

Enhanced Pentatonics

What goes up must come down.

By Ted Eschliman



Continuing with Pentatonics

We introduced the benefits of intimacy with the **Pentatonic Scale** in jazz in our past session, **Developing Pentatonics for Jazz: A systematic approach to pentatonic mastery in all 12 keys** <http://mandolinsessions.com/aug07/Eschliman.html> . We took it a step farther showing you specific **Pentatonic** scale fodder that could be applied in **Tonal Centers** in our article, **Alternate Fingerings Part 2: Incorporating the Four Pentatonic Fingerings** <http://mandolinsessions.com/dec07/Eschliman.html>. We want to take this yet a step further and look at ways of altering note order for potential melodic silage, an exponentially greater stream of interesting lyrical nuggets.

Crazy Eights

But first let's ask, if you've played the two-page exercises, have you taken the time to work the other eight keys? Now would be a good time to dig them up or just download them again:

FFcP Pentatonic Studies www.JazzMando.com

Mandolin

1st FFcP 2nd FFcP 3rd FFcP 4th FFcP

Mdn

17 Crazy eights

Mdn

21 Start on 6th (relative minor pentatonic)

Repeat 1st visual measure indefinitely, until comfortably proficient before moving on.
**Notice the starting note and its relationship within the scale.*
**Always connect, vibrate the string all the way to the beginning of the next note.*
**Pay attention to string crossings, don't allow them to be awkward especially for 3rd and 4th fingers.*
**Use the melodic variety as models or jumping off points in your own improvisation.*

Pentatonic FFcP <http://www.jazzmando.com/print/FFcPPentatonic.pdf>

We've written out the first batch in the keys of **A, C, Eb and F#**. If you haven't already, let's go the next step and move everything up a fret and work the entire exercise in **Bb, Db, E, and G**. Then work another set, **B, D, F and Ab**. Remember, in doing so you will have covered a one-octave scale of every possible key. Such is the beauty of our perfect little fifths-tuned instrument; so magnificently ordered (compared to what our guitar-strutting brethren have to deal with, that nasty little **3rd** between the G and B string)!

Ex 1 Bb, Db, E, and G

Ex 2 B, D, F and Ab

Motion and melody

Notice how we build throughout the exercise and inject a variety of motion in each subsequent pattern. In the musical "real world," you don't hear song lines played out in consecutive scales; you don't want to improvise that way, either. If you only practice scales in consecutive note fashion (step-wise motion), you'll *sound* like you're improvising only scales. The other benefit of motion deviation is the practice of starting your phrases on different notes of the scale. If every phrase in your playing started on the root of each chord or tonal center, it would be obvious even to the untrained ear; your soloing is terribly sterile. Putting that root on an off beat, throwing a passing note in front of it, this is all part of the larger process of making your solos fresh and interesting.

This whole exercise helps hone this with Pentatonics, but we want to slip out of the waltz 3/4 time and add some variations in 4/4 time.

We'll start by repeating the first two notes of every measure:

Play the rest of the exercise this way, but don't write it out. Part of the process is internalizing these for some intuitive, auto-pilot improvisation (that doesn't *sound* auto-pilot!). Get these patterns into your fingers and they will show up for the dance when you improvise.

Another variation is to take the exercise and double the second pair of notes. Play the exercise this way:

The third variation should be painfully obvious, too:

Again, you'll want to move everything up a fret, and later up two frets.

Building brain and fingers

We can't stress enough how investing time in practicing these patterns can help you develop into a better mandolinist. The cerebral versatility, especially once you get to the point of knowing these so well that you forget them, will help you grab them unconsciously, allowing you to move in your soloing and attack the larger looming harmonic landscape with higher thought process.

Even if soloing isn't your thing yet, the exercises are incredible chop-builders. Fiddletune playing is fun, but by itself will never allow your **3rd** and **4th** fingers to develop to their full potential in strength and versatility.

Try using these patterns in context. Take something harmonically simple like "**Mack the Knife**," or "**Lady Be Good**," and start injecting these patterns into the solos. This can be an incredible incubating process for even more fresh ideas! (*"Mack the Knife" is especially good because you're moving these Pentatonic finger patterns up a half step just like in the exercise...*)



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