

DISCOVERING PITCH - AXIS

Is this yet another mystical name given to a 'new' idea by some 'guitar god' who certainly does give the impression that he knows more than you do.

Well, you may well surprise yourself by dropping here today.

Answer me this, can you play more than one scale?

I won't even wait for you to answer 'YES' to that one, because there is a good chance that you wouldn't have dug this far into my website if you weren't that accomplished, and if you can't, you are about to learn, that's what I'm here for!

If you look on the internet for info on 'Pitch- Axis you will find a great deal about Joe Satriani, and a very large percentage about why helicopters crash, am I right?

Well let me congratulate you on digging this far because I am known for having a really aggravating habit of simplifying things down so much that the ordinary bloke in the street, yes, that's you and me, can understand all of that mumbo jumbo that is thrown about to either sell guitar magazines or make some 'guitar god' seem immortal.

Well I'm here to show you that most of the time you are up there with them.

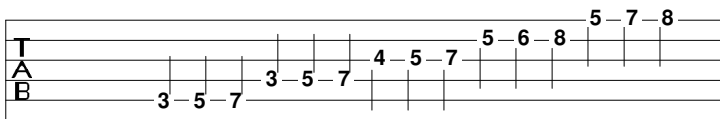
No exceptions!

Things just need explaining more clearly.

This is in a nutshell.

Here is the scale of C major, see if you can play it.

Ex. 1



Now let's get the academic side of things clear. As this scale (Ex. 1) is in C we may assume you are playing in the KEY of C major. The accompanying harmonies for this key are made up of the chords related to the key of C. They are C (the tonic), F, G, Am, Dm, and Em. Now, your accompanist can wander around those chords till the cows come home and you, the soloist can't make a mistake. You may make the odd suspension here and there but they won't be out-of-tune wrong notes. The style that you play in is up to you be it Rock, Jazz, Funk or Country, you name it.

But after a while you'r going to want a change of key. This is called a MODULATION.

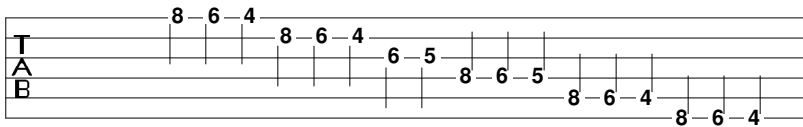
Now you can do this by utilising the cycle of fifths which takes a little experience and pre-planning for the modulation or you can employ.....PITCH AXIS.

Now all you do is this, PLAY IN THE SCALE OF THE KEY THAT YOU ARE IN, AND CHANGE INTO ANOTHER KEY BY USING A CONDUSIVE NOTE TO CHANGE INTO A NEW KEY/SCALE.

Now try this, play up the scale of C major and come back down the key/scale of Ab. This may sound terrifying but have faith in old JT.

This is the scale of Ab.





Imagine your band throbbing away on a rock thing in C and you do a screaming Blues solo and land sweetly on the note of C, it will sound pretty cool if the band suddenly flick round to a pumping Blues in Ab and proceed to throb away in that key.

You have changed key by revolving around a, what I like to call, **COMMON DENOMINATOR**. So the trick is to hit a note that works for your existng key and acts as a catalyst into your new key. Bingo!

So, know your scales and be aware of what notes make up the chords that you are playing over. You can change on any of the notes that are communal, as long as the rest of the band know about it that is.

Ex. 2 The note of E is in the chords of; C, E, A, Em, Am.

And in the jazzier chords of; Fmaj7, Bb-5, G6, I could go on forever. Whatever is pertaining to the music that you prefer to play.

Ex. 3 Scream out a note of G on the 3rd string 12th fret and have the band change from Em to Eb7 to Dm to Db7 to C. Great finish to a heavy metal ballad. And if its a hit I want 10%.

Ex. 3 Latin. Play the note of E on the 12th fret 1st sring and accompany it with Cmaj7 to Gm7 to Fmaj7 to Fm maj7 to C6. Cool.

Now this is just playing around with chords, Pitch-Axis is the changing of key. Hit a note that works in the scale of the key that you are in, and is also the new key. Easy

Concentrate on your scales, for whatever music you prefer and play. I think all music is jazz by the pure definition that it is all a variation on a chord sequence. It doesn't always have to be played by Charlie Parker clones, listen to the great Frank Zappa. That's great jazz, man! Just the same as Bach or Mozart, chords and a melody.

Keep playing those boring scales, they are the building blocks of what ever music you choose to play, whether you like it or not!

J.A.