A horse fucker cheat guide to music fagging basics

By

Anon (who else?)

Introduction

So you're a newbie and want to learn the arcane ways of musicfagging?

Let me tell you 2 things.

First, is not as complicated and arcane as the musical circle jerk might make you think it is. If you can figure out patterns and follow easy recipes, you're good to go with music fagging.

Second, you'll need to experiment and practice a lot. Like any other artistic form, music takes time to master, and practice makes master. So don't worry if at first you don't succeed. As you keep doing so you'll figure your own stylistic stuff out and learn from your mistakes.

I'm not an expert, and that should suffice to let you know that ANYONE can musicfag with some dedication and logic.

So keep it up, anon, and good luck! Work hard, play hard and rest hard!

Let’s get down to business.

Scales

Having got that introduction/foreword out of the way, we can get down to what you want, the cheats.

These sheets will focus on a more practical way, and those of you who are onto keyboards (pianos and such) will feel at home, because the keyboard layout is the easiest way to understand how to cheat.

As a little reminder, the piano layout has big (most often white) keys for all the tones and smaller (usually black) keys for semitones/halftones, and they are always in the same pattern:

C	C#/Db	D	D#/Eb	E	F	F#/Gb	G	G#/Ab	A	A#/Bb	B

You know the drill, anon. The **#** means sharp and the **b** means flat. If you’re not into microtonal shit, you can take the sharp of a tone equal to the flat of the next one for practical purposes. Don’t sweat it, keep it simple.

And you might have already heard about the circle of fifths and the major/minor shit… the problem with that circle is that it works for 2 modal scales mostly, but in practice we use at least 7 in western music theory. So you kinda see the problem now, right?

You probably also have heard of those “formulas” to figure out scales, but honestly, they are a pain in the ass to remember and I couldn’t bother on them. Instead, I’ll show you where did they get them.

But before that, let’s recall the 7 modal scales I mentioned before.

- Major (Ionian, if I recall it right)
- Dorian
- Phrygian
- Lydian
- Mixolydian
- Minor (Aeonian, but I could be wrong)
- Locrian

Note: Major and Minor have another name, but you’ll find them most often by their generic names, so don’t sweat it.

But now, how do we build them?

Well, This is where shit gets easy. You see, anon, in their most basic shapes, they are made from the 7 white keys. Yeah, that stupidly easy.

Major	C D E F G A B
Dorian	D E F G A B C
Phrygian	E F G A B C D
Lydian	F G A B C D E
Mixolydian	G A B C D E F
Minor	A B C D E F G
Locrian	B C D E F G A

Easy peasy one two threesie, ain't it?

But wait, so how do we get the formulas from knowing that?

Well, this is where the piano roll comes to save the day. Instead of memorizing the tone half-tone tone chant these guys do, you can aid yourself with a piano roll and count shit.

So, if we were to construct a major scale, we look at the piano roll and count each interval of whites.

C	C#/Db	D	D#/Eb	E	F	F#/Gb	G	G#/Ab	A	A#/Bb	B
R		2		2	1		2		2		2

See what I did?

The root is C, I counted to the next white 2 keys, and so on.

So the formula for all major scales is

R 2 2 1 2 2 2 R

Yeah, that easy.

So, let's say I want to build the major Scale for D. I just apply the formula with the aid of the piano roll.

C		D		E	F		G		A		B	C		D		E	F		G		A		B
		R		2		2	1		2		2		2	R										

So there we have it.

D E F# G A B C#

The same goes for the rest of the modal scales you might want to build.

Next up, I'll leave all the formulas on a single table.

Major	R 2 2 1 2 2 2 R
Dorian	R 2 1 2 2 2 1 R
Phrygian	R 1 2 2 2 1 2 R
Lydian	R 2 2 2 1 2 2 R
Mixolydian	R 2 2 1 2 2 1 R
Minor	R 2 1 2 2 1 2 R
Locrian	R 1 2 2 1 2 2 R

Check it, I might have fucked up due some time issues.

So there you have it. You can build any modal scale from there with no problem. It seems faster and easier than using the circle of fifths (at least for me)

Next up, we shall treat cheating bastard chord building (yeah, I have a shortcut to be lazy and not use the regular formulas).

Chord building (cheating bastard way)

Usually, to build chords we are taught formulas and they tell us modal scales have their chord formulas too. You know, the minor Major diminished mumbo jumbo. Well, what would you do if I told you there's an easier, far more faggotish way to do so without learning a shit ton of patterns?

Indeed, we have an easy way to build the chords for a given modal scale without actually having to work it out too much.

To do so, you need to make the scale and write it down first, and what comes next is just counting and filling up a table. Nothing too complex, really.

All modal scales we do will have an octave of length. I don't need to get into that. In general, we can use a single formula to build ALL chords according to our scale.

Taking the root pitch as 1, just write down 1-7 (I do so twice in a row to make it easier to count).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

From there, you can build the basic chords by adding 2 steps and then another two steps, like this:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	4	5	6	7	1	2
5	6	7	1	2	3	4

That there is the general form of the chords proper to a given modal scale, disregard what modal scale you use.

So, let's use this formula to build the "natural" chords of the scale we made earlier.

Our scale was D major, and it resulted as follows:

D E F# G B A C#

We can give a number to each pitch to make it easier to understand.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
D	E	F#	G	A	B	C#

Following the above table, we can just substitute and we will have the chords easily.

D	E	F#	G	A	B	C#
F#	G	A	B	C#	D	E
A	B	C#	D	E	F#	G

And there we go, we got the 7 “natural” chords of our modal scale. The only “problem” we might find here is we don’t explicitly have the chord quality/type/whatever there. If you write the chords down on your DAW, you’ll see the quality easily, same if you use a piano roll.

C	#	D	#	E	F	#	G	#	A	#	B	C	#	D	#	E	F	#	G	#	A	#	B
	7	1		2		3	4		5		6		7	1		2		3	4		5		6

If you count the spaces in between, you’ll notice most have gaps of 2 and 3 spaces. You can easily figure out the quality of a given chord by observing these gaps. We can make 3 easy rules with these observations.

1. If the gaps go 3-2, is a Major chord (M)
   i.e *D F# A*
2. If the gaps go 2-3, is a minor chord (m)
   i.e *E G B*
3. If the gaps go 2-2, is a diminished chord (°)
   i.e *C# E G*

Now, remember how we matched each pitch to a number? That’s useful if you want to use the notation for chords. It helps you if you’re going to use one of those minor-Major progression cheat sheets you can find or if you are going to write about your composition for someone’s study.

To use the notation, you just substitute the number by its roman numeral. If it is a Major chord, you write it in capitals. If it is minor, you write it in lower case. If diminished, you write it in lower case and add a grade symbol (°).

For our example, we would do as follows:

I ii iii IV V vi vii°

Not so hard, right?

There’s a whole lot about chords, though. I’ll board some that are quite useful and quite common.

Some stuff on chords

Inversions

An inverted chord is nothing but a chord in which you move pitches an octave up. This is useful if you want to adapt your pitch to either raise it without raising the whole chord or move the pitch down for a mood swing.

A first inversion moves the root an octave up. For instance, if we were working on the 4th octave our D major first chord, the basic form would be D4 F#4 A4. But the first inversion would be D5 F#4 A4. We can do the second inversion by moving the pitch from the middle (usually called the 3rd) an octave up too. So, our second inversion would be D5 F#5 A4. This is something you should try on your instrument or DAW to understand better.

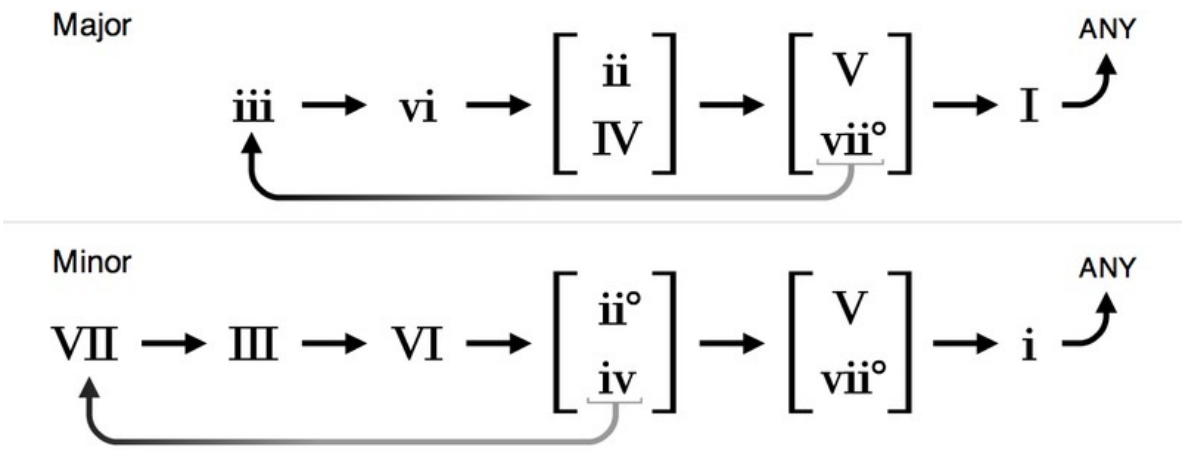
7ths, 9ths and so on!

Up to this point, we've been working with triads, but you can add one, two or more pitches if you follow the building idea we saw earlier. Given these grow in intervals of 2, we call them according to this idea. So, for instance, if we make the 7th of our D major, we would have 4 pitches in our chord and it would look like this:

D F# A C#

That there is the 7th. Not too much science. I'm not really sure if this applies all the times, so don't take it as a law or rule, but as an empiric observation. You can build 9ths by following this idea. And even longer chords. How you use them? That's up to you.

Now, I don't know of actual cheats for progressions, but you can use this tip of mine. Usually, if you look up a cheat sheet, you'll find 2 formulas for the entire thing. One for major and one for minor. But that leaves us with 5 scales out. So what do instead of using these fellas? I mean, is not like there aren't other charts out there, but more often than not they are on those annoying paid courses and what not and following the same usual progressions can make for boring music.



What you can do is use pivot tones. This is pretty much moving between chords that share one or more pitches. You'll have to listen to your progression to figure out if you like it or it sucks, but that's part of music fagging. Be creative!

For instance, if you are on a chord that uses F# A C#, you can move to any other chord that has one or more of those pitches, opening several options that either move up or down. You could jump to D F# A, or C# E G, for instance.

Chords are really useful and you'll find yourself playing with chords a bit more than you do building up melodies.

Music creation basics (bits and whatnot)

With the stuff we saw above, we are ready to board some of the basics to start working on our composition. You can google shit up later on to add more to your arsenal. Do so maggot!

First, I want to tell you about the 2 most important aspects to any composition. I'm not talking "parts" as of song structure, but as of core parts that are on pretty much all "parts". We can say they are like atoms to matter. Yeah, pretty much.

1. **Harmony**: Harmony is usually overlooked by beginners. We all want to drop that catchy melody we have stuck on our heads. We want to sing, to play solos and so on. But harmony is the tortilla of your taco. Take it off and you taco is no more. Is just minced meat with veggies and delicious hot sauce. Edible, perhaps, but messy and could use a base to eat it up efficiently. Harmony is why chord building is so damn important, and some people ignore the fact that you can help yourself build melodies if you use your harmony as a base. Harmony also gives shape and direction to your music. Harmony rocks your socks. Love it and work it.
2. **Melody**: is that one part that gets stuck on people's head. Is the part pretty much everyone remembers from a song, It gives an identity to your piece, given harmony is a bit more limited and harmony is more technical and thus more likely for people to repeat even if they don't mean to do so. Melody can be delivered through several instruments, even through voices. Usually singing is the most common way to deliver a melody to people. Melody can be hard to come up with at times because of its free nature, but we always have ways to land melodies easy enough to not work on one for several months. If you can't come up with a melody in a couple months after being a composer for a year or two, you might want to try to follow the shape your harmony is giving you. Sometimes the answers come in the simplest ways.

Having got those very basic concepts for both, we can go down to work on them.

Harmony:

Put bluntly, your harmony will be defined by the chord progression you pick. There are a lot of terms that come after such as cadences and what not, but right now let's just focus on how to use our chords in very primitive ways.

Usually, the most basic use of a chord will be to play it and sustain it for a given amount of measures before playing the next chord on your progression. This is common for techno and what not and voiced by pads, keyboards and sometimes choruses.

Other times, we can play the chord several times in little “bursts” or “taps” following a rhythm. You’ll find this use in punk a lot, where rhythmic guitars will play a chord or power chord several times in a measure to let the listener have a sense of tempo. Can be used in any composition, obviously, but that depends on what you’re trying to do.

We have arpeggios too. These fellas play each pitch of a given chord one at a time in sequence to tell the listener the chord. They can go from root and upwards and loop (ie D F# A D F# A), go from the last pitch from the chord to the root (ie A F# D A F# D), go up and down (ie D F# A F# D) and even have weird patterns you can come up as long as you loop the sequence (ie F# A D F# D). You can find arpeggios in a lot of genres.

Another technique is to play only the root of each chord. This is common for basses.

Of course, you can get creative and try your own ideas with them chords, but most of them will be combinations of what I already said.

But all in all, harmony will give body to your composition, so keep it in mind.

Melody:

Ah, melody. I hope I’m not the only music fag to tell you, but melody is our conflictive love interest. We love and hate it with a passion because melody will cause problems like no other thing.

There’s no actual formula to make melodies, but there are a few tips you can use to get you on the right direction, and it has to do with both your modal scale and your chords.

You see, while it’s practically true you can play just about ANY pitch for your melody, if you go about it carelessly you’ll find yourself having a bad time when your melody clashes your harmony or simply blends in too much and can’t be appreciated, your melody makes no sense or the tension is just far too much to enjoy it.

What do when stuck with a rebel melody?

Well, ground the motherfucker according to your chords and scale!

Not a rule of thumb, but a common trick for music fags is to make your melody using only pitches from your modal scale. This way you’ll make sure it goes smoothly with your harmony and it gives you 7 pitches to work with, which is a

good amount of pitches and can give you an almost infinite bunch of options to work with.

Another trick that goes hoof in hoof with the scale trick is to try to start your melody on a pitch from your current chord. Not always the best, because it can blend in too much, but can make for nice and smooth introduction notes for your melody.

You can also follow the movement of your current chord to keep an idea going.

I might come up with more tips later on, but for now, this should suffice to get your creativity flowing and getting used to the most basic parts.