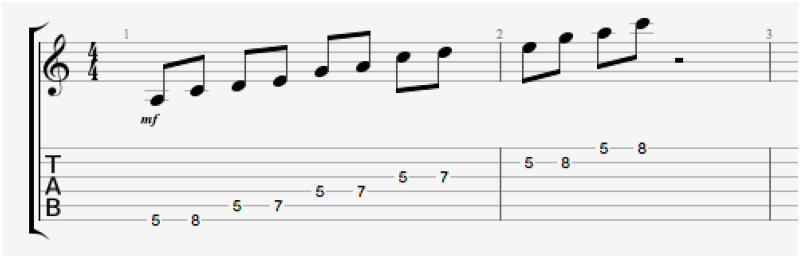
Mastering the Pentatonic

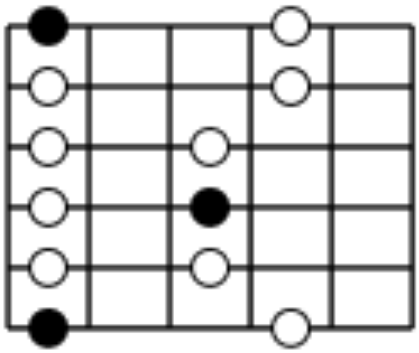
Article 2 - Carlos Santana; blend Dorian.

The Pentatonic Scale is the holy grail for guitarists. It's easy to play and it sounds amazing.

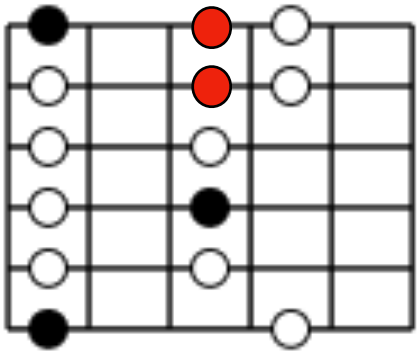
This series will show you how to get the most out of our favourite scale, and how making small modifications will get you sounding like the pros and their signature sound.

In this article we will look at how Carlos Santana adds two notes to the pentatonic to create the latin-blues mix he is known for. Below is the A minor pentatonic scale.





The two notes we need to add are the **2nd** (B) and a **major 6th** (F#). Our scale now looks like this (see right).

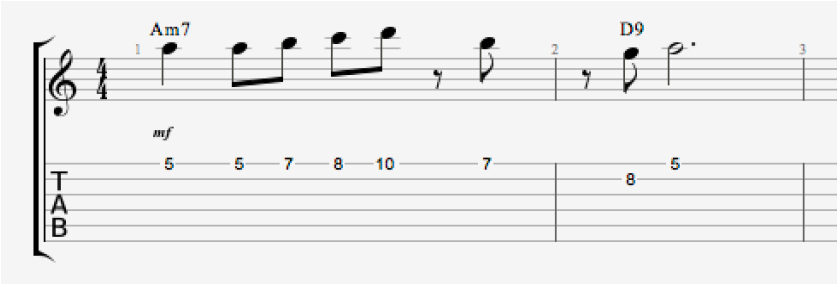


These new notes create **semitones** within our pentatonic scale. This interval is key in sounding like Santana. If you were to add these two notes in both octaves of the pentatonic you would now be playing the **Dorian** mode, but more on that later!

We will now look at song examples where Santana strides between the pentatonic and Dorian:

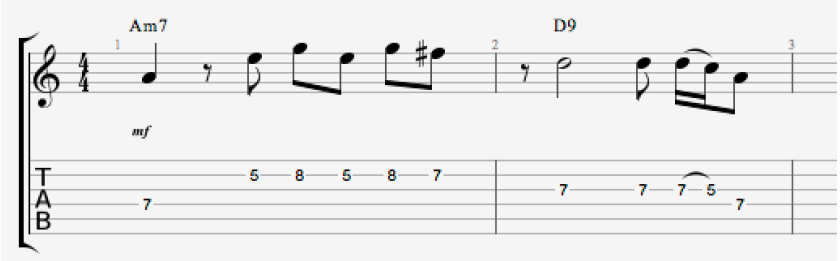
"Oye Como Va" Intro melody:

The song is in the key of A minor, hence our use of a minor scale. The melody ascends, making full use of the **2nd** (B), before falling back to the tonic note. Syncopated (off-beat) notes also give this lick a latin flavour.



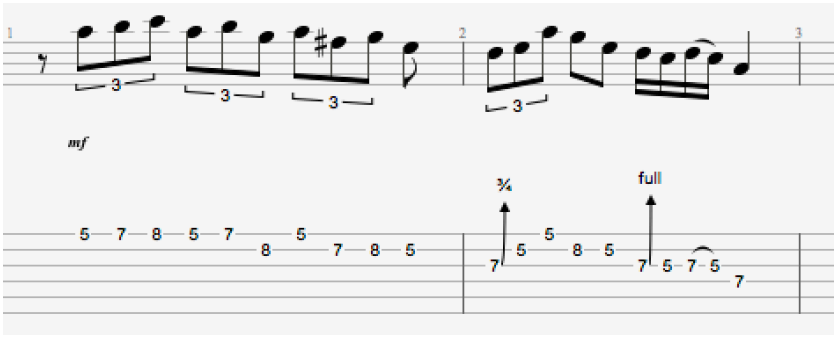
"Oye Como Va" Main melody:

Here Santana uses the **6th** (F#) on the 7th fret of the B string. He mixes this dorian lick with a classic blues motif in the second bar.



"Evil Ways" Solo: (transposed to Am)

A quintessential Satana lick; starting on the "and" of beat 1 gives the lick a real syncopated feel. The first bar is strict Dorian, followed by a classic blues lick in bar 2.



"Samba Pa Ti" Main melody:

One of Santana's most famous instrumentals. The following three licks are all taken from the opening section. Here we introduce a new Santana technique of ***grace notes***. These quick notes add another latin flavour. Lick 1 is the opening melody, lick 2 its response, and lick 3 is a turnaround used to get back to chord I.

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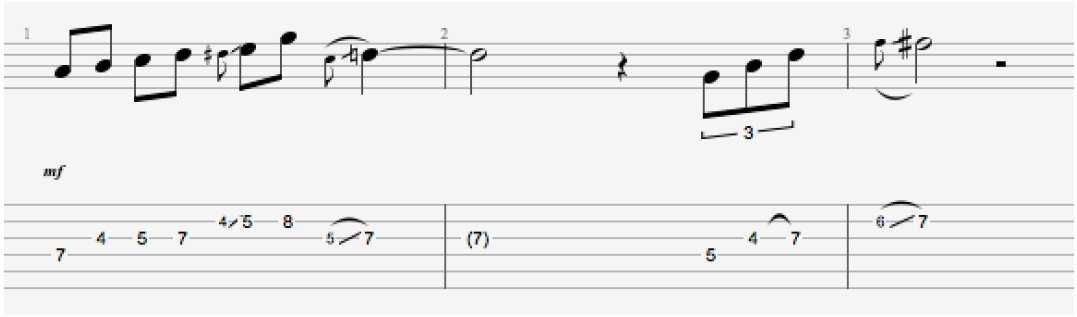

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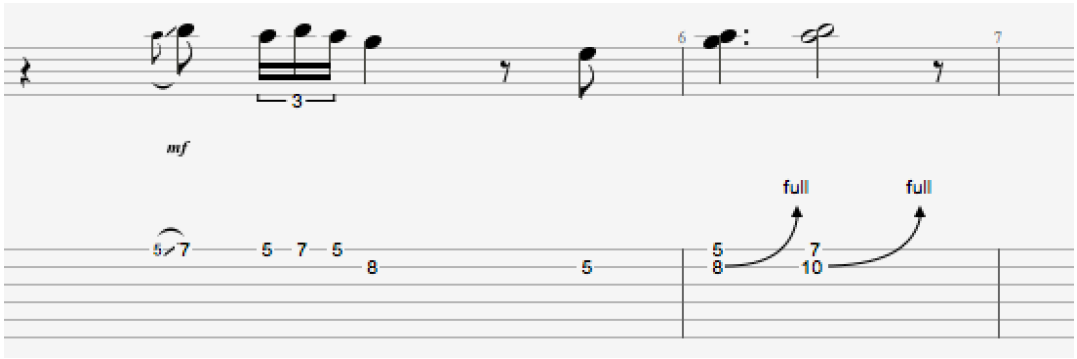
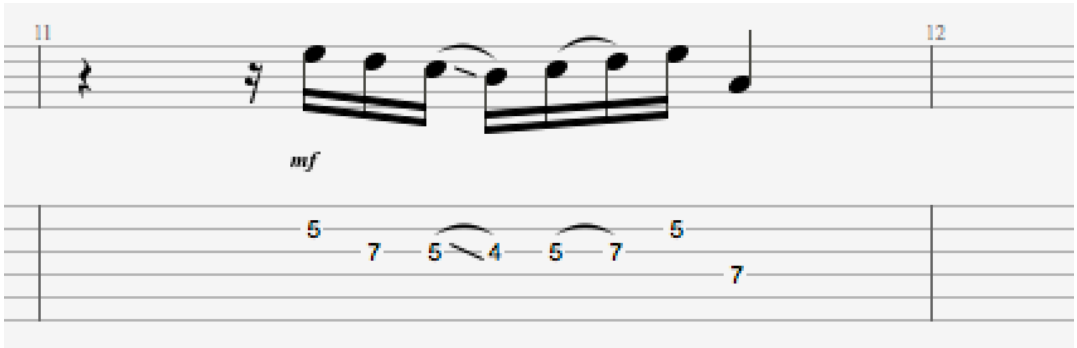
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