

Mastering the Pentatonic

Article 4 - Mark Knopfler; "Sultans of Swing", adding the 2nd, and flirting with Harmonic Minor.



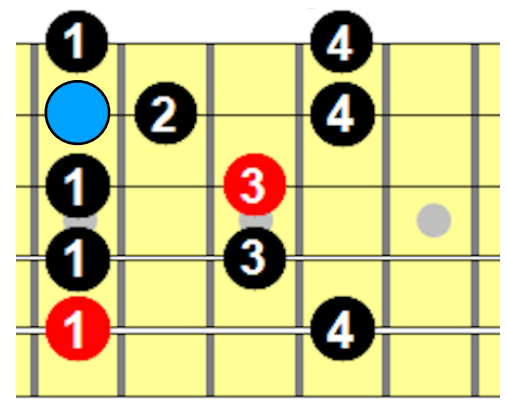
The Pentatonic Scale is the holy grail for guitarists. It's easy to play and it sounds amazing.

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.

With any scale, it is important to learn the shape starting on the E string (like in previous articles) but also starting on the A string. This article will be using the D minor pentatonic at fret 5 on the A string (see right).

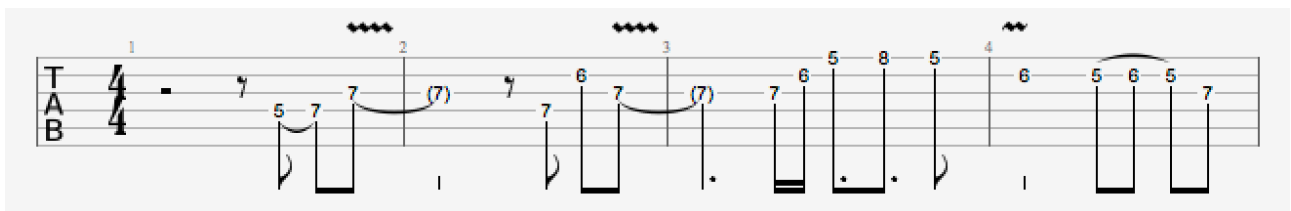
You will notice an extra note added in blue, this is the 2nd, a note Knopfler often uses in a trill with the minor 3rd (see in the licks below).

Achieving the signature Knopfler sound isn't just about note selection but also articulation and phrasing. You will very rarely (if ever) see Knopfler using a pick. He employs a "claw" technique between his thumb, first and second finger. This means he plays lines that you might not think up with a pick. This also leads to the heavy use of double stops; playing two notes at the same time, and rakes.



"Sultans of Swing" licks:

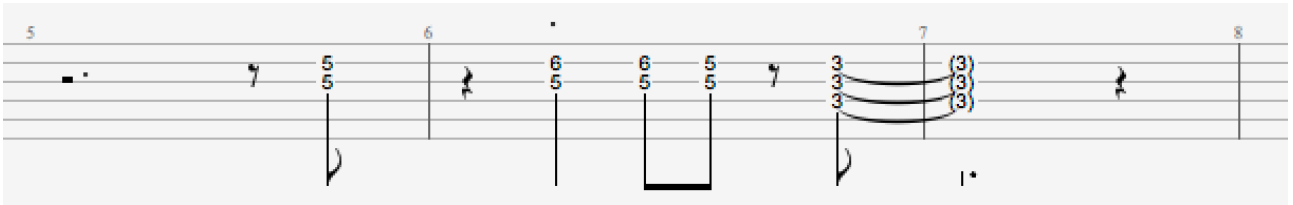
1. Intro



This opening lick perfectly shows the 3 main ingredients to Knopfler's playing; the pentatonic scale, fingerstyle, and the use of the 2nd.

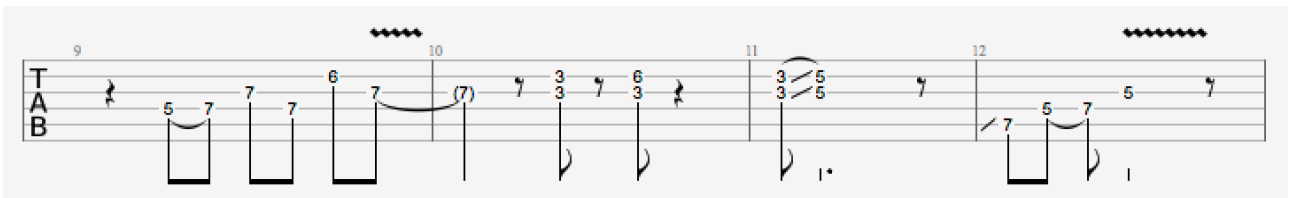
Bar 1 & 2 is made up of a classic pentatonic lick with lots of vibrato. Bar 3 has a "rake" in it from the G string to the E string, quintessentially Knopfler - assign a finger to each string and make it snappy! It's also worth noting that these notes make up a D minor **arpeggio** and highlight the chord underneath perfectly, another Knopfler move. Finally we have a hammer-on-pull-off between the 2nd and m3 on the B string.

2. Verse double stops



Here we see how Knopfler uses double stops. They reinforce the harmony but also act as a rhythmic device. The syncopated pattern help push these couples bars along. Play these using your 1st and 2nd finger, with the final triad being played with thumb, 1st and 2nd finger.

Below is a lick that is made up of all the ideas we have discussed so far.



3. Verse Harmonic Minor use.

Although very much in D minor, "Sultans of Swing" throws in an A dominant 7 chord every now and again, a chord "outside" the key. If you were to play a D minor pentatonic over the A7, the C (m7) of the D minor pentatonic would clash with the C# (3rd) of the A7 chord. To get around this, Knopfler dips into a D Harmonic Minor scale, which is a D minor scale with a major 7th:

D E F G A Bb **C#**

