

Harmonic Minor Mayhem

BY KEN STEIGER



LOVE HIM OR HATE him, Yngwie Malmsteen is one of the greatest guitarists on the planet. His playing instantly recalls an era in rock guitar history when musical proficiency was hailed, not ridiculed. Malmsteen created an instant buzz when he moved to the States in 1983, and, under the guidance of *GP* columnist Mike Varney, began shredding with the band Steeler (and soon after, Alcatraz).

But it wasn't until his 1984 album, *Rising Force*—a truly stunning debut—that the Swedish prodigy attained global fame. In the process, he introduced the harmonic minor scale to metal-heads all over the world.

Armed with Strat-through-a-Marshall tones inspired by Jimi Hendrix and Ritchie Blackmore, as well as soaring, baroque melodies borrowed from Bach, Vivaldi, Mozart, and Paganini, Malmsteen

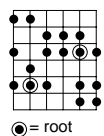
spearheaded a new movement in metal that soon became known as neo-classical. The harmonic minor scale (essentially, a natural minor scale with a raised 7th degree) plays a key role in the neo-classical sound. Two of Malmsteen's favorite fingerings for this scale are shown in **Examples 1** and **2**.

In each of these grids, a circled note represents the root. Ex. 1, for instance, contains two roots—one on the fifth string, and another an

octave up on the second string. To play this scale in *A* minor, start it at the 8th fret of the low string. Once you become familiar with the pattern, it won't be long before you can blaze up and down the scale in triplets using alternate picking, as in **Ex. 3**.

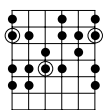
One of Malmsteen's tricks is to play runs on one string that *sound* as though they're being played on multiple strings. This approach makes it easier to play patterns at

Ex. 1



◎ = root

Ex. 2

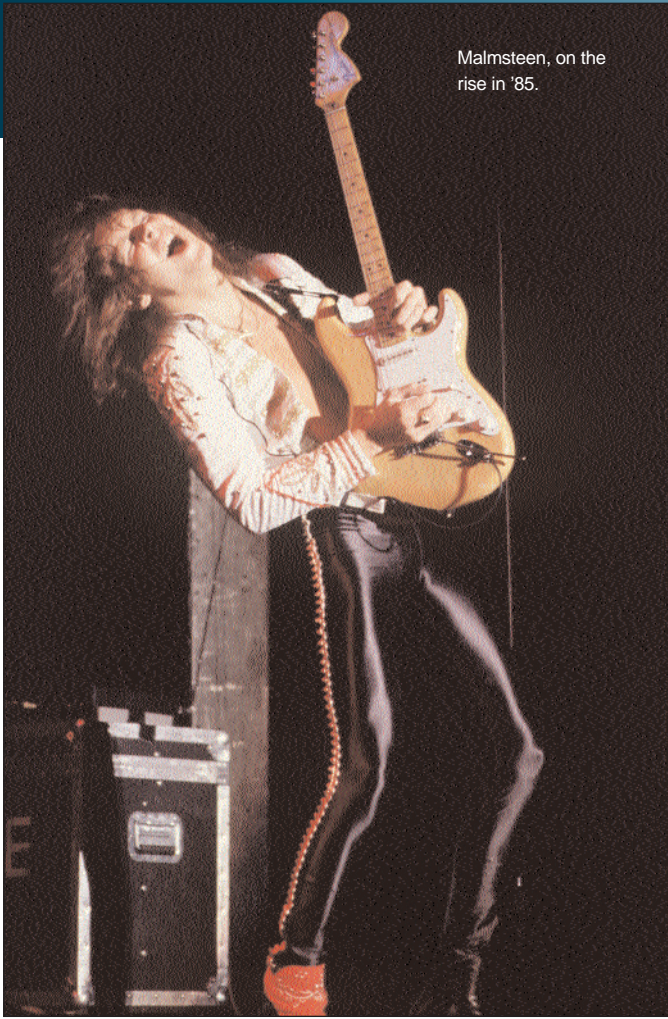


Ex. 3 Am

Ex. 4

Ex. 5

Malmsteen, on the rise in '85.



light speed because there's no string-skipping involved, as demonstrated by the repeating maneuver in **Ex. 4**. As you shift back and forth between the tenth and the ninth positions, see how fast you can play these triplets.

When you're warmed up, try **Ex. 5**. This new bit of harmonic minor chaos shifts gears to sixteenth-notes (four notes per downbeat) and descends along a single string. I suggest learning the harmonic minor scale on each string by applying this pattern up and down the neck. Next, branch out to two-string shapes, such as **Ex. 6**.

Malmsteen is quite proficient at playing harmonic minor in every position on the neck. **Ex. 7** is a new pattern that begins with the root, *A*, as the highest note and descends in sixteenth-notes, landing on another root two octaves below.

Once *you* become proficient with these fingerings, chances are that, like Malmsteen, you'll spy

cool arpeggio shapes hiding within the scale. In **Ex. 8**, you'll see an *Am* arpeggio that Malmsteen executes at insane speeds with the help of sweep picking. (Notice that after the pull-off to the 8th fret of the high string, the next two notes are swept with an upstroke, and the last two notes are swept with a downstroke.)

There are diminished shapes hiding in the scale as well. Starting on the 7th degree, *G#*, and stacking minor thirds from there, we get *G#*, *B*, *D*, and *F*, which spells a *G#dim7* chord. **Ex. 9** shows how Malmsteen uses these arpeggios to ascend up the neck with *rising force*, landing on a towering high note, a final *G#*, that implies the *V* chord, *E*. ■

G.I.T. instructor Ken Steiger was hired as guitar coach for the movie Rock Star. Check out his new intra-metal shred guitar CD at projectsteiger.com.

Ex. 6

Ex. 7

Ex. 8

Ex. 9