

## The Aeolian Mode

Mode vi of the major scale or Aeolian mode is also known as the natural minor scale and is considered to have a tonic function chord. However, unlike the melodic or harmonic minor scales the Aeolian minor is without any altered tones and therefore does not have a leading tone or raised 7th. Consequently and in spite of its tonic chord function, the Aeolian mode is therefore rarely employed as a I minor chord, especially in Jazz. Ex.6.1e is a comparison of the aeolian or natural minor and the harmonic minor.

Ex.6.1e

A aeolian minor      natural 6th

A harmonic minor      leading tone

Ex.6.1f compares the Aeolian mode with the dorian minor scale. Note the only difference between the two is the raised 6th in the dorian minor. In Jazz, the Aeolian mode is often employed as the vi chord in a I – vi – ii - V7 chord progression (Ex.6.1g). When this occurs it allows an improviser or melodist to apply one scale for the entire chord progression. Can you guess what scale that would be?

Ex.6.1f

A aeolian minor      natural 6th

A dorian minor      raised 6th

However more often than not, the vi chord is substituted with a V7/ii (Ex.6.1h) and when so provides a wider array of harmonic and melodic choices due to the brief tonicization into ii minor. Note the addition of Bb (the b9 of the V7/ii chord) in Ex.6.1h. Can you figure out what parent scale this note belongs to?

Ex.6.1g

CMaj9    Amin9    Dmin9    G 13    CMaj69

C Major : I      vi      ii      V7      I

Ex.6.1h

CMaj9    A7(b9)    Dmin9    G 13    CMaj69

I      V7/ii    ii      V7      I