

UNLEASH YOUR INNER ROCK GOD

THE MINOR BLUES SCALE

GUITAR

My earliest experience with playing blues guitar was being taught the Minor Pentatonic scale. I loved that damn scale as it allowed me to play those cool blues-based Chuck Berry licks. And it was always cool to be able to say "dig me as I play some sweet blues" at a jam with my then-fellow-13-year-olds. But after a while, as I started to listen to more and more blues, something started to bug me. It didn't sound like I was playing the blues ...

Sure, I was playing the Minor Pentatonic scale, which the guitar mags and my teacher had both told me was an integral part of the blues. And I certainly had enough built-up early-teenage angst to power a small to medium-sized hellhound – another essential blues element. But the licks I was playing just sounded ... stock. They just weren't as nuanced, as emotive or as bluesy as the licks I was hearing from guys like Stevie Ray Vaughan or older blues kings like BB King and Buddy Guy. At first I thought it was down to attitude and experience. "Live it and it will come." But eventually I realised that the Minor Pentatonic scale can only get you so far.

To really unlock the sweetness and the sting of the blues, you have to get in between the notes. It's pretty common for blues players to bend microtonally. In this context, that usually means bending the string up to a note that's not quite the next half-step up. This adds a nice little vocal kind of element to the lick. But it's still not quite enough. Instead, the secret is in the flattened fifth.

Play the E note on the 7th fret of the A string. Now play the Bb note on the 8th fret of the D string. Hear that? It can sound evil. It can sound sophisticated and complex. It can definitely sound like progressive metal. But most of all it can sound bluesy. And to add it to a Minor Pentatonic scale (and thus turn it into the Minor Blues scale), check out **Figure 1**. Let's do this in the key of Am. I've included a heavy accent on the flattened fifth whenever it shows up in the Minor Blues version. Sounds bluesier already, right?

Now let's turn it into some blues licks! **Figure 2** is great as a finger warm-up, in addition to sounding undeniably bluesy. The first half is this lick at steady 8th note triplets. In the second half we crank it up to 16th note triplets, which gives it a bit more of a Paul Gilbert bluesy shred vibe. Want a cool tag to add to the end of that? Then check out **Figure 3**.

Figure 4 is more of a laid back, loose, bluesy



lick which encourages you to bend from the flattened fifth up to the fifth for dramatic effect. This one sounds especially nasty (in a good way) on my Gibson Les Paul Traditional with the

bridge pickup in full glorious bite mode. Happy shredding!

BY PETER HODGSON

WHAT'S THAT SOUND

WHAT A (MICRO) BRUTE!

KEYS

It has been a little over two years since I first brought you the news of Arturia's release of the new legendary MiniBrute keyboard. For those keen, you may have picked up on certain hints of its imminent release even before we were officially allowed to make it public. And so, once everyone heard about it, the demand went through the roof for what has paved the way for a wide range of affordable analogue synthesizers now being produced. So much was the demand, that many Australian users were not able to even get a look at one of these units for well over a year after the announcement. There simply were not enough units of the MiniBrute turning up on our shores to meet the demand of our local synth geeks and electronica lovers. So, with the release of its little brother imminent, how quickly will you be getting your hands onto the new MicroBrute?

ARTURIA MICROBRUTE



Officially announced a little over a month ago on Arturia's website, after much speculation from the likes of myself and other synth buffs, the MicroBrute is taking what the MiniBrute has already given us and packaging it into a smaller shell with a few different twists. The even more compact 25 note keyboard looks at a glance to be remarkably similar to the original, if you have no point of reference for its size. It is a smaller unit, with keys that are roughly half the size of the original, so you won't get the same feel nor playability as you may be used to, but don't let that deter you. What the MicroBrute lacks in size, it appears to make up with new features.

In fact, for many keyboard users who are not entirely up to speed with the inner workings of an analogue synthesizer, this could well be the perfect starting point. With less controls to worry about, you are able to build sounds with more ease, yet still have them sound monstrous. The controls are now broken down to a simpler sound building design that gets you tweaking straight away. The oscillator section looks fairly easy to navigate, as does the Steiner-Parker filter that the MiniBrute is so well known for. LFO and Envelope controls are kept simple and easy too, so you can finalise your tones without much trouble. The same style overlay sheets

for a somewhat rudimentary 'patch memory' come packaged with the MicroBrute, so you will have a good starting point and a simple way for noting down your favourite sounds. But, the real fun is going to be getting into the Modulation Matrix that allows you to patch the signal in and out of the eight point patch bay to direct your signal flow. This is going to create a wide range of possibilities not only within the MicroBrute itself, but when you discover other synths that are compatible for patching signals to and from.

I think the fun is really going to start when you

get your hands on a MicroBrute and start mixing it with other synthesizers in your collection. Just about any sound is going to be possible with this compact little unit in the right setup. So, get in fast if you are keen. I already have mine on order, as I am sure many others do.

BY ROB GEE

For more information on the Arturia range of products contact CMI on (03) 9315 2244 or visit www.cmi.com.au