

Like history, we have ignored the Locrian mode because of its musical liabilities. But now that you have explored the six accepted modes, we'll show you the one history has thrown away. Once you understand this one, you are no longer a dulcimer musician, but a musician who plays dulcimer.

THE LOCRIAN MODE

The original keytone of the Locrian is B. The scale begins on the second fret, and has a scheme of $\frac{1}{2}-1-1-\frac{1}{2}-1-1$. Its tuning looks like this:

 (X+2)
 X
 X

The *** notation means that the bass string cannot be tuned within the established notation system of tuning from the unison value. Instead, tune the bass string an octave below the middle string when fretted on the fourth fret—but remember to tune the middle string to its (X+2) value first.

Now, the odd thing about the Locrian mode is that it has no fifth tone. The bass provides a droning fifth only as an accompaniment. This doesn't help very much when you are looking for a resting place after playing a phrase, or trying to find a strong note from which to launch another phrase.

Since the dominant has been left out, the next strongest possible tone is the sub-dominant, the fourth. However, the relative minoriness of the fourth combined with the octave fifth drones (carried by the other two strings) demands that you move off it quickly and seek a tone of completion. The only tones of completion, or resolve, are the octaves, so here is where you always wind up, which makes you feel as if you haven't gone anywhere at all. Maybe the Locrian should be called the "Sisyphus mode"—you may find yourself playing in circles.