

CLAY GOLDIN · PRODUCER HANDBOOK

Music Theory for Indie Tech House

The complete book — every scale, every stealable example, every workflow from the artists who built the indie tech sound.

Dark edition · October 2026

READ THIS FIRST

How to use this book.

It's long on purpose — it's a reference, not a novel. Three ways in:

PICK YOUR PATH

1. **New here?** Read Foundations, then D · Five Scales. One scale per day: loop its one-bar hook for ten minutes, steal one more example into your track.
2. **Making a track tonight?** Jump to From the Artists — steal one workflow, then grab the scale you need from the Phrygian Reference.
3. **Need a scale fast?** The Phrygian Reference at the back has every letter key — scale strip, hook, bass and stabs on demand.

THE ONE RULE

One scale per day. When the loop gets stale, borrow a single note from the next scale — never leave home without a reason.

Inside.

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The core theory: what scales are, the minor family, and Ableton's scale tools — everything the rest of the book stands on.	
D · Five Scales	19
Phrygian, Phrygian dominant, natural minor, harmonic minor and Dorian in D — ten stealable Ableton piano-roll examples per scale.	
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The same five scales, re-keyed to A# — fifty more piano-roll examples in the sharp key.	
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PART 1

MUSIC THEORY FOR INDIE TECH HOUSE

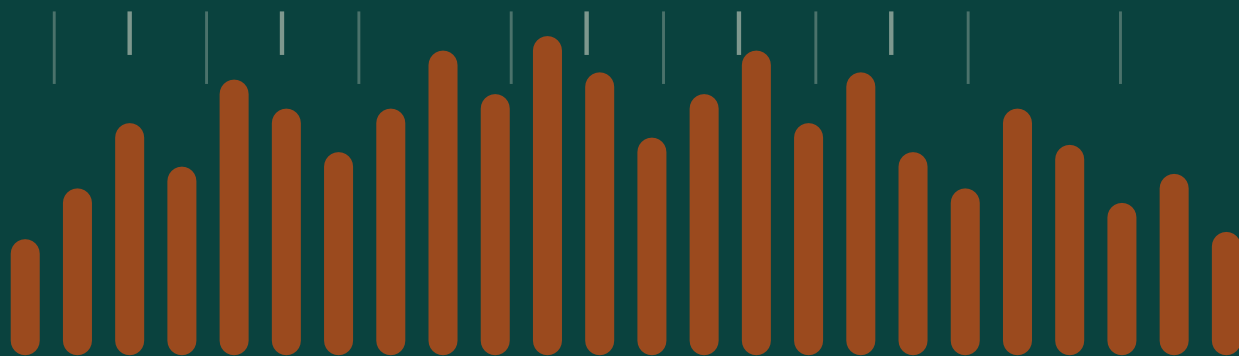
Foundations

The core theory: what scales are, the minor family, and Ableton's scale tools — everything the rest of the book stands on.

THE DUMBED-DOWN EDITION

Music Theory for indie tech Tech House

Notes, scales, chords, basslines, drums, and arrangement —
minimum viable theory for warm, bouncy, groove-first tracks. No
sight-reading. No exams.



What each thing actually does — shown, not explained.

Five ideas do 90% of the work. The rest is taste.

Read front to back once, then use the cheat sheet forever.

MADE FOR CLAY GOLDIN · SEPTEMBER 2026

Five ideas do 90% of the work

A indie-tech-style track is not theory-dense. It is a small handful of decisions made well. Here they are, in the order this guide covers them.

1 Notes

There are only 12 musical notes, and they repeat forever. Learn them once, on a keyboard, and recognize them in the piano roll.

2 Key

Pick one note as home base. The "key" is the set of notes that feel like home around it. In this lane you will almost always pick a minor key.

3 Scales

A scale is a recipe for which notes are "allowed". The minor scale is one spacing shape you can slide to any key. Two tiny variations give the indie tech flavor.

4 Rhythm and drums

The groove. Four-to-the-floor kick, swung hats and percussion, offbeat syncopation. Good rhythm covers a lot of simple harmony.

5 Chords and arrangement

Three-note chords turned into stabs, then everything packed into DJ-friendly sections that build to one payoff.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read pages 7 to 16 once, in order. Each page teaches one idea and ends with what to do with it. Page 17 gives the repeatable starting workflow for every track. Page 18 is the cheat sheet — print it, screenshot it, keep it next to the screen while you write.

You do not need

Reading sheet music. Perfect pitch. Knowing the circle of fifths. Anything with a Roman numeral.

You do need

A DAW with a piano roll. A copy of the keyboard diagrams (they are in here). Twenty minutes and one genre you already love.

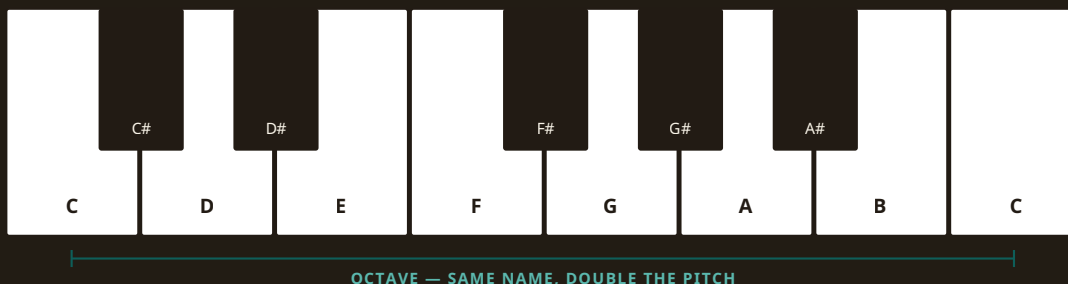
Only 12 notes exist. Learn them once.

A note is a named pitch. There are twelve of them, and they just repeat forever. The keyboard below is one octave — one full set of twelve.

White keys are named **C, D, E, F, G, A, B**, and then they start over. Black keys are the notes **in between** — named after their neighbor plus a # (sharp), which means "one step up". So the black key between C and D is **C#**, and between F and G is **F#**. There is no black key between E/F or B/C — those pairs are already touching.

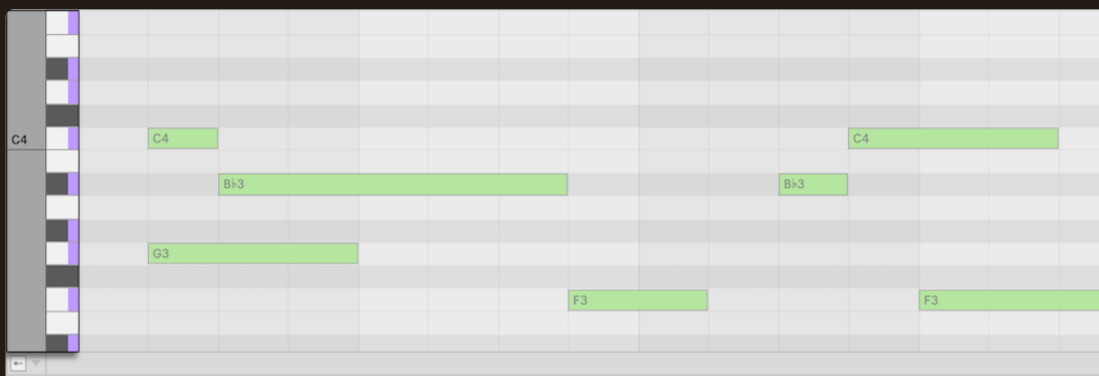
After 12 notes, the names repeat at twice the frequency. That repeat is called an **octave**. In Ableton the piano roll is the same layout turned vertical — the same 12 names repeating up the screen.

One octave: the whole universe, C to C



Count them: 7 white + 5 black = 12. That is every note that exists. Everything else in music is choosing some notes, skipping others, and repeating.

The same keyboard in Ableton — turned vertical



This is Ableton's piano ruler, from the official Live 12 manual. The same 12 names run bottom to top instead of left to right — the strip labeled **C4** marks your octave. Click a key to hear it, double-click the grid to drop a note on that row.

Pick a home note. Then stay in its sandbox.

The "key" answers two questions: which note is home, and which notes are allowed. Everything in your track lives in it — the bass, the chords, the hook.

Major keys sound happy and resolved. **Minor** keys sound tense and moody. This whole lane is minor — pick a home note and use the minor formula from it.

A **minor** is the easiest key in the world: make **A** your home, and the allowed notes are every white key from A. No thinking required. You can slide this same shape to any other home note later.

A minor: the white keys from A



The gray keys are NOT in the key — ignore them for now.

In A minor the allowed notes are A, B, C, D, E, F, G. Play only these and you literally cannot play a wrong note. The numbers are scale degrees — the "position" of each note matters more than its name.

THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

Most indie-tech-style tracks sit in minor keys with meat in the low register — the catalog lives around E minor, F minor, G minor. A minor is the same shape from a different home note. Learn this shape once and you can play any of those.

The one rule of keys: **if the note is not in your scale, it is probably wrong**. One accidental black key is the reason a bass line that "feels off" actually feels off.

THE ONLY VOCAB YOU NEED

A **half step (semitone)** = the smallest step: one key to the next, black or white. C to C# is a half step. E to F is a half step.

A **whole step** = two half steps. C to D is a whole step.

All of the scales in this guide are just recipes counted in half and whole steps.

The minor scale is a shape you can slide.

A scale is how far apart the allowed notes sit from each other. Count in whole (W) and half (H) steps: the natural minor scale is **W - H - W - W - H - W - W**.

The minor shape on the 12-note strip (shown from A)



W = whole step (skips one note) · H = half step (plays the neighbor right next to it)

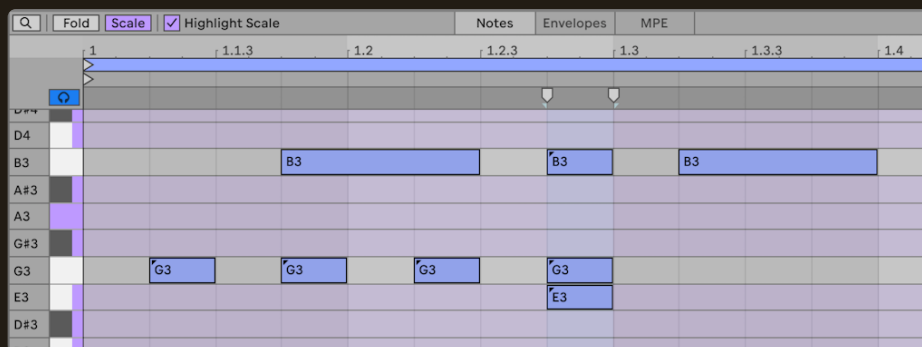
Start on ANY note, count W-H-W-W-H-W-W, and you have that minor key. Want G minor? Start on G: G W A H Bb W C W D H Eb W F W G. Do it once, write the answer down, never do it again.

That is genuinely the whole trick. The names of the notes change from key to key; the **shape of the gaps does not**. Think in shapes, not letters.

See it in Ableton.

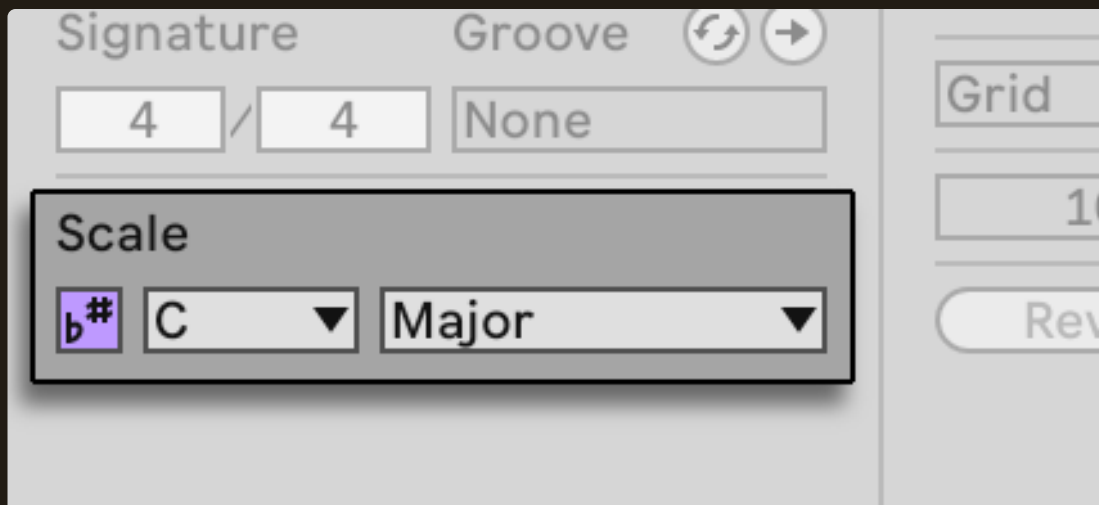
Two switches turn the piano roll into training wheels: highlight your scale, then fold away everything else.

Your scale, lit up inside Ableton's piano roll



Screenshot from Ableton's Live 12 manual: Highlight Scale is on (press K). Every purple row is a note in your scale — draw anywhere outside the purple and you have left the scale. The root note gets the strongest highlight: start and end your phrases on it.

Turn on Scale Mode in Clip View



In Clip View, switch on Scale, then pick your root note and the scale name — Minor, Phrygian, and Harmonic Minor all live in that menu. That one choice drives Highlight Scale, Fold to Scale, and the pitch tools.

THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

Natural minor alone is fine, but the indie tech flavor comes from two one-note tweaks: **flat the 2nd** for the dark Mediterranean hook (Phrygian), or **raise the 7th** for the exotic spice (harmonic minor). Next page shows both.

Two one-note tweaks make the indie tech flavor.

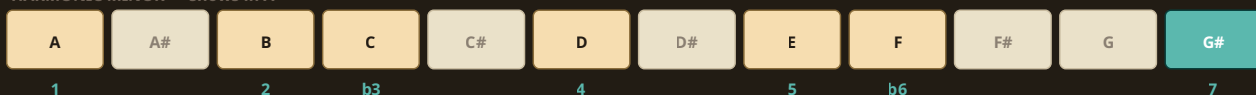
Start from natural minor. Move **one** note a half step and the whole mood changes. These two moves are the Mediterranean/Middle Eastern identity of the sound.

Phrygian (E): flat the 2nd. · Harmonic minor (A): raise the 7th.

PHRYGIAN — shows in E



HARMONIC MINOR — shows in A

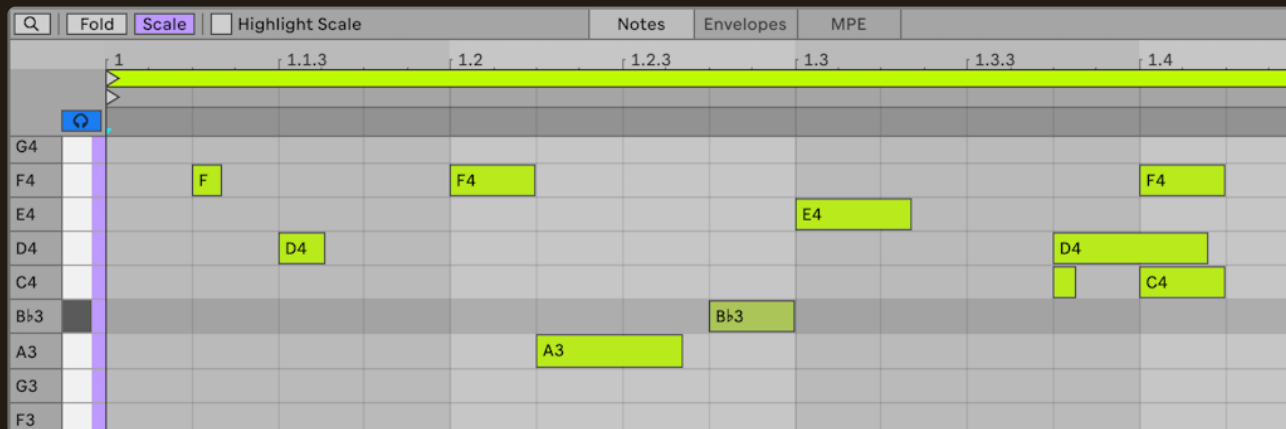


3 half steps — the exotic gap

Phrygian = natural minor, 2nd dropped one half step · Harmonic minor = natural minor, 7th raised one half step

"b" means "lowered from the major version". b2 = a half step above the root. That rubbed tension between the root and the b2 is the hook fingerprint of half the indie tech catalog.

Fold to Scale: hide every note you can't use



Screenshot from Ableton's Live 12 manual: press G with Scale on and the piano roll folds to your scale **only**. Every visible row is a legal note — you can draw freely without missing. This is the move when you don't trust your theory yet: pick your scale, fold, and write.

Reach for Phrygian when...

...you want the dark Mediterranean hook. Works especially well on bass: the rub between root and b2 (one half step apart) is what makes heads turn.

Reach for harmonic minor when...

...you want the exotic, desert-movie melody. That 3-half-step jump between the 6th and 7th is strong spice — use a little, or the whole track tastes like it.

The bounce is where notes land, not which notes.

indie tech basslines are rolling 8th notes on the root with the **accent dodging the kick**. That dodge is the whole genre.

Straight vs. the bounce — the same notes, different landing spots

ON THE BEAT



THE BOUNCE



1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and

Same notes, moved to the "ands" = bounce. The kick handles the downbeat; the bass dancing between the kicks is what makes hips move.

A one-bar rolling bass: root anchors, octave pops

OCTAVE



5TH



ROOT



1 2 3 4

R = root, 5 = fifth, 8 = octave. These three notes are always in your key — there is no wrong move. The octave pops on the "ands" are the bounce.

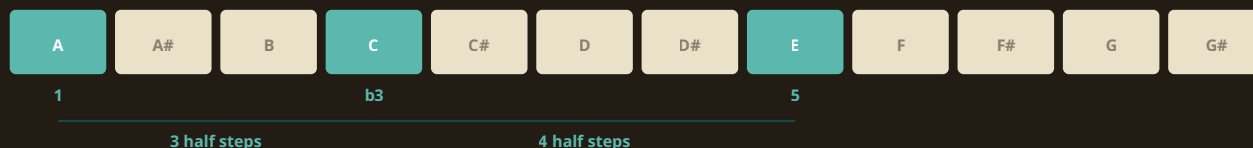
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

The indie tech move: write the bass exactly like the bar above, then **once every few bars**, swap one root pop for the Phrygian **b2** (one half step above your root). That little rub against the home note is the fingerprint bass move of the sound.

A chord is three notes from your key, stacked.

Count from your root: play the 1st, the flat-3rd, and the 5th. That is a minor triad — the chord underneath nearly every indie tech stab.

The minor triad: 1 - b3 - 5 (shown on A)

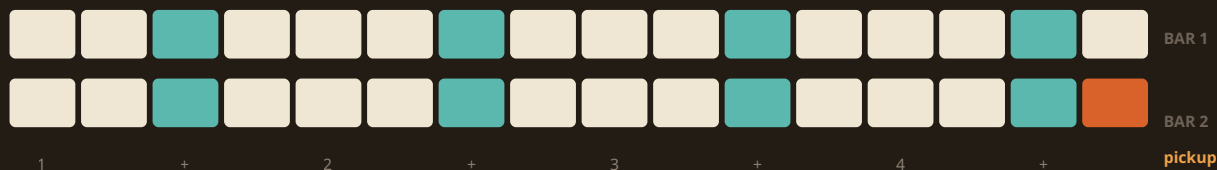


Stack the three notes in ANY order or octave and it is still the chord — just brighter or darker.

Build any minor triad by counting. From G: up 3 half steps (Bb), up 4 more (D). The order and octave are free — shuffle them for different flavors of the same chord.

Now turn the chord into a **stab**: play all three notes as one short, punchy hit — and do not put it on the downbeat. The kick owns the downbeat; the stab lives on the "ands", arguing with the bass.

Two bars of classic stab rhythm (the "ands")



Every stab sits off the kick. Bar 2 ends with a double hit (the "pickup") that shoves you back into bar 1. This two-bar loop is the engine of most house and tech house tracks.

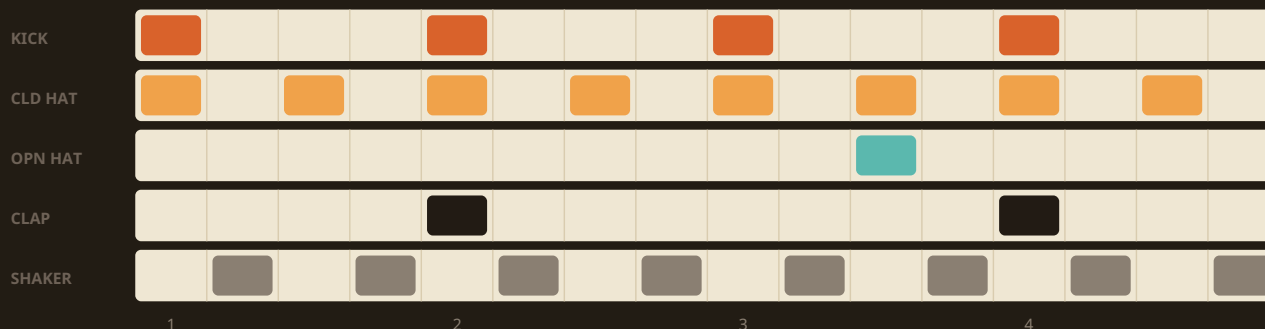
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

indie tech stabs run **short and dry** — the staff is rhythmic, not lush. Instant B-section: copy the whole stab loop, move **every note up one octave**, and use it only in the second half of the drop.

Kick owns the downbeat. Swing loosens everything else.

The rhythm bar below is worth more than a chapter on scales. Every row does one job — and **swing** is what makes the rows breathe together.

One bar: the full house drum grid (16 steps)



Kick: anchors time. **Closed hats:** tick the 8ths. **Open hat:** one breath per bar. **Clap:** slaps on 2 and 4.

Shaker: the glue filling the gaps. Start here and remove hats if the groove gets busy — never add more before this works.

Swing: the same row, loosened



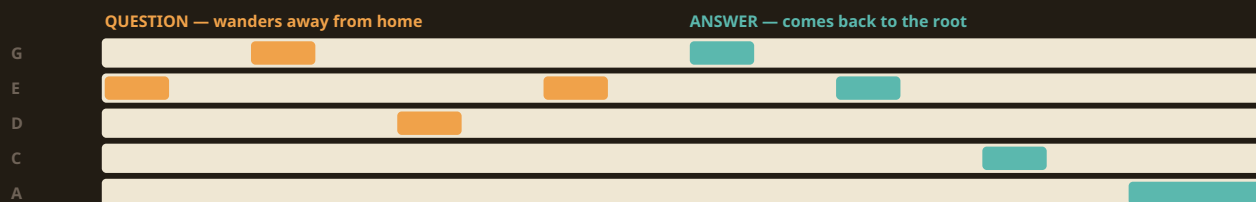
Every other hit nudged **late** (nothing else changed). 52-56% on 16ths is the sweet spot; past 58% it's stumbling-drinks.

Swing hats and shaker together, or they fight each other. Kick and clap stay straight — they are the reference frame your swing wobbles against.

A hook is five notes and two phrases.

Take your minor scale and throw out the 2nd and the 6th. The five remaining notes (**the pentatonic cheat**) all work with each other — every choice is safe. A hook is a question that leaves home, then an answer that lands back on the root.

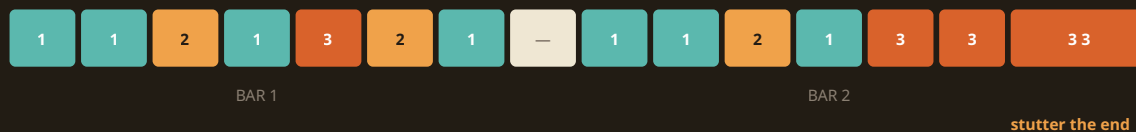
Question and answer: two phrases over two bars



The question jumps between safe notes; the answer walks down and parks on the root. Most memorable hooks in this lane are exactly this shape — wander, then land.

Vocal chops follow the same idea, with the vocal doing the melody work for you: slice a phrase into syllables, tune the slices to your key, place them like stabs on the offbeats, and **stutter the last slice** — repeat it two or three times to slam the loop shut.

A chop map: which syllable plays, step by step



Numbers are syllables from the original phrase. Same few syllables, playful order, shuffled into the offbeat grid. The ending stutter is the vocal equivalent of the stab's pickup.

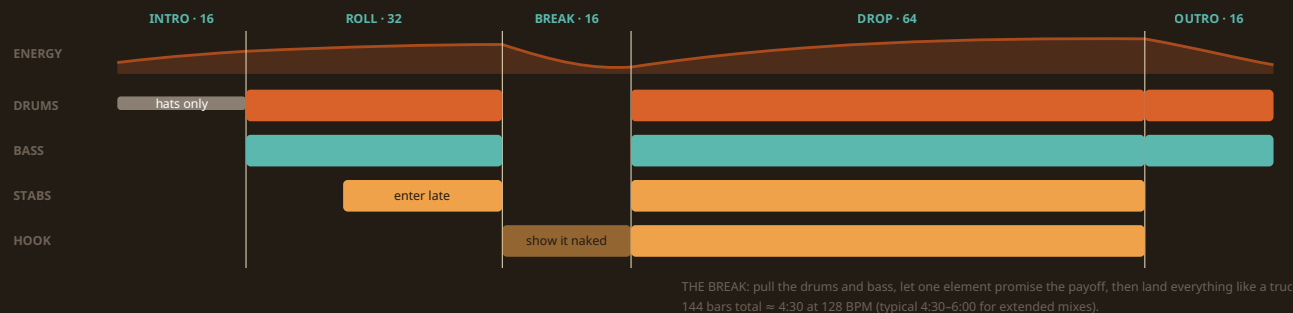
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

indie tech hooks lean **Phrygian**: spring the b2 into the question (one jab of tension) and land the answer cleanly on the root. Tension first, safe landing later — that push/pull is the lane.

Stack layers in sections. Strip them off at the break.

A DJ track is a movie in five scenes: setup, groove, tension, payoff, exit. Scenes land in 16-bar chunks because mixes are built on 16s and 32s — and because your listener predicts the drop and you must make them wait.

Anatomy of a track: layers enter, the break strips them off



Only one thing changes at a time. A layer enters, the groove holds, then the next one. The intro and outro exist so a DJ can mix your track — never skip them.

DJ-FRIENDLY RULES

Bars come in **16s**. Intros are **mixing room**, not a second song. The break is **the window DJs mix in** — keep it simple and don't surprise anyone there.

The five-minute workflow. Every track.

Order matters: build the groove first, the melodies last. Repeatable beats inspired for track number one hundred.

1 Pick a key.

A minor to start. Write the root name somewhere you can see it. Done is better than clever.

2 Sketch the drums.

One bar from the grid on page 14. Kick, hats, clap, shaker — do not fiddle, this bar is a placeholder for the whole track.

3 Shape the bass.

Root on the 8ths, octave pops on the "ands", one slip onto the b2 every few bars if you are feeling indie tech.

4 Drop the stabs.

One minor triad on the "ands", a two-bar loop with a pickup. Steal the rhythm from page 12 and do not touch it again until the groove breathes.

5 Write the hook.

Five pentatonic notes, question then answer over two bars. Synth line or vocal chops — same rules either way.

6 Steal the arrangement.

Sections in 16s. Carve the break by deleting drums and bass for 16 bars. Everything before is the setup; the drop is the argument.

When it sounds wrong — the anti-fail list

- ☐ **It clashes:** scan the piano roll for a note not in your key. One black key is usually the whole bug.
- ☐ **It drags:** it is the rhythm, not the notes. Push hits onto the "ands" or add swing to hats and shaker.
- ☐ **The hook won't sit:** it is probably playing on beats where the kick lives. Shift its first hit to an "and".
- ☐ **The bass is muddy:** too many different low notes. Anchor the root and move the octave pops higher.
- ☐ **Before bounce:** is the intro DJ-mixable, is the break exactly 16, does the drop land after it?

THE WORKFLOW RULE

Render the loop and listen tomorrow, then fix exactly one thing and move on. A finished track you learned from beats five unfinished theory exercises every time.

Steal these shapes. Finish tracks.

The whole guide on one page. Keep it next to the keyboard until the key of A minor is muscle memory.

The three shapes

NATURAL MINOR (A) — shape: W-H-W-W-H-W-W · slides to any root

A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#
---	----	---	---	----	---	----	---	---	----	---	----

PHRYGIAN (E) — natural minor with the 2nd dropped a half step (the indie tech move)

E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#
---	---	----	---	----	---	----	---	---	----	---	----

HARMONIC MINOR (A) — natural minor with the 7th raised a half step (the spice)

A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#
---	----	---	---	----	---	----	---	---	----	---	----

Triad emergency line: minor chord = 1 + b3 + 5 (count up 3, then 4 half steps). Example from A: **A - C - E**.

The rhythm in one bar (16 steps)

KICK	■			■				■				■			
CH HAT	■		■		■		■		■		■		■		■
OP HAT									■						
CLAP				■								■			
SHKR	■		■		■		■		■		■		■		■

Stabs, hooks, chops: nothing on the downbeat — live on the "ands". Swing hats + shaker together at 52-56%.

THE SIX GOLDEN RULES

1. **Stay in the key.** Wrong notes are almost always outside-scale notes.
2. **Root, 5th, octave:** the three notes that are always safe on the bass.
3. **Offbeats = bounce, swing = breath.** Rhythm covers simple harmony.
4. **Question, then answer.** Every hook leaves home and lands back on the root.
5. **Strip the break to one element.** The drop argues louder when the break whispers.
6. **Finish the arrangement before you polish.** A structured track beats a perfect loop.

PART 2

MUSIC THEORY FOR INDIE TECH HOUSE

D • Five Scales

Phrygian, Phrygian dominant, natural minor, harmonic minor and Dorian in D — ten stealable Ableton piano-roll examples per scale.

Five scales, one key. Steal them all.

Phrygian got you the dark hook. These are the other four moves the indie tech lane runs on — each with ten stealable piano-roll examples drawn exactly as they look in Ableton's MIDI Note Editor, folded to the scale. Pick a scale, copy a shape, change the rhythm, it's yours.

HOW TO USE THIS

One scale per day. Loop its one-bar hook for ten minutes, then steal one more example from the same scale into your track. When the loop gets stale, borrow a single note from the next scale — page 51 shows you how.

THE FIVE SCALES

1. **D Phrygian** — The indie tech move
2. **D Phrygian dominant** — The Desert Scale
3. **D natural minor** — The Plain Groove
4. **D harmonic minor** — The Spice
5. **D Dorian** — The Lift

D Phrygian

Phrygian is natural minor with the 2nd dropped a half step. That 1–b2 rub is the dark Mediterranean fingerprint all over the indie tech catalog — the hook sound.

D Phrygian: your seven allowed notes

D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	Bb	B	C	C#
1	b2		b3		4		5	b6		b7	

In D Phrygian the allowed notes are D, Eb, F, G, A, Bb, C. Set Ableton: **root D**, **scale Phrygian**, press G to fold — every row you see is legal.

HEAR IT IN THE WILD

The catalog sound: half the indie tech hooks you hum are the 1–b2–1 rub.

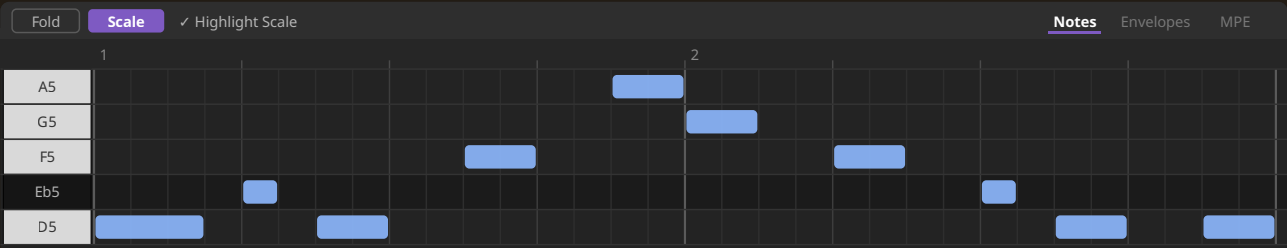
Steal these.

Example 1 · One-bar hook — the fingerprint



The move: D–Eb–D in the first half — that half-step rub is this scale's fingerprint. Climbs to F, lands on A. Loop it, nudge the rhythm, never leave the folded rows.

Example 2 · Two-bar hook — question and answer



Bar 1 asks (ends on A), **bar 2 answers** (ends home on D). Two phrases and the hook feels finished — copy the shape, change the rhythm, it is yours.

Steal these.

Example 3 · Rolling bass — the bounce

Fold

Scale

✓ Highlight Scale

Notes

Envelopes

MPE

1

D4

Eb3

D3

Root 8ths with octave pops on the ands of 2 and 3. The last 8th swaps to Eb — one spice note per bar keeps the roll from going flat. The kick owns the downbeat; this dances between the kicks.

Example 4 · Offbeat bass — nothing on the kick

Fold

Scale

✓ Highlight Scale

Notes

Envelopes

MPE

1

A3

D3

Bass on the ands only, root and A alternating. Short notes, maximum bounce — this is the pattern that makes the kick hit harder.

Steal these.

Example 5 · Triad stabs — chop it on the ands

Fold **Scale** ✓ Highlight Scale Notes Envelopes MPE

1 2

A5
F5
D5
A4
F4
D4

The 1–b3–5 stack (D – F – A) chopped onto the ands. Bar 2 flips to the higher voicing so it breathes. Short, punchy, gone before the kick lands.

Example 6 · Chord progression — i – VI – III – VII

Fold **Scale** ✓ Highlight Scale Notes Envelopes MPE

1 2

C5
A4
G4
F4
Eb4
D4
C4
Bb3

Four chords, eight steps each: D minor (i) → Bb (VI) → F (III) → C (VII). The progression under half the indie tech catalog — loop it, stab it, or pad it.

Steal these.

Example 7 · Signature lick — the b2 rub

Fold **Scale** ✓ Highlight Scale Notes Envelopes MPE

1

D–Eb–D, then the **5–Bb–5** sigh. The two moves that say "Phrygian" before a single other note plays.

Example 8 · Call and response — the lead talks to itself

Fold **Scale** ✓ Highlight Scale Notes Envelopes MPE

1 2

Question (bar 1, ends on A) and **answer** (bar 2, ends on D). End the first phrase away from home and the second phrase home — that is the whole trick.

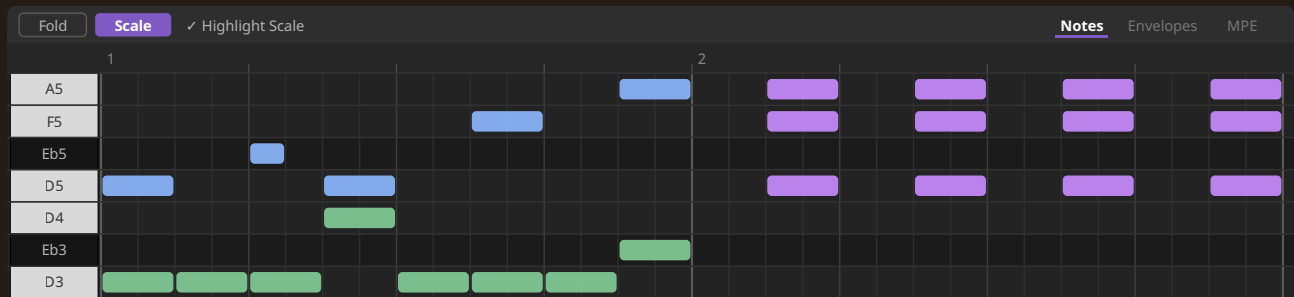
Steal these.

Example 9 · Pad swells — the break



Two long chords: D minor, then Bb major. Pull the drums out, let these ring, bring the kick back on the D. That is a break.

Example 10 · Full groove — all three layers at once



Green = bass, purple = stabs, blue = hook. Three patterns, one scale, zero wrong notes — this is what a finished 2-bar loop looks like on the piano roll.

D Phrygian dominant

Phrygian with a major 3rd. The b2 *plus* the major-3rd rub is the desert-movie sound — exotic, instantly recognizable, one notch spicier than plain Phrygian.

D Phrygian dominant: your seven allowed notes

D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	Bb	B	C	C#
1	b2			3	4		5	b6		b7	

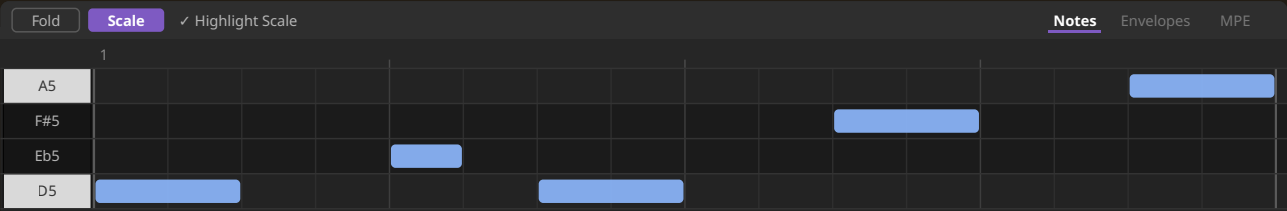
In D Phrygian dominant the allowed notes are D, Eb, F#, G, A, Bb, C. Ableton has no one-click fold for this one — draw from the strip below, the highlighted rows are your scale.

HEAR IT IN THE WILD

Hava Nagila is the most famous b2 on earth — and it is this scale. So is Misirlou (the Pulp Fiction one).

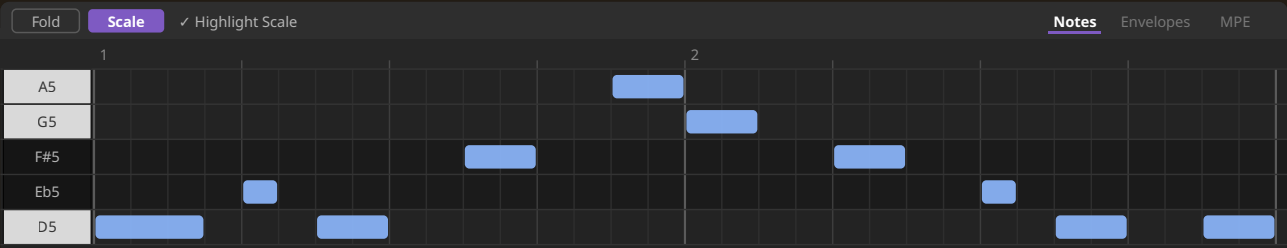
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Steal these.

Example 3 · Rolling bass — the bounce

Fold

Scale

✓ Highlight Scale

Notes

Envelopes

MPE

1

D4

Eb3

D3

Root 8ths with octave pops on the ands of 2 and 3. The last 8th swaps to Eb — one spice note per bar keeps the roll from going flat. The kick owns the downbeat; this dances between the kicks.

Example 4 · Offbeat bass — nothing on the kick

Fold

Scale

✓ Highlight Scale

Notes

Envelopes

MPE

1

A3

D3

Bass on the ands only, root and A alternating. Short notes, maximum bounce — this is the pattern that makes the kick hit harder.

Steal these.

Example 5 · Triad stabs — chop it on the ands

Fold **Scale** ✓ Highlight Scale Notes Envelopes MPE

1 2

A5
F#5
D5
A4
F#4
D4

The 1–3–5 stack (D – F# – A) chopped onto the ands. Bar 2 flips to the higher voicing so it breathes. Short, punchy, gone before the kick lands.

Example 6 · Chord progression — i – VI – III – VII

Fold **Scale** ✓ Highlight Scale Notes Envelopes MPE

1 2

C5
A4
G4
F#4
Eb4
D4
C4
Bb3

Four chords, eight steps each: D minor (i) → Bb (VI) → F# (III) → C (VII). The progression under half the indie tech catalog — loop it, stab it, or pad it.

Steal these.

Example 7 · Signature lick — the desert rub

Fold **Scale** ✓ Highlight Scale Notes Envelopes MPE

1

F#5
Eb5
D5

D–Eb–F#. The flat 2nd grinding against the major 3rd is the whole desert-movie sound in three notes.

Example 8 · Call and response — the lead talks to itself

Fold **Scale** ✓ Highlight Scale Notes Envelopes MPE

1 2

A5
G5
F#5
Eb5
D5

Question (bar 1, ends on A) and **answer** (bar 2, ends on D). End the first phrase away from home and the second phrase home — that is the whole trick.

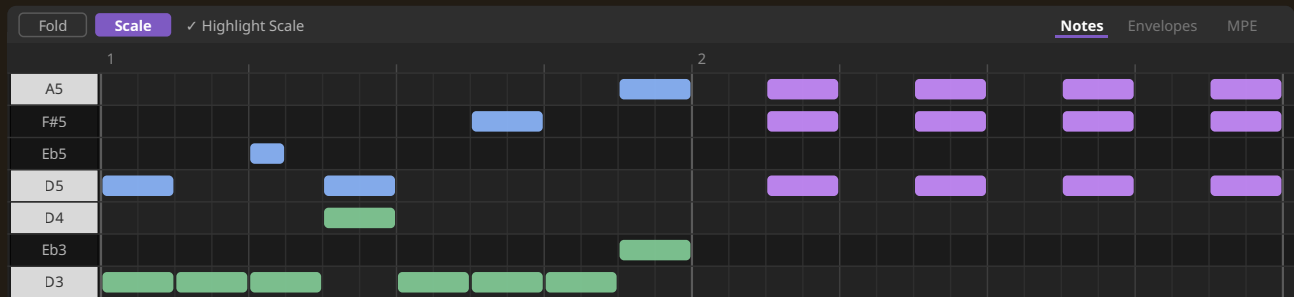
Steal these.

Example 9 · Pad swells — the break



Two long chords: D minor, then Bb major. Pull the drums out, let these ring, bring the kick back on the D. That is a break.

Example 10 · Full groove — all three layers at once



Green = bass, purple = stabs, blue = hook. Three patterns, one scale, zero wrong notes — this is what a finished 2-bar loop looks like on the piano roll.

D natural minor

The canvas the other four paint on. No rub, no spice — write the verse here, then borrow one note from a neighbor scale when the loop needs to bite.

D natural minor: your seven allowed notes

D	E♭	E	F	F♯	G	G♯	A	B♭	B	C	C♯
1		2	b3		4		5	b6		b7	

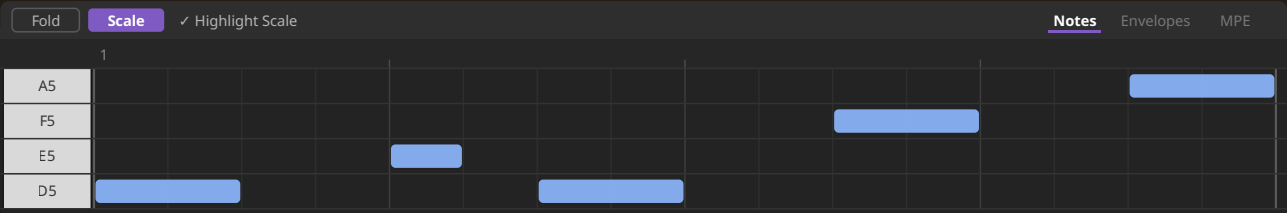
In D natural minor the allowed notes are D, E, F, G, A, B♭, C. Ableton has no one-click fold for this one — draw from the strip below, the highlighted rows are your scale.

HEAR IT IN THE WILD

Every minor-key tech house loop you have ever made started life here.

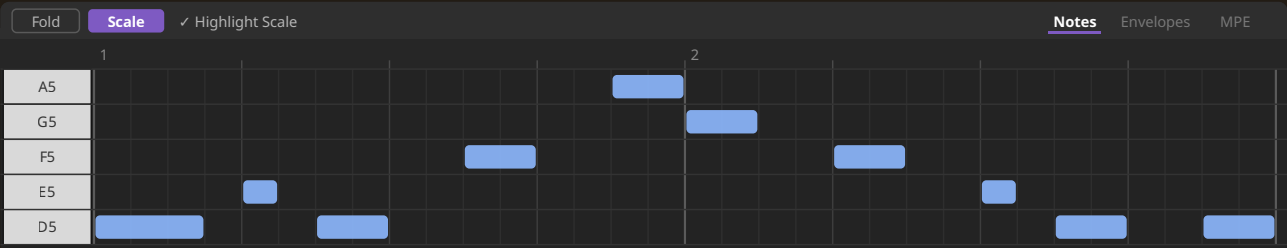
Steal these.

Example 1 · One-bar hook — the fingerprint



The move: D–E–D in the first half — that whole-step 1–2–1 move is this scale's fingerprint. Climbs to F, lands on A. Loop it, nudge the rhythm, never leave the folded rows.

Example 2 · Two-bar hook — question and answer



Bar 1 asks (ends on A), **bar 2 answers** (ends home on D). Two phrases and the hook feels finished — copy the shape, change the rhythm, it is yours.

Steal these.

Example 3 · Rolling bass — the bounce

Fold

Scale

✓ Highlight Scale

Notes

Envelopes

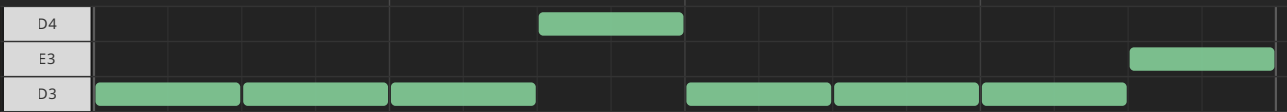
MPE

1

D4

E3

D3



Root 8ths with octave pops on the ands of 2 and 3. The last 8th swaps to E — one spice note per bar keeps the roll from going flat. The kick owns the downbeat; this dances between the kicks.

Example 4 · Offbeat bass — nothing on the kick

Fold

Scale

✓ Highlight Scale

Notes

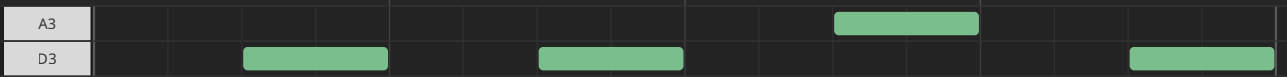
Envelopes

MPE

1

A3

D3



Bass on the ands only, root and A alternating. Short notes, maximum bounce — this is the pattern that makes the kick hit harder.

Steal these.

Example 5 · Triad stabs — chop it on the ands

Fold **Scale** ✓ Highlight Scale Notes Envelopes MPE

1 2

A5
F5
D5
A4
F4
D4

The 1-b3-5 stack (D – F – A) chopped onto the ands. Bar 2 flips to the higher voicing so it breathes. Short, punchy, gone before the kick lands.

Example 6 · Chord progression — i – VI – III – VII

Fold **Scale** ✓ Highlight Scale Notes Envelopes MPE

1 2

C5
A4
G4
F4
E4
D4
C4
Bb3

Four chords, eight steps each: D minor (i) → Bb (VI) → F (III) → C (VII). The progression under half the indie tech catalog — loop it, stab it, or pad it.

Steal these.

Example 7 · Signature lick — the plain run

Fold **Scale** ✓ Highlight Scale Notes Envelopes MPE

1

C6

A5

G5

F5

D5

D-F-G-A-C. The minor pentatonic run — the plainest strong line in the key. Dress it up by borrowing later.

Example 8 · Call and response — the lead talks to itself

Fold **Scale** ✓ Highlight Scale Notes Envelopes MPE

1

A5

G5

F5

E5

D5

2

Question (bar 1, ends on A) and **answer** (bar 2, ends on D). End the first phrase away from home and the second phrase home — that is the whole trick.

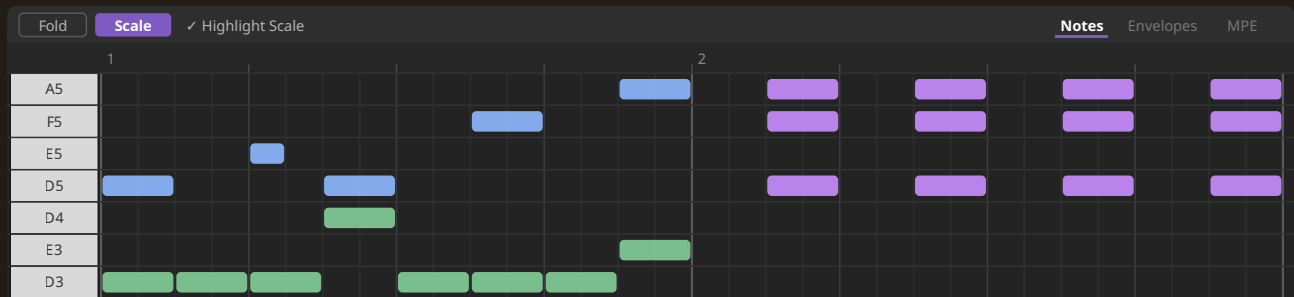
Steal these.

Example 9 · Pad swells — the break



Two long chords: D minor, then Bb major. Pull the drums out, let these ring, bring the kick back on the D. That is a break.

Example 10 · Full groove — all three layers at once



Green = bass, purple = stabs, blue = hook. Three patterns, one scale, zero wrong notes — this is what a finished 2-bar loop looks like on the piano roll.

D harmonic minor

Natural minor with the 7th raised a half step. The b6–7 gap is three half steps — that exotic lift is the turnaround move, not the verse move.

D harmonic minor: your seven allowed notes

D	E $\flat$	E	F	F $\sharp$	G	G $\sharp$	A	B $\flat$	B	C	C $\sharp$
1		2	b3		4		5	b6			7

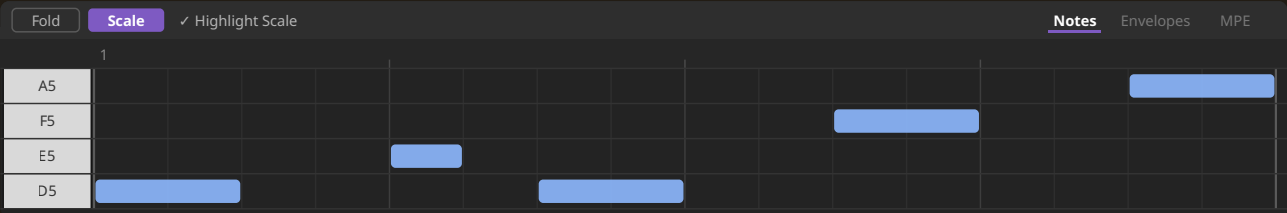
In D harmonic minor the allowed notes are D, E, F, G, A, B $\flat$, C $\sharp$. Ableton has no one-click fold for this one — draw from the strip below, the highlighted rows are your scale.

HEAR IT IN THE WILD

Desert-movie strings and the classic raised-7th turnaround at the end of a phrase.

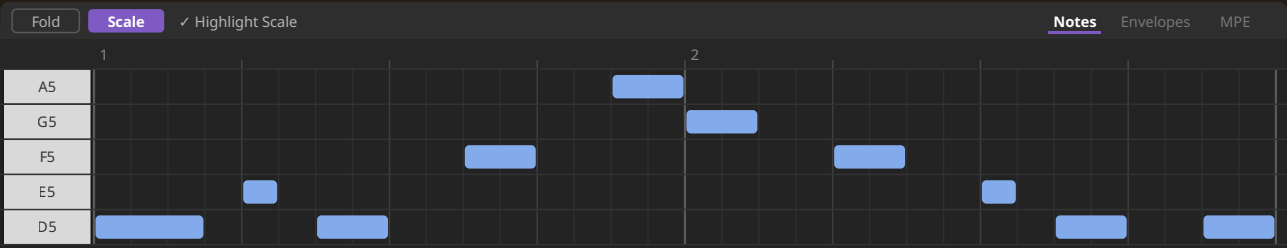
Steal these.

Example 1 · One-bar hook — the fingerprint



The move: D–E–D in the first half — that whole-step 1–2–1 move is this scale's fingerprint. Climbs to F, lands on A. Loop it, nudge the rhythm, never leave the folded rows.

Example 2 · Two-bar hook — question and answer

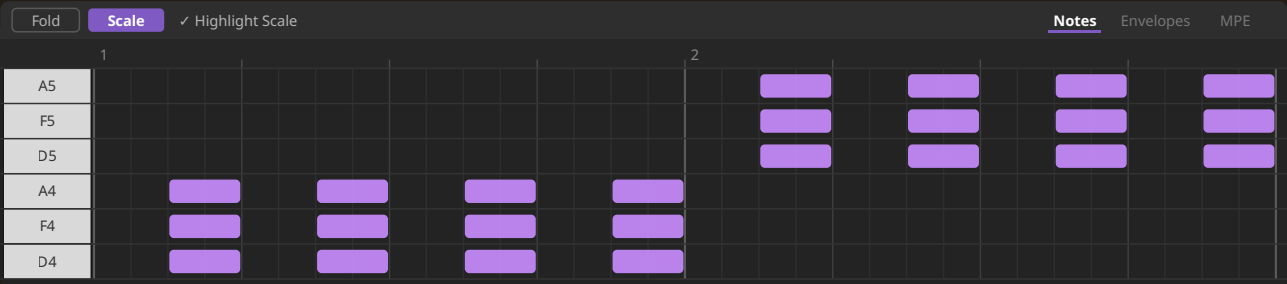


Bar 1 asks (ends on A), **bar 2 answers** (ends home on D). Two phrases and the hook feels finished — copy the shape, change the rhythm, it is yours.

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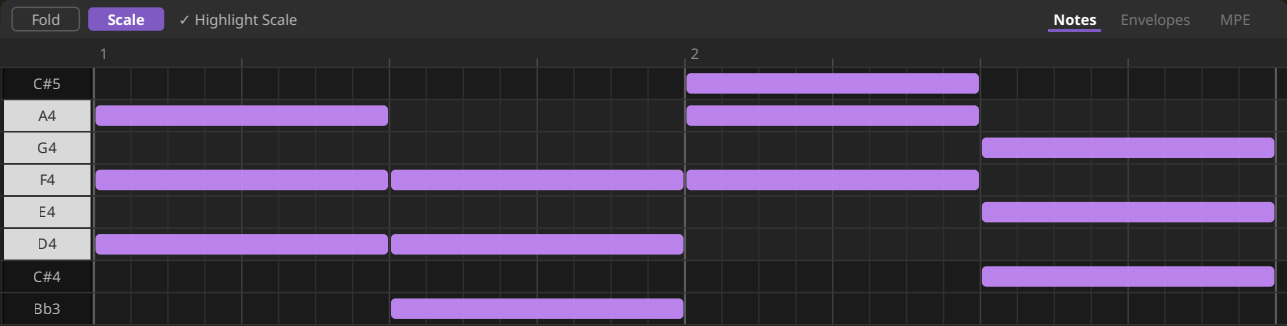
Steal these.

Example 5 · Triad stabs — chop it on the ands



The 1-b3-5 stack (D – F – A) chopped onto the ands. Bar 2 flips to the higher voicing so it breathes. Short, punchy, gone before the kick lands.

Example 6 · Chord progression — i – VI – III – VII



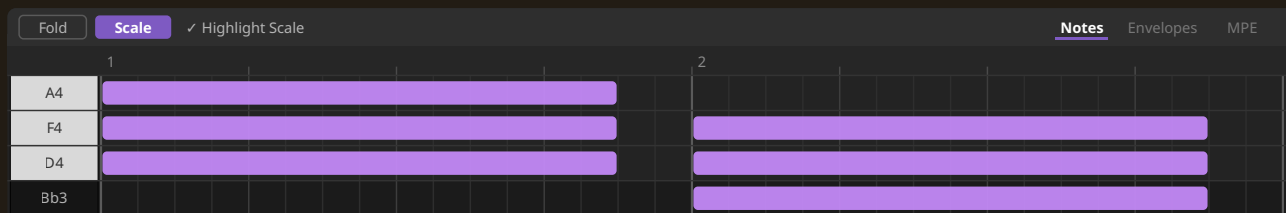
Four chords, eight steps each: D minor (i) → Bb (VI) → F (III) → C# (VII). The progression under half the indie tech catalog — loop it, stab it, or pad it.

The screenshot shows the 'Scale' section of the software interface. The 'Scale' button is highlighted in purple, and the 'Notes' tab is selected. The piano roll displays three voices: D6, C#6, and Bb5. Blue horizontal bars represent notes for each voice across a timeline.

43

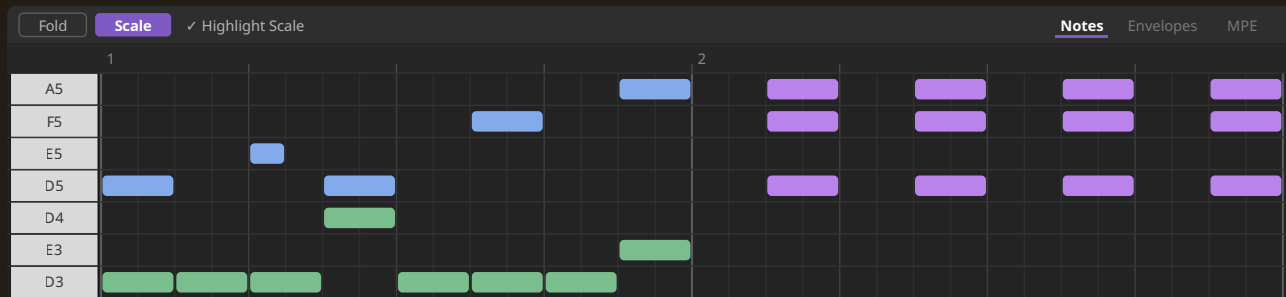
Steal these.

Example 9 · Pad swells — the break



Two long chords: D minor, then Bb major. Pull the drums out, let these ring, bring the kick back on the D. That is a break.

Example 10 · Full groove — all three layers at once



Green = bass, purple = stabs, blue = hook. Three patterns, one scale, zero wrong notes — this is what a finished 2-bar loop looks like on the piano roll.

D Dorian

Minor with a natural 6th. Warmer and funkier than Phrygian — the bridge scale when the loop gets too dark, and the bassline scale when you want bounce.

D Dorian: your seven allowed notes

D	E $\flat$	E	F	F $\sharp$	G	G $\sharp$	A	B $\flat$	B	C	C $\sharp$
1		2	b3		4		5		6	b7	

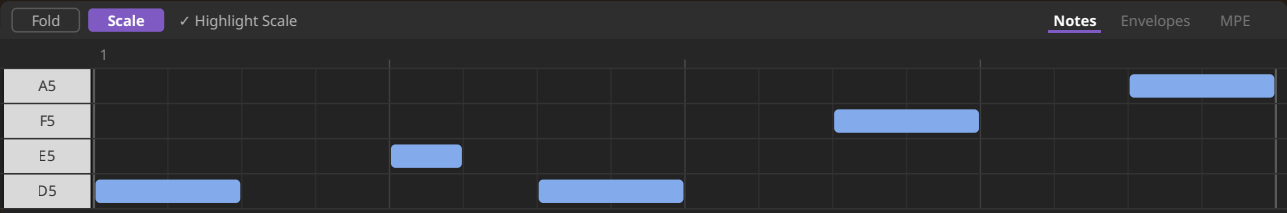
In D Dorian the allowed notes are D, E, F, G, A, B, C. Ableton has no one-click fold for this one — draw from the strip below, the highlighted rows are your scale.

HEAR IT IN THE WILD

The funkier minor: use it when Phrygian starts sounding like a dungeon.

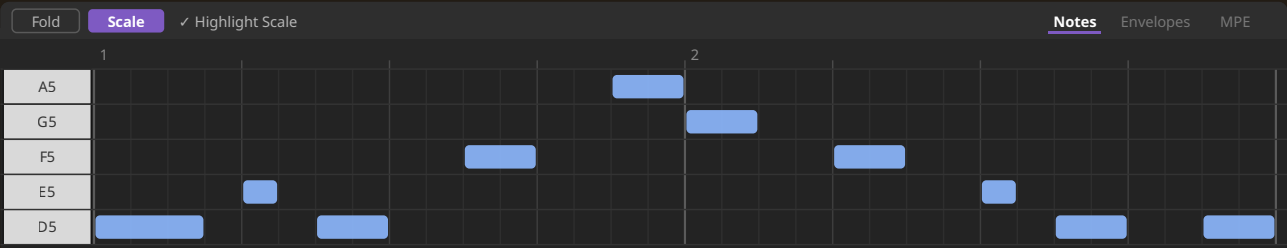
Steal these.

Example 1 · One-bar hook — the fingerprint



The move: D–E–D in the first half — that whole-step 1–2–1 move is this scale's fingerprint. Climbs to F, lands on A. Loop it, nudge the rhythm, never leave the folded rows.

Example 2 · Two-bar hook — question and answer



Bar 1 asks (ends on A), **bar 2 answers** (ends home on D). Two phrases and the hook feels finished — copy the shape, change the rhythm, it is yours.

Steal these.

Example 3 · Rolling bass — the bounce

Fold

Scale

✓ Highlight Scale

Notes

Envelopes

MPE

1

D4

E3

D3

Root 8ths with octave pops on the ands of 2 and 3. The last 8th swaps to E — one spice note per bar keeps the roll from going flat. The kick owns the downbeat; this dances between the kicks.

Example 4 · Offbeat bass — nothing on the kick

Fold

Scale

✓ Highlight Scale

Notes

Envelopes

MPE

1

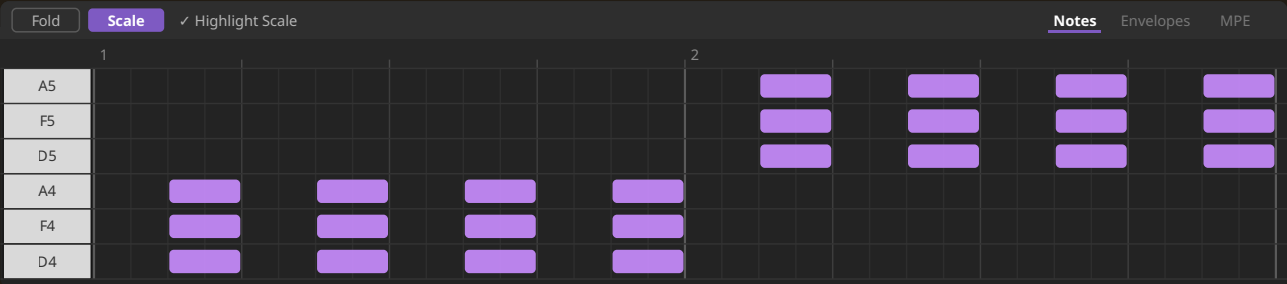
A3

D3

Bass on the ands only, root and A alternating. Short notes, maximum bounce — this is the pattern that makes the kick hit harder.

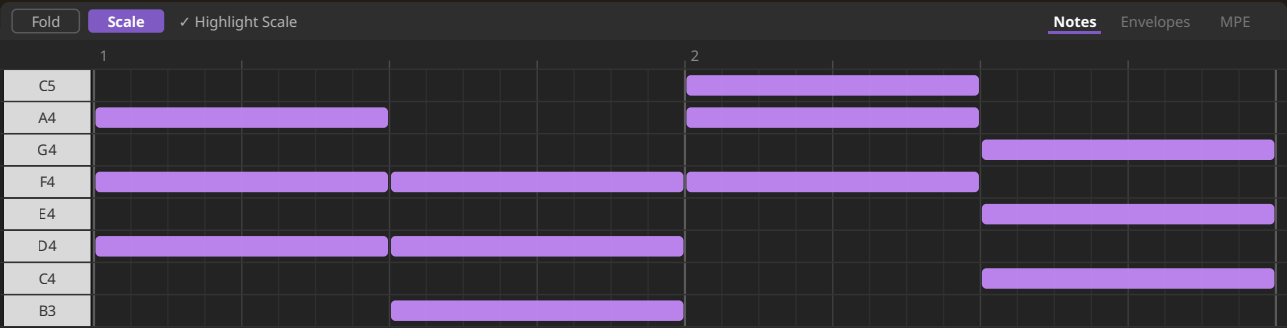
Steal these.

Example 5 · Triad stabs — chop it on the ands



The 1–b3–5 stack (D – F – A) chopped onto the ands. Bar 2 flips to the higher voicing so it breathes. Short, punchy, gone before the kick lands.

Example 6 · Chord progression — i – VI – III – VII



Four chords, eight steps each: D minor (i) → B (VI) → F (III) → C (VII). The progression under half the indie tech catalog — loop it, stab it, or pad it.

Steal these.

Example 7 · Signature lick — the natural-6th lift

Fold **Scale** ✓ Highlight Scale Notes Envelopes MPE

1

B5
A5
G5
D5

D–G–A–B–A. The natural 6th (B) is the warm lift that separates Dorian from every darker minor.

Example 8 · Call and response — the lead talks to itself

Fold **Scale** ✓ Highlight Scale Notes Envelopes MPE

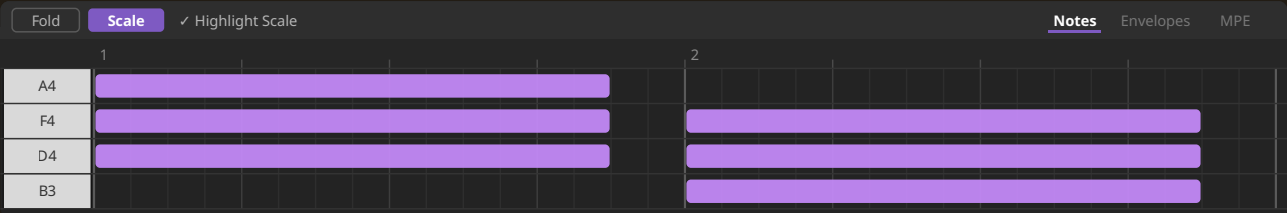
1 2

A5
G5
F5
E5
D5

Question (bar 1, ends on A) and **answer** (bar 2, ends on D). End the first phrase away from home and the second phrase home — that is the whole trick.

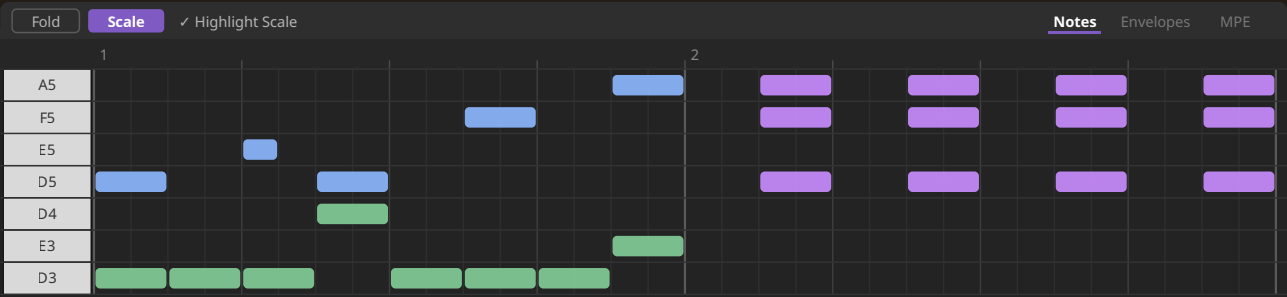
Steal these.

Example 9 · Pad swells — the break



Two long chords: D minor, then B diminished. Pull the drums out, let these ring, bring the kick back on the D. That is a break.

Example 10 · Full groove — all three layers at once



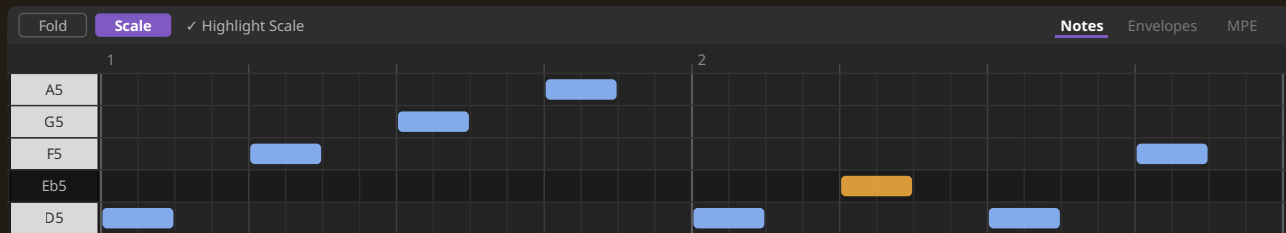
Green = bass, purple = stabs, blue = hook. Three patterns, one scale, zero wrong notes — this is what a finished 2-bar loop looks like on the piano roll.

PUT THEM TOGETHER

Intertwine: live in one scale, shoplift from the next.

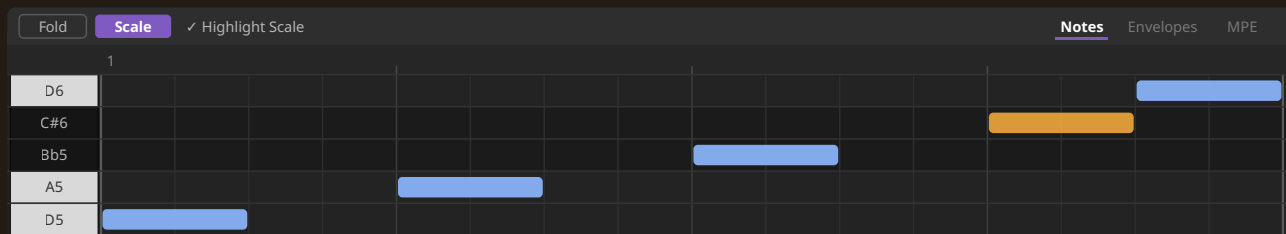
Every scale here is one note away from its neighbor. Write the verse in the plain one, borrow a single note for the hook — the loop keeps evolving and you never leave home.

Borrow the b2 — verse in D natural minor, hook in D Phrygian



Same rhythm, one note nudged down a half step — the orange note is the borrow. Verse breathes in natural minor, the hook bites in Phrygian.

The raised-7th turnaround — flash of D harmonic minor



Borrow the raised 7th (C#) for exactly one heartbeat at the turnaround — harmonic minor flashes, then home. That three-half-step b6–7 gap is the exotic lift.

Fifty examples. Pick five.

You do not need all fifty. Steal one hook, one bass, one stab pattern, one lick, and one borrow move — that is a track's whole DNA. The other keys (A, B, C, E, F, G) get the same treatment next: same fifty shapes, slid to the new home note.

FIVE GOLDEN RULES FOR THESE SCALES

1. Phrygian is the hook scale — the 1–b2 rub does the talking.
2. Phrygian dominant is the desert scale — save it for the breakdown.
3. Natural minor is the verse scale — plain on purpose.
4. Harmonic minor is the turnaround scale — one heartbeat of C#, then home.
5. Dorian is the bridge scale — the natural 6th lifts the loop out of the dark.

PART 3

MUSIC THEORY FOR INDIE TECH HOUSE

A# · Five Scales

The same five scales, re-keyed to A# — fifty more piano-roll examples in the sharp key.

Five scales, one key. Steal them all.

Phrygian got you the dark hook. These are the other four moves the indie tech lane runs on — each with ten stealable piano-roll examples drawn exactly as they look in Ableton's MIDI Note Editor, folded to the scale. Pick a scale, copy a shape, change the rhythm, it's yours.

HOW TO USE THIS

One scale per day. Loop its one-bar hook for ten minutes, then steal one more example from the same scale into your track. When the loop gets stale, borrow a single note from the next scale — page 85 shows you how.

THE FIVE SCALES

1. **A# Phrygian** — The indie tech move
2. **A# Phrygian dominant** — The Desert Scale
3. **A# natural minor** — The Plain Groove
4. **A# harmonic minor** — The Spice
5. **A# Dorian** — The Lift

A# Phrygian

Phrygian is natural minor with the 2nd dropped a half step. That 1–b2 rub is the dark Mediterranean fingerprint all over the indie tech catalog — the hook sound.

A# Phrygian: your seven allowed notes

A#	B	B#	C#	C##	D#	E	E#	F#	F##	G#	G##
1	b2		b3		4		5	b6		b7	

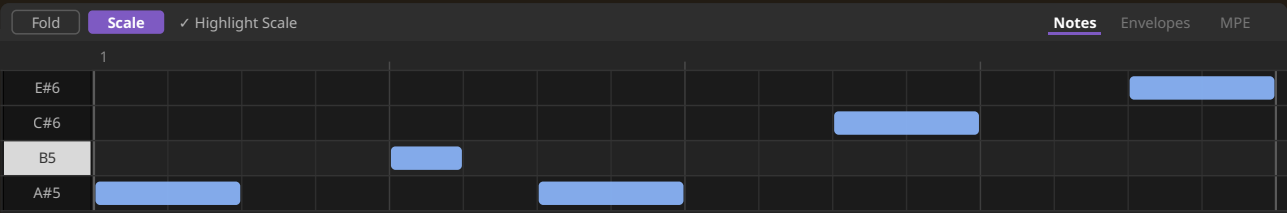
In A# Phrygian the allowed notes are A#, B, C#, D#, E#, F#, G#. Set Ableton: **root A#, scale Phrygian**, press G to fold — every row you see is legal.

HEAR IT IN THE WILD

The catalog sound: half the indie tech hooks you hum are the 1–b2–1 rub.

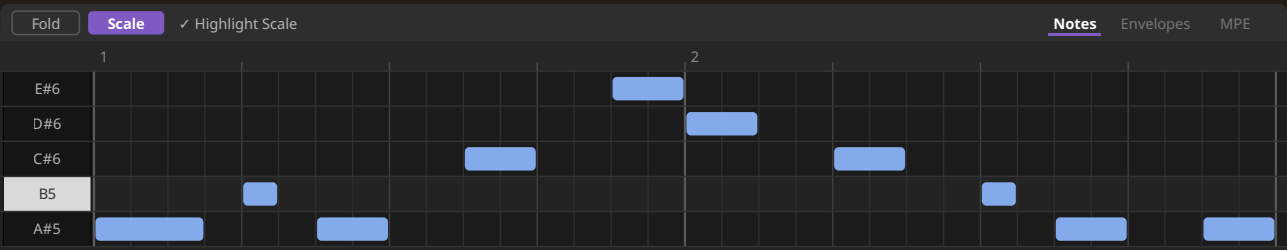
Steal these.

Example 1 · One-bar hook — the fingerprint



The move: A#–B–A# in the first half — that half-step rub is this scale's fingerprint. Climbs to C#, lands on E#. Loop it, nudge the rhythm, never leave the folded rows.

Example 2 · Two-bar hook — question and answer



Bar 1 asks (ends on E#), **bar 2 answers** (ends home on A#). Two phrases and the hook feels finished — copy the shape, change the rhythm, it is yours.

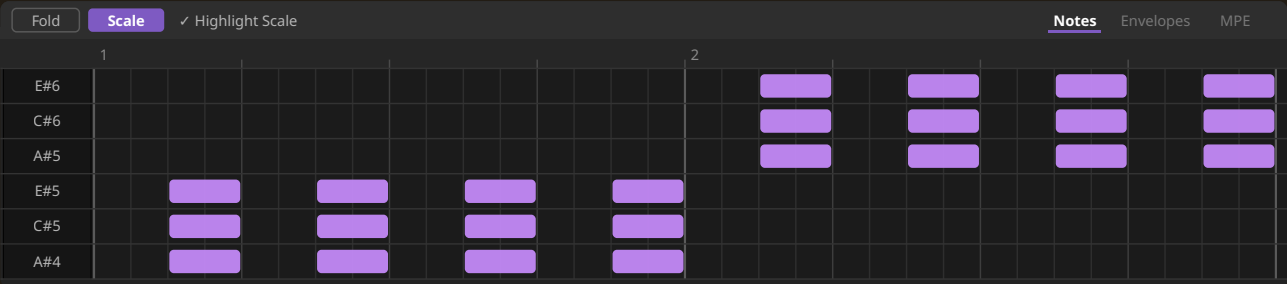
The screenshot shows the Scale tool interface. At the top, there is a 'Scale' button (highlighted in purple), a checked 'Highlight Scale' checkbox, and three tabs: 'Notes' (active), 'Envelopes', and 'MPE'. Below the tabs is a piano roll with three staves labeled A#4, B3, and A#3. The A#4 staff has a single green note. The B3 staff has a single green note. The A#3 staff has three green notes. The piano roll is set to a 12-tone scale, with the notes corresponding to the scale degrees 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12.

The screenshot shows the 'Scale' section of the software interface. At the top, there are tabs for 'Fold', 'Scale' (which is selected), and 'Notes'. Below the tabs, there is a checkbox labeled 'Highlight Scale' which is checked. The main area displays a piano roll with two staves. The top staff is labeled 'E#4' and the bottom staff is labeled 'A#3'. The A#3 staff contains three green rectangular notes, and the E#4 staff contains one green rectangular note. The interface is dark-themed.

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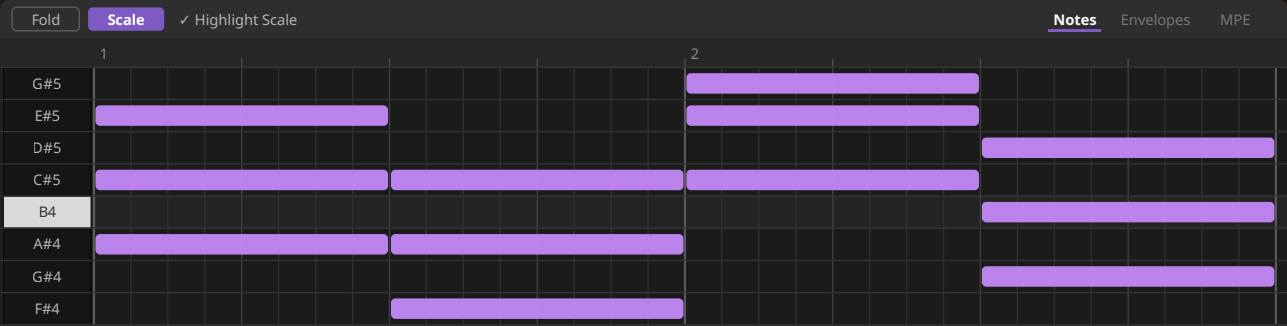
Steal these.

Example 5 · Triad stabs — chop it on the ands



The 1-b3-5 stack (A# – C# – E#) chopped onto the ands. Bar 2 flips to the higher voicing so it breathes. Short, punchy, gone before the kick lands.

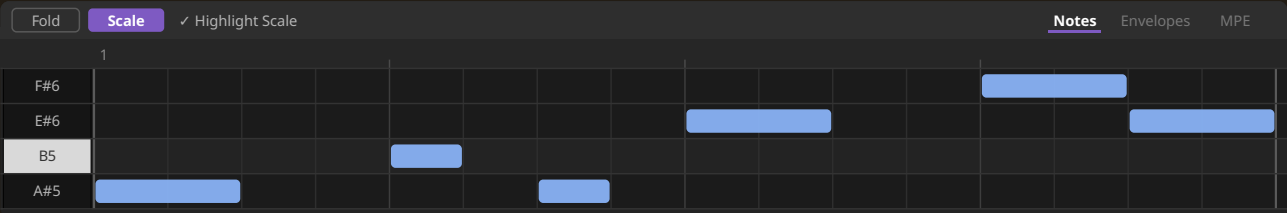
Example 6 · Chord progression — i – VI – III – VII



Four chords, eight steps each: A# minor (i) → F# (VI) → C# (III) → G# (VII). The progression under half the indie tech catalog — loop it, stab it, or pad it.

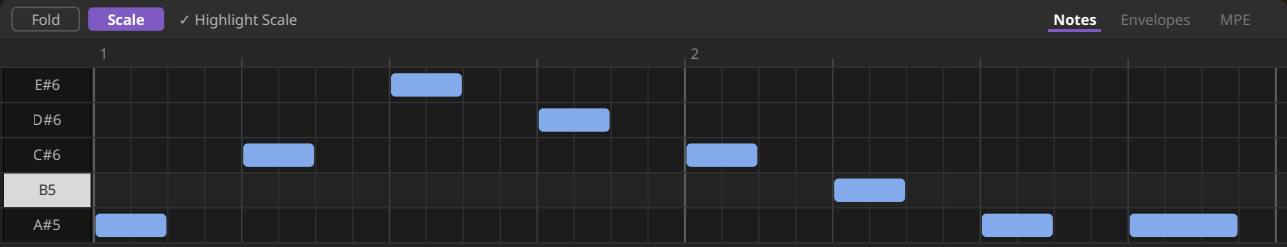
Steal these.

Example 7 · Signature lick — the b2 rub



A#-B-A#, then the 5-F#-5 sigh. The two moves that say "Phrygian" before a single other note plays.

Example 8 · Call and response — the lead talks to itself



Question (bar 1, ends on E#) and answer (bar 2, ends on A#). End the first phrase away from home and the second phrase home — that is the whole trick.

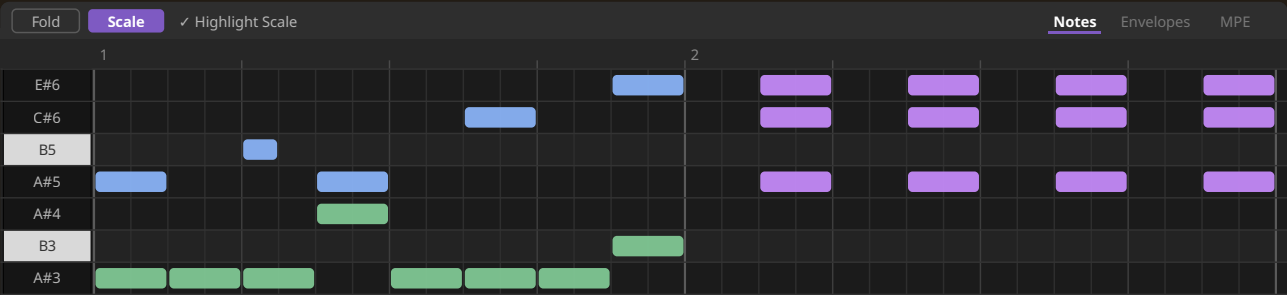
Steal these.

Example 9 · Pad swells — the break



Two long chords: A# minor, then F# major. Pull the drums out, let these ring, bring the kick back on the A#. That is a break.

Example 10 · Full groove — all three layers at once



Green = bass, purple = stabs, blue = hook. Three patterns, one scale, zero wrong notes — this is what a finished 2-bar loop looks like on the piano roll.

A# Phrygian dominant

Phrygian with a major 3rd. The b2 *plus* the major-3rd rub is the desert-movie sound — exotic, instantly recognizable, one notch spicier than plain Phrygian.

A# Phrygian dominant: your seven allowed notes

A#	B	B#	C#	C##	D#	E	E#	F#	F##	G#	G##
1	b2			3	4		5	b6		b7	

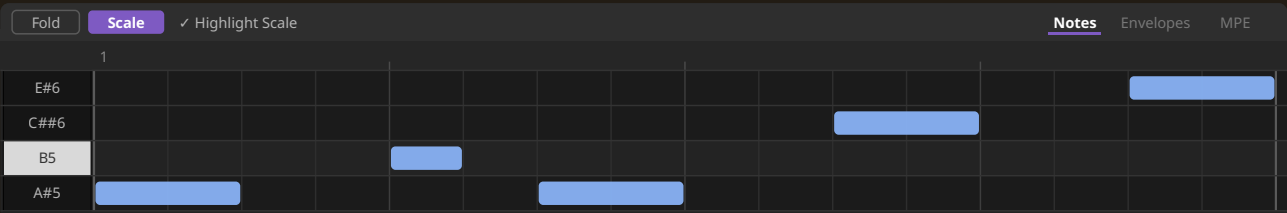
In A# Phrygian dominant the allowed notes are A#, B, C##, D#, E#, F#, G#. Ableton has no one-click fold for this one — **draw from the strip below**, the highlighted rows are your scale.

HEAR IT IN THE WILD

Hava Nagila is the most famous b2 on earth — and it is this scale. So is Misirlou (the Pulp Fiction one).

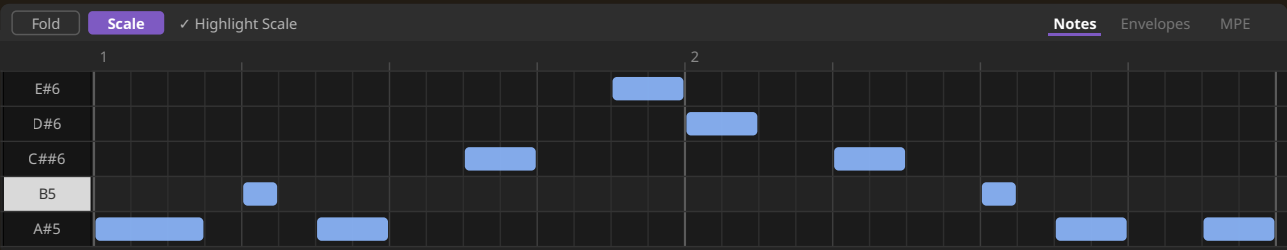
Steal these.

Example 1 · One-bar hook — the fingerprint



The move: A#–B–A# in the first half — that half-step rub is this scale's fingerprint. Climbs to C##, lands on E#.
Loop it, nudge the rhythm, never leave the folded rows.

Example 2 · Two-bar hook — question and answer



Bar 1 asks (ends on E#), **bar 2 answers** (ends home on A#). Two phrases and the hook feels finished — copy the shape, change the rhythm, it is yours.

The screenshot shows the Scale tool interface. At the top, there is a 'Scale' button (highlighted in purple), a checked 'Highlight Scale' checkbox, and three tabs: 'Notes' (active), 'Envelopes', and 'MPE'. Below the tabs is a piano roll with three staves labeled A#4, B3, and A#3. The A#4 staff has a single green note. The B3 staff has a single green note. The A#3 staff has three green notes. The piano roll is set to a 12-tone scale, with the notes corresponding to the scale degrees 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12.

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Steal these.

Example 5 · Triad stabs — chop it on the ands

Fold

Scale

✓ Highlight Scale

Notes

Envelopes

MPE

	1	2
E#6		
C##6		
A#5		
E#5		
C##5		
A#4		

The 1–3–5 stack (A# – C## – E#) chopped onto the ands. Bar 2 flips to the higher voicing so it breathes. Short, punchy, gone before the kick lands.

Example 6 · Chord progression — i – VI – III – VII

Fold

Scale

✓ Highlight Scale

Notes

Envelopes

MPE

	1	2
G#5		
E#5		
D#5		
C##5		
B4		
A#4		
G#4		
F#4		

Four chords, eight steps each: A# minor (i) → F# (VI) → C## (III) → G# (VII). The progression under half the indie tech catalog — loop it, stab it, or pad it.

Steal these.

Example 7 · Signature lick — the desert rub

Fold **Scale** ✓ Highlight Scale Notes Envelopes MPE

1

C##6
B5
A#5

A#–B–C##. The flat 2nd grinding against the major 3rd is the whole desert-movie sound in three notes.

Example 8 · Call and response — the lead talks to itself

Fold **Scale** ✓ Highlight Scale Notes Envelopes MPE

1 2

E#6
D#6
C##6
B5
A#5

Question (bar 1, ends on E#) and **answer** (bar 2, ends on A#). End the first phrase away from home and the second phrase home — that is the whole trick.

Steal these.

Example 9 · Pad swells — the break

Fold **Scale** ✓ Highlight Scale Notes Envelopes MPE

Two long chords: A# minor, then F# major. Pull the drums out, let these ring, bring the kick back on the A#. That is a break.

Example 10 · Full groove — all three layers at once

Fold **Scale** ✓ Highlight Scale Notes Envelopes MPE

Green = bass, purple = stabs, blue = hook. Three patterns, one scale, zero wrong notes — this is what a finished 2-bar loop looks like on the piano roll.

A# natural minor

The canvas the other four paint on. No rub, no spice — write the verse here, then borrow one note from a neighbor scale when the loop needs to bite.

A# natural minor: your seven allowed notes

A#	B	B#	C#	C##	D#	E	E#	F#	F##	G#	G##
1		2	b3		4		5	b6		b7	

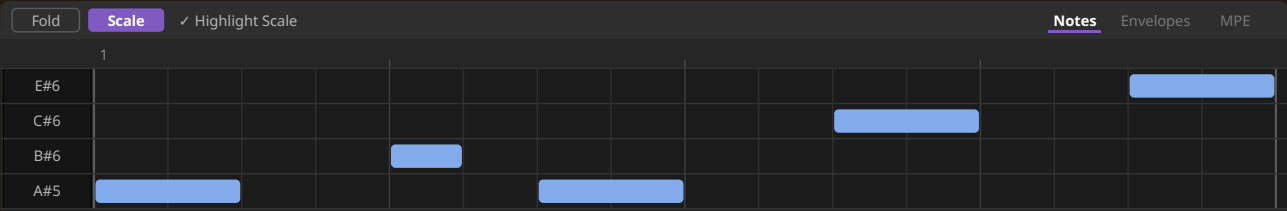
In A# natural minor the allowed notes are A#, B#, C#, D#, E#, F#, G#. Ableton has no one-click fold for this one — draw from the strip below, the highlighted rows are your scale.

HEAR IT IN THE WILD

Every minor-key tech house loop you have ever made started life here.

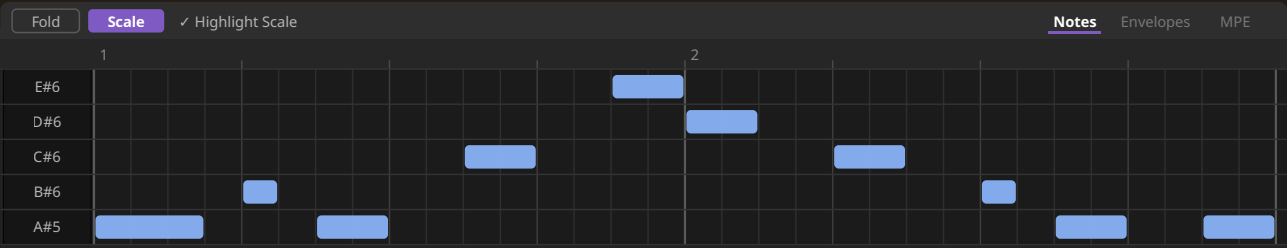
Steal these.

Example 1 · One-bar hook — the fingerprint



The move: A#–B#–A# in the first half — that whole-step 1–2–1 move is this scale's fingerprint. Climbs to C#, lands on E#. Loop it, nudge the rhythm, never leave the folded rows.

Example 2 · Two-bar hook — question and answer



Bar 1 asks (ends on E#), **bar 2 answers** (ends home on A#). Two phrases and the hook feels finished — copy the shape, change the rhythm, it is yours.

The screenshot shows the Scale tool interface. At the top, there is a 'Scale' button (highlighted in purple), a checked 'Highlight Scale' checkbox, and three tabs: 'Notes' (active), 'Envelopes', and 'MPE'. Below the tabs is a piano roll for three voices: A#4, B#4, and A#3. The piano roll has a grid with 16 horizontal divisions. Voice A#4 has a single green note spanning from the 8th to the 12th division. Voice B#4 has a single green note spanning from the 14th to the 16th division. Voice A#3 has three green notes: the first spans from the 1st to the 4th division, the second from the 4th to the 8th division, and the third from the 12th to the 15th division.

69

Steal these.

Example 5 · Triad stabs — chop it on the ends

Fold

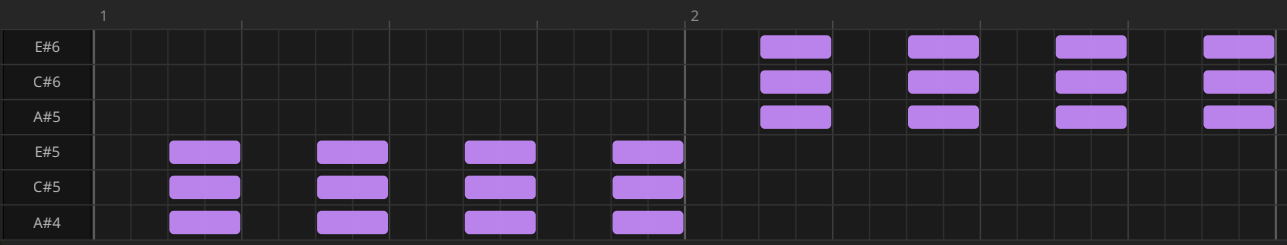
Scale

✓ Highlight Scale

Notes

Envelopes

MPE



The 1–b3–5 stack (A# – C# – E#) chopped onto the ends. Bar 2 flips to the higher voicing so it breathes. Short, punchy, gone before the kick lands.

Example 6 · Chord progression — i – VI – III – VII

Fold

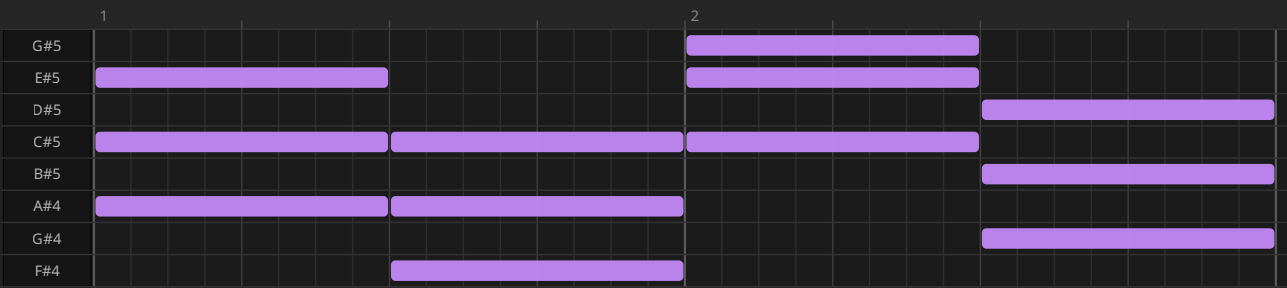
Scale

✓ Highlight Scale

Notes

Envelopes

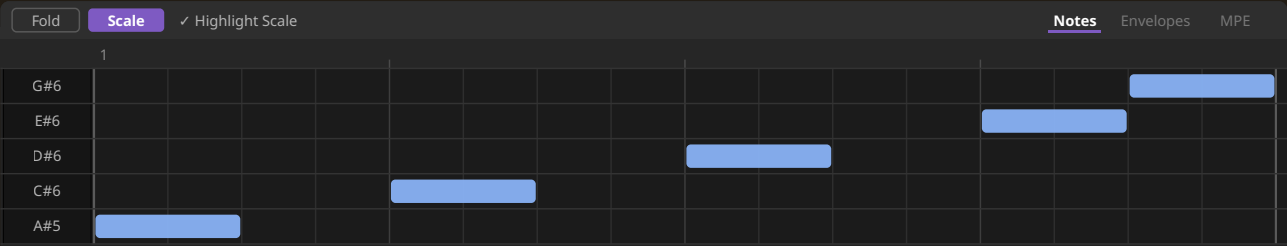
MPE



Four chords, eight steps each: A# minor (i) → F# (VI) → C# (III) → G# (VII). The progression under half the indie tech catalog — loop it, stab it, or pad it.

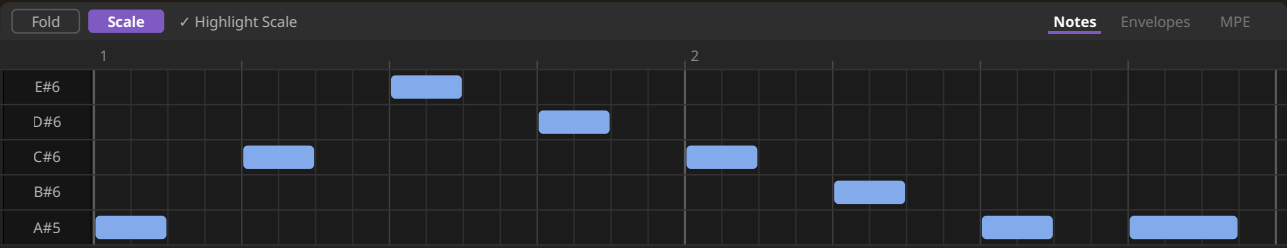
Steal these.

Example 7 · Signature lick — the plain run



A#-C#-D#-E#-G#. The minor pentatonic run — the plainest strong line in the key. Dress it up by borrowing later.

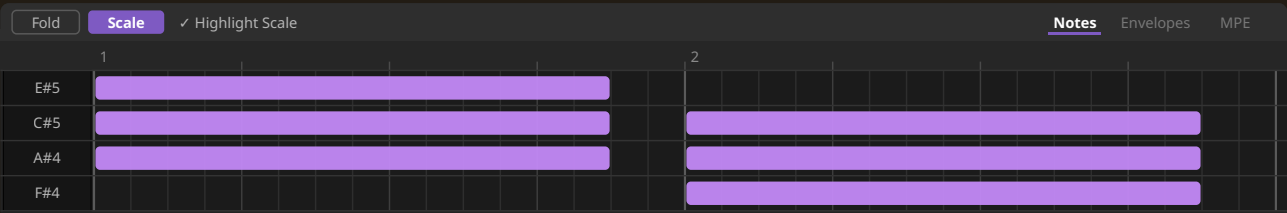
Example 8 · Call and response — the lead talks to itself



Question (bar 1, ends on E#) and **answer** (bar 2, ends on A#). End the first phrase away from home and the second phrase home — that is the whole trick.

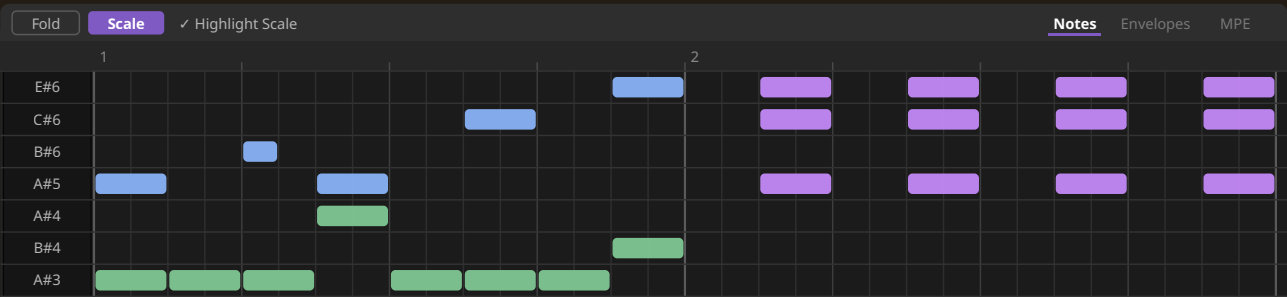
Steal these.

Example 9 · Pad swells — the break



Two long chords: A# minor, then F# major. Pull the drums out, let these ring, bring the kick back on the A#. That is a break.

Example 10 · Full groove — all three layers at once



Green = bass, purple = stabs, blue = hook. Three patterns, one scale, zero wrong notes — this is what a finished 2-bar loop looks like on the piano roll.

A# harmonic minor

Natural minor with the 7th raised a half step. The b6–7 gap is three half steps — that exotic lift is the turnaround move, not the verse move.

A# harmonic minor: your seven allowed notes

A#	B	B#	C#	C##	D#	E	E#	F#	F##	G#	G##
1		2	b3		4		5	b6			7

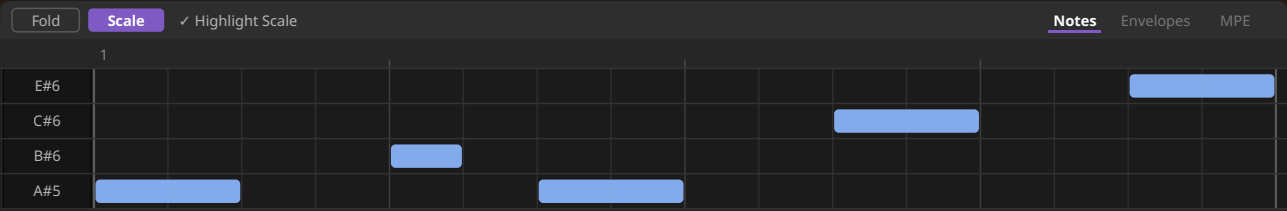
In A# harmonic minor the allowed notes are A#, B#, C#, D#, E#, F#, G##. Ableton has no one-click fold for this one — **draw from the strip below**, the highlighted rows are your scale.

HEAR IT IN THE WILD

Desert-movie strings and the classic raised-7th turnaround at the end of a phrase.

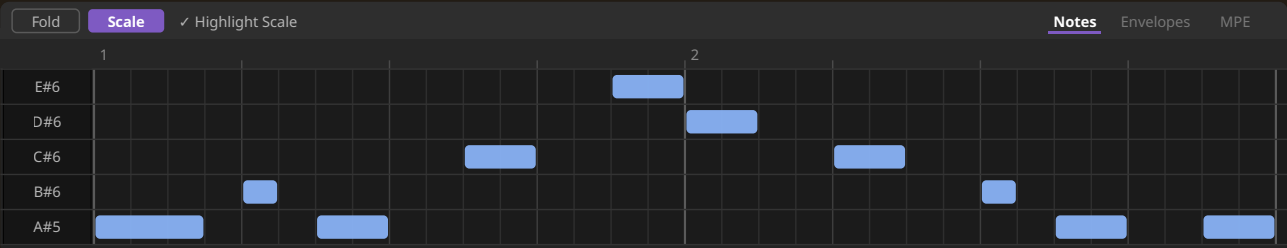
Steal these.

Example 1 · One-bar hook — the fingerprint



The move: A#–B#–A# in the first half — that whole-step 1–2–1 move is this scale's fingerprint. Climbs to C#, lands on E#. Loop it, nudge the rhythm, never leave the folded rows.

Example 2 · Two-bar hook — question and answer



Bar 1 asks (ends on E#), **bar 2 answers** (ends home on A#). Two phrases and the hook feels finished — copy the shape, change the rhythm, it is yours.

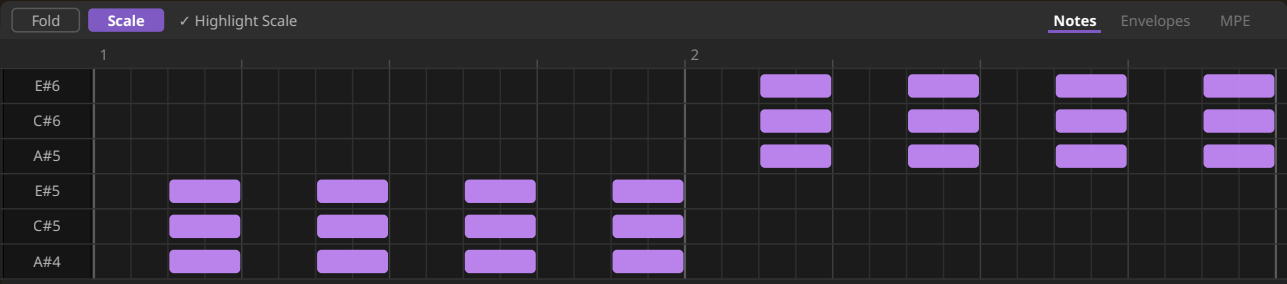
The screenshot shows the Scale tool interface. At the top, there is a 'Fold' button, a 'Scale' button, and a 'Highlight Scale' checkbox. To the right are tabs for 'Notes', 'Envelopes', and 'MPE'. The main area displays a piano roll for three voices: A#4, B#4, and A#3. Each voice has a green scale bar indicating the active scale. The A#4 voice has a scale bar from measure 1 to 4. The B#4 voice has a scale bar from measure 5 to 8. The A#3 voice has a scale bar from measure 1 to 8.

The screenshot shows the Scale tool interface. At the top, there are tabs for 'Fold', 'Scale' (which is selected and highlighted in purple), and 'Highlight Scale'. To the right of these tabs is a checkmark and the text 'Highlight Scale'. Further right are tabs for 'Notes', 'Envelopes', and 'MPE'. Below the tabs, a piano roll is visible. The piano roll has two staves. The top staff is labeled 'E#4' and the bottom staff is labeled 'A#3'. The piano roll shows a sequence of notes represented by green rectangular blocks. The notes are arranged in a way that suggests a scale or a specific musical sequence. The piano roll is divided into measures by vertical lines. The notes are placed on the staves, with some notes spanning across measures. The piano roll is set against a dark background.

75

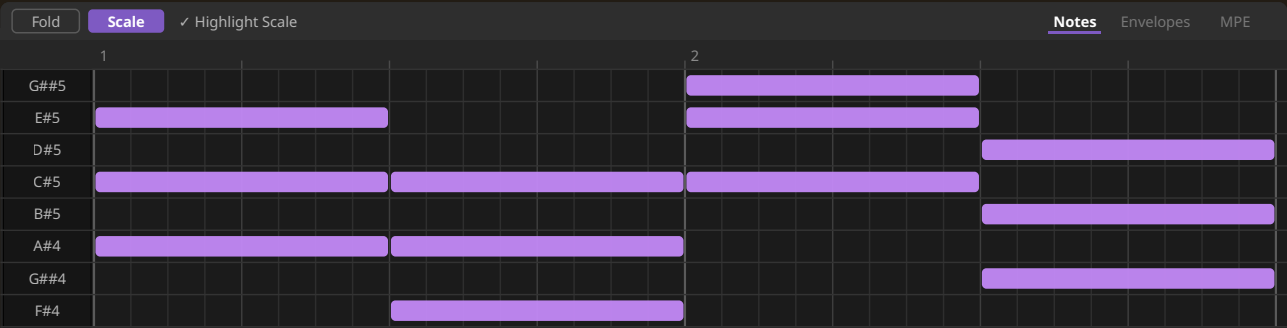
Steal these.

Example 5 · Triad stabs — chop it on the ands



The 1–b3–5 stack (A# – C# – E#) chopped onto the ands. Bar 2 flips to the higher voicing so it breathes. Short, punchy, gone before the kick lands.

Example 6 · Chord progression — i – VI – III – VII



Four chords, eight steps each: A# minor (i) → F# (VI) → C# (III) → G## (VII). The progression under half the indie tech catalog — loop it, stab it, or pad it.

Steal these.

Example 7 · Signature lick — the b6-7 lift

Fold

Scale

✓ Highlight Scale

Notes

Envelopes

MPE

	1															
A#6																
G##6																
F#6																

F#-G##-A#. The three-half-step gap is the exotic lift — save it for the turnaround, one heartbeat at a time.

Example 8 · Call and response — the lead talks to itself

Fold

Scale

✓ Highlight Scale

Notes

Envelopes

MPE

	1								2							
E#6																
D#6																
C#6																
B#6																
A#5																

Question (bar 1, ends on E#) and **answer** (bar 2, ends on A#). End the first phrase away from home and the second phrase home — that is the whole trick.

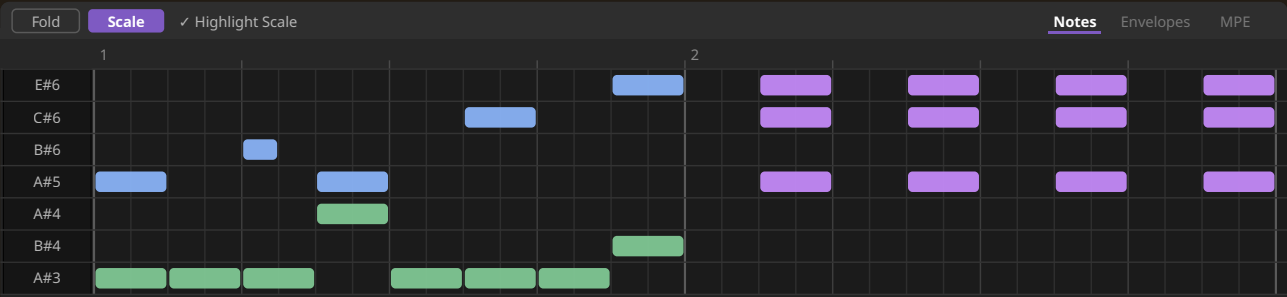
Steal these.

Example 9 · Pad swells — the break



Two long chords: A# minor, then F# major. Pull the drums out, let these ring, bring the kick back on the A#. That is a break.

Example 10 · Full groove — all three layers at once



Green = bass, purple = stabs, blue = hook. Three patterns, one scale, zero wrong notes — this is what a finished 2-bar loop looks like on the piano roll.

A# Dorian

Minor with a natural 6th. Warmer and funkier than Phrygian — the bridge scale when the loop gets too dark, and the bassline scale when you want bounce.

A# Dorian: your seven allowed notes

A#	B	B#	C#	C##	D#	E	E#	F#	F##	G#	G##
1		2	b3		4		5		6	b7	

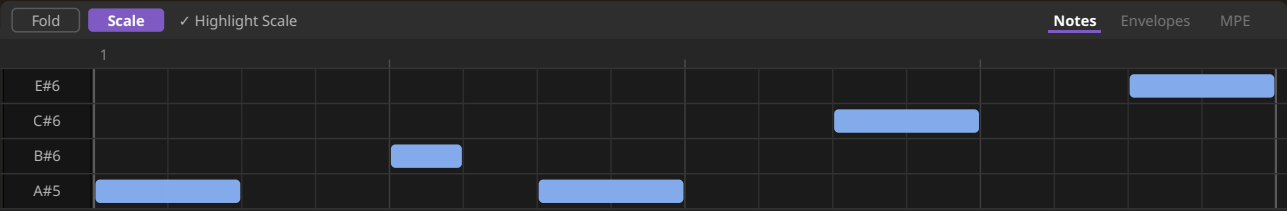
In A# Dorian the allowed notes are A#, B#, C#, D#, E#, F##, G#. Ableton has no one-click fold for this one — draw from the strip below, the highlighted rows are your scale.

HEAR IT IN THE WILD

The funkier minor: use it when Phrygian starts sounding like a dungeon.

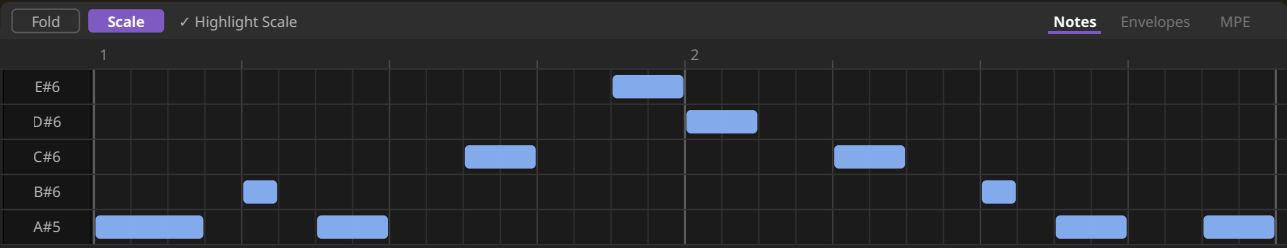
Steal these.

Example 1 · One-bar hook — the fingerprint



The move: A#–B#–A# in the first half — that whole-step 1–2–1 move is this scale's fingerprint. Climbs to C#, lands on E#. Loop it, nudge the rhythm, never leave the folded rows.

Example 2 · Two-bar hook — question and answer

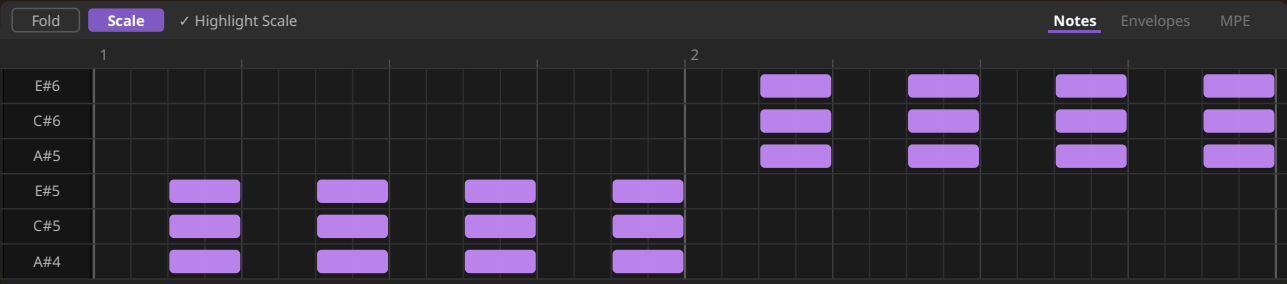


Bar 1 asks (ends on E#), **bar 2 answers** (ends home on A#). Two phrases and the hook feels finished — copy the shape, change the rhythm, it is yours.

81

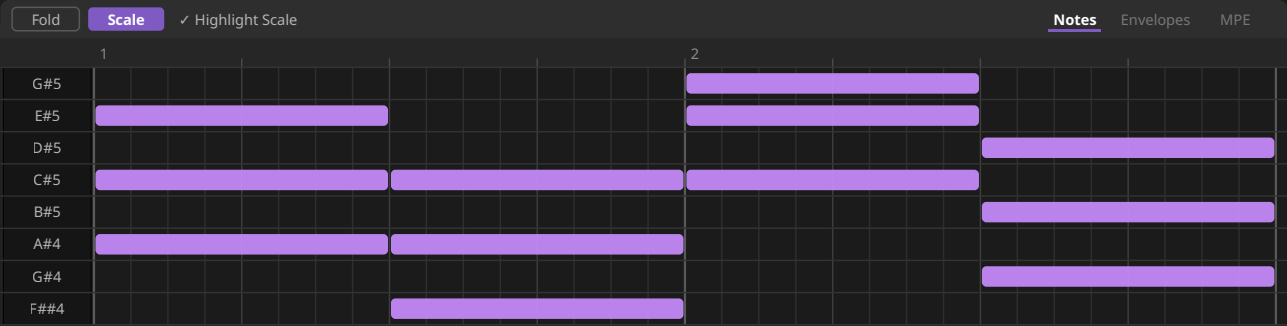
Steal these.

Example 5 · Triad stabs — chop it on the ends



The 1-b3-5 stack (A# – C# – E#) chopped onto the ends. Bar 2 flips to the higher voicing so it breathes. Short, punchy, gone before the kick lands.

Example 6 · Chord progression — i – VI – III – VII



Four chords, eight steps each: A# minor (i) → F## (VI) → C# (III) → G# (VII). The progression under half the indie tech catalog — loop it, stab it, or pad it.

Steal these.

Example 7 · Signature lick — the natural-6th lift

Fold

Scale

✓ Highlight Scale

Notes

Envelopes

MPE

	1															
F##6																
E#6																
D#6																
A#5																

A#-D#-E#-F##-E#. The natural 6th (F##) is the warm lift that separates Dorian from every darker minor.

Example 8 · Call and response — the lead talks to itself

Fold

Scale

✓ Highlight Scale

Notes

Envelopes

MPE

	1								2							
E#6																
D#6																
C#6																
B#6																
A#5																

Question (bar 1, ends on E#) and answer (bar 2, ends on A#). End the first phrase away from home and the second phrase home — that is the whole trick.

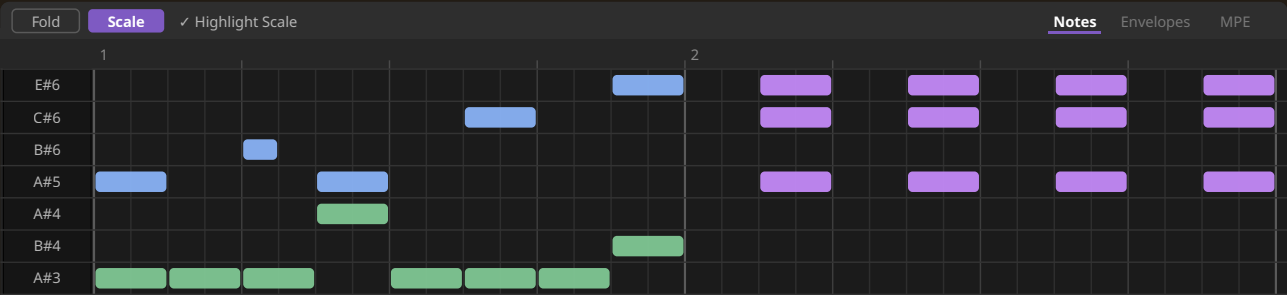
Steal these.

Example 9 · Pad swells — the break



Two long chords: A# minor, then F## diminished. Pull the drums out, let these ring, bring the kick back on the A#. That is a break.

Example 10 · Full groove — all three layers at once



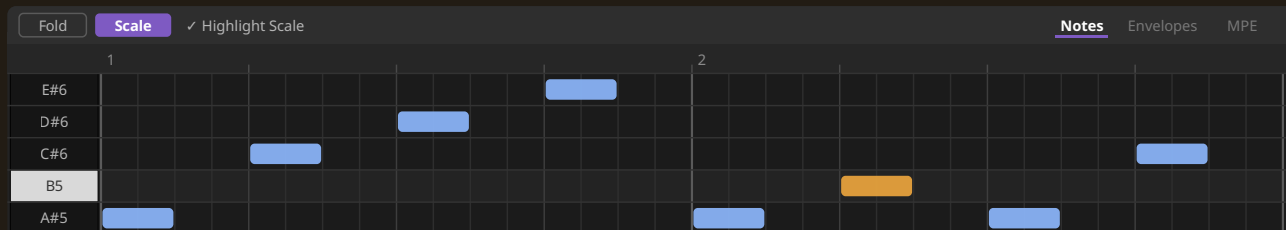
Green = bass, purple = stabs, blue = hook. Three patterns, one scale, zero wrong notes — this is what a finished 2-bar loop looks like on the piano roll.

PUT THEM TOGETHER

Intertwine: live in one scale, shoplift from the next.

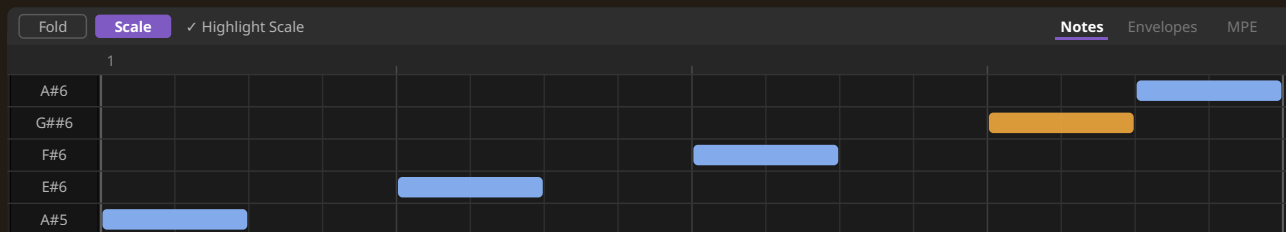
Every scale here is one note away from its neighbor. Write the verse in the plain one, borrow a single note for the hook — the loop keeps evolving and you never leave home.

Borrow the b2 — verse in A# natural minor, hook in A# Phrygian



Same rhythm, one note nudged down a half step — the orange note is the borrow. Verse breathes in natural minor, the hook bites in Phrygian.

The raised-7th turnaround — flash of A# harmonic minor



Borrow the raised 7th (G##) for exactly one heartbeat at the turnaround — harmonic minor flashes, then home. That three-half-step b6–7 gap is the exotic lift.

Fifty examples. Pick five.

You do not need all fifty. Steal one hook, one bass, one stab pattern, one lick, and one borrow move — that is a track's whole DNA. The letter keys (A, B, C, E, F, G) get the same treatment next: same fifty shapes, slid to the new home note.

FIVE GOLDEN RULES FOR THESE SCALES

1. Phrygian is the hook scale — the 1–b2 rub does the talking.
2. Phrygian dominant is the desert scale — save it for the breakdown.
3. Natural minor is the verse scale — plain on purpose.
4. Harmonic minor is the turnaround scale — one heartbeat of G###, then home.
5. Dorian is the bridge scale — the natural 6th lifts the loop out of the dark.

PART 4

MUSIC THEORY FOR INDIE TECH HOUSE

From the Artists

Workflows mined from Adam Ten, Mita Gami, RAFAEL, LUCH, Omri Smadar and Broken Hill — how the indie tech lane actually makes tracks.

Steal their workflows.

Dug through the interviews, masterclasses and studio videos of the indie tech lane — Adam Ten, Mita Gami, RAFAEL, LUCH, Omri Smadar, Broken Hill. Honest note first: none of them lecture about scales on camera. What they all talk about is groove, bass, vocals, and finishing. That is the real theory of this sound — ten pages of it, translated into moves you can steal tonight.

STEAL THIS

1. Every artist below starts from rhythm or a single hook — never from a chord progression.
2. The bassline is a lead instrument in this lane, not a utility.
3. Finish fast, test on a dancefloor, revise 2–5 times. The club is the QA.

Source: Research: artist interviews & videos, Oct 2026 — full source list on the last page.

The bass IS the hook.

"We Move" happened by accident: hunting for a lead line on his Roland, a bass came out instead — he opened a new project, recorded the bass, added groove, and three hours later most of the track was done. He played it that same night.

Bass-first sketch — D Phrygian, hooky 8ths with the b2 spice

Fold **Scale** ✓ Highlight Scale Notes Envelopes MPE

1

Root 8ths, one octave pop, one b2 at the end of the bar. If the bassline is not hummable on its own, it is not the hook — keep hunting.

STEAL THIS

1. Start from a bassline, not a chord. Record the first thing that feels like a hook.
2. Add groove second, arrange third. Sketch fast — hours, not days.
3. Road-test the sketch the same night if you can. The dancefloor decides.

Source: musicis4lovers.com — Adam Ten interview (Dec 2020)

Write for the set, not the studio.

Ten DJed for ten years before producing, and he writes every track for a specific set moment: "We Move" and "Hamakor" are opening groovy tracks for outdoors; "Mita In Reverse" and "The Queen" are dramatic closers. Ask of every track: where in the night does this live?

STEAL THIS

1. Name the set moment before you arrange — opener, peak, after-hours, closer.
2. "The Queen" recipe: groove first, guitar played around it, then hunt the vocal that fits.
3. Finishing = 2–5 versions, tested by him or Mita Gami. Done when "there are no notes to be taken" on playback.
4. Remix rule: find one hook you love, build everything around it. If it does not come easy, skip it — do not force it.

Source: musicis4lovers.com · progressiveastronaut.com — Adam Ten interviews

Psychedelic leads from simple ingredients.

His "High On" lead is a Nord Lead A1 recording plus Splice samples — hybrid, not purist: "sometimes most of the tracks are done on hardware synths and drum machine, sometimes I don't even touch them." The psychedelic, expressive lead sound comes from movement, not from stacking oscillators: portamento + legato + vibrato + phasers.

Expressive lead line — D Phrygian, begging for glide and vibrato

Long notes, small intervals. Then: glide between them (portamento), legato on, slow vibrato, a phaser drifting. A static synth becomes something organic.

STEAL THIS

1. Keep the rig small: Ableton + a couple of hardware pieces (his: Roland SE-02, JU-06A, TR-8S).
Simple setup = attention on ideas.
2. Lead movement recipe: portamento + legato + vibrato + phaser. Four knobs, instant indie tech.

Source: progressiveastronaut.com — Adam Ten interview · zenworld lead tutorial

Groove first, ego zero.

"Start with creating a nice groove and if it works it works — the most important thing is to just sit down and work." The Adam Ten collab runs on trust and zero ego with a clean division of labor: Adam owns groove and overall flow; Mita, the pianist, writes the melodies.

STEAL THIS

1. If you get stuck on melody, you are an Adam: find a Mita. Collabs work when roles are split by strength.
2. Circle back later to ideas that do not work today — do not delete, do not force.
3. His rig, for reference: Nord Lead 4A (leads), Roland SE-02 (bass), Gibson Les Paul, acid machine, Korg Minilogue, vocoder.

Source: radiointense.com — Mita Gami interview

Vocal first, hook you can shout.

"Gotta Be Cool" started when Tobias Wincorn played him a vocal that "instantly felt special" — weeks later, on a friend's couch in New York, he built the whole track around it with one vision: "a hook that people can immediately connect to and shout back on the dancefloor." Slow-blooming synths underneath, playful almost childlike vocal chants on top.

Shout-back chant hook — D Phrygian

Fold
Scale
✓ Highlight Scale

Notes Envelopes MPE

Five notes, all chantable. If the crowd cannot shout it back after two listens, simplify until they can.

STEAL THIS

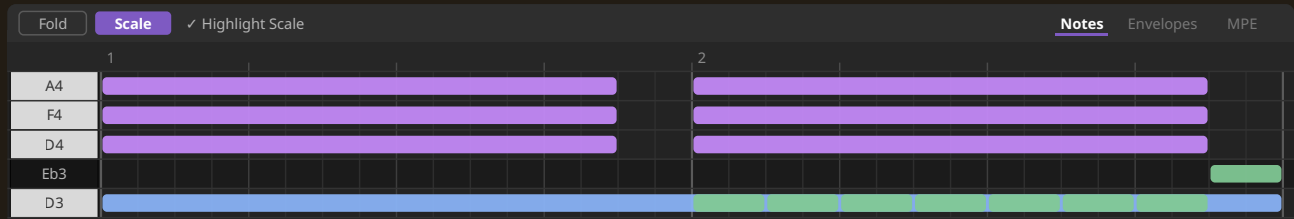
1. Build the track around the vocal — find the special vocal first, produce second.
2. His masterclass chapters read like a syllabus: vocal processing, vocal textures, vocal chops and glides, bassline layering, tom sounds.
3. B-side "Teder": layered percussion, fluid grooves, loose after-hours energy — the deeper cut is all drums.

Source: findyoursounds.com — "Gotta Be Cool" press · Red Room masterclass (YouTube, 1h44m)

Start from a drone, add drums last.

Luch's studio series teaches composing over a one-note synth drone — the "bed". Loop a single sustained note, stack ambient sounds, then textures, and only then rhythm and bass. Harmony and atmosphere first, drums last: the exact reverse of the usual tech-house order.

The bed — D drone, Dm textures stacked, bass enters late



Blue = the bed (never stops). Purple = texture stacks. Green = bass, arriving in bar 2. Try it: one drone note, loop 8 bars, build everything on top before touching drums.

STEAL THIS

1. Writer's block cure: pick one root note, drone it, stack until a track appears.
2. His chapter order is the method: ambient sounds → stacked notes/textures → rhythm and bass → noise and groove → final touches.

Source: YouTube: Luch — "The Bed Theory" (Apr 2025)

Jam it live, keep it analog.

Classically and jazz trained (Jerusalem Music Academy), but works "out of the box, with analog synths and instruments — not the VST type of guy." His Disco Halal cut "October" started as a tribal loop he jammed with and finished the same day. His Collage project remixes classic Israeli music — the crate-digging instinct, formalized.

STEAL THIS

1. Jam-first workflow: loop something tribal, play over it, finish fast. Do not sequence a jam to death.
2. The Collage move is yours too: flip old regional records (your Samplette Mizrahi/Zemer Ivri digs) into house structures.
3. Retro + quirky + dirty, but always dancefloor-approachable — that is the aesthetic filter for every sound choice.

Source: technomood.org — Omri Smadar interview

Bass like a lead instrument.

"indie tech is all about groove, bounce, and personality — a lot of club tracks live or die by their bass line." On "Brain Delay" one NI Monark instance carries the whole low end. The movement comes from automation, not layers: ride the filter cutoff and resonance together so the bass breathes in sync with the drums.

One bassline, ridden by automation — D Phrygian

Same 8 notes all bar — the life is in the filter. Automate cutoff + resonance together for the "breathing with the drums" pulse; gentle sidechain, EQ carve the low mids.

STEAL THIS

1. One great bass sound > five layered ones. Commit fast, move on.
2. Automate two parameters in unison (cutoff + resonance) — unique movement no preset gives you.
3. Keep movement inside the synth first; external FX only enhance. A touch of chorus/phaser for width, Trash 2 for grit.

Source: blog.native-instruments.com — Broken Hill interview

Watch them work.

Everything above came from these sources. Watch with the chapters — steal one move per video.

WATCH LIST — WITH JUMP-TOS

1. **RAFAEL — Red Room masterclass (1h44m)**. Vocal processing 26:54 · vocal textures 50:53 · bassline layering 53:53 · tom sounds 1:25:43 · vocal chops & glides 1:33:23.
youtube.com/watch?v=mr4-Qj2cnp0
2. **LUCH — "The Bed Theory" (11 min)**. Full method, start to finish.
youtube.com/watch?v=kvVQ4of_908
3. **LUCH — "In The Studio" series**. "Shepards Tone" themed workflow; "UH HUH" — 3 things every song needs.
youtube.com/@Luch
4. **The Producer School — "The Secret Behind Adam Ten & Mita Gami's indie tech sound" (24 min)**. Idea 0:46 · lead & drop 15:39 · arrangement 28:00 · vocals 36:49.
youtube.com/watch?v=LHY-oarzk-g

Honest caveat: none of these videos had accessible transcripts — the nuggets above come from the artists' written interviews, video chapters/descriptions, and third-party breakdowns. No accessible source names explicit scales or chord progressions; the lane's theory lives in groove, bass, and vocal moves — which is exactly what these ten pages teach.

PART 5

MUSIC THEORY FOR INDIE TECH HOUSE

Maqam Melodies

Four Arabic-style 4-bar melodies (Hijaz, Bayati, Kurd, Nahawand) with MIDI files — the modal DNA behind the sound.

Four Arabic-style melodies.

Each melody is 4 bars in 4/4, built on a maqam (Arabic modal scale), drawn like Ableton's MIDI Note Editor. Real maqam uses quarter-tones; standard MIDI is 12-tone, so these are 12-TET approximations — what 99% of Western "Arabic-style" records use. For true microtones: pitch bend, MPE, or .scl tuning files.

HOW TO USE

Set the BPM shown, drop the MIDI clip on an Instrument track, swap the sound — plucks, flutes and mono legato leads all work. Transpose the clip to change key; the shape stays. The matching .mid files live in ~/workspace/maqam-melodies/out/.

1. Hijaz on E — The classic 'Arabic' sound

Scale: E - F - G# - A - B - C - D · Formula: 1 b2 3 4 5 b6 b7 · 100 BPM

Signature move: The F -> G# leap (an augmented 2nd) is the money interval. Lean on it at phrase starts.

Producer tip: Try a plucky lead (Wavetable, mono/legato) with a touch of delay. Accent beat 1 of each bar.



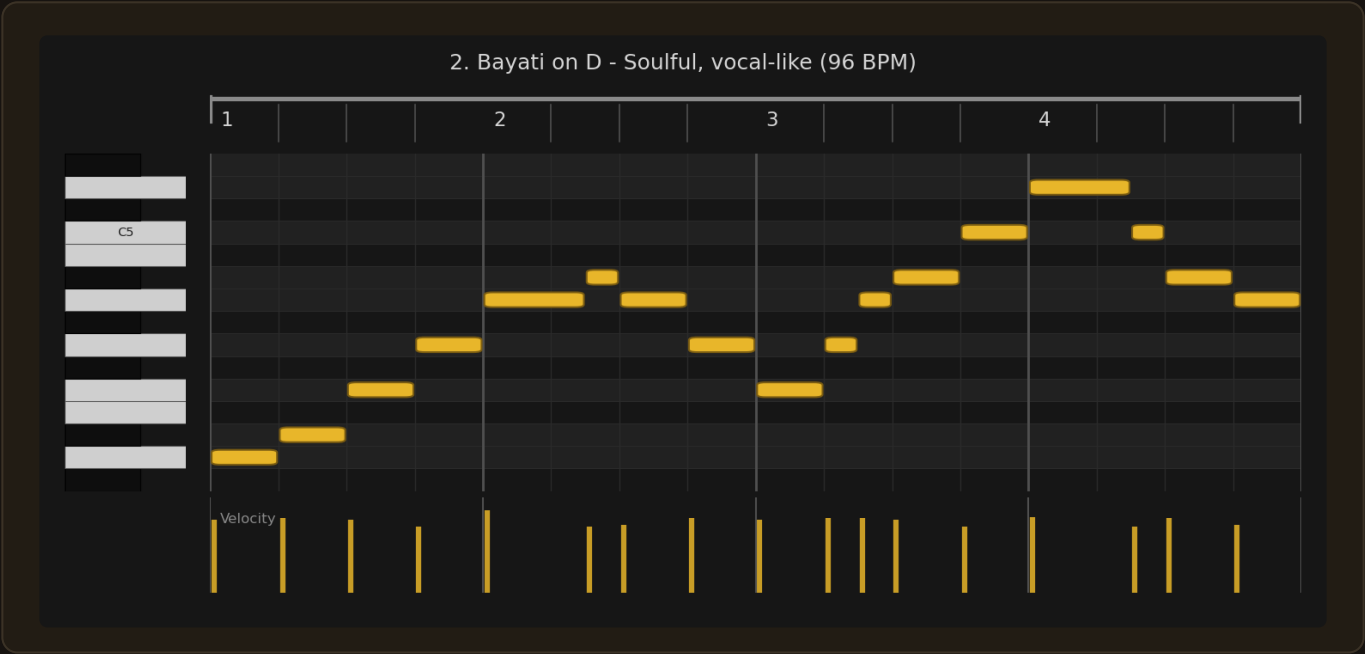
Bar	Beat	Note	MIDI	Length
1	1	E4	64	1
1	2	F4	65	0.5
1	2.5	G#4	68	0.5
1	3	A4	69	1
1	4	B4	71	1
2	1	A4	69	0.5
2	1.5	G#4	68	0.5
2	2	F4	65	1
2	3	E4	64	1
2	4	D4	62	1
3	1	E4	64	1.5
3	2.5	F4	65	0.5
3	3	G#4	68	1
3	4	A4	69	1
4	1	B4	71	1
4	2	A4	69	1
4	3	G#4	68	1

2. Bayati on D — Soulful, vocal-like

Scale: D - Eb - F - G - A - Bb - C · Formula: 1 b2 b3 4 5 b6 b7 · 96 BPM

Signature move: Opens with the D -> Eb half-step rub. Ends on A (the ghammaz) - a classic Bayati resting point instead of the tonic.

Producer tip: Works great as a vocal-chop or flute-like lead melody. Humanize the velocity for a sung feel.



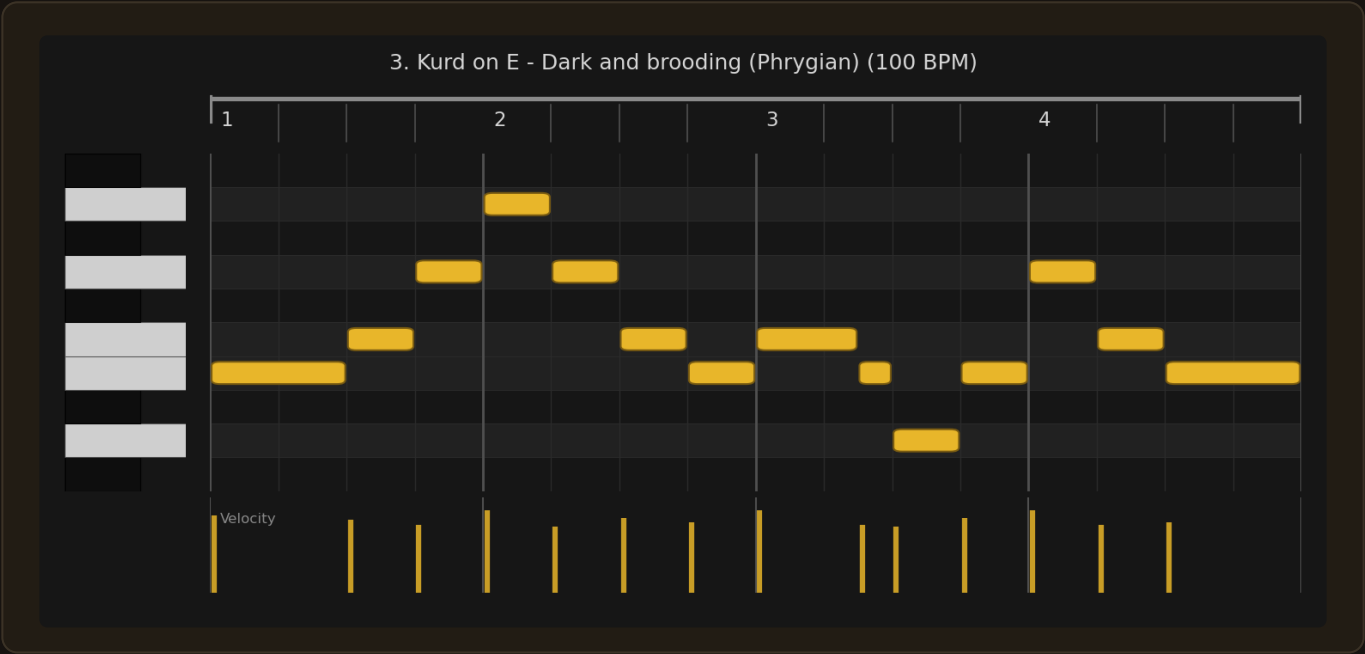
Bar	Beat	Note	MIDI	Length
1	1	D4	62	1
1	2	D#4	63	1
1	3	F4	65	1
1	4	G4	67	1
2	1	A4	69	1.5
2	2.5	A#4	70	0.5
2	3	A4	69	1
2	4	G4	67	1
3	1	F4	65	1
3	2	G4	67	0.5
3	2.5	A4	69	0.5
3	3	A#4	70	1
3	4	C5	72	1
4	1	D5	74	1.5
4	2.5	C5	72	0.5
4	3	A#4	70	1
4	4	A4	69	1

3. Kurd on E — Dark and brooding (Phrygian)

Scale: E - F - G - A - B - C - D · Formula: 1 b2 b3 4 5 b6 b7 · 100 BPM

Signature move: Same b2 tension as Hijaz but with a natural G - darker, heavier, great under distorted 808s.

Producer tip: Drop the octave for a bassline, or keep it high with reverb for an intro arp.



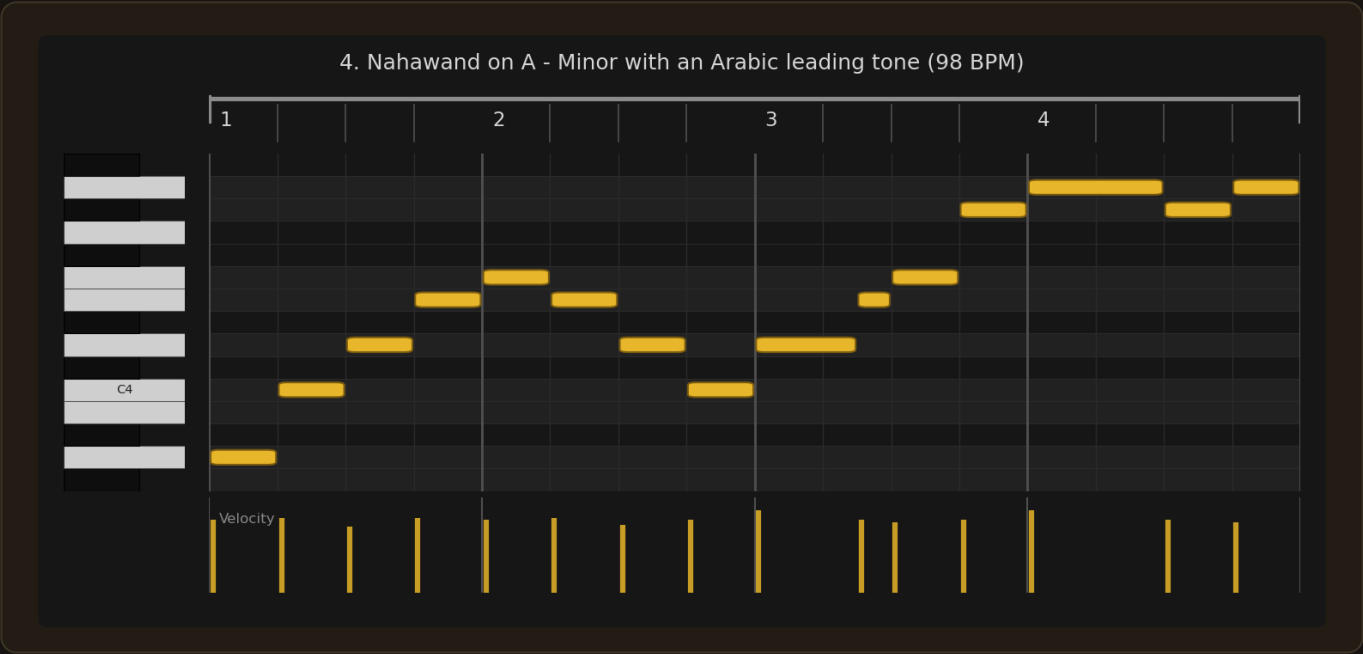
Bar	Beat	Note	MIDI	Length
1	1	E4	64	2
1	3	F4	65	1
1	4	G4	67	1
2	1	A4	69	1
2	2	G4	67	1
2	3	F4	65	1
2	4	E4	64	1
3	1	F4	65	1.5
3	2.5	E4	64	0.5
3	3	D4	62	1
3	4	E4	64	1
4	1	G4	67	1
4	2	F4	65	1
4	3	E4	64	2

4. Nahawand on A — Minor with an Arabic leading tone

Scale: A - B - C - D - E - F - G# · Formula: 1 2 b3 4 5 b6 7 · 98 BPM

Signature move: The G# -> A resolution at the end is the hook - natural minor below, harmonic-minor sting on top.

Producer tip: Perfect for a breakdown-to-drop melody. Automate a filter opening into bar 4.



Bar	Beat	Note	MIDI	Length
1	1	A3	57	1
1	2	C4	60	1
1	3	D4	62	1
1	4	E4	64	1
2	1	F4	65	1
2	2	E4	64	1
2	3	D4	62	1
2	4	C4	60	1
3	1	D4	62	1.5
3	2.5	E4	64	0.5
3	3	F4	65	1
3	4	G#4	68	1
4	1	A4	69	2
4	3	G#4	68	1
4	4	A4	69	1

PART 6

MUSIC THEORY FOR INDIE TECH HOUSE

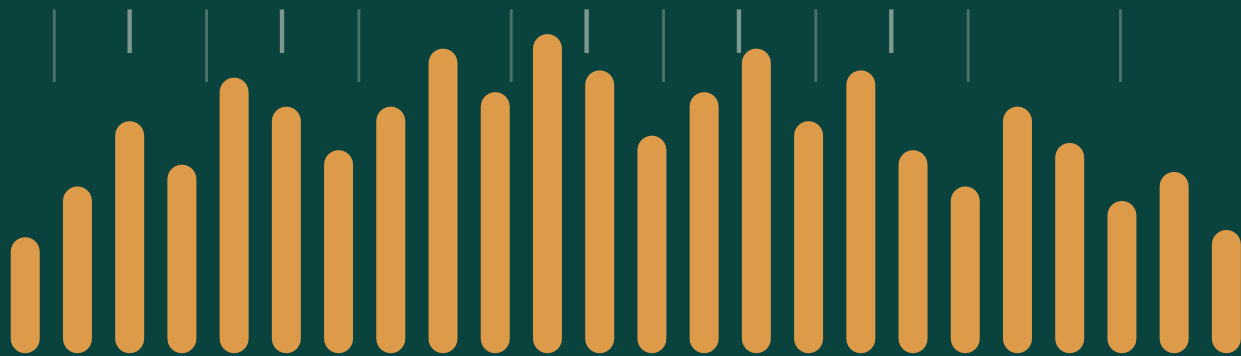
Phrygian Reference · A–G

Every letter key's Phrygian: scale strips, hooks, basses and stabs — the quick-lookup appendix at the back of the book.

THE DUMBED-DOWN EDITION

Music Theory for indie tech Tech House

Notes, scales, chords, basslines, drums, and arrangement —
minimum viable theory for warm, bouncy, groove-first tracks. No
sight-reading. No exams.



What each thing actually does — shown, not explained.

Five ideas do 90% of the work. The rest is taste.

Read front to back once, then use the cheat sheet forever.

MADE FOR CLAY GOLDIN · A PHRYGIAN EDITION

Five ideas do 90% of the work

A indie-tech-style track is not theory-dense. It is a small handful of decisions made well. Here they are, in the order this guide covers them.

1 Notes

There are only 12 musical notes, and they repeat forever. Learn them once, on a keyboard, and recognize them in the piano roll.

2 Key

Pick one note as home base. The "key" is the set of notes that feel like home around it. In this lane you will almost always pick Phrygian.

3 Scales

A scale is a recipe for which notes are "allowed". The minor scale is one spacing shape you can slide to any key. Two tiny variations give the indie tech flavor.

4 Rhythm and drums

The groove. Four-to-the-floor kick, swung hats and percussion, offbeat syncopation. Good rhythm covers a lot of simple harmony.

5 Chords and arrangement

Three-note chords turned into stabs, then everything packed into DJ-friendly sections that build to one payoff.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read pages 107 to 120 once, in order. Each page teaches one idea and ends with what to do with it. Page 121 gives the repeatable starting workflow for every track. Page 122 is the cheat sheet — print it, screenshot it, keep it next to the screen while you write.

You do not need

Reading sheet music. Perfect pitch. Knowing the circle of fifths. Anything with a Roman numeral.

You do need

A DAW with a piano roll. A copy of the keyboard diagrams (they are in here). Twenty minutes and one genre you already love.

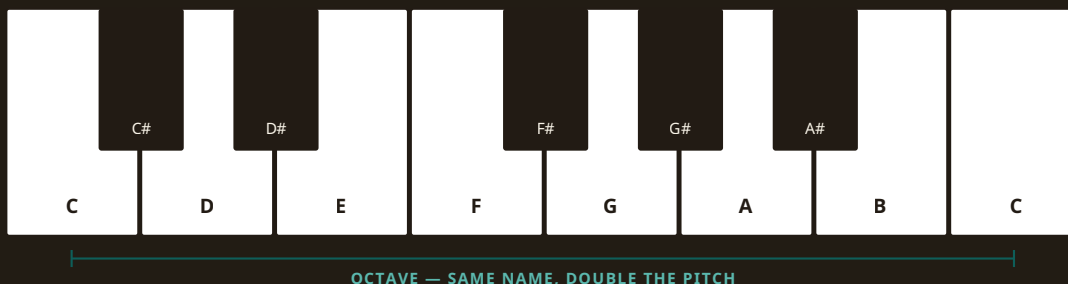
Only 12 notes exist. Learn them once.

A note is a named pitch. There are twelve of them, and they just repeat forever. The keyboard below is one octave — one full set of twelve.

White keys are named **C, D, E, F, G, A, B**, and then they start over. Black keys are the notes **in between** — named after their neighbor plus a # (sharp), which means "one step up". So the black key between C and D is **C#**, and between F and G is **F#**. There is no black key between E/F or B/C — those pairs are already touching.

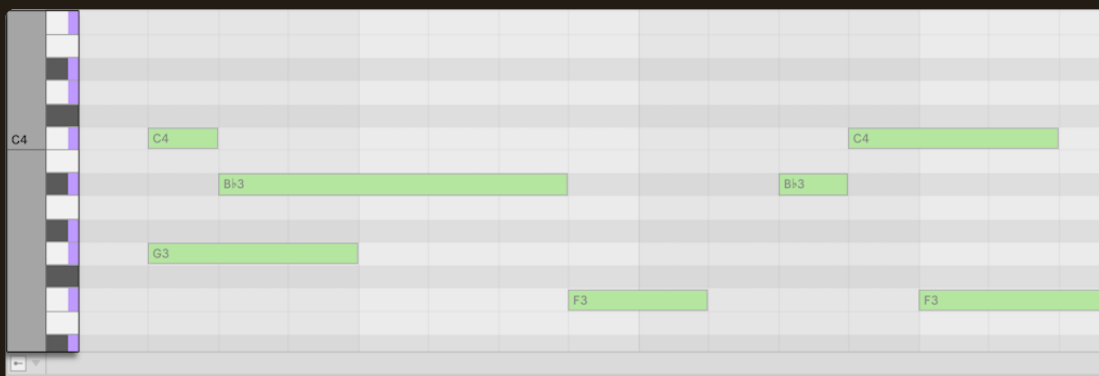
After 12 notes, the names repeat at twice the frequency. That repeat is called an **octave**. In Ableton the piano roll is the same layout turned vertical — the same 12 names repeating up the screen.

One octave: the whole universe, C to C



Count them: 7 white + 5 black = 12. That is every note that exists. Everything else in music is choosing some notes, skipping others, and repeating.

The same keyboard in Ableton — turned vertical



This is Ableton's piano ruler, from the official Live 12 manual. The same 12 names run bottom to top instead of left to right — the strip labeled **C4** marks your octave. Click a key to hear it, double-click the grid to drop a note on that row.

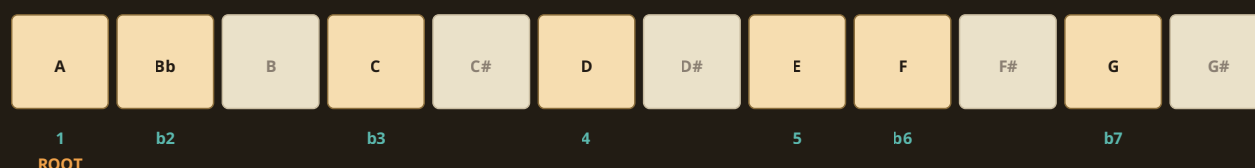
Pick a home note. Then stay in its sandbox.

The "key" answers two questions: which note is home, and which notes are allowed. Everything in your track lives in it — the bass, the chords, the hook.

Major keys sound happy and resolved. **Phrygian** is tense and moody with a dark Mediterranean edge. This whole lane is Phrygian — **A** is home, and the allowed notes are the Phrygian scale from A.

A Phrygian is your home for this guide: make **A** your home, and the allowed notes are A, Bb, C, D, E, F, G. Seven notes — that is the whole game. You can slide this same shape to any other home note later.

A Phrygian: your seven allowed notes



The gray notes are NOT in the key — ignore them for now.

In A Phrygian the allowed notes are A, Bb, C, D, E, F, G. Play only these and you literally cannot play a wrong note. The numbers are scale degrees — the "position" of each note matters more than its name.

THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

Most indie-tech-style tracks sit in Phrygian with meat in the low register — the catalog lives around D, E, and F. A Phrygian is the same shape from a different home note. Learn this shape once and you can play any of those.

The one rule of keys: **if the note is not in your scale, it is probably wrong.** One accidental black key is the reason a bass line that "feels off" actually feels off.

THE ONLY VOCAB YOU NEED

A half step (semitone) = the smallest step: one key to the next, black or white. C to C# is a half step. E to F is a half step.

A whole step = two half steps. C to D is a whole step.

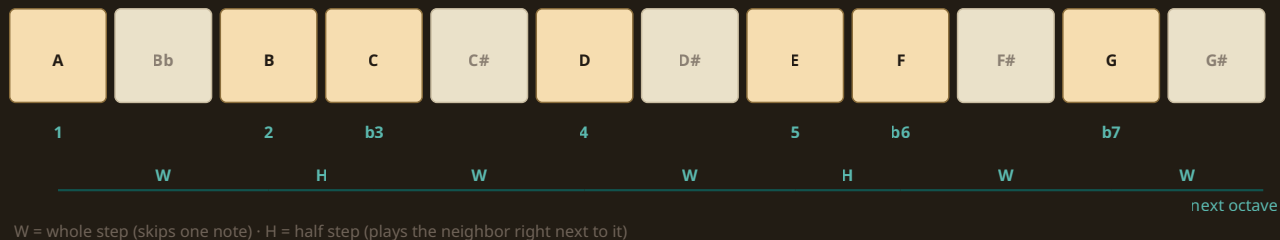
All of the scales in this guide are just recipes counted in half and whole steps.

3 · SCALES

The minor scale is a shape you can slide.

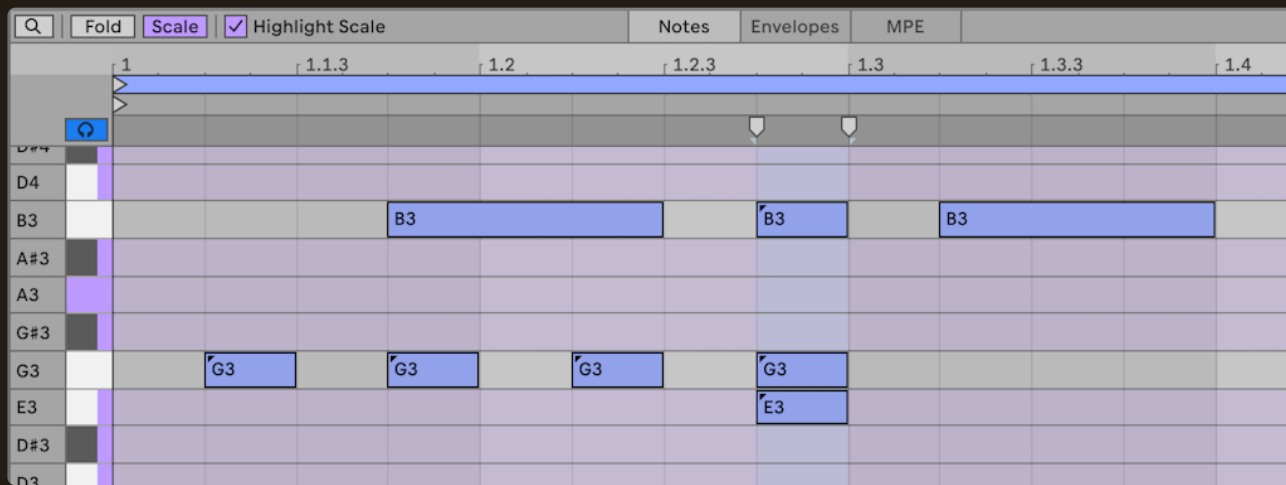
A scale is how far apart the allowed notes sit from each other. Count in whole (W) and half (H) steps: the natural minor scale is **W - H - W - W - H - W - W**.

The minor shape on the 12-note strip (shown from A)



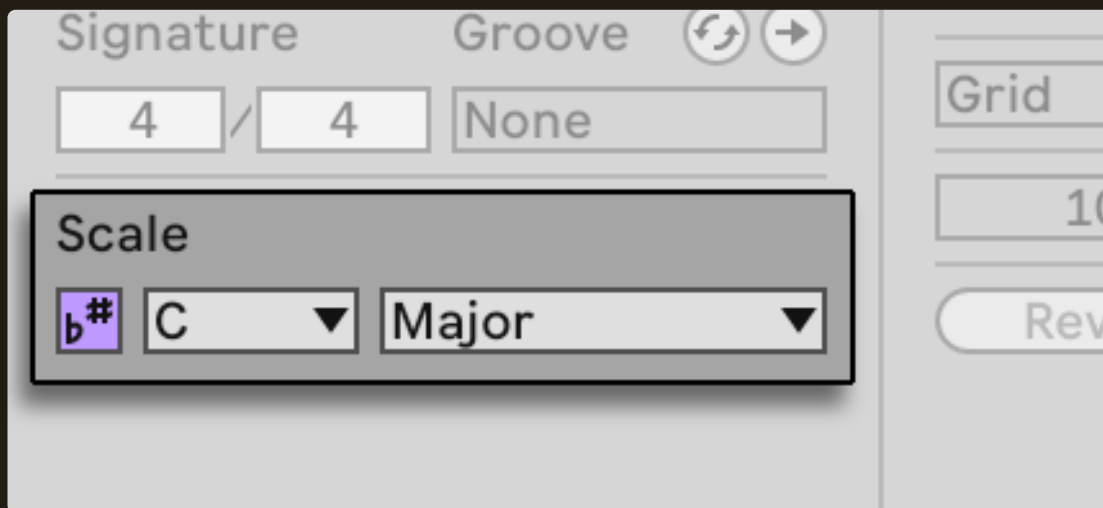
Start on ANY note, count W-H-W-W-H-W-W, and you have that minor key. Want A minor? Start on A: A W B H C W D W E H F W G W A. Do it once, write the answer down, never do it again.

Your scale, lit up inside Ableton's piano roll



Screenshot from Ableton's Live 12 manual: Highlight Scale is on (press K). Every purple row is a note in your scale — set the root to **A** and the scale to **Minor**, and draw only on the purple rows. The root note gets the strongest highlight: start and end your phrases on it.

Turn on Scale Mode in Clip View



In **Clip View**, switch on **Scale**, then pick your root note and the scale name — Minor, Phrygian, and Harmonic Minor all live in that menu. For this edition that's root **A**, scale **Phrygian**. That one choice drives Highlight Scale, Fold to Scale, and the pitch tools.

That is genuinely the whole trick. The names of the notes change from key to key; the **shape of the gaps does not**. Think in shapes, not letters.

THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

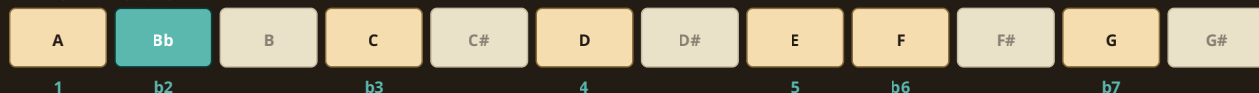
Natural minor alone is fine, but the indie tech flavor comes from two one-note tweaks: **flat the 2nd** for the dark Mediterranean hook (Phrygian), or **raise the 7th** for the exotic spice (harmonic minor). Next page shows both.

Two one-note tweaks make the indie tech flavor.

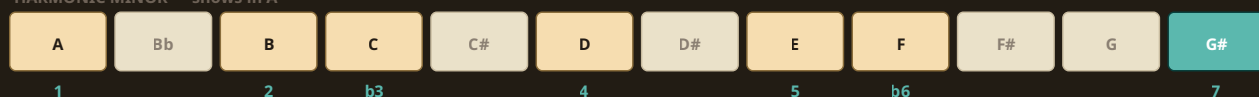
Start from natural minor. Move **one** note a half step and the whole mood changes. These two moves are the Mediterranean/Middle Eastern identity of the sound.

Phrygian (A): flat the 2nd. · Harmonic minor (A): raise the 7th.

PHRYGIAN — shows in A



HARMONIC MINOR — shows in A

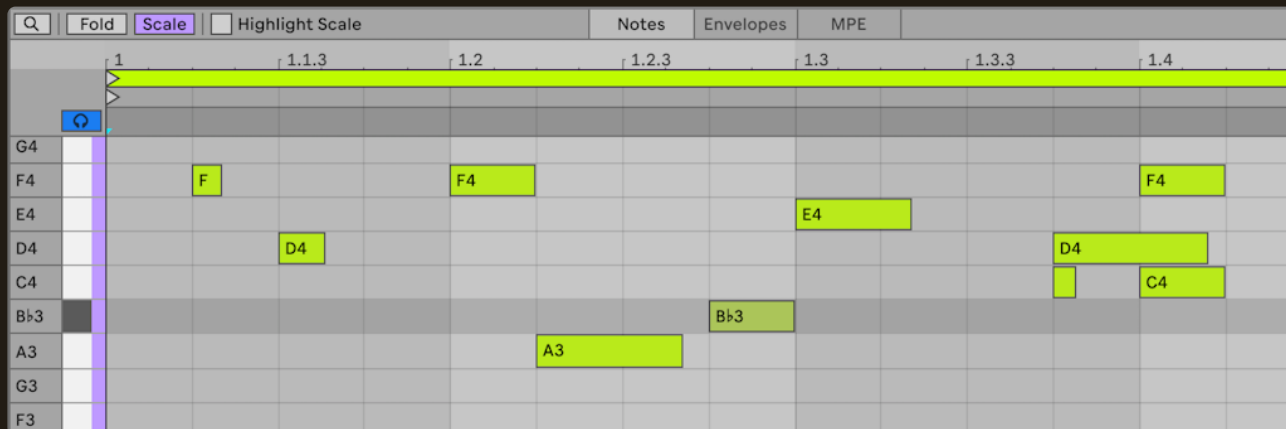


Phrygian = natural minor, 2nd dropped one half step · Harmonic minor = natural minor, 7th raised one half step

3 half steps — the exotic gap

"b" means "lowered from the major version". b2 = a half step above the root. That rubbed tension between the root and the b2 is the hook fingerprint of half the indie tech catalog.

Fold to Scale: hide every note you can't use



Screenshot from Ableton's Live 12 manual: press G with Scale on (root A, scale Phrygian) and the piano roll folds to your scale only. Every visible row is a legal note — you can draw freely without missing. This is the move when you don't trust your theory yet: pick your scale, fold, and write.

Reach for Phrygian when...

...you want the dark Mediterranean hook. Works especially well on bass: the rub between root and b2 (one half step apart) is what makes heads turn.

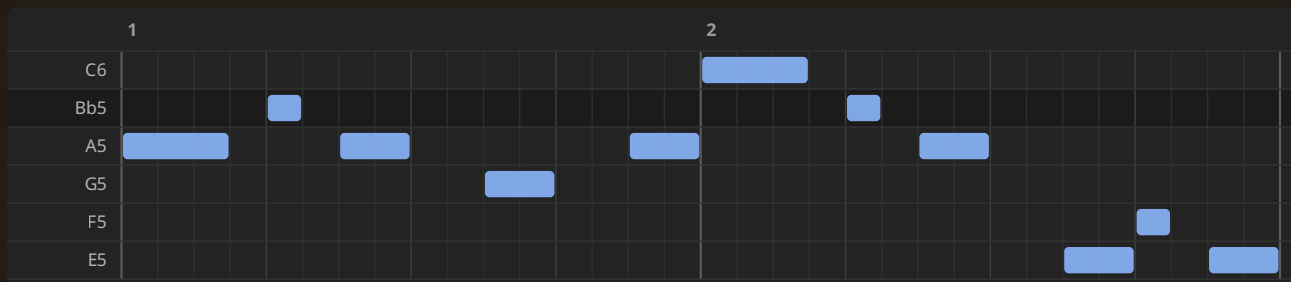
Reach for harmonic minor when...

...you want the exotic, desert-movie melody. That 3-half-step jump between the 6th and 7th is strong spice — use a little, or the whole track tastes like it.

Steal this hook. It's already in your key.

A two-bar A Phrygian hook drawn exactly as it looks in Ableton's MIDI Note Editor, folded to the scale (press G) — every row you see is a legal note. Copy the shape, change the rhythm, it's yours.

Two-bar A Phrygian hook — the b2 rub does the talking



The move: A–Bb–A in the first bar — that half-step rub is the indie tech fingerprint. It climbs to C, sighs E–F–E, and lands back home on A. Loop it, nudge the rhythm, never leave the folded rows.

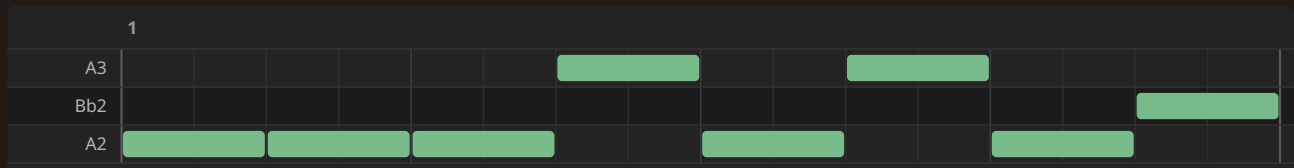
MAKE IT YOURS

Three moves and it stops sounding like an example: **1)** start the A–Bb rub on the and instead of the downbeat. **2)** Play the second bar up an octave. **3)** Copy both bars and end the copy on E instead of A — now the first half asks a question and the second half answers it.

The bass and the stabs that go under it.

Same key, same loop. Three patterns, one scale, zero wrong notes.

Rolling A bass — root 8ths, octave pops, one b2 spice



Root 8ths with octave pops on the ends of 2 and 3. The last 8th swaps to the b2 (Bb) — the indie tech touch. The kick owns the downbeat; this dances between the kicks.

A minor triad stabs — nothing on the downbeat

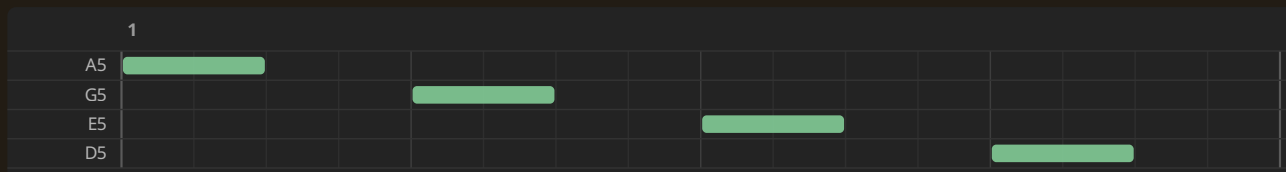


The 1–b3–5 stack (A – C – E) chopped onto the ands. Bar 2 flips to the higher voicing so it breathes. Short, punchy, gone before the kick lands.

Same home note, three indie tech moods.

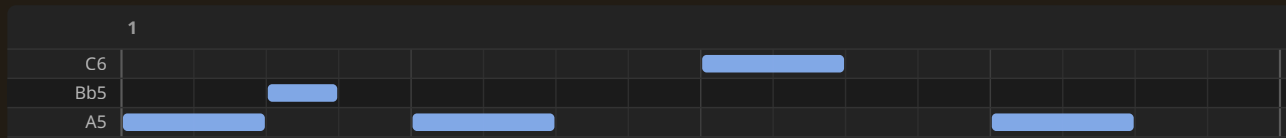
The three scales this lane runs on, all from A. Learn to hear which one a track is in — then steal it.

A natural minor — the plain groove



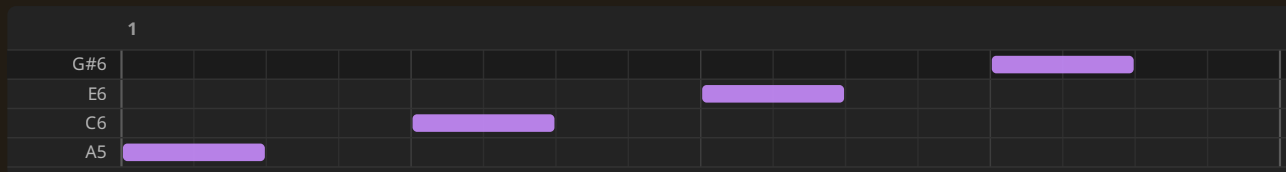
No rub, no spice — the canvas the other two paint on.

A Phrygian — flat the 2nd



Drop the 2nd to Bb — instant dark Mediterranean hook.

A harmonic minor — raise the 7th

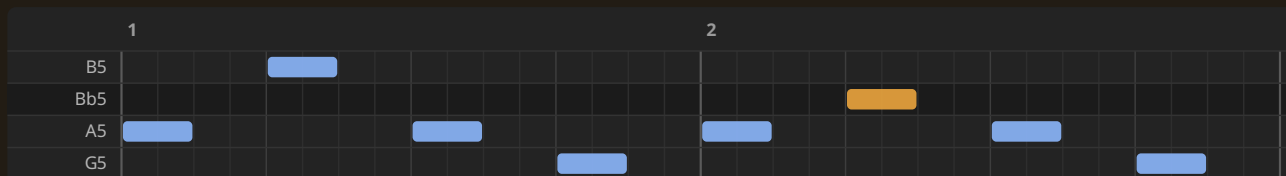


Raise the 7th to G# — the b6–7 lift is pure desert.

Live in one scale, shoplift from its neighbor.

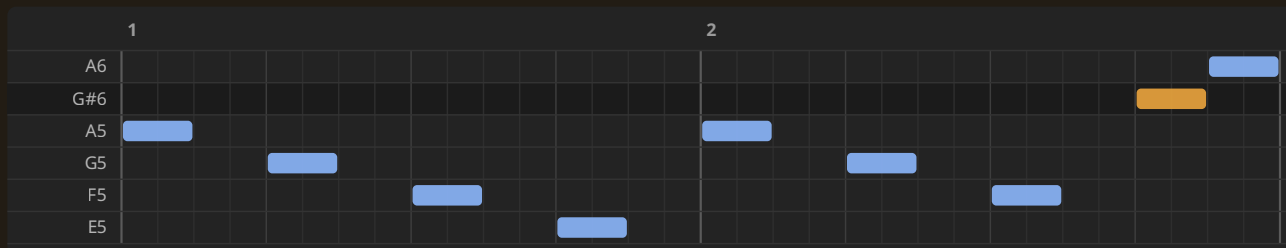
Phrygian *is* natural minor with the 2nd dropped; harmonic minor *is* natural minor with the 7th raised. So you can write a whole track in one scale and borrow a single note from the next — the loop keeps evolving and you never leave home.

Borrow the b2 — verse in A natural minor, hook in A Phrygian



Same rhythm, one note nudged down a half step — the orange note is the borrow. Verse breathes in natural minor, the hook bites in Phrygian.

The raised-7th turnaround



Borrow the raised 7th (G#) for exactly one heartbeat at the turnaround — harmonic minor flashes, then home. That 3-half-step b6–7 gap is the exotic lift.

You already know these scales. You just didn't know their names.

The b2 isn't a theory invention — it's the sound of half the melodies you grew up hearing.

The desert scale: Phrygian dominant — Phrygian with a major 3rd

A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#
1	b2			3	4		5	b6		b7	

Hava Nagila is the most famous b2 on earth — and it's Phrygian dominant: 1, b2, **3**, 4, 5, b6, b7. That b2 *plus* major-3rd rub is the desert-movie sound. **Misirlou** (the Pulp Fiction one) lives in the same family, one notch spicier.

THE INDIE TECH CONNECTION

Adam Ten, Rafael, Mita Gami and the whole indie tech wave run on these exact moves — the b2 rub and the raised-7th lift are the catalog's fingerprints. Next time a hook grabs you, hum it and check: nine times out of ten it's the 1–b2–1 rub or the b6–7–1 lift you just learned to draw.

PRACTICE: ONE SCALE PER DAY

Pick one of the three hooks on the previous page. Loop it for ten minutes, then borrow one note — flat the 2nd, or raise the 7th at the turnaround. That's intertwining. Do it until your ear reaches for the borrow before your brain does.

The bounce is where notes land, not which notes.

indie tech basslines are rolling 8th notes on the root with the **accent dodging the kick**. That dodge is the whole genre.

Straight vs. the bounce — the same notes, different landing spots

ON THE BEAT



THE BOUNCE



1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and

Same notes, moved to the "ands" = bounce. The kick handles the downbeat; the bass dancing between the kicks is what makes hips move.

A one-bar rolling bass: root anchors, octave pops

OCTAVE



5TH



ROOT



1 2 3 4

R = root, 5 = fifth, 8 = octave. These three notes are always in your key — there is no wrong move. The octave pops on the "ands" are the bounce.

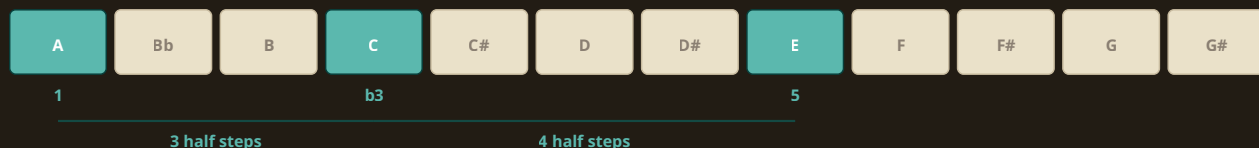
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

The indie tech move: write the bass exactly like the bar above, then **once every few bars**, swap one root pop for the Phrygian **b2** (one half step above your root). That little rub against the home note is the fingerprint bass move of the sound.

A chord is three notes from your key, stacked.

Count from your root: play the 1st, the flat-3rd, and the 5th. That is a minor triad — the chord underneath nearly every indie tech stab.

The minor triad: 1 - b3 - 5 (shown on A)

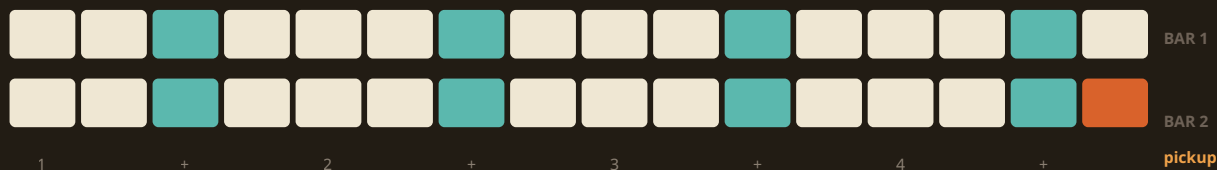


Stack the three notes in ANY order or octave and it is still the chord — just brighter or darker.

Build any minor triad by counting. From A: up 3 half steps (C), up 4 more (E). The order and octave are free — shuffle them for different flavors of the same chord.

Now turn the chord into a **stab**: play all three notes as one short, punchy hit — and do not put it on the downbeat. The kick owns the downbeat; the stab lives on the "ands", arguing with the bass.

Two bars of classic stab rhythm (the "ands")



Every stab sits off the kick. Bar 2 ends with a double hit (the "pickup") that shoves you back into bar 1. This two-bar loop is the engine of most house and tech house tracks.

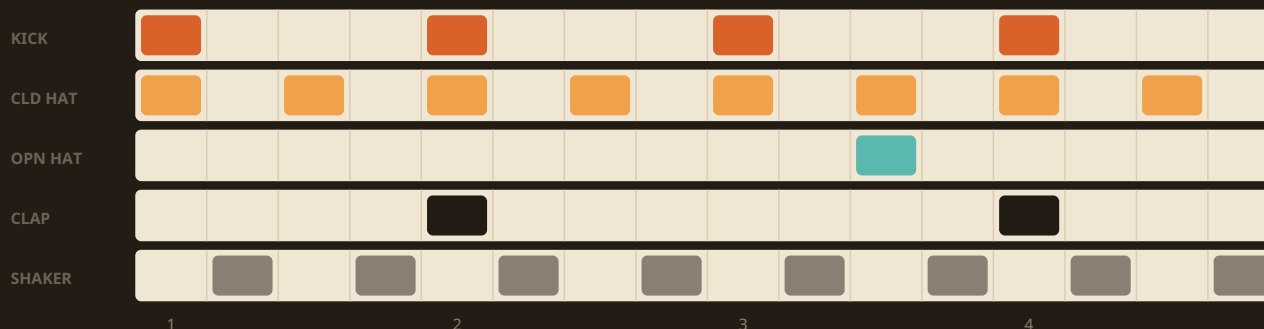
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

indie tech stabs run **short and dry** — the staff is rhythmic, not lush. Instant B-section: copy the whole stab loop, move **every note up one octave**, and use it only in the second half of the drop.

Kick owns the downbeat. Swing loosens everything else.

The rhythm bar below is worth more than a chapter on scales. Every row does one job — and **swing** is what makes the rows breathe together.

One bar: the full house drum grid (16 steps)



Kick: anchors time. **Closed hats:** tick the 8ths. **Open hat:** one breath per bar. **Clap:** slaps on 2 and 4.

Shaker: the glue filling the gaps. Start here and remove hats if the groove gets busy — never add more before this works.

Swing: the same row, loosened



Every other hit nudged **late** (nothing else changed). 52-56% on 16ths is the sweet spot; past 58% it's stumbling-drinks.

Swing hats and shaker together, or they fight each other. Kick and clap stay straight — they are the reference frame your swing wobbles against.

A hook is five notes and two phrases.

Take your minor scale and throw out the 2nd and the 6th. The five remaining notes (**the pentatonic cheat**) all work with each other — every choice is safe. A hook is a question that leaves home, then an answer that lands back on the root.

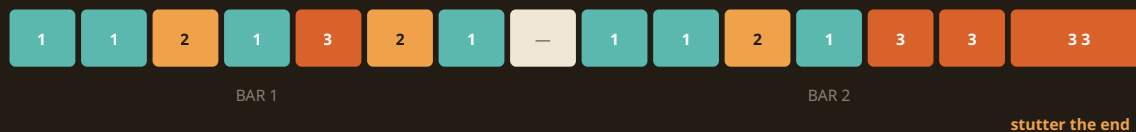
Question and answer: two phrases over two bars



The question jumps between safe notes; the answer walks down and parks on the root. Most memorable hooks in this lane are exactly this shape — wander, then land.

Vocal chops follow the same idea, with the vocal doing the melody work for you: slice a phrase into syllables, tune the slices to your key, place them like stabs on the offbeats, and **stutter the last slice** — repeat it two or three times to slam the loop shut.

A chop map: which syllable plays, step by step



Numbers are syllables from the original phrase. Same few syllables, playful order, shuffled into the offbeat grid. The ending stutter is the vocal equivalent of the stab's pickup.

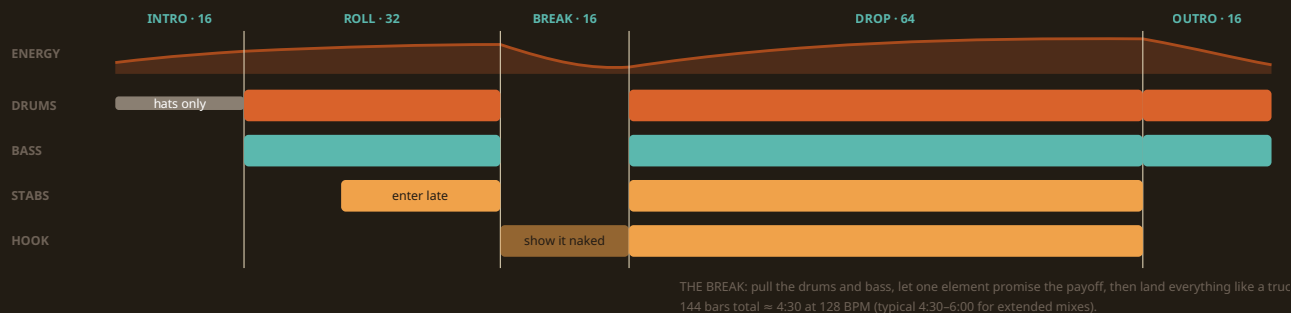
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

indie tech hooks lean **Phrygian**: spring the b2 into the question (one jab of tension) and land the answer cleanly on the root. Tension first, safe landing later — that push/pull is the lane.

Stack layers in sections. Strip them off at the break.

A DJ track is a movie in five scenes: setup, groove, tension, payoff, exit. Scenes land in 16-bar chunks because mixes are built on 16s and 32s — and because your listener predicts the drop and you must make them wait.

Anatomy of a track: layers enter, the break strips them off



Only one thing changes at a time. A layer enters, the groove holds, then the next one. The intro and outro exist so a DJ can mix your track — never skip them.

DJ-FRIENDLY RULES

Bars come in **16s**. Intros are **mixing room**, not a second song. The break is **the window DJs mix in** — keep it simple and don't surprise anyone there.

The five-minute workflow. Every track.

Order matters: build the groove first, the melodies last. Repeatable beats inspired for track number one hundred.

1 Pick a key.

A minor to start. Write the root name somewhere you can see it. Done is better than clever.

2 Sketch the drums.

One bar from the grid on page 118. Kick, hats, clap, shaker — do not fiddle, this bar is a placeholder for the whole track.

3 Shape the bass.

Root on the 8ths, octave pops on the "ands", one slip onto the b2 every few bars if you are feeling indie tech.

4 Drop the stabs.

One minor triad on the "ands", a two-bar loop with a pickup. Steal the rhythm from page 116 and do not touch it again until the groove breathes.

5 Write the hook.

Five pentatonic notes, question then answer over two bars. Synth line or vocal chops — same rules either way.

6 Steal the arrangement.

Sections in 16s. Carve the break by deleting drums and bass for 16 bars. Everything before is the setup; the drop is the argument.

When it sounds wrong — the anti-fail list

- ☐ **It clashes:** scan the piano roll for a note not in your key. One black key is usually the whole bug.
- ☐ **It drags:** it is the rhythm, not the notes. Push hits onto the "ands" or add swing to hats and shaker.
- ☐ **The hook won't sit:** it is probably playing on beats where the kick lives. Shift its first hit to an "and".
- ☐ **The bass is muddy:** too many different low notes. Anchor the root and move the octave pops higher.
- ☐ **Before bounce:** is the intro DJ-mixable, is the break exactly 16, does the drop land after it?

THE WORKFLOW RULE

Render the loop and listen tomorrow, then fix exactly one thing and move on. A finished track you learned from beats five unfinished theory exercises every time.

Steal these shapes. Finish tracks.

The whole guide on one page. Keep it next to the keyboard until A Phrygian is muscle memory.

The three shapes

NATURAL MINOR (A) — shape: W-H-W-W-H-W-W · slides to any root

A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#
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PHRYGIAN (A) — natural minor with the 2nd dropped a half step (the indie tech move)

A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#
---	----	---	---	----	---	----	---	---	----	---	----

HARMONIC MINOR (A) — natural minor with the 7th raised a half step (the spice)

A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#
---	----	---	---	----	---	----	---	---	----	---	----

Triad emergency line: minor chord = 1 + b3 + 5 (count up 3, then 4 half steps). Example from A: **A - C - E**.

The rhythm in one bar (16 steps)

KICK	
CH HAT	
OP HAT	
CLAP	
SHKR	

Stabs, hooks, chops: nothing on the downbeat — live on the "ands". Swing hats + shaker together at 52-56%.

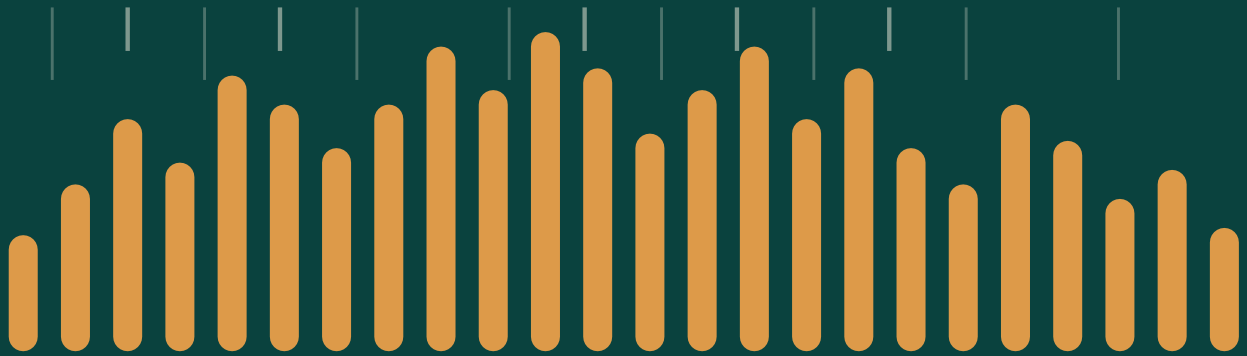
THE SIX GOLDEN RULES

1. **Stay in the key.** Wrong notes are almost always outside-scale notes.
2. **Root, 5th, octave:** the three notes that are always safe on the bass.
3. **Offbeats = bounce, swing = breath.** Rhythm covers simple harmony.
4. **Question, then answer.** Every hook leaves home and lands back on the root.
5. **Strip the break to one element.** The drop argues louder when the break whispers.
6. **Finish the arrangement before you polish.** A structured track beats a perfect loop.

THE DUMBED-DOWN EDITION

Music Theory for indie tech Tech House

Notes, scales, chords, basslines, drums, and arrangement —
minimum viable theory for warm, bouncy, groove-first tracks. No
sight-reading. No exams.



What each thing actually does — shown, not explained.

Five ideas do 90% of the work. The rest is taste.

Read front to back once, then use the cheat sheet forever.

MADE FOR CLAY GOLDIN · B PHRYGIAN EDITION

Five ideas do 90% of the work

A indie-tech-style track is not theory-dense. It is a small handful of decisions made well. Here they are, in the order this guide covers them.

1 Notes

There are only 12 musical notes, and they repeat forever. Learn them once, on a keyboard, and recognize them in the piano roll.

2 Key

Pick one note as home base. The "key" is the set of notes that feel like home around it. In this lane you will almost always pick Phrygian.

3 Scales

A scale is a recipe for which notes are "allowed". The minor scale is one spacing shape you can slide to any key. Two tiny variations give the indie tech flavor.

4 Rhythm and drums

The groove. Four-to-the-floor kick, swung hats and percussion, offbeat syncopation. Good rhythm covers a lot of simple harmony.

5 Chords and arrangement

Three-note chords turned into stabs, then everything packed into DJ-friendly sections that build to one payoff.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read pages 125 to 138 once, in order. Each page teaches one idea and ends with what to do with it. Page 139 gives the repeatable starting workflow for every track. Page 140 is the cheat sheet — print it, screenshot it, keep it next to the screen while you write.

You do not need

Reading sheet music. Perfect pitch. Knowing the circle of fifths. Anything with a Roman numeral.

You do need

A DAW with a piano roll. A copy of the keyboard diagrams (they are in here). Twenty minutes and one genre you already love.

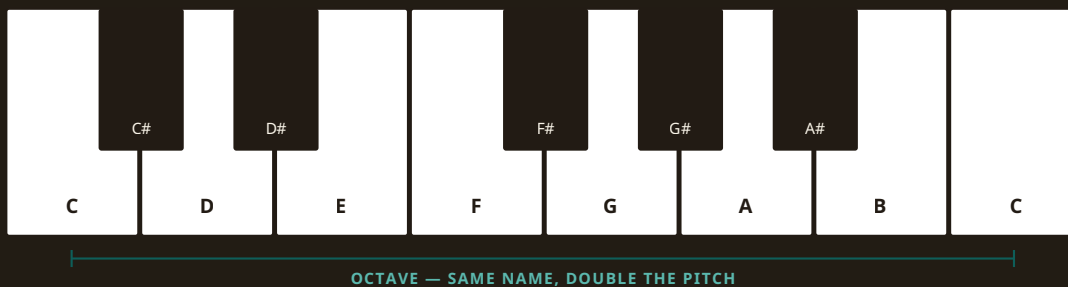
Only 12 notes exist. Learn them once.

A note is a named pitch. There are twelve of them, and they just repeat forever. The keyboard below is one octave — one full set of twelve.

White keys are named **C, D, E, F, G, A, B**, and then they start over. Black keys are the notes **in between** — named after their neighbor plus a # (sharp), which means "one step up". So the black key between C and D is **C#**, and between F and G is **F#**. There is no black key between E/F or B/C — those pairs are already touching.

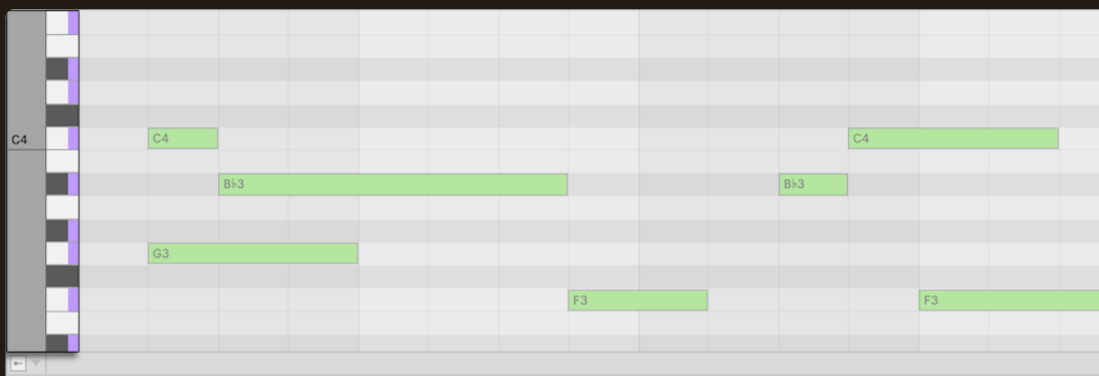
After 12 notes, the names repeat at twice the frequency. That repeat is called an **octave**. In Ableton the piano roll is the same layout turned vertical — the same 12 names repeating up the screen.

One octave: the whole universe, C to C



Count them: 7 white + 5 black = 12. That is every note that exists. Everything else in music is choosing some notes, skipping others, and repeating.

The same keyboard in Ableton — turned vertical



This is Ableton's piano ruler, from the official Live 12 manual. The same 12 names run bottom to top instead of left to right — the strip labeled **C4** marks your octave. Click a key to hear it, double-click the grid to drop a note on that row.

Pick a home note. Then stay in its sandbox.

The "key" answers two questions: which note is home, and which notes are allowed. Everything in your track lives in it — the bass, the chords, the hook.

Major keys sound happy and resolved. **Phrygian** is tense and moody with a dark Mediterranean edge. This whole lane is Phrygian — **B** is home, and the allowed notes are the Phrygian scale from B.

B Phrygian is your home for this guide: make **B** your home, and the allowed notes are B, C, D, E, F#, G, A. Seven notes — that is the whole game. You can slide this same shape to any other home note later.

B Phrygian: your seven allowed notes



The gray notes are NOT in the key — ignore them for now.

In B Phrygian the allowed notes are B, C, D, E, F#, G, A. Play only these and you literally cannot play a wrong note. The numbers are scale degrees — the "position" of each note matters more than its name.

THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

Most indie-tech-style tracks sit in Phrygian with meat in the low register — the catalog lives around D, E, and F. B Phrygian is the same shape from a different home note. Learn this shape once and you can play any of those.

The one rule of keys: **if the note is not in your scale, it is probably wrong.** One accidental black key is the reason a bass line that "feels off" actually feels off.

THE ONLY VOCAB YOU NEED

A half step (semitone) = the smallest step: one key to the next, black or white. C to C# is a half step. E to F is a half step.

A whole step = two half steps. C to D is a whole step.

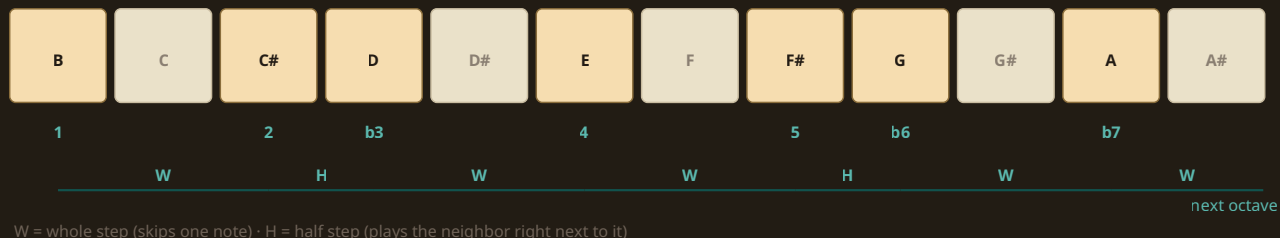
All of the scales in this guide are just recipes counted in half and whole steps.

3 · SCALES

The minor scale is a shape you can slide.

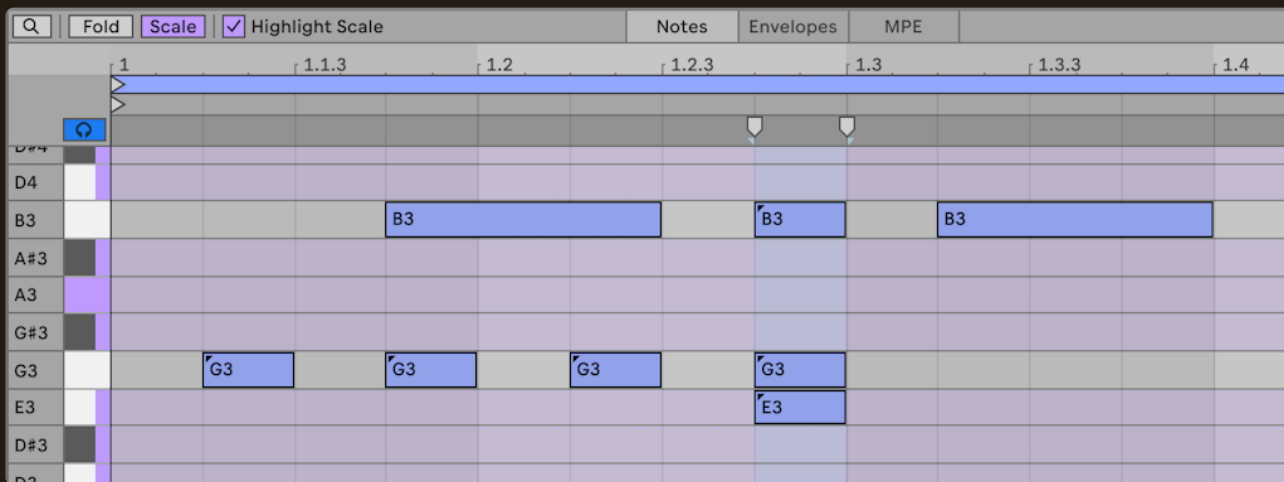
A scale is how far apart the allowed notes sit from each other. Count in whole (W) and half (H) steps: the natural minor scale is **W - H - W - W - H - W - W**.

The minor shape on the 12-note strip (shown from B)



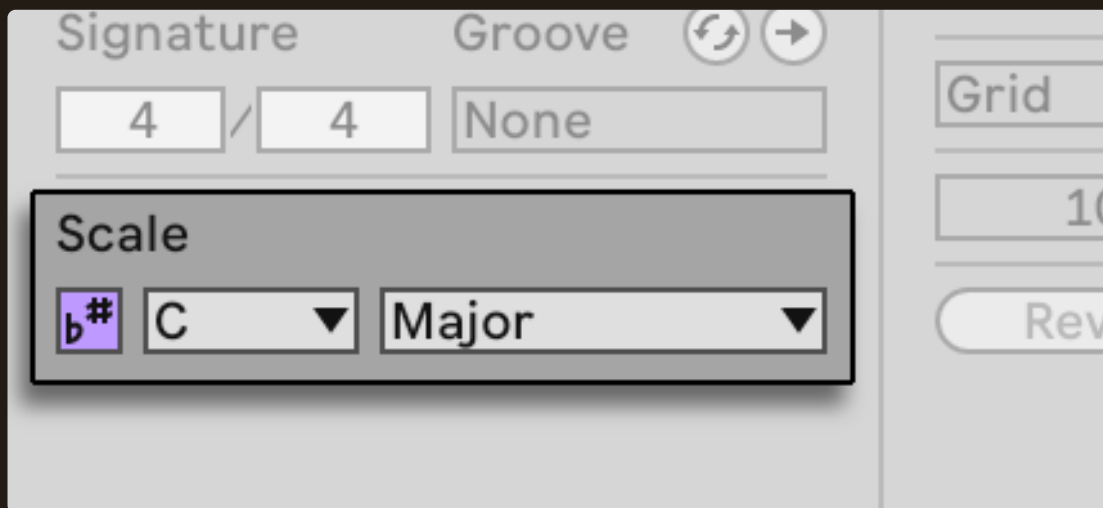
Start on ANY note, count W-H-W-W-H-W-W, and you have that minor key. Want B minor? Start on B: B W C# H D W E W F# H G W A W B. Do it once, write the answer down, never do it again.

Your scale, lit up inside Ableton's piano roll



Screenshot from Ableton's Live 12 manual: Highlight Scale is on (press K). Every purple row is a note in your scale — set the root to **B** and the scale to **Minor**, and draw only on the purple rows. The root note gets the strongest highlight: start and end your phrases on it.

Turn on Scale Mode in Clip View



In **Clip View**, **switch on Scale**, then pick your root note and the scale name — Minor, Phrygian, and Harmonic Minor all live in that menu. For this edition that's root **B**, scale **Phrygian**. That one choice drives Highlight Scale, Fold to Scale, and the pitch tools.

That is genuinely the whole trick. The names of the notes change from key to key; the **shape of the gaps does not**. Think in shapes, not letters.

THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

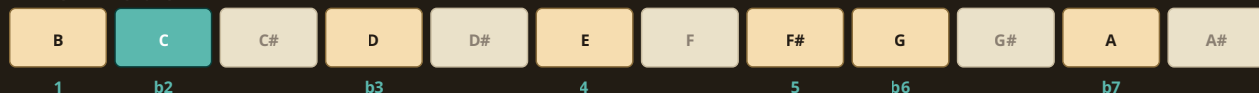
Natural minor alone is fine, but the indie tech flavor comes from two one-note tweaks: **flat the 2nd** for the dark Mediterranean hook (Phrygian), or **raise the 7th** for the exotic spice (harmonic minor). Next page shows both.

Two one-note tweaks make the indie tech flavor.

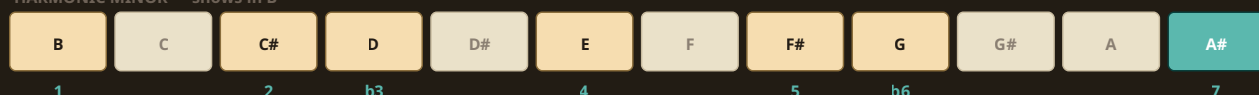
Start from natural minor. Move **one** note a half step and the whole mood changes. These two moves are the Mediterranean/Middle Eastern identity of the sound.

Phrygian (B): flat the 2nd. · Harmonic minor (B): raise the 7th.

PHRYGIAN — shows in B



HARMONIC MINOR — shows in B

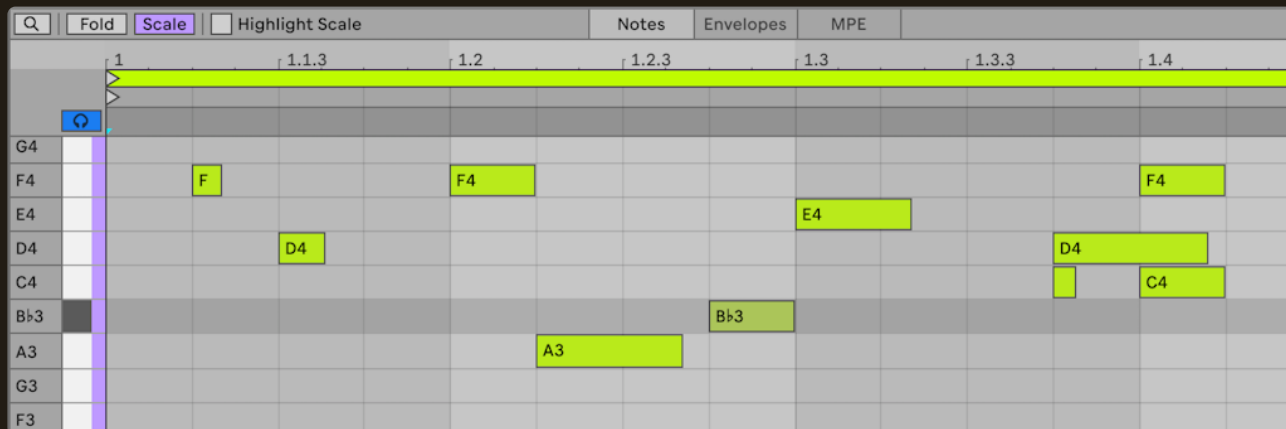


3 half steps — the exotic gap

Phrygian = natural minor, 2nd dropped one half step · Harmonic minor = natural minor, 7th raised one half step

"b" means "lowered from the major version". b2 = a half step above the root. That rubbed tension between the root and the b2 is the hook fingerprint of half the indie tech catalog.

Fold to Scale: hide every note you can't use



Screenshot from Ableton's Live 12 manual: press **G** with **Scale** on (root B, scale Phrygian) and the piano roll folds to your scale only. Every visible row is a legal note — you can draw freely without missing. This is the move when you don't trust your theory yet: pick your scale, fold, and write.

Reach for Phrygian when...

...you want the dark Mediterranean hook. Works especially well on bass: the rub between root and b2 (one half step apart) is what makes heads turn.

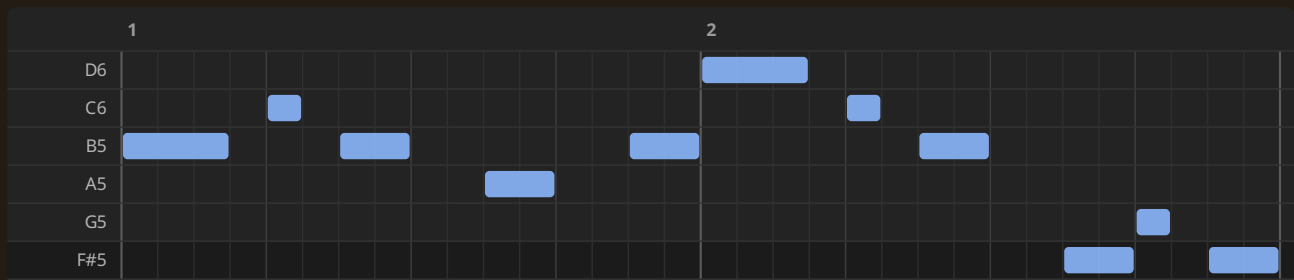
Reach for harmonic minor when...

...you want the exotic, desert-movie melody. That 3-half-step jump between the 6th and 7th is strong spice — use a little, or the whole track tastes like it.

Steal this hook. It's already in your key.

A two-bar B Phrygian hook drawn exactly as it looks in Ableton's MIDI Note Editor, folded to the scale (press G) — every row you see is a legal note. Copy the shape, change the rhythm, it's yours.

Two-bar B Phrygian hook — the b2 rub does the talking



The move: B–C–B in the first bar — that half-step rub is the indie tech fingerprint. It climbs to D, sighs F#–G–F#, and lands back home on B. Loop it, nudge the rhythm, never leave the folded rows.

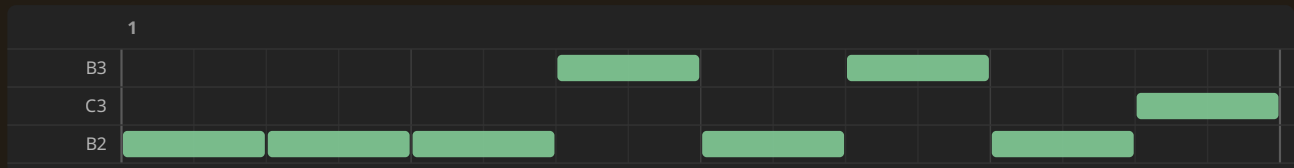
MAKE IT YOURS

Three moves and it stops sounding like an example: **1)** start the B–C rub on the and instead of the downbeat. **2)** Play the second bar up an octave. **3)** Copy both bars and end the copy on F# instead of B — now the first half asks a question and the second half answers it.

The bass and the stabs that go under it.

Same key, same loop. Three patterns, one scale, zero wrong notes.

Rolling B bass — root 8ths, octave pops, one b2 spice



Root 8ths with octave pops on the ends of 2 and 3. The last 8th swaps to the b2 (C) — the indie tech touch. The kick owns the downbeat; this dances between the kicks.

B minor triad stabs — nothing on the downbeat

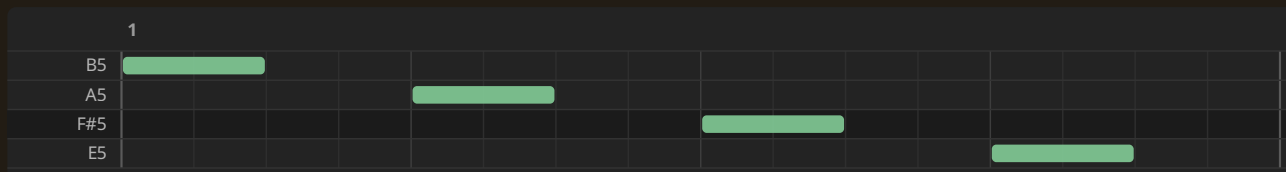


The 1-b3-5 stack (B – D – F#) chopped onto the ands. Bar 2 flips to the higher voicing so it breathes. Short, punchy, gone before the kick lands.

Same home note, three indie tech moods.

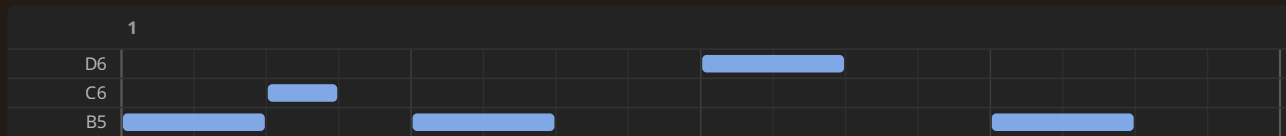
The three scales this lane runs on, all from B. Learn to hear which one a track is in — then steal it.

B natural minor — the plain groove



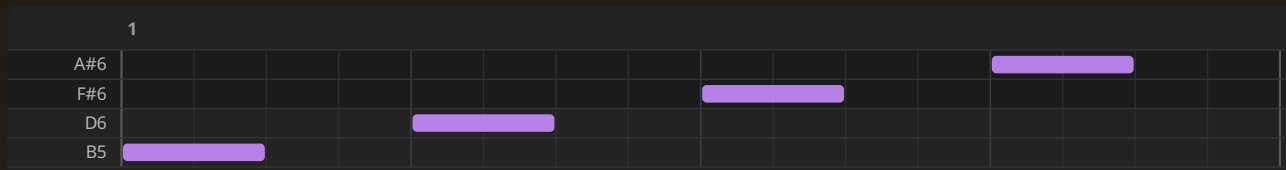
No rub, no spice — the canvas the other two paint on.

B Phrygian — flat the 2nd



Drop the 2nd to C — instant dark Mediterranean hook.

B harmonic minor — raise the 7th

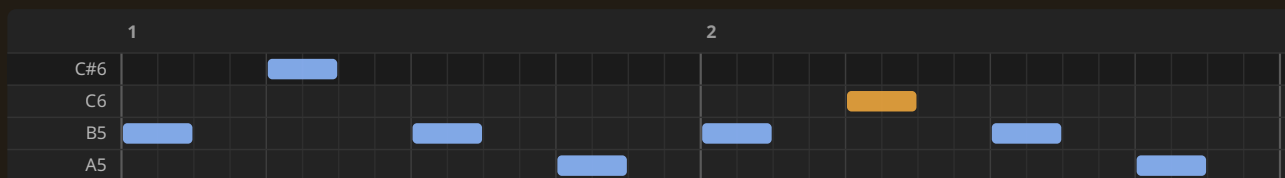


Raise the 7th to A# — the b6–7 lift is pure desert.

Live in one scale, shoplift from its neighbor.

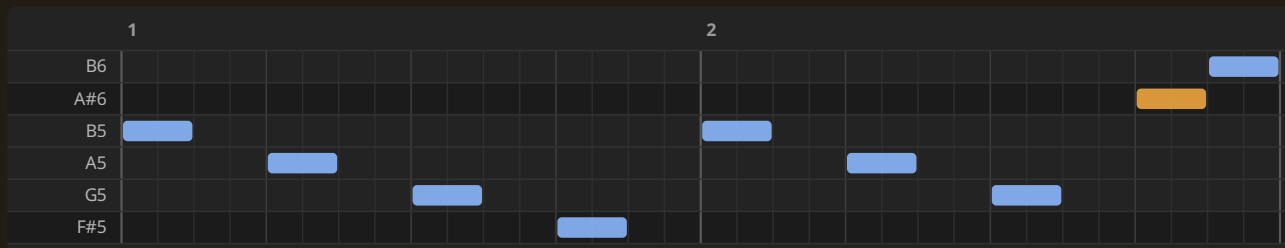
Phrygian *is* natural minor with the 2nd dropped; harmonic minor *is* natural minor with the 7th raised. So you can write a whole track in one scale and borrow a single note from the next — the loop keeps evolving and you never leave home.

Borrow the b2 — verse in B natural minor, hook in B Phrygian



Same rhythm, one note nudged down a half step — the orange note is the borrow. Verse breathes in natural minor, the hook bites in Phrygian.

The raised-7th turnaround

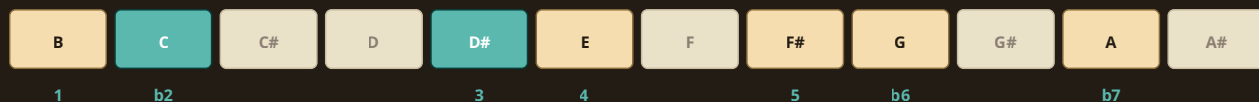


Borrow the raised 7th (A#) for exactly one heartbeat at the turnaround — harmonic minor flashes, then home. That 3-half-step b6–7 gap is the exotic lift.

You already know these scales. You just didn't know their names.

The b2 isn't a theory invention — it's the sound of half the melodies you grew up hearing.

The desert scale: Phrygian dominant — Phrygian with a major 3rd



Hava Nagila is the most famous b2 on earth — and it's Phrygian dominant: 1, b2, **3**, 4, 5, b6, b7. That b2 *plus* major-3rd rub is the desert-movie sound. **Misirlou** (the Pulp Fiction one) lives in the same family, one notch spicier.

THE INDIE TECH CONNECTION

Adam Ten, Rafael, Mita Gami and the whole indie tech wave run on these exact moves — the b2 rub and the raised-7th lift are the catalog's fingerprints. Next time a hook grabs you, hum it and check: nine times out of ten it's the 1–b2–1 rub or the b6–7–1 lift you just learned to draw.

PRACTICE: ONE SCALE PER DAY

Pick one of the three hooks on the previous page. Loop it for ten minutes, then borrow one note — flat the 2nd, or raise the 7th at the turnaround. That's intertwining. Do it until your ear reaches for the borrow before your brain does.

The bounce is where notes land, not which notes.

indie tech basslines are rolling 8th notes on the root with the **accent dodging the kick**. That dodge is the whole genre.

Straight vs. the bounce — the same notes, different landing spots

ON THE BEAT



THE BOUNCE



Same notes, moved to the "ands" = bounce. The kick handles the downbeat; the bass dancing between the kicks is what makes hips move.

A one-bar rolling bass: root anchors, octave pops

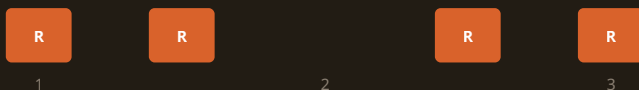
OCTAVE



5TH



ROOT



R = root, 5 = fifth, 8 = octave. These three notes are always in your key — there is no wrong move. The octave pops on the "ands" are the bounce.

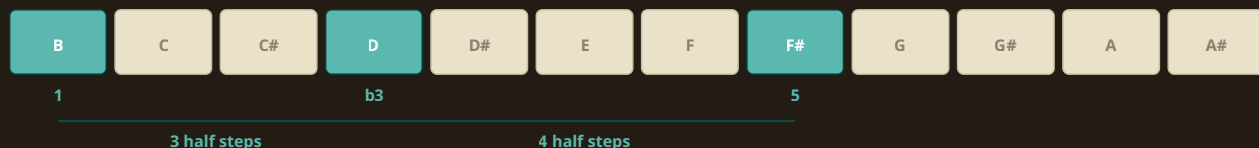
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

The indie tech move: write the bass exactly like the bar above, then **once every few bars**, swap one root pop for the Phrygian **b2** (one half step above your root). That little rub against the home note is the fingerprint bass move of the sound.

A chord is three notes from your key, stacked.

Count from your root: play the 1st, the flat-3rd, and the 5th. That is a minor triad — the chord underneath nearly every indie tech stab.

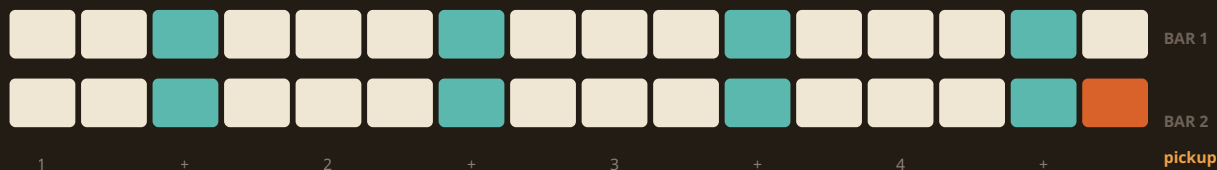
The minor triad: 1 - b3 - 5 (shown on B)



Build any minor triad by counting. From B: up 3 half steps (D), up 4 more (F#). The order and octave are free — shuffle them for different flavors of the same chord.

Now turn the chord into a **stab**: play all three notes as one short, punchy hit — and do not put it on the downbeat. The kick owns the downbeat; the stab lives on the "ands", arguing with the bass.

Two bars of classic stab rhythm (the "ands")



Every stab sits off the kick. Bar 2 ends with a double hit (the "pickup") that shoves you back into bar 1. This two-bar loop is the engine of most house and tech house tracks.

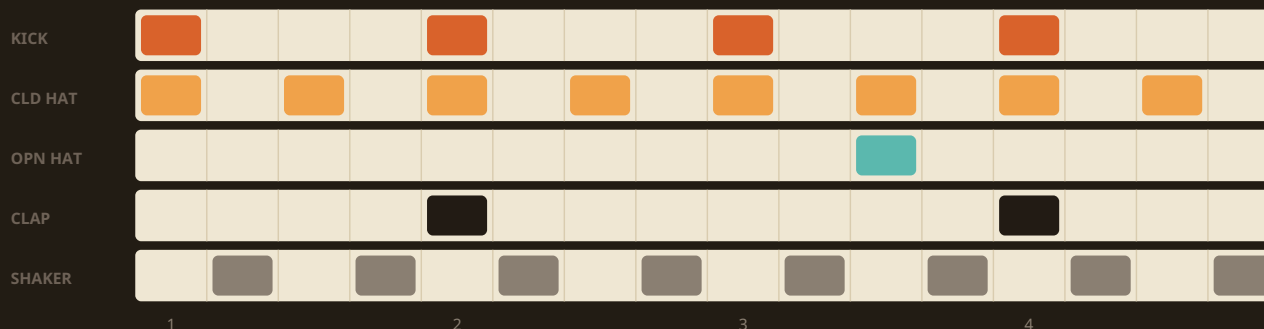
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

indie tech stabs run **short and dry** — the staff is rhythmic, not lush. Instant B-section: copy the whole stab loop, move **every note up one octave**, and use it only in the second half of the drop.

Kick owns the downbeat. Swing loosens everything else.

The rhythm bar below is worth more than a chapter on scales. Every row does one job — and **swing** is what makes the rows breathe together.

One bar: the full house drum grid (16 steps)



Kick: anchors time. **Closed hats:** tick the 8ths. **Open hat:** one breath per bar. **Clap:** slaps on 2 and 4.

Shaker: the glue filling the gaps. Start here and remove hats if the groove gets busy — never add more before this works.

Swing: the same row, loosened



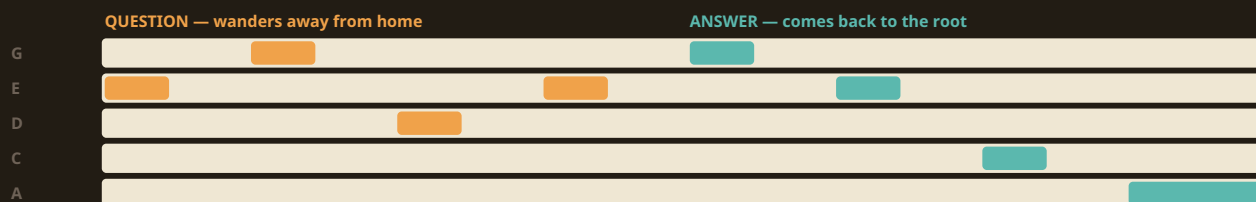
Every other hit nudged **late** (nothing else changed). 52-56% on 16ths is the sweet spot; past 58% it stumbling-drinks.

Swing hats and shaker together, or they fight each other. Kick and clap stay straight — they are the reference frame your swing wobbles against.

A hook is five notes and two phrases.

Take your minor scale and throw out the 2nd and the 6th. The five remaining notes (**the pentatonic cheat**) all work with each other — every choice is safe. A hook is a question that leaves home, then an answer that lands back on the root.

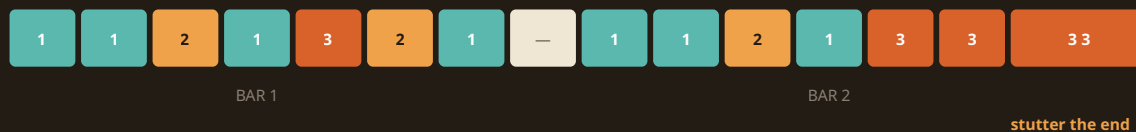
Question and answer: two phrases over two bars



The question jumps between safe notes; the answer walks down and parks on the root. Most memorable hooks in this lane are exactly this shape — wander, then land.

Vocal chops follow the same idea, with the vocal doing the melody work for you: slice a phrase into syllables, tune the slices to your key, place them like stabs on the offbeats, and **stutter the last slice** — repeat it two or three times to slam the loop shut.

A chop map: which syllable plays, step by step



Numbers are syllables from the original phrase. Same few syllables, playful order, shuffled into the offbeat grid. The ending stutter is the vocal equivalent of the stab's pickup.

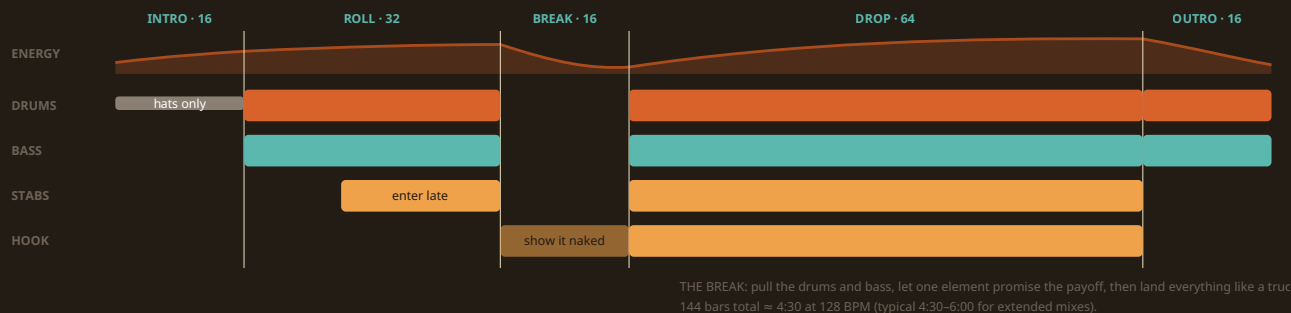
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

indie tech hooks lean **Phrygian**: spring the b2 into the question (one jab of tension) and land the answer cleanly on the root. Tension first, safe landing later — that push/pull is the lane.

Stack layers in sections. Strip them off at the break.

A DJ track is a movie in five scenes: setup, groove, tension, payoff, exit. Scenes land in 16-bar chunks because mixes are built on 16s and 32s — and because your listener predicts the drop and you must make them wait.

Anatomy of a track: layers enter, the break strips them off



Only one thing changes at a time. A layer enters, the groove holds, then the next one. The intro and outro exist so a DJ can mix your track — never skip them.

DJ-FRIENDLY RULES

Bars come in **16s**. Intros are **mixing room**, not a second song. The break is **the window DJs mix in** — keep it simple and don't surprise anyone there.

The five-minute workflow. Every track.

Order matters: build the groove first, the melodies last. Repeatable beats inspired for track number one hundred.

1 Pick a key.

A minor to start. Write the root name somewhere you can see it. Done is better than clever.

2 Sketch the drums.

One bar from the grid on page 136. Kick, hats, clap, shaker — do not fiddle, this bar is a placeholder for the whole track.

3 Shape the bass.

Root on the 8ths, octave pops on the "ands", one slip onto the b2 every few bars if you are feeling indie tech.

4 Drop the stabs.

One minor triad on the "ands", a two-bar loop with a pickup. Steal the rhythm from page 134 and do not touch it again until the groove breathes.

5 Write the hook.

Five pentatonic notes, question then answer over two bars. Synth line or vocal chops — same rules either way.

6 Steal the arrangement.

Sections in 16s. Carve the break by deleting drums and bass for 16 bars. Everything before is the setup; the drop is the argument.

When it sounds wrong — the anti-fail list

- ☐ **It clashes:** scan the piano roll for a note not in your key. One black key is usually the whole bug.
- ☐ **It drags:** it is the rhythm, not the notes. Push hits onto the "ands" or add swing to hats and shaker.
- ☐ **The hook won't sit:** it is probably playing on beats where the kick lives. Shift its first hit to an "and".
- ☐ **The bass is muddy:** too many different low notes. Anchor the root and move the octave pops higher.
- ☐ **Before bounce:** is the intro DJ-mixable, is the break exactly 16, does the drop land after it?

THE WORKFLOW RULE

Render the loop and listen tomorrow, then fix exactly one thing and move on. A finished track you learned from beats five unfinished theory exercises every time.

Steal these shapes. Finish tracks.

The whole guide on one page. Keep it next to the keyboard until B Phrygian is muscle memory.

The three shapes

NATURAL MINOR (B) — shape: W-H-W-W-H-W-W · slides to any root

B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#
---	---	----	---	----	---	---	----	---	----	---	----

PHRYGIAN (B) — natural minor with the 2nd dropped a half step (the indie tech move)

B	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#
---	---	----	---	----	---	---	----	---	----	---	----

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---	---	----	---	----	---	---	----	---	----	---	----

Triad emergency line: minor chord = 1 + b3 + 5 (count up 3, then 4 half steps). Example from B: **B - D - F#**.

The rhythm in one bar (16 steps)

KICK															
CH HAT															
OP HAT															
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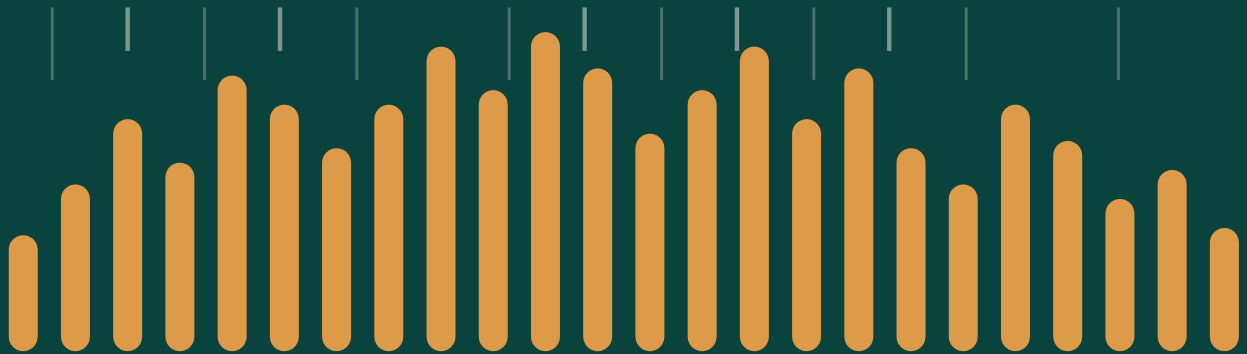
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A scale is a recipe for which notes are "allowed". The minor scale is one spacing shape you can slide to any key. Two tiny variations give the indie tech flavor.

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The groove. Four-to-the-floor kick, swung hats and percussion, offbeat syncopation. Good rhythm covers a lot of simple harmony.

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Three-note chords turned into stabs, then everything packed into DJ-friendly sections that build to one payoff.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read pages 143 to 156 once, in order. Each page teaches one idea and ends with what to do with it. Page 157 gives the repeatable starting workflow for every track. Page 158 is the cheat sheet — print it, screenshot it, keep it next to the screen while you write.

You do not need

Reading sheet music. Perfect pitch. Knowing the circle of fifths. Anything with a Roman numeral.

You do need

A DAW with a piano roll. A copy of the keyboard diagrams (they are in here). Twenty minutes and one genre you already love.

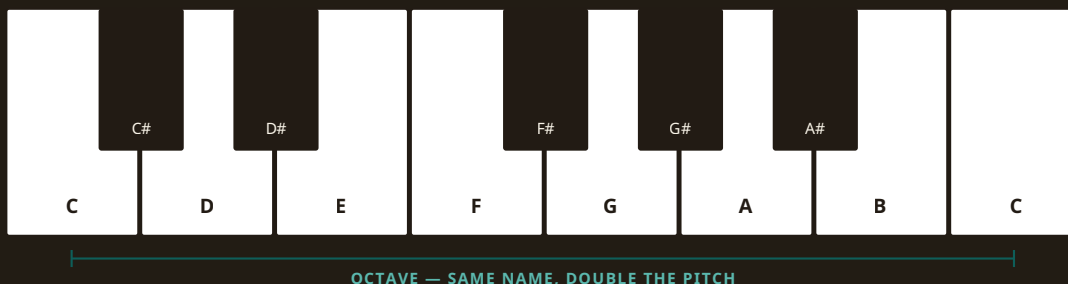
Only 12 notes exist. Learn them once.

A note is a named pitch. There are twelve of them, and they just repeat forever. The keyboard below is one octave — one full set of twelve.

White keys are named **C, D, E, F, G, A, B**, and then they start over. Black keys are the notes **in between** — named after their neighbor plus a # (sharp), which means "one step up". So the black key between C and D is **C#**, and between F and G is **F#**. There is no black key between E/F or B/C — those pairs are already touching.

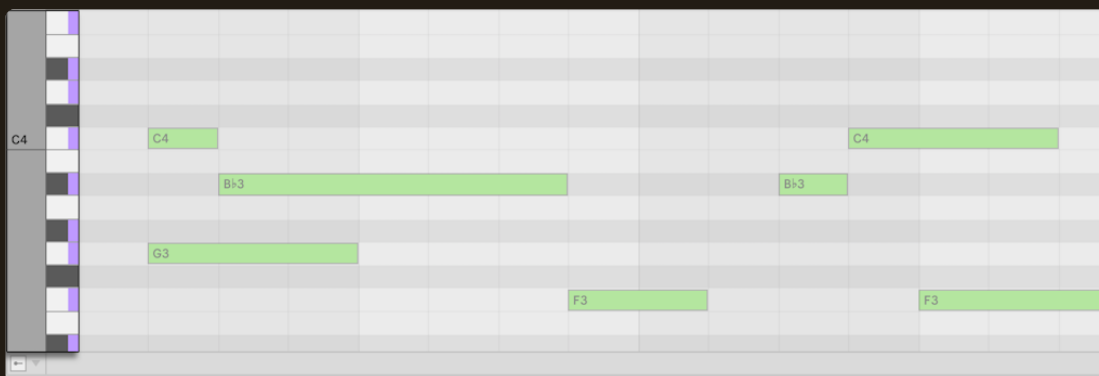
After 12 notes, the names repeat at twice the frequency. That repeat is called an **octave**. In Ableton the piano roll is the same layout turned vertical — the same 12 names repeating up the screen.

One octave: the whole universe, C to C



Count them: 7 white + 5 black = 12. That is every note that exists. Everything else in music is choosing some notes, skipping others, and repeating.

The same keyboard in Ableton — turned vertical



This is Ableton's piano ruler, from the official Live 12 manual. The same 12 names run bottom to top instead of left to right — the strip labeled **C4** marks your octave. Click a key to hear it, double-click the grid to drop a note on that row.

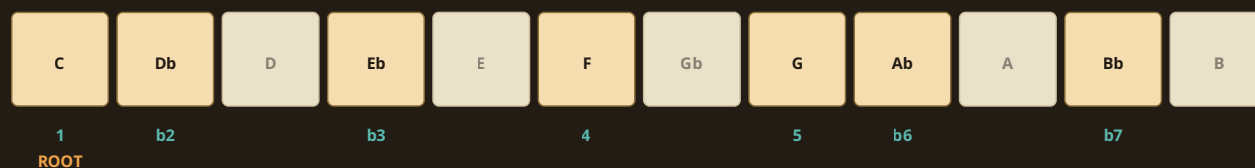
Pick a home note. Then stay in its sandbox.

The "key" answers two questions: which note is home, and which notes are allowed. Everything in your track lives in it — the bass, the chords, the hook.

Major keys sound happy and resolved. **Phrygian** is tense and moody with a dark Mediterranean edge. This whole lane is Phrygian — **C** is home, and the allowed notes are the Phrygian scale from C.

C Phrygian is your home for this guide: make **C** your home, and the allowed notes are C, Db, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb. Seven notes — that is the whole game. You can slide this same shape to any other home note later.

C Phrygian: your seven allowed notes



The gray notes are NOT in the key — ignore them for now.

In C Phrygian the allowed notes are C, Db, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb. Play only these and you literally cannot play a wrong note. The numbers are scale degrees — the "position" of each note matters more than its name.

THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

Most indie-tech-style tracks sit in Phrygian with meat in the low register — the catalog lives around D, E, and F. C Phrygian is the same shape from a different home note. Learn this shape once and you can play any of those.

The one rule of keys: **if the note is not in your scale, it is probably wrong.** One accidental black key is the reason a bass line that "feels off" actually feels off.

THE ONLY VOCAB YOU NEED

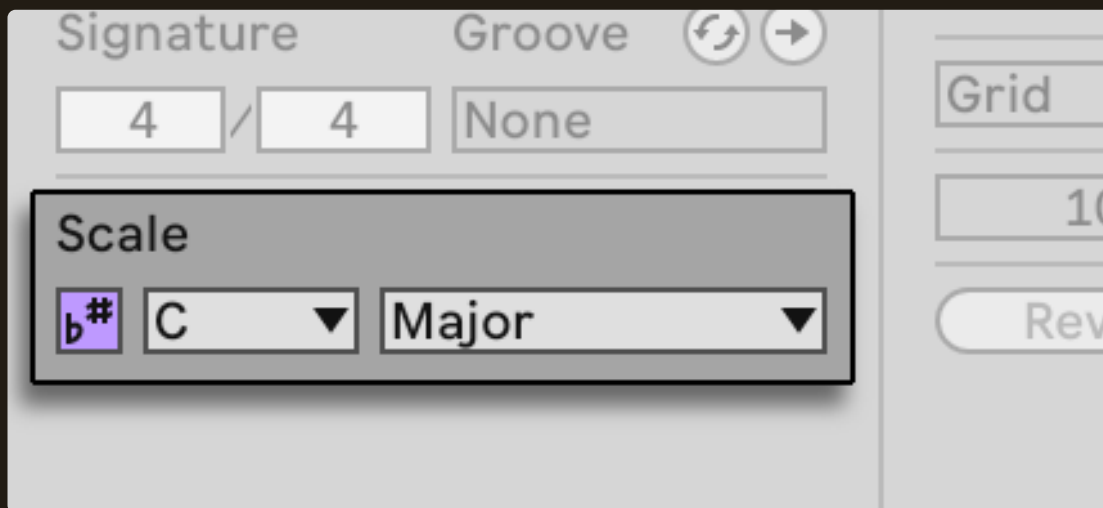
A half step (semitone) = the smallest step: one key to the next, black or white. C to C# is a half step. E to F is a half step.

A whole step = two half steps. C to D is a whole step.

All of the scales in this guide are just recipes counted in half and whole steps.

Screenshot from Ableton's Live 12 manual: Highlight Scale is on (press K). Every purple row is a note in your scale — set the root to **C** and the scale to **Minor**, and draw only on the purple rows. The root note gets the strongest highlight: start and end your phrases on it.

Turn on Scale Mode in Clip View



In **Clip View**, switch on **Scale**, then pick your root note and the scale name — Minor, Phrygian, and Harmonic Minor all live in that menu. For this edition that's root **C**, scale **Phrygian**. That one choice drives Highlight Scale, Fold to Scale, and the pitch tools.

That is genuinely the whole trick. The names of the notes change from key to key; the **shape of the gaps does not**. Think in shapes, not letters.

THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

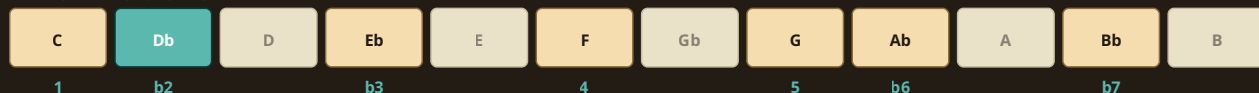
Natural minor alone is fine, but the indie tech flavor comes from two one-note tweaks: **flat the 2nd** for the dark Mediterranean hook (Phrygian), or **raise the 7th** for the exotic spice (harmonic minor). Next page shows both.

Two one-note tweaks make the indie tech flavor.

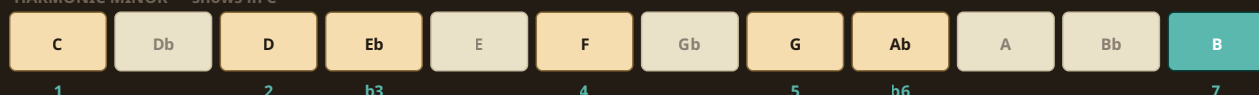
Start from natural minor. Move **one** note a half step and the whole mood changes. These two moves are the Mediterranean/Middle Eastern identity of the sound.

Phrygian (C): flat the 2nd. · Harmonic minor (C): raise the 7th.

PHRYGIAN — shows in C



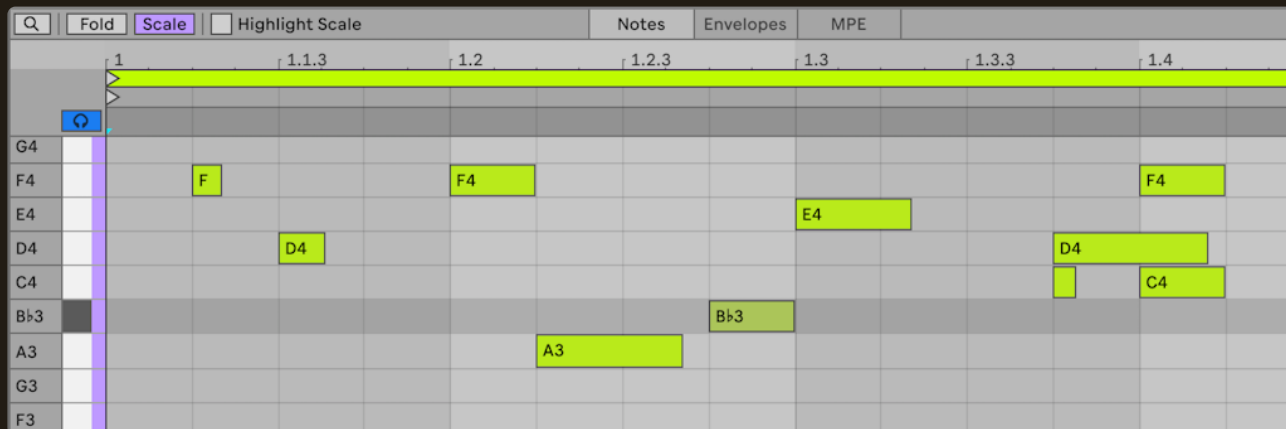
HARMONIC MINOR — shows in C



Phrygian = natural minor, 2nd dropped one half step · **Harmonic minor** = natural minor, 7th raised one half step

"b" means "lowered from the major version". b2 = a half step above the root. That rubbed tension between the root and the b2 is the hook fingerprint of half the indie tech catalog.

Fold to Scale: hide every note you can't use



Screenshot from Ableton's Live 12 manual: press **G** with **Scale** on (root **C**, scale **Phrygian**) and the piano roll folds to your scale only. Every visible row is a legal note — you can draw freely without missing. This is the move when you don't trust your theory yet: pick your scale, fold, and write.

Reach for Phrygian when...

...you want the dark Mediterranean hook. Works especially well on bass: the rub between root and b2 (one half step apart) is what makes heads turn.

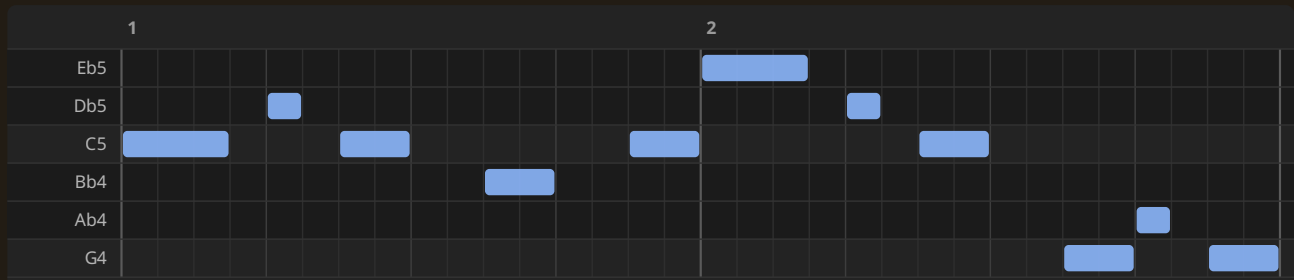
Reach for harmonic minor when...

...you want the exotic, desert-movie melody. That 3-half-step jump between the 6th and 7th is strong spice — use a little, or the whole track tastes like it.

Steal this hook. It's already in your key.

A two-bar C Phrygian hook drawn exactly as it looks in Ableton's MIDI Note Editor, folded to the scale (press G) — every row you see is a legal note. Copy the shape, change the rhythm, it's yours.

Two-bar C Phrygian hook — the b2 rub does the talking



The move: C–Db–C in the first bar — that half-step rub is the indie tech fingerprint. It climbs to Eb, sighs G–Ab–G, and lands back home on C. Loop it, nudge the rhythm, never leave the folded rows.

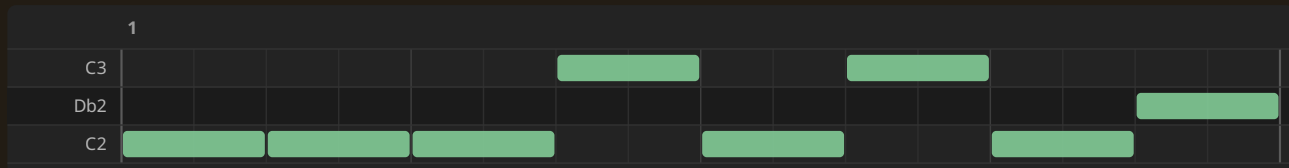
MAKE IT YOURS

Three moves and it stops sounding like an example: **1)** start the C–Db rub on the and instead of the downbeat. **2)** Play the second bar up an octave. **3)** Copy both bars and end the copy on G instead of C — now the first half asks a question and the second half answers it.

The bass and the stabs that go under it.

Same key, same loop. Three patterns, one scale, zero wrong notes.

Rolling C bass — root 8ths, octave pops, one b2 spice



Root 8ths with octave pops on the ends of 2 and 3. The last 8th swaps to the b2 (Db) — the indie tech touch. The kick owns the downbeat; this dances between the kicks.

C minor triad stabs — nothing on the downbeat

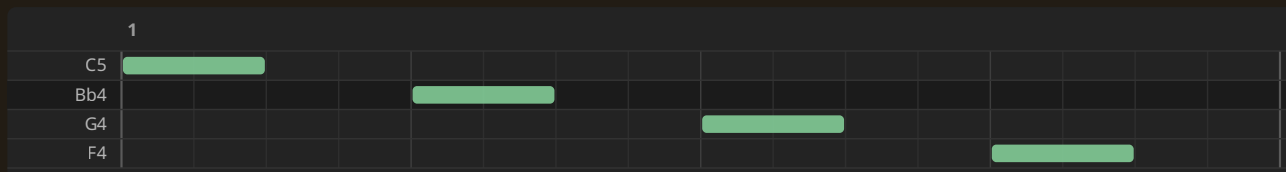


The 1-b3-5 stack (C – Eb – G) chopped onto the ands. Bar 2 flips to the higher voicing so it breathes. Short, punchy, gone before the kick lands.

Same home note, three indie tech moods.

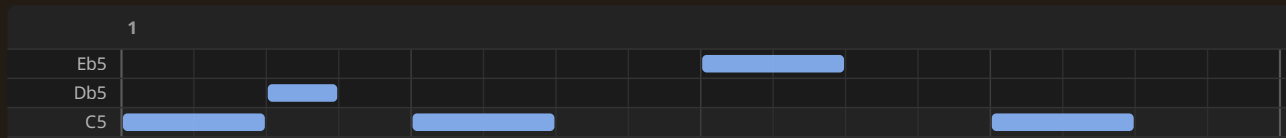
The three scales this lane runs on, all from C. Learn to hear which one a track is in — then steal it.

C natural minor — the plain groove



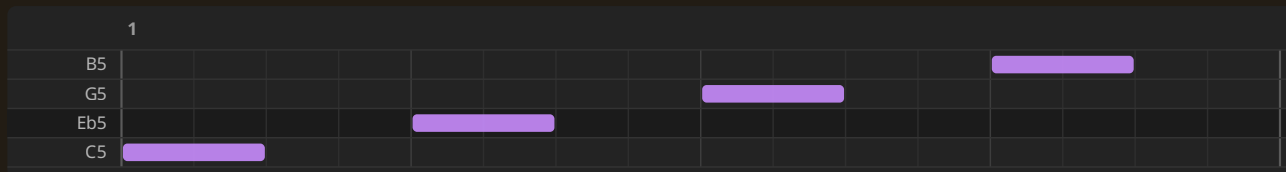
No rub, no spice — the canvas the other two paint on.

C Phrygian — flat the 2nd



Drop the 2nd to Db — instant dark Mediterranean hook.

C harmonic minor — raise the 7th

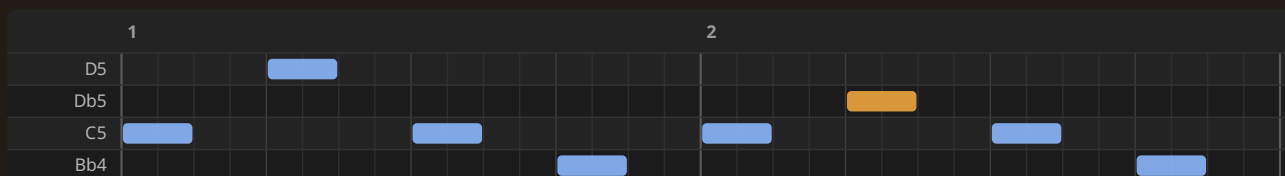


Raise the 7th to B — the b6–7 lift is pure desert.

Live in one scale, shoplift from its neighbor.

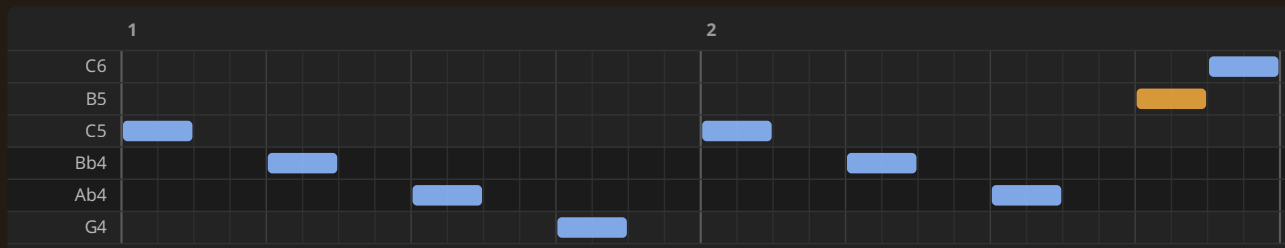
Phrygian *is* natural minor with the 2nd dropped; harmonic minor *is* natural minor with the 7th raised. So you can write a whole track in one scale and borrow a single note from the next — the loop keeps evolving and you never leave home.

Borrow the b2 — verse in C natural minor, hook in C Phrygian



Same rhythm, one note nudged down a half step — the orange note is the borrow. Verse breathes in natural minor, the hook bites in Phrygian.

The raised-7th turnaround

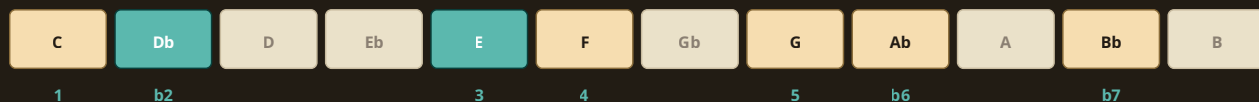


Borrow the raised 7th (B) for exactly one heartbeat at the turnaround — harmonic minor flashes, then home. That 3-half-step b6–7 gap is the exotic lift.

You already know these scales. You just didn't know their names.

The b2 isn't a theory invention — it's the sound of half the melodies you grew up hearing.

The desert scale: Phrygian dominant — Phrygian with a major 3rd



Hava Nagila is the most famous b2 on earth — and it's Phrygian dominant: 1, b2, **3**, 4, 5, b6, b7. That b2 *plus* major-3rd rub is the desert-movie sound. **Misirlou** (the Pulp Fiction one) lives in the same family, one notch spicier.

THE INDIE TECH CONNECTION

Adam Ten, Rafael, Mita Gami and the whole indie tech wave run on these exact moves — the b2 rub and the raised-7th lift are the catalog's fingerprints. Next time a hook grabs you, hum it and check: nine times out of ten it's the 1–b2–1 rub or the b6–7–1 lift you just learned to draw.

PRACTICE: ONE SCALE PER DAY

Pick one of the three hooks on the previous page. Loop it for ten minutes, then borrow one note — flat the 2nd, or raise the 7th at the turnaround. That's intertwining. Do it until your ear reaches for the borrow before your brain does.

The bounce is where notes land, not which notes.

indie tech basslines are rolling 8th notes on the root with the **accent dodging the kick**. That dodge is the whole genre.

Straight vs. the bounce — the same notes, different landing spots

ON THE BEAT



THE BOUNCE



1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and

Same notes, moved to the "ands" = bounce. The kick handles the downbeat; the bass dancing between the kicks is what makes hips move.

A one-bar rolling bass: root anchors, octave pops

OCTAVE



5TH



ROOT



1 2 3 4

R = root, 5 = fifth, 8 = octave. These three notes are always in your key — there is no wrong move. The octave pops on the "ands" are the bounce.

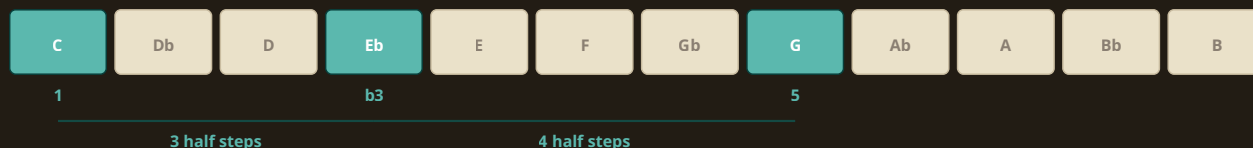
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

The indie tech move: write the bass exactly like the bar above, then **once every few bars**, swap one root pop for the Phrygian **b2** (one half step above your root). That little rub against the home note is the fingerprint bass move of the sound.

A chord is three notes from your key, stacked.

Count from your root: play the 1st, the flat-3rd, and the 5th. That is a minor triad — the chord underneath nearly every indie tech stab.

The minor triad: 1 - b3 - 5 (shown on C)

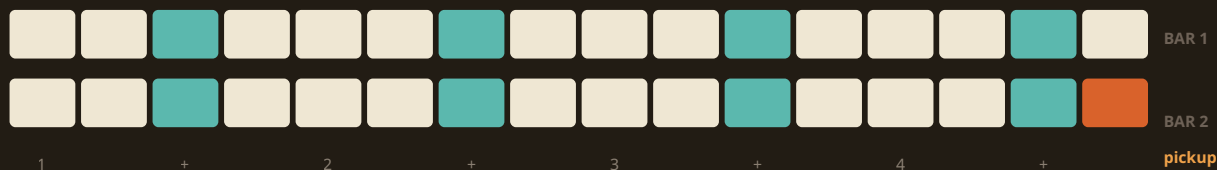


Stack the three notes in ANY order or octave and it is still the chord — just brighter or darker.

Build any minor triad by counting. From C: up 3 half steps (Eb), up 4 more (G). The order and octave are free — shuffle them for different flavors of the same chord.

Now turn the chord into a **stab**: play all three notes as one short, punchy hit — and do not put it on the downbeat. The kick owns the downbeat; the stab lives on the "ands", arguing with the bass.

Two bars of classic stab rhythm (the "ands")



Every stab sits off the kick. Bar 2 ends with a double hit (the "pickup") that shoves you back into bar 1. This two-bar loop is the engine of most house and tech house tracks.

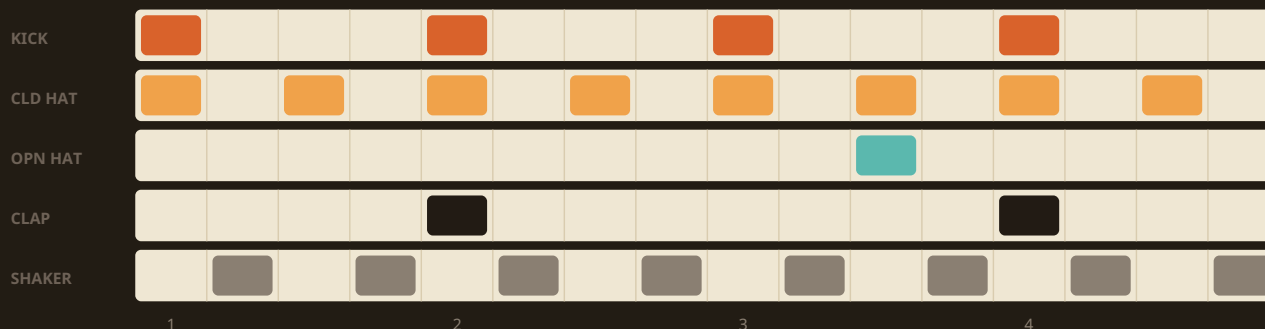
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

indie tech stabs run **short and dry** — the staff is rhythmic, not lush. Instant B-section: copy the whole stab loop, move **every note up one octave**, and use it only in the second half of the drop.

Kick owns the downbeat. Swing loosens everything else.

The rhythm bar below is worth more than a chapter on scales. Every row does one job — and **swing** is what makes the rows breathe together.

One bar: the full house drum grid (16 steps)



Kick: anchors time. **Closed hats:** tick the 8ths. **Open hat:** one breath per bar. **Clap:** slaps on 2 and 4.

Shaker: the glue filling the gaps. Start here and remove hats if the groove gets busy — never add more before this works.

Swing: the same row, loosened



Every other hit nudged **late** (nothing else changed). 52-56% on 16ths is the sweet spot; past 58% it stumbling-drinks.

Swing hats and shaker together, or they fight each other. Kick and clap stay straight — they are the reference frame your swing wobbles against.

A hook is five notes and two phrases.

Take your minor scale and throw out the 2nd and the 6th. The five remaining notes (**the pentatonic cheat**) all work with each other — every choice is safe. A hook is a question that leaves home, then an answer that lands back on the root.

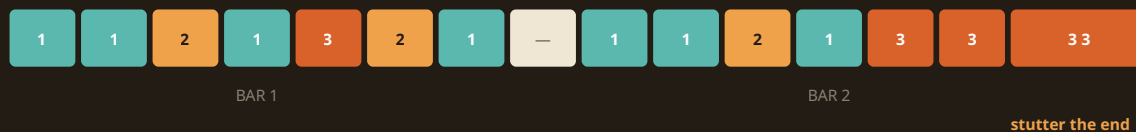
Question and answer: two phrases over two bars



The question jumps between safe notes; the answer walks down and parks on the root. Most memorable hooks in this lane are exactly this shape — wander, then land.

Vocal chops follow the same idea, with the vocal doing the melody work for you: slice a phrase into syllables, tune the slices to your key, place them like stabs on the offbeats, and **stutter the last slice** — repeat it two or three times to slam the loop shut.

A chop map: which syllable plays, step by step



Numbers are syllables from the original phrase. Same few syllables, playful order, shuffled into the offbeat grid. The ending stutter is the vocal equivalent of the stab's pickup.

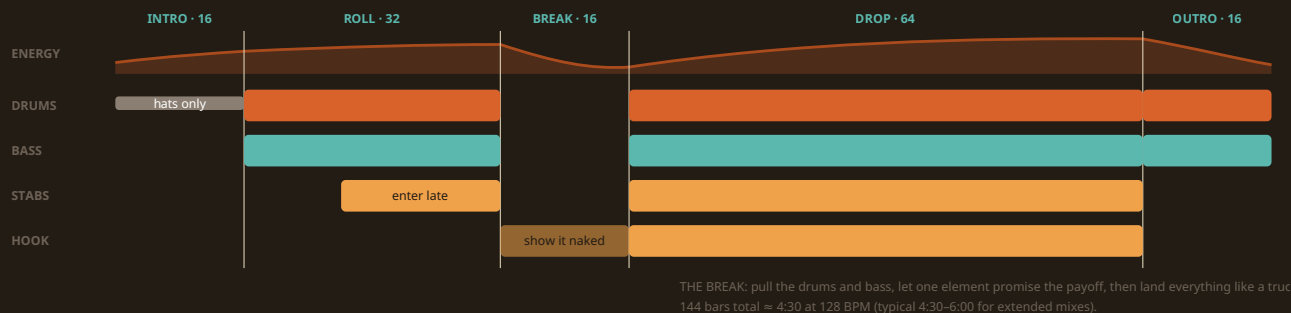
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

indie tech hooks lean **Phrygian**: spring the b2 into the question (one jab of tension) and land the answer cleanly on the root. Tension first, safe landing later — that push/pull is the lane.

Stack layers in sections. Strip them off at the break.

A DJ track is a movie in five scenes: setup, groove, tension, payoff, exit. Scenes land in 16-bar chunks because mixes are built on 16s and 32s — and because your listener predicts the drop and you must make them wait.

Anatomy of a track: layers enter, the break strips them off



Only one thing changes at a time. A layer enters, the groove holds, then the next one. The intro and outro exist so a DJ can mix your track — never skip them.

DJ-FRIENDLY RULES

Bars come in **16s**. Intros are **mixing room**, not a second song. The break is **the window DJs mix in** — keep it simple and don't surprise anyone there.

The five-minute workflow. Every track.

Order matters: build the groove first, the melodies last. Repeatable beats inspired for track number one hundred.

1 Pick a key.

A minor to start. Write the root name somewhere you can see it. Done is better than clever.

2 Sketch the drums.

One bar from the grid on page 154. Kick, hats, clap, shaker — do not fiddle, this bar is a placeholder for the whole track.

3 Shape the bass.

Root on the 8ths, octave pops on the "ands", one slip onto the b2 every few bars if you are feeling indie tech.

4 Drop the stabs.

One minor triad on the "ands", a two-bar loop with a pickup. Steal the rhythm from page 152 and do not touch it again until the groove breathes.

5 Write the hook.

Five pentatonic notes, question then answer over two bars. Synth line or vocal chops — same rules either way.

6 Steal the arrangement.

Sections in 16s. Carve the break by deleting drums and bass for 16 bars. Everything before is the setup; the drop is the argument.

When it sounds wrong — the anti-fail list

- ☐ **It clashes:** scan the piano roll for a note not in your key. One black key is usually the whole bug.
- ☐ **It drags:** it is the rhythm, not the notes. Push hits onto the "ands" or add swing to hats and shaker.
- ☐ **The hook won't sit:** it is probably playing on beats where the kick lives. Shift its first hit to an "and".
- ☐ **The bass is muddy:** too many different low notes. Anchor the root and move the octave pops higher.
- ☐ **Before bounce:** is the intro DJ-mixable, is the break exactly 16, does the drop land after it?

THE WORKFLOW RULE

Render the loop and listen tomorrow, then fix exactly one thing and move on. A finished track you learned from beats five unfinished theory exercises every time.

Steal these shapes. Finish tracks.

The whole guide on one page. Keep it next to the keyboard until C Phrygian is muscle memory.

The three shapes

NATURAL MINOR (C) — shape: W-H-W-W-H-W-W · slides to any root

C	Db	D	Eb	E	F	Gb	G	Ab	A	Bb	B
---	----	---	----	---	---	----	---	----	---	----	---

PHRYGIAN (C) — natural minor with the 2nd dropped a half step (the indie tech move)

C	Db	D	Eb	E	F	Gb	G	Ab	A	Bb	B
---	----	---	----	---	---	----	---	----	---	----	---

HARMONIC MINOR (C) — natural minor with the 7th raised a half step (the spice)

C	Db	D	Eb	E	F	Gb	G	Ab	A	Bb	B
---	----	---	----	---	---	----	---	----	---	----	---

Triad emergency line: minor chord = 1 + b3 + 5 (count up 3, then 4 half steps). Example from C: **C - Eb - G**.

The rhythm in one bar (16 steps)

KICK	
CH HAT	
OP HAT	
CLAP	
SHKR	

Stabs, hooks, chops: nothing on the downbeat — live on the "ands". Swing hats + shaker together at 52-56%.

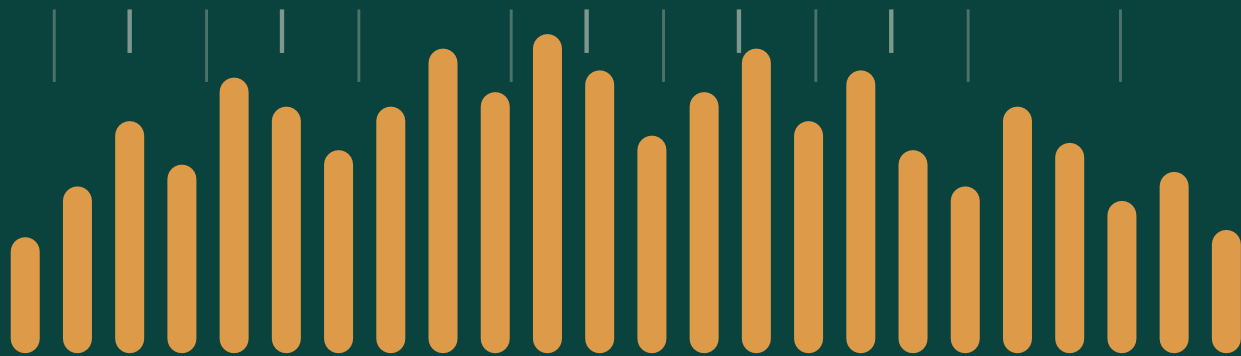
THE SIX GOLDEN RULES

1. **Stay in the key.** Wrong notes are almost always outside-scale notes.
2. **Root, 5th, octave:** the three notes that are always safe on the bass.
3. **Offbeats = bounce, swing = breath.** Rhythm covers simple harmony.
4. **Question, then answer.** Every hook leaves home and lands back on the root.
5. **Strip the break to one element.** The drop argues louder when the break whispers.
6. **Finish the arrangement before you polish.** A structured track beats a perfect loop.

THE DUMBED-DOWN EDITION

Music Theory for indie tech Tech House

Notes, scales, chords, basslines, drums, and arrangement —
minimum viable theory for warm, bouncy, groove-first tracks. No
sight-reading. No exams.



What each thing actually does — shown, not explained.

Five ideas do 90% of the work. The rest is taste.

Read front to back once, then use the cheat sheet forever.

MADE FOR CLAY GOLDIN · D PHRYGIAN EDITION

Five ideas do 90% of the work

A indie-tech-style track is not theory-dense. It is a small handful of decisions made well. Here they are, in the order this guide covers them.

1 Notes

There are only 12 musical notes, and they repeat forever. Learn them once, on a keyboard, and recognize them in the piano roll.

2 Key

Pick one note as home base. The "key" is the set of notes that feel like home around it. In this lane you will almost always pick Phrygian.

3 Scales

A scale is a recipe for which notes are "allowed". The minor scale is one spacing shape you can slide to any key. Two tiny variations give the indie tech flavor.

4 Rhythm and drums

The groove. Four-to-the-floor kick, swung hats and percussion, offbeat syncopation. Good rhythm covers a lot of simple harmony.

5 Chords and arrangement

Three-note chords turned into stabs, then everything packed into DJ-friendly sections that build to one payoff.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read pages 161 to 174 once, in order. Each page teaches one idea and ends with what to do with it. Page 175 gives the repeatable starting workflow for every track. Page 176 is the cheat sheet — print it, screenshot it, keep it next to the screen while you write.

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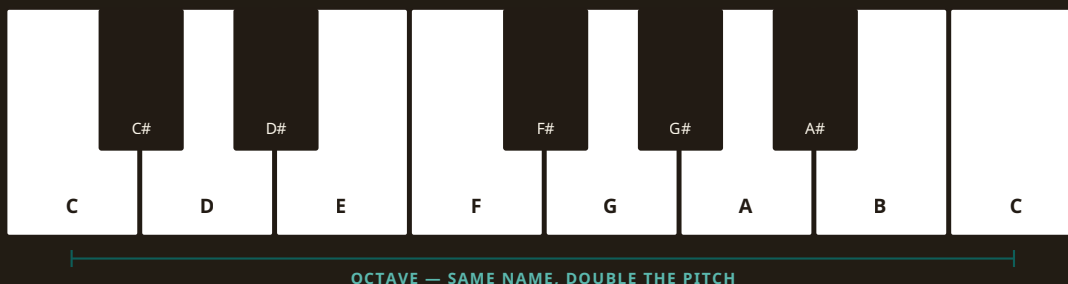
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A note is a named pitch. There are twelve of them, and they just repeat forever. The keyboard below is one octave — one full set of twelve.

White keys are named **C, D, E, F, G, A, B**, and then they start over. Black keys are the notes **in between** — named after their neighbor plus a # (sharp), which means "one step up". So the black key between C and D is **C#**, and between F and G is **F#**. There is no black key between E/F or B/C — those pairs are already touching.

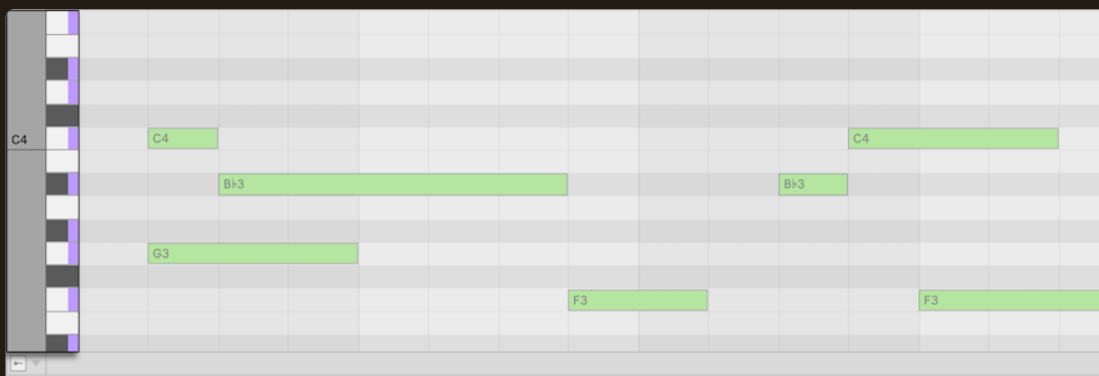
After 12 notes, the names repeat at twice the frequency. That repeat is called an **octave**. In Ableton the piano roll is the same layout turned vertical — the same 12 names repeating up the screen.

One octave: the whole universe, C to C



Count them: 7 white + 5 black = 12. That is every note that exists. Everything else in music is choosing some notes, skipping others, and repeating.

The same keyboard in Ableton — turned vertical



This is Ableton's piano ruler, from the official Live 12 manual. The same 12 names run bottom to top instead of left to right — the strip labeled **C4** marks your octave. Click a key to hear it, double-click the grid to drop a note on that row.

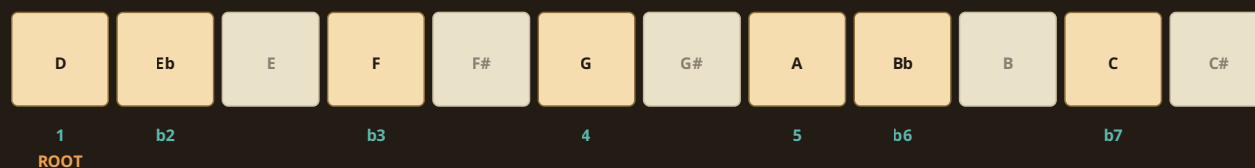
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The "key" answers two questions: which note is home, and which notes are allowed. Everything in your track lives in it — the bass, the chords, the hook.

Major keys sound happy and resolved. **Phrygian** is tense and moody with a dark Mediterranean edge. This whole lane is Phrygian — **D** is home, and the allowed notes are the Phrygian scale from D.

D Phrygian is your home for this guide: make **D** your home, and the allowed notes are D, Eb, F, G, A, Bb, C. Seven notes — that is the whole game. You can slide this same shape to any other home note later.

D Phrygian: your seven allowed notes



The gray notes are NOT in the key — ignore them for now.

In D Phrygian the allowed notes are D, Eb, F, G, A, Bb, C. Play only these and you literally cannot play a wrong note. The numbers are scale degrees — the "position" of each note matters more than its name.

THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

Most indie-tech-style tracks sit in Phrygian with meat in the low register — the catalog lives around D, E, and F. D Phrygian is the same shape from a different home note. Learn this shape once and you can play any of those.

The one rule of keys: **if the note is not in your scale, it is probably wrong.** One accidental black key is the reason a bass line that "feels off" actually feels off.

THE ONLY VOCAB YOU NEED

A half step (semitone) = the smallest step: one key to the next, black or white. C to C# is a half step. E to F is a half step.

A whole step = two half steps. C to D is a whole step.

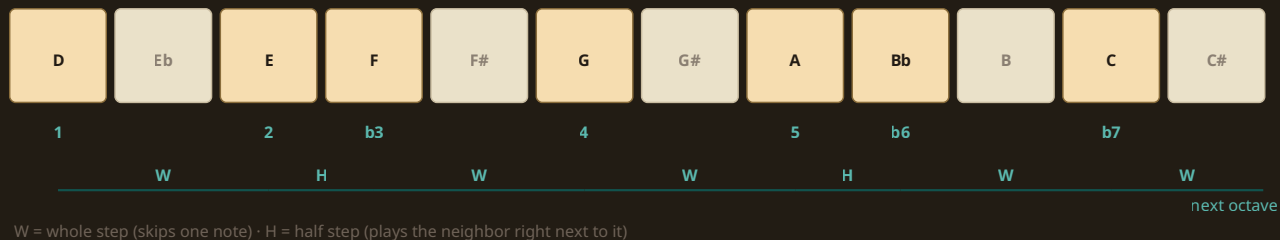
All of the scales in this guide are just recipes counted in half and whole steps.

3 · SCALES

The minor scale is a shape you can slide.

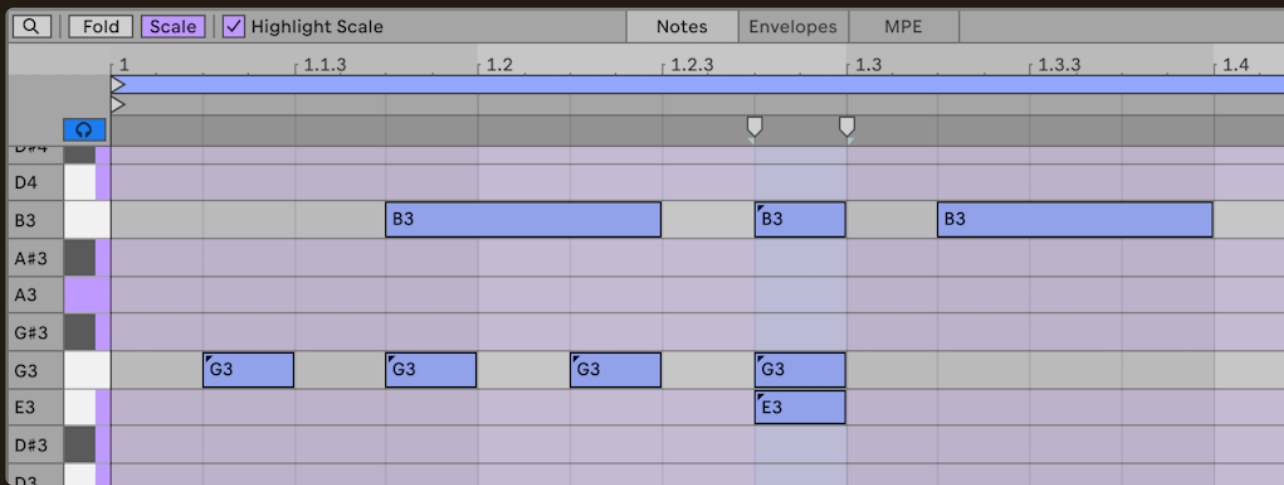
A scale is how far apart the allowed notes sit from each other. Count in whole (W) and half (H) steps: the natural minor scale is **W - H - W - W - H - W - W**.

The minor shape on the 12-note strip (shown from D)



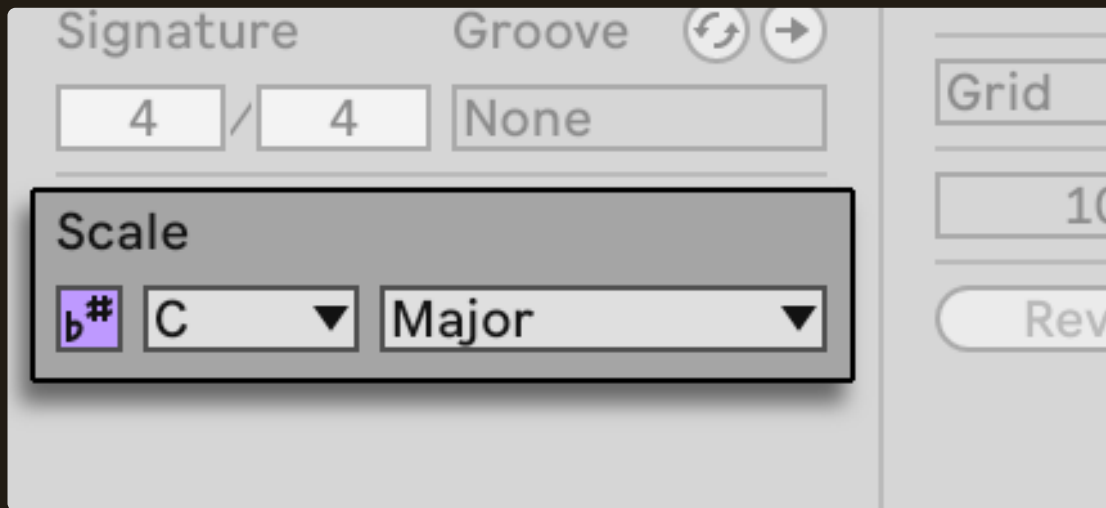
Start on ANY note, count W-H-W-W-H-W-W, and you have that minor key. Want D minor? Start on D: D W E H F W G W A H Bb W C W D. Do it once, write the answer down, never do it again.

Your scale, lit up inside Ableton's piano roll



Screenshot from Ableton's Live 12 manual: Highlight Scale is on (press K). Every purple row is a note in your scale — set the root to **D** and the scale to **Minor**, and draw only on the purple rows. The root note gets the strongest highlight: start and end your phrases on it.

Turn on Scale Mode in Clip View



In **Clip View**, **switch on Scale**, then pick your root note and the scale name — Minor, Phrygian, and Harmonic Minor all live in that menu. For this edition that's root **D**, scale **Phrygian**. That one choice drives Highlight Scale, Fold to Scale, and the pitch tools.

That is genuinely the whole trick. The names of the notes change from key to key; the **shape of the gaps does not**. Think in shapes, not letters.

THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

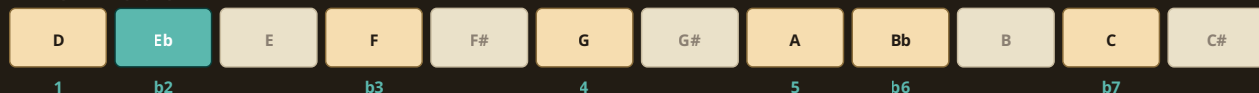
Natural minor alone is fine, but the indie tech flavor comes from two one-note tweaks: **flat the 2nd** for the dark Mediterranean hook (Phrygian), or **raise the 7th** for the exotic spice (harmonic minor). Next page shows both.

Two one-note tweaks make the indie tech flavor.

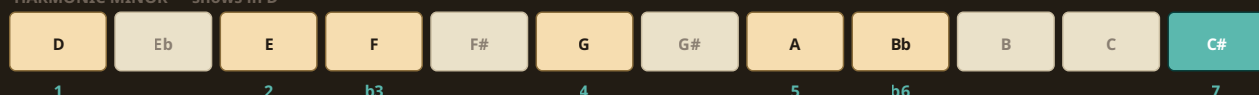
Start from natural minor. Move **one** note a half step and the whole mood changes. These two moves are the Mediterranean/Middle Eastern identity of the sound.

Phrygian (D): flat the 2nd. · Harmonic minor (D): raise the 7th.

PHRYGIAN — shows in D



HARMONIC MINOR — shows in D

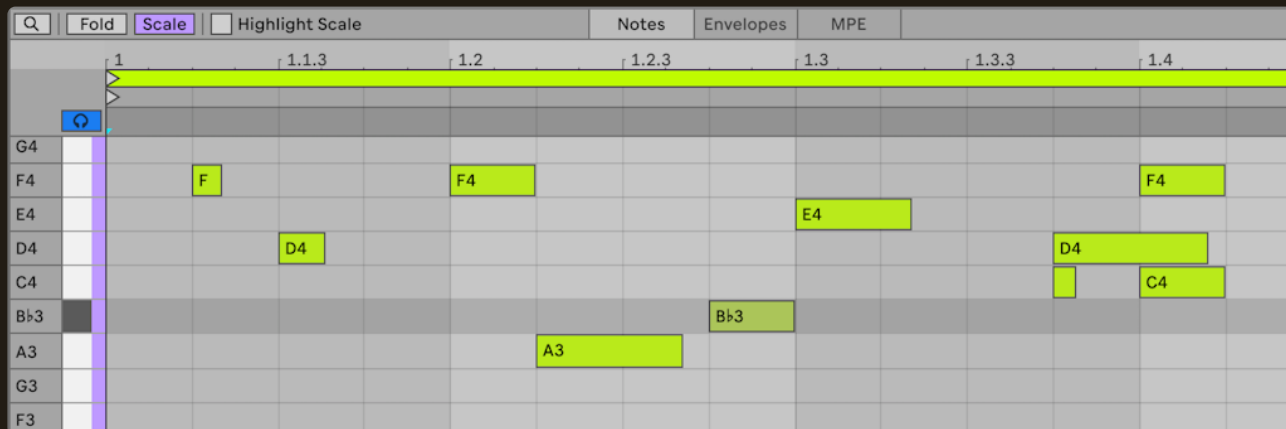


3 half steps — the exotic gap

Phrygian = natural minor, 2nd dropped one half step · Harmonic minor = natural minor, 7th raised one half step

"b" means "lowered from the major version". b2 = a half step above the root. That rubbed tension between the root and the b2 is the hook fingerprint of half the indie tech catalog.

Fold to Scale: hide every note you can't use



Screenshot from Ableton's Live 12 manual: press **G** with **Scale** on (root D, scale Phrygian) and the piano roll folds to your scale only. Every visible row is a legal note — you can draw freely without missing. This is the move when you don't trust your theory yet: pick your scale, fold, and write.

Reach for Phrygian when...

...you want the dark Mediterranean hook. Works especially well on bass: the rub between root and b2 (one half step apart) is what makes heads turn.

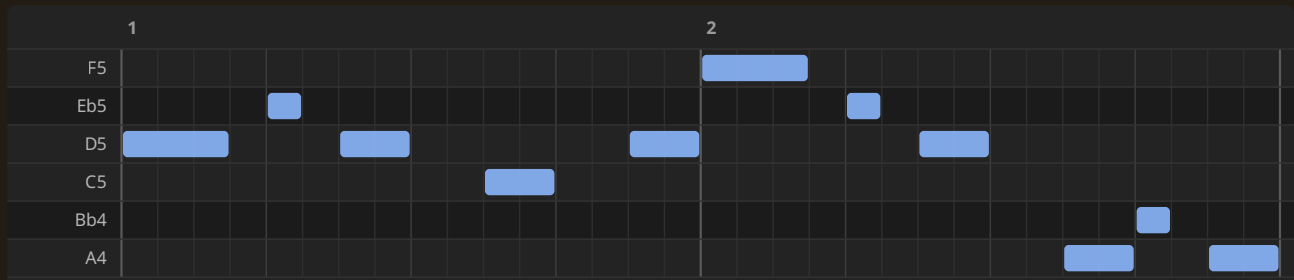
Reach for harmonic minor when...

...you want the exotic, desert-movie melody. That 3-half-step jump between the 6th and 7th is strong spice — use a little, or the whole track tastes like it.

Steal this hook. It's already in your key.

A two-bar D Phrygian hook drawn exactly as it looks in Ableton's MIDI Note Editor, folded to the scale (press G) — every row you see is a legal note. Copy the shape, change the rhythm, it's yours.

Two-bar D Phrygian hook — the b2 rub does the talking



The move: D–Eb–D in the first bar — that half-step rub is the indie tech fingerprint. It climbs to F, sighs A–Bb–A, and lands back home on D. Loop it, nudge the rhythm, never leave the folded rows.

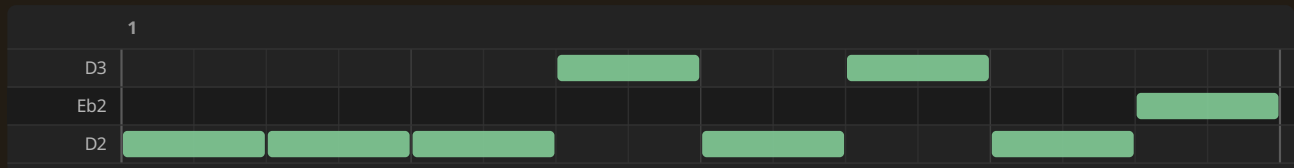
MAKE IT YOURS

Three moves and it stops sounding like an example: **1)** start the D–Eb rub on the and instead of the downbeat. **2)** Play the second bar up an octave. **3)** Copy both bars and end the copy on A instead of D — now the first half asks a question and the second half answers it.

The bass and the stabs that go under it.

Same key, same loop. Three patterns, one scale, zero wrong notes.

Rolling D bass — root 8ths, octave pops, one b2 spice



Root 8ths with octave pops on the ends of 2 and 3. The last 8th swaps to the b2 (Eb) — the indie tech touch. The kick owns the downbeat; this dances between the kicks.

D minor triad stabs — nothing on the downbeat

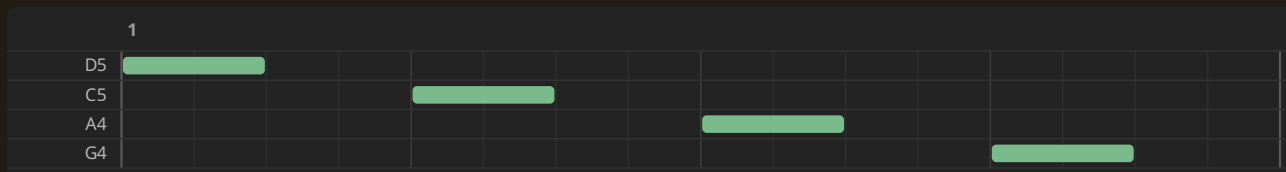


The 1-b3-5 stack (D – F – A) chopped onto the ands. Bar 2 flips to the higher voicing so it breathes. Short, punchy, gone before the kick lands.

Same home note, three indie tech moods.

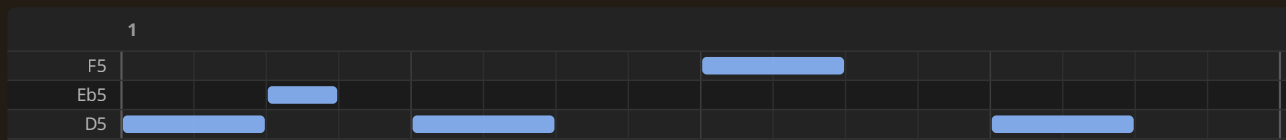
The three scales this lane runs on, all from D. Learn to hear which one a track is in — then steal it.

D natural minor — the plain groove



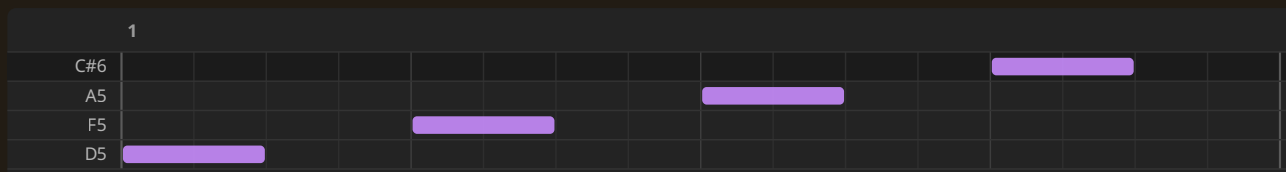
No rub, no spice — the canvas the other two paint on.

D Phrygian — flat the 2nd



Drop the 2nd to Eb — instant dark Mediterranean hook.

D harmonic minor — raise the 7th

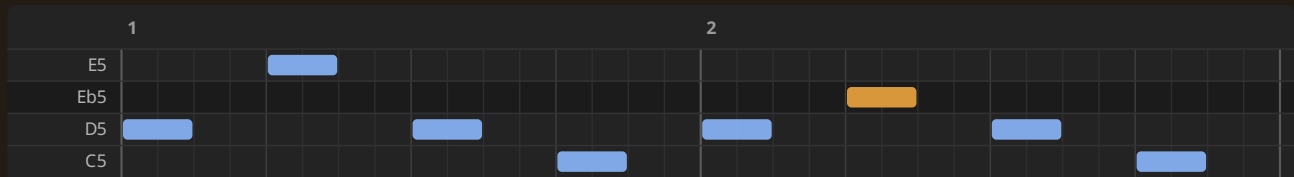


Raise the 7th to C# — the b6–7 lift is pure desert.

Live in one scale, shoplift from its neighbor.

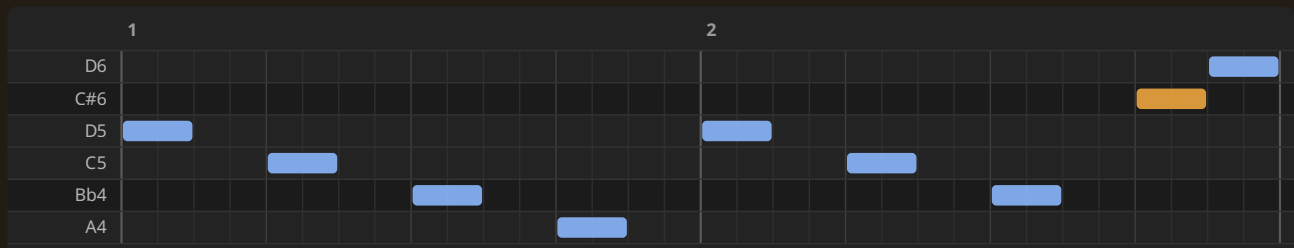
Phrygian *is* natural minor with the 2nd dropped; harmonic minor *is* natural minor with the 7th raised. So you can write a whole track in one scale and borrow a single note from the next — the loop keeps evolving and you never leave home.

Borrow the b2 — verse in D natural minor, hook in D Phrygian



Same rhythm, one note nudged down a half step — the orange note is the borrow. Verse breathes in natural minor, the hook bites in Phrygian.

The raised-7th turnaround



Borrow the raised 7th (C#) for exactly one heartbeat at the turnaround — harmonic minor flashes, then home. That 3-half-step b6–7 gap is the exotic lift.

You already know these scales. You just didn't know their names.

The b2 isn't a theory invention — it's the sound of half the melodies you grew up hearing.

The desert scale: Phrygian dominant — Phrygian with a major 3rd

D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	Bb	B	C	C#
1	b2			3	4		5	b6		b7	

Hava Nagila is the most famous b2 on earth — and it's Phrygian dominant: 1, b2, **3**, 4, 5, b6, b7. That b2 *plus* major-3rd rub is the desert-movie sound. **Misirlou** (the Pulp Fiction one) lives in the same family, one notch spicier.

THE INDIE TECH CONNECTION

Adam Ten, Rafael, Mita Gami and the whole indie tech wave run on these exact moves — the b2 rub and the raised-7th lift are the catalog's fingerprints. Next time a hook grabs you, hum it and check: nine times out of ten it's the 1–b2–1 rub or the b6–7–1 lift you just learned to draw.

PRACTICE: ONE SCALE PER DAY

Pick one of the three hooks on the previous page. Loop it for ten minutes, then borrow one note — flat the 2nd, or raise the 7th at the turnaround. That's intertwining. Do it until your ear reaches for the borrow before your brain does.

The bounce is where notes land, not which notes.

indie tech basslines are rolling 8th notes on the root with the **accent dodging the kick**. That dodge is the whole genre.

Straight vs. the bounce — the same notes, different landing spots

ON THE BEAT



THE BOUNCE



1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and

Same notes, moved to the "ands" = bounce. The kick handles the downbeat; the bass dancing between the kicks is what makes hips move.

A one-bar rolling bass: root anchors, octave pops

OCTAVE



5TH



ROOT



1 2 3 4

R = root, 5 = fifth, 8 = octave. These three notes are always in your key — there is no wrong move. The octave pops on the "ands" are the bounce.

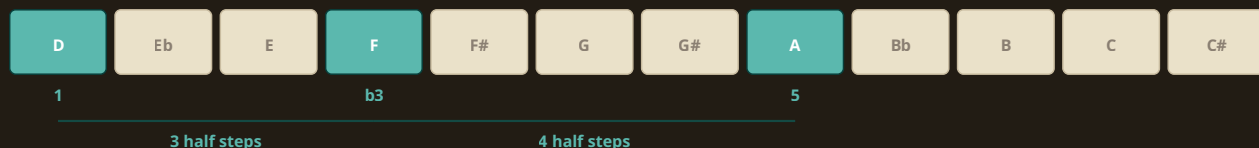
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

The indie tech move: write the bass exactly like the bar above, then **once every few bars**, swap one root pop for the Phrygian **b2** (one half step above your root). That little rub against the home note is the fingerprint bass move of the sound.

A chord is three notes from your key, stacked.

Count from your root: play the 1st, the flat-3rd, and the 5th. That is a minor triad — the chord underneath nearly every indie tech stab.

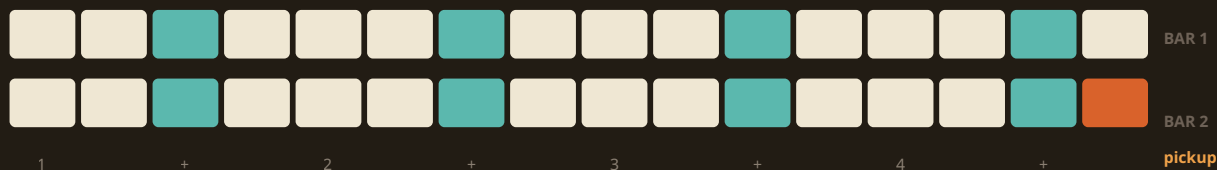
The minor triad: 1 - b3 - 5 (shown on D)



Build any minor triad by counting. From D: up 3 half steps (F), up 4 more (A). The order and octave are free — shuffle them for different flavors of the same chord.

Now turn the chord into a **stab**: play all three notes as one short, punchy hit — and do not put it on the downbeat. The kick owns the downbeat; the stab lives on the "ands", arguing with the bass.

Two bars of classic stab rhythm (the "ands")



Every stab sits off the kick. Bar 2 ends with a double hit (the "pickup") that shoves you back into bar 1. This two-bar loop is the engine of most house and tech house tracks.

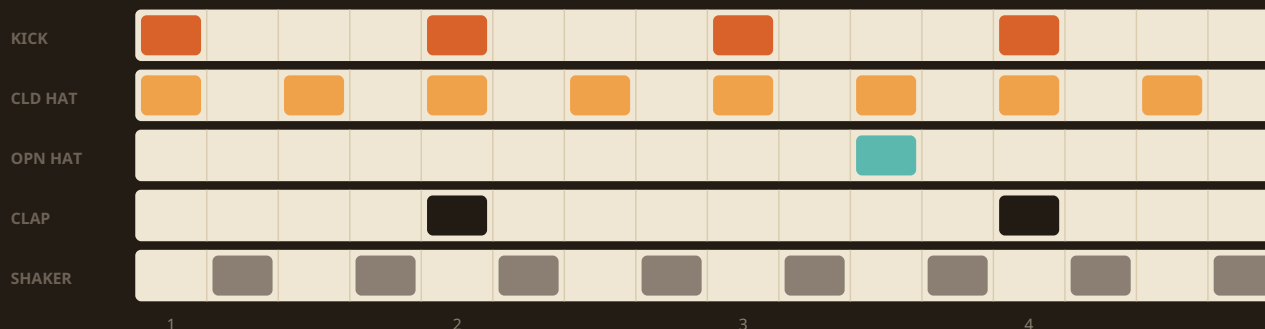
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

indie tech stabs run **short and dry** — the staff is rhythmic, not lush. Instant B-section: copy the whole stab loop, move **every note up one octave**, and use it only in the second half of the drop.

Kick owns the downbeat. Swing loosens everything else.

The rhythm bar below is worth more than a chapter on scales. Every row does one job — and **swing** is what makes the rows breathe together.

One bar: the full house drum grid (16 steps)



Kick: anchors time. **Closed hats:** tick the 8ths. **Open hat:** one breath per bar. **Clap:** slaps on 2 and 4.

Shaker: the glue filling the gaps. Start here and remove hats if the groove gets busy — never add more before this works.

Swing: the same row, loosened



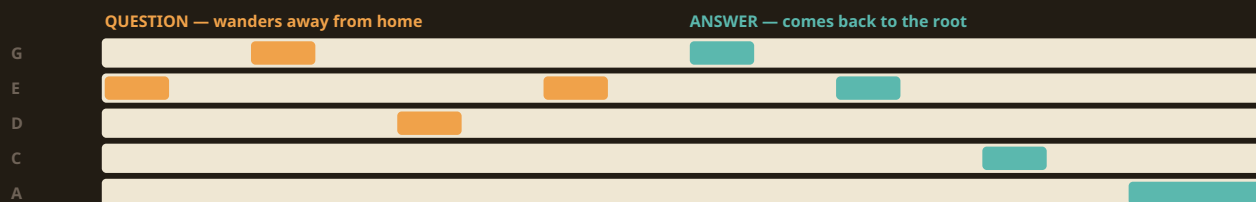
Every other hit nudged **late** (nothing else changed). 52-56% on 16ths is the sweet spot; past 58% it stumbling-drinks.

Swing hats and shaker together, or they fight each other. Kick and clap stay straight — they are the reference frame your swing wobbles against.

A hook is five notes and two phrases.

Take your minor scale and throw out the 2nd and the 6th. The five remaining notes (**the pentatonic cheat**) all work with each other — every choice is safe. A hook is a question that leaves home, then an answer that lands back on the root.

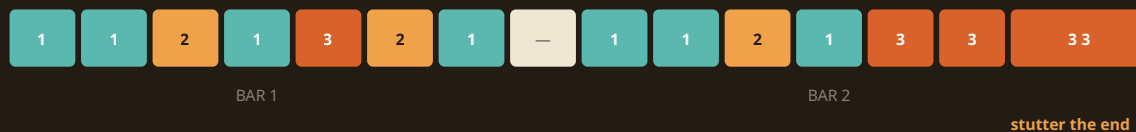
Question and answer: two phrases over two bars



The question jumps between safe notes; the answer walks down and parks on the root. Most memorable hooks in this lane are exactly this shape — wander, then land.

Vocal chops follow the same idea, with the vocal doing the melody work for you: slice a phrase into syllables, tune the slices to your key, place them like stabs on the offbeats, and **stutter the last slice** — repeat it two or three times to slam the loop shut.

A chop map: which syllable plays, step by step



Numbers are syllables from the original phrase. Same few syllables, playful order, shuffled into the offbeat grid. The ending stutter is the vocal equivalent of the stab's pickup.

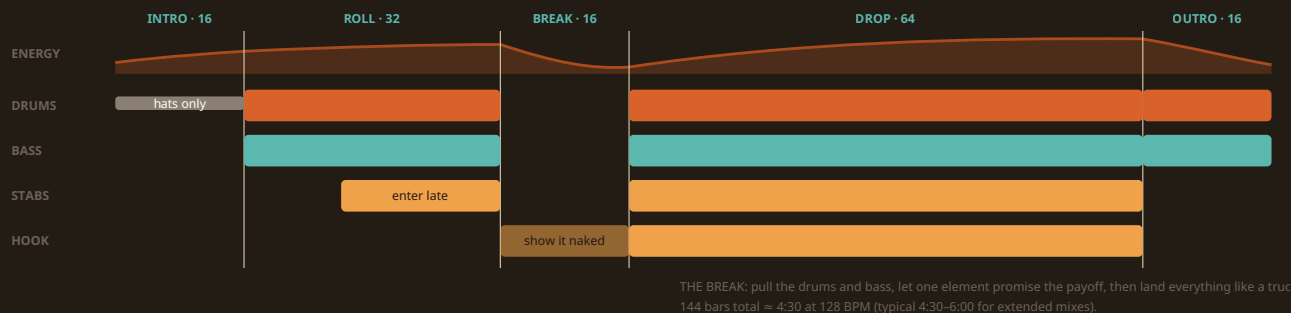
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

indie tech hooks lean **Phrygian**: spring the b2 into the question (one jab of tension) and land the answer cleanly on the root. Tension first, safe landing later — that push/pull is the lane.

Stack layers in sections. Strip them off at the break.

A DJ track is a movie in five scenes: setup, groove, tension, payoff, exit. Scenes land in 16-bar chunks because mixes are built on 16s and 32s — and because your listener predicts the drop and you must make them wait.

Anatomy of a track: layers enter, the break strips them off



Only one thing changes at a time. A layer enters, the groove holds, then the next one. The intro and outro exist so a DJ can mix your track — never skip them.

DJ-FRIENDLY RULES

Bars come in **16s**. Intros are **mixing room**, not a second song. The break is **the window DJs mix in** — keep it simple and don't surprise anyone there.

The five-minute workflow. Every track.

Order matters: build the groove first, the melodies last. Repeatable beats inspired for track number one hundred.

1 Pick a key.

A minor to start. Write the root name somewhere you can see it. Done is better than clever.

2 Sketch the drums.

One bar from the grid on page 172. Kick, hats, clap, shaker — do not fiddle, this bar is a placeholder for the whole track.

3 Shape the bass.

Root on the 8ths, octave pops on the "ands", one slip onto the b2 every few bars if you are feeling indie tech.

4 Drop the stabs.

One minor triad on the "ands", a two-bar loop with a pickup. Steal the rhythm from page 170 and do not touch it again until the groove breathes.

5 Write the hook.

Five pentatonic notes, question then answer over two bars. Synth line or vocal chops — same rules either way.

6 Steal the arrangement.

Sections in 16s. Carve the break by deleting drums and bass for 16 bars. Everything before is the setup; the drop is the argument.

When it sounds wrong — the anti-fail list

- ☐ **It clashes:** scan the piano roll for a note not in your key. One black key is usually the whole bug.
- ☐ **It drags:** it is the rhythm, not the notes. Push hits onto the "ands" or add swing to hats and shaker.
- ☐ **The hook won't sit:** it is probably playing on beats where the kick lives. Shift its first hit to an "and".
- ☐ **The bass is muddy:** too many different low notes. Anchor the root and move the octave pops higher.
- ☐ **Before bounce:** is the intro DJ-mixable, is the break exactly 16, does the drop land after it?

THE WORKFLOW RULE

Render the loop and listen tomorrow, then fix exactly one thing and move on. A finished track you learned from beats five unfinished theory exercises every time.

Steal these shapes. Finish tracks.

The whole guide on one page. Keep it next to the keyboard until D Phrygian is muscle memory.

The three shapes

NATURAL MINOR (D) — shape: W-H-W-W-H-W-W · slides to any root

D	E ^b	E	F	F [#]	G	G [#]	A	B ^b	B	C	C [#]
---	----------------	---	---	----------------	---	----------------	---	----------------	---	---	----------------

PHRYGIAN (D) — natural minor with the 2nd dropped a half step (the indie tech move)

D	E ^b	E	F	F [#]	G	G [#]	A	B ^b	B	C	C [#]
---	----------------	---	---	----------------	---	----------------	---	----------------	---	---	----------------

HARMONIC MINOR (D) — natural minor with the 7th raised a half step (the spice)

D	E ^b	E	F	F [#]	G	G [#]	A	B ^b	B	C	C [#]
---	----------------	---	---	----------------	---	----------------	---	----------------	---	---	----------------

Triad emergency line: minor chord = 1 + b3 + 5 (count up 3, then 4 half steps). Example from D: **D - F - A**.

The rhythm in one bar (16 steps)

KICK	■			■				■				■			
CH HAT	■		■		■		■		■		■		■		■
OP HAT									■						
CLAP					■								■		
SHKR	■		■		■		■		■		■		■		■

Stabs, hooks, chops: nothing on the downbeat — live on the "ands". Swing hats + shaker together at 52-56%.

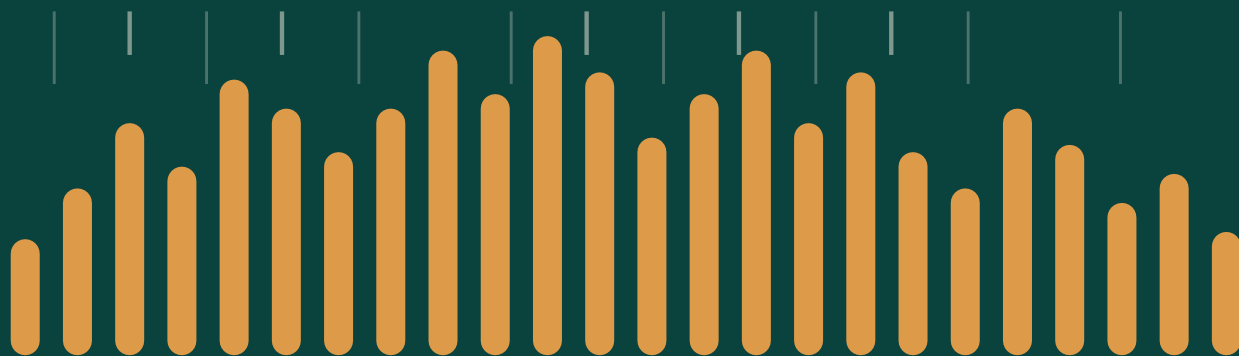
THE SIX GOLDEN RULES

1. **Stay in the key.** Wrong notes are almost always outside-scale notes.
2. **Root, 5th, octave:** the three notes that are always safe on the bass.
3. **Offbeats = bounce, swing = breath.** Rhythm covers simple harmony.
4. **Question, then answer.** Every hook leaves home and lands back on the root.
5. **Strip the break to one element.** The drop argues louder when the break whispers.
6. **Finish the arrangement before you polish.** A structured track beats a perfect loop.

THE DUMBED-DOWN EDITION

Music Theory for indie tech Tech House

Notes, scales, chords, basslines, drums, and arrangement —
minimum viable theory for warm, bouncy, groove-first tracks. No
sight-reading. No exams.



What each thing actually does — shown, not explained.

Five ideas do 90% of the work. The rest is taste.

Read front to back once, then use the cheat sheet forever.

MADE FOR CLAY GOLDIN · E PHRYGIAN EDITION

Five ideas do 90% of the work

A indie-tech-style track is not theory-dense. It is a small handful of decisions made well. Here they are, in the order this guide covers them.

1 Notes

There are only 12 musical notes, and they repeat forever. Learn them once, on a keyboard, and recognize them in the piano roll.

2 Key

Pick one note as home base. The "key" is the set of notes that feel like home around it. In this lane you will almost always pick Phrygian.

3 Scales

A scale is a recipe for which notes are "allowed". The minor scale is one spacing shape you can slide to any key. Two tiny variations give the indie tech flavor.

4 Rhythm and drums

The groove. Four-to-the-floor kick, swung hats and percussion, offbeat syncopation. Good rhythm covers a lot of simple harmony.

5 Chords and arrangement

Three-note chords turned into stabs, then everything packed into DJ-friendly sections that build to one payoff.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read pages 179 to 192 once, in order. Each page teaches one idea and ends with what to do with it. Page 193 gives the repeatable starting workflow for every track. Page 194 is the cheat sheet — print it, screenshot it, keep it next to the screen while you write.

You do not need

Reading sheet music. Perfect pitch. Knowing the circle of fifths. Anything with a Roman numeral.

You do need

A DAW with a piano roll. A copy of the keyboard diagrams (they are in here). Twenty minutes and one genre you already love.

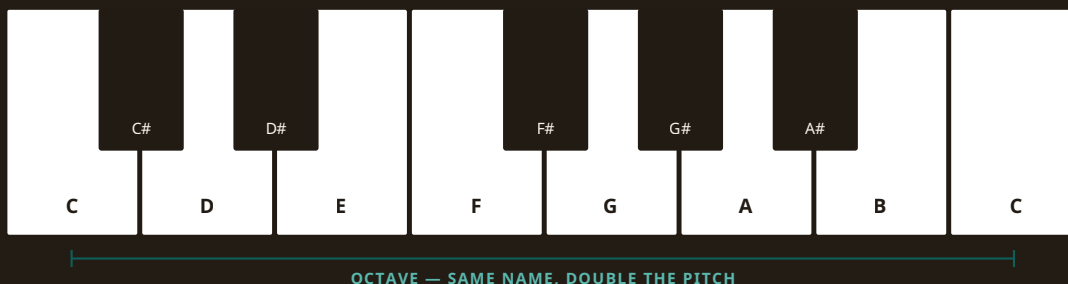
Only 12 notes exist. Learn them once.

A note is a named pitch. There are twelve of them, and they just repeat forever. The keyboard below is one octave — one full set of twelve.

White keys are named **C, D, E, F, G, A, B**, and then they start over. Black keys are the notes **in between** — named after their neighbor plus a # (sharp), which means "one step up". So the black key between C and D is **C#**, and between F and G is **F#**. There is no black key between E/F or B/C — those pairs are already touching.

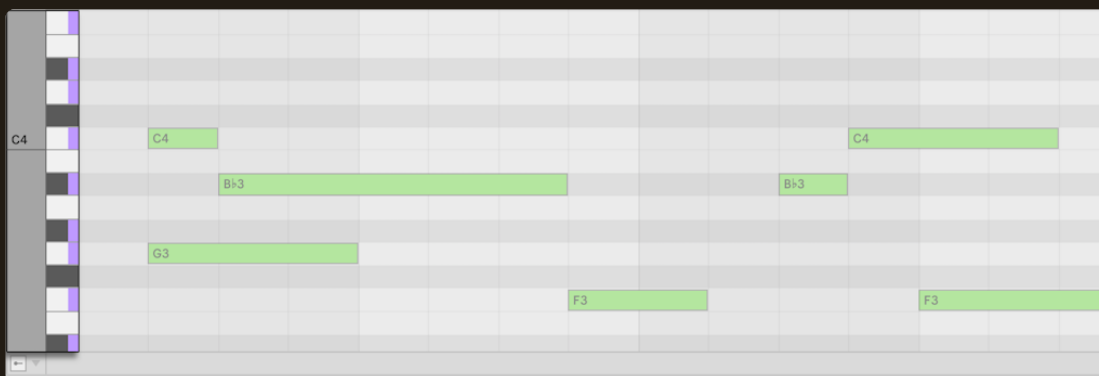
After 12 notes, the names repeat at twice the frequency. That repeat is called an **octave**. In Ableton the piano roll is the same layout turned vertical — the same 12 names repeating up the screen.

One octave: the whole universe, C to C



Count them: 7 white + 5 black = 12. That is every note that exists. Everything else in music is choosing some notes, skipping others, and repeating.

The same keyboard in Ableton — turned vertical



This is Ableton's piano ruler, from the official Live 12 manual. The same 12 names run bottom to top instead of left to right — the strip labeled **C4** marks your octave. Click a key to hear it, double-click the grid to drop a note on that row.

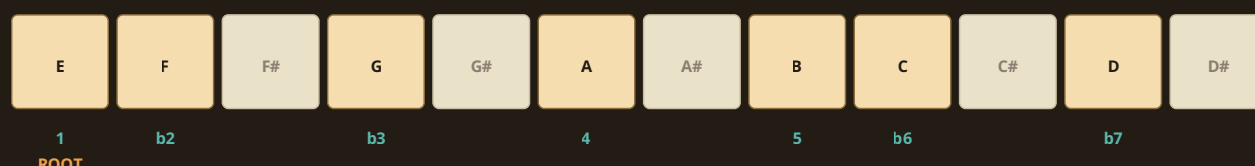
Pick a home note. Then stay in its sandbox.

The "key" answers two questions: which note is home, and which notes are allowed. Everything in your track lives in it — the bass, the chords, the hook.

Major keys sound happy and resolved. **Phrygian** is tense and moody with a dark Mediterranean edge. This whole lane is Phrygian — **E** is home, and the allowed notes are the Phrygian scale from E.

E Phrygian is your home for this guide: make **E** your home, and the allowed notes are E, F, G, A, B, C, D. Seven notes — that is the whole game. You can slide this same shape to any other home note later.

E Phrygian: your seven allowed notes



The gray notes are NOT in the key — ignore them for now.

In E Phrygian the allowed notes are E, F, G, A, B, C, D. Play only these and you literally cannot play a wrong note. The numbers are scale degrees — the "position" of each note matters more than its name.

THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

Most indie-tech-style tracks sit in Phrygian with meat in the low register — the catalog lives around D, E, and F. E Phrygian is the same shape from a different home note. Learn this shape once and you can play any of those.

The one rule of keys: **if the note is not in your scale, it is probably wrong.** One accidental black key is the reason a bass line that "feels off" actually feels off.

THE ONLY VOCAB YOU NEED

A half step (semitone) = the smallest step: one key to the next, black or white. C to C# is a half step. E to F is a half step.

A whole step = two half steps. C to D is a whole step.

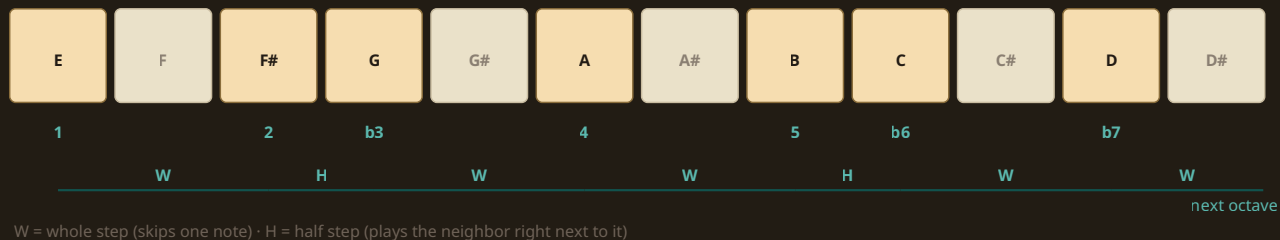
All of the scales in this guide are just recipes counted in half and whole steps.

3 · SCALES

The minor scale is a shape you can slide.

A scale is how far apart the allowed notes sit from each other. Count in whole (W) and half (H) steps: the natural minor scale is **W - H - W - W - H - W - W**.

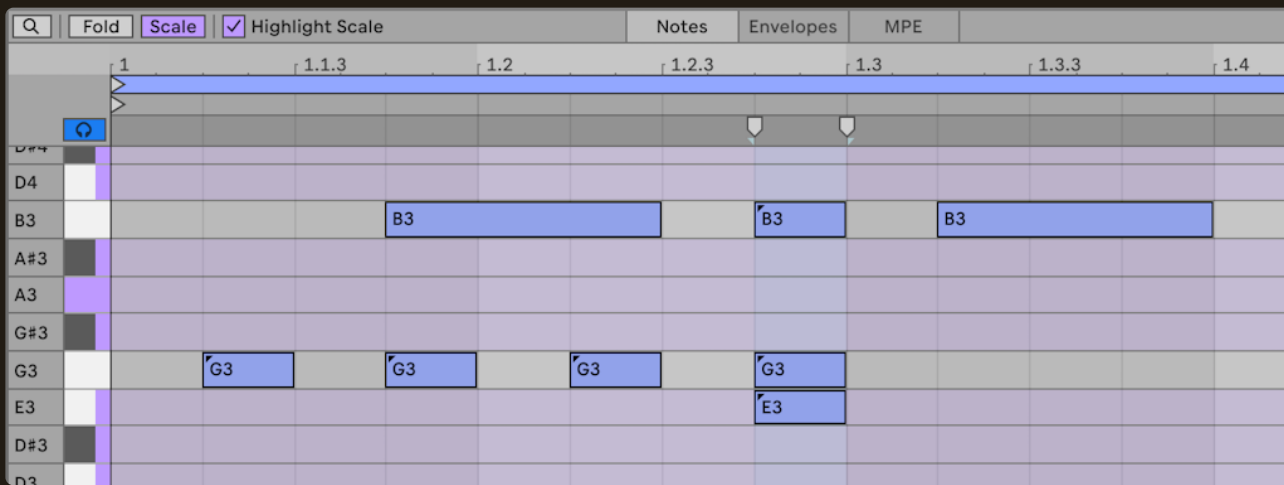
The minor shape on the 12-note strip (shown from E)



W = whole step (skips one note) · H = half step (plays the neighbor right next to it)

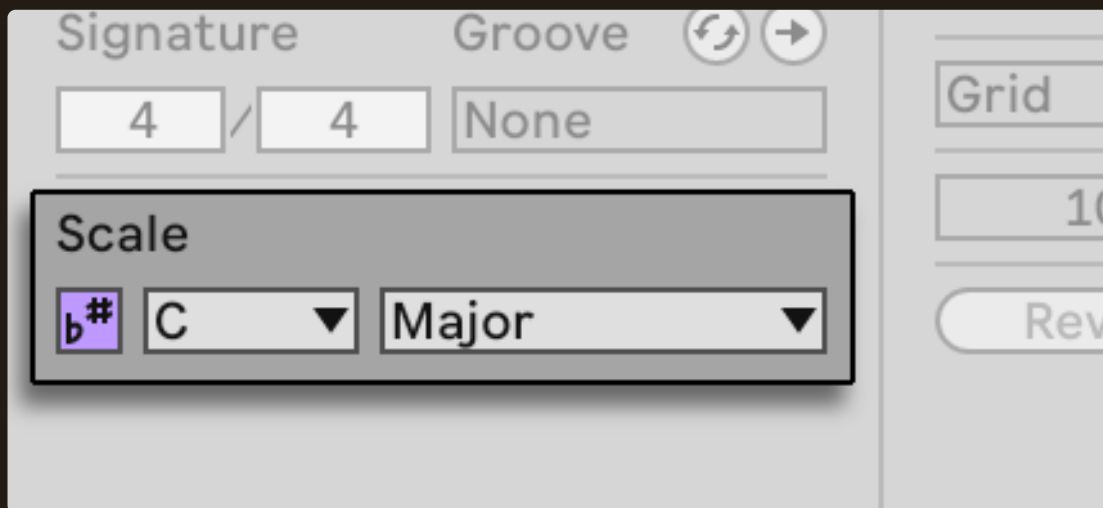
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Your scale, lit up inside Ableton's piano roll



Screenshot from Ableton's Live 12 manual: Highlight Scale is on (press K). Every purple row is a note in your scale — set the root to **E** and the scale to **Minor**, and draw only on the purple rows. The root note gets the strongest highlight: start and end your phrases on it.

Turn on Scale Mode in Clip View



In **Clip View**, switch on **Scale**, then pick your root note and the scale name — Minor, Phrygian, and Harmonic Minor all live in that menu. For this edition that's root **E**, scale **Phrygian**. That one choice drives Highlight Scale, Fold to Scale, and the pitch tools.

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THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

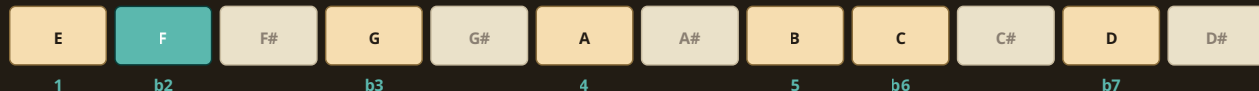
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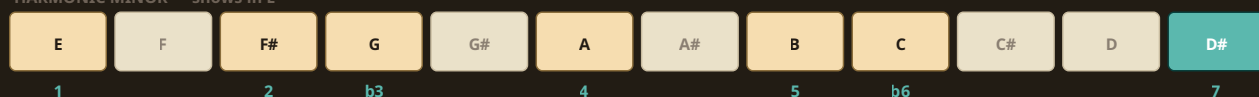
Start from natural minor. Move **one** note a half step and the whole mood changes. These two moves are the Mediterranean/Middle Eastern identity of the sound.

Phrygian (E): flat the 2nd. · Harmonic minor (E): raise the 7th.

PHRYGIAN — shows in E



HARMONIC MINOR — shows in E

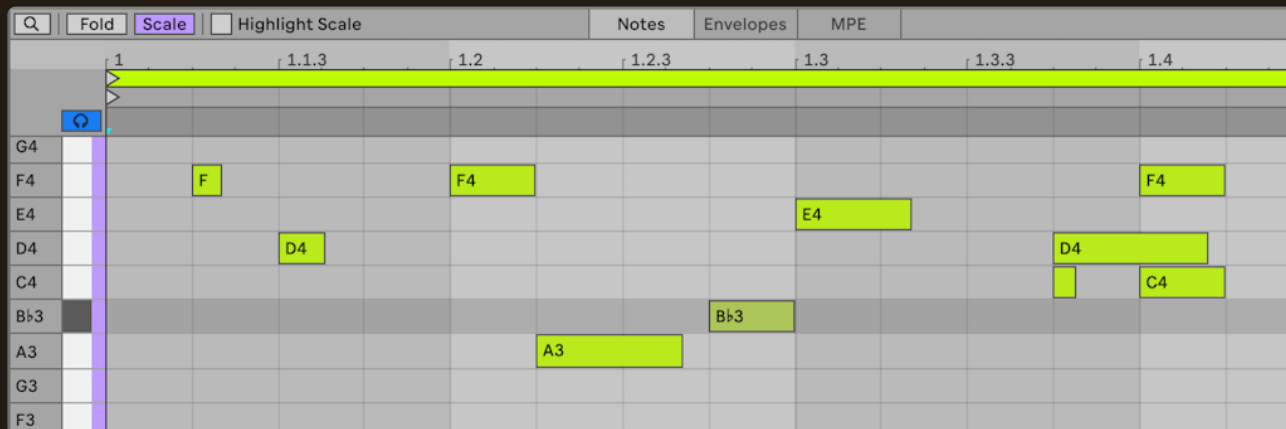


3 half steps — the exotic gap

Phrygian = natural minor, 2nd dropped one half step · Harmonic minor = natural minor, 7th raised one half step

"b" means "lowered from the major version". b2 = a half step above the root. That rubbed tension between the root and the b2 is the hook fingerprint of half the indie tech catalog.

Fold to Scale: hide every note you can't use



Screenshot from Ableton's Live 12 manual: press **G** with **Scale** on (root E, scale Phrygian) and the piano roll folds to your scale only. Every visible row is a legal note — you can draw freely without missing. This is the move when you don't trust your theory yet: pick your scale, fold, and write.

Reach for Phrygian when...

...you want the dark Mediterranean hook. Works especially well on bass: the rub between root and b2 (one half step apart) is what makes heads turn.

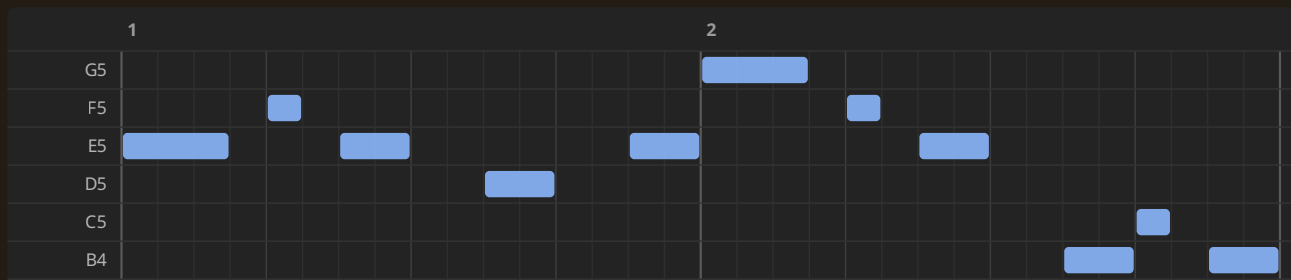
Reach for harmonic minor when...

...you want the exotic, desert-movie melody. That 3-half-step jump between the 6th and 7th is strong spice — use a little, or the whole track tastes like it.

Steal this hook. It's already in your key.

A two-bar E Phrygian hook drawn exactly as it looks in Ableton's MIDI Note Editor, folded to the scale (press G) — every row you see is a legal note. Copy the shape, change the rhythm, it's yours.

Two-bar E Phrygian hook — the b2 rub does the talking



The move: E–F–E in the first bar — that half-step rub is the indie tech fingerprint. It climbs to G, sighs B–C–B, and lands back home on E. Loop it, nudge the rhythm, never leave the folded rows.

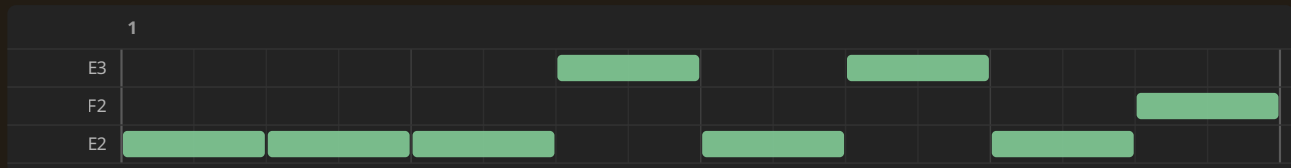
MAKE IT YOURS

Three moves and it stops sounding like an example: **1)** start the E–F rub on the and instead of the downbeat. **2)** Play the second bar up an octave. **3)** Copy both bars and end the copy on B instead of E — now the first half asks a question and the second half answers it.

The bass and the stabs that go under it.

Same key, same loop. Three patterns, one scale, zero wrong notes.

Rolling E bass — root 8ths, octave pops, one b2 spice



Root 8ths with octave pops on the ends of 2 and 3. The last 8th swaps to the b2 (F) — the indie tech touch. The kick owns the downbeat; this dances between the kicks.

E minor triad stabs — nothing on the downbeat

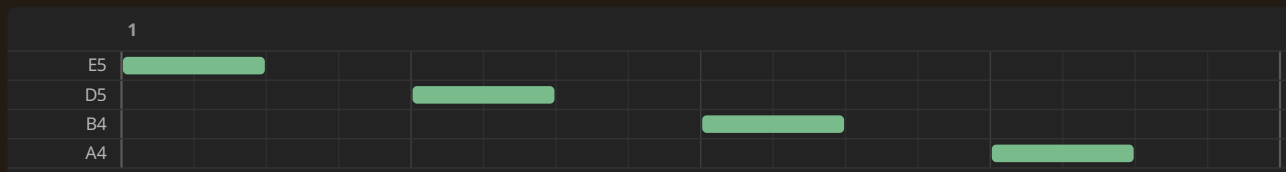


The 1-b3-5 stack (E – G – B) chopped onto the ands. Bar 2 flips to the higher voicing so it breathes. Short, punchy, gone before the kick lands.

Same home note, three indie tech moods.

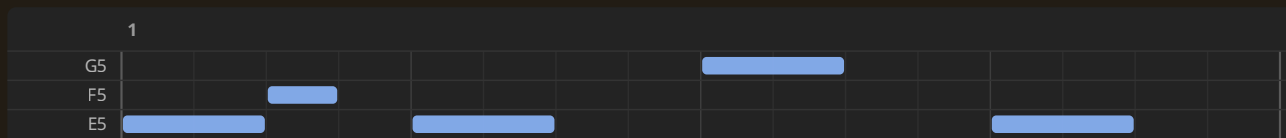
The three scales this lane runs on, all from E. Learn to hear which one a track is in — then steal it.

E natural minor — the plain groove



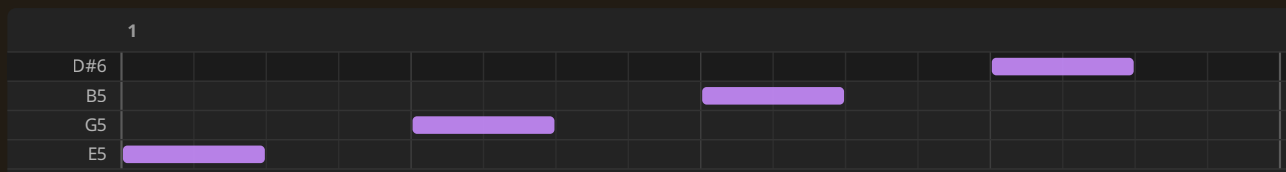
No rub, no spice — the canvas the other two paint on.

E Phrygian — flat the 2nd



Drop the 2nd to F — instant dark Mediterranean hook.

E harmonic minor — raise the 7th

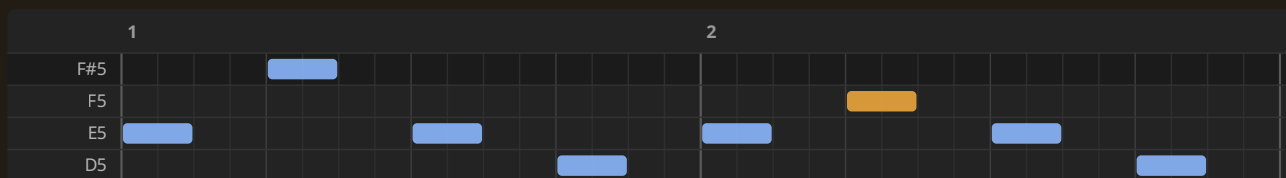


Raise the 7th to D# — the b6–7 lift is pure desert.

Live in one scale, shoplift from its neighbor.

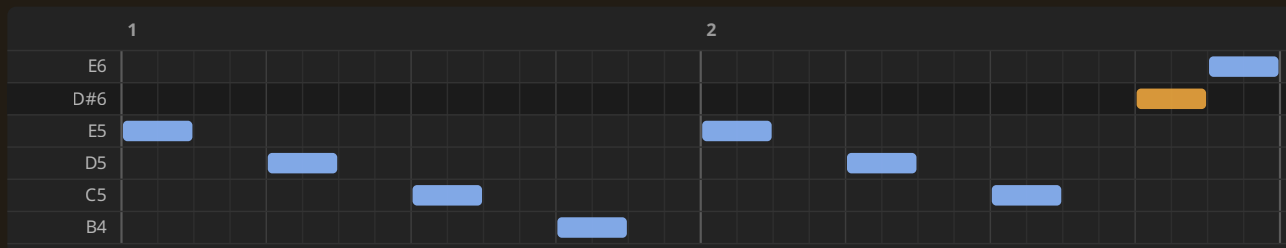
Phrygian *is* natural minor with the 2nd dropped; harmonic minor *is* natural minor with the 7th raised. So you can write a whole track in one scale and borrow a single note from the next — the loop keeps evolving and you never leave home.

Borrow the b2 — verse in E natural minor, hook in E Phrygian



Same rhythm, one note nudged down a half step — the orange note is the borrow. Verse breathes in natural minor, the hook bites in Phrygian.

The raised-7th turnaround



Borrow the raised 7th (D#) for exactly one heartbeat at the turnaround — harmonic minor flashes, then home. That 3-half-step b6–7 gap is the exotic lift.

You already know these scales. You just didn't know their names.

The b2 isn't a theory invention — it's the sound of half the melodies you grew up hearing.

The desert scale: Phrygian dominant — Phrygian with a major 3rd

E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#
1	b2			3	4		5	b6		b7	

Hava Nagila is the most famous b2 on earth — and it's Phrygian dominant: 1, b2, **3**, 4, 5, b6, b7. That b2 *plus* major-3rd rub is the desert-movie sound. **Misirlou** (the Pulp Fiction one) lives in the same family, one notch spicier.

THE INDIE TECH CONNECTION

Adam Ten, Rafael, Mita Gami and the whole indie tech wave run on these exact moves — the b2 rub and the raised-7th lift are the catalog's fingerprints. Next time a hook grabs you, hum it and check: nine times out of ten it's the 1–b2–1 rub or the b6–7–1 lift you just learned to draw.

PRACTICE: ONE SCALE PER DAY

Pick one of the three hooks on the previous page. Loop it for ten minutes, then borrow one note — flat the 2nd, or raise the 7th at the turnaround. That's intertwining. Do it until your ear reaches for the borrow before your brain does.

The bounce is where notes land, not which notes.

indie tech basslines are rolling 8th notes on the root with the **accent dodging the kick**. That dodge is the whole genre.

Straight vs. the bounce — the same notes, different landing spots

ON THE BEAT



THE BOUNCE



1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and

Same notes, moved to the "ands" = bounce. The kick handles the downbeat; the bass dancing between the kicks is what makes hips move.

A one-bar rolling bass: root anchors, octave pops

OCTAVE



5TH



ROOT



1 2 3 4

R = root, 5 = fifth, 8 = octave. These three notes are always in your key — there is no wrong move. The octave pops on the "ands" are the bounce.

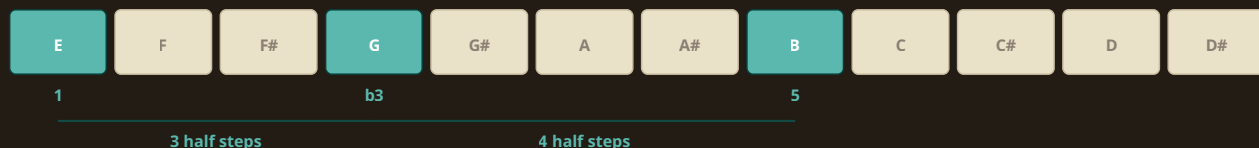
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

The indie tech move: write the bass exactly like the bar above, then **once every few bars**, swap one root pop for the Phrygian **b2** (one half step above your root). That little rub against the home note is the fingerprint bass move of the sound.

A chord is three notes from your key, stacked.

Count from your root: play the 1st, the flat-3rd, and the 5th. That is a minor triad — the chord underneath nearly every indie tech stab.

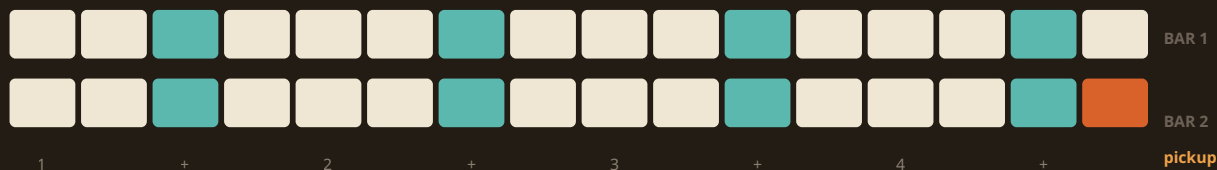
The minor triad: 1 - b3 - 5 (shown on E)



Build any minor triad by counting. From E: up 3 half steps (G), up 4 more (B). The order and octave are free — shuffle them for different flavors of the same chord.

Now turn the chord into a **stab**: play all three notes as one short, punchy hit — and do not put it on the downbeat. The kick owns the downbeat; the stab lives on the "ands", arguing with the bass.

Two bars of classic stab rhythm (the "ands")



Every stab sits off the kick. Bar 2 ends with a double hit (the "pickup") that shoves you back into bar 1. This two-bar loop is the engine of most house and tech house tracks.

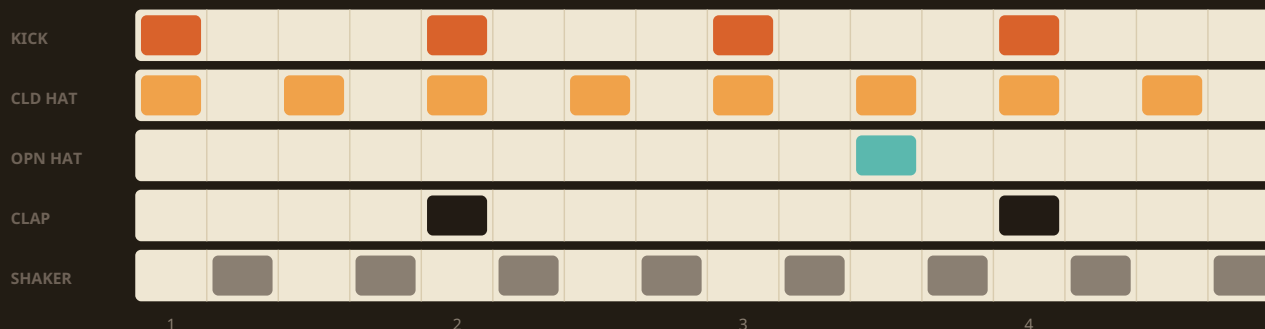
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

indie tech stabs run **short and dry** — the staff is rhythmic, not lush. Instant B-section: copy the whole stab loop, move **every note up one octave**, and use it only in the second half of the drop.

Kick owns the downbeat. Swing loosens everything else.

The rhythm bar below is worth more than a chapter on scales. Every row does one job — and **swing** is what makes the rows breathe together.

One bar: the full house drum grid (16 steps)



Kick: anchors time. **Closed hats:** tick the 8ths. **Open hat:** one breath per bar. **Clap:** slaps on 2 and 4.

Shaker: the glue filling the gaps. Start here and remove hats if the groove gets busy — never add more before this works.

Swing: the same row, loosened



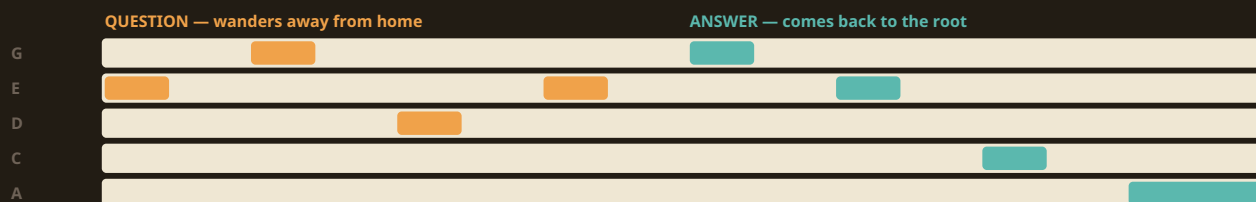
Every other hit nudged **late** (nothing else changed). 52-56% on 16ths is the sweet spot; past 58% it's stumbling-drinks.

Swing hats and shaker together, or they fight each other. Kick and clap stay straight — they are the reference frame your swing wobbles against.

A hook is five notes and two phrases.

Take your minor scale and throw out the 2nd and the 6th. The five remaining notes (**the pentatonic cheat**) all work with each other — every choice is safe. A hook is a question that leaves home, then an answer that lands back on the root.

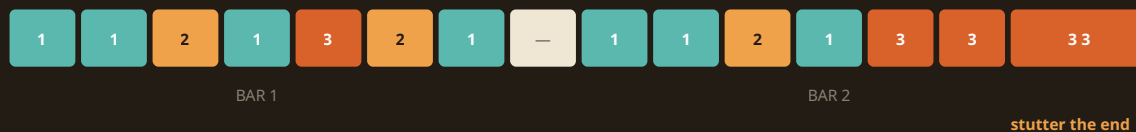
Question and answer: two phrases over two bars



The question jumps between safe notes; the answer walks down and parks on the root. Most memorable hooks in this lane are exactly this shape — wander, then land.

Vocal chops follow the same idea, with the vocal doing the melody work for you: slice a phrase into syllables, tune the slices to your key, place them like stabs on the offbeats, and **stutter the last slice** — repeat it two or three times to slam the loop shut.

A chop map: which syllable plays, step by step



Numbers are syllables from the original phrase. Same few syllables, playful order, shuffled into the offbeat grid. The ending stutter is the vocal equivalent of the stab's pickup.

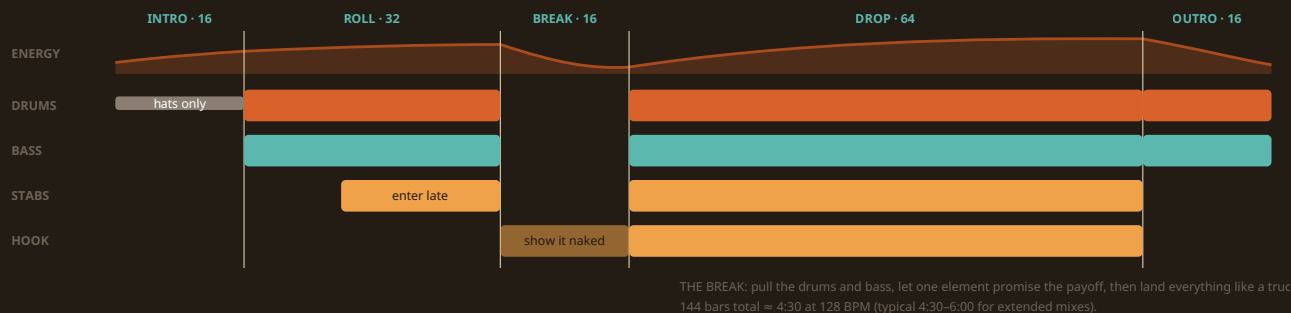
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

indie tech hooks lean **Phrygian**: spring the b2 into the question (one jab of tension) and land the answer cleanly on the root. Tension first, safe landing later — that push/pull is the lane.

Stack layers in sections. Strip them off at the break.

A DJ track is a movie in five scenes: setup, groove, tension, payoff, exit. Scenes land in 16-bar chunks because mixes are built on 16s and 32s — and because your listener predicts the drop and you must make them wait.

Anatomy of a track: layers enter, the break strips them off



Only one thing changes at a time. A layer enters, the groove holds, then the next one. The intro and outro exist so a DJ can mix your track — never skip them.

DJ-FRIENDLY RULES

Bars come in **16s**. Intros are **mixing room**, not a second song. The break is **the window DJs mix in** — keep it simple and don't surprise anyone there.

The five-minute workflow. Every track.

Order matters: build the groove first, the melodies last. Repeatable beats inspired for track number one hundred.

1 Pick a key.

A minor to start. Write the root name somewhere you can see it. Done is better than clever.

2 Sketch the drums.

One bar from the grid on page 190. Kick, hats, clap, shaker — do not fiddle, this bar is a placeholder for the whole track.

3 Shape the bass.

Root on the 8ths, octave pops on the "ands", one slip onto the b2 every few bars if you are feeling indie tech.

4 Drop the stabs.

One minor triad on the "ands", a two-bar loop with a pickup. Steal the rhythm from page 188 and do not touch it again until the groove breathes.

5 Write the hook.

Five pentatonic notes, question then answer over two bars. Synth line or vocal chops — same rules either way.

6 Steal the arrangement.

Sections in 16s. Carve the break by deleting drums and bass for 16 bars. Everything before is the setup; the drop is the argument.

When it sounds wrong — the anti-fail list

- ☐ **It clashes:** scan the piano roll for a note not in your key. One black key is usually the whole bug.
- ☐ **It drags:** it is the rhythm, not the notes. Push hits onto the "ands" or add swing to hats and shaker.
- ☐ **The hook won't sit:** it is probably playing on beats where the kick lives. Shift its first hit to an "and".
- ☐ **The bass is muddy:** too many different low notes. Anchor the root and move the octave pops higher.
- ☐ **Before bounce:** is the intro DJ-mixable, is the break exactly 16, does the drop land after it?

THE WORKFLOW RULE

Render the loop and listen tomorrow, then fix exactly one thing and move on. A finished track you learned from beats five unfinished theory exercises every time.

Steal these shapes. Finish tracks.

The whole guide on one page. Keep it next to the keyboard until E Phrygian is muscle memory.

The three shapes

NATURAL MINOR (E) — shape: W-H-W-W-H-W-W · slides to any root

E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#
---	---	----	---	----	---	----	---	---	----	---	----

PHRYGIAN (E) — natural minor with the 2nd dropped a half step (the indie tech move)

E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#
---	---	----	---	----	---	----	---	---	----	---	----

HARMONIC MINOR (E) — natural minor with the 7th raised a half step (the spice)

E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#
---	---	----	---	----	---	----	---	---	----	---	----

Triad emergency line: minor chord = 1 + b3 + 5 (count up 3, then 4 half steps). Example from E: **E - G - B**.

The rhythm in one bar (16 steps)

KICK															
CH HAT															
OP HAT															
CLAP															
SHKR															

Stabs, hooks, chops: nothing on the downbeat — live on the "ands". Swing hats + shaker together at 52-56%.

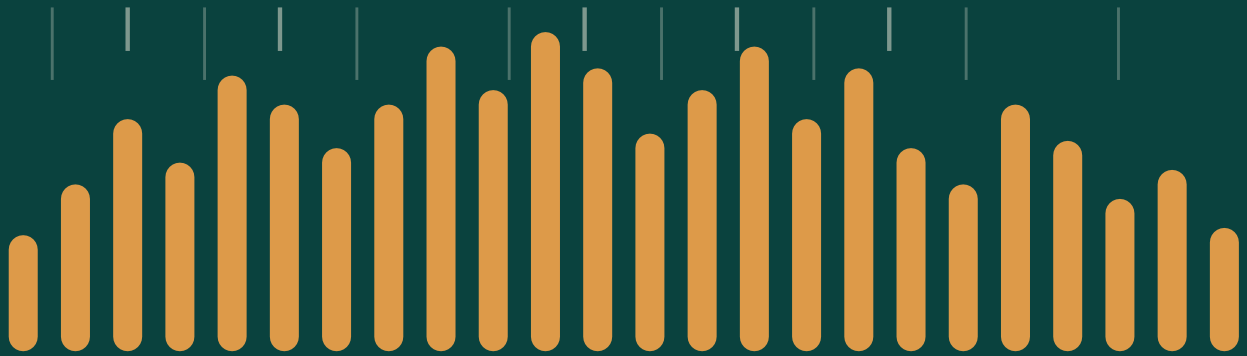
THE SIX GOLDEN RULES

1. **Stay in the key.** Wrong notes are almost always outside-scale notes.
2. **Root, 5th, octave:** the three notes that are always safe on the bass.
3. **Offbeats = bounce, swing = breath.** Rhythm covers simple harmony.
4. **Question, then answer.** Every hook leaves home and lands back on the root.
5. **Strip the break to one element.** The drop argues louder when the break whispers.
6. **Finish the arrangement before you polish.** A structured track beats a perfect loop.

THE DUMBED-DOWN EDITION

Music Theory for indie tech Tech House

Notes, scales, chords, basslines, drums, and arrangement —
minimum viable theory for warm, bouncy, groove-first tracks. No
sight-reading. No exams.



What each thing actually does — shown, not explained.

Five ideas do 90% of the work. The rest is taste.

Read front to back once, then use the cheat sheet forever.

MADE FOR CLAY GOLDIN · F PHRYGIAN EDITION

Five ideas do 90% of the work

A indie-tech-style track is not theory-dense. It is a small handful of decisions made well. Here they are, in the order this guide covers them.

1 Notes

There are only 12 musical notes, and they repeat forever. Learn them once, on a keyboard, and recognize them in the piano roll.

2 Key

Pick one note as home base. The "key" is the set of notes that feel like home around it. In this lane you will almost always pick Phrygian.

3 Scales

A scale is a recipe for which notes are "allowed". The minor scale is one spacing shape you can slide to any key. Two tiny variations give the indie tech flavor.

4 Rhythm and drums

The groove. Four-to-the-floor kick, swung hats and percussion, offbeat syncopation. Good rhythm covers a lot of simple harmony.

5 Chords and arrangement

Three-note chords turned into stabs, then everything packed into DJ-friendly sections that build to one payoff.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read pages 197 to 210 once, in order. Each page teaches one idea and ends with what to do with it. Page 211 gives the repeatable starting workflow for every track. Page 212 is the cheat sheet — print it, screenshot it, keep it next to the screen while you write.

You do not need

Reading sheet music. Perfect pitch. Knowing the circle of fifths. Anything with a Roman numeral.

You do need

A DAW with a piano roll. A copy of the keyboard diagrams (they are in here). Twenty minutes and one genre you already love.

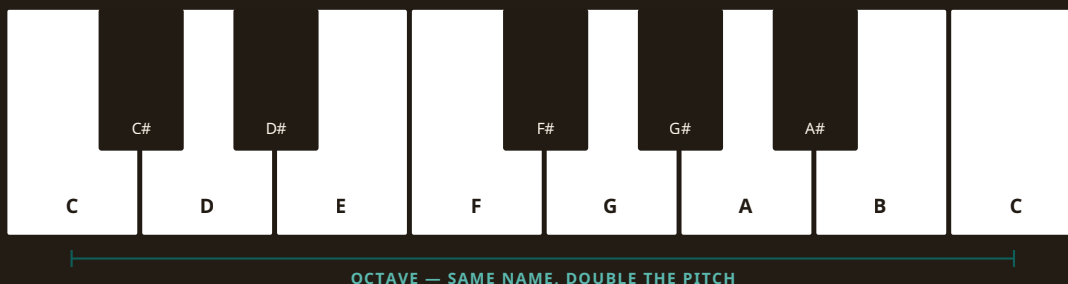
Only 12 notes exist. Learn them once.

A note is a named pitch. There are twelve of them, and they just repeat forever. The keyboard below is one octave — one full set of twelve.

White keys are named **C, D, E, F, G, A, B**, and then they start over. Black keys are the notes **in between** — named after their neighbor plus a # (sharp), which means "one step up". So the black key between C and D is **C#**, and between F and G is **F#**. There is no black key between E/F or B/C — those pairs are already touching.

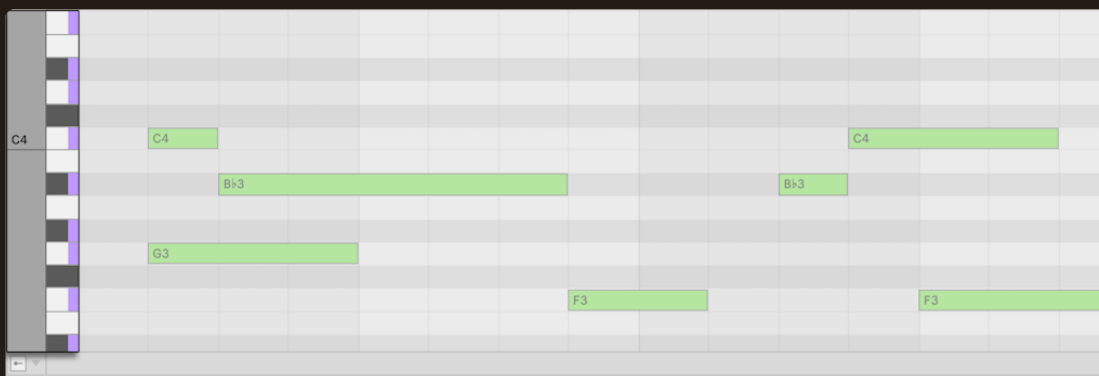
After 12 notes, the names repeat at twice the frequency. That repeat is called an **octave**. In Ableton the piano roll is the same layout turned vertical — the same 12 names repeating up the screen.

One octave: the whole universe, C to C



Count them: 7 white + 5 black = 12. That is every note that exists. Everything else in music is choosing some notes, skipping others, and repeating.

The same keyboard in Ableton — turned vertical



This is Ableton's piano ruler, from the official Live 12 manual. The same 12 names run bottom to top instead of left to right — the strip labeled **C4** marks your octave. Click a key to hear it, double-click the grid to drop a note on that row.

Pick a home note. Then stay in its sandbox.

The "key" answers two questions: which note is home, and which notes are allowed. Everything in your track lives in it — the bass, the chords, the hook.

Major keys sound happy and resolved. **Phrygian** is tense and moody with a dark Mediterranean edge. This whole lane is Phrygian — **F** is home, and the allowed notes are the Phrygian scale from F.

F Phrygian is your home for this guide: make **F** your home, and the allowed notes are F, Gb, Ab, Bb, C, Db, Eb. Seven notes — that is the whole game. You can slide this same shape to any other home note later.

F Phrygian: your seven allowed notes



The gray notes are NOT in the key — ignore them for now.

In F Phrygian the allowed notes are F, Gb, Ab, Bb, C, Db, Eb. Play only these and you literally cannot play a wrong note. The numbers are scale degrees — the "position" of each note matters more than its name.

THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

Most indie-tech-style tracks sit in Phrygian with meat in the low register — the catalog lives around D, E, and F. F Phrygian is the same shape from a different home note. Learn this shape once and you can play any of those.

The one rule of keys: **if the note is not in your scale, it is probably wrong.** One accidental black key is the reason a bass line that "feels off" actually feels off.

THE ONLY VOCAB YOU NEED

A half step (semitone) = the smallest step: one key to the next, black or white. C to C# is a half step. E to F is a half step.

A whole step = two half steps. C to D is a whole step.

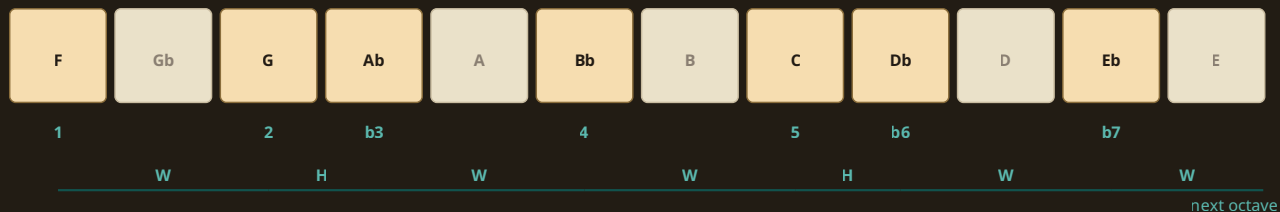
All of the scales in this guide are just recipes counted in half and whole steps.

3 · SCALES

The minor scale is a shape you can slide.

A scale is how far apart the allowed notes sit from each other. Count in whole (W) and half (H) steps: the natural minor scale is **W - H - W - W - H - W - W**.

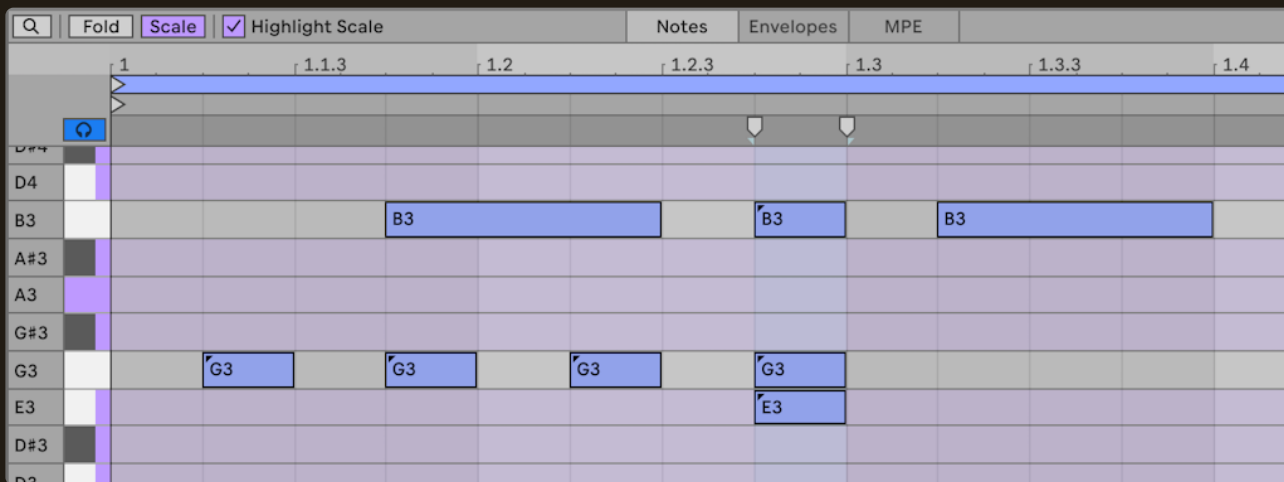
The minor shape on the 12-note strip (shown from F)



W = whole step (skips one note) · H = half step (plays the neighbor right next to it)

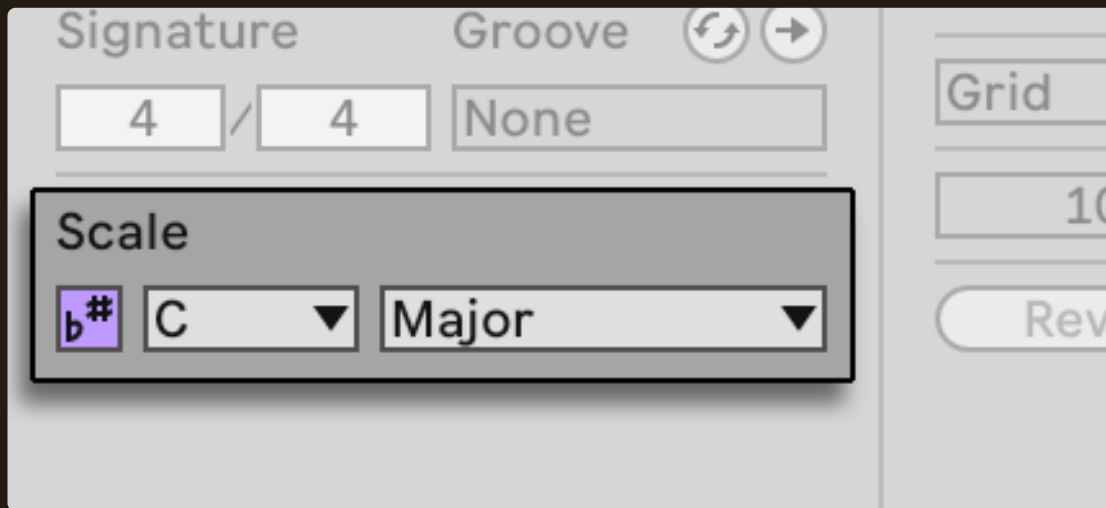
Start on ANY note, count W-H-W-W-H-W-W, and you have that minor key. Want F minor? Start on F: F W G H Ab W Bb W C H Db W Eb W F. Do it once, write the answer down, never do it again.

Your scale, lit up inside Ableton's piano roll



Screenshot from Ableton's Live 12 manual: Highlight Scale is on (press K). Every purple row is a note in your scale — set the root to **F** and the scale to **Minor**, and draw only on the purple rows. The root note gets the strongest highlight: start and end your phrases on it.

Turn on Scale Mode in Clip View



In **Clip View**, **switch on Scale**, then pick your root note and the scale name — Minor, Phrygian, and Harmonic Minor all live in that menu. For this edition that's root **F**, scale **Phrygian**. That one choice drives Highlight Scale, Fold to Scale, and the pitch tools.

That is genuinely the whole trick. The names of the notes change from key to key; the **shape of the gaps does not**. Think in shapes, not letters.

THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

Natural minor alone is fine, but the indie tech flavor comes from two one-note tweaks: **flat the 2nd** for the dark Mediterranean hook (Phrygian), or **raise the 7th** for the exotic spice (harmonic minor). Next page shows both.

Two one-note tweaks make the indie tech flavor.

Start from natural minor. Move **one** note a half step and the whole mood changes. These two moves are the Mediterranean/Middle Eastern identity of the sound.

Phrygian (F): flat the 2nd. · **Harmonic minor (F):** raise the 7th.

PHRYGIAN — shows in F



HARMONIC MINOR — shows in F

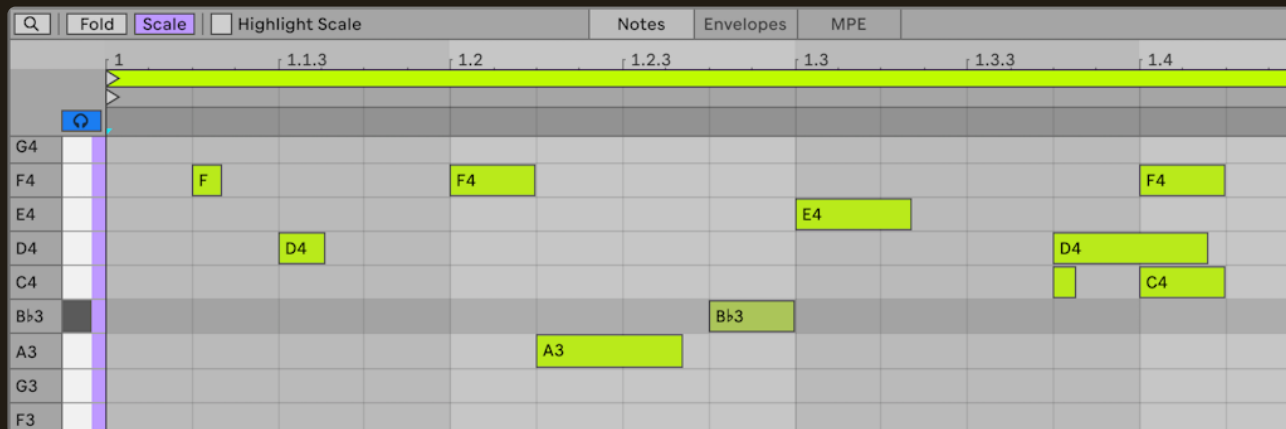


Phrygian = natural minor, 2nd dropped one half step · **Harmonic minor** = natural minor, 7th raised one half step

3 half steps — the exotic gap

"b" means "lowered from the major version". b2 = a half step above the root. That rubbed tension between the root and the b2 is the hook fingerprint of half the indie tech catalog.

Fold to Scale: hide every note you can't use



Screenshot from Ableton's Live 12 manual: press G with Scale on (root F, scale Phrygian) and the piano roll folds to your scale only. Every visible row is a legal note — you can draw freely without missing. This is the move when you don't trust your theory yet: pick your scale, fold, and write.

Reach for Phrygian when...

...you want the dark Mediterranean hook. Works especially well on bass: the rub between root and b2 (one half step apart) is what makes heads turn.

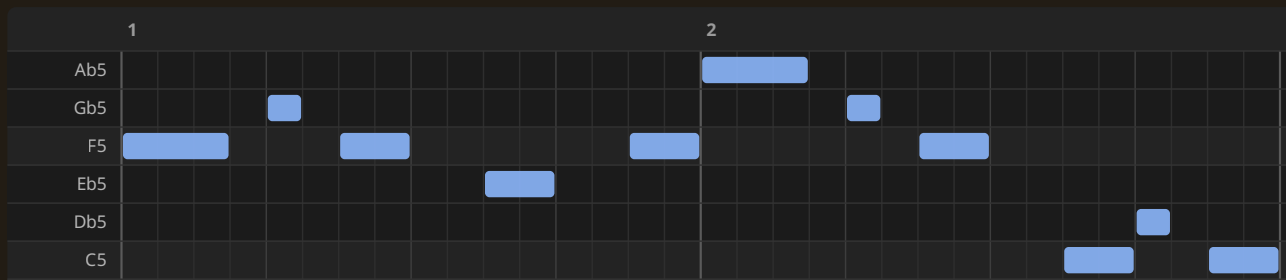
Reach for harmonic minor when...

...you want the exotic, desert-movie melody. That 3-half-step jump between the 6th and 7th is strong spice — use a little, or the whole track tastes like it.

Steal this hook. It's already in your key.

A two-bar F Phrygian hook drawn exactly as it looks in Ableton's MIDI Note Editor, folded to the scale (press G) — every row you see is a legal note. Copy the shape, change the rhythm, it's yours.

Two-bar F Phrygian hook — the b2 rub does the talking



The move: F–Gb–F in the first bar — that half-step rub is the indie tech fingerprint. It climbs to Ab, sighs C–Db–C, and lands back home on F. Loop it, nudge the rhythm, never leave the folded rows.

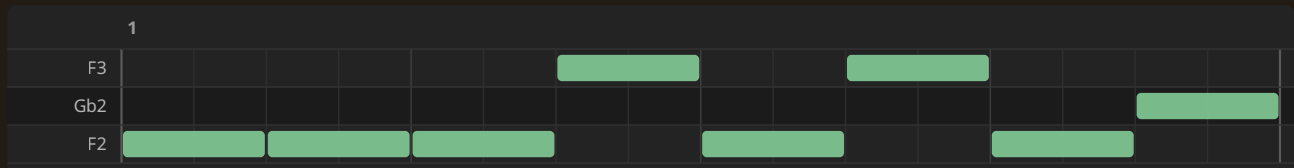
MAKE IT YOURS

Three moves and it stops sounding like an example: **1)** start the F–Gb rub on the and instead of the downbeat. **2)** Play the second bar up an octave. **3)** Copy both bars and end the copy on C instead of F — now the first half asks a question and the second half answers it.

The bass and the stabs that go under it.

Same key, same loop. Three patterns, one scale, zero wrong notes.

Rolling F bass — root 8ths, octave pops, one b2 spice



Root 8ths with octave pops on the ends of 2 and 3. The last 8th swaps to the b2 (Gb) — the indie tech touch. The kick owns the downbeat; this dances between the kicks.

F minor triad stabs — nothing on the downbeat

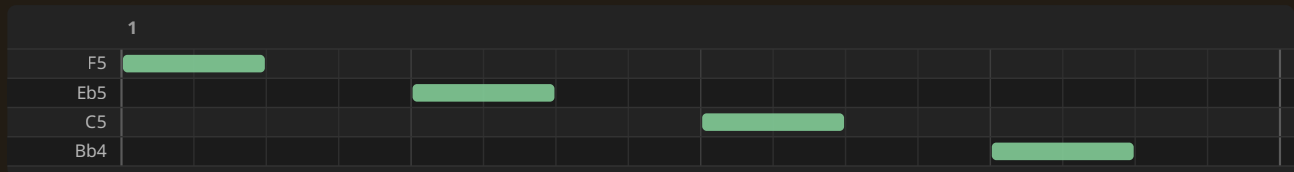


The 1–b3–5 stack (F – Ab – C) chopped onto the ands. Bar 2 flips to the higher voicing so it breathes. Short, punchy, gone before the kick lands.

Same home note, three indie tech moods.

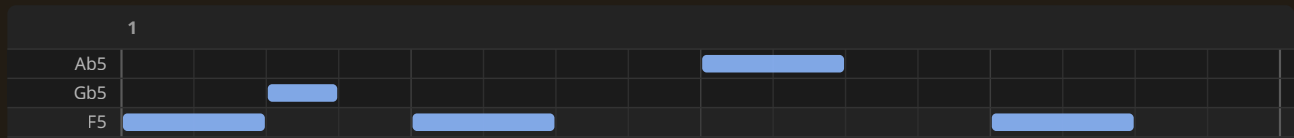
The three scales this lane runs on, all from F. Learn to hear which one a track is in — then steal it.

F natural minor — the plain groove



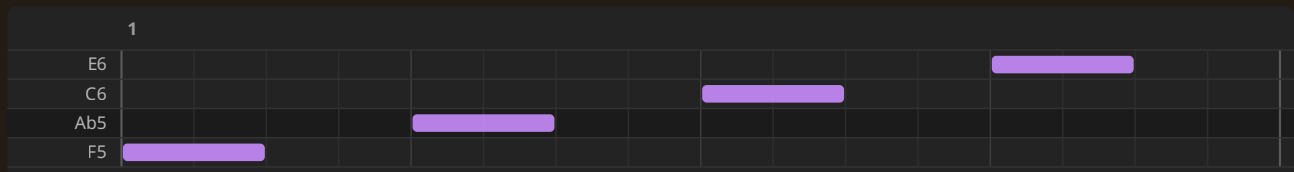
No rub, no spice — the canvas the other two paint on.

F Phrygian — flat the 2nd



Drop the 2nd to Gb — instant dark Mediterranean hook.

F harmonic minor — raise the 7th

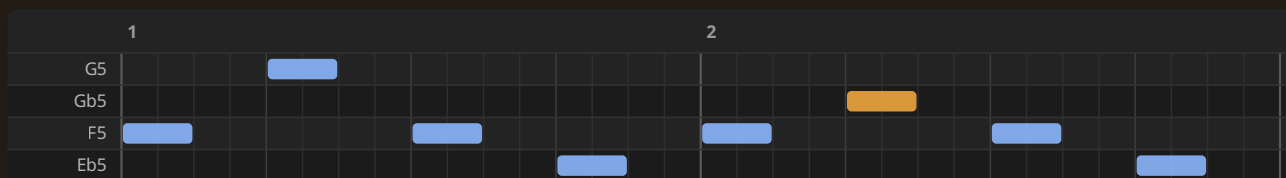


Raise the 7th to E — the b6–7 lift is pure desert.

Live in one scale, shoplift from its neighbor.

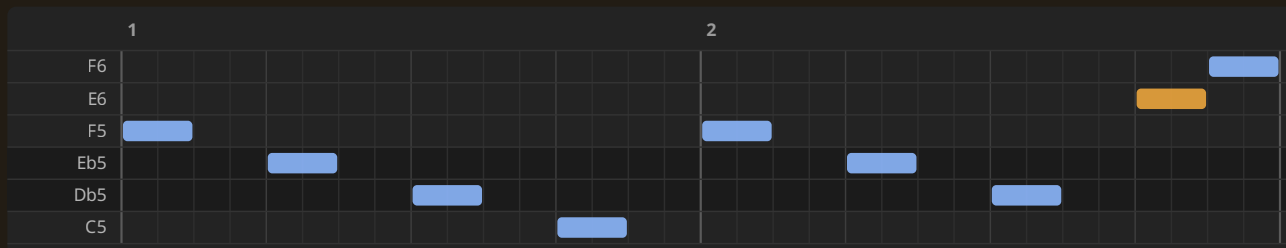
Phrygian *is* natural minor with the 2nd dropped; harmonic minor *is* natural minor with the 7th raised. So you can write a whole track in one scale and borrow a single note from the next — the loop keeps evolving and you never leave home.

Borrow the b2 — verse in F natural minor, hook in F Phrygian



Same rhythm, one note nudged down a half step — the orange note is the borrow. Verse breathes in natural minor, the hook bites in Phrygian.

The raised-7th turnaround



Borrow the raised 7th (E) for exactly one heartbeat at the turnaround — harmonic minor flashes, then home. That 3-half-step b6–7 gap is the exotic lift.

You already know these scales. You just didn't know their names.

The b2 isn't a theory invention — it's the sound of half the melodies you grew up hearing.

The desert scale: Phrygian dominant — Phrygian with a major 3rd

F	Gb	G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	Db	D	Eb	E
1	b2			3	4		5	b6		b7	

Hava Nagila is the most famous b2 on earth — and it's Phrygian dominant: 1, b2, **3**, 4, 5, b6, b7. That b2 *plus* major-3rd rub is the desert-movie sound. **Misirlou** (the Pulp Fiction one) lives in the same family, one notch spicier.

THE INDIE TECH CONNECTION

Adam Ten, Rafael, Mita Gami and the whole indie tech wave run on these exact moves — the b2 rub and the raised-7th lift are the catalog's fingerprints. Next time a hook grabs you, hum it and check: nine times out of ten it's the 1–b2–1 rub or the b6–7–1 lift you just learned to draw.

PRACTICE: ONE SCALE PER DAY

Pick one of the three hooks on the previous page. Loop it for ten minutes, then borrow one note — flat the 2nd, or raise the 7th at the turnaround. That's intertwining. Do it until your ear reaches for the borrow before your brain does.

The bounce is where notes land, not which notes.

indie tech basslines are rolling 8th notes on the root with the **accent dodging the kick**. That dodge is the whole genre.

Straight vs. the bounce — the same notes, different landing spots

ON THE BEAT



THE BOUNCE



1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and

Same notes, moved to the "ands" = bounce. The kick handles the downbeat; the bass dancing between the kicks is what makes hips move.

A one-bar rolling bass: root anchors, octave pops

OCTAVE



5TH



ROOT



1 2 3 4

R = root, 5 = fifth, 8 = octave. These three notes are always in your key — there is no wrong move. The octave pops on the "ands" are the bounce.

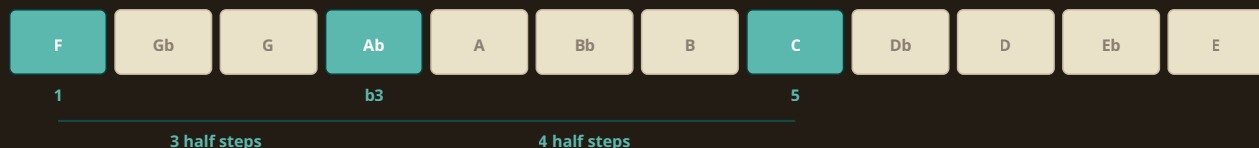
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

The indie tech move: write the bass exactly like the bar above, then **once every few bars**, swap one root pop for the Phrygian **b2** (one half step above your root). That little rub against the home note is the fingerprint bass move of the sound.

A chord is three notes from your key, stacked.

Count from your root: play the 1st, the flat-3rd, and the 5th. That is a minor triad — the chord underneath nearly every indie tech stab.

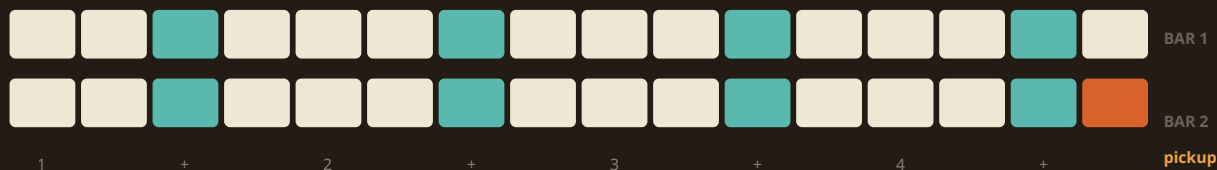
The minor triad: 1 - b3 - 5 (shown on F)



Build any minor triad by counting. From F: up 3 half steps (Ab), up 4 more (C). The order and octave are free — shuffle them for different flavors of the same chord.

Now turn the chord into a **stab**: play all three notes as one short, punchy hit — and do not put it on the downbeat. The kick owns the downbeat; the stab lives on the "ands", arguing with the bass.

Two bars of classic stab rhythm (the "ands")



Every stab sits off the kick. Bar 2 ends with a double hit (the "pickup") that shoves you back into bar 1. This two-bar loop is the engine of most house and tech house tracks.

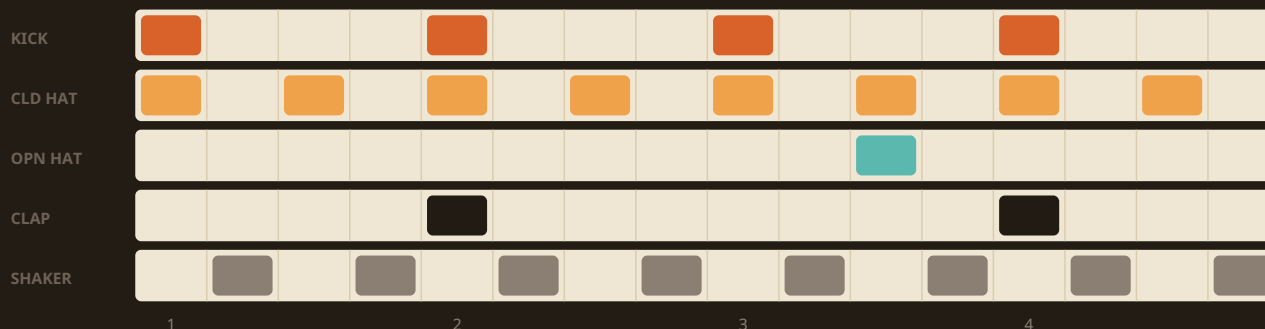
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

indie tech stabs run **short and dry** — the staff is rhythmic, not lush. Instant B-section: copy the whole stab loop, move **every note up one octave**, and use it only in the second half of the drop.

Kick owns the downbeat. Swing loosens everything else.

The rhythm bar below is worth more than a chapter on scales. Every row does one job — and **swing** is what makes the rows breathe together.

One bar: the full house drum grid (16 steps)



Kick: anchors time. **Closed hats:** tick the 8ths. **Open hat:** one breath per bar. **Clap:** slaps on 2 and 4.

Shaker: the glue filling the gaps. Start here and remove hats if the groove gets busy — never add more before this works.

Swing: the same row, loosened



Every other hit nudged **late** (nothing else changed). 52-56% on 16ths is the sweet spot; past 58% it stumbling-drinks.

Swing hats and shaker together, or they fight each other. Kick and clap stay straight — they are the reference frame your swing wobbles against.

A hook is five notes and two phrases.

Take your minor scale and throw out the 2nd and the 6th. The five remaining notes (**the pentatonic cheat**) all work with each other — every choice is safe. A hook is a question that leaves home, then an answer that lands back on the root.

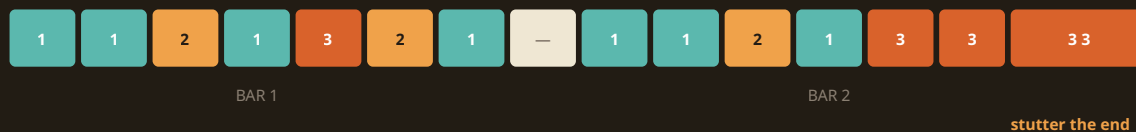
Question and answer: two phrases over two bars



The question jumps between safe notes; the answer walks down and parks on the root. Most memorable hooks in this lane are exactly this shape — wander, then land.

Vocal chops follow the same idea, with the vocal doing the melody work for you: slice a phrase into syllables, tune the slices to your key, place them like stabs on the offbeats, and **stutter the last slice** — repeat it two or three times to slam the loop shut.

A chop map: which syllable plays, step by step



Numbers are syllables from the original phrase. Same few syllables, playful order, shuffled into the offbeat grid. The ending stutter is the vocal equivalent of the stab's pickup.

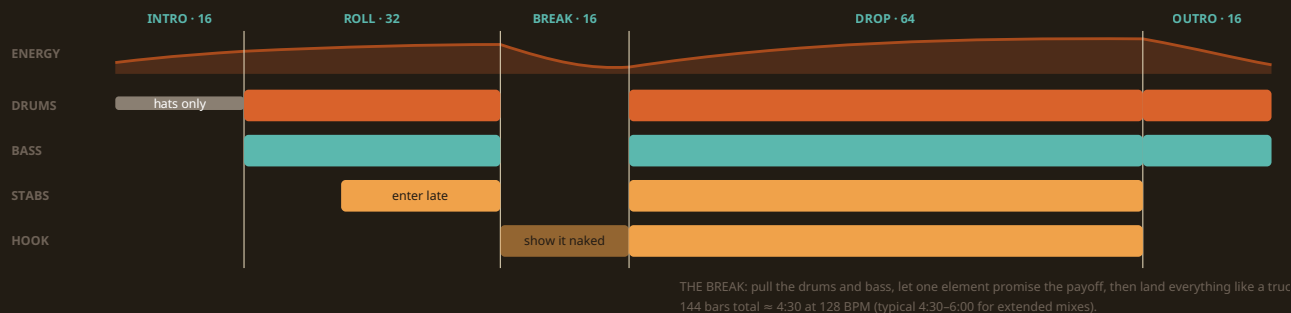
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

indie tech hooks lean **Phrygian**: spring the b2 into the question (one jab of tension) and land the answer cleanly on the root. Tension first, safe landing later — that push/pull is the lane.

Stack layers in sections. Strip them off at the break.

A DJ track is a movie in five scenes: setup, groove, tension, payoff, exit. Scenes land in 16-bar chunks because mixes are built on 16s and 32s — and because your listener predicts the drop and you must make them wait.

Anatomy of a track: layers enter, the break strips them off



Only one thing changes at a time. A layer enters, the groove holds, then the next one. The intro and outro exist so a DJ can mix your track — never skip them.

DJ-FRIENDLY RULES

Bars come in **16s**. Intros are **mixing room**, not a second song. The break is **the window DJs mix in** — keep it simple and don't surprise anyone there.

The five-minute workflow. Every track.

Order matters: build the groove first, the melodies last. Repeatable beats inspired for track number one hundred.

1 Pick a key.

A minor to start. Write the root name somewhere you can see it. Done is better than clever.

2 Sketch the drums.

One bar from the grid on page 208. Kick, hats, clap, shaker — do not fiddle, this bar is a placeholder for the whole track.

3 Shape the bass.

Root on the 8ths, octave pops on the "ands", one slip onto the b2 every few bars if you are feeling indie tech.

4 Drop the stabs.

One minor triad on the "ands", a two-bar loop with a pickup. Steal the rhythm from page 206 and do not touch it again until the groove breathes.

5 Write the hook.

Five pentatonic notes, question then answer over two bars. Synth line or vocal chops — same rules either way.

6 Steal the arrangement.

Sections in 16s. Carve the break by deleting drums and bass for 16 bars. Everything before is the setup; the drop is the argument.

When it sounds wrong — the anti-fail list

- ☐ **It clashes:** scan the piano roll for a note not in your key. One black key is usually the whole bug.
- ☐ **It drags:** it is the rhythm, not the notes. Push hits onto the "ands" or add swing to hats and shaker.
- ☐ **The hook won't sit:** it is probably playing on beats where the kick lives. Shift its first hit to an "and".
- ☐ **The bass is muddy:** too many different low notes. Anchor the root and move the octave pops higher.
- ☐ **Before bounce:** is the intro DJ-mixable, is the break exactly 16, does the drop land after it?

THE WORKFLOW RULE

Render the loop and listen tomorrow, then fix exactly one thing and move on. A finished track you learned from beats five unfinished theory exercises every time.

Steal these shapes. Finish tracks.

The whole guide on one page. Keep it next to the keyboard until F Phrygian is muscle memory.

The three shapes

NATURAL MINOR (F) — shape: W-H-W-H-W-W · slides to any root

F	Gb	G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	Db	D	Eb	E
---	----	---	----	---	----	---	---	----	---	----	---

PHRYGIAN (F) — natural minor with the 2nd dropped a half step (the indie tech move)

F	Gb	G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	Db	D	Eb	E
---	----	---	----	---	----	---	---	----	---	----	---

HARMONIC MINOR (F) — natural minor with the 7th raised a half step (the spice)

F	Gb	G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	Db	D	Eb	E
---	----	---	----	---	----	---	---	----	---	----	---

Triad emergency line: minor chord = 1 + b3 + 5 (count up 3, then 4 half steps). Example from F: **F - Ab - C**.

The rhythm in one bar (16 steps)

KICK	■			■				■				■			
CH HAT	■		■		■		■		■		■		■		■
OP HAT													■		
CLAP					■									■	
SHKR		■		■		■		■		■		■		■	

Stabs, hooks, chops: nothing on the downbeat — live on the "ands". Swing hats + shaker together at 52-56%.

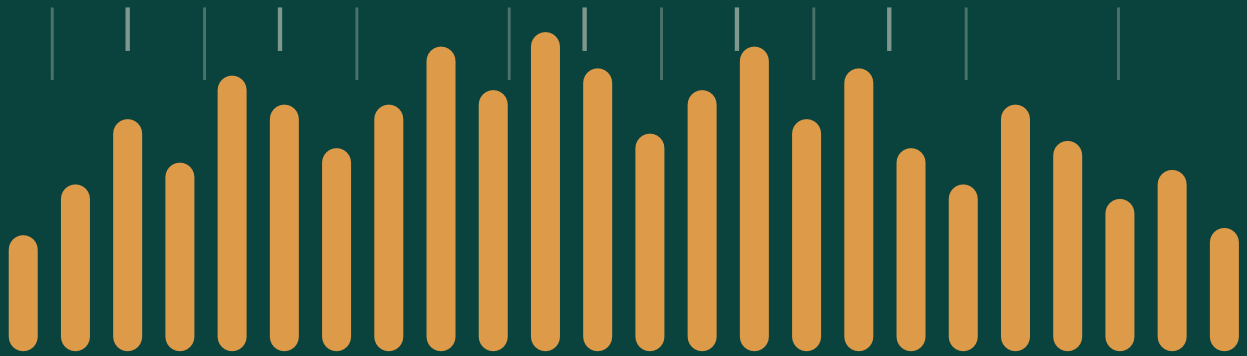
THE SIX GOLDEN RULES

1. **Stay in the key.** Wrong notes are almost always outside-scale notes.
2. **Root, 5th, octave:** the three notes that are always safe on the bass.
3. **Offbeats = bounce, swing = breath.** Rhythm covers simple harmony.
4. **Question, then answer.** Every hook leaves home and lands back on the root.
5. **Strip the break to one element.** The drop argues louder when the break whispers.
6. **Finish the arrangement before you polish.** A structured track beats a perfect loop.

THE DUMBED-DOWN EDITION

Music Theory for indie tech Tech House

Notes, scales, chords, basslines, drums, and arrangement —
minimum viable theory for warm, bouncy, groove-first tracks. No
sight-reading. No exams.



What each thing actually does — shown, not explained.

Five ideas do 90% of the work. The rest is taste.

Read front to back once, then use the cheat sheet forever.

MADE FOR CLAY GOLDIN · G PHRYGIAN EDITION

Five ideas do 90% of the work

A indie-tech-style track is not theory-dense. It is a small handful of decisions made well. Here they are, in the order this guide covers them.

1 Notes

There are only 12 musical notes, and they repeat forever. Learn them once, on a keyboard, and recognize them in the piano roll.

2 Key

Pick one note as home base. The "key" is the set of notes that feel like home around it. In this lane you will almost always pick Phrygian.

3 Scales

A scale is a recipe for which notes are "allowed". The minor scale is one spacing shape you can slide to any key. Two tiny variations give the indie tech flavor.

4 Rhythm and drums

The groove. Four-to-the-floor kick, swung hats and percussion, offbeat syncopation. Good rhythm covers a lot of simple harmony.

5 Chords and arrangement

Three-note chords turned into stabs, then everything packed into DJ-friendly sections that build to one payoff.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read pages 215 to 228 once, in order. Each page teaches one idea and ends with what to do with it. Page 229 gives the repeatable starting workflow for every track. Page 230 is the cheat sheet — print it, screenshot it, keep it next to the screen while you write.

You do not need

Reading sheet music. Perfect pitch. Knowing the circle of fifths. Anything with a Roman numeral.

You do need

A DAW with a piano roll. A copy of the keyboard diagrams (they are in here). Twenty minutes and one genre you already love.

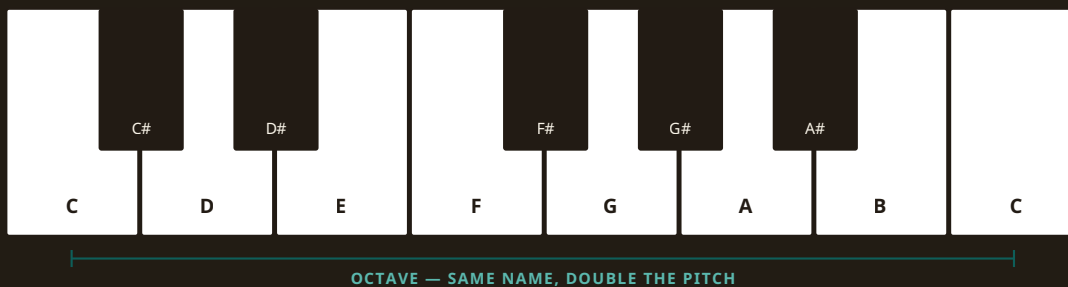
Only 12 notes exist. Learn them once.

A note is a named pitch. There are twelve of them, and they just repeat forever. The keyboard below is one octave — one full set of twelve.

White keys are named **C, D, E, F, G, A, B**, and then they start over. Black keys are the notes **in between** — named after their neighbor plus a # (sharp), which means "one step up". So the black key between C and D is **C#**, and between F and G is **F#**. There is no black key between E/F or B/C — those pairs are already touching.

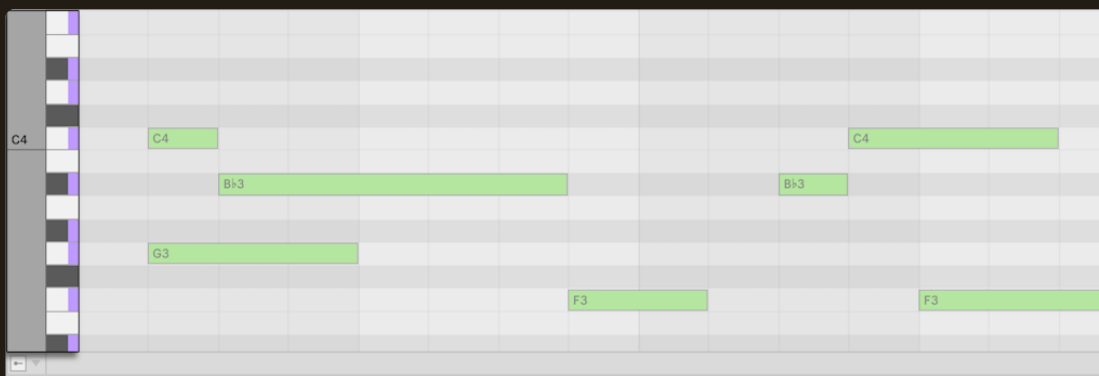
After 12 notes, the names repeat at twice the frequency. That repeat is called an **octave**. In Ableton the piano roll is the same layout turned vertical — the same 12 names repeating up the screen.

One octave: the whole universe, C to C



Count them: 7 white + 5 black = 12. That is every note that exists. Everything else in music is choosing some notes, skipping others, and repeating.

The same keyboard in Ableton — turned vertical



This is Ableton's piano ruler, from the official Live 12 manual. The same 12 names run bottom to top instead of left to right — the strip labeled **C4** marks your octave. Click a key to hear it, double-click the grid to drop a note on that row.

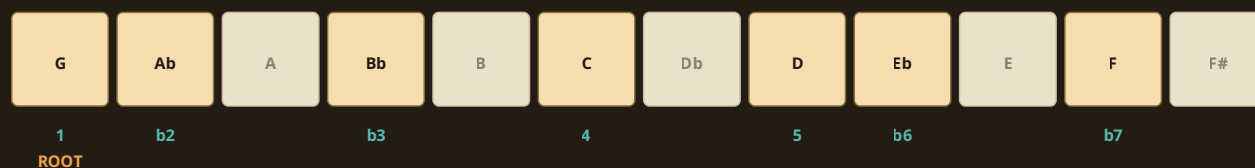
Pick a home note. Then stay in its sandbox.

The "key" answers two questions: which note is home, and which notes are allowed. Everything in your track lives in it — the bass, the chords, the hook.

Major keys sound happy and resolved. **Phrygian** is tense and moody with a dark Mediterranean edge. This whole lane is Phrygian — **G** is home, and the allowed notes are the Phrygian scale from G.

G Phrygian is your home for this guide: make **G** your home, and the allowed notes are G, Ab, Bb, C, D, Eb, F. Seven notes — that is the whole game. You can slide this same shape to any other home note later.

G Phrygian: your seven allowed notes



The gray notes are NOT in the key — ignore them for now.

In G Phrygian the allowed notes are G, Ab, Bb, C, D, Eb, F. Play only these and you literally cannot play a wrong note. The numbers are scale degrees — the "position" of each note matters more than its name.

THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

Most indie-tech-style tracks sit in Phrygian with meat in the low register — the catalog lives around D, E, and F. G Phrygian is the same shape from a different home note. Learn this shape once and you can play any of those.

The one rule of keys: **if the note is not in your scale, it is probably wrong.** One accidental black key is the reason a bass line that "feels off" actually feels off.

THE ONLY VOCAB YOU NEED

A half step (semitone) = the smallest step: one key to the next, black or white. C to C# is a half step. E to F is a half step.

A whole step = two half steps. C to D is a whole step.

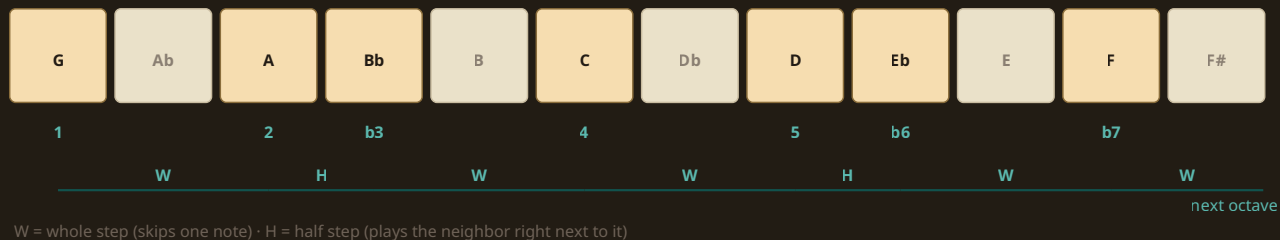
All of the scales in this guide are just recipes counted in half and whole steps.

3 · SCALES

The minor scale is a shape you can slide.

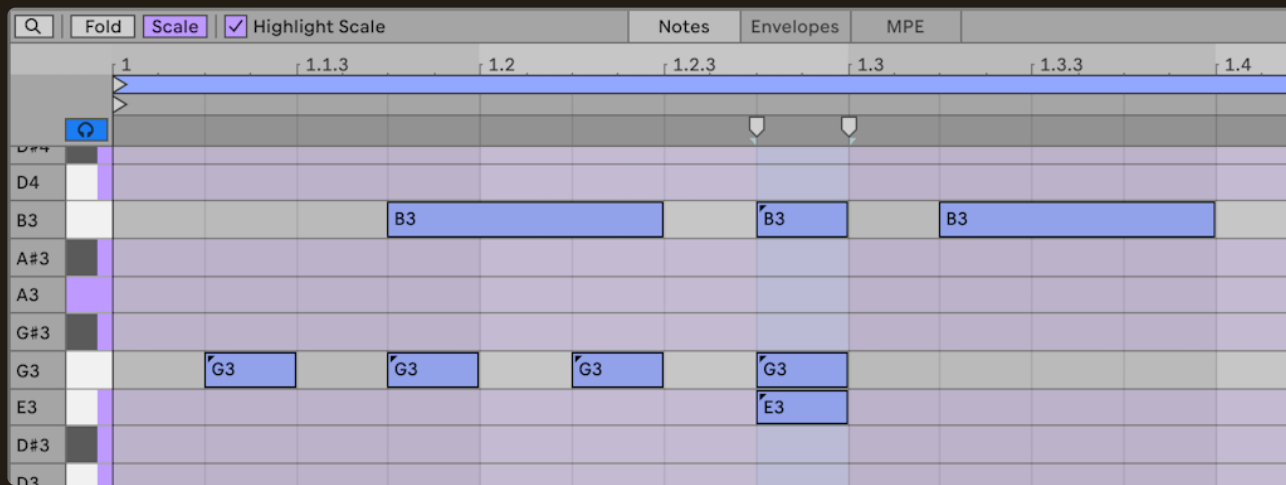
A scale is how far apart the allowed notes sit from each other. Count in whole (W) and half (H) steps: the natural minor scale is **W - H - W - W - H - W - W**.

The minor shape on the 12-note strip (shown from G)



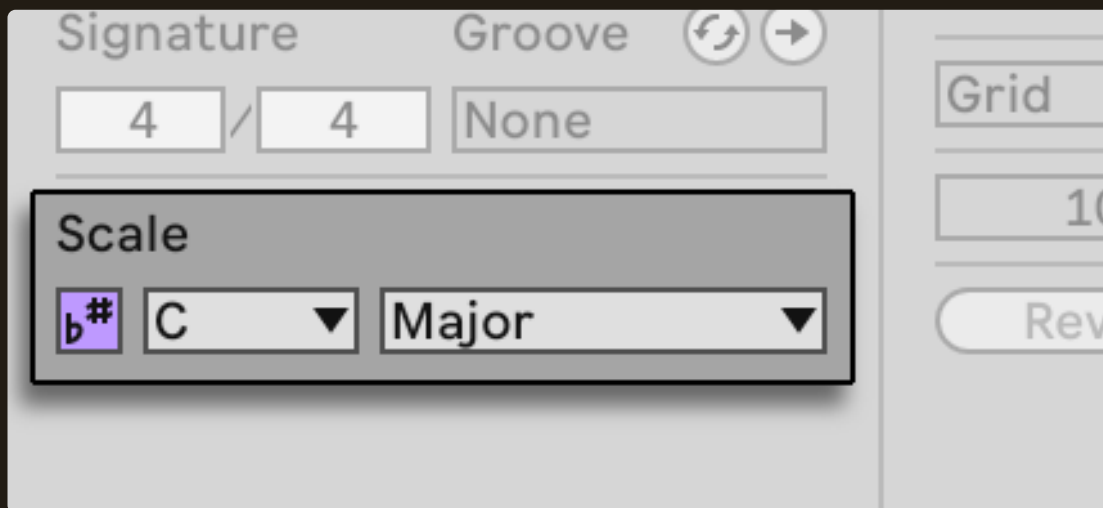
Start on ANY note, count W-H-W-W-H-W-W, and you have that minor key. Want G minor? Start on G: G W A H Bb W C W D H Eb W F W G. Do it once, write the answer down, never do it again.

Your scale, lit up inside Ableton's piano roll



Screenshot from Ableton's Live 12 manual: Highlight Scale is on (press K). Every purple row is a note in your scale — set the root to **G** and the scale to **Minor**, and draw only on the purple rows. The root note gets the strongest highlight: start and end your phrases on it.

Turn on Scale Mode in Clip View



In **Clip View**, switch on **Scale**, then pick your root note and the scale name — Minor, Phrygian, and Harmonic Minor all live in that menu. For this edition that's root **C**, scale **Phrygian**. That one choice drives Highlight Scale, Fold to Scale, and the pitch tools.

That is genuinely the whole trick. The names of the notes change from key to key; the **shape of the gaps does not**. Think in shapes, not letters.

THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

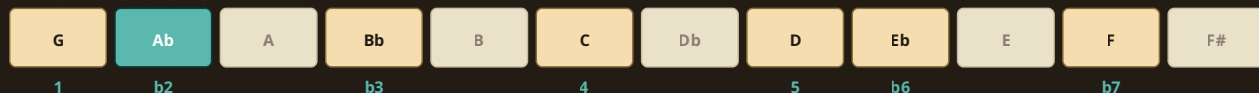
Natural minor alone is fine, but the indie tech flavor comes from two one-note tweaks: **flat the 2nd** for the dark Mediterranean hook (Phrygian), or **raise the 7th** for the exotic spice (harmonic minor). Next page shows both.

Two one-note tweaks make the indie tech flavor.

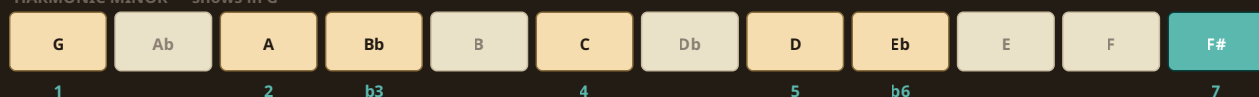
Start from natural minor. Move **one** note a half step and the whole mood changes. These two moves are the Mediterranean/Middle Eastern identity of the sound.

Phrygian (G): flat the 2nd. · Harmonic minor (G): raise the 7th.

PHRYGIAN — shows in G



HARMONIC MINOR — shows in G

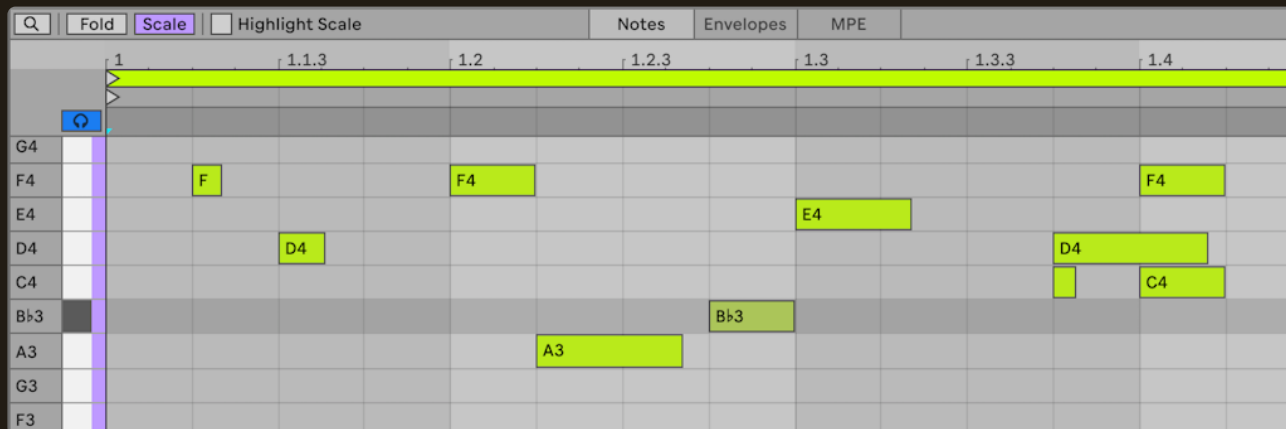


Phrygian = natural minor, 2nd dropped one half step · Harmonic minor = natural minor, 7th raised one half step

3 half steps — the exotic gap

"b" means "lowered from the major version". b2 = a half step above the root. That rubbed tension between the root and the b2 is the hook fingerprint of half the indie tech catalog.

Fold to Scale: hide every note you can't use



Screenshot from Ableton's Live 12 manual: press G with Scale on (root G, scale Phrygian) and the piano roll folds to your scale only. Every visible row is a legal note — you can draw freely without missing. This is the move when you don't trust your theory yet: pick your scale, fold, and write.

Reach for Phrygian when...

...you want the dark Mediterranean hook. Works especially well on bass: the rub between root and b2 (one half step apart) is what makes heads turn.

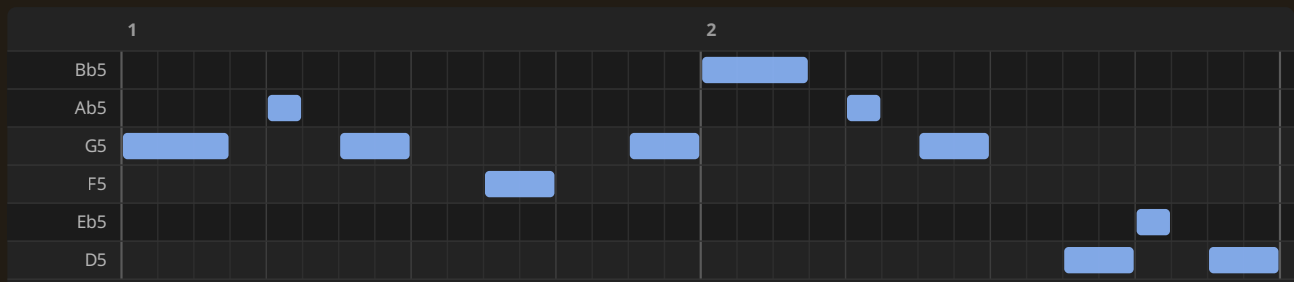
Reach for harmonic minor when...

...you want the exotic, desert-movie melody. That 3-half-step jump between the 6th and 7th is strong spice — use a little, or the whole track tastes like it.

Steal this hook. It's already in your key.

A two-bar G Phrygian hook drawn exactly as it looks in Ableton's MIDI Note Editor, folded to the scale (press G) — every row you see is a legal note. Copy the shape, change the rhythm, it's yours.

Two-bar G Phrygian hook — the b2 rub does the talking



The move: G–Ab–G in the first bar — that half-step rub is the indie tech fingerprint. It climbs to Bb, sighs D–Eb–D, and lands back home on G. Loop it, nudge the rhythm, never leave the folded rows.

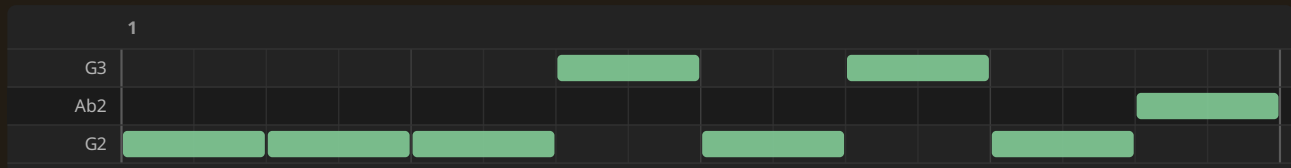
MAKE IT YOURS

Three moves and it stops sounding like an example: **1)** start the G–Ab rub on the and instead of the downbeat. **2)** Play the second bar up an octave. **3)** Copy both bars and end the copy on D instead of G — now the first half asks a question and the second half answers it.

The bass and the stabs that go under it.

Same key, same loop. Three patterns, one scale, zero wrong notes.

Rolling G bass — root 8ths, octave pops, one b2 spice



Root 8ths with octave pops on the ends of 2 and 3. The last 8th swaps to the b2 (Ab) — the indie tech touch. The kick owns the downbeat; this dances between the kicks.

G minor triad stabs — nothing on the downbeat

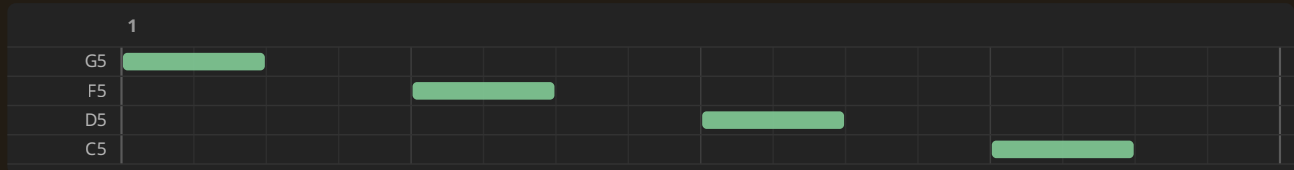


The 1-b3-5 stack (G - Bb - D) chopped onto the ands. Bar 2 flips to the higher voicing so it breathes. Short, punchy, gone before the kick lands.

Same home note, three indie tech moods.

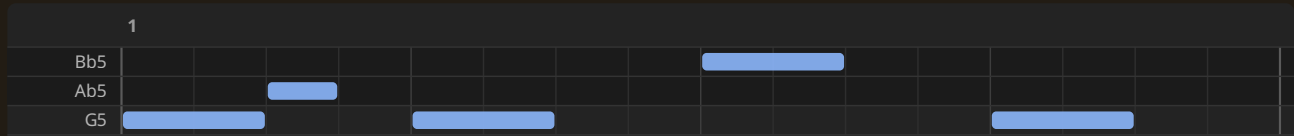
The three scales this lane runs on, all from G. Learn to hear which one a track is in — then steal it.

G natural minor — the plain groove



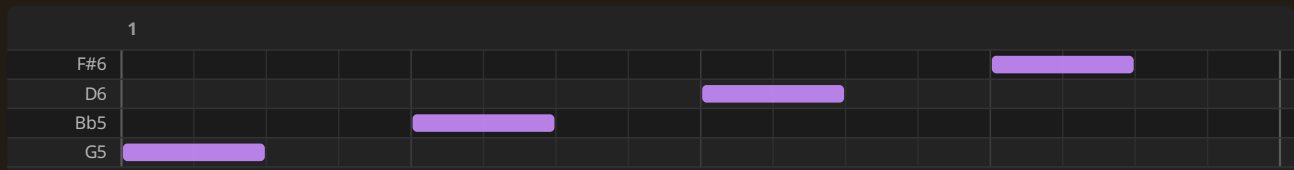
No rub, no spice — the canvas the other two paint on.

G Phrygian — flat the 2nd



Drop the 2nd to Ab — instant dark Mediterranean hook.

G harmonic minor — raise the 7th

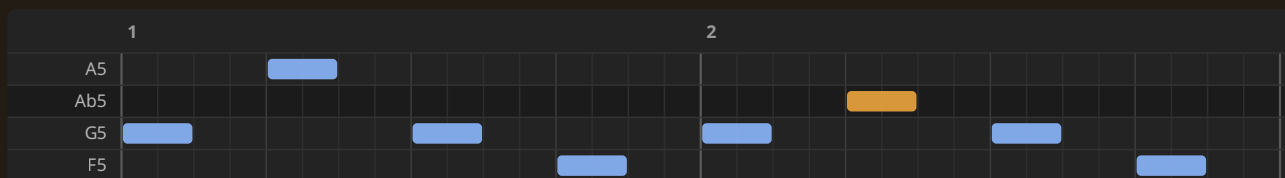


Raise the 7th to F# — the b6–7 lift is pure desert.

Live in one scale, shoplift from its neighbor.

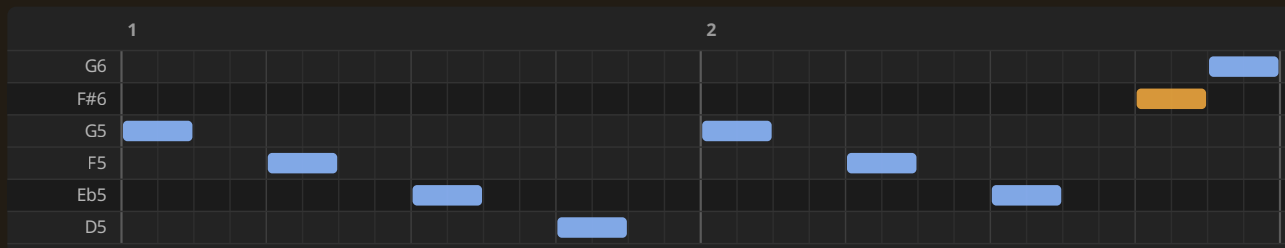
Phrygian *is* natural minor with the 2nd dropped; harmonic minor *is* natural minor with the 7th raised. So you can write a whole track in one scale and borrow a single note from the next — the loop keeps evolving and you never leave home.

Borrow the b2 — verse in G natural minor, hook in G Phrygian



Same rhythm, one note nudged down a half step — the orange note is the borrow. Verse breathes in natural minor, the hook bites in Phrygian.

The raised-7th turnaround



Borrow the raised 7th (F#) for exactly one heartbeat at the turnaround — harmonic minor flashes, then home. That 3-half-step b6–7 gap is the exotic lift.

You already know these scales. You just didn't know their names.

The b2 isn't a theory invention — it's the sound of half the melodies you grew up hearing.

The desert scale: Phrygian dominant — Phrygian with a major 3rd

G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	Db	D	Eb	E	F	F#
1	b2			3	4		5	b6		b7	

Hava Nagila is the most famous b2 on earth — and it's Phrygian dominant: 1, b2, **3**, 4, 5, b6, b7. That b2 *plus* major-3rd rub is the desert-movie sound. **Misirlou** (the Pulp Fiction one) lives in the same family, one notch spicier.

THE INDIE TECH CONNECTION

Adam Ten, Rafael, Mita Gami and the whole indie tech wave run on these exact moves — the b2 rub and the raised-7th lift are the catalog's fingerprints. Next time a hook grabs you, hum it and check: nine times out of ten it's the 1–b2–1 rub or the b6–7–1 lift you just learned to draw.

PRACTICE: ONE SCALE PER DAY

Pick one of the three hooks on the previous page. Loop it for ten minutes, then borrow one note — flat the 2nd, or raise the 7th at the turnaround. That's intertwining. Do it until your ear reaches for the borrow before your brain does.

The bounce is where notes land, not which notes.

indie tech basslines are rolling 8th notes on the root with the **accent dodging the kick**. That dodge is the whole genre.

Straight vs. the bounce — the same notes, different landing spots

ON THE BEAT



THE BOUNCE



Same notes, moved to the "ands" = bounce. The kick handles the downbeat; the bass dancing between the kicks is what makes hips move.

A one-bar rolling bass: root anchors, octave pops

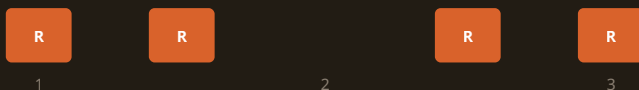
OCTAVE



5TH



ROOT



R = root, 5 = fifth, 8 = octave. These three notes are always in your key — there is no wrong move. The octave pops on the "ands" are the bounce.

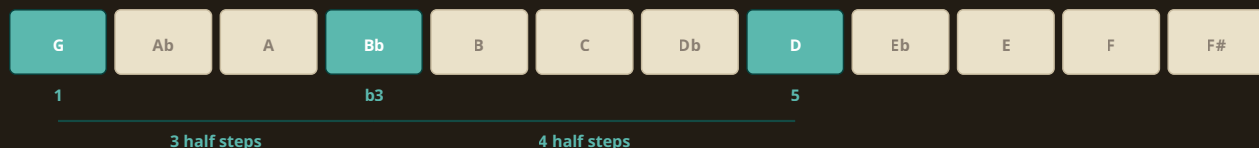
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

The indie tech move: write the bass exactly like the bar above, then **once every few bars**, swap one root pop for the Phrygian **b2** (one half step above your root). That little rub against the home note is the fingerprint bass move of the sound.

A chord is three notes from your key, stacked.

Count from your root: play the 1st, the flat-3rd, and the 5th. That is a minor triad — the chord underneath nearly every indie tech stab.

The minor triad: 1 - b3 - 5 (shown on G)

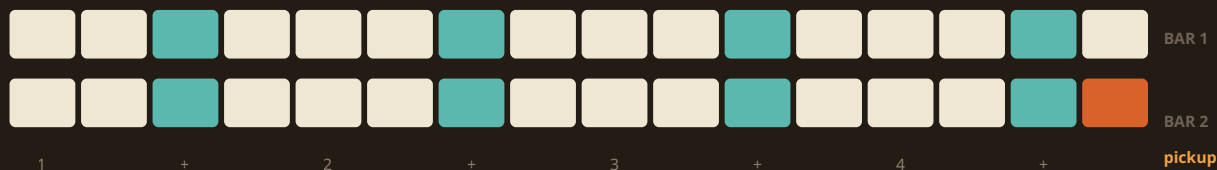


Stack the three notes in ANY order or octave and it is still the chord — just brighter or darker.

Build any minor triad by counting. From G: up 3 half steps (Bb), up 4 more (D). The order and octave are free — shuffle them for different flavors of the same chord.

Now turn the chord into a **stab**: play all three notes as one short, punchy hit — and do not put it on the downbeat. The kick owns the downbeat; the stab lives on the "ands", arguing with the bass.

Two bars of classic stab rhythm (the "ands")



Every stab sits off the kick. Bar 2 ends with a double hit (the "pickup") that shoves you back into bar 1. This two-bar loop is the engine of most house and tech house tracks.

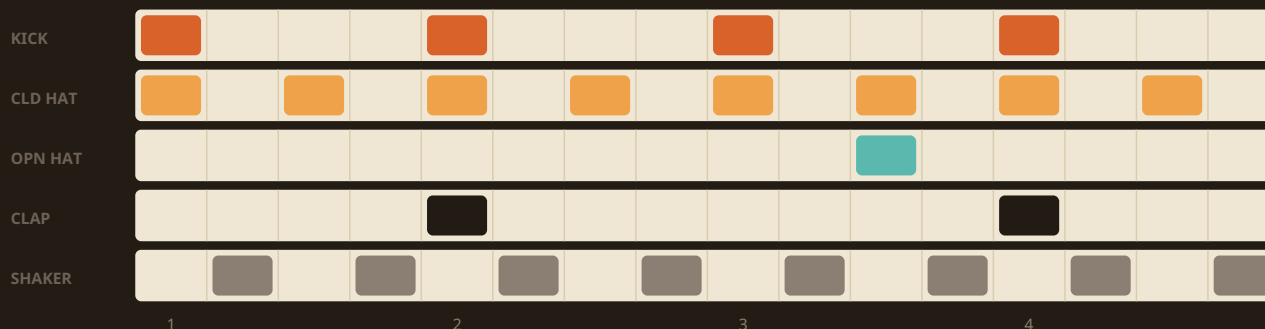
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

indie tech stabs run **short and dry** — the staff is rhythmic, not lush. Instant B-section: copy the whole stab loop, move **every note up one octave**, and use it only in the second half of the drop.

Kick owns the downbeat. Swing loosens everything else.

The rhythm bar below is worth more than a chapter on scales. Every row does one job — and **swing** is what makes the rows breathe together.

One bar: the full house drum grid (16 steps)



Kick: anchors time. **Closed hats:** tick the 8ths. **Open hat:** one breath per bar. **Clap:** slaps on 2 and 4.

Shaker: the glue filling the gaps. Start here and remove hats if the groove gets busy — never add more before this works.

Swing: the same row, loosened



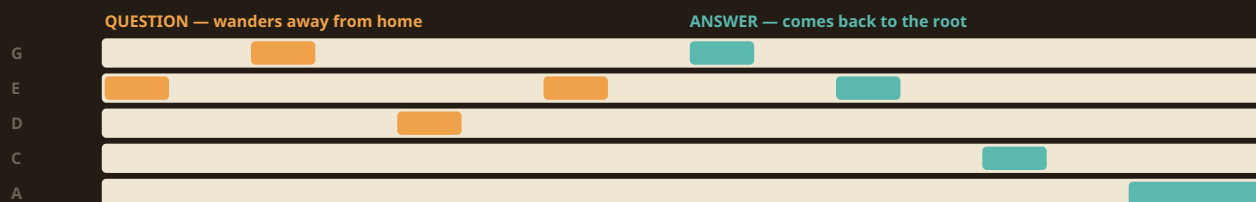
Every other hit nudged **late** (nothing else changed). 52-56% on 16ths is the sweet spot; past 58% it stumbling-drinks.

Swing hats and shaker together, or they fight each other. Kick and clap stay straight — they are the reference frame your swing wobbles against.

A hook is five notes and two phrases.

Take your minor scale and throw out the 2nd and the 6th. The five remaining notes (**the pentatonic cheat**) all work with each other — every choice is safe. A hook is a question that leaves home, then an answer that lands back on the root.

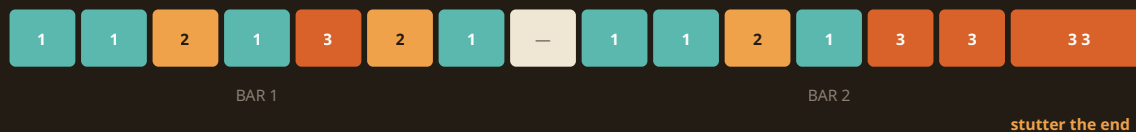
Question and answer: two phrases over two bars



The question jumps between safe notes; the answer walks down and parks on the root. Most memorable hooks in this lane are exactly this shape — wander, then land.

Vocal chops follow the same idea, with the vocal doing the melody work for you: slice a phrase into syllables, tune the slices to your key, place them like stabs on the offbeats, and **stutter the last slice** — repeat it two or three times to slam the loop shut.

A chop map: which syllable plays, step by step



Numbers are syllables from the original phrase. Same few syllables, playful order, shuffled into the offbeat grid. The ending stutter is the vocal equivalent of the stab's pickup.

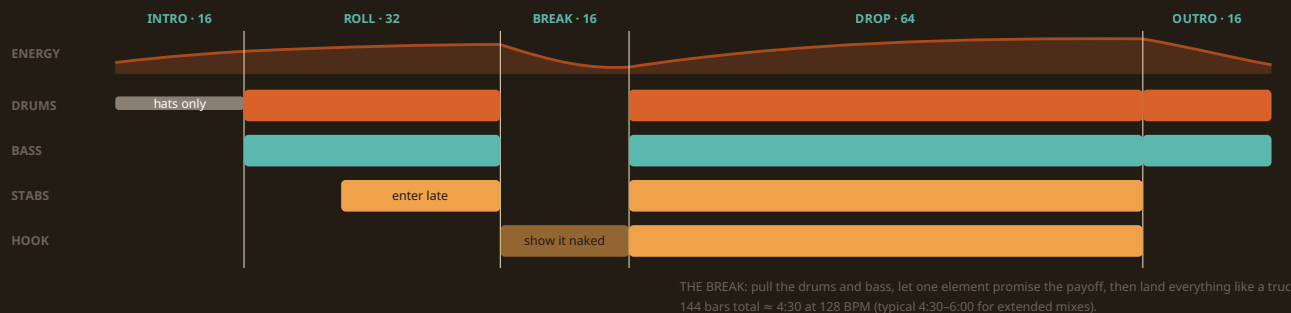
THE INDIE TECH TOUCH

indie tech hooks lean **Phrygian**: spring the b2 into the question (one jab of tension) and land the answer cleanly on the root. Tension first, safe landing later — that push/pull is the lane.

Stack layers in sections. Strip them off at the break.

A DJ track is a movie in five scenes: setup, groove, tension, payoff, exit. Scenes land in 16-bar chunks because mixes are built on 16s and 32s — and because your listener predicts the drop and you must make them wait.

Anatomy of a track: layers enter, the break strips them off



Only one thing changes at a time. A layer enters, the groove holds, then the next one. The intro and outro exist so a DJ can mix your track — never skip them.

DJ-FRIENDLY RULES

Bars come in **16s**. Intros are **mixing room**, not a second song. The break is **the window DJs mix in** — keep it simple and don't surprise anyone there.

The five-minute workflow. Every track.

Order matters: build the groove first, the melodies last. Repeatable beats inspired for track number one hundred.

1 Pick a key.

A minor to start. Write the root name somewhere you can see it. Done is better than clever.

2 Sketch the drums.

One bar from the grid on page 226. Kick, hats, clap, shaker — do not fiddle, this bar is a placeholder for the whole track.

3 Shape the bass.

Root on the 8ths, octave pops on the "ands", one slip onto the b2 every few bars if you are feeling indie tech.

4 Drop the stabs.

One minor triad on the "ands", a two-bar loop with a pickup. Steal the rhythm from page 224 and do not touch it again until the groove breathes.

5 Write the hook.

Five pentatonic notes, question then answer over two bars. Synth line or vocal chops — same rules either way.

6 Steal the arrangement.

Sections in 16s. Carve the break by deleting drums and bass for 16 bars. Everything before is the setup; the drop is the argument.

When it sounds wrong — the anti-fail list

- ☐ **It clashes:** scan the piano roll for a note not in your key. One black key is usually the whole bug.
- ☐ **It drags:** it is the rhythm, not the notes. Push hits onto the "ands" or add swing to hats and shaker.
- ☐ **The hook won't sit:** it is probably playing on beats where the kick lives. Shift its first hit to an "and".
- ☐ **The bass is muddy:** too many different low notes. Anchor the root and move the octave pops higher.
- ☐ **Before bounce:** is the intro DJ-mixable, is the break exactly 16, does the drop land after it?

THE WORKFLOW RULE

Render the loop and listen tomorrow, then fix exactly one thing and move on. A finished track you learned from beats five unfinished theory exercises every time.

Steal these shapes. Finish tracks.

The whole guide on one page. Keep it next to the keyboard until G Phrygian is muscle memory.

The three shapes

NATURAL MINOR (G) — shape: W-H-W-W-H-W-W · slides to any root

G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	Db	D	Eb	E	F	F#
---	----	---	----	---	---	----	---	----	---	---	----

PHRYGIAN (G) — natural minor with the 2nd dropped a half step (the indie tech move)

G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	Db	D	Eb	E	F	F#
---	----	---	----	---	---	----	---	----	---	---	----

HARMONIC MINOR (G) — natural minor with the 7th raised a half step (the spice)

G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	Db	D	Eb	E	F	F#
---	----	---	----	---	---	----	---	----	---	---	----

Triad emergency line: minor chord = 1 + b3 + 5 (count up 3, then 4 half steps). Example from G: **G - Bb - D**.

The rhythm in one bar (16 steps)

KICK	■			■				■				■			
CH HAT	■		■		■		■		■		■		■		■
OP HAT									■						
CLAP					■								■		
SHKR	■		■		■		■		■		■		■		■

Stabs, hooks, chops: nothing on the downbeat — live on the "ands". Swing hats + shaker together at 52-56%.

THE SIX GOLDEN RULES

1. **Stay in the key.** Wrong notes are almost always outside-scale notes.
2. **Root, 5th, octave:** the three notes that are always safe on the bass.
3. **Offbeats = bounce, swing = breath.** Rhythm covers simple harmony.
4. **Question, then answer.** Every hook leaves home and lands back on the root.
5. **Strip the break to one element.** The drop argues louder when the break whispers.
6. **Finish the arrangement before you polish.** A structured track beats a perfect loop.

PART 7

MUSIC THEORY FOR INDIE TECH HOUSE

Daily Drops

New theory added day by day — newest ideas at the end. Each drop is 1–3 pages on one fresh topic.

Slice the vocal. Play it like keys.

Half the tech house hooks you play are one sample-pack vocal, chopped and replayed on MIDI. No vocalist needed — a phrase, Simpler's Slice mode, and a Drum Rack.

THE WORKFLOW (ABLETON)

1. **Warp first.** Drop the vocal on a MIDI track → Simpler → Slice mode. Set warp to **Complex Pro** so transposing later doesn't chew it up.
2. **Slice by Manual.** Mark the syllables you actually like (*yeah, oh, hey*) — skip the garbage, keep the character.
3. **Slice to Drum Rack.** Right-click the sample area → Slice to Drum Rack. Every slice lands in its own Simpler with its own transpose, filter, and envelope.
4. **Flatten pitch tricks.** Pitched the vocal (+6 semitones for the chipmunk lift)? Consolidate the audio first so the pitch change is baked in before slicing.
5. **Replay it like drums.** Record 4–5 takes on MIDI until a bar feels like a hook. Keep one bar — hooks are one bar repeated, not four bars of novelty.

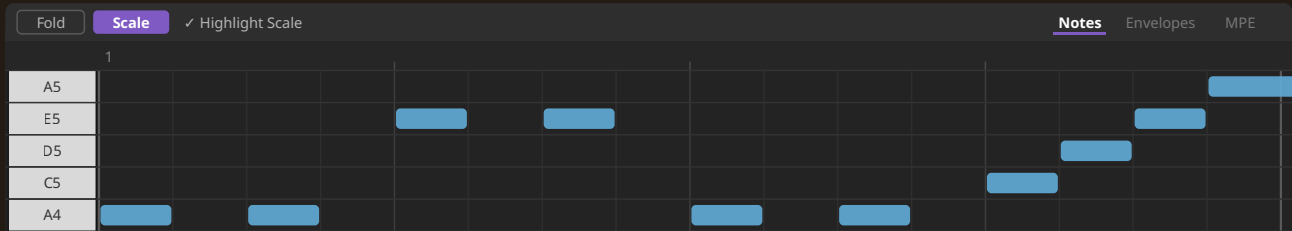
THE OCTAVE-UNDER TRICK

Duplicate the vocal clip, Complex Pro, transpose **-12**, Formants to **0.00**, blend it under the main vocal at low level. You get that weird, androgynous doubled harmony half the deep tracks ride on — no plugin needed.

Two chop rhythms that never fail.

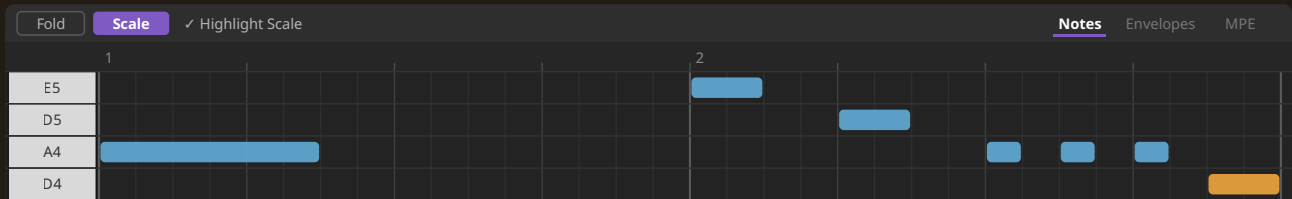
Each note below is one slice trigger. Steal the rhythm, drop in your own slices — they work on any acapella in any key.

1 · The stutter build — slices accelerate into bar 2



Same slice, accelerating: eighth notes → sixteenth notes → the last one raised an octave. Drop the kick out under it, slam everything back in on bar 2. The pitch climb does the work — no riser needed.

2 · The call-and-drop — long phrase, pitched-down answer



Orange note = sliced at -7 semitones (warp off = tape slow-down). Long "call" slice on the 1, two answer chops, then the stutter that falls a fifth at the bar end. That falling slice is the hook — loop it.

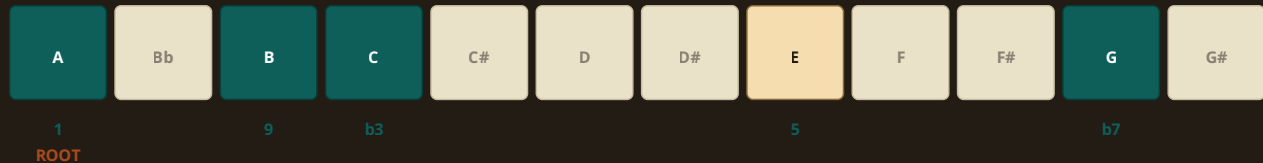
REVERB THROW

Put a big reverb (~4s) on a return, dry signal off, send the chops -9 dB. Automate the send up on the last beat of 8 bars — the chop blooms, then duck it hard under the drop. One move, every time.

The stab chord, spelled out.

That expensive tech house sound is usually one chord: a **minor 9th**. Root, minor 3rd, minor 7th, and the 9th on top. Four notes. Drop the 5th — the bass already plays it.

The formula — 1, b3, b7, 9 (5 dropped)



The 9 is the same note as the 2, one octave up. Drop the 5 (grayed out) — the bass covers it.

How to build it: take any minor 7th chord (root, b3, 5, b7), move the **5th up out of the chord** or delete it, and put the 9th (two semitones above the root, octave up) on top. Spread the remaining notes wide — the MusicRadar move: transpose the middle notes up an octave and the chord opens up and breathes.

Am9 — the shape to copy (A3, C4, G4, B4)

Fold
Scale
✓ Highlight Scale

Notes
Envelopes
MPE

1

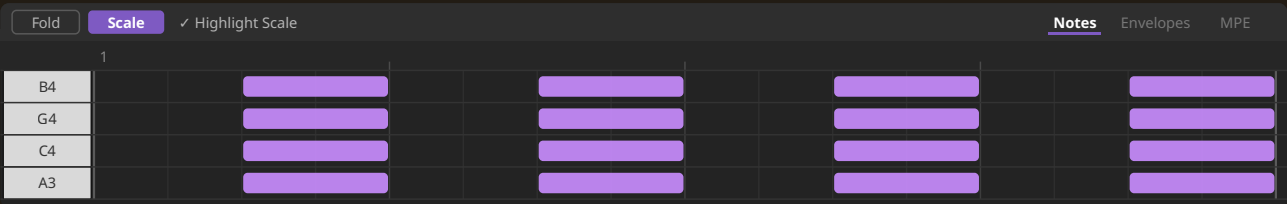
B4												
G4												
C4												
A3												

Steal the shape, move it anywhere. This voicing is rootless-sounding on purpose: the ear hears A minor from C (b3), G (b7) and B (9). Same shape works on every root below.

Three stab rhythms that run the genre.

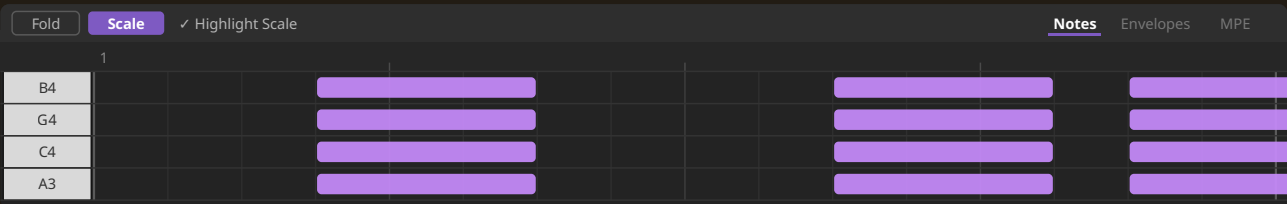
The voicing is the same everywhere — the **rhythm** is what makes it yours. Stabs live in the gaps between kicks, never on top of them. Short notes, hard velocity.

1 · The offbeat chopper — every “and”, nothing else



Kicks sit on 1, 2, 3, 4. The stabs sit exactly between them. This is the classic: hypnotic, tireless, room-filling. Start here.

2 · The double push — late, then a stutter



The first hit lands late (on the “e” of beat 1), so the ear leans forward. The two 16th-note hits at the bar end push into the next bar. Instant groove, zero extra notes.

3 · Call & answer — bass asks, stab answers

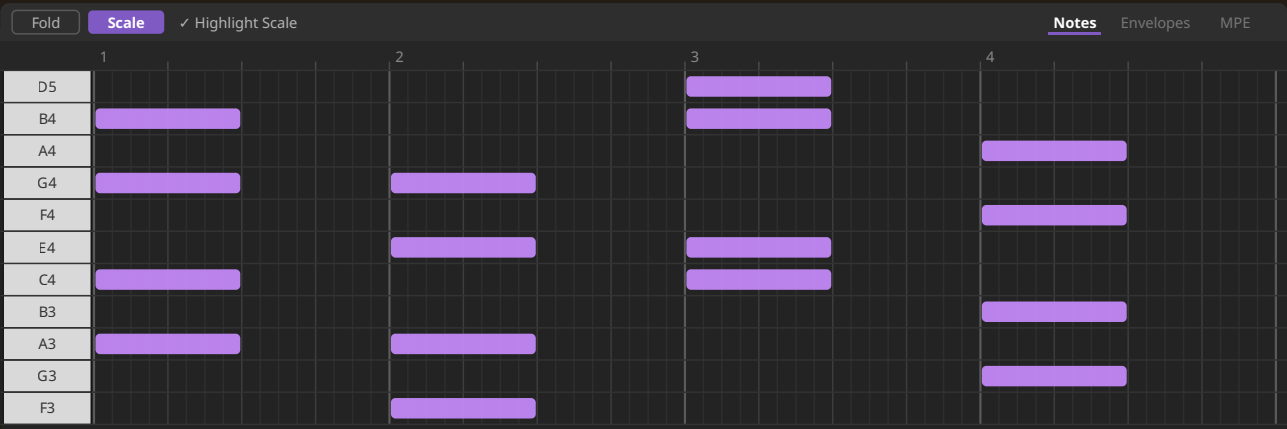


Green = the bass (root 8ths). **Purple = the stab**. The stab only ever plays when the bass pauses — two voices trading, never colliding. This is the whole indie tech breakdown conversation.

Move it. One shape, four chords.

You don't need new voicings — **move the shape to a new root**. Each bar below keeps the same 1–b3–b7–9 stack (5 dropped) and slides it under the bassline. i → VI → III → VII in A minor.

Four-bar loop — Am9 → Fmaj9 → Cmaj9 → G9



Read it as shapes, not notes: bar 1 is the Am9 you copied above. Bar 2 drops it to F (F A E G — major 9th, same stack). Bar 3 climbs to C (C E B D). Bar 4 lands on G (G B F A — dominant 9, the tension that drags everything back to Am). Loop it under the bass from page 2.

VOICE-LEADING RULE

Moving between chords, change **one note** when you can instead of all four. Am9 → Fmaj9 keeps A and G and only moves C → E, B → F. Smaller moves = smoother = more expensive-sounding.