



Tools of the Trade

Spread Voicings, Part 1

By Chris Buono

When I first started transcribing jazz guitarists, especially strong solo performers like Vic Juris and Mick Goodrick, I found myself having trouble accurately identifying what seemed to be simple harmonic devices. My ears would tell me that I was hearing major or minor triad sounds, but when I drew from what was a limited arsenal of voicings, I always seemed to fall short. I just wasn't hearing the same depth in my interpretation of the chords as I was hearing these great players lay down. During my private studies with both Vic and Mick I eventually discovered the missing component—spread voicings. In the first half of this two-part installment of *Tools of the Trade* I will describe the basic mechanics of spread voicings and lay out the chord fingerings required for Part II.

In order to understand what a spread or open voiced chord is, it might be a good idea to go back and review what a close or closed voicing is. Closed voicings—as I like to refer to them—are triad formulae that are voiced (arranged) in sequential order in their closest proximity. Looking at the table below notice how the order of the chord tones remains consistent throughout all three chords, regardless of the inversion. Simply put, a root is always followed by the 3rd, which is then followed by the 5th, which in turn is always leading back to the root.

CLOSED VOICINGS

Root Position:	R—3rd—5th
First Inversion:	3rd—5th—R
Second Inversion:	5th—R—3rd

A spread or open voiced chord takes the above formulae and does just that—opens up the closed triad and spreads out the chord tones by taking the middle note of each three note formula and raising it up an octave. Like the closed voicings, the chord tones follow a consistent sequence throughout.

SPREAD VOICINGS

Root Position: R—5th—3rd

First Inversion: 3rd—R—5th

Second Inversion: 5th—3rd—R

In **Figs. 1-4** you have the four basic triads—major (1-3-5), minor (1-b3-5), diminished (1-b3-b5), and augmented (1-3-#5)—in all inversions voiced as spreads. I suggest playing these chords with either a fingerstyle or hybrid picking technique. For the straight-up finger style playing try using your pick hand thumb for handling the bass notes on the low E string and your first and second fingers for the higher notes on the D and G strings. For a hybrid picking approach, you'll need to combine your pick and fingers. Use the pick for the bass notes on the low E while your second and third fingers play the D and G strings. For both techniques make sure you curl your fingers in and keep a hook-like position when striking the strings while your thumb or pick employs a downstroke for the low E string notes. All the voicings below and throughout this lesson will be based off the 6th string to maintain continuity and to drive home the “throaty” quality spread voicings possess. With that said, it's also very important to establish a strong chord vision on the upper strings so be sure to put the time into transferring these chords to the higher string sets.

A word to the wise—be sure to properly warm up and stretch before playing these chords especially if you have no prior experience with spread voicings or multi-fret spanning chords that involve unorthodox stretches. Also, it's a good idea to have your fret hand thumb placed around the middle of the neck facing outwards “hitchhiker” style to help provide comfortable, yet sturdy hand placement. And please—take it slow.

Fig. 1

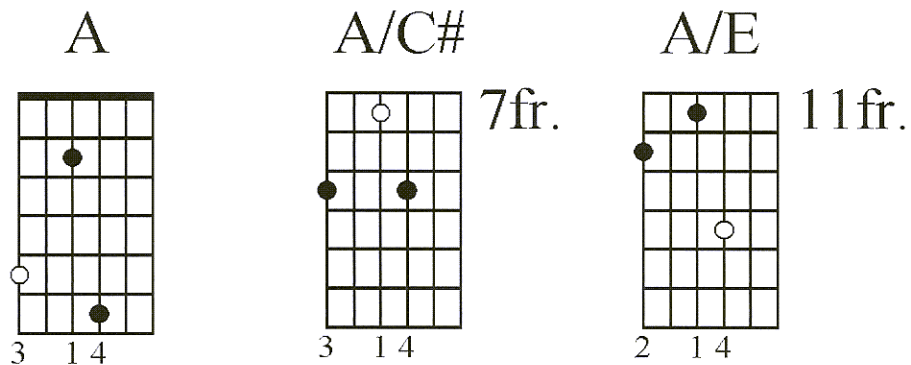


Fig. 2

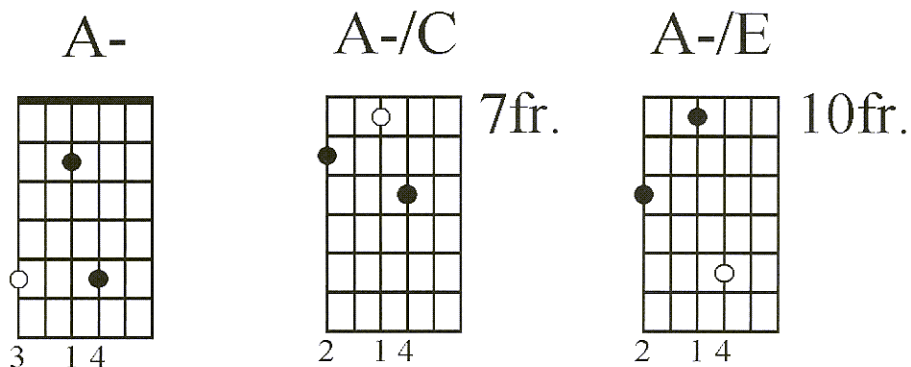


Fig. 3

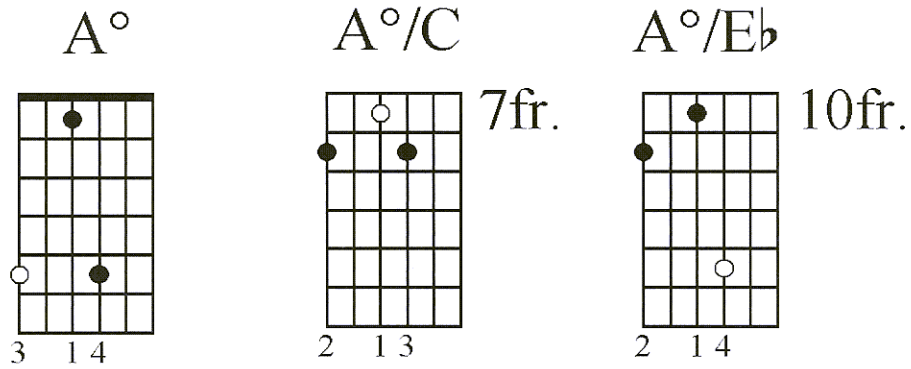
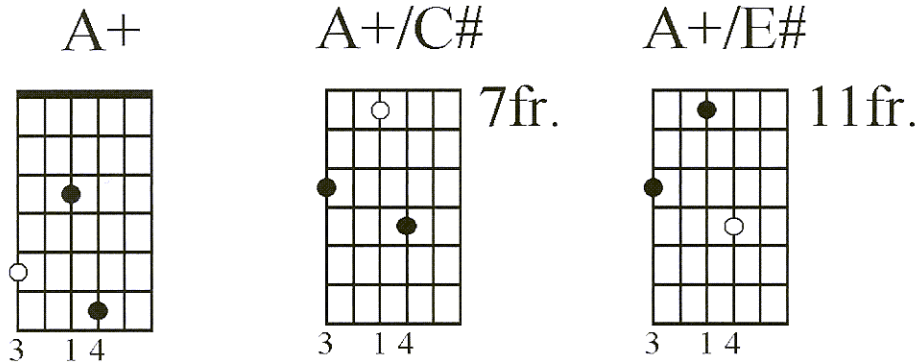


Fig. 4



While spread voicings cover a four adjacent string span they only occupy three of those four strings. What if we take that middle note on the D string and diagonally transfer up the neck to it's unison counterpart on the A string? The result is a secondary set of fingerings that could provide for more efficient chord switching since some the previous fingerings can have some difficult wide fret hand stretches. Check out **Figs. 5-8** and this time for conventional finger picking use your first finger for the A string and your third finger for the G string notes. For the hybrid picking approach, try your second finger for the A string notes and your fourth finger for the G string notes.

Fig. 5

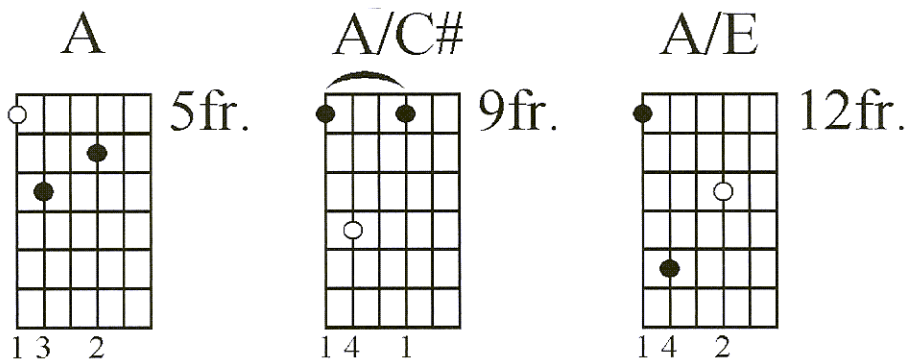


Fig. 6

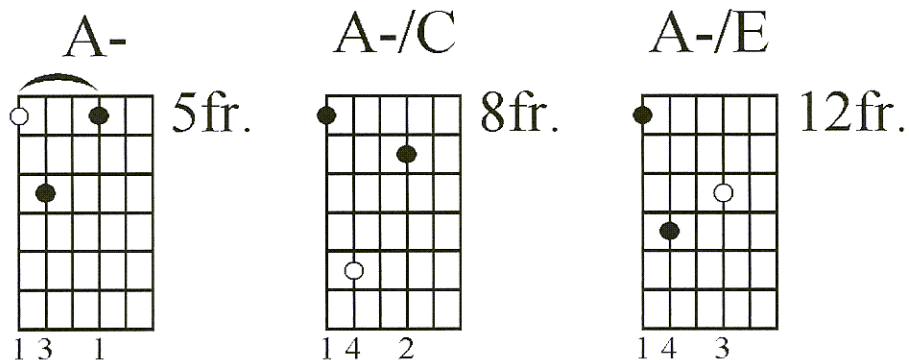


Fig. 7

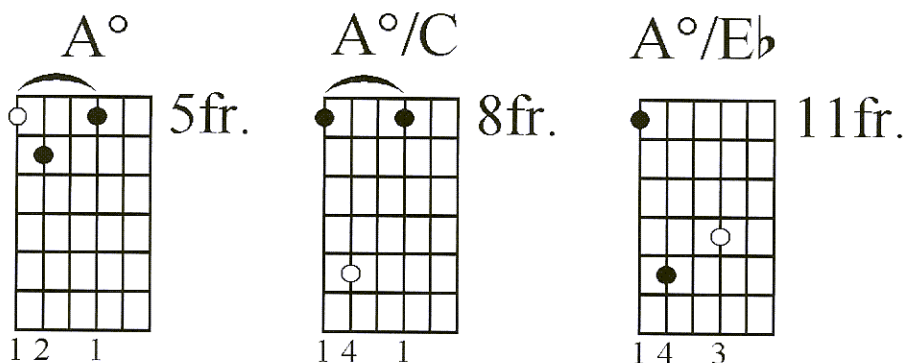
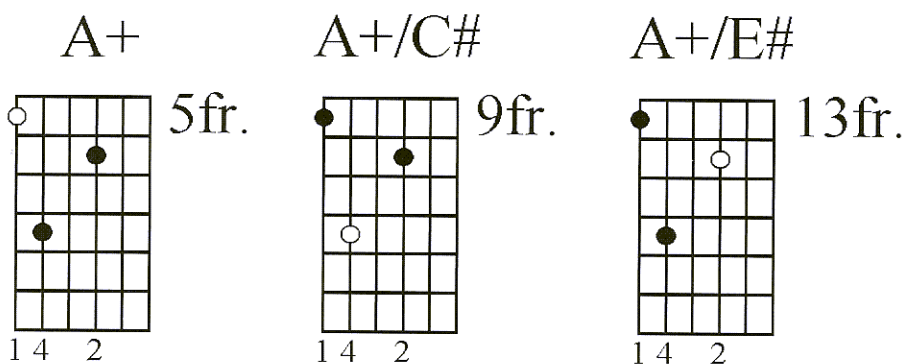


Fig. 8



Have fun while familiarizing your hands with these new shapes and entertaining your ears with the deeply resonant timbres these chords produce. Try to *internalize* instead of memorizing the chords so you can get the most out of Part II. For instance, whenever possible try to incorporate these spread voicings into your comping, solo arrangements, and chord soloing. Be sure to watch for the following article in the August issue of JYG where I will guide you through some fresh new ways to approach chord scale exercises using spreads and I will include my methods involving the elusive “Goodrick Cycles”. Enjoy!

Chris Buono is an active composer, bandleader, and sideman. He has performed and recorded throughout North America and abroad in a variety of styles including modern jazz and jazz/funk, rock, world music, electronic, and the avant-garde. His unique playing style can be heard on numerous major and independent label releases, some of which have received airplay on national radio as well as network and cable television. Chris is a regular contributor and video clinician to *Guitar One* magazine as well as an Assistant Professor at Berklee College of Music and a seminar teacher for the National Guitar Workshop. Please visit www.chrisbuono.com for more information on Chris, *on-line lessons and new private lesson location in western MA.*, upcoming CD releases and summer performances, clinics, and workshops at National Guitar Workshop and Berklee, and how to purchase his latest CD entitled “Solitaire” and his Alfred publications book “Jazz Lead Guitar Solos”.

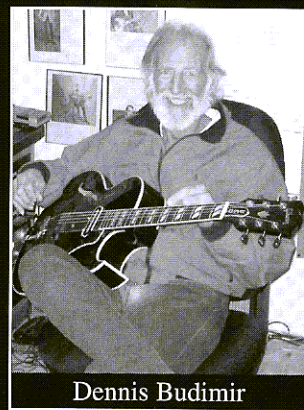
Engraving and Graphic Layout by Doug Osborn

JUST JAZZ GUITAR

www.justjazzguitar.com

U.S. \$10⁰⁰

THE PUBLICATION FOR THE JAZZ GUITAR ENTHUSIAST



Dennis Budimir

No. 47 MAY 2006

Tommy Emmanuel

Fingerpicker
Extraordinaire

A Lesson

with Mark Elf

Interviews

Tommy Emmanuel

Dennis Budimir

Lenny Argese

Will Matthews

Product Reviews

Raezer's Edge

Stealth 10-ER

Acoustic Image

Clarus 2R Series III

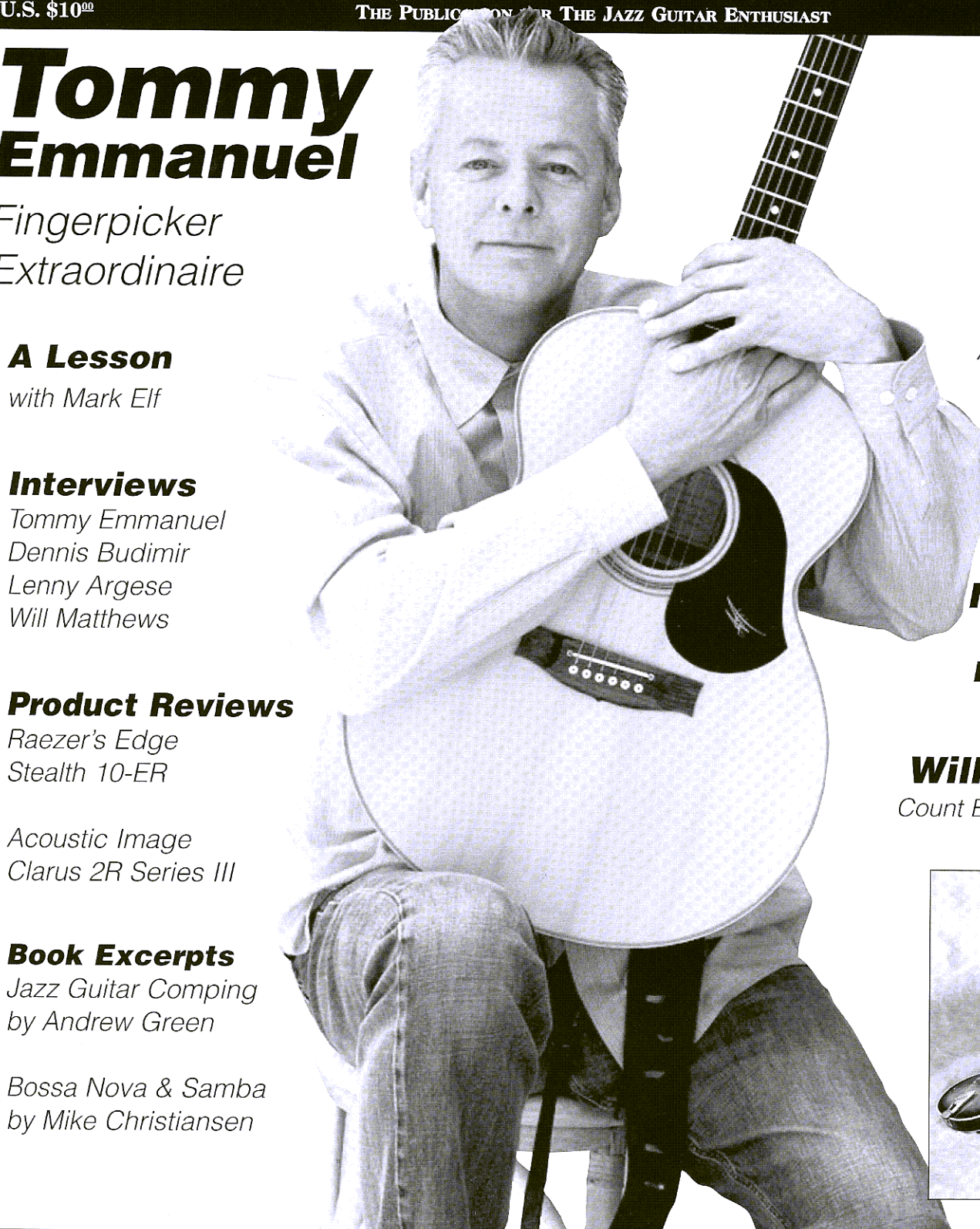
Book Excerpts

Jazz Guitar Comping

by Andrew Green

Bossa Nova & Samba

by Mike Christiansen



Music

Spring Is Here

Over the Rainbow

Lonely Street

Rio Margarita

On The Move

Addio Caro Amico

Hearing Chord Changes

by Bill Bay

Winter NAMM 2006

Listening Test

with Jimmy Bruno

Will Matthews

Count Basie's Rhythm Man

