



Tools of the Trade

Spread Voicings, Part II: *Chord Scales and the Goodrick Cycles*

By Chris Buono

In the previous installment of *Tools of the Trade* (No. 47, May 2006) I presented the essential components needed to fully understand the basic concepts of spread or open voiced triad chords. For our fellow brethren just tuning in who may have little to no experience with spread voicings, I strongly recommend going back and reading through my previous submission to get the most out of concepts that lie ahead. For those of you continuing the journey—welcome back.

Chord Scales

Playing jazz on the guitar, whether it be comping, chord soloing, or chord-melody arrangements, requires us to have a deep understanding of harmony. That knowledge helps us be able to effectively play those rich and sophisticated textures that most likely played an integral part in our initial attraction to jazz guitar. Assuming you've played through all the spreads, we will now begin to explore some concepts that will introduce how to attain those amazing sounds.

An excellent way to study harmonic movements and relationships is to analyze, memorize, and internalize harmonized scales—also known as *chord scales*. Looking over at **Fig. 1** you'll see three complete chord scales built from an A major scale (A-B-C#-D-E-F#-G#) arranged in root position (1-5-3), 1st inversion (3-1-5), and 2nd inversion (5-3-1) spread voiced triads. If you're new to the concept of chord scales, think of them as a series of similarly voiced chords built on the successive ascending degrees of a chosen scale. The catch is each chord can only be built with chord tones that are derived from the given scale. Before continuing, put the time in and really play through the chord scales below keeping in mind that the next two figures will be built upon them.

Fig. 1

T	6	7	9	11	13	14	4	9	11	13	2	4	6	7	14	4	6	7	9	11	13
A	2	4	6	7	9	11	0	7	9	11	0	2	4	6	11	0	2	4	6	7	9
B	5	7	9	10	12	14	4	9	10	12	2	4	5	7	12	2	4	5	7	9	10

Even if you really shed all the voicings presented in the last lesson, you may find it difficult playing the spreads in a series of varying chord qualities. Remember to take it slow and try to form your fingers in the shape of the chord in the air allowing you to correctly place all your fret hand fingers down simultaneously. At the same time, learn to look ahead to the location on the neck where the next chord needs to go and take a mental snapshot visualizing the change before it actually happens. Though there is no rhythm indicated, be sure to

apply a steady pulse and eventually some rhythmic motives to help establish playing these spread voiced chord scales in time.

I suggest learning and playing these chord scale ideas in all keys, on all possible string sets to help attain a true command of harmony on the guitar. With that said, notice how each of the three chord scales is set up so that no chord ever completely goes past the 12th fret. Imagine the neck is a conveyor belt and the chords are moving along the way regardless if they're ascending or descending. Once the chords reach the end of the line so to speak, they "roll" over and come back to the original area to start the motion once again. I implemented this tactic because I noticed a common difficulty most guitarists have—myself included—

with transposing chord sequences like these is that they initially learn the concept in a horizontal direction within a key that allows for the sequence to be comfortably played in that one direction from start to finish. The problem is what may work for one key, may not work well for others and those keys become the inevitable stick in the spokes as we play through a tune. By setting up the chords to never go past the 12th fret, you're dealing with the inherent limitation of the guitar that causes this and developing the skills necessary to adapt on the fly.

Goodrick Cycles

After playing through Fig. 1 and what could be a plethora of chord scales as you move on in your studies they may start to feel a little redundant and sound too much like exercises. One reason might be that the chord scale sequences are played in a successive ascending or descending order leaving the chord tones to only move in a linear (constant) motion resulting in elementary voice leading (a compositional technique involving the movement of chord tones from one chord to another in the smallest possible motion). For example, if you look at the notes in the initial root position A major spread triad it's spelled A-C#-E. Comparing it to the next chord, Bm which is spelled B-D-F#, you'll see that each chord tone or voice from the A chord moves to the very next note in the A scale within the Bm and continues throughout the rest of the chord scale—linear motion. To remedy this, I apply an ingenious approach to chord scale application and voice leading concepts organized by fellow Berklee professor and legendary jazz guitarist, **Mick Goodrick**. Mick took chord scales and set them to interval sequences diatonic (all in one key) to an applied scale and called them *cycles*. In theory, all three ascending chord scales in Fig. 1 are in what could be viewed as a cycle. Since each chord is separated by a second—A to Bm, Bm to C#m, C#m to D, etc—this would be called Cycle 2. What if the chord scales were still played in Cycle 2 but in a descending motion? The result would be the chords progress in varying inversions—A to Bm/F#, Bm/F# to C#m/E, C#m/E to D—thus creating much more musical voice leading because of the disjunt (variable) motion within the chord tones. Play through **Fig. 2** to hear the difference.

Fig. 2

Keeping with the 12th fret rule I mentioned above you'll play through all three inversions for each chord—21 chords total—before getting back to the root position A chord you started with. Notice the consistent pattern the cycle takes: root position, 1st inversion, 2nd inversion, and then back to root position.

Fig. 3's A major chord scale is arranged in successive diatonic thirds—Cycle 3. Here I apply one of my own additives when playing cycles I find challenging, but at the same time extremely beneficial. Looking back to the secondary set of spread voiced chord fingerings in Part I, I arranged this cycle so that the chords constantly alternate between the two sets so I can play every fingering option and further my neck vision, expand my chord vocabulary, and sharpen my adaptation skills. Taking a close look to this idea you'll notice that after the chord makes the switch to the optional fingering, it is that fingering group that is employed for the change within the cycle—tricky? absolutely ... useful? totally.

Fig. 3

The figure displays three systems of musical notation for Cycle 3 of the A major chord scale. Each system consists of a treble clef staff showing chord voicings and a guitar fretboard diagram below it. The fretboard diagrams show the left hand positions for each chord, with numbers 1-5 indicating fingerings.

System 1: A, C#-/G#, E/G#, G#°, B-/F#, D/F#, F#-.

System 2: A/C#, C#-, E/B, G#°/B, B-, D/A, F#-/A, A.

System 3: A/E, C#-/E, E, G#°/D, B-/D, D, F#-/C#.

As a side note, a cycle's direction is simply determined by whichever direction has the best voice leading properties. Notice how the Cycle 3 sequence descends as opposed to the ascending Cycle 2 chord scale in Fig. 2. At the same time, the chords follow the same recurring inversion pattern as the Cycle 2 sequence.

These are just a couple of simple ideas I use to make my practice and study time more musical and productive. Keep in mind this is but a small taste of what cycles and Mick's concepts have to offer. In my studies with the great one, Mick always stressed that he's only providing the tools for which to work from and that I needed to establish my own methodology to realize my potential as a guitarist, an improviser, a composer, and most importantly—as an artist. For those of you with continued interest in cycles and their related concepts and more of Mick's inventive work in presenting harmonic devices along with other groundbreaking methodologies please visit www.mrgoodchord.com. There you will find the book series from which I learned about Cycles aptly titled *Almanac of Guitar Voice Leading* consisting of *Volume I: Name That Chord*, *Volume II: Do Not Name That Chord*, and the highly anticipated *Volume III: Beyond the Mother Lode*. For a chance to get into Mick's head and see what he does with the cycles, check out my Lesson Lab article entitled *Extreme Voice Leading: Advanced Harmonic Applications on the Fretboard* in the July 2006 issue of *Guitar One* magazine. There I collaborated with Mick for an intense lesson showcasing Mick's own discoveries he himself has made playing through the cycles along with some supplemental concepts that are presented in the Almanacs. 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, a contributing writer for Mel Bay's Guitar Sessions on-line 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".

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