



John Petrucci *Wild Stringdom*

A Change of Seasons

Dream Theater's extended-chord workout

If you've been following my columns, you know how strongly I believe in applying new concepts to practical musical situations (sessions, gigs etc.). Now that we've covered a few different approaches on how to spice up your chord playing, let's put them into action.

My band, Dream Theater, recently released an EP called *A Change of Seasons*. Coincidentally, the title track (which is 22 minutes long and goes through various movements) has a section in the middle that contains most of the chord types we've covered in the past few months. FIGURE 1 is a study based on this passage. It's a good example of how to use sophisticated-sounding voicings in a real-life situation. It makes a great chord study, too.

FIGURE 1

The figure shows a guitar study in E major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of two systems of music. The first system contains four measures with the following chord voicings: C#m7, Asus2, F#m11, and G#m. The second system contains four measures with the following chord voicings: C#m7, Amaj9, F#m11, and Badd11. Each measure includes a standard musical staff with a melodic line and a guitar fretboard diagram with fret numbers. The fretboard diagrams use '0' for open strings and 'Tie' for notes that are tied from the previous measure. The Badd11 chord in the final measure includes a natural sign over the 11th fret on the D string.

Chord voicings shown in FIGURE 1:

- C#m7
- Asus2
- F#m11
- G#m
- C#m7
- Amaj9
- F#m11
- Badd11

9 Em(add9) Csus2 Bm7#5 Dsus2

13 Em9 Cmaj9#11(no 3) Bm(add9) Dsus2

AUDIO FILES FIGURE 1 (80 bpm) slowly

[AIFF Audio File](#) (Macintosh)

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AUDIO FILES FIGURE 1 (100 bpm) fast

[AIFF Audio File](#) (Macintosh)

[WAVE Audio File](#) (Windows) 

When I originally recorded this section of "A Change of Seasons," I used simpler voicings in a few places. For the purpose of this study, however, I made them a bit more interesting. For example, on the record I played a simple Em chord in bar 9, but here I decided to use Em(add9) instead. Both work well, but I feel Em(add9) is more dramatic. On the original "A Change Of Seasons," I repeated the Asus2 chord in bar 6 that I played in bar 2. Here, I substituted it with an open-string Amaj9 voicing.

Performance Tips

The key to mastering this study is to finger each chord before arpeggiating it. This will enable the notes to ring into each other and produce a "harp-like" shimmering effect. The same goes for executing the single-note run in measure 12-don't lift your finger after sliding into the F#. Instead, let it ring into the open G.

All it takes to switch from C#m7 to Amaj9 in bars 5-6 is simply lifting your index finger. Then compare these two voicings-it's amazing how a single bass note can radically change the harmonic function of a chord.

Make sure you mute the A string when arpeggiating the F#m11 chords in bars 3 and 7.

Practice this study with a metromone set at quarter-note=80 at first, and increase it to 100-110 as you get more comfortable with the piece.

Last but not least, try adding a bit of chorus and reverb to your guitar sound. This will bring out the lush quality of the chords.

I hope this crash course in chords has opened your mind (and ears) to the different harmonic possibilities that even a simple progression can present. Don't be afraid to experiment with chords-try adding color tones, open strings and different bass notes to stock voicings. You don't have to rely on the conventional fingerings found in chord books. Above all, let your ear be the final judge.

Starting next month: how to solo over chords that are not diatonic to the key of the song that you're playing (or chords you may be unfamiliar with in general). Later!