



## John Petrucci *Wild Stringdom*

### Stretch The Boundries: Extended major voicings

Last month, we looked at using sus2 and add9 voicings to drastically change the sound of common chord progressions. This time around, I want to show you two chord forms that I regularly use instead of simple major triads. Both are built on the sus2 shape that we learned in last month's lesson and include other "color tones" in addition to the added ninth.

FIGURE 1



To my ears, one of the most beautiful-sounding voicings on the guitar is the maj9 chord depicted in FIGURE 1. The natural seventh on the B string ringing against the root on the E string (creating an interval of a minor second) adds a unique chime-like quality to this voicing. The ninth and the natural seventh, along with the third, also invoke a very strong, resolved major sound.

The maj9 chord is commonly used as a substitute for the I or IV chord in a diatonic major progression, or for the bVI chord in a minor progression. For example, check out how FIGURES 1A and 1B breathe new life to stock G-C and Em-C progressions.

FIGURE 1A

FIGURE 1B

(G) (C) (Am) (Em) (C)

Gmaj9 (G,B) Cmaj9 Amadd9 Emadd9 Cmaj9

let ring ----- | let ring ----- | let ring ----- | let ring -----

**T** 3 7 7 3 8 5-5 7 8 12 12 12 12 12 12

**A** 7 7 5 12 12 5-5 9 11 8 8 12 12 12 12

**B** 5 7 5 10 7-7 7 9 11 10 12 12 12 12

(Tis) (Tis)

AUDIO FILES FIGURE 1A

[AIFF Audio File](#) (Macintosh)

[WAVE Audio File](#) (Windows) 

## AUDIO FILES FIGURE 1B

[AIFF Audio File](#) (Macintosh)

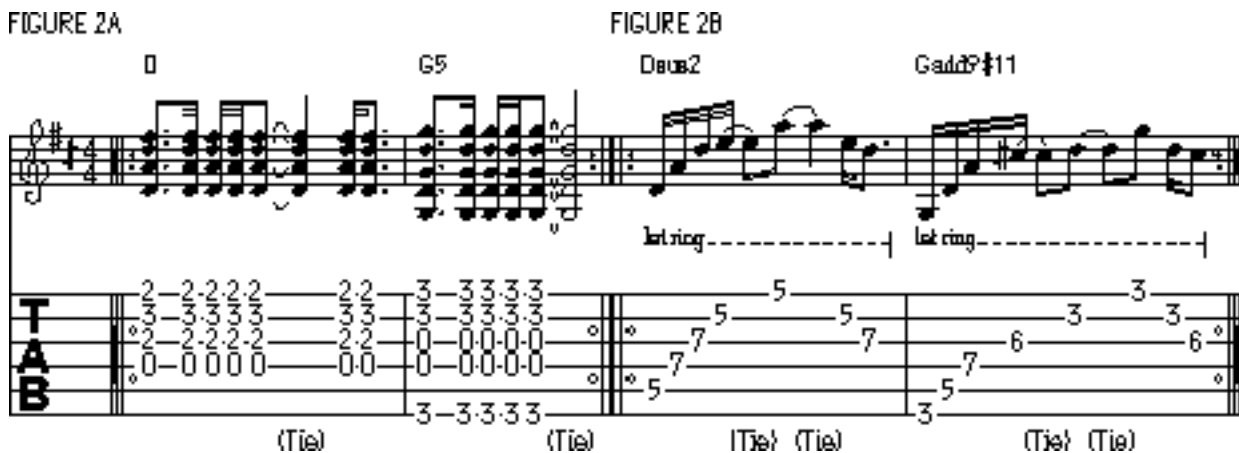
[WAVE Audio File](#) (Windows) 

Though this is one of the hardest voicings to execute cleanly on the guitar, it's well worth the effort. Play the tricky barre with your pinky bent at the first joint, making sure to leave enough room for the high E string to ring out.

**FIGURE 2** FIGURE 2 features another favorite chord of mine, the add9#11. In this particular voicing, the raised eleventh replaces the third, creating a Lydian sound. Since this chord doesn't contain the third, it's technically neither major nor minor. In context, however, it functions as a major chord. Its usage is very specific—since the raised eleventh defines the Lydian sound, the add9#11 chord can only be used as a substitute for the IV chord in a diatonic major progression.

The power of this voicing is evident when you compare FIGURES 2A and 2B. Look at the simple D-G5 progression in FIGURE 2A.

**FIGURE 2A** **FIGURE 2B**



Chord diagrams: D, G5, Dsus2, Gadd9#11

Tablature: T, A, B

(Tie) (Tie) (Tie) (Tie)

Big deal, right? It's just another nice groove that you and 5,000,000 other guitarists can play. Now play FIGURE 2B. All of a sudden, that same boring progression sounds very fresh, haunting and mysterious. And believe it or not, the notes in these chords are totally diatonic—you've never left the key of D.

## AUDIO FILES FIGURE 2A

[AIFF Audio File](#) (Macintosh)

[WAVE Audio File](#) (Windows) 

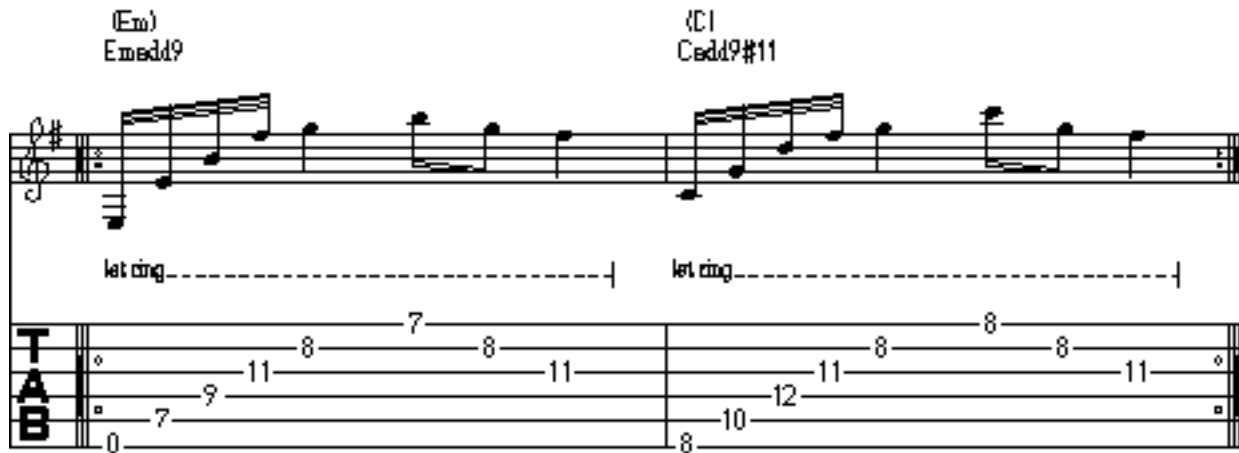
## AUDIO FILES FIGURE 2B

[AIFF Audio File](#) (Macintosh)

[WAVE Audio File](#) (Windows) 

You can also use the add9#11 chord in a minor key over the bVI chord. Check out FIGURE 2C to see how a humdrum Em-C progression is magically transformed into a memorable theme.

FIGURE 2C



The figure displays musical notation for two chords: (Em) Em add9 and (C) C add9#11. The notation includes a melodic line with notes and rests, and a guitar tablature (TAB) with fret numbers (0, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12) and a 'let ring' instruction.

## AUDIO FILES FIGURE 2C

[AIFF Audio File](#) (Macintosh)

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Because these voicings encompass quite a few frets, they also make great stretching exercises. As a warm-up, I'll play a bunch of add9 chords until my fingers stretch out. But if you're not used to playing wide-spaced voicings, be careful. Initially, they're pretty difficult to play in the lower positions, so you may want to start practicing them higher up the neck, moving them down as they become easier to play. Start slowly and don't overdo it—you don't want to hurt your tendons. And of course, make sure that all the notes ring out clearly. I'll see you next month with more chord magic.