

Dividing Deeper Into Chord Embellishments

by Dennis Winge

Ok here's the scenario: I was on a rehearsal recently where the bandleader spontaneously wanted to play "Brand New Day" by Sting. I was not familiar with it and quickly listened a few seconds of it on Spotify, and did a quick internet search for the chords. While we were playing it, the chords sounded so bland compared to what I heard on the track.

It seems that many guitarists are content to play chords that pianists would never linger on, if they played them at all. Guitarists can learn a lot about chord theory and fretboard theory from studying piano voicings. We are going to use "Brand New Day" as an example to illustrate this. We are going to analyze some of the chords used in the song and show tablature and diagrams of the corresponding guitar chords. There is also a [video performance](#) that goes with this article.

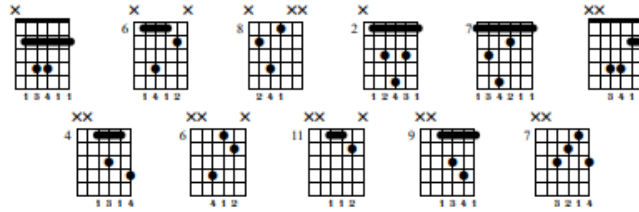
The quick internet search I did of the chords to the song yielded B, Em7 and Em, A, Dmaj7, and G. Right from the onset, I heard more in tonic (B) chord voicing. It turned out to be the note *c#*, or the 9th of the chord. When you add a 9th to an existing triad (1, 3, and 5), it becomes Badd9.

However, I am going to encourage you not to pay attention to names so much for this study because they can inhibit your ability to think creatively within a specific sonority. When you have hit the listener over the head with the fact that the song is in B major, especially after the first few times they hear the B major or Badd9, you don't need to play every voice in a chord every single time.

For example, if you play just root, 9th, and 5th that would be called Bsus2, which is a completely suitable substitute for Badd9. Similarly, you don't have to always hit the root, especially in a band situation where it is being played by the bass player. If you played only the 2, 3 and 5 of the chord, it could be called F#6 (no 3rd) or D#m7 (no 5th). These names don't really help; they just get in the way. In the context of the song, such a voicing of *c#*, *d#*, and *f#* are really just part of Badd9.

My favorite voicings for this chord are:

Badd9



Standard tuning

♩ = 120

In the Em chord I clearly hear a 9th (the note *f#*) and an 11th (an *a* note). The name of this chord is Em11. If you left the root of the Em11 chord to the bassist, your chord could be called G/D, but thinking this way would leave you with D/G/E which doesn't make sense, so again don't get hung up on names. My favorite voicings for this chord are:

Em11



Standard tuning

♩ = 120

From there I hear lots of other great voicings as well. Sometimes I had to choose a name for the chord just for reference, even though it could have two or three names.

For example, G6add9/B = Em11 (no 9th)/ B = A7sus/ B. The C#m11/E = E 6/9 (no 3rd) = F#sus4/E.

You may notice that I also provided voicings for Gsus2 even though there is no such chord in the chord chart, which follows. This is because Gadd9/B has its 3rd in the bass, and when that 3rd is removed, you get a sus2. Of course, in the context of the tune, as I've said previously, playing Gsus2 is perceived as Gadd9 because the *b* note, even if not played by the bassist, is implied since it's the root of the song. The same concept applies to my presenting C#m11 without the E root below.

Lastly, I did not supply voicings for the Add9 because they are the same as those for Badd9, just down 2 frets. Similarly, the B/E, also not tabbed below, is the same as A/D moved up 2 frets. The idea is to open up your mind to possibilities rather than dictate a specific way to play it.

Here are my favorite voicings to the other chords in the song:

Standard tuning
♩ = 120

Chord diagrams shown above the score:

- A/C#
- A/C#
- G6add9/B
- G6add9/B
- Esus2
- Gadd9/B
- Gsus2
- Gsus2
- Gsus2
- C#m11/E
- C#m11/E
- C#m11
- C#m11
- C#m11
- C#m11

Score measures and chords:

- Measure 1: A/C#
- Measure 2: A/C#
- Measure 3: G6add9/B
- Measure 4: G6add9/B
- Measure 5: Esus2
- Measure 6: Gadd9/B
- Measure 7: Gsus2
- Measure 8: Gsus2
- Measure 9: Gsus2
- Measure 10: C#m11/E
- Measure 11: C#m11/E
- Measure 12: C#m11
- Measure 13: C#m11

I will be using the shorter version of the song which comes right in with the harmonica riff, as the longer version's intro could be the subject of another article in and of itself. The entire songs looks like this:

(intro)

|| Badd9 | Em11 | Add9 | Badd9 ||

(verse)

||: Badd9 | Em11 | Add9 | Badd9 :|| play 4x

(pre-chorus)

|| Badd9 | A/D | B/E | A/C# |
| Badd9 | A/D | B/E | % ||

(chorus)

||: Badd9 | Em11 | Add9 | Badd9 :|| play 4x

(bridge)

	Badd9	G6add9/B	Esus2	A/C#
	Badd9	G6add9/B	Esus2 C#m11/E	Esus2
%	%			

(chorus)

||: Badd9 | Em11 | Add9 | Badd9 :|| play 4x

(chorus breakdown) – (hold each chord)

|| Badd9 | Em11 | Add9 | Badd9 |
| Badd9 | Em11 | Add9 | N.C. ||

(outro) – (vamp & fade)

||: Badd9 | Em11 | Add9 | Badd9 |
| Badd9 | Em11 | Add9 | Add9 Gadd9 :||

As you can see, there is big pay off to a) training your ear to hear the inner voices of the accompaniment of songs, regardless of what instrument(s) being played, b) understanding the theory behind the chords so you know what variations and substitutions can be used, c) knowing your fretboard well enough so you can implement those voicings on the fly.