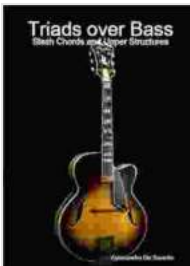


Slash Chords and Upper Structures: The Jazz Guitar Workshop Series

Slash chords and upper structures are fundamental concepts in jazz guitar improvisation and composition. They provide a gateway to creating sophisticated and harmonically rich music. This article will serve as an in-depth guide, exploring the construction, application, and harmonic implications of slash chords and upper structures. By mastering these techniques, jazz guitarists can unlock a world of musical possibilities.



Triads over Bass: Slash Chords and Upper Structures (The Jazz Guitar Workshop Series) by Iron Maiden

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Slash Chords

A slash chord, also known as a compound chord, is a combination of two or more chords written one above the other, separated by a slash (/). The bottom chord represents the root movement, while the top chord provides the color and extension. For example, the C/G slash chord consists of a C major triad in the bass (C-E-G) and a G major triad in the treble (G-B-D).

Slash chords are commonly used to add tension and harmonic interest to progressions. The contrast between the root movement and the upper structure creates a dissonant yet satisfying sound. They can also be used to create smooth voice leading and avoid awkward leaps in chord voicings.

Types of Slash Chords

There are various types of slash chords, each with its unique harmonic function:

1. **Diatonic Slash Chords:** These slash chords use notes from the parent scale, such as Cmaj7/G, which contains notes from the C major scale.
2. **Chromatic Slash Chords:** These slash chords introduce notes outside the parent scale, creating tension and harmonic richness, such as Cmaj7/G#.
3. **Extended Slash Chords:** These slash chords include tensions or alterations beyond the seventh, such as Cmaj7(#11)/G.

Upper Structures

Upper structures are extended chords built on top of a given root. They involve adding notes above the basic triad to create more complex and harmonically interesting voicings. Upper structures are commonly used to create tension and anticipation in jazz improvisation and composition.

Types of Upper Structures

There are numerous types of upper structures, each with its distinct sound and harmonic implications:

1. **Shell Voicings:** These upper structures consist of just the root, third, and seventh, such as C-E-G-B.
2. **Drop 2 Voicings:** These upper structures place the root in the second voice, creating a spacious and open sound, such as C-G-E-B.
3. **Drop 3 Voicings:** These upper structures place the root in the third voice, creating a darker and more resonant sound, such as C-E-G-B.

Harmonic Implications

Slash chords and upper structures have profound harmonic implications that affect the overall sound and direction of a jazz composition.

Understanding their interactions is crucial for creating effective and musically satisfying progressions.

Tension and Release

Slash chords and upper structures can create tension by introducing dissonant intervals, such as the tritone in the Cmaj7/G example. This tension can be resolved by moving to a more consonant chord, providing a sense of harmonic release.

Voice Leading and Smooth Bass Lines

Slash chords and upper structures allow for more flexible voice leading, as the upper structure notes can move independently from the root movement. This technique enables smooth bass lines and avoids awkward leaps in the bass register.

Modal Interchange

Slash chords and upper structures can be used to create modal interchange, where chords from different scales are superimposed over a given root. This technique expands the harmonic palette and adds depth and complexity to chord progressions.

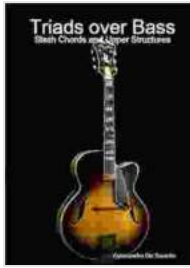
Practical Application

To effectively incorporate slash chords and upper structures into your jazz guitar playing, consider the following tips:

1. **Start with Diatonic Slash Chords:** Begin by exploring diatonic slash chords to familiarize yourself with their sound and harmonic function.
2. **Experiment with Upper Structures:** Experiment with different upper structures to discover their unique tonal qualities and how they affect the overall sound of the chord.
3. **Listen Closely:** Pay attention to how jazz guitar masters use slash chords and upper structures in their solos and compositions.
4. **Practice Regularly:** Consistent practice is essential for developing proficiency in using slash chords and upper structures.

Slash chords and upper structures are essential tools for jazz guitarists seeking to expand their harmonic vocabulary and create sophisticated and captivating music. By understanding their construction, application, and harmonic implications, you can unlock a world of musical possibilities. Embrace these techniques and incorporate them into your playing to elevate your jazz guitar skills to new heights.

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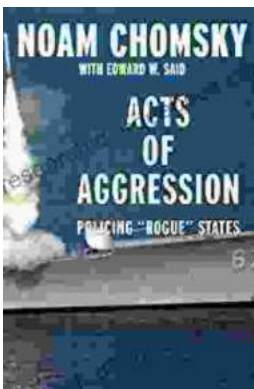
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