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## Chord Combinations for the Lizard Ear, Last Call: From the Pros Part 2!

August 2010 4,173 views One Comment



By Ted Eschliman

### Going straight to the Lizard Brain

*“Bacon bypasses all thinking processes and speaks directly to the lizard brain.”*

Cyber-advertising legend, Perry Marshall on the power of emotion in advertising

This is the third and final part of our “**Lizard Brain**” Series on chords, and the quote from **Perry Marshall** illustrates the concept marvelously. When you think of bacon, you don’t dare ponder its nutritional value, because frankly, there isn’t much. Still it’s a very powerful stimulant to the senses of taste and smell. When we started with Part One, our goal was to abandon, or at least temporarily bypass the analytical cortexes of the brain. We wanted a brief respite from music theory and heavy investigative energy, just soaking in the sounds.

Review: April 2010, **Chord Combinations for the Lizard Ear** <http://www.mandolinsessions.com/?p=567>

No doubt many of you went the next step and did some cursory harmonic analysis. We can’t help it; when we enjoy something we want to be able to repeat it. Knowing what it’s made of allows us to duplicate the results. We continued on with some of our friends in the industry and asked them *“What are your personal ‘**Lizard Ear**’ chords? When you audition someone’s instrument to sample its full sonority, or just like to hit something in the privacy of the front porch, pleasant and primal, what are your special chords and/or chord combinations?”*

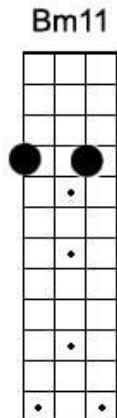
The first round of contributions was in our previous article, and now we’re delighted to bring you some great ones we didn’t have room for, but still want to share. If you haven’t already, be sure to check out the previous installment: June 2010 **Chord Combinations for the Lizard Ear, Cont’d From the Pros**. <http://www.mandolinsessions.com/?p=599>

As we requested then, stick with the mission of the article and listen to these first for sound. Play them; get them into your ears and fingers. Later, you might want to use the brain for chord analysis and transposition, but for now, *just listen*. We hope these might be fodder for a whole new fertile field of chord voicings for you, as well.

## Eva Scow

It was no surprise that rising star, US choro/jazz bandolimet **Eva Scow** would give us a chord that was contemporarily ambiguous in sound. She describes it as, *“one I like, sort of a Bm9.”* With the addition of the open E, we took the liberty of labeling it an **11 chord** (with the 9th implied). With two open notes and two closed, this would definitely be one that would reveal the tonal characteristics of the wood and steel of the instrument. It’s a delicious and mysterious chord.

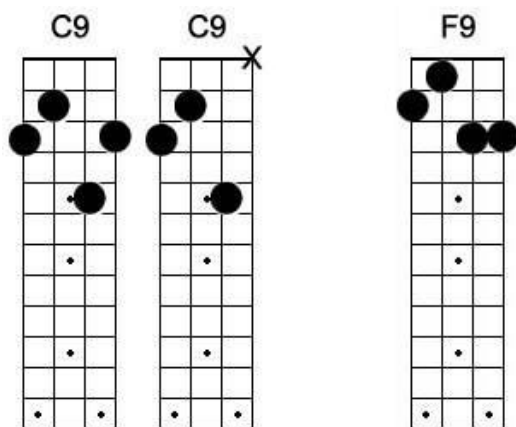
Note in our diagrams, if a string is not marked with an “X”, it is open and not muted. The following includes an open D and E string:



## Michael Lampert

Los Angeles area jazz electric mandolinist and mentor **Michael Lampert** is known more for his horizontal sense, a melodic fluidity reminiscent of a wind player, but he still had some chord tricks up his sleeve. He is particularly fond of variations on **seventh chords** (9ths), with his blues pedigree. He also mentions the option for mandolinists to avoid feeling compelled to use all four courses. A good 3-note chord can still pack a vibrant harmonic punch.

It will help to play a low C (or run through a C Major scale) to set the tonality of the first two chords in your ear, absent the C tonic, same for the F9 chord:

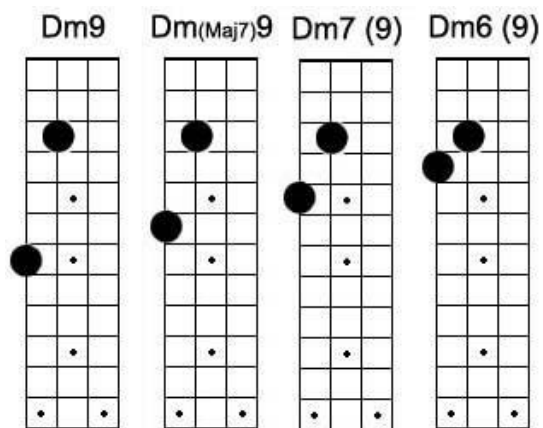


## Jamie Masefield

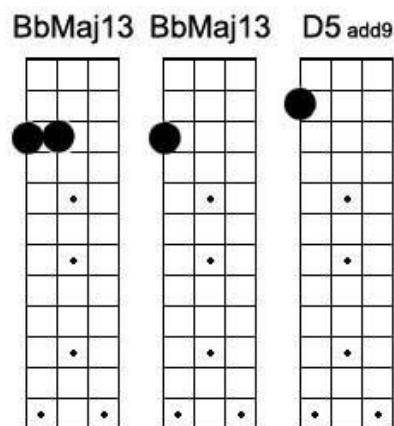
“The Jazz mandolin Project’s” leader, musical innovator **Jamie Masefield** known worldwide for blazing new trails for mandolin in the jam band format is also an incredible good gypsy jazz picker, having recently conducted the mandolin workshops at **Django in June** the last two years. He weighs in on how he gets acquainted with a new (or old) instrument. We’ll give you the text, but you’ll want to compare it with the chord diagrams below: *“Here’s what I like to do when I first pick up a mando. Ring finger on the D on the G string. Pointing finger on an F natural on the D string and the A and E open making what I consider a fat Dm with a 2 or 9 on the top w the E note.*

*“Then, I slide the D on the G string down a half step to the C# making it a Dm with a natural 7th in the base, then I slide the C# down to a C natural making it a Dm7 (still A and E ringing on the top). Then C natural to a B making it a*

*Dm6 or sometimes I use that as a G7.*



*Then B to a Bflat, this is with the F note still holding on the D string or taking it off and letting the D ring open. And finally resolving to dropping the Bflat down to an A making a D chord of sorts.*

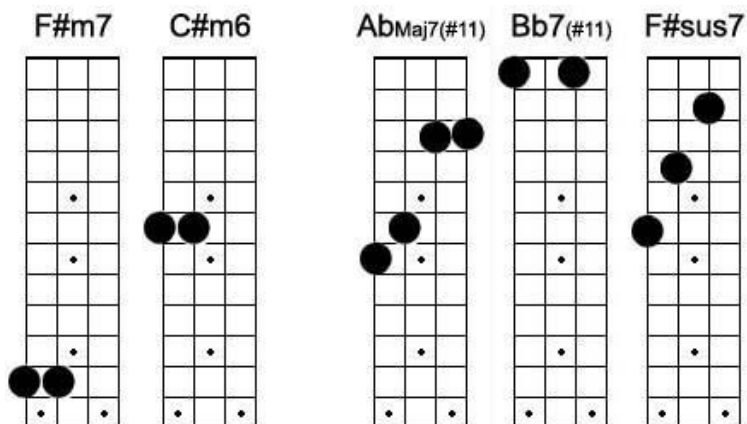


*I like to crosspick this stuff too because it sounds so nice with all those open ringing notes also fun to solo. I've written a number of tunes that utilize this kind of thing."*

### John McGann

Speaking of innovators, we couldn't leave out Professor **John McGann** of the **Berklee School of Music** in Boston, who also shared the clinician chair at **Django in June** with Jamie. The Professor's dynamic career has made him an in demand-east coast session player on guitar, mandolin, and lately he's seemed to gravitate to octave mandolin, even authoring a column in **Mandolin Magazine** the last several years. John is equally expert in jazz and Celtic music.

He explains his chords, *"These allow you to hear balance and resonance on an instrument, as well as intonation, and I just love the sound of 'em!"*



Like they say in Boston, “*wicked cool!*”

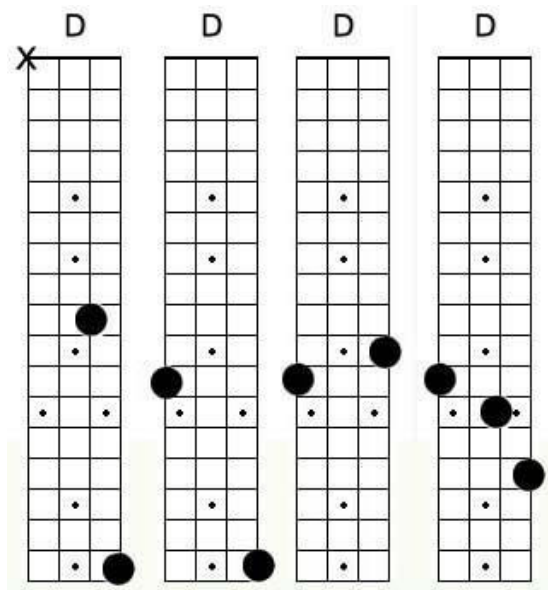
## Evan Marshall

Our last pro really takes us off the beaten path, and if you’ve ever seen him live or in his YouTube videos, you’ll understand what we mean. **Evan Marshall**, whose passion for classical music is eclipsed only by his love for Beatles music. If you ever get a chance to attend one of clinics or performances in person, don’t pass it up. You’ll be forever changed.

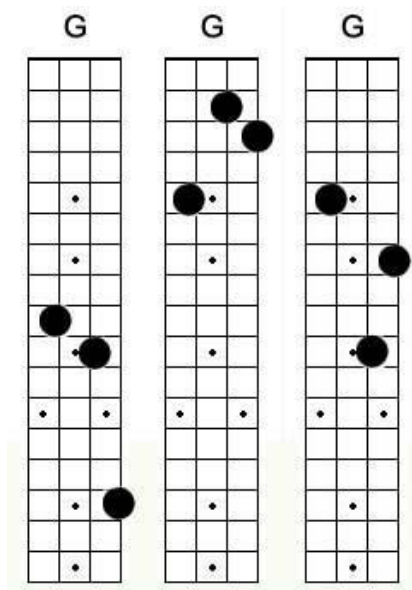
Evan takes us so far up the fretboard, we even had to extend the fretboard diagram to seventeen frets. What you get here is a total journey to the extremes of the instruments. Note again that unless we’ve indicated an “X” for the string for muting, all open strings are left for you to let ring.

To help you understand the diagrams, we’ll include the text he sent along. He indicates string first, and fret number second:

**D chords:** D0-A9-E17, G11-D0-A0-E17, G11-D0-A0-E10, G11-D0-A12-E14;



**G chords:** G0-D9-A10-E15, G0-D5-A2-E3, G0-D5-A10-E7.



## Conclusion

You can have a ton of fun playing all these chords just as they are written. Granted the ones that use a lot of resonant, open strings will hardly be movable, but even a diehard **FFcP** devotee likes to extract the full resonance of an open string once in a while. Nothing wrong with that!

*Arguably even more stimulating than bacon...*

By the way, if you ever want a title summary of all the JazzMandology topics (over three dozen, now!) here's a page that lists them: [http://jazzmando.com/mandolin\\_sessions.shtml](http://jazzmando.com/mandolin_sessions.shtml). There's a lot to uncover there, and **Mel Bay Publishing** has brought these all to you for free. *Pretty generous, huh?* Share them with your Facebook and Twitter friends.

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Guest contributor websites:

Eva Scow: <http://www.myspace.com/evascow>

Michael Lampert: <http://www.sojournerrecords.net/>

Jamie Masfield: <http://www.jazzmandolinproject.com/>

John McGann: <http://johnmcgann.com/>

Evan Marshall: <http://www.solomandolin.com/>

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**[John McGann](#)** said:

Thanks Ted! Actually, what you called C#m6 I think of as Amaj7...we might have to call it C#m(b6) as A# would be the 6th...these structures are all ambiguous and have many possible functions and serious versatility:

the F#m7 could also be Dmaj7, A6/9, and many partial sonorities like hinting at Bm7 (9, 11, no 3rd); Em6/9 (no 3rd), Gmaj7 (#11 13)(no 3rd), Go7 (maj7, 9 no 3rd) etc. etc .

# 11 August 2010 at 1:39 am

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