

Donald Potter's
Mel Bay Modern Guitar Method File

A Compilation of Useful Materials
for Students of
Mel Bay's Modern Guitar Method

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Contents

1. Letter to Mel Bay, August 21, 1996
2. Letter to Bill Bay, August 29, 1996
3. Reply from Bill Bay, September 3, 1996
4. Harmonic information relating to *The Mel Bay Modern Guitar Method* as it relates to the Circle of 5th.
5. *Johnny Smith Approach to Guitar* Information
6. Chord Comparison based on Mel Bay Chord Forms.
7. Note from Internet Publisher: Donald L. Potter

12061 W. Hoffman Dr.
Odessa, TX 79764
August 21, 1996

Dear Mel Bay,

The time has come for me to express to you my deepest appreciation for years of exquisite delight playing the guitar.

I began playing the guitar as a teenager in 1964 at the George Smith Music Studio in Aurora, Indiana. My teachers were Ervin Warren and his son Virgil. They were masters of the plectrum guitar, having thoroughly mastered your guitar method. I completed Grades 1, Grade 2, and about half of Grade 3 in about two years. I fondly remember practicing two hours every day in my room in our old Indiana farmhouse. Then college, a family, and career put an end to serious guitar studies until about 1981, when I purchased your new series and started to work on completing all seven Grades. Since there was no one to play the duet with, I soon switched to classical guitar. I even took one very valuable semester of classical guitar at the local college. About two years ago, I made the decision to dust off my Gibson ES-125 and took up the plectrum guitar with the intent of finishing all seven grades. I have finished through Grade 4 and can play much of in the upper grades also. I got out my *Orchestral Chord System for Guitar* and *Guitar Melody Chord Playing System*. Those two books proved to be real eye openers! I have probably bought three hundred dollars of guitar books from you in the last couple of years. Still my main focus is the total mastery of all seven grades. That if a worthy goal, even if it has taken me decades to get there. I can tell you that I am “closing in.”

In my spare time, I teach two teenagers. One has just finished Grade 2. It is difficult to adequately express the pure joy of playing – after all these years – the wonderful duets in your Method with my students. I have every intention of finishing all seven grades with this fine young high school senior. I have two more years to work with him since he is going to be going to the local junior college. In fact, he tried out for the High School Jazz Band this year and won. Of course, he is working hard on your *Rhythm Guitar System*, that I gave him for his birthday.

THE TAPES. This deserves a separate paragraph. October 9, 1995, the tapes for Grades 1, 2, and 3 arrived. My hands trembled with reverent excitement as I opened them. It was a profound feeling to hold music I have practiced on and off for thirty years – some of the finest music ever arranged for guitar. Listening and playing along with those tapes has not been a disappointment. Nothing has done as much for my growth as a true artist than those tapes. I would give almost anything to get tapes for the rest of the Grades 4 through 7, especially the duets and solos. In fact, if there are any recordings of the music in the other grades, I should sincerely like information on how to get them. Tommy Flint can play guitar! Feel free to tell him I said so.

Thank you, Mel, for the contribution you have made to my musical life and the lives of so many others who have had the privilege to study your PREMIER COURSE OF GUITAR INSTRUCTION.

May God continue to bless your life!

Sincerely, Donald L. Potter

12061 W. Hoffman
Odessa, TX 79764
August 29, 1996

Mel Bay Publications, Inc.
#4 Industrial Drive
Pacific, MO 63069

Dear Mr. William Bay,

This letter is a personal request for two things:

1. Recording (Cassettes, CD, or LP) of all or some of the music in *The Mel Bay Modern Guitar Method* Grades 4, 5, 6, and 7. I am especially interested in the solos and duets.
2. A copy of the 1947 edition of *The Mel Bay Modern Guitar Method*. I studied guitar back in 1965. I still have Grades 2 (1947 copyright) and Grade 3 (1965 copyright). I should like to have copies of the others. There are several beautiful pieces that are not in the later editions.

I will not go into detail, but I have managed to make my way through the first four grades (and much of Grade 5) of the *Mel Bay Modern Guitar Method*, *The Rhythm Guitar* book, and sizable portions of Mel's *Melody Cord System*. I have come to understand the brilliant logic behind Mel's "chord shape" approach to music on the guitar.

One of my students, who already plays lead and rhythm for his HS Jazz Band, is beginning *Grade Three*. We have a wonderful time playing the duets.

I purchased the tapes for Grade 1-3 about a year ago. They have added a much needed professional touch to my playing. Tommy Flint is a true professional. I would give almost anything to have at least the duets and solos for grades four through seven. I kept thinking that Mel surely recorded some solos and duets, perhaps under some other label. Maybe there are guitar studios that use *Mel's Method* and produced practice recordings for their students. I should be happy to correspond with anyone who could help me find such recordings.

Again thanks to you, Mel, and all the guitar professionals at *Mel Bay Publications*, who have contributed to the music lives of guitarists like myself.

Sincerely,
Donald Potter

After reading these correspondences between Bill Bay and myself, you can easily see why I was so excited when I discovered a couple weeks ago that an Expanded Edition of *The Mel Bay Modern Guitar Method* was available with audio CDs for every exercise, solo, and duet. I purchased the Expanded Edition with the CDs the same day and had them a few days later. They are in many ways a dream come true. I have a new set of strings on my old Gibson ES 125 and a new VOX DA15 practice amp hooked up for daily practice. (August 2010).



MEL BAY PUBLICATIONS, INC. . . . Excellence in Music

September 3, 1996



Mr. Donald Potter
12061 W. Hoffman
Odessa, TX 79764

Dear Mr. Potter:

Thank you for your kind remarks. I will forward your letter to Mel.



Enclosed is a copy of *Graded Guitar Duets*. This book was discontinued several years ago but does contain all of the old duets which used to appear in the *Modern Guitar Method*.

We do not have (readily available) old, original copies of the *Modern Guitar Method*. They are kept in archive files and some of them are kept in Mel's home.



In regard to the recordings, we are planning audio recordings for Grades 4-7. Hopefully, the first few of them will be completed this year.

Thanks for your interest.

Sincerely,

William A. Bay
Vice President



WAB:tp
Enclosures
Graded Guitar Duets
Guitar/Bass Catalog



Index to the Mel Bay Modern Guitar Method Donald Potter 9-18-96

Grade 1

C - Am
G - Em

Grade 2

F - Dm
D - Bm

Grade 3

A - F#m

Harmonized Scales
C - Am
G - Em
D - Bm
F - Dm

~~Bb~~ - Gm
~~Bb~~ - Gm Harm. Scale
Eb - Cm
Ab - Fm

Grade 4

E - C#m

Grade 5

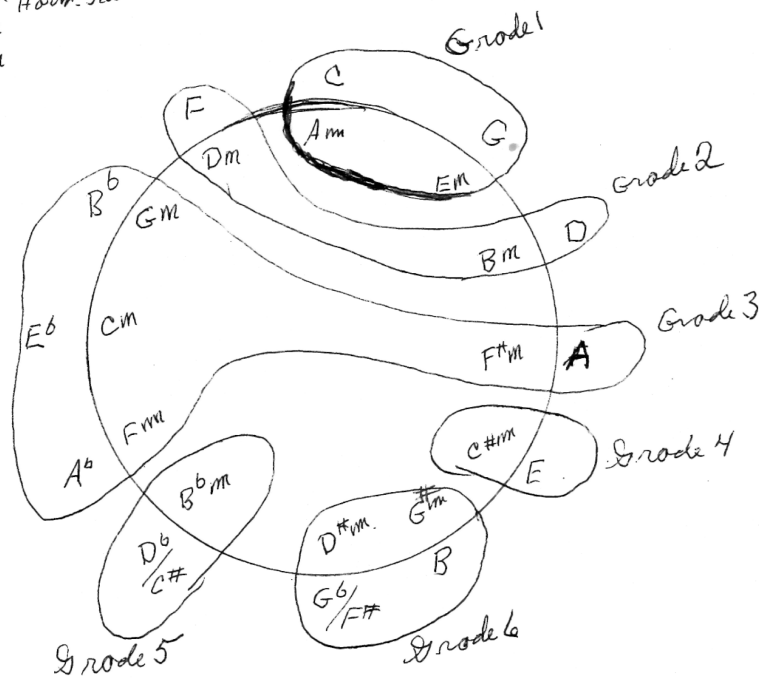
Dim. chords
Aug. chords
Db - Bm

Grade 6

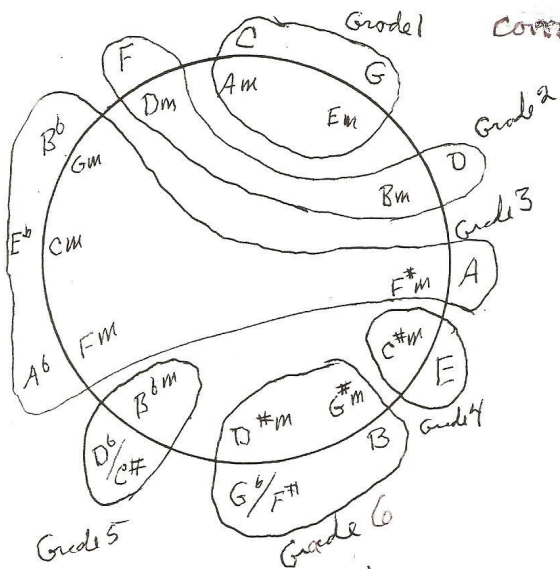
B - G#m
F#/Gb - Dm/Ebm
7-5; 7#5

Grade 7

6th chords
Minor 6th chords
9th chords
11th chords
9/6 chord
13 chords

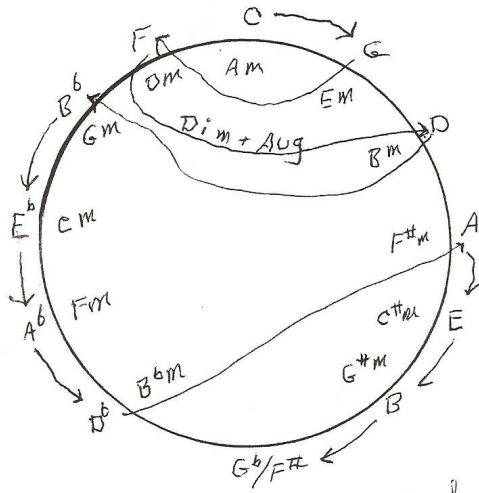


Mel Bay and the Circle of Fifths
First mapped by DP 2-13-95

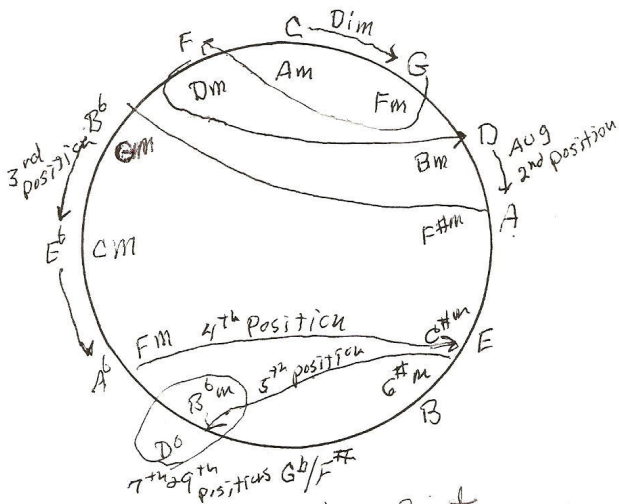


Mel Bay's Modern Guitar Method Harmonic Index

Comparative Study



Mel Bay's Guitar Chord Melody Playing & System



Mel Bay Modern Guitar Method Grade 5

Dim
Aug

- Maj 7
- min 7
- 7+5
- 7-5
- Maj 6
- min 6
- 9
- 11
- Aug 11
- 13
- 13-9

Grade 6

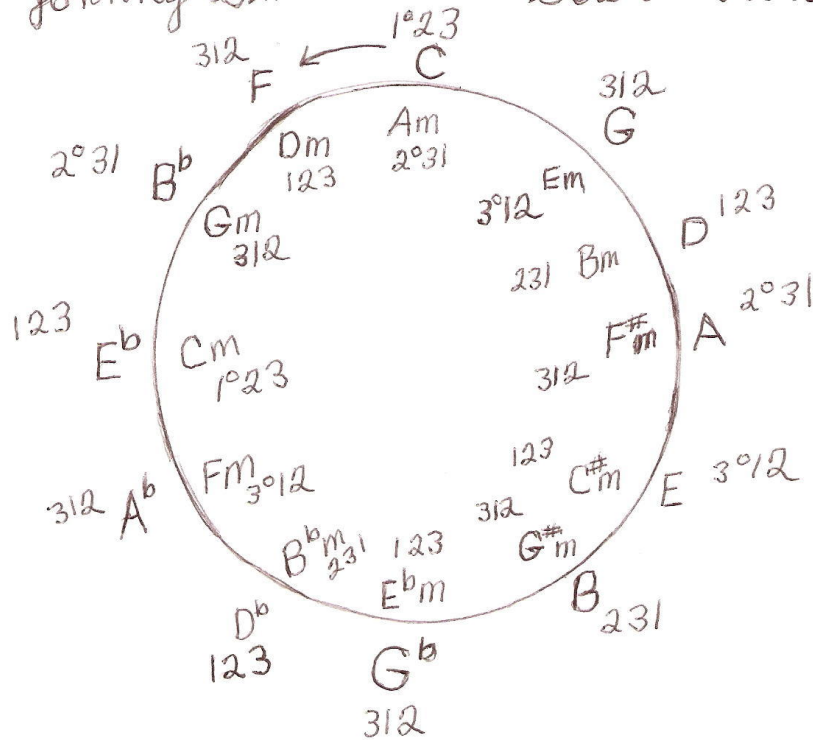
- Min 7
- Maj 7
- 7-5
- 7+5

Grade 7

- 6+4
- min 6
- 9
- 11
- 9/6
- 13

Donald Patton
8-15-99

Johnny Smith Chord + Scale Practice Sequence 5/15/10



Prepared by Donald L. Potter 5/15/10.

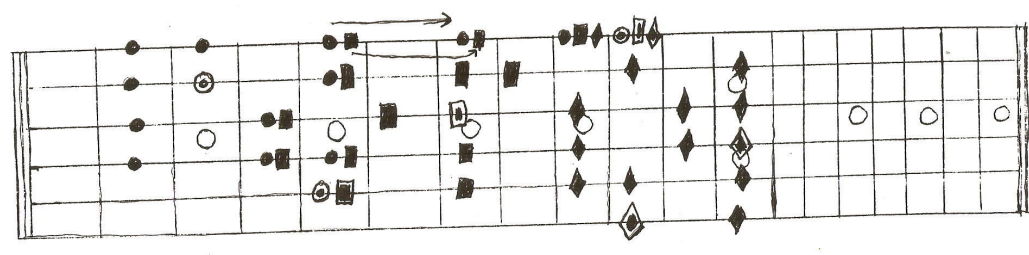
Superscript ⁰ = open strings

See *The Johnny Smith Approach to Guitar*. The numbers relate to the scale forms (fingerings), and the scale forms correspond with the chord forms. The scales are Major and Harmonica Minor. Start with the Key of C and proceed counterclockwise around the Circle of 5ths for a daily scale and chord practice routine. Do the major first and then the relative minor. See my chart for the Johnny Smith scales and chords. It is a good idea, when working through *Mel Bay's Modern Guitar Method*, to note, which of Mr. Smith's scales are being practiced.

Johnny Smith's approach is very important for every guitarist because it is based on the Grand Staff and will enable the guitarist to read music written for the Bass Clef. This will liberate the guitarist from the bonds of only being able to read the Treble Clef

Johnny Smith major Scales
 D major - example
 Form 1 Form 2 Form 3

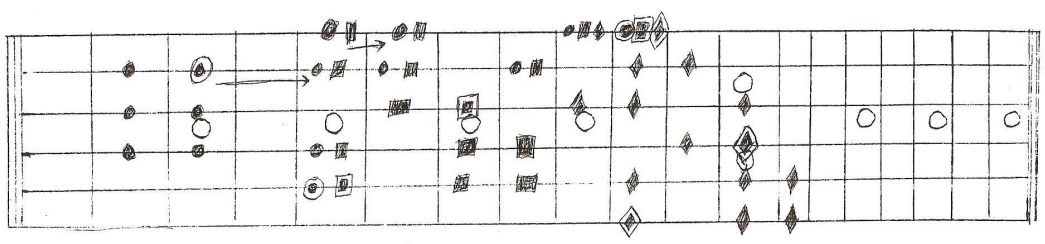
Donald Potter
 4-18-96



Major Scales using open strings: C, E, F, A, Bb

Johnny Smith Harmonic Minor Scales
 D minor - Example
 Form 1 Form 2 Form 3

4-18-96
 Donald Potter



Minor Scales open strings: Cm, Em, Fm, Am. Note that the roots are have a thin line around them. Start with the root when playing the scale.

Note: I prepared these charts to help me memorize *The Johnny Smith Approach to Guitar* Major and Harmonic Minor Scales. I found the charts very helpful. The Circle of Fifths on the previous pages serves as a template where you can see "Johnny Smith's Practice Sequence" at a glance.

Mel Bay Dominant Seventh Chord Forms Compared

Rhythm melody Middle 4 Strings Last 4 Strings

				Intervals
V⁷ 1 67 35	I⁷ 67 35 1	I⁷ 67 35 1	I⁷ 67 35 1	67 3 5 1
VII⁷ 3 15 67	III⁷ 15 67 3	III⁷ 15 67 3	III⁷ 15 67 3 7	1 5 67 3
I⁷ 5 3 67 1	V⁷ 3 67 1 5	V⁷ 3 67 1 5	V⁷ 3 67 1 5 7	3 67 1 5
III⁷ 67 5 1 3	VII⁷ 5 1 3 67	VII⁷ 5 1 3 67	VII⁷ 5 1 3 67	5 1 3 67

Rhythm → Melody
 (6) → (1)
 ◆ = Root

Rotational pattern for each interval group/family:
 → LAST 4 strings → (Rhythm + Melody) → Middle 4 strings →

Donald Potter 8-13-97

Note from Internet Publisher: Donald L. Potter

May 17, 2010

This page has been published with the intent of sharing some of the materials that I developed over the years of studying *Mel Bay's Modern Guitar Method*. I will be adding more material to this document as I have opportunity.

I would like to give a cordial invitation to anyone who loves music and especially guitar music to my website: www.donpotter.net

The *Johnny Smith Approach to Guitar* chord practice forms of the major and minor keys will also be published in the next few days. I wrote this in 2010, but a just getting around to adding the files on April 8, 2024! I am appending them to the end of this file.

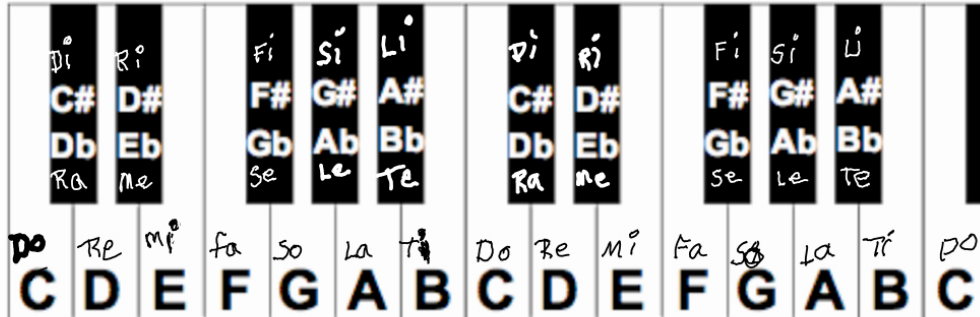
March 30, 2024, Update

Recently because of hearing loss, I switched from mostly playing classical guitar back to plectrum playing. I purchased the *Mel Bay Modern Guitar Method* e-book, which I loaded onto my reMarkable tablet. I also saved the free audio tapes the Mel Bay company graciously makes available. I was able to divide the one large pdf file into seven separate files, one for each Grade to facilitate working with the material.

I am working on ear training with with Aaron Shearer's Fix-Do Chromatic Scale method, which I learned while studying Shearer's Mel Bay classical guitar books. To further my musical development, I am working through Phil Duncan's *Mel Bay's Complete Chromatic Harmonica Method*, which is a superb introduction to music in general.

Since I had never studied keyboard, I decided to use the Garage Band piano keyboard to help me visualize the positions of the notes.

Fixed-Do Chromatic scale



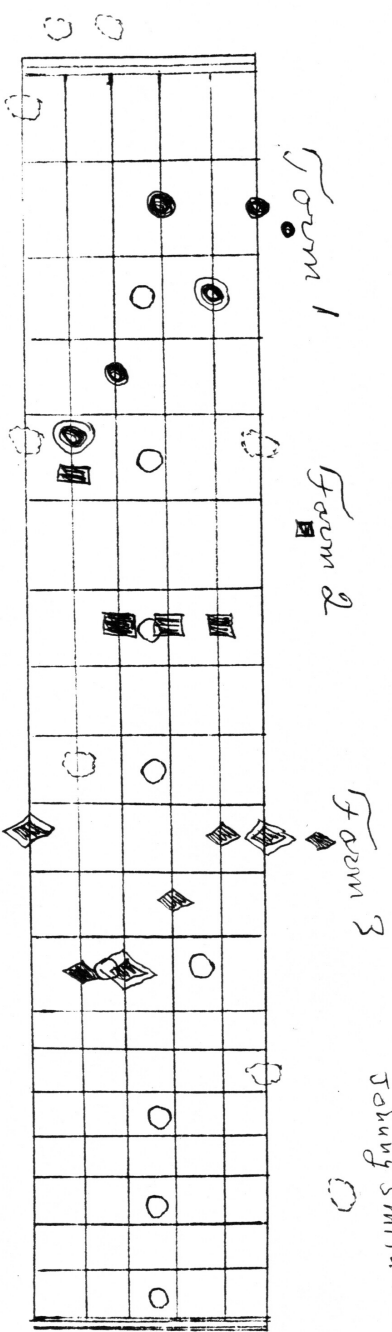
i = / e e /
e = / a /

4 = 2' - 24'
by Donald Potter

From Fernando Sor's *Method for the Guitar*

I think I have completely proved that the knowledge of the thirds and sixths is the foundation of the whole fingering in regarding to harmony. I shall not cease exhorting those who would devote themselves to study of the guitar, to endeavor to acquire this knowledge. A guitarist, who is a harmonist, will always have an advantage over one who is not. Even a tolerable player on the pianoforte (the first instrument to produce harmony), has already acquired very useful musical habit regarding the guitar. A tolerable pianist cannot be a bad guitarist (p. 42).

Johnny Smith Major Chord Form
 8-13-97
 Donald Pater
 D Major - Example
 Chord Tone not in Johnny Smith (TS) Form



Chord Tones (Intervals)
 1 3 5

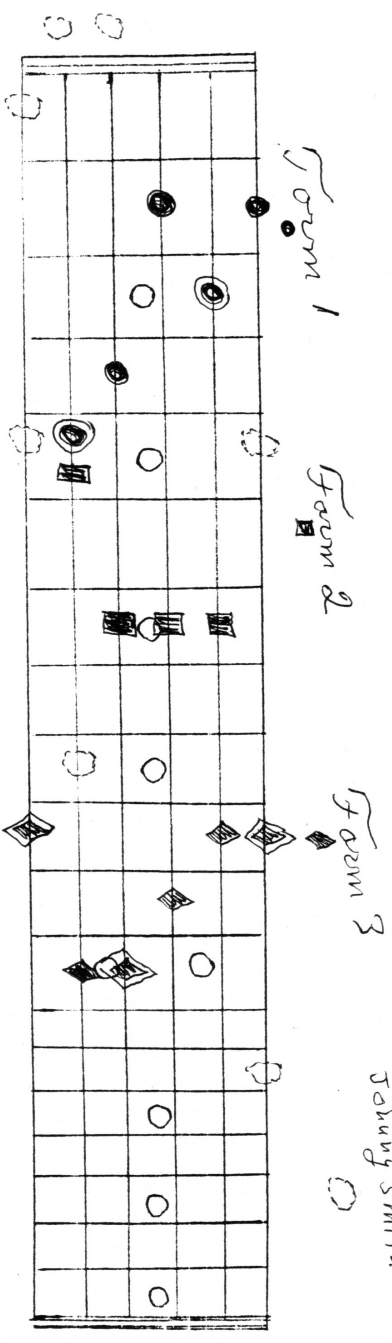
Root tones:

- Open
- C Form 1
 - E Form 3
 - A Form 2

Forme number based based on C notational pattern eye the neck
 all hand forme possible are here when 1235 tones are added; Neck, Rhythm, Inside, Top 4 strings

Johnny & Smith Major Chord Form
 8-13-97
 Donald Potter

D Major - Example



Chord tones not in Johnny Smith (SS) Form

Chord Tones (Intervals)
 P F# A
 1 3 5

Root tones: 

- Open
- C Form 1
 - E Form 3
 - A Form 2

Forme number based based on rotational pattern up the neck. All hand forme possible are here when 1st 5 strings are added. Neck, Rhythm, Inside, Top 4 strings