

# Chapter Sixteen

## *Spread Voicing Technique*

**Definition:** Spread voicings contain four or five notes in a semi-open or open style comparable to Drop 2, Drop 3 and Drop 2+4 techniques. However, all spread voicings (by this author's definition) contain the root of the chord as the lowest note of the voicing. The root most often occurs in the octave beginning one octave below middle "C" and extending for an octave or more below, depending on the instrument assigned to that pitch (bass trombone, baritone saxophone, etc.).

### Usage of Spread Voicing Technique

This technique is appropriate for long note values such as chordal pads or melodies at slow tempos. This technique is also valuable on single kick figures or cadence points where the impact of spreads will be most evident. It is common to mix this technique with other voicing techniques. In general, spread voicings are more dramatic than other voicings as a result of the low root and clearly defined harmony.

Four-note Spreads are very common in writing for a trombone section, creating sustained or rhythmic pads (not too busy) [Ex. 16-1]. Five-note Spreads are orchestrated with the saxophone section or with a combination of trumpets or flugelhorns and trombones, also, on sustained or rhythmic pads [Ex.16-2].

Ex. 16-1 FOUR TROMBONES (4 NOTE SPREAD)      Ex. 16-2 FIVE SAXOPHONES (5 NOTE SPREAD)

Chords for Ex. 16-1:  $Dm_{11}^b9$ ,  $G_{13}$ ,  $G+7$ ,  $C_{maj}^9$ ,  $E_b_{13}$

Chords for Ex. 16-2:  $B^b_9$ ,  $G_7(b_9b_{13})$ ,  $C_{m11}$ ,  $F\#_{13}(\#_{11})$ ,  $F_{m9}$ ,  $E_b_{13}(b_9)$

### Common Scenarios for Spread Voicing Technique

- Melodies comprised of mostly long note values at a slow tempo [Ex. 16-3].
- Melodies comprised of predominantly eighth notes at a slow tempo using a reharmonization technique, whereby each eighth note is a new chord, allowing for root to root movement in the bottom voice [Ex. 16-4].

After studying Examples 16-3 and 16-4 at the piano, listen to CD Track #29, played by a saxophone section.

CD TRACK #29

EX. 16-3 SLOW MELODY (5 SAXOPHONES)      EX. 16-4 8TH NOTE MELODY-REHARMONIZATION (5 SAXOPHONES)

## Intervallic Considerations

The most common intervals between the lowest two voices in a spread voicing are:

- 10th - root to major or minor 3rd displaced by an octave
- 7th - root to major or minor 7th
- Perfect 5th - root to perfect 5th, diminished and augmented 5ths are not common low in the voicing (See Low Interval Limits Chart, pg. 94)
- 3rd - root to major or minor 3rd [Ex. 16-5 through 16-8]

EX. 16-5 5 NOTE SPREAD      EX. 16-6 5 NOTE SPREAD      EX. 16-7 5 NOTE SPREAD      EX. 16-8 5 NOTE SPREAD

Above the bottom two notes of a spread voicing, the intervals range from a minor 2nd to a maximum of a major 6th. The most common intervals are 3rds, 4ths and 5ths. See examples above.

## Range of Lead in Spread Voicings

The spread technique always includes a low root; so there is a limit to how high the lead can effectively be written. Typically, the lead can extend to approximately "D" a ninth above middle "C." Above that lead range, either the root would be too high to produce the desired sound or the voicing would be too spread with intervals wider than a 6th between adjacent voices (except the lowest interval, which can extend as wide as a 10th).

## Creating Four Note Spread Voicings

Four Note Spreads are formed following the formula below (top to bottom)

1. Lead note - any available tension, 5th, 3rd or 7th. Avoid placing a root in the lead which will result in a triadic structure.
2. 2nd note - 3rd or 7th
3. 3rd note - 3rd, 5th or 7th
4. 4th note - root

This formula is most effective if the 3rd and 7th occur as second and third notes (order depends on the lead note). Therefore, the best lead notes are tensions and 5ths.

**Common 4 Way Spread Formulas** (read top to bottom)

	* Major 7		Minor 7 *		Dom. 7 *		*	
Lead	9	5	9	5	9	13	#9	b13
2nd	ma 7	3	b7	b3	b7	3	b7	3
3rd	3	ma7	b3	b7	3	b7	3	b7
4th	Rt.	Rt.	Rt.	Rt.	Rt.	Rt.	Rt.	Rt.

(Ex. 16-9) (Ex. 16-10) (Ex. 16-11) (Ex. 16-12)

\*notated examples corresponding to the above formula

Ex. 16-9:  $FMA^9$  (9, ma7, 3, Rt.)

Ex. 16-10:  $CM^7$  (5, b3, b7, Rt.)

Ex. 16-11:  $G^{13}$  (13, 3, b7, Rt.)

Ex. 16-12:  $D^7(\#9)$  (#9, b7, 3, Rt.)

Play and analyze Ex. 16-13 Four Way Spread Technique at the piano and then listen to the Jazz Arranging CD Track # 30.