

# Introduction

***The Big Book of Polychords*** continues where ***The Sticktionary*** ended. Originally, I thought I could combine all aspects of chord chemistry together in one large volume. However, that idea was abandoned as soon as the work began. In this text, I present a reference of two-handed chord combinations as they apply to the Chapman Stick®.

***The Big Book of Polychords*** is a glossary of complex chords that can be constructed by simultaneously combining two simplified chord forms – one from each hand, in both the bass and melody sides of The Stick.

In an effort to make this reference useful for all Stick tunings, chord diagrams are shown in an abbreviated format. In one section, a glossary of basic chord shapes for both the left and right hands is given. In another section, chord shape combination diagrams are shown – organized by the primary left-hand chord shape along with the various right-hand possibilities. All of these diagrams depict the chord shape, fingering, intervals, and the basic names of the chords used in each section. A table of the Touchboard® is provided on page 23, before the chord diagrams to aid in determining the identity of individual chords, as they apply to your specific tuning. Not represented in this book are instruments tuned with the High Bass 4<sup>th</sup> or not tuned utilizing uniform fourths (melody) and reversed fifths (bass).

The concept behind ***The Big Book of Polychords*** is to provide a complete reference for complex chord voicings. The chords are big, their names are big, and their sound is big. My intention is for the book to be used three ways. First, you can dig right in and try some chords that appeal to your ears. Second, you can find the names to polychords you already play by locating the appropriate shape combinations. And finally, I hope that you will spend some time discovering how polychords are constructed using the methods I describe in the first section.

This entire catalog was created using only combinations from eleven basic chords, creating over 1000 different combinations in each key. Each of the twelve keys contain more than 170 unique chord names. In addition to the root position chords; alternate voicings and chordal inversions are also identified and only the most musical sounding chords are included.

The ***Stick method*** of two-handed string tapping was conceived and developed by Emmett Chapman in 1969. He built his first Stick prototype in 1970 and in 1974 he started his first production run of instruments. The ***Stick method*** employs both hands approaching the Stick from opposite sides and perpendicular to the instrument. The crook of the left hand fits around the left side of The Stick and the fingers reach over to the bass strings – much like playing a guitar or bass. The crook of the right hand fits around the right side of The Stick and the fingers reach over to the melody strings. To make music, the fingers tap and hold the strings between frets in a fashion similar to the way a pianist plays the keys of a piano.

Along with the ***Stick method***, Emmett threw out any preconceived ideas of how his instrument should be tuned. From this was born the specific configuration of reversed fifths tuning in the bass and uniform fourths tuning in the melody – the lowest pitched strings at the center of The Stick. It is this system of tuning that enables the player to produce rich sounding chords.

If you are a new student to the Stick, *Free Hands* – by Emmett Chapman, *The Stick Book, Vol. 1* – by Greg Howard, and my book – *The Sticktionary* – should prove to be invaluable references. Remember that experimentation, exploration, and listening are as equally important to anything you can be taught or read from a book.