

The Power of Harmony

BY DANIEL ZIMMERMAN



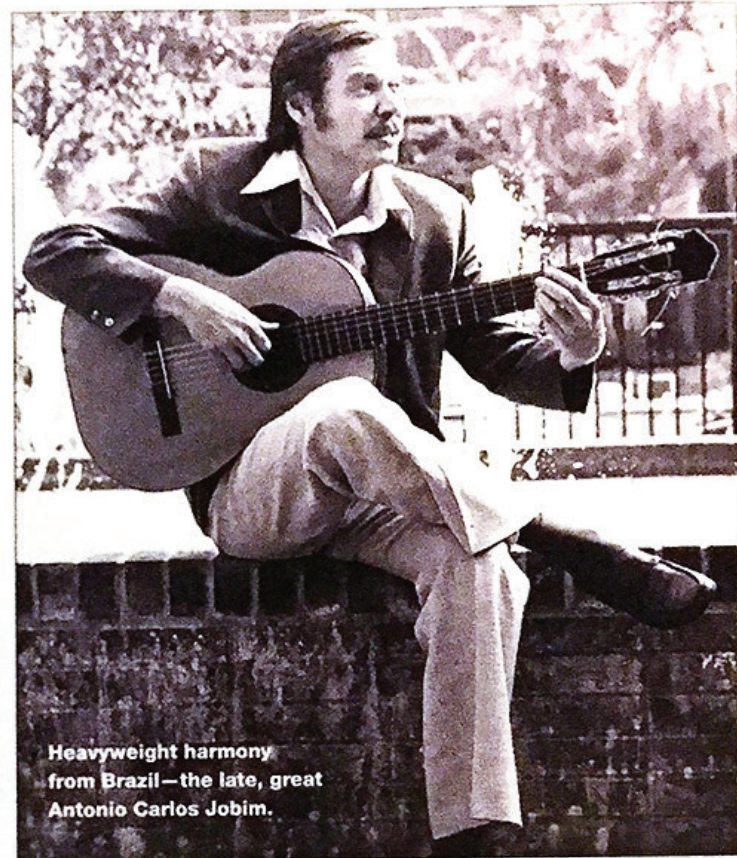
FEW THINGS HEIGHTEN

the emotional impact of a riff or melody more than an inspired and inventive harmonization. A unique harmony can give a riff one of the most elusive qualities of all—*individuality*. To hear a dramatic example of the power of harmony, let's play the simplest of all melodies and then harmonize it.

Our melody is so simple, it doesn't need to be written out: Just pluck C at the 8th fret of the first string several times in a row. If this one-note riff seems boring or monotonous, try Ex. 1, which recasts

the same C as the highest note in several different chords. Suddenly, juxtaposed against colorful, changing harmonic backdrops, our droning, one-note theme sounds alluring and hypnotic. Like an actor cast in different roles, the C has an entirely different sound within each new grip, evoking a new feeling with every reharmonization.

Things get more interesting, of course, when we harmonize a melody that has more than one note. To demonstrate, let's start by playing the simple, diatonic D major phrase in Ex. 2a. In pop music, these melody notes would typically



Heavyweight harmony from Brazil—the late, great Antonio Carlos Jobim.

be cast only as chord tones—that is, the melody's main pitches would be the 1, 3, 5, or 7 of the chords accompanying them. But

in Ex. 2b, we create rich, intriguing harmonies when the same notes are recast as outer extensions of the accompanying chords.

CONTINUES ON PAGE 98

Ex. 1

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Ex. 2a

Ex. 2b

▶ CHOPS ◀

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 96

For example, the $F\sharp$ in bar 2 is the $\sharp 11$ of $Csus2\sharp 11$, the D in bar 3 is the 11 of $A\flat 11$, and the A in the last chord is the 2 of $Gsus2$. Saxophonist Wayne Shorter uses

this technique in his composition "Infant Eyes."

Finally, in the spirit of Antonio Carlos Jobim and his timeless composition "One Note Samba," Ex. 3

illustrates how an entire melody can have only one note, yet sound utterly captivating thanks to the shifting, kaleidoscopic chord changes beneath it.

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Ex. 3

The musical score for Ex. 3 is presented in two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 4, and the second system contains measures 5 through 8. Each measure is labeled with a specific guitar chord. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is written in the bass clef. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 on the strings. The chords and their corresponding fingerings are as follows:

Measure	Chord	T (Treble)	A (Acoustic)	B (Bass)
1	Bm11	5	7	7
2	B \flat 7 \flat 5	5 5 5	6	6
3	Amaj7	5	6	5
4	A \flat 7 \sharp 5	5 5 5	5	4
5	G13	5	4	3
6	F \sharp 7sus4	5 5 5	4	2
7	F \sharp 7		3	2
8	Fmaj7 \sharp 11	0	0	2
9	Asus2	0 0 0	0	0
10			2	0