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January '88: HARMONIZED SCALES (PART ONE)

Here's a lesson I enjoy giving because the benefits and possibilities are great, while the method is simple and easy to implement. I'm talking about harmonized scales. Let's get specific. If you stay within the bounds of the major scale you will find that each note can be harmonized with one or more notes from the same scale, with varying results. Let's try a two-octave C major scale harmonized in 3rds (see Staff 1). As you can see, we get major 3rds for the notes C, F and G (root, 4th and 5th), and minor 3rds for the notes D, E, A and B (2nd, 3rd, 6th and 7th). Next try the A minor scale in three octaves (see Staff 2).

I think you will find practicing in three or more octaves more beneficial with exercises of this nature. Remember, it is essential that you try to memorize every fingering and positional variation in all keys. We all know that exercises are not well known for their "musical swing," so you will have to take this concept and apply it to an actual melody, solo or support line to really hear it work. Thirds have a very harmonious sound, but there are many other options when considering harmonization. Next month we will explore some other options.





February '88: HARMONIZED SCALES (PART TWO)

Last month I discussed the techniques and benefits of learning scales harmonized in 3rds in both two and three octaves. Let's move on to 4ths and 5ths. Using the G major scale, we find that it takes a variety of 4ths and 5ths to set up the correct harmony (see Staves 1 and 2). Once memorized, transpose into all keys. Play slowly and pay close attention to the characteristics of these harmonies. By that I mean their uniqueness and their "color." Each interval has its own sound, and knowing these sounds will put you in control. Next, try writing a melody or solo and harmonize it using 3rds, 4ths and 5ths in any combination you like. Experiment.

Harmonized guitar lines are very popular these days. For the most outrageous example, I recommend Steve Vai's "The Attitude Song" (transcribed in the Nov. '87 issue of GUITAR For The Practicing Musician). Steve puts more