



Harmonizing the Melody with

3rds and 6ths #26

Chord Melody Beyond Top Note

Welcome to lesson 26, so you may have noticed that while octaves provide a beefier texture for the melody than the melody alone, they don't exactly provide any additional harmonic support, it's just the same note up or down an octave, so let's take this to the next logical step, and learn to harmonize melodies with other notes from the scale, so we'll harmonize with intervals. Technically, you can harmonize a melody with any interval be it an octave, a seventh, third, fourth, or whatever you want, so in this lesson, we're going to focus on harmonizing our melody notes with diatonic thirds, in a way.

The reason for this, is because the kinds of chords we use in jazz are typically built by stacking consecutive thirds intervals on top of each other. In keeping with the top note principle, we'll harmonize our melody notes with notes that are a third below them in the scale. So say if we were in C minor, this is my C note, then I can go... So a C natural minor chord.

However, if you want to harmonize a melody entirely in thirds while still hearing the chords and the bass line, you might find that sometimes the harmonization doesn't sit quite as well as you might hope it would. The reason for this is often because the harmony may end up on a non-chord tone, so the melody note is not a chord tone or an important beat sometimes, or even it can be pushed away from an important beat in the bar, so usually melodies for jazz taggers are written so that the melody

resolves very nicely with the chord, but if our harmony doesn't also do the same, while we build the chord melody, the harmonized melody can be left waning.

So for example, if we are harmonizing a melody that lands on C... with the third bit below, we could either go... This is an A natural, or an A flat, depending if you're thinking the chord at that moment, if it's coming from C natural minor, or melodic minor, harmonic minor, so it's not exactly a strong resolving sound and it doesn't really feel like C minor. So it sounds like F a little bit, right? So what do we do, well if it doesn't sound good, change the harmony note. Instead of harmonizing with thirds...

We can harmonize with fourths, then... Below instead, so we're playing a C and a G together, over a C minor chord gives you the root of the C, like this. This is a pretty well resolved sound in general, you harmonize with a third below your melody, and unless it doesn't sound convincing, in which case you harmonize with a fourth. So this is what we'll be doing, so, rule of thumb: I believe that the trickiest part for most people trying to do this for the first time is figuring out exactly what notes we should use under the melody note to harmonize. Most students know that a third below C, is an A. So C, B, A... but should it be A, or A flat, or A sharp? Should there be a natural? So this is where chord scales come in handy. So a chord scale is a scale that is appropriate to use over a particular chord. The A, or the A flat playing over the C or the C minor chord in the example above, that depends on whether you are treating the C minor as part of C natural minor, or part of C Dorian, or the other possibilities I mentioned above.

So in jazz, the choice is yours, but you can trust your ears to guide you along the way, to say this is really what I want to hear. So experiment chord by chord, and try to reach for the sounds you want from any particular moment when you are practicing this technique, so we have major third, and minor thirds, perfect fourths, and diminished fourths, and once you've got it, try to figure out what chord scales you're working with, and write them down so you remember, you'll realize oh, this is C Dorian, this is C this, this is C that. So the next few lessons, we're going to learn to

harmonize the melody to Kenny Dorham's jazz standard Blue Bossa, of course, it's with thirds and with fourths, so you'll notice on the exercise sheet that I've noted which chord scales we're thinking about in every measure.

However, the 16 bar melody to the song is usually played twice through, so on the second pass, we're going to mix it up a little, and remember, this course is about going... It's about going beyond top notes with capillary for you to discover, so we're going to harmonize the melody to Blue Bossa, and the second time through, which related to the thirds and the fourths, with an inversion, that is what we will harmonize this with sixths, and fifths when sixths don't work. Again, the same rule applies, you harmonize with a sixth below the melody, and wherever that doesn't sound too convincing, you'll try to fix this with a fifth below.

So the first video is just me playing Blue Bossa melody, alone without harmonization, accompanied by a backing track just so you understand where it's laying on the fret board, and in what register. So practice the melody alone until you really have it under your fingers, then practice harmonizing with thirds, and sixths with me in the following videos, please keep me posted if you have any questions, and I'll see you there.