

# A ZVS PWM Inverter with Active Voltage Clamping Technique Using Only a Single Auxiliary Switch

Marcello Mezaroba\* Non-member  
 Denizar Cruz Martins\*\* Non-member  
 Ivo Barbi\*\* Non-member

This paper presents a zero-voltage (PWM) inverter with active voltage clamping technique using only a single auxiliary switch. The structure is particularly simple and robust. It is very attractive for single-phase high power applications. Conduction and switching losses are reduced due to implementation of the simple active snubber circuit, that provides ZVS conditions for all switches, including the auxiliary one. Its main features are: Simple control strategy, robustness, lower weight and volume, lower harmonic distortion of the output current, and high efficiency. The principle of operation for steady-state conditions, mathematical analysis and experimental results from a laboratory prototype are presented.

**Keywords:** inverters, soft commutation, active voltage clamping

## 1. Introduction

Much effort has been exerted by researchers all over the world in an attempt to reduce harmonic distortion and audible noise in the output of inverters. Their objectives have been attained through an increase in inverter commutation frequencies and an appropriate modulation strategy. These measures have provided some benefits, such as a reduction in the weight and volume of the magnetic elements. However, they have caused some difficulties due to the high commutation losses in the switches and the appearance of electromagnetic interference. These factors occur mainly in inverter topologies that use the bridge inverter configuration. At the moment that the main switch turns on, the anti-parallel diode of the bridge complementary switch begins its reverse recovery phase. During this stage, the switches are submitted to a high current ramp rate ( $di/dt$ ) and a high peak reverse recovery current  $i_r$ . Both contribute significantly to increasing the commutation losses and produce electromagnetic interference.

To solve this problem, diverse works have been developed by the scientific community in recent years and can be divided into two groups: Passive Techniques and Active Techniques. The passive techniques are characterized by the absence of controlled switches in the switching aid circuit, while the active techniques are characterized by circuits that use controlled switches. Among the passive solutions, perhaps the most widely-known is the Undeland snubber<sup>(1)</sup>. This snubber provides good performance in the majority of

its applications, but is not capable of regenerating the energy lost in switching. To try to minimize these losses, some works have considered modifications to the Undeland snubber, aiming at the regeneration of the energy lost in switching<sup>(2)-(5)</sup>. The active solutions are already distinguished by the use of controlled switches to obtain soft commutation. The main ones are those that use conventional PWM modulation, without the need for special control circuits. One of these works is the ARDPI inverter<sup>(6)</sup>.

This topology matches the use of PWM modulation, with the soft switching attained through a relatively simple circuit.

On the other hand, it needs a high current circulating in the circuit, about 2.5 times the load current, raising the current stress in the switches. A topology very similar to the previous one is the ARPI (Auxiliary Resonant Pole Inverter)<sup>(7)</sup>. Theoretically, this circuit reduces the current levels necessary for switching, but it involves a complex control strategy. Another circuit found in literature is the ARCPI (Auxiliary Resonant Commutated Pole Inverter)<sup>(8)-(10)</sup>. This inverter has auxiliary switches that are only turned on when the load current is not sufficient to effect the soft switching, causing the control circuit to become very complex and dependent on the sensors.

Recently, some research was carried out using the reverse recovery energy from the diodes to obtain soft commutation in the switches of the pre-regulated rectifiers with high power factor (11) and (12).

In this paper, a ZVS PWM inverter with voltage clamping across the switches, using only a single auxiliary switch, is presented. The proposed structure uses the diode reverse recovery energy technique to obtain soft commutation in all switches, such as the rectifier shown in reference<sup>(12)</sup>.

## 2. Proposed Circuit

The proposed circuit is shown in Fig. 1. It presents a half-bridge inverter configuration, where  $Q_1$ ,  $Q_2$  are the main

\* UDESC - Santa Catarina State University  
 LEPO - Power Electronics Laboratory  
 P.O. BOX 631

CEP: 89223-100, Joinville, SC, Brasil

\*\* UFSC - Federal University of Santa Catarina  
 INEP - Power Electronics Institute  
 P.O. Box 5119  
 88040-970 Florianópolis, SC, BRAZIL

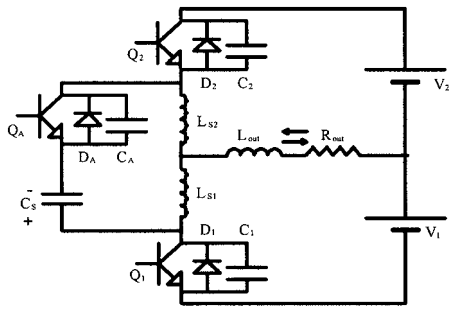


Fig. 1. Proposed circuit

switches.

The snubber circuit is formed by one switch  $Q_A$ , one small center-tapped inductor  $L_{S1}$ ,  $L_{S2}$  and one capacitor  $C_S$ .  $C_1$ ,  $C_2$  and  $C_A$  are the commutation capacitors. Capacitor  $C_S$  is responsible for the storage of the diode reverse recovery energy and for the clamping of the voltage across the switches. Inductors  $L_{S1}$  and  $L_{S2}$  are responsible for the control of the  $di/dt$  during the diode reverse recovery time.

### 3. Operation Stages (for the first half -cycle)

To simplify the analysis, the following assumptions are made: the circuit operates in steady state; the components are considered ideal; the voltage across capacitor  $C_S$  and the current through the output inductor  $L_{OUT}$  are considered constant during the switching period.

In the following paragraphs, the operation stage (Fig. 2) of

the first positive half-cycle of the output current is described in detail.

**First stage ( $t_0$ - $t_1$ ):** At  $t_0$ , switch  $Q_A$  is turned on. During this interval, the output current,  $i_{OUT}$ , is delivering energy to source  $V_2$  via diode  $D_2$ . At the same time, additional current  $i_{L_{S1}}$  circulates through the mesh, formed by  $L_{S2}$ ,  $Q_A$ ,  $C_S$ , and  $L_{S1}$ . At the end of this stage, the current through inductor  $L_{S1}$  reaches its maximum value,  $i_f$  (Fig. 3). This stage was chosen to initiate the converter analysis because it precedes the commutation process of the main switch,  $Q_1$ , during the half-cycle of operation. At time  $t_0$  current  $i_{L_{S1}}$  becomes positive and increases linearly. At the end of the first stage this current is responsible for the soft commutation process of  $Q_1$ .

**Second stage ( $t_1$ - $t_2$ ):** This stage starts when auxiliary switch  $Q_A$  is blocked. Current  $i_{L_{S1}}$  charges capacitor  $C_A$  from zero to  $E + vC_S$ , and discharges  $C_1$  from  $E + vC_S$  to zero.  $E = V_1 + V_2$ . During this stage the current,  $i_{Q_1}$ , circulates through the intrinsic capacitor of switch  $Q_1$ .

**Third stage ( $t_2$ - $t_3$ ):** At  $t_2$ , the voltage across  $C_1$  reaches zero and is clamped by diode  $D_1$ . At this moment, the voltage  $E = V_1 + V_2$  is applied across inductors  $L_{S1}$  and  $L_{S2}$  and currents  $i_{L_{S1}}$  and  $i_{L_{S2}}$  decrease linearly. In this stage, switch  $Q_1$  must be turned on.

**Fourth stage ( $t_3$ - $t_4$ ):** This stage begins when current  $i_{L_{S1}}$  inverts its direction and flows through switch  $Q_1$ . The turn-on occurs at zero voltage. Current  $i_{L_{S2}}$  continues to decrease until inverting its direction, which begins the reverse recovery phase of diode  $D_2$ . The auxiliary inductors limit the reverse recovery  $di/dt$ .

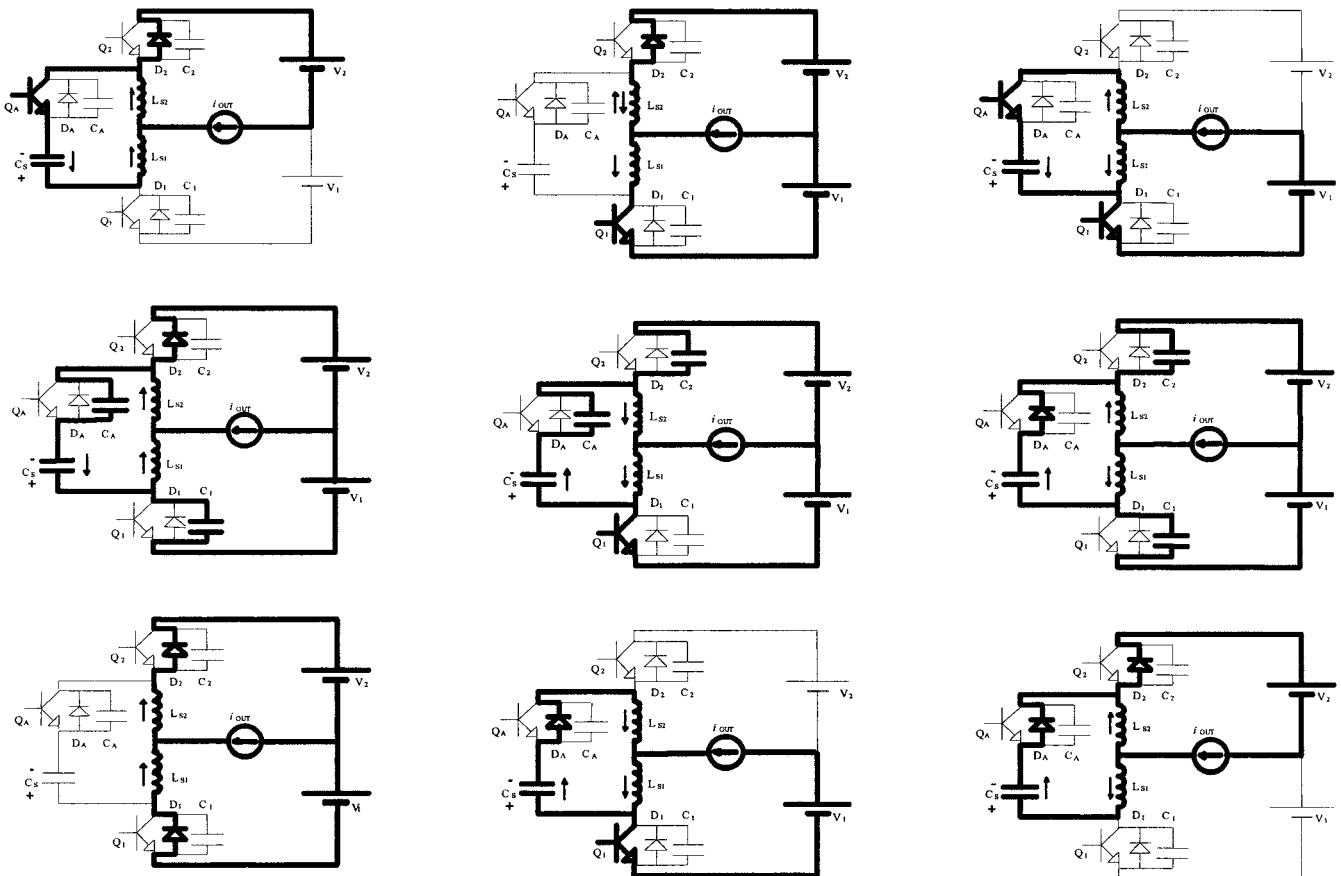


Fig. 2. Operation stages

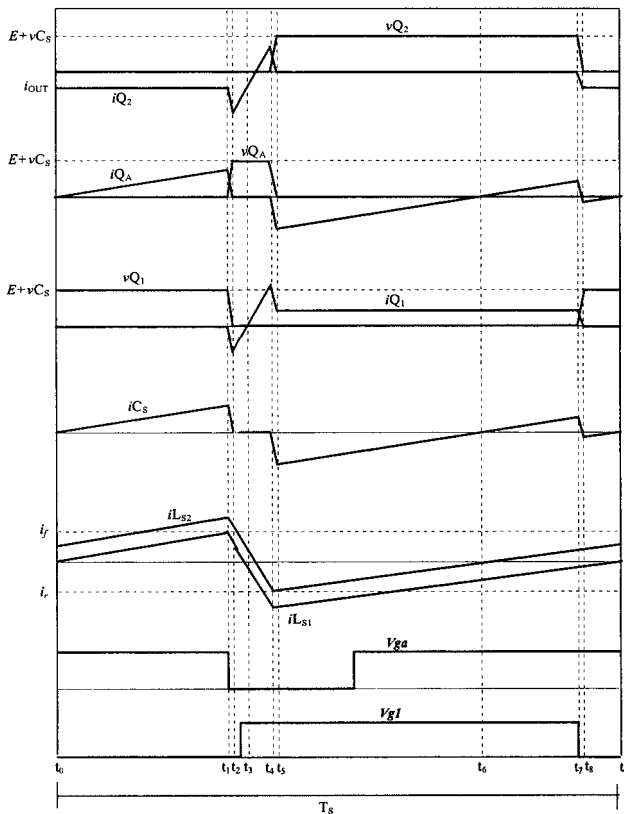


Fig. 3. Main waveforms

**Fifth stage (t4-t5):** This stage starts when diode D<sub>2</sub> stops conducting. Current  $i_{L_{S2}}$  begins charging capacitor C<sub>2</sub> from zero to  $E + v_{C_S}$  and discharging C<sub>A</sub> from  $E + v_{C_S}$  to zero.

**Sixth stage (t5-t6):** At t<sub>5</sub>, the voltage across capacitor C<sub>A</sub> reaches zero and is clamped by diode D<sub>A</sub>. Currents  $i_{L_{S1}}$  and  $i_{L_{S2}}$  increase, due to the application of voltage  $v_{C_S}$  across inductors L<sub>S1</sub> and L<sub>S2</sub>. In this stage, switch Q<sub>A</sub> must be turned on. It is important to emphasize that the drive time of switch Q<sub>A</sub> is estimated previously and kept constant during the entire inverter operation range. So, the use of current sensor is not necessary.

**Seventh stage (t6-t7):** This stage begins when current  $i_{L_{S2}}$  changes its direction and flows through switch Q<sub>A</sub>. Current  $i_{L_{S1}}$  continues to increase linearly.

**Eighth stage (t7-t8):** During this stage, switch Q<sub>1</sub> is blocked and the current through C<sub>S</sub> inverts its direction and flows through diode D<sub>A</sub>. Capacitor C<sub>1</sub> charges itself from zero to  $E + v_{C_S}$  and capacitor C<sub>2</sub> discharges from  $E + v_{C_S}$  to zero.

**Ninth stage (t8-t9):** This stage begins when the voltage across capacitor C<sub>2</sub> reaches zero and is clamped by diode D<sub>2</sub>. Current  $i_{L_{S1}}$  continues to increase. This stage finishes when  $i_{L_{S1}}$  inverts its direction and flows through auxiliary switch Q<sub>A</sub>, restarting the first operation stage.

For the second half-cycle, the operation stage is analogous and can be described in an identical way.

The main operation stages are shown in Fig. 2. Fig. 3 shows the main waveforms.

#### 4. Mathematical Analysis of the Commutation

To guarantee ZVS conditions, it is necessary, in the second

stage, that the stored energy in inductor  $L_S = L_{S1} + L_{S2}$  be sufficient to discharge capacitor C<sub>1</sub> and to charge C<sub>A</sub>. Thus, by inspection of Fig. 3 (Interval t<sub>1</sub>-t<sub>2</sub>), the following condition can be formulated:

$$L_S \cdot i_f^2 \geq (C_A + C_1)(E + v_{C_S})^2 \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

where  $i_f$  is the maximum current in L<sub>S1</sub> and  $v_{C_S}$  is maintained constant during the switching period. Current  $i_f$  must be sufficient to promote the charge and discharge of the commutation capacitors.

Assuming  $v_{C_S} \ll E$  we have:

$$i_{f \min} \geq E \sqrt{\frac{C_1 + C_A}{L_S}} \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

It is necessary to know the clamping voltage behavior for the design of the switches and capacitor C<sub>S</sub>.

In steady state conditions, the clamping capacitor average current must be zero. Thus:

$$i_{C_{Sav}} = \frac{1}{T_S} \left[ \int_{t_5}^{t_7} \left( \frac{v_{C_S}}{L_S} t - i_r \right) dt + \int_{t_7}^{T_S} \left( \frac{v_{C_S}}{L_S} t - i_{OUT} - i_r \right) dt \right] \dots\dots\dots (3)$$

where T<sub>S</sub> is the switching period.

In relation to the switching period, the commutation time is very short. Therefore, the following simplifications can be made:

$$t_5 \approx t_1 = 0 \dots\dots\dots (4)$$

$$t_7 - t_5 = D \cdot T_S \Rightarrow t_7 = D \cdot T_S \dots\dots\dots (5)$$

From (4) and (5), equation (3) can be re-written as follow:

$$i_{C_{Sav}} = \frac{1}{T_S} \left[ \int_0^{D \cdot T_S} \left( \frac{v_{C_S}}{L_S} t - i_r \right) dt + \int_{D \cdot T_S}^{T_S} \left( \frac{v_{C_S}}{L_S} t - i_{OUT} - i_r \right) dt \right] \dots\dots\dots (6)$$

Solving the integral equation, and considering:

$$i_{C_{Sav}} = 0 \dots\dots\dots (7)$$

We have:

$$v_{C_S} = \frac{2 \cdot L_S}{T_S} [i_r + i_{OUT}(1 - D)] \dots\dots\dots (8)$$

Considering that the load current is a sinusoidal function and is in phase with the output voltage, then:

$$i_{OUT}(\omega t) = \frac{E \cdot ma}{2 \cdot Z_{OUT}} \cdot \sin \omega t \dots\dots\dots (9)$$

where Z<sub>OUT</sub> is the load impedance.

The converter output voltage is controlled by the amplitude modulation factor (ma), which is obtained through the relation between the peak value of the sinusoidal reference signal and the peak value of the sawtooth waveform.

$$ma = \frac{v_{refpk}}{V_{SAVpk}} \dots\dots\dots (10)$$

The inverter output voltage for a switching period can be expressed by (11).

$$v_{OUT} = E \left( D - \frac{1}{2} \right) \dots\dots\dots(11)$$

From (11) we can obtain the duty cycle  $D$ , that is:

$$D = \frac{v_{OUT}}{E} + \frac{1}{2} \dots\dots\dots(12)$$

The inverter output voltage for an output period is given by (13).

$$v_{OUT}(\omega t) = \sqrt{2} \cdot v_{OUT_{rms}} \cdot \sin \omega t \dots\dots\dots(13)$$

where  $\omega$  is expressed by:

$$\omega = 2 \cdot \pi f \dots\dots\dots(14)$$

and  $f$  is the output frequency.

The maximum output voltage is given by:

$$v_{OUT_{pk}} = \frac{E \cdot ma}{2} \dots\dots\dots(15)$$

The RMS output voltage is obtained from (16).

$$v_{OUT_{rms}} = \frac{E \cdot ma}{2 \cdot \sqrt{2}} \dots\dots\dots(16)$$

Equation (17) shows the inverter duty cycle obtained from (12), (13) and (16).

$$D(\omega t) = \frac{ma}{2} \cdot \sin \omega t + \frac{1}{2} \dots\dots\dots(17)$$

Combining (9), (10) and (17), we obtain the expression of the snubber capacitor voltage,  $v_{CS}$ , given by (18).

$$v_{CS}(\omega t) = \frac{2 \cdot L_S}{T_S} \left[ i_r + \frac{E \cdot ma}{4 \cdot Z_{OUT}} \cdot \sin \omega t - \frac{E \cdot ma^2}{4 \cdot Z_{OUT}} \cdot \sin^2 \omega t \right] \dots\dots\dots(18)$$

where  $i_r$  is the peak reverse recovery current of the anti-parallel diode, which can be given by (19)<sup>(16)</sup>:

$$i_r = \sqrt{\frac{4}{3} \cdot Q_{rr} \cdot \frac{E}{L_S}} \dots\dots\dots(19)$$

$Q_{rr}$  represents the reverse recovery charge of the diode.

From the analysis of the current behavior in capacitor  $C_S$ , the expression of current  $i_f$  can be obtained:

$$i_f(\omega t) = \frac{v_{CS}(\omega t)}{L_S} \cdot T_S - i_{OUT}(\omega t) - i_r \dots\dots\dots(20)$$

Combining (18) with (20), and making some simplifications, we obtain the expression that represents the evolution of current  $i_f$ .

$$i_f(\omega t) = i_r - \frac{E \cdot ma^2}{2 \cdot Z_{OUT}} \cdot \sin^2 \omega t \dots\dots\dots(21)$$

To guarantee the ZVS condition in all load ranges, the minimum value of current  $i_f$  obtained from (21) must be greater than the value obtained from (2).

## 5. Design Example

### 5.1 Input Data

$E = 400 \text{ V}$	Bus Voltage
$V_{OUT} = 127 \text{ V}$	RMS Output Voltage
$P_{OUT} = 1000 \text{ W}$	Output Power
$i_{OUT} = 7.88 \text{ A}$	Output Current
$f_s = 20 \text{ KHz}$	Switching Frequency
$f = 60 \text{ Hz}$	Output Frequency
$L_{OUT} = 2.5 \text{ mH}$	Load Inductance
$R_{OUT} = 16 \Omega$	Load Resistance
$ma = 0.9$	Modulation Factor

### 5.2 Calculation of the Auxiliary Inductors

The auxiliary inductors are responsible for the  $di/dt$  limit during the turn-off of the main diodes. The  $di/dt$  is directly related to the peak reverse recovery current  $i_r$  of the anti-parallel diodes. A “snappy”  $di/dt$  produces a large amplitude transient voltage and contributes significantly to electromagnetic interference.

In the design procedure, a  $di/dt$  that is usually found in the diode datasheet was chosen. This is a simple way to obtain the diode’s fundamental parameter for the design of the inverter. In this case, the  $di/dt$  chosen for the example was  $40 \text{ A}/\mu\text{s}$ . We know that the current ramp rate is determined by the external circuit, thus:

$$L_S = \frac{E}{di/dt} = \frac{400 \text{ V}}{40 \text{ A}/\mu\text{s}} = 10 \mu\text{H} \dots\dots\dots(22)$$

The auxiliary inductors are given by:

$$L_{S1} = L_{S2} = \frac{L_S}{2} = 5 \mu\text{H} \dots\dots\dots(23)$$

**5.3 Load Impedance** The load impedance is obtained from (24)

$$Z_{OUT} = \sqrt{16\Omega^2 + (2 \cdot \pi \cdot 60 \text{ Hz} \cdot 2.5 \text{ mH})^2} \cong 16 \Omega \dots\dots\dots(24)$$

### 5.4 Diode Choice

For satisfactory performance of the inverter, it is important to choose a slow diode. Therefore, we opted to use the body diode of MOSFET IRFP460, which has the following characteristics:

$V_{dss} = 500 \text{ V}$	Maximum Reverse Voltage
$i_S = 20 \text{ A}$	Diode Average Current
$Q_{rr} = 5.7 \mu\text{C}$	Reverse Recovery Charge

### 5.5 Switching Period

$$T_S = \frac{1}{f_s} = \frac{1}{20 \text{ kHz}} = 50 \mu\text{s} \dots\dots\dots(25)$$

**5.6 Reverse Recovery Current** The reverse recovery current is given by (19).

$$i_r = \sqrt{\frac{4}{3} \cdot 5.7 \mu\text{C} \cdot \frac{400 \text{ V}}{10 \mu\text{H}}} = 17.4 \text{ A} \dots\dots\dots(26)$$

**5.7 Capacitor Clamping Voltage Behavior** Using (18), the curves described in Fig. 4 are obtained.

For  $Z_{out} = 16 \Omega$  and  $ma = 0.9$ , the maximum clamping voltage is  $8 \text{ V}$ .

We can observe that the voltage increment across the switches is smaller than in a conventional inverter.

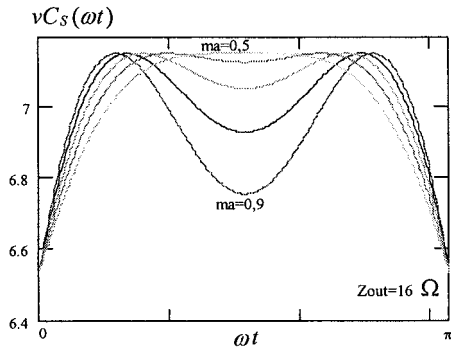


Fig. 4. Capacitor clamping voltage behavior

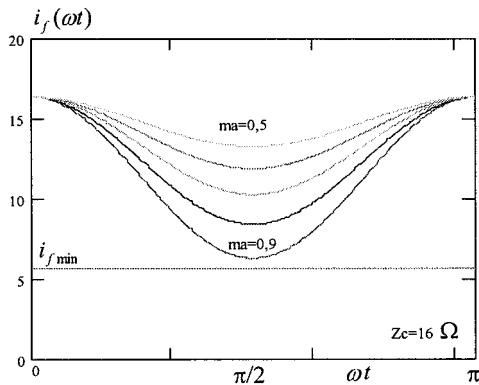


Fig. 5. Current if behavior

**5.8 Behavior of Current  $i_f$**  The behavior of current  $i_f$ , obtained from (21) and (2), can be seen in Fig. 5.

It can be seen that current  $i_f$  has a minimum point that is located at  $\pi/2$ , and the intensity of the current diminishes with the increase of the load. To guarantee a ZVS condition in all load ranges, the minimum value of current  $i_f$ , obtained from (21), must be greater than the value of the traced straight line from (2).

## 6. Experimental Results

An inverter prototype rated 1000 W, operating with PWM commutation, was built to evaluate the proposed circuit. The main components are given below:

### 6.1 Prototype Specifications

- $Q_1, Q_2, Q_A$  (IGBT IRG4PC50 W)
- $D_1, D_2, D_A$  (MOSFET Body Diode IRFP460)
- $C_1, C_2, C_A$  (Component's Intrinsic Capacitance = 8 nF)
- $L_{S1}, L_{S2}$  (5  $\mu$ H each; Ferrite Core)
- $C_S$  (220  $\mu$ F/35 V; Electrolytic Capacitor)
- $L_{OUT}$  (2.5 mH, Output Inductor)
- $R_{out}$  (16  $\Omega$ ; Output Resistor)

**6.2 Experimental Waveforms** In the figures presented below, we can observe the experimental waveforms obtained from the laboratory prototype.

Figs. 6, 7 and 8 show the voltage and current in the switches. We can observe that for all the switches, including the auxiliary one, the commutation occurs under ZVS conditions, confirming the theoretical analysis.

In Fig. 9, the current in the commutation auxiliary inductors for a switching period can be observed. A proportionality of values between the currents in both inductors can

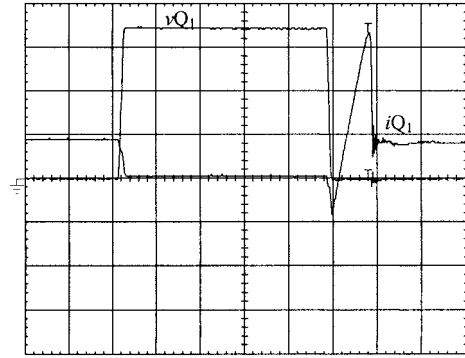


Fig. 6. Voltage and current in  $Q_1, D_1, C_1$ . (100 V/div, 5 A/div, 1 us/div)

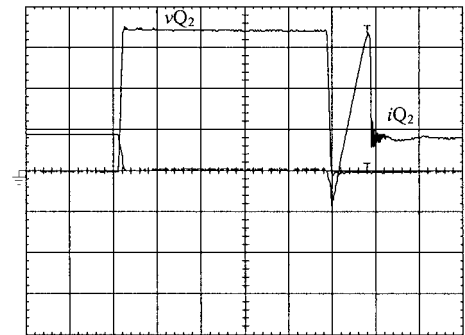


Fig. 7. Voltage and current in  $Q_2, D_2, C_2$ . (100 V/div, 5 A/div, 1 us/div)

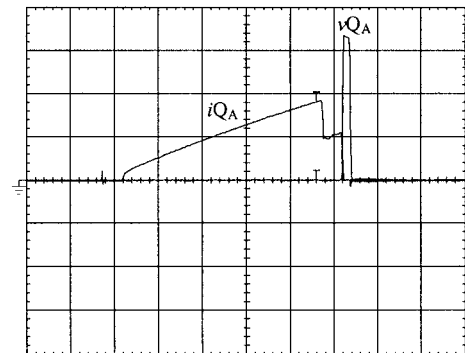


Fig. 8. Voltage and current in  $Q_A, C_A$ . (100 V/div, 5 A/div, 1 us/div)

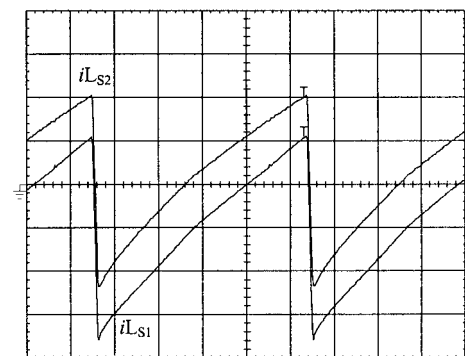


Fig. 9. Current through  $L_{S1}$  and  $L_{S2}$ . (5 A/div, 10 us/div)

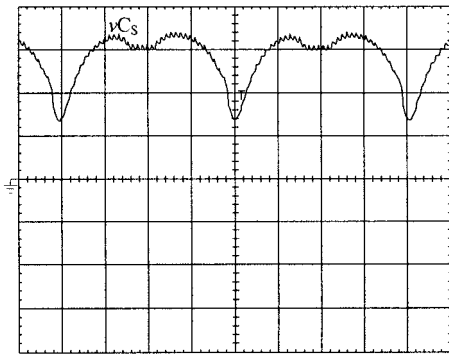


Fig. 10. Voltage in CS. (2 V/div, 2 ms/div)

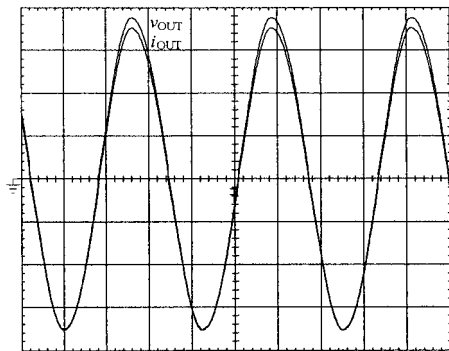


Fig. 11. Output voltage and current. (50 V/div, 5 A/div, 5 ms/div)

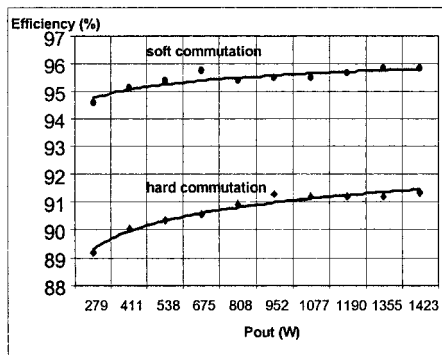


Fig. 12. Efficiency versus the output power

be observed. The difference between them is the load current. The voltage across clamping capacitor  $C_S$  is shown in Fig. 10. We can note a very low voltage across  $C_S$ , which represents a minimal voltage stress across the devices.

The output voltage and current are presented in Fig. 11. Fig. 12 shows the efficiency as a function of the load range for both hard and soft commutation. The difference between soft and hard commutation appear because with the technique proposed the commutation losses practically disappear in the soft commutation condition. In the hard commutation we have the commutation and conduction losses acting together. The converter efficiency with soft commutation was improved by approximately 5% for all load ranges.

## 7. Conclusions

A ZVS PWM inverter with voltage clamping using a single auxiliary switch has been developed. The operation stages for a steady-state condition, mathematical analysis, main

waveforms and experimental results were presented. The experimental results show low voltage across the clamping capacitor. Switching losses are reduced due to the implementation of a simple active snubber circuit, which provides ZVS conditions for all the switches, including the auxiliary one. The reduced number of components and the simplicity of the structure increase its efficiency and reliability and make it suitable for practical applications. The proposed circuit presents soft commutation for all load ranges, confirming the theoretical studies.

This topology presents certain advantages when compared to the conventional soft commutation inverters studied in literature, which are:

- Soft commutation in all load ranges;
- Simple structure with a low number of components;
- Use of a classical PWM modulation;
- Auxiliary switch works with a constant duty cycle in all operation stages;
- Use of slow and low-cost rectifier diodes;
- Low clamping voltage across the capacitor;
- Low current stress through the main switches;
- Simple design procedure with few restrictions;
- High efficiency.

With these characteristics, the authors believe that the proposed inverter circuit can be very useful for several industrial applications, such as: AC drive systems, power factor correction, UPS, active filters, induction heating etc.

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**Marcello Mezaroba** (Non-member) was born in Videira, SC, Brazil, on November 20, 1972. He received the B.S., M.S. and the Ph.D. degrees in electrical engineering from the Federal University of Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, SC, Brazil, in 1996, 1998 and 2001, respectively. He is presently Titular Professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering at State University of Santa Catarina, Brazil.



**Denizar Cruz Martins** (Non-member) was born in Sao Paulo, SP, Brazil, on April 24, 1955. He received the B.S. and M.S. degrees in electrical engineering from the Federal University of Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, SC, Brazil, in 1978 and 1981, respectively, and the Ph.D. degree in electrical engineering from the Polytechnic National Institute of Toulouse, Toulouse, France, in 1986. He is presently Titular Professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering at Federal University of Santa Catarina, Brazil.



**Ivo Barbi** (Non-member) was born in Gaspar, Santa Catarina, Brazil, in 1949. He received the B.S. and M.S. degrees in electrical engineering from the Federal University of Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, Brazil, in 1973 and 1976, respectively, and the Dr.Ing. degree from the Polytechnic National Institute of Toulouse, Toulouse, France, in 1979. He founded the Brazilian Power Electronics Society, the Power Electronics Institute of the Federal University of Santa Catarina, and created the Brazilian Power Electronics Conference. Currently, he is Professor of the Power Electronics Institute, Federal University of Santa Catarina.

