

ETSBOA Jazz Clinic

Suggestions for Learning to Improvise on Rhythm Changes – Dr. Greene, Fall 2017

BEFORE trying an improvisation on ANY tune, **LISTEN** to several representative recordings. **Becoming a voracious listener will help you sound more like an “informed” improviser and keep you motivated and fired up to improvise. Jazz does not exist in a museum or a vacuum, it is a living, breathing thing! Hopefully these recordings will inspire you to dig deeper and expand your ears, always a worthwhile pursuit.**

Find recordings of and listen to the following tunes that use the “I Got Rhythm” chord progression:

1. I Got Rhythm
2. Cottontail
3. Rhythm-a-Ning
4. Moose the Mooch
5. Dexterity
6. Anthropology
7. Oleo
8. The Eternal Triangle
9. Lester Leaps In
10. Seven-Come-Eleven

“Rhythm Changes” is a chord progression used in George Gershwin’s “I Got Rhythm.” Like many show tunes, Rhythm Changes became a popular vehicle for improvisation among jazz players in the swing and bebop era. Below is a common rhythm changes progression with a jumping off point for improvisation using the Blues Scale (1,b3,4,#4,5,b7,7,1).

“Rhythm Changes” in Concert B-Flat Standard Chord Progression:

The form is AABA, with each section lasting 8 measures. Backslashes represent beats, chord symbols represent, Where X represents the root/name of the chord: **XMaj7**(1,3,5,7); **X7** (1,3,5,b7); **X-7** (1,b3,5,b7)

So, for *concert pitch* instruments, the chords would be:

The first A Section (Experiment with improvisation on the Bb Blues Scale(Bb, Db,Eb,E, F, Ab, A, Bb):

BbMaj7 G7 | C-7 F7 | D-7 G7 | C-7 F7 |
/ / / / / / / / / / / / / / / /

F-7 Bb7 | EbMaj7 Ab7 | D-7 G7 | C-7 F7 |
/ / / / / / / / / / / / / / / /

The Second A Section(Bb Blues Scale):

BbMaj7 G7 | C-7 F7 | D-7 G7 | C-7 F7 |
/ / / / / / / / / / / / / / / /

F-7 Bb7 | EbMaj7 Ab7 | D-7 G7 | BbMaj7 |
/ / / / / / / / / / / / / / / /
(OVER)

The B Section(Experiment with **D Blues Scale (D,F,G,G#,A,C,C#,D)** for 2 bars, **G Blues Scale (G,Bb,C,C#,D,F,F#,G)** for 2 bars, **C Blues Scale (C,Eb,F,F#,G,Bb,B,C)** for 2 bars, **F Blues Scale (F,Ab,Bb,B,C,Eb,E,F)** for 2 bars):

D7 | | G7 | | C7 | | F7 | | |
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The Final A Section(Bb Blues Scale):

BbMaj7 G7 | C-7 F7 | D-7 G7 | C-7 F7 |
 / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / /

F-7 Bb7 | EbMaj7 Ab7 | (D-7 G7 | C-7 F7)* |
 / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / /

*The chords in parentheses are called a “turnaround,” used to cycle back to the I chord if the form is to be repeated. On the final time through the form, a dominant to tonic cadence is placed at the end.

If I may be of assistance, please let me know! Call, text, email anytime.

All the best,

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