

Building a Solo

Idea

Every good solo tells a story. It should have a beginning, build interest toward a climax, and then wind its way back down to the conclusion. The following five-chorus blues solo demonstrates these points. The solo begins in a relaxed manner in the low to middle range of the sax. Starting at an easy volume and with short phrases gives you plenty room to build. Each chorus gets a little busier and more harmonically complex while the notes steadily climb up the horn, reaching a climax in the first two measures of the last chorus.

The solo begins mainly with chord tones, establishing a major tonality. As it progresses, more of the $\flat 3$ and $\flat 5$ blues notes come into play, and the phrases lengthen, giving the listener the sense of digging in. After the solo climaxes, it winds back down using some inventive chord substitutions.

It's important before you begin your solo to have in mind how many choruses you're going to take, so you can pace yourself accordingly. Always try for a strong opening statement. This will get you on solid footing and give you something to build on.



TRACK 18

$\text{♩} = 126$

A A7 D9 A13

D A7 F \sharp 7

Bm7 E7 A7 F \sharp 7 Bm7 E7

B A7 D7 A7

D7 A7 F \sharp 7

Bm7 E7 A7 F \sharp 7 Bm7 E7

Rhythm Changes

Idea #

Up until the forties, the jazz repertoire was based on popular songs and blues numbers. During the bebop era, jazz musicians began creating new melodies and using chord substitutions within the framework of existing standard tunes. Countless songs were based on George and Ira Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm," including "Moose the Mooche" (Charlie Parker), "Lester Leaps In" (Lester Young), "Oleo" (Sonny Rollins), "Rhythm-a-ning" (Thelonious Monk), and the Flintstones' TV theme. This is an important chord progression to know, because of the large number of tunes based on it.

"I Got Rhythm" is a thirty-two-measure AABA composition featuring a tonic-based progression for the first sixteen measures. For the bridge, the song moves up a major third and, using the cycle of fourths, works its way back to the tonic.

The first two choruses of the solo below are based on the standard "rhythm changes." The next two choruses use a variety of chord substitutions to bring a more modern approach. After learning the solo, try playing the last two choruses over the rhythm section playing the first two choruses. This allows you to play "outside" by superimposing one set of chords over another.



TRACK 24

A C C⁺7 Dm7 G7 Em7 A7 Dm7 G7

Gm7 C7 F B^b7 Em7 A7 Dm7 G7

C C⁺7 Dm7 G7 Em7 A7 Dm7 G7

Gm7 C7 F B^b7 Em7 A7 Dm7 G7 C

E7 A7

D7 G7