**I’ve Got Rhythm**

We tend to do all the same things to *rhythm* tunes that we do to a blues—same blues licks (idioms), and same blues scales. It's an eight-measure blues in an AABA form. There are many other examples of eight-bar blues in thirty-two-measure form with common tonal bridges, such as *You Don't Know What Love Is*, *Angel Eyes*, and *Confirmation*. While we should make it our business to be able to *blue* any progression, some, like those mentioned above, are more blues-like than others, often containing blue melody notes and blues chords (chords containing blue notes). It's not so much a technical approach as an attitude.

*I’ve Got Rhythm* and its contrafacts are forms of the blues with a *rhythm* (secondary dominants moving directly through the circle of fourths) bridge. As jazz improvisers, we tend to do the same things to both. As with the other blues forms, it has endured to this day, since many original lines are still written on the tune’s familiar chord progressions. In addition to blues figures of speech, however, it is effective also to develop the original song in your improvisation.

The A section is comprised of a four-measure antecedent (question) phrase and a four-measure consequent (answer) phrase. The latter is a guide tone line (characteristically built on the thirds and sevenths of the chords) which typically descends in step-wise fashion. Use this also as a basis for development—and this particular approach takes you to the center of the chord changes without having to think chords.

*Rhythm* chord progressions are clichés of tonal harmony. While there are many reharmonization schemes for this progression, the first four measures of the A sections are built on the common I, vi, ii, V root progression, and then it is repeated in each A section. The consequent phrase of the A sections is also a harmonic cliché, since it begins with a secondary cadence to the IV chord; then goes to IV, to IVm, back to I vi ii V. The bridge is a succession of secondary dominants two measures each in length (again, there are many elaborations on this, such as employing ii Vs or ii SubVs, etc.): V7/vi; V7/ii; V7/V; V7. It is the strongest of root progressions in tonal music (which is one reason for its popularity among practitioners), before
smoothly returning to the I chord at the beginning of the concluding A section.

The most basic line to hear in the back of your mind (as a sort of cantus firmus) is a half-note line:

A Sections:

||: do la | re sol | do la | re sol | do te | la le | sol ti | do do :||

B (Bridge) Section (in whole notes):

|| mi | mi | me | me | re re | ra ra ||

Another good cantus firmus can be drawn from reducing the basic original melody of *I’ve Got Rhythm*, which will work on any rhythm tune (in half notes):

A Sections (half notes):

|| sol la | do re | re do | la sol | sol la | do fa | me re | do do ||

B Section:

|| mi mi | mi mi | mi fi | fi fi | re re | re re | mi sol | sol sol ||

Yet another suggestion for use in improvisation: Since the melody of the A section is comprised of the following hexachord (six-note pitch collection)—do re me fa sol la do, four of which notes are pentatonic—you could use that as a basis for improvisation as well. And since *fa* only appears as an upper neighbor, you could eliminate that and just play the pentatonic scale as a melody pc.