The backdoor dominant chord is a variation of a plagal IV - iv - I resolution. In the second phrase of progression no. 38, the IV chord (B♭) is followed by the iv (B♭m7) then the backdoor dominant E♭7 resolves to the I chord, F. To avoid an anticlimactic return to the home tonic chord too soon, the iii7 chord, Am7 can replace the I chord as shown in the second line.

Cannonball Adderley recorded a tune with this progression and replaced the iii chord with a major chord on the ♭III. In another context anyone would have expected the A♭maj7 to follow B♭m7 and E♭7, but in the context of F major, the characteristic resolution of E♭7 would have been to the F or Am7. The use of the ♭III chord creates a situation where the E♭7 to A♭maj7 is a surprise deceptive cadence! The A♭maj7 chord is not far removed from the parallel key of F minor, and in this case, the melody note C fits all of the possible chords m.7: F, Am7 and A♭maj7.

Progression no. 38

F / / /	E7 / / /	F / / /	Cm7 / F7 /
1			
Fmaj7 / / /	Bm7 / E7 /	Fmaj7 / / /	Cm7 / F7 /
B♭maj7 / / /	B♭m7 / E♭7 /	F	Gm7 / C7 /
5			
B♭maj7 / / /	B♭m7 / E♭7 /	Am7 / Dm7 /	Gm7 / C7 /
		(A♭maj7 / / /)	

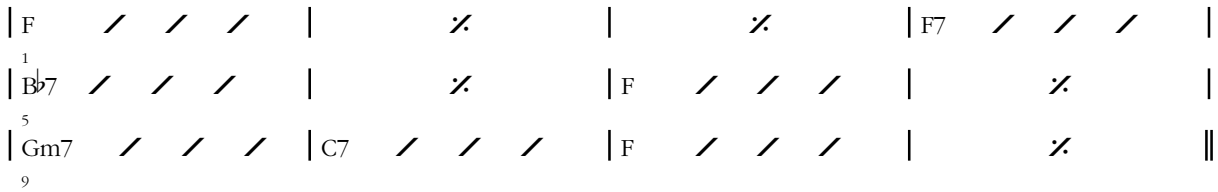
Two progressions are played more often than any others in jazz performances: the twelve measure blues and "Rhythm Changes." The forms for these two tunes allow for much freedom of expression with tempo and style. They both lend themselves to numerous harmonic possibilities. The variety of progressions can fit any number of moods, tempos and rhythmic settings. Blues may occur in all major and minor keys and Rhythm Changes may occur in any major key. The most prevalent keys for both are B♭ and F major. Here are the some basic harmonic progressions for blues in F major and minor and for Rhythm Changes in B♭ major with common substitutions. These progressions should be transposed and studied for other commonly performed keys.

HARMONIC SUBSTITUTIONS for BLUES in F Major

Jazz musicians rarely use the three chord blues common to rock 'n' roll or country. A rock 'n' roll or country version of the basic blues would have a V chord in m.9 followed by a IV chord in m.10. In most jazz performances, the ii7 - V7 progression is used. The barest jazz version of the blues progression is shown below. The most important structural points are:

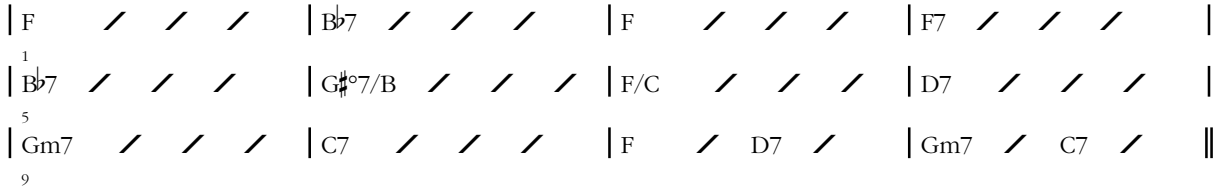
- Usually begins on some chord built on tonic degree. It may be a modal chord and not necessarily a I chord in the major/minor traditional sense
- m.5 almost always includes a chord built on the fourth scale degree
- m.9-10 is a dominant area with either a V - IV (country, rock, simple jazz versions), ii7 - V7, or V7/V - V7 or other variations
- MM.11-12 may have some kind of a turnaround to return to I at the top of the form. The tonic chord will not necessarily be a part of that turnaround as iii7 and other chords may substitute for I.

BARE MINIMUM JAZZ BLUES



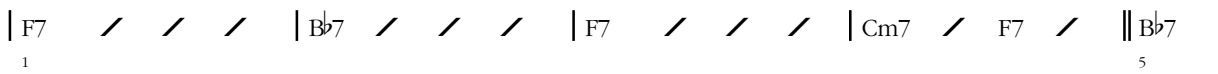
The progression below is a more common version for improvisation in jazz performance. There is typically a departure in m.2 to some chord built on the fourth degree. A secondary V7/IV may occur in m.4 setting up the chord in m.5. A G♯°7 in first inversion moves the bass note from B♭ to B♮ and then to the C with the F chord in inversion in m.7. The diminished chord in m.6 is often labeled a B°7. In m.8, a secondary dominant chord D7 (V7/ii) prepares the coming ii7 chord. The most common turnaround occurs in the last two measures: I - V7/ii - ii7 - V7 returning to the top of the form.

BASIC JAZZ BLUES with COMMON HARMONIC ADDITIONS

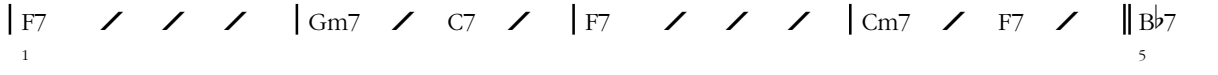


Measures 1-4

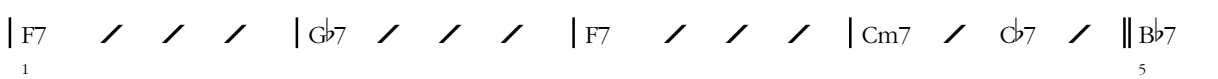
A common addition is the ii7/IV - V7/IV in m.4:



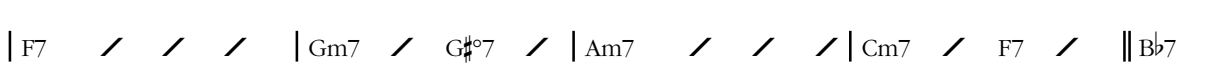
A ii7 - V7 in m.2 provides another variation of the slight departure from the I chord:



Sometimes the tritone substitute dominant can occur in m.2. A tritone substitute dominant may also occur in m.4:



Here is a progression that Charlie Parker suggested in a example shown earlier. The Gm7 - G♯°7 - Am7 elaborates the tonic F area.



Sometimes a logical progression can be created by backing up from the destination. The destination of all harmonic activity in the first four measures points to a chord built on the fourth degree occurring in m.5. The ii7/IV - V7/IV (Cm7 - F7) in m.4 prepare the B♭ in m.5. The Cm7 is tonicized by its dominant G7, and the G7 can be preceded by the iii7 chord, Dm7 in m.3. The Dm7 chord is set up by the iiø7/vi -

V7/vi, Eø7 - A7 in m.2. The strong bass line of descending fifths begins the progression with the I - IV in m.1. As with all harmonic possibilities, consider the desired results and context. These changes are considered "pretty" chords and would not be the best choice if trying to create "down 'n' dirty" blues.

| F / (B♭maj7) / | Eø7 / A7 / | Dm7 / G7 / | Cm7 / F7 / ‖ B♭7
1 5

The concept of backing up from a destination is taken to the extreme in this example. Each dominant chord points down a fifth to the next and ultimately resolves to the expected B♭ chord in m.5. This set of changes creates a great deal of melodic and harmonic tension, and may not be a good choice for a first or second chorus. After a few choruses, this idea can wake up the entire band. The first dominant chord is a half-step above the expected F7.

| F♯7 / B7 / | E7 / A7 / | D7 / G7 / | C7 / F7 / ‖ B♭7
1 5

Measures 5-8

This common version of the second phrase suggests an ascending bass line: B♭ - B♮ - C - D then resolves down a fifth to the ii7 chord. Why not call the G♯°7/B a B°7? The G♯°7 is the vii°7 of Am, a key that is closely related to the key of F. The B°7 is the vii°7 of C minor, a much more remote key to the key of F. Labeling the chord as G♯°7/B makes the distinction. (It would be possible to use B°7 in this context or other colorations, but vii°7/iii is the path of least resistance.)

| B♭7 / / / | G♯°7/B / / / | F7/C / / / | D7 / / / ‖ Gm7
5 9

It is possible to precede the V7/ii with the iiø7/ii in m.8:

| B♭7 / / / | G♯°7/B / / / | F7/C / / / | Aø7 / D7 / ‖ Gm7
5 9

The iiø7/ii, Aø7, can occur in m.7 before the V7/ii, D7 in m.8. It might be hard to distinguish the Aø7 from an F9 chord as they share four pitches, and if the bass player chooses to play the F chord in first inversion, it will sound like an Aø7.

| B♭7 / / / | 𝄎 | Aø7 / / / | D7 / / / ‖ Gm7
5 9

The secondary dominant A7, the V7/vi, can be used to set up the D chord. The A7 points to D minor, which becomes D7 in m.8. The A7 chord in first inversion continues the ascending step progression as shown before by adding the chromatic C♯. The A7 chord is more common in slower gospel style blues.

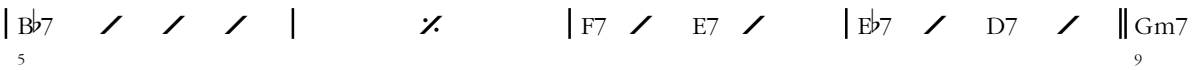
| B♭7 / / / | G♯°7/B / / / | F/C / A7/C♯ / | D7 / / / ‖ Gm7
5 9

A more bebop style setting may include a series of chromatic ii7 - V7 chords often inserted in mm.6-8.

| B♭ / / / | B♭m7 / E♭7 / | Am7 / D7 / | A♭m7 / D♭7 / ‖ Gm7
5 9

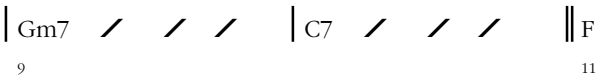
A series of descending dominant chords may be used in mm.7-8. The D7 is the V7/ii. The E♭7 is a tritone substitute for the A7, the V7 of D. The E7 points to the A chord which could have been used in place of the E♭7. This cycle is similar to the cycle that began on F♯7 shown for the first four measures.

Instead of the dominants progressing in downward fifths, they progress to their destination in downward half steps by using tritone substitutions.

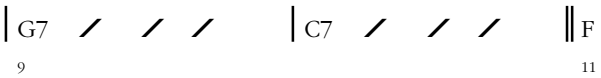


Measures 9-10

The most typical progression in mm.9-10 is the ii7 - V7:



A V7/V may replace the ii7 chord:



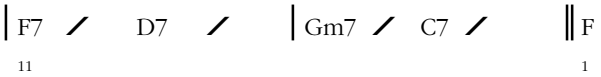
Chords may be borrowed from the parallel minor key of F minor. A iiø7/i and V7/I suggest the key of four flats:

A D♭7 chord is the tritone substitute for the G7, the V7/V:

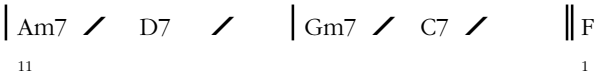
A G♭7, the tritone substitute dominant can replace the C7:

Measures 11-12: The Turnaround back to the top

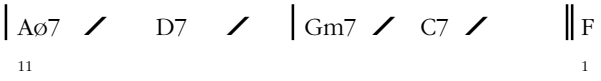
The most common turnaround is I - V7/ii – ii7 – V7:



The I chord may be avoided in m.11 by using the iii7:



The iiø7/ii can precede the V7/ii and replace the I or iii7 chord. The Aø7 chord is very similar to the F9 chord and is indistinguishable from an F7 chord in first inversion.



An A7 can be used to point to the D7. The A♭7 and G♭7 chords are tritone substitutes for the D7 and C7. This creates a descending chromatic line in the bass.

A7 / A♭7 /	Gm7 / G♭7 /	F
11		1

E♭7 and D♭7 are tritone substitutes for the A7 and G7. This creates another descending chromatic line in the bass.

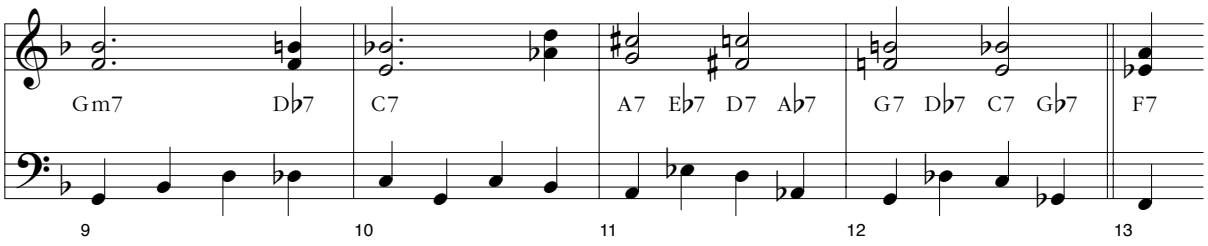
E♭7 / D7 /	D♭7 / C7 /	F
11		1

Using the tritone substitutes for D7, G7 and C7 creates a cycle of tritone substitute dominants and a bass line of descending fifths that finally resolves down a half step to the F.

F7 / A♭7 /	D♭7 / G♭7 /	F
11		1

Measures 9-12 Tritone Substitution Implications from bass lines

The tritone substitutions may be implied by the nature of a walking bass line. The D7, G7, C7 and F7 chords are preceded by chromatic upper neighbor tones, which suggest the tritone substitutions as shown.



"WEST COAST" or "PRETTY" BLUES

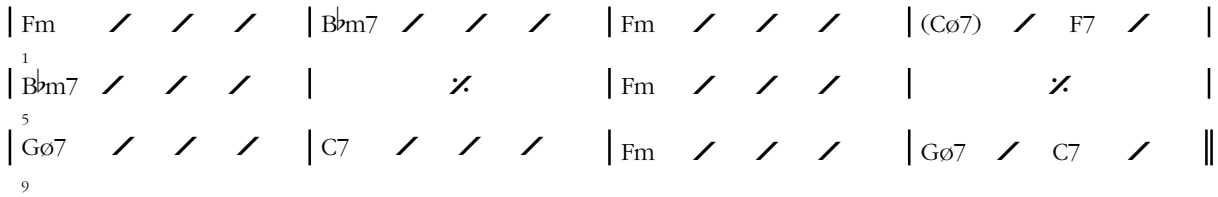
The blues progression below is sometimes called the "pretty" or "West Coast" blues. This progression may occur for the whole form if agreed upon ahead of time. It can sometimes be used as the last chorus or two of a longer solo ending with a more elaborate chord progression. The I chord moves down a fifth to the IV chord. The IV chord moves down a diatonic fifth to the Eø7, the viiø7 of F, but functioning as the iiø7/vi moving to the V7/vi. The Dm7 is the vi7 and naturally moves to the V7/v. The Cm7 - F7, ii/IV - V7/IV set up the B♭ m.5. The second phrase is a series of descending chromatic ii7 - V7 progressions finally reaching the ii7 - V7 in the key of F in m.9. The last four measures are usually played without too much alteration from the common blues progression.

F / (B♭maj7) /	Eø7 / A7 /	Dm7 / G7 /	Cm7 / F7 /
1			
B♭ / / /	B♭m7 / E♭7 /	Am7 / D7 /	A♭m7 / D♭7 /
5			
Gm7 / / /	C7 / / /	F7 / D7 /	Gm7 / C7 /
9			

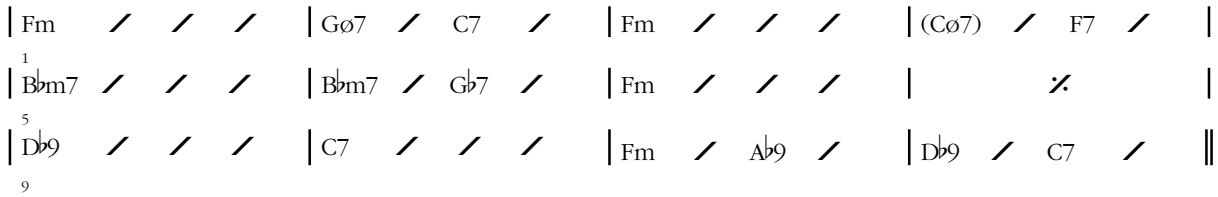
HARMONIC SUBSTITUTIONS for BLUES in F Minor

There are a number of harmonic variations for minor blues. Minor blues share similar characteristics with major blues including the chord in m.5 being built on the fourth degree and dominant area in mm.9-10. The chords are usually drawn from diatonic chords of minor keys.

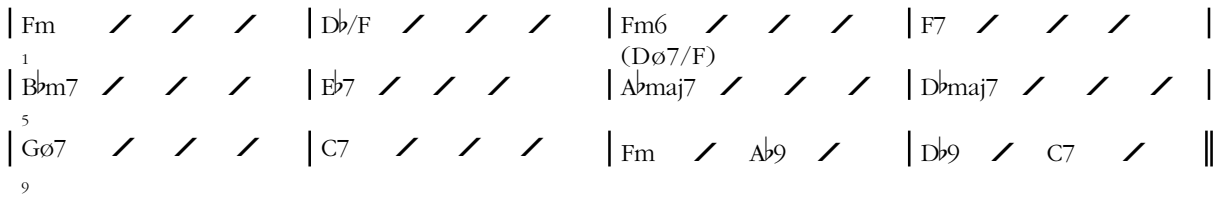
Common Minor Blues Progression including a secondary iiø7/iv - V7/iv in m.4:



This minor blues progression includes iiø7 - V7 departure in m.2 instead of the iv7 chord. The G♭7 in m.6 is a tritone substitute dominant preparing the return of the Fm chord in m.7. D♭7 is a tritone substitute dominant functioning in the traditional sense, as an augmented sixth chord pointing to the V7. The V7 sets up the return of the Fm chord in m.11. The turnaround includes the tritone substitute dominants A♭7 and D♭7.

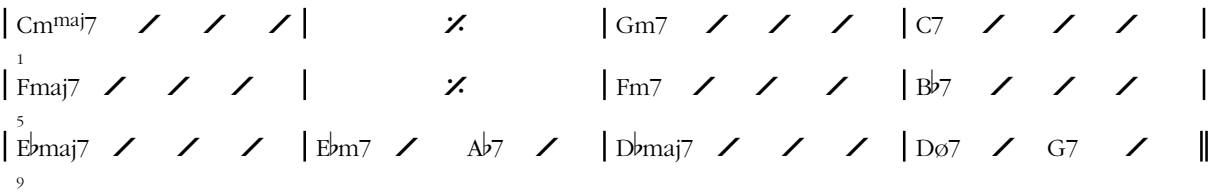


This minor blues progression remains on the tonic pitch for the first few measures and suggests an inner chromatic voice: C – D♭ – D – E♭. The chord in m.2 sounds like a VI chord in first inversion, but is often notated as Fm♯5. Obviously, a minor chord by definition has a perfect and not an augmented fifth, but the Fm♯5 shorthand in this context may help suggest the chromatic moving voice. The F7 in m.4 prepares the iv7 chord in m.5. The iv7 is also the ii7 chord in the relative A♭ major (♭III) and continues to cycle in the key of A♭, through the V7/♭III - I/♭III - IV/♭III. The Gø7, even though shared by the two keys of F minor and A♭ major signals the return to F minor.

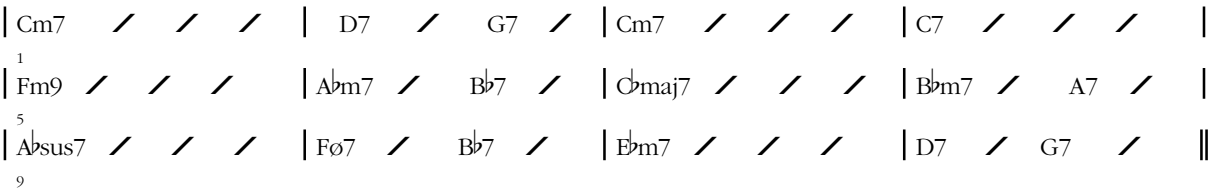


The boundaries of the blues have been stretched very far as evidenced by these next two examples. These harmonic progressions are for specific tunes and not standard blues substitutions.

This first progression could be considered a blues progression that wanders to remote keys and back in the short twelve measure form. Some may argue this is not a blues progression, but it is a twelve measure form that moves to a chord built on the fourth degree in m.5. In performances of this piece, improvisers use only this progression, never inserting traditional blues progressions.



The first five measures of the following blues progression behave as a typical blues, establishing the tonic key area first and then moving towards the iv7 chord in m.5. Things change quickly from m.6. The A♭m7 - B♭7 - C♭maj7 are the iv7 - V7 - and VImaj7 chords from the remote key of E♭m. The B♭m7 and A7 act as a ii7 and tritone substitute V7 to the key of A♭, but the A♭ chord is a suspended dominant in the key of D♭. Order seems restored with the Fø7 - B♭7, the iiø7 - V7 to E♭ minor, but wait, isn't this blues is in C minor? The last measure brings it back around to the top and the tonic key with the V7/V - V7. In a performance of the piece from which this progression was extracted, the improvisers use these changes for the melody and only the last few choruses of each improvisation. Other improvised choruses use one of the standard minor blues progressions.



HARMONIC SUBSTITUTIONS for RHYTHM CHANGES

The form for Rhythm changes is AABA. There are numerous possibilities for harmonic variations. A few of the more common variations and substitutions are examined below, phrase by phrase.

A SECTION

Measures 1-4

This basic pattern for the first four measures uses the diatonic vi7 chord Gm7 in m.1, and substitutes the secondary V7/ii chord G7 in m.3. All the chords cycle back to the tonic chord B♭.