

## Web Feature 23.1

### Blues progression variations in early recordings of King Oliver and Louis Armstrong

In chapter 23 we see that while there is a “basic” template to the blues progression, variants are extremely common. Even in the earliest jazz and blues recordings, a number of other variations of the progression can be found. For example, compare the progressions of three different blues songs recorded by King Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band (which featured a young Louis Armstrong on cornet) in 1923.

“Canal Street Blues” uses the following progression, which—aside from one secondary dominant chord—matches the “basic” progression:

(measure)	1	2	3	4
	I	—	—	V <sup>7</sup> /IV
	5	6	7	8
	IV	—	I	—
	9	10	11	12
	V	—	I	—

“Chimes Blues,” however, adds secondary dominants to measures 8 and 9 to make a chromatic circle of fifths harmonic progression:

(measure)	1	2	3	4
	I	—	—	V <sup>7</sup> /IV
	5	6	7	8
	IV	—	I	V/ii
	9	10	11	12
	V/V	V	I	—

“Dippermouth Blues” (a.k.a. “Dipper Mouth Blues”) meanwhile is still more elaborate, formally as well as harmonically. It begins with the following progression, for two choruses:

(measure)	1	2	3	4
	I	IV	I	V <sup>7</sup> /IV

5	6	7	8
IV	IV	I	—
9	10	11	12
$V_3^4$	V	I	—

The third and fourth choruses, however, at [0:35–1:06], use the following progression—note the unusual chromaticism in measures 2 and 6, which may be the result of the influence of ragtime music (itself influenced considerably by the chromatic harmony of European salon music). (Note: the German augmented sixth chord or  $\text{Ger}^{+6}$  is introduced in chapter 24, and the common-tone diminished seventh chord or  $\text{ct}^{o7}$  is introduced in chapter 26.)

(measure)	1	2	3	4
	I	$\text{ct}^{o7}$	I	$V^7/IV$
	5	6	7	8
	$IV^6$	$\text{Ger}^{+6}$	$I_4^6$	$V^7/ii$
	9	10	11	12
	$V/V$	V	I	—

The song continues, alternating these progressions every two choruses.