

5 Mid-Phrase Resolution

Each 4-bar phrase resolves midway to tonic I, at measure 3, measure 7, and measure 11.

4 Alternate Chords

Outside the triangle, additional chords illustrate alternate harmonies common to traditional blues and bebop blues.

6 Outer Circle

The outer circle illustrates alternate phrasing that connects bars 3, 7, and 11, breaking the predictability of the standard 4-bar phrase (measures 1-4, 5-8, 9-12).

1 Start Here

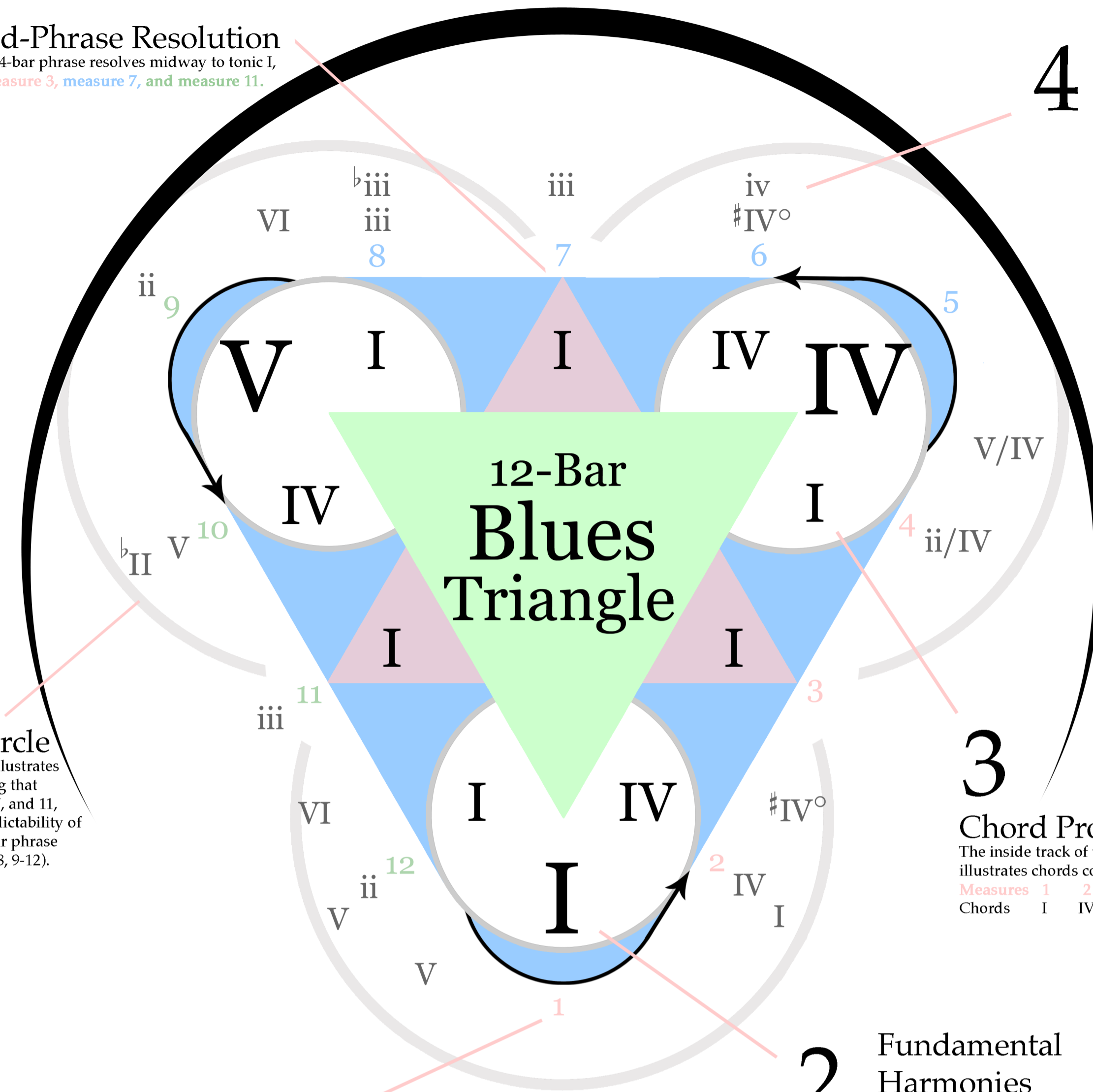
3 Phrases of the Blues
Measures 1-4
Measures 5-8
Measures 9-12

2 Fundamental Harmonies

Each Blues phrase begins with a different harmony:
I - IV - V

3 Chord Progression

The inside track of the triangle illustrates chords common to each measure:
Measures 1 2 3 4
Chords I IV I I



About the Blues Triangle

The 12-Bar Blues Triangle offers a graphic representation of Blues Form and harmony. It can help unlock creativity and increase musical understanding. The examples in standard notation below will help you to begin using the Blues Triangle to create your own Blues progressions.

12-Bar Blues Progression (key of C)

This illustrates the main chord progression (the "inner track") of the Blues Triangle, in the key of C.

Parent Scale

The C Major scale is the parent scale for Blues in the key of C. Get to know the scale steps (i.e. "scale degrees", numbered from 1-8) for your parent scale.

Diatonic Chords

Roman numerals, I through vii, signify chords built off each note of the parent scale. Uppercase for Major; lowercase for minor and diminished.

Bebop Blues (key of C)

This is a common Bebop Blues chord progression. Note the use of chords from the "inner track" and also chords from the "outer circle", including the common use of ii - V in measures 9-10, and the use of iii in measure 11, replacing I. The iii chord is a common substitute for I.

Note: 7th chord extensions typically enhance harmonic function. However, 7th chords within a blues can be entirely ornamental and interchangeable. In this example, C7 often can be replaced with C6 and other extensions.