

THE LENNON/McCARTNEY DYNAMIC

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1964 THE 12-BAR BLUES

While several earlier covers use it, the first original Beatles recordings to employ the 12-bar blues were McCartney's 'Can't Buy Me Love' and Lennon's 'You Can't Do That', both off the album *A Hard Day's Night*.

Track 01

'Can't Buy Me Love', recorded 29 January - 10 March 1964

Track 02

'You Can't Do That', recorded 25 February, 22 May 1964

Since both songs employ the 12-bar blues, they may be played simultaneously (after compensating for differences in tonality and tempo).

Track 03

ABSTRACT

Few songwriting partnerships can match the longevity, innovations, and popularity of John Lennon and Paul McCartney. Together they formed the core of The Beatles, arguably the most important rock band in history. Fascinatingly, the way Lennon and McCartney composed is often comparable, even though their resulting music is stylistically distinct, a pattern I dub **The Lennon/McCartney Dynamic**. This study observes six pairs of songs, one pair for each year from 1964-69, to show how the two songwriters frequently employed the same compositional ideas, but in ways that produced uniquely personal music. It illustrates how Lennon and McCartney functioned independently within the context of their collaboration.

Year	Technique	Paul McCartney	John Lennon
1964	12-Bar Blues	'Can't Buy Me Love'	'You Can't Do That'
1965	PR Modulations	'Another Girl'	'You're Going To Lose That Girl'
1966	Whole Tone Modulations	'Good Day Sunshine'	'Doctor Robert'
1967	Varispeeded Vocals	'When I'm Sixty-Four'	'Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds'
1968	Extended Forms	'Helter Skelter'	'Revolution'
1969	Half-Diminished Sevenths	'You Never Give Me Your Money'	'Because'

CONCLUSIONS

Though this study is not an exhaustive list of all instances of The Lennon/McCartney Dynamic, some large-scale conclusions may be drawn from these limited examples. First, judging from the earliest dates of recording, McCartney tends to be the first to use a technique. Of the six songwriting techniques considered here, Paul was the first to use four of them. Second, even though Paul typically used these ideas first, John often uses them in more innovative ways. Given those premises, it seems that Paul brought ideas to the table, which John then picked up and employed in some of The Beatles' most ground-breaking work.

Both men needed each other to be their best – neither would have been as successful without the other. Their constant support, competition, and borrowing of songwriting ideas consistently spurred them both to progressively greater compositional achievements. Their synergy is one reason, among many, why The Beatles were so spectacularly successful in the 1960s, and why they are still successful half a century later.

1968 EXTENDED FORMS

The early Beatles were masters of economy. Only three of their first 116 recordings surpass three minutes. While they would never abandon brevity, there is a clear progression towards longer songs, especially in their later years. Discarded drafts of two songs from *The White Album* prove their formal experimentation.

Though the official version of McCartney's 'Helter Skelter' lasts 4:29 (The Beatles' ninth-longest track), the second take lasted thirteen minutes. Similarly, the eighteenth take of Lennon's 'Revolution' lasted over ten minutes.

'Helter Skelter', take 2, recorded 18 July 1968		'Revolution', take 18, recorded 30 May 1968	
0:00-2:20	Groove	0:29-0:44	Intro Groove
2:20-2:42	(A) Verse 1	0:44-1:30	(A) Verse 1
2:42-4:01	Groove	1:30-1:50	(B) Chorus 1
4:01-4:22	(A) Verse 2	1:50-2:35	(A) Verse 2
4:22-4:37	Groove	2:35-2:54	(B) Chorus 2
4:37-4:58	(A) Verse 3	2:54-3:38	(A) Verse 3
4:58-5:17	Groove	3:38-3:57	(B) Chorus 3
5:17-5:32	Intro	3:57-9:37	Coda Groove
5:32-6:13	Groove	9:37-10:48	Groove stops, SFX continue
6:13-6:38	(A) Verse 4		
6:38-6:52	(B) Chorus 1		
6:52-7:06	Groove		
7:06-7:38	(A) Verse 5		
7:38-7:52	(B) Chorus 2		
7:52-8:35	Groove		
8:35-9:13	Intro		
9:13-9:27	(B) Chorus 3		
9:27-12:54	Groove		

Track 13

Track 12

While the official versions of both songs clock in at more conventional durations, the early takes show that both Paul McCartney and John Lennon were experimenting with large-scale musical structures. It would be another year before this quest for extended forms came to fruition with the epic medley from the B-side of 1969's *Abbey Road*.

1965 PR MODULATIONS

A relative modulation (R) refers to a key change to the relative major/minor (ex: C major to A minor). A parallel modulation (P) refers to a change in modality (ex: A minor to A major). Combining these two techniques yields a PR modulation (the relative of the parallel, ex: A major to C major) and its retrograde RP modulation (the parallel of the relative, ex: C major to A major). Two songs from the 1965 album *Help!* demonstrate.

In McCartney's 'Another Girl', the verses are in A major while the bridges are in C major, yielding PR modulations when moving from verse to bridge and RP modulations when moving from bridge back to verse.

Track 04

'Another Girl', recorded 15-16 February 1965

0:00-0:07	Introduction	A Major
0:07-0:28	Verse 1	A Major
0:28-0:49	Verse 2	A Major
0:49-1:00	Bridge 1	C Major
1:00-1:22	Verse 3	A Major
1:22-1:33	Bridge 2	C Major
1:33-2:05	Verse 4	A Major

Likewise, the verses and choruses of Lennon's 'You're Going To Lose That Girl' are in E major while the bridges are in G major, resulting in PR modulations when moving from chorus to bridge and RP modulations when moving from bridge to verse.

Track 05

'You're Going To Lose That Girl', recorded 19 February 1965

0:00-0:09	Introduction	E major
0:09-0:23	Verse 1	E Major
0:23-0:30	Chorus 1	E Major
0:30-0:45	Verse 2	E Major
0:45-0:56	Chorus 2	E Major
0:56-1:10	Bridge 1	G Major
1:10-1:25	Solo	E Major
1:25-1:36	Chorus 3	E Major
1:36-1:49	Bridge 2	G Major
1:49-2:03	Verse 3	E Major
2:03-2:20	Chorus 5	E Major

1966 WHOLE TONEMODULATIONS

Where PR modulations are inherently modulations by minor third, skipping two notes (ex: A major to C major skips B^b and B), whole tone modulations skip only one note (ex: A major to B major skips B^b). Two songs off the album *Revolver* illustrate.

The first Beatles recording to use a modulation by whole tone was George Harrison's 'If I Needed Someone', recorded 16-18 October 1965, which switches from A Major in the verses to B Minor in the bridges. But the first official Beatles recording to use a modulation by whole tone between two major tonalities is Lennon's 'Doctor Robert'.

Track 06

'Doctor Robert', recorded 17-19 April 1966

0:00-0:06	Introduction	A major
0:06-0:32	(A) Verse 1	A major to B major
0:32-0:58	(A) Verse 2	A major to B major
0:58-1:13	(B) Bridge 1	B major to A major
1:13-1:40	(A) Verse 3	A major to B major
1:40-1:55	(B) Bridge 2	B major to A major
1:55-2:14	(A) Verse/Coda	A major to B major

McCartney was not far behind with 'Good Day Sunshine', recorded about seven weeks later, which also incorporates modulations by whole tone back and forth from B major to A major.

Track 07

'Good Day Sunshine', recorded 8-9 June 1966

0:00-0:08	Introduction	B major (?)
0:08-0:20	(B) Chorus 1	B major
0:20-0:37	(A) Verse 1	A major
0:37-0:49	(B) Chorus 2	B major
0:49-1:06	(A) Verse 2, Solo	A major, D major
1:06-1:18	(B) Chorus 3	B major
1:18-1:34	(A) Verse 3	A major
1:34-1:46	(B) Chorus 4	B major
1:46-1:58	(B) Chorus 5	B major
1:58-2:08	Coda	B ^b major (?)

Despite identical modulations, where they occur is significantly different: McCartney employs structurally-reinforcing tonality (when the song moves to a new section, the tonality also moves to a new key), where Lennon treats tonality as structurally fluid (each section starts in one key but ends in another). This distinction, observable in small scale through these two individual songs, also applies to their songwriting styles and outputs in general.

1967 VARISPEEDED VOCALS

Varispeed refers to the speeding up/slowing down of analog (tape) recordings. This has the effect of quickening/slowing the tempo and raising/lowering the pitch. The Beatles frequently used varispeed on their 1967 album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*.

In McCartney's cheeky tribute to his father, 'When I'm Sixty-Four', 6-21 December 1966, varispeed was applied to Paul's vocals, raising the pitch from C major (at which it was recorded) to D^b major (at which it is heard in the song) in order to make his voice sound younger.

'When I'm Sixty-Four' pre-varispeed (as McCartney sang it)

'When I'm Sixty-Four' with varispeed (higher and faster)

Similarly, in Lennon's 'Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds', recorded 28 February-2 March 1967, John's vocals were also recorded slower and lower than needed, then sped up for the finished song – not to sound younger, but to sound like he's flying along with the title character.

'Lucy' pre-varispeed (as Lennon sang it)

Track 08

Track 09

Track 10

Track 11

1969 HALF-DIMINISHED SEVENTHS

The half-diminished seventh chord (a diminished triad with a minor seventh, ex: c-e^b-g^b-b^b) is one of the rarest chords in The Beatles' catalog. Of their 211-song official output, only two employ explicit half diminished sevenths, and both are from the album *Abbey Road*.

The half-diminished seventh chords in McCartney's 'You Never Give Me Your Money' and Lennon's 'Because' all function as pre-dominants (chords that lead to V) in minor keys.

Track 14

'You Never Give Me Your Money', recorded 6 May - 5 August 1969

Track 15

'Because', recorded 1, 4, 5 August 1969

Interestingly, both composers use the same chords (i, ii^o, V⁷, and bVI) but in different orders and in different keys.

Listen to the examples at
www.AaronKrerowicz.com/BSU-Symposium.html