

Excerpted from the amazing and comprehensive Beatles blog by Aaron Krerowicz -

<https://www.aaronkrerowicz.com/beatles-blog/the-12-bar-blues-in-beatles-music-part-2-analyses>

27 songs recorded and released by the Beatles use a 12 bar blues progression or something comparable. Of those 27, 15 were original compositions and 12 were covers. Below are some, listing their year of release.

"Money (That's What I Want)" (1963) E major

E7 E7 (A) E7 E7
A7 A7 E7 E7
B7 A7 E7 B7

In addition to adding sevenths to every chord, "Money" also adds an extra A chord in the second measure of each verse. This chord is listed in parentheses above because unlike every other chord listed above it does not represent a full measure. (If it did, it would make this a 13 bar blues pattern instead of 12.) Rather, it represents a brief instrumental fill (listen right after the words "life are free") that embellishes the 12 bar blues progression but does not interfere in any way with its function.

"Roll Over Beethoven" (1963) D major

D7 G7 D7 D7
G7 G7 D7 D7
G7 A7 D7 D7

In addition to adding sevenths to every chord, "Roll Over Beethoven" also replaces the second chord (which 'should' be D7) with a G7. The 9th and 10th bars are also reversed (G7 A7 instead of A7 G7).

"Can't Buy Me Love" (1964) C major

C7 C7 C7 C7
F7 F7 C7 C7
G7 F7 F7 C7

The only substantial deviation from the model is using an F chord in bar 11 (instead of the more typical C).

"You Can't Do That" (1964) G major

G7 G7 G7 G7
C7 C7 G7 G7
D7 C7 G7 D7

"You Can't Do That" uses a typical 12 bar blues progression except for the very last chord, which is changed to a dominant to heighten the harmonic tension and release when the pattern is repeated.

"Slow Down" (1964) C major

C C C C C C C C
F F F F C C C C
G F C C C C C C

"Slow Down" takes the 12 bar blues and augments it into a 24 bar blues. The first 16 measures of "Slow Down" are simply the first 8 measures of a normal 12 bar blues doubled (but proportionally maintained); and the last 8 measures of "Slow Down" are just the last 4 measures of normal 12 bar blues with 4 extra bars of C grafted on to the end.

"She's a Woman" (1964) A major

A7 D7 A7 A7 A7 D7 A7 A7
D7 D7 D7 D7 A7 D7 A7 A7
E7 E7 D7 D7 A7 D7 A7 E7

"She's a Woman" takes the 12 bar blues progression and doubles it into a 24 bar progression. The D7 chords in measures 2, 6, 14, and 22 serve as harmonic ornamental embellishments and thus do not interfere with the overall function of the 12 (24) bar blues progression. Since this is a McCartney original, perhaps Paul learned the trick from Berry Gordy Junior and Janie Bradford, who wrote "Money (That's What I Want)" or from Chuck Berry, who wrote "Roll Over Beethoven"

"Everybody's Trying to Be My Baby" (1964) E major

E E E E

A A E E

B7 A E E

This one, too, is about as standard as a progression can get. The only thing I can mention is the use of a seventh in the 9th bar, which provides more harmonic dissonance and thus tension to the chords.

"Rock and Roll Music" (1964) A major

A7 A7 A7 A7

D7 D7 A7 A7

E7 E7 E7 A7 E7 A7

"Rock and Roll Music" extends the 12 bar blues to a 14 bar blues by repeating the last two measures.

"Dizzy Miss Lizzy" (1965) A major

A A A A

D D A A

E7 D A E7

"I'm Down" (1965) G major

G G G G

C C G G

C C D7 G D7 G

"I'm Down" turns the 12 bar blues into a 14 bar blues by repeating the final two measures of the pattern.

"Day Tripper" (1965) E major

E7 E7 E7 E7

A7 A7 E7 E7

F#7 F#7 F#7 F#7

A7 G#7 C#7 B7

They are beginning to distance themselves from the past, taking one of their first steps towards full artistic maturity. "Day Tripper" is one of the first hints at the innovations to come.

"The Word" (1965) D major

D7 D7 D7 D7

G7 G7 D7 D7

A G D7 D7

This one's about as standard as it can get.

"Flying" (1967) C major

C C C C

F7 F7 C C

G7 F C C

Fits the mold perfectly.

"Don't Pass Me By" (1968) C major

C C F F

C C G G

F F C C

Uses the same chords as the mold, in the same order, over the same duration, but with different proportions.

"Yer Blues" (1968) E major

E E A7 E

G,B7 E,A,E,B7

"Birthday" (1968) A major

A7 A7 A7 A7

D7 D7 A7 A7

E7 E7 A7 A7

"Why Don't We Do It In The Road" (1968) D major

D7 D7 D7 D7

G7 G7 D7 D7

A7 G7 D7 D7

Standard.

"The Ballad of John and Yoko" (1969) E major

E E E E E7 E7 E7 E7

A A E E B7 B7 E E

"The Ballad of John and Yoko" stretches the 12 bar blues into a 16 bar blues by doubling the first four measures.

Total number of Beatles songs using the 12 bar blues - or something comparable - by year

1963: 5 1964: 9 1965: 6 1966: 0 1967: 1 1968: 4 1969: 1 1970: 2

But even in the early songs, The Beatles are not hesitant to break the mold where and whenever it suits a particular song.