

“Domestication” of Blue Notes in the Beatles’ Songs

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Much of the Beatles’ originality stems from the special way in which they handle blue notes. Blue notes, by nature, are alienated from their harmonic environment and have a dissonant relationship with them, giving the blues and all its derivatives a rough, angry character. Nevertheless, the hostility of blue notes toward the surrounding world may be mitigated—“domesticated”—through consonantization. From this perspective, the present paper explains the formation of several of the harmonic idioms that shape the Beatles’ style. In broader terms, the paper attempts to uncover the blues affinities in the Beatles’ repertoire, even when they are latent and expressed in ostensibly non-blues details. These affinities contribute to the unity of the repertoire despite its diversity and eclecticism.

ALMOST EVERY ARTIST IN twentieth-century Western pop music, including the Beatles, has conducted a dialogue of some sort with the blues. The Beatles’ songs are rich in blues elements, and nothing could be more natural: the Beatles’ music has its origins in rock ’n roll, rock ’n roll in rhythm & blues, and rhythm & blues in the blues. Only a negligible minority of the Beatles’ songs, however, are purely blues, and these contain an element of parody: they are prototypical in the extreme, whether due to the strict schematicism (as in Harrison’s “For You Blue”) or because of the exaggerated expression of suffering in the text and the overemphasis of the threefold internal division of the beat (in “Yer Blues”).

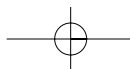
The blues origins of the Beatles is reflected in their cover versions of classic blues-oriented hits that they put on their “regular” albums. In these songs, which date from the second

half of the 1950s, they pay homage to the fathers of rock ’n roll. The songs include Chuck Berry’s “Roll Over Beethoven”; Little Richard’s “Long Tall Sally” and “Hey-Hey-Hey”; Leiber and Stoller’s “Kansas City”; Larry Williams’ “Dizzy Miss Lizzy,” “Slow Down,” and “Bad Boy”; and Carl Perkins’ “Match Box,” “Everybody’s Trying to Be My Baby,” and “Honey Don’t.” None of these songs deviates from the standard blues vocabulary. With but one exception, they all make do with chords to which we will refer below as “primary blues chords.”¹

The initial manifestations of originality in the Beatles’ rock ’n roll can be described as a deviation from the fundamental blues schemata. This deviation entails enrichment, expansion, and integration of these schemata with elements that do not originate in the blues. In the center of the present discussion, we place the argument that some of the distinctive marks of the Beatles’ repertoire can be attributed to their treatment of blue notes.²

This paper is based on the book *The Beatles: The Seven Good Years* (Wagner 1999), especially Chapter 11, “Beatles and Blues” (pp. 189–213). It chiefly develops the ideas presented in the section “Emancipation of Blue Notes” (pp. 205–10).

- 1 The exception: an appearance of $\flat VI$ in “Honey Don’t.”
- 2 The present discussion focuses on the Beatles’ repertoire only and is not comparative; therefore, it may be possible to find precedents for all or



Blue notes (BNs), by nature, spoil the diatonicism of and cause dissonance in “clean” chords. But these notes may achieve their own independent harmonization, thereby being domesticated and turning into “environment-friendly” consonant notes. This domesticating, consonantizing process led the Beatles to invent original chord combinations that seem more acts of harmonic daring than attempts to sterilize basic rhythm & blues and remove its stinger.

The products of the consonantization of the BNs, which appear in a major-mode harmonic environment, are necessarily flattened degrees. These degrees turn the BNs from minor notes, which are “alien” to the major chords that build the basic harmonic progression, into “family” notes that are “at home” in these chords. The legitimacy that the flattened chords give the BNs is ostensibly the opposite of the “emancipation” that Arnold Schoenberg gave dissonant notes when he freed them from having to resolve to consonance, since the BNs by nature are dissonant notes with no obligation to be resolved.³ However, the domestication of the BNs is an emancipatory act, since they thereby stop clashing with the harmony and instead become settled in it.

Example 1 shows the formation of BNs, through their annexation to, blurring of, and confrontation with the basic harmonic functions, and also examines their potential for domestication: At (a), the BNs are defined by means of the clash between the minor pentatonic nucleus of the blues and the major diatonicism of the harmonic accompaniment. The clash between the two is manifested at $\hat{3}$ and $\hat{7}$. The appear-

some of these phenomena in the works of other artists (see, for example, note 1). Nevertheless, the repertoire discussed here, due to its volume, diversity, canonical status, and influence on later artists, serves as an excellent laboratory for the study of these phenomena.

3 On the freeness of the interaction of BNs (which have pentatonic roots) and diatonic harmony, Walter Everett has commented: “Unlike the diatonic system, the pentatonic allows free treatment of nonharmonic tones. Therefore, the minor seventh above I is not pressured to resolve and is often the last note of a tune” (Everett 2001, 58).

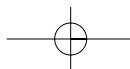
ance of such a minor-mode scale degree in a major environment is known as a BN. To complete the picture, we have to consider a third, fairly common BN, $\flat\hat{5}$, which is obtained through flattening of the pentatonic nucleus itself. This note will appear as a BN even in a minor environment. The description offered here is fairly simplistic and clearly does not reflect all aspects of the subject, especially the aspect of intonation, but it meets the needs of the present discussion.

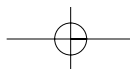
The fundamental blues harmony is based on the three primary chords of the major scale (I, IV, and V). When these degrees appear in a blues context, we will call them “primary blue chords,” or PBCs for short. Example 1(b) shows how BNs instill equality among the seventh chords that are based on the three primary chords, for the tonic, the subdominant, and the dominant are all manifested as a major chord with a minor seventh ($I^{\flat 7}$, $IV^{\flat 7}$, and V^7). This uniformity negates the uniqueness of the dominant seventh chord, which in the pure diatonic system occurs only once. The strongest integration of BNs with the basic harmonic functions is manifested in $I^{\flat 7}$ and $IV^{\flat 7}$.⁴

Frequently, BNs denote sensitive, important points of contact between the melody and the harmony. For instance, the flattened third degree ($\flat\hat{3}$) may be present in all three PBCs: $I^{\flat 10}_7$, $IV^{\flat 7}$, and $V^{\flat 13}_7$, as shown in Example 1(c). This makes it possible for one to repeat a melodic phrase several times, dressing it in different chordal garb each time. When the shared BN is a central and salient melodic note, it may also function as a note with structural significance, in which case we will call it a “structural blue note” (SBN). (Note that a BN may have a high structural status in terms of the melody, whereas from the harmonic-functional perspective it is merely an appendage of the triad.)

In Example 1(d), we see the complementary harmonies of the major key. These degrees do not take part in the funda-

4 Isolating the three minor sevenths built on the three roots of the three PBCs (E–D, A–G, and B–A) gives us the pentatonic scale in Ex. 1 [E, G, A, B, D, E], as Walter Everett (1999, 18) shows.





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(a) (b) (c) (d) (e)

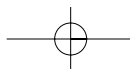
BN = Blue Note
 CBN = consonant BN(s)
 MIX = Mixture
 PBC = primary blue chord(s)
 SCH = secondary chord(s)
 SBN = Structural BN

EXAMPLE I. *The blue notes clashing with their tonal environment—schemata.*

mental blues progressions on which rock 'n roll is based, and we can therefore call them “secondary chords” (SCH) for the purpose of this discussion. The Beatles liked to contrast blues sections of their songs, based on the primary degrees, with lyric sections that include the complementary degrees. In “I Feel Fine,” for example, the “ticking” diatonic refrain appears after a rough blues verse. The album *A Hard Day's Night* is especially rich in such examples (“I’ll Cry Instead,” “You Can’t Do That,” “A Hard Day’s Night,” “Can’t Buy Me Love,” etc.). Less often, there is direct contact between the blues chords (PBCs) and the complementary chords (SCHs) in their diatonic form (e.g., the progression VI–IV^{b7} in “Drive My Car”). The probability of closer contact between PBCs and SCHs has to do with the performance of the various flattenings, as we shall see in the next example.

In Example 1(e), we see flatted or “minorized” degrees, among them VI and III. These degrees now include $\flat 3$ and $\flat 7$ not as BNs but in a mixtural framework—that is, as an insertion of flatted notes in a major key. Both of these—mixture and BNs—are common in the Beatles’ songs. Are

they related? Ostensibly, they are two completely different things: the journey back in time in quest of the origins of blues will take us to the Mississippi Delta and from there to Africa, whereas the search for the origins of mixture, which is anchored in traditional harmony, will eventually lead us to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe. The connection goes through the “domestication of BNs”—when it can be shown that a particular BN has changed from being outside the consonant harmony, in which case we may regard it as a garnish or a “disturbance,” to being an integral part of a consonant triad. If, for example, we can claim in a particular context that the \flat III chord in Example 1(e) is based on a BN (G \flat), then the status of this BN has improved substantially relative to its status in (c): instead of being an outsider, it becomes a distinguished member of the club of the flatted mediant without losing its blues character. Moreover, as a converted BN, it gives the entire chord a blues touch. Is there a context that justifies such an interpretation of a flatted chord? A relationship between the flatted degree and a particular BN is proven clearly only when the former appears in



the context of blues harmony, and especially when certain notes appear both as distinct BNs and as flatted degrees, as we see from the examples.⁵

In the discussion of Example 1, a number of abbreviations were introduced. Since these will be used extensively in the remainder of this article, a brief summary is given here:

- BN—blue note (Ex. 1[a]);
- CBN—consonant blue note (Ex. 1[e]);
- CBN chord—a chord containing a CBN;
- MIX—mixture chord;
- PBC—primary blue chord (Exx. 1[b] and 1[c])
- SBN—structural blue note (Ex. 1[c])
- SCH—secondary chord (Ex. 1[d])

CBN AND OTHER ANIMALS: EXAMPLES FROM THE BEATLES' SONGS

"I Saw Her Standing There" is the first song on the Beatles' first regular album, *Please Please Me*, from 1963. As seen in Example 2, the only chord in the chorus that deviates from the elementary blues framework is the \flat VI in the fourth measure.⁶ It can therefore be considered an isolated CBN chord in an environment of PBCs. The domesticated

- 5 Everett displays great sensitivity to the Beatles' multidimensional use of flatted notes and draws attention to the relationship between the pentatonic blues system and the diatonic modal system: "By 1963, the Beatles' free and expressive manipulation of scale degrees leads to a new dialect juxtaposing the pentatonic system with major/minor mode mixture, becoming a defining characteristic of early Beatles style" (Everett 2001, 58).
- 6 Most of the analytical sketches presented above are not strictly Schenkerian. Their commitment to the Schenkerian *Ursatz*, for example, is weaker than that in Walter Everett's writings, but they take voice leading into account more than do, for example, Allan Moore's sketches. I do not accept the definitiveness with which Moore states that "in such a guitar-based style, inner parts (especially) do not obey any conventional voice-leading rules" (Moore 1997, 27). The moderate approach to the Schenkerian method adopted here is consistent with

note is not the root (C), but the fifth, G. It is first used as a melodic BN in the tonic PBC framework, m. 2. Immediately, it becomes a harmonic BN in the IV framework (m. 3), undergoes consonantization in the \flat VI framework (m. 4), and finally comes around again as a BN in the V^7 framework (m. 6).⁷

"The Word" exemplifies almost academically the consonantization process: as shown in Example 3, part A is a pure 12-measure blues with a frequent presence of the two routine BNs, $F\sharp$ and $C\sharp$, in a blues framework on D. The $C\sharp$ functions in the tonic PBC framework (as in Ex. 1[b]); the $F\sharp$ is a BN with important melodic status, but it also clashes with the underlying harmony (as in Ex. 1[c]). The status of these two notes in the harmonic society improves substantially in part B: they become the roots of VII and III, and thus they become respected members of the community and live in consonant harmony with the rest of the notes. Their past is nevertheless evident in the descriptive term CBN, which is imprinted on their identity cards.

The situation just described can also be analyzed from the scalar perspective: the verse can be seen as a contest between the major key, which is evident in the accompanying foundation, and the dorian mode, which is seen mainly in the melody. The conflict is resolved in the refrain, where a synthesis between the scales takes place: the tonic remains major, but the other degrees become dorian, with the IV shared by both. As a result, in Example 3 VII and III are recorded not as flatted but as integral degrees in the synthetic scale that emerges in the refrain.

the understanding that emerges from John Covach's discussion of the relevance of traditional analytical methods to popular music (Covach 1997).

- 7 A precedent for the domestication of $G\sharp$ in an identical scalar context can be found in Carl Perkins' 1956 song "Honey Don't." The G alternates in the chords of E and C, once as a BN in the tonic framework and once as a CBN in the \flat VI framework. Thus, the domestication is not the object of a climactic focus, as it is in "I Saw Her Standing There."

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EXAMPLE 2. “I Saw Her Standing There” (Lennon–McCartney)—reduction.

EXAMPLE 3. “The Word” (Lennon–McCartney)—voice-leading graph.

The lyrics include an internal contradiction: on one hand, there is a call for freedom (“Say the word and you’ll be free”), while on the other, there is a call to be similar (“Say the word and be like me”). Just as being like another person is, in a way, a giving up of the freedom to be different, the $F\sharp$ in part B is freed from its otherness, but it thereby gives up the freedom that it had in part A, where it was an independent melodic entity that did not blend with the harmony. Thus, in the end, the emancipation becomes domestication.

The opposite occurs in “Think for Yourself” (Example 4). The blues refrain retroactively interprets flatted notes in the

verse, which in the context of their nearby environment could be regarded as a case of mixture (see the minor V in m. 4 and the flatted III in m. 5). The verse, the lyrics of which are directed entirely toward improving another person’s character, moves much farther away from the blues chord vocabulary, but the assertive intro on I^{7b} (mm. 1 and 2 in the example) penetrates the verse itself as a divider and makes sure to maintain it within a blues envelope. The grumbling in the text contributes to the existence of a blues connection: the speaker comes across as a denouncer, complainer, consoler, psychologist, guide for life, and existential philosopher.

EXAMPLE 4. "Think for Yourself" (Harrison)—reduction.

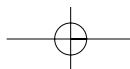
Perhaps in the attempt to domesticate the other person, he also domesticates a few BNs. In the refrain, he seems to despair of his efforts, washes his hands of her, and sinks into characteristic blues. Although he enhances the dejected blues with $\flat VI$, he puts it in a weak position (second inversion), and it is hard to hold on to it as a sign of hope for a better future. If the flatted notes in the verse could be either CBN or MIX, the $B\flat$ that appears in $\flat VI$ in the refrain—despite its unstable inversion—is clearly a CBN in view of its recurrent function throughout the refrain as a routine BN.

The dualism between CBN and MIX is clear in "The Night Before" (Example 5). The main section of the song is based on contrast between the intimacy of the night before and the present estrangement. The contrast is expressed in the relationship between the melody and the harmony in the song: the nostalgic lines about "the night before" have a minor melody supported by major chords. The result is a blues effect, such that the $\flat VII$ is interpreted as a CBN

chord. In the lines complaining about the change that occurred "today," the relationship is reversed: the melody is based on a major tetrachord but is accompanied by minor chords. The $B\flat$ that causes a minorization of the subdominant becomes a clear element of MIX.

It is instructive to follow the adventures of the $C\sharp$ during the course of the song. In the intro, it functions in the PBC framework; in $\flat VII$ it is, as noted, a CBN; and in the beginning of the episode, it functions as part of an auxiliary cadence to IV. The $F\sharp$ begins in the intro as part of a CBN chord (disguised as a PBC), whereas in the main section it becomes a BN. A motivic parallel links these two appearances, as the brackets in Example 5 show.

The title of "Back in the U.S.S.R." (Example 6), which opens the so-called "White Album," is a takeoff on Chuck Berry's "Back in the U.S.A.," which undergirds the song's rhythm & blues character. From the perspective of BNs, we should follow the fate of $C\sharp$ (the $\flat\hat{3}$ in the key of A



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Intro

Main Section “the night before”

BN

CBN

SCH MIX SCH MIX PBC...

I \flat VII IV V

Fine

Episode

from G

IV V

D.S.

EXAMPLE 5. “The Night Before” (Lennon-McCartney)—voice-leading graph.

Verse

SBN

CBN

Refrain

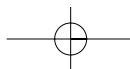
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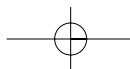
SBN

9

I IV \flat III IV I \flat III IV I V/V V

EXAMPLE 6. “Back in the U.S.S.R.” (Lennon-McCartney)—voice-leading graph.





major). At the beginning of the verse, it introduces itself as a melodic SBN in the tonic framework (m. 1), but it immediately achieves independent harmonization as a CBN and becomes the root of the \flat III (m. 3).⁸ At the beginning of the refrain (m. 6), $C\sharp$ retains its status as a CBN and remains the root of the \flat III, but the melodic environment places this status at risk: $C\sharp$ in mm. 5 and 9 claims hegemony as the representative of the $\hat{3}$. And indeed, in m. 7 $C\sharp$ loses its rights of consonance, goes back to being a subversive BN, and risks exile to Siberia.

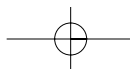
In “Another Girl” (Example 7), the two BNs— $G\sharp$ and $C\sharp$ —achieve consonance. The G alternates as a standard BN in the tonic blues framework of m. 1 and as a CBN in the \flat VII framework of m. 2. The consonance of G lays the groundwork for the expansion of the flatted mediant in the refrain, where the \flat VII functions as the V^7 of the \flat III.⁹ $C\sharp$ not only achieves consonance, but it celebrates its newfound status in the prolonged \flat III framework.¹⁰ The blues nature of the song is broken suddenly in the middle of the refrain simultaneously with the consonantization of $C\sharp$, which functioned until then as a regular BN in the I and IV frameworks. $C\sharp$ had this function so long as the song had a complaining character during the verse and during the provocative announcement of the refrain in its shortened form: “for I have got another girl.” But the second time the refrain comes

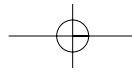
- 8 Everett 1999, 188, finds a precedent in “Sgt. Pepper” for the progression I– \flat III–IV–I that appears here. (Compare the bass progressions in the refrains of Exx. 6 and 11.)
- 9 Porter 1979 also connects the appearance of the $\flat\hat{3}$ and $\flat\hat{7}$ in the verse with the expansion of \flat III in the refrain. To him, both fall into the category of modal mixture. I, however, prefer to distinguish conceptually between the two and to view their encounter as a stylistic characteristic of the Beatles.
- 10 The tonal expansion of the flatted mediant entails an expansion of the refrain by means of an internal episode that is not independent. Despite the fact that the episode appears only once, it can be regarded as an integral part of the refrain.

around, with its description of the lofty qualities of the other girl, who radiates eternal love and uncompromising loyalty, it takes a lyric turn with tonicization of the \flat III. The $\flat\hat{3}$ loses thereby its bitterness and attains harmony with the notes around it. The establishment of $C\sharp$ as a CBN requires renunciation of its status as an SBN, which it held securely throughout the verse and most of the refrain. After the “happy” conclusion of the refrain, the tonic appears as a full-fledged major chord, and the $C\sharp$ now celebrates its victory over the $C\sharp$ as the legitimate representative of $\hat{3}$.

A struggle for leadership between versions of the third scale degree also occurs in “Got to Get You into My Life” (Example 8). In this case, the struggle is between the diatonic degree ($B\sharp$) and the flatted degree ($B\flat$, marked as an SBN), but the order is reversed compared to that in the previous song: in the intro and in the verse, the diatonic $B\sharp$ prevails; only in the refrain does $B\flat$ appear and take over the leading position. The appearance of $B\flat$ as an SBN is quite impressive: it bursts forth suddenly and serves as a basis for the climactic recitation of the title phrase, which makes the almost hysterical sense of immediacy radiated by the entire song even more extreme. Until $B\flat$ appeared, there seemed to be no real threat to the hegemony of the diatonic $\hat{3}$; the $B\sharp$ attained its status first from the middle register in the mixolydian environment and then from the bass within the tonicization of the mediant (i.e., expansion of SCH). But it is precisely its increased strength in the key of B minor that works against it: the appearance of $A\sharp$ in the descending chromatic bass framework is revealed retroactively as an enharmonic allusion that prepares the revelation of the $B\flat$ as an SBN.

The function of the $\flat\hat{3}$ as an SBN is common and natural to blues melodies, but the $\flat\hat{7}$ may also serve as an SBN, as in “Ticket to Ride” (Example 9). In the upper voice is an ascending upper mixolydian tetrachord: E– $F\sharp$ –G–A. The mixolydian element, $G\sharp$, appears each time in different garb: first, it appears as a melodic BN in the tonic framework (m. 5); then, it shows up as an accompaniment (CBN) to





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The image shows a musical score for the song "Another Girl" by The Beatles. It is divided into two parts: Verse and Refrain. The Verse section starts with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (D major). It features a melody line and a bass line. A dashed line above the melody indicates a voice-leading graph. Labels "SBN" and "CBN" are placed above and below the notes, respectively. A measure number "7" is shown below the bass line. The Refrain section follows, also with a dashed line above the melody. A label "Prolonged CBN" is placed above the notes.

EXAMPLE 7. “Another Girl” (Lennon-McCartney)—voice-leading graph.

The image shows a musical score for the song "Got to Get You into My Life" by The Beatles. It features a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F# major). The score shows a melody line and a bass line. A dashed line above the melody indicates a voice-leading graph. A label "SBN" is placed above the notes.

EXAMPLE 8. “Got to Get You into My Life” (Lennon-McCartney)—voice-leading graph.

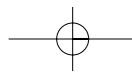
The image shows a musical score for the song "Ticket to Ride" by The Beatles. It features a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (D major). The score shows a melody line and a bass line. A dashed line above the melody indicates a voice-leading graph. Labels "BN" and "CBN" are placed above and below the notes, respectively. Measure numbers "10" and "16" are shown below the bass line.

EXAMPLE 9. “Ticket to Ride” (Lennon-McCartney)—voice-leading graph.

♭VII (m. 13); and finally it returns to the melody and reaches its peak of salience as an SBN in the cadential dominant (m. 15).

It is worth noting the behavior of the ♭VII of m. 13, which, while rooted in a CBN, also is a platform for foreign notes that clash with it. This is an extreme case that verges on detachment of the melody from the harmony: against the

backdrop of G-major, ♭VII chord, the notes F#, E, and C# appear in the melody, and none of them belongs to the chord! Does this indicate that the CBN has become so established that it appears as the stable element in the chord compared to other notes that are separated from it, or, on the contrary, is the melody rejecting the G-major harmonic dominion and refusing to blend in with it?



B & B (BEATLES AND BLUES)

One developmental path of the Beatles can be described as the gradual distancing from basic rhythm & blues with which they began their career. Yet the Beatles never lost (and never wanted to lose) a basic attachment to their roots. The songs discussed above were primarily those in which the blues elements are obvious, and the discussion showed the Beatles to have expanded and enhanced them in ways that may be unique to them (and unlike the other means of blues enhancement that developed elsewhere, especially in jazz). There is a consistent synthesis between blues and other styles, such as the combination of alternating blues and “lyric” sections, the intrusion of a blues passage into a ballad (as in “Blackbird”), and the use of SCHs, among other techniques.

But even in songs with a weaker blues affinity, such affinity is visible under the surface. The Beatles’ inclination towards the mixolydian and dorian modes, which may be attributed to the influence of Elizabethan songs, might also stem from the habit of inserting common BNs in major-mode melodies to the point that they become an integral part of it, as in “Norwegian Wood,” one part of which is mixolydian and the other part dorian. Interestingly, the Beatles’ “Indian” songs, too, are linked to Indian scales that resemble the dorian and mixolydian.¹¹ Another avenue of influence is seen in the pentatonic songs, especially the minor pentatonicism mentioned in connection with Example 1(a) above.

The blues affinity may also explain several idiomatic expressions in the Beatles’ harmonic lexicon. For example, the Beatles’ characteristic regressive formula I–♭VII–IV–I can

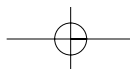
ii On the Beatles’ songs as an encounter between Western modality, pentatonicism, and the raga scales, see Reck 1985, especially p. 100. Additional affinities can be found between pop-rock and traditional Indian music, as Ian Macdonald does when he relates Western one-chord hits to the Eastern drone (Macdonald 1994, 114).

be understood as a transposition of the blues progression V–IV–I–V (mm. 9–12 in the 12-bar blues). Might the blues have provided them with the first motivation for creating the harmonic syntax of regressive progressions? If the ♭VII, which is common in the Beatles’ repertoire, indeed was born of a blues affinity, its most far-reaching ramifications also stem from blues.¹² “Good Day Sunshine” (Example 10), like later songs, is based on a relationship of a major second between the refrain in B major and the verse in A major. This relationship can be regarded as an expansion of the common combination I–♭VII.¹³ We can see here how the blues subdominant of B major serves as a pivot chord for modulation to A major. In other words, a PBC is interpreted as a diatonic dominant-seventh chord. Of course, in this case it would be wrong to call it a CBN chord, because the BN (D♭) achieves not consonance but diatonicization. This, too, however, may be regarded as part of the domestication of blue notes, since the note that constitutes an abandoned BN in one key (♭3 in B major) and becomes an ordinary note in a different key (4 in A major). In this latter key, it has to obey the rules of counterpoint and be resolved properly to C♯.

The Beatles always tended toward stylistic eclecticism and demonstrated openness to a wide variety of musical influences. Their use of multiple genres may explain the interesting behaviors of BNs when rock ’n roll elements conflict with elements of other genres: musicals, classical music, vaudeville, and so on. “Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band” (Example 11) illustrates this multigenre phenomenon: the fictional band that introduces itself in the song

12 Allan Moore (1995) discusses the melodic ♭7 and its blues context, together with the flatted seventh, which is anchored in the modal system. He does not, however, present a convincing explanation of the connection between the two beyond the tendency of rock to avoid the leading tone.

13 According to the analytical sketch presented in Example 10, the song oscillates between two tonal centers, B and A. Everett 1999, 55, proposes a monotonal interpretation, according to which the refrain “good day, sunshine” leads the verse with an auxiliary progression: V/V–V’–I.



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“the blue shift”

diatonization of BN

7 7 7

IV7 \flat = V7

EXAMPLE IO. “Good Day Sunshine” (Lennon-McCartney)—voice-leading graph.

Intro

Verse

SBN

Interlude
a moment of traditional harmony

PBC

Fine

I IV V

Refrain

1. 2.

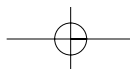
secondary BN

CBN BN

CBN

D.S.

EXAMPLE II. “Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band” (Lennon-McCartney)—voice-leading graph.



could be a rock band or a firemen's band. The multifaceted nature is manifested especially in the instrumental interlude: for a brief "classical" moment, the IV^{b7} changes from a PBC to a V^7 in the tonicization of the $bVII$, but it immediately resumes its function as the blues subdominant that marches toward the dominant that prepares the refrain. Example 11 lets us follow the changes in meaning of the C^7 chord throughout the song. One can follow separately the incarnations of Bb , which becomes a CBN soon after the beginning of the refrain. The $F\sharp$ is a more modest BN, for unlike the Bb , it does not have the status of an SBN, and it functions most of the time as an ordinary, ornamental BN. Nevertheless, this does not prevent it from acting as a "classical" CBN in the tonicization of $bVII$ in the interlude.

The verse is arranged around a formula that ostensibly has nothing to do with blues: $I-II\sharp^7-IV-I$. This formula, which appears here on two levels, contains several identifying marks of the Beatles' harmony: a regressive harmonic progression ($II-IV-I$ instead of $I-IV-II$), contrapuntal regression (the seventh of the $II\sharp$ is not resolved in the descent), and disalteration of $C\sharp$ (which descends to $C\sharp$ instead of ascending to D). The combination $II\sharp^7-IV$, which makes up the nucleus of the formula, may elicit a blues feeling. Due to the regressive motion, the $C\sharp$ of the IV may sound like a CBN when it follows the $II\sharp^7$. This formula also appears in the intro without the opening tonic, and it functions as a sort of auxiliary cadence. The deletion of the opening tonic intensifies the blues connotation, since we are likely to hear the progression as a transposition of $I^{b7}-bIII$ (compare the beginnings of Exx. 6 and 11).

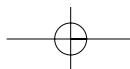
The blues affinity may explain why many chords, including the $II\sharp^7$, tend to appear in a structure of dominant-seventh chords. They are simply disguised as PBCs. Even CBN chords may be dressed up as PBCs by the addition of a minor seventh. In this manner, we may find chords such as $bIII^{b7}$ (Ex. 5, chord F^7 , at the beginning of the intro) or $bVII^{7b}$ (Ex. 11, chord F^7 , toward the end of the refrain),

which are essentially chords based on domesticated BNs to which secondary BNs have been appended.

In summary, the link between the Beatles and the blues takes place both on the manifest plane and on the latent plane: on the manifest plane the presence of BNs in the PBC framework is prominent. We discovered that a BN may grow stronger and turn into an SBN without changing its skin and losing its original complexion. In the discussion above, we focused primarily on the latent plane. We attempted to track the BN, even when it loses its "outsider" nature and becomes an integral part of the consonant triad. In this way, it may serve as a root of a flatted chord and even achieve tonicization or diatonicization in a new key. One conclusion is that the Beatles' repertoire is more blues-oriented than it looks and sounds on the surface. The group's increasing tendency to move away from the prototypical formulas of the blues and of rhythm & blues is, in this interpretation, not an example of growing detachment. On the contrary, it entails the latent and apparently unconscious development of blues elements, which undergo sublimation.

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