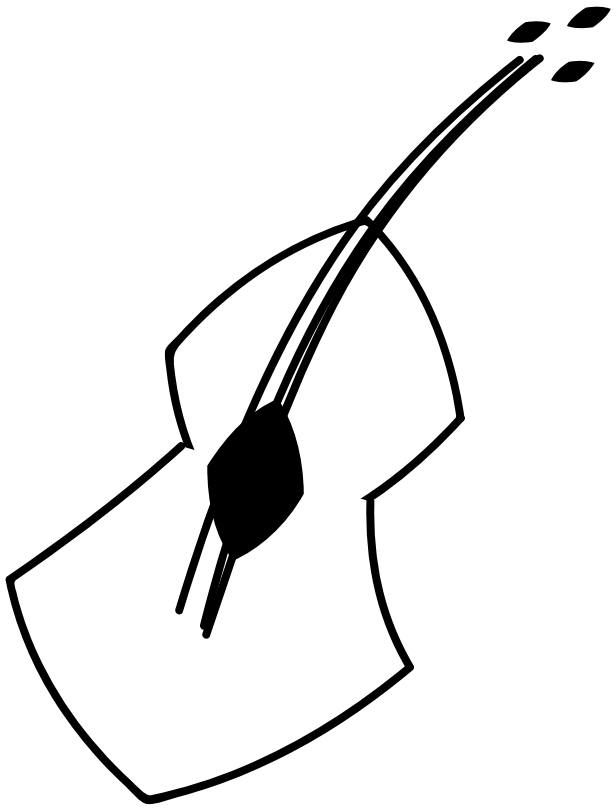
Solo Jazz Guitar

Arrangements for finger style



by Victor Saumarez

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Introduction

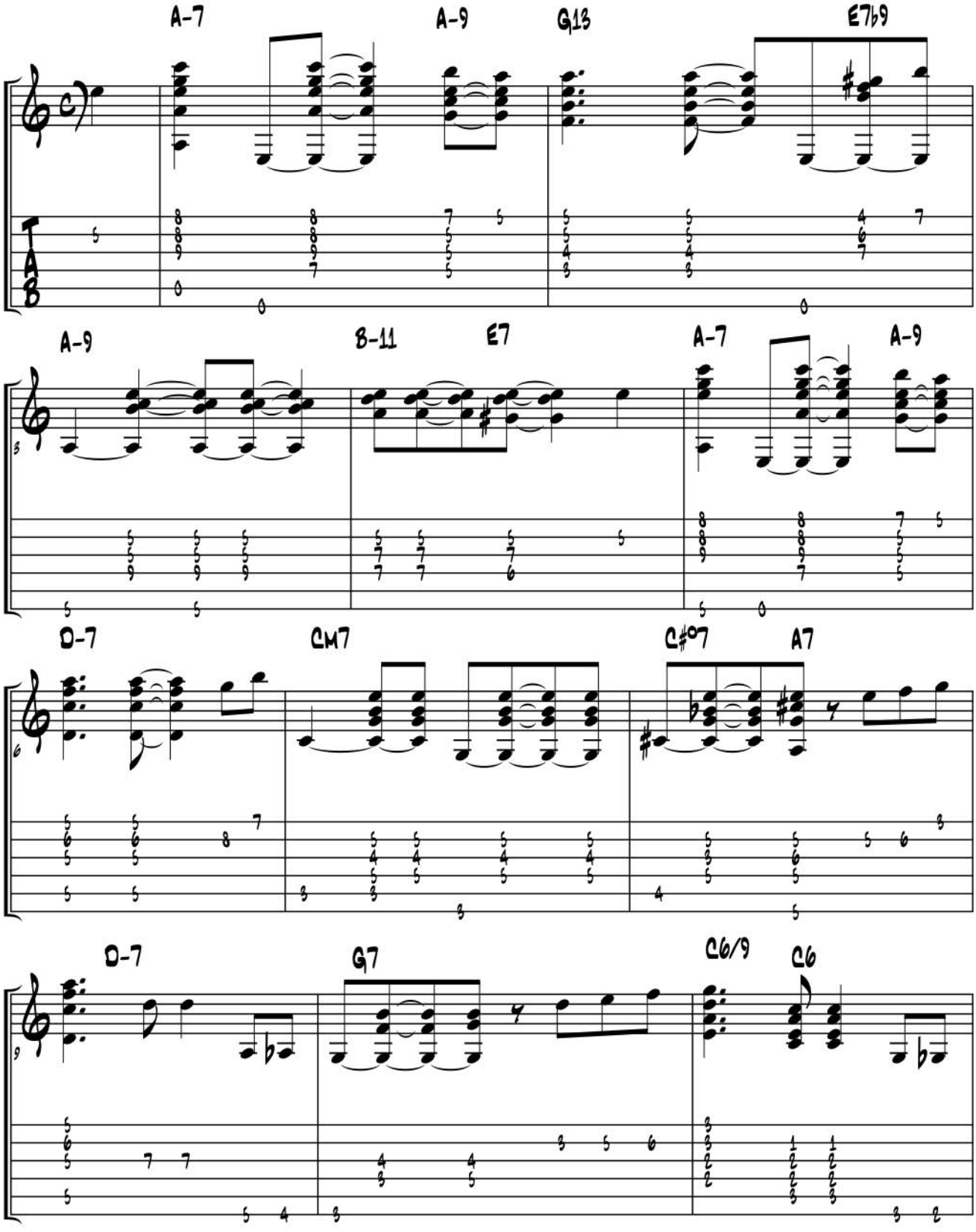
This e-book with accompanying video contains ten solo arrangements for the jazz guitar. All pieces are to be played 'finger style' with the exception of Misty, which is to be played with a pick. The tunes explore the many different aspect of playing in a variety of jazz styles. The aim was always to produce interesting and fun pieces, that maintained a strong pulse or groove. This was done by using walking bass lines, funky latin grooves, simple but effective harmonisations, and independent right hand movement. The relative playing ease or difficulty is indicated by a minus and plus sign above each tune's introductory explanation.

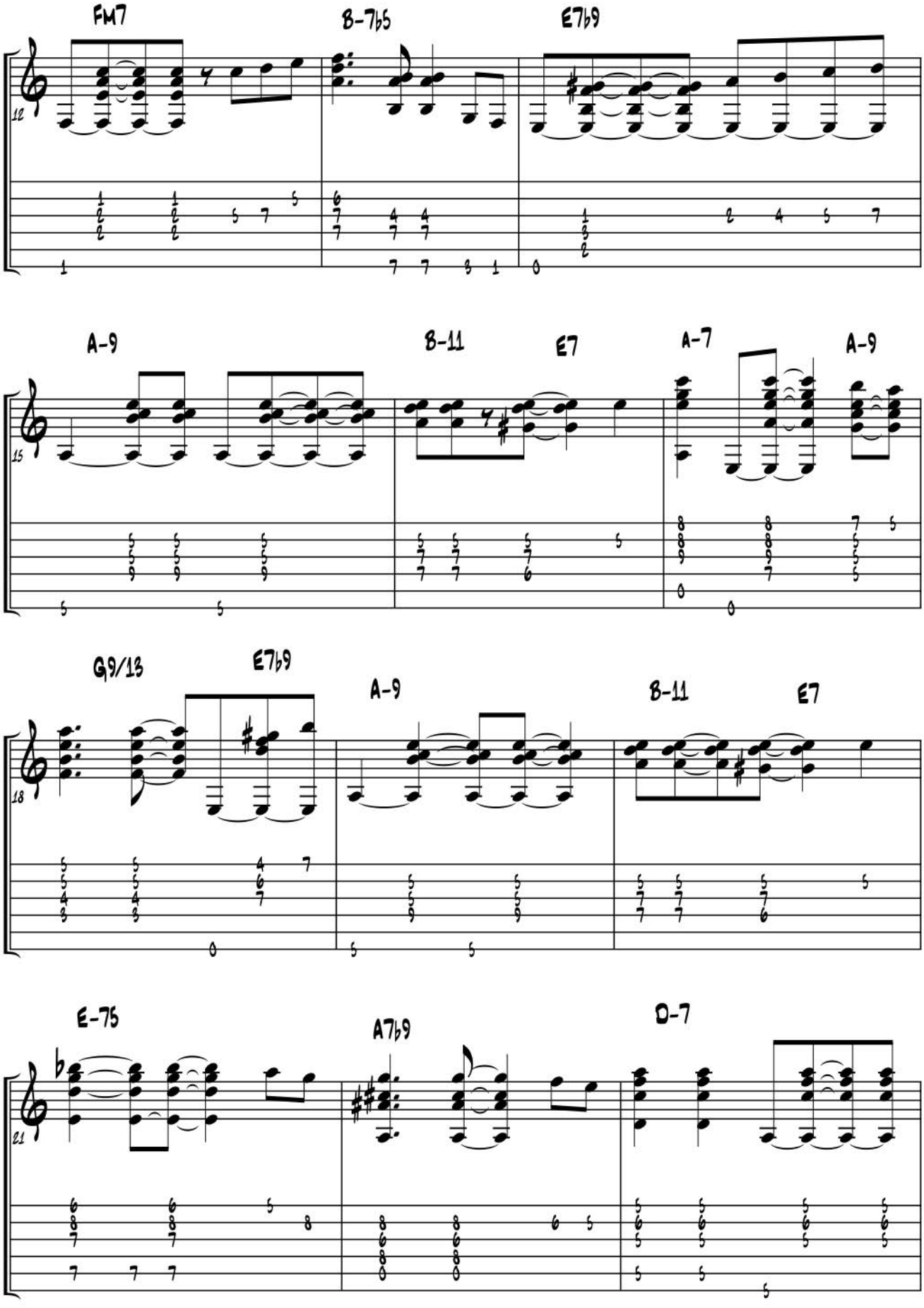
Black Orpheus is a classic Bossa Nova well suited to the guitar. The fingerings are all fairly straight forward. However, the challenge is to keep the music flowing and with a pulse. Where bass note are omitted they are implied. Play slowly and with feel. If some changes are awkward feel free to re-harmonise until you find a more comfortable position.

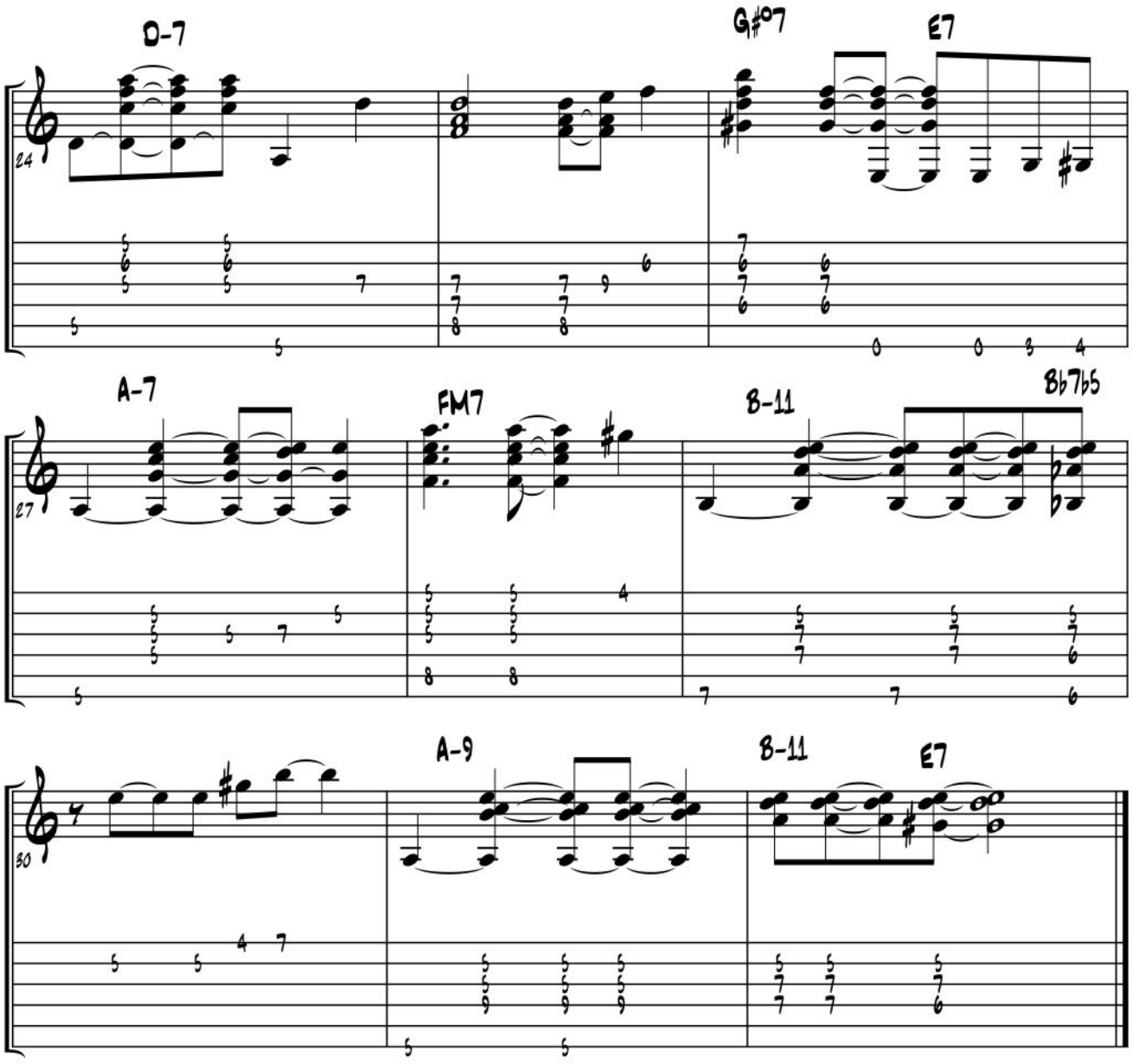
Black Orpheus

♩=115

Louis Bonfi




FM7
B-7b5
E7b9
12
A-9
B-11
E7
A-7
A-9
15
G9/13
E7b9
A-9
B-11
E7
18
E-75
A7b9
D-7
21

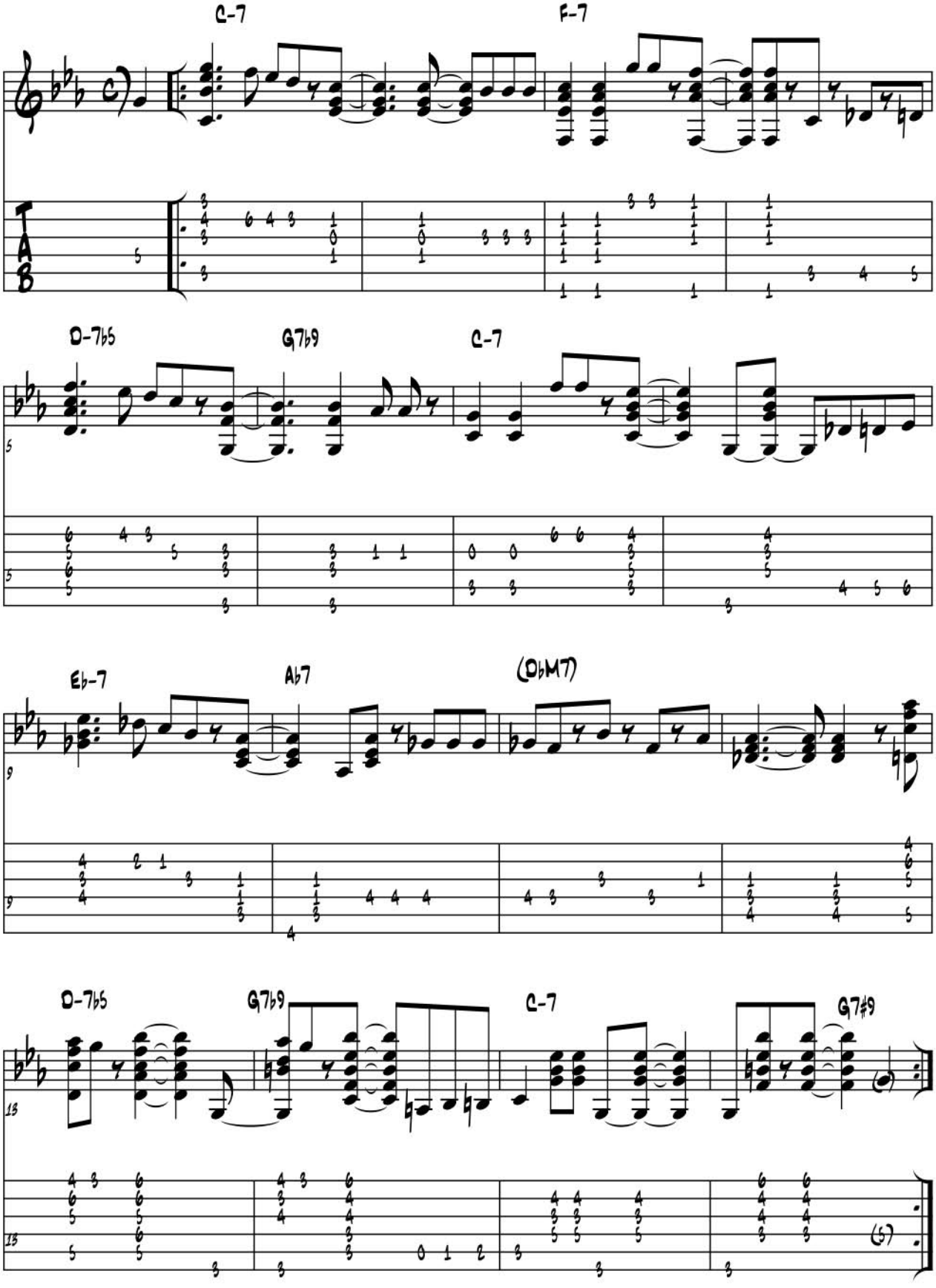

D-7
G#07
E7
24
A-7
FM7
B-11
Bb7b5
27
A-9
B-11
E7
30

Blue Bossa is another bossa and but has a more rhythmical feel. There is one slightly tricky change in bar four leading to bar five. It requires a swift movement of the left hand to reposition for the chord, after the ascending bass line. Feel free to find alternative fingerings. As with all tunes, learn fingerings inside out and then you can start to play with freedom.

Blue Bossa

♩=120

Kenny Dorham



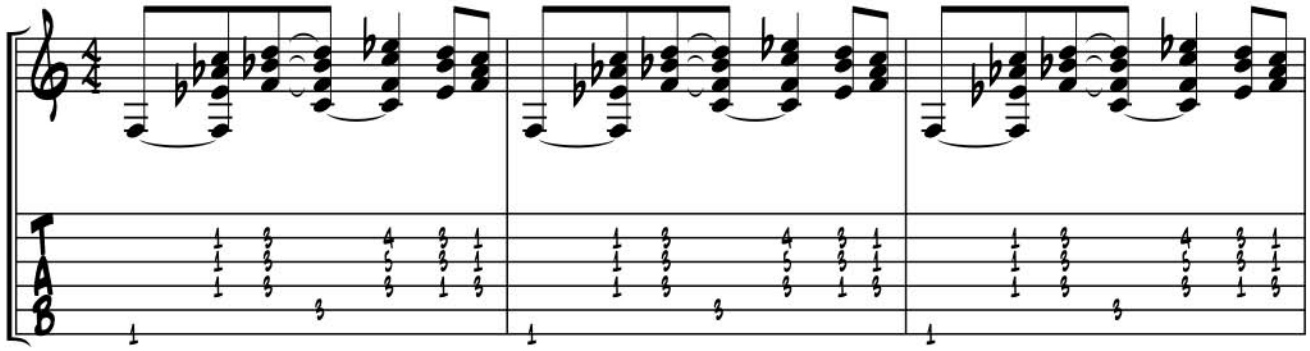
Cantaloupe Island has a latin or jazz-rock feel to it, and may take a little mastering. It is probably worth working on just the chordal pattern, which has been adapted from the original piano piece, before attempting the melody. In bar five, I sometimes slide the chord up from fret four to six, to avoid a clumsy transition. I have added a double time walking bass line from bar thirteen to sixteen, to maintain movement to an otherwise static section.

Cantaloupe Island

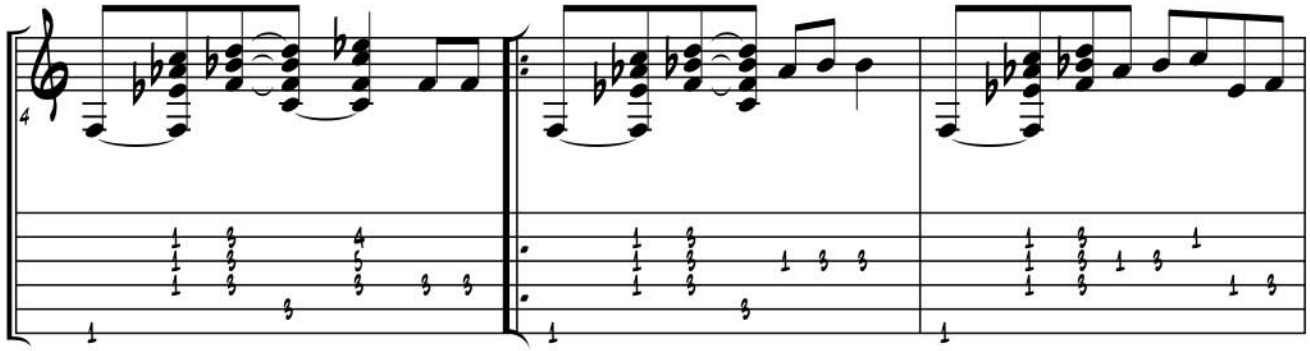
Herbie Hancock

♩ = 110

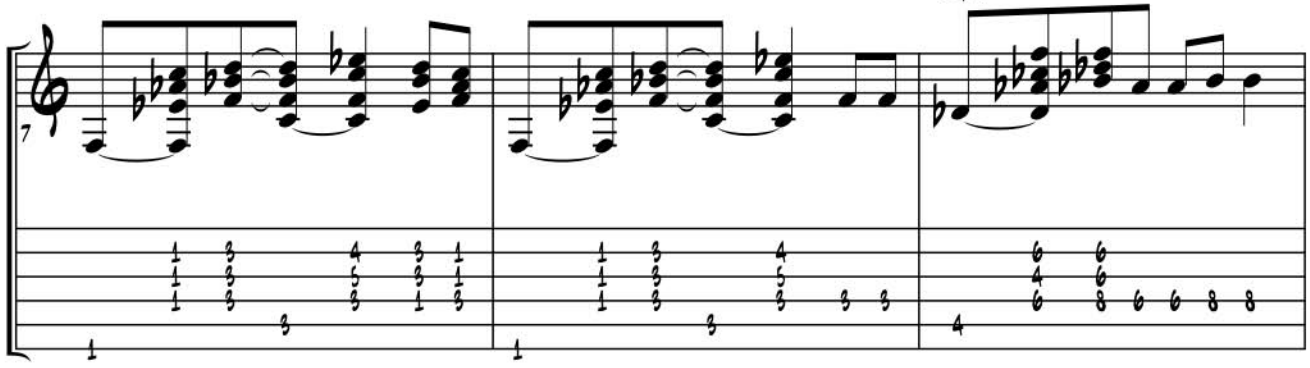
F-7

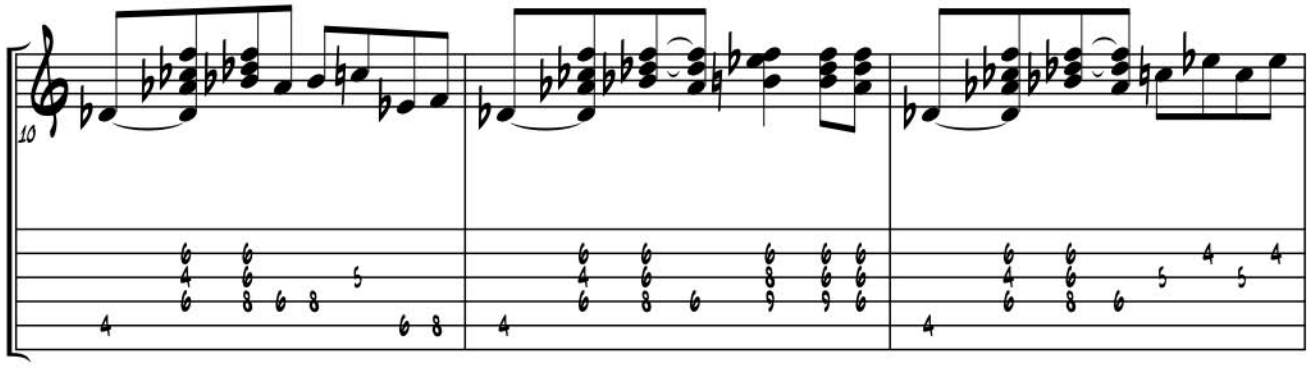


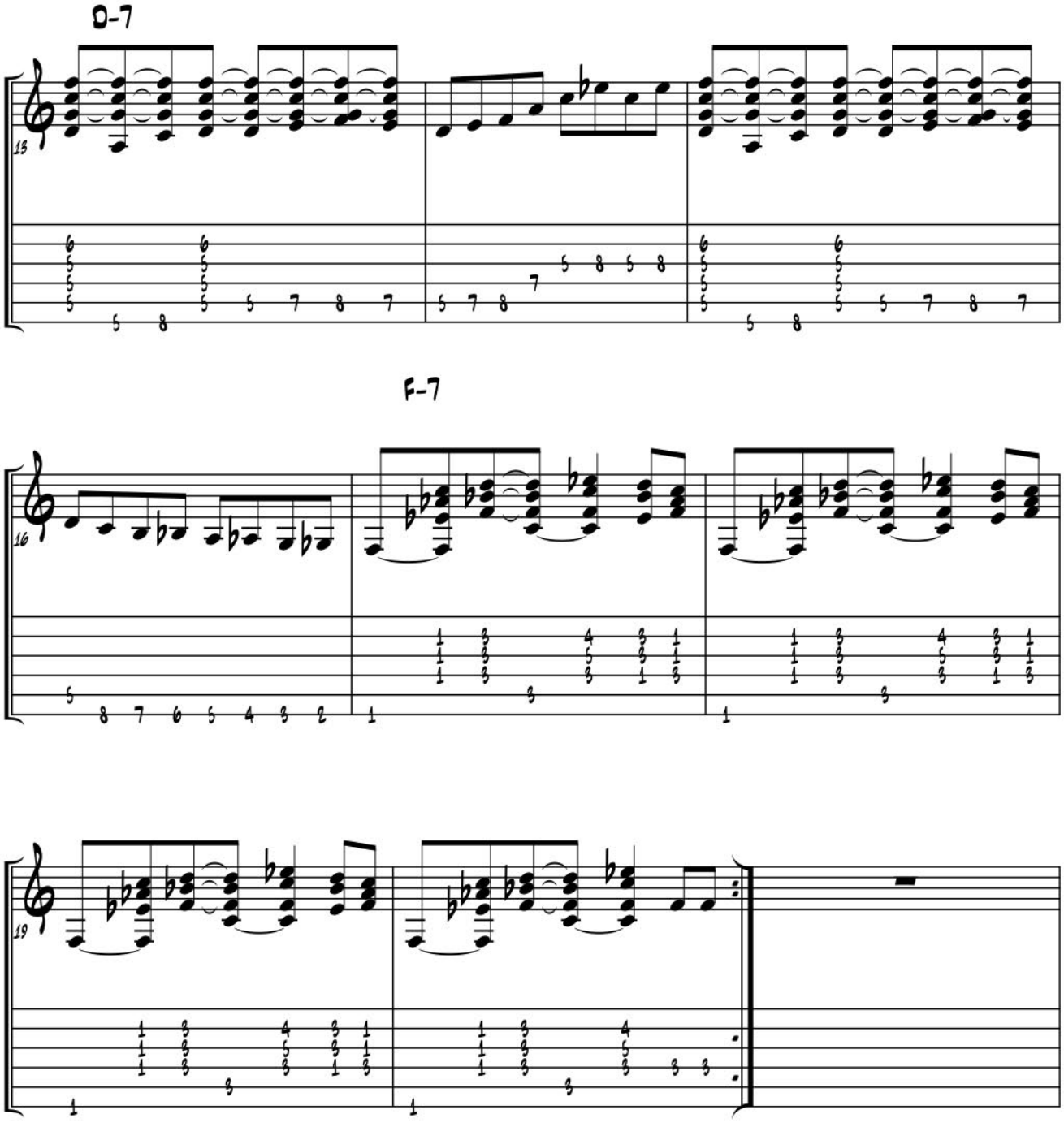
F-7



Db7





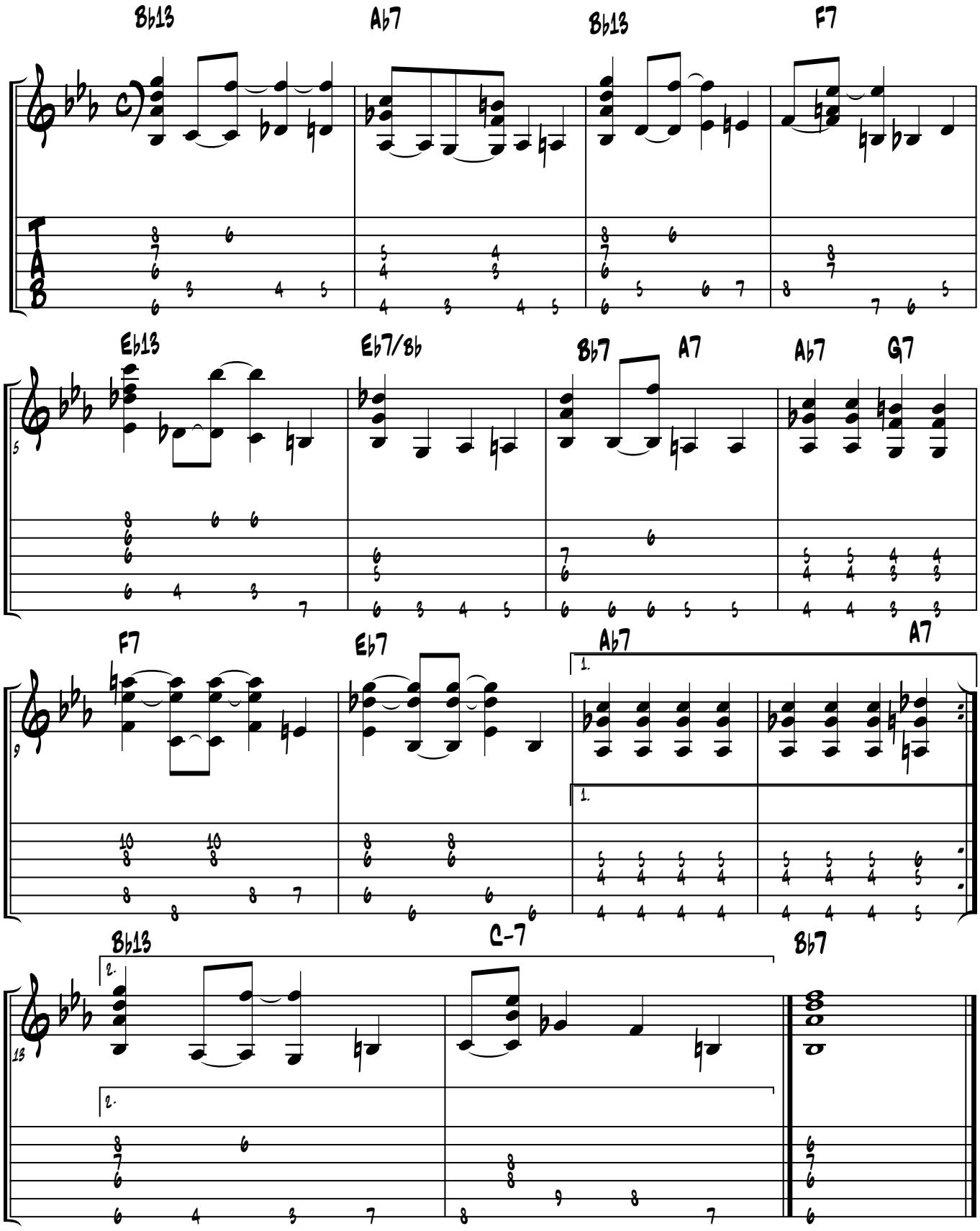

D-7
15
F-7
16
19

Freddie the Freeloader lends itself well to an accompanying walking bass line, since the melody is straightforward. If you are feeling adventurous, add the back beat by striking the bass string with the thumb at the same time as sounding the bass. This takes a little mastering but adds a nice feel. See the video clip to get an idea of how this sounds, as it was not possible to notate it.

Freddie the Freeloader

♩=120

Miles Davis

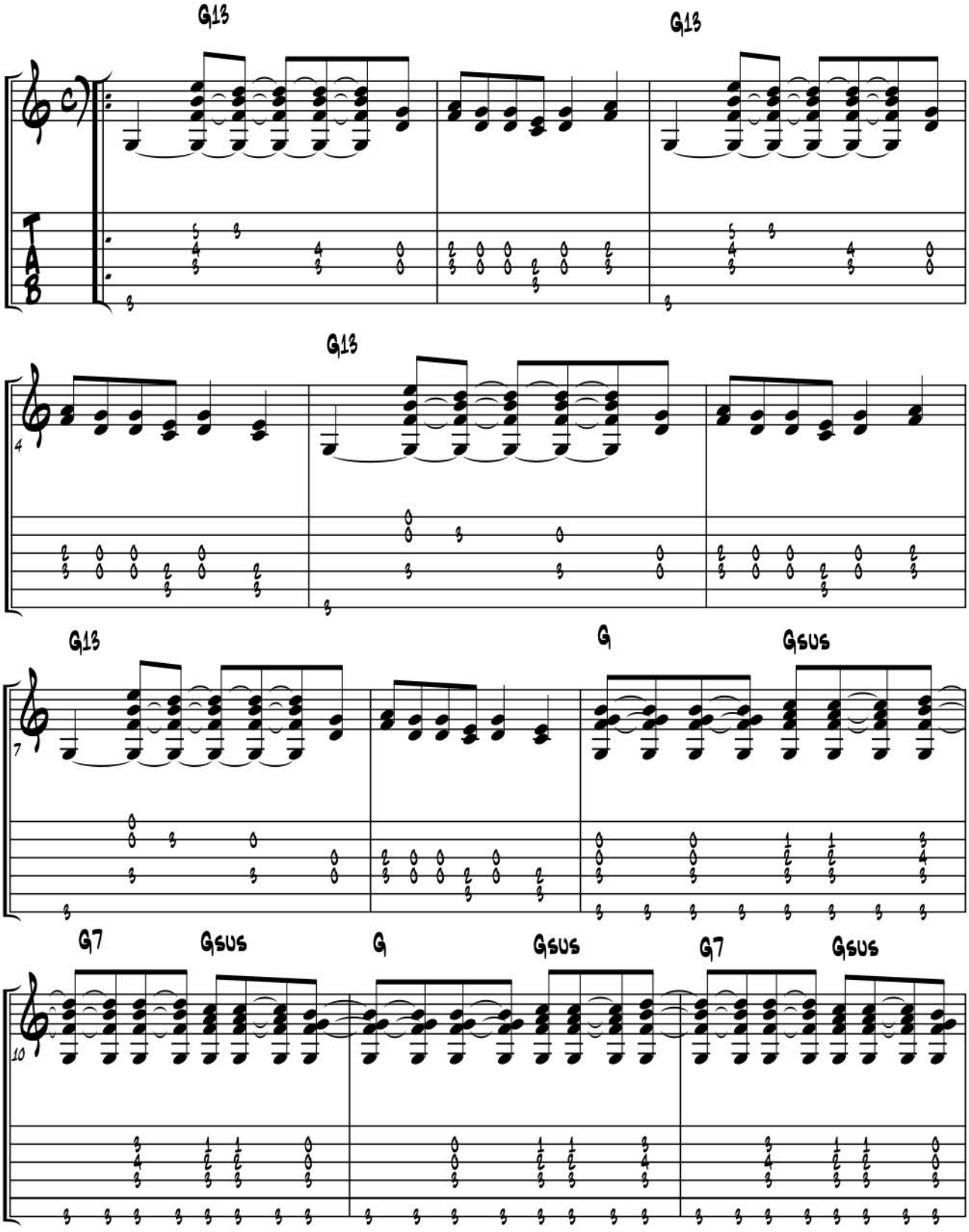


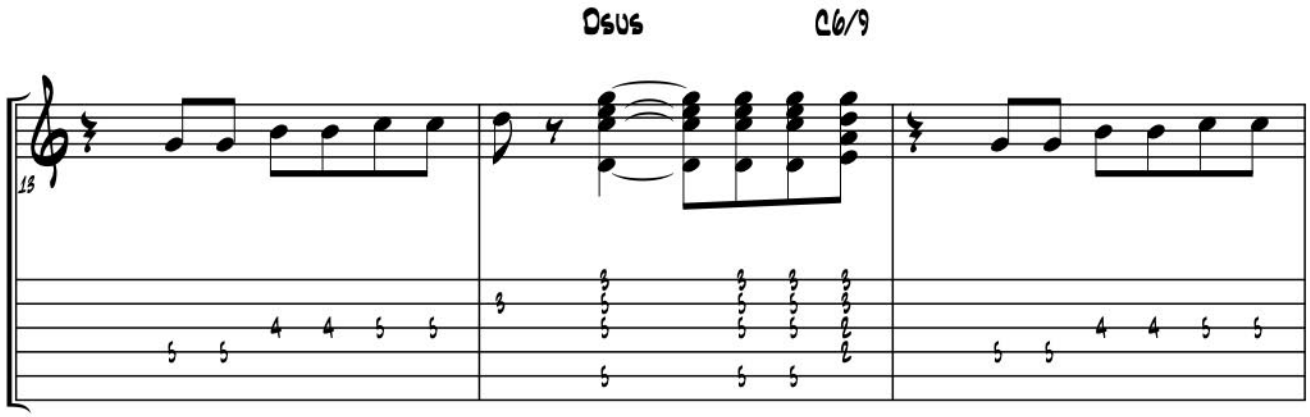
Mercy, Mercy, Mercy is rooted in Gospel, but is arranged here as a jazz rock song. It is very simple to play, and makes frequent use of stops (two note chords). The challenge is keeping the pedal bass going from bars nine to twelve, as the chords change. This is great for independent right hand development.

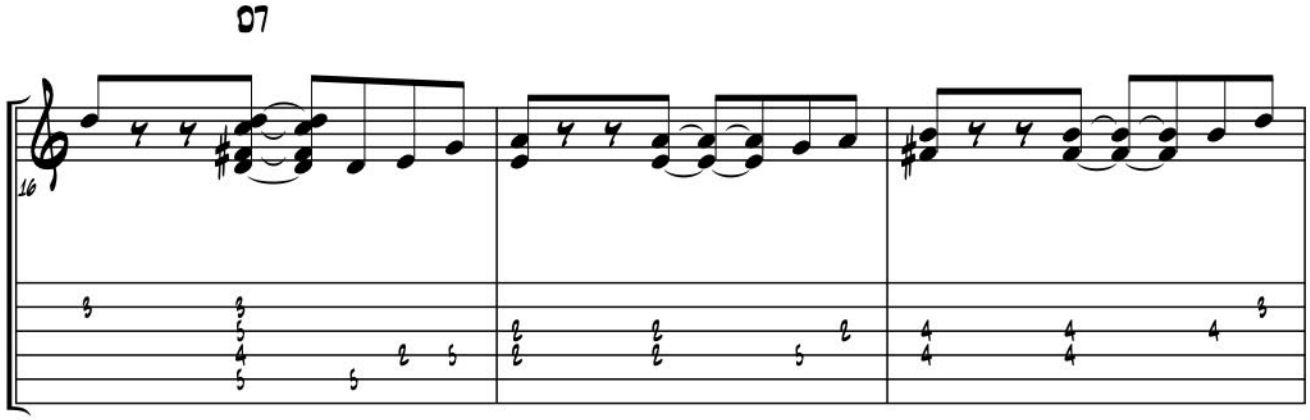
Mercy, Mercy, Mercy

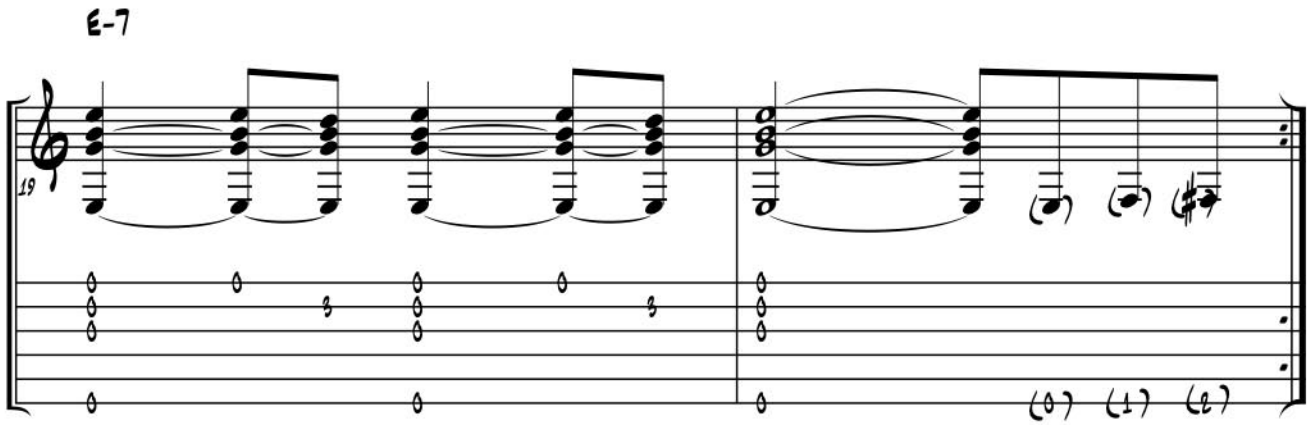
♩=100

Joe Zawinul




Dsus
C6/9
13


D7
16

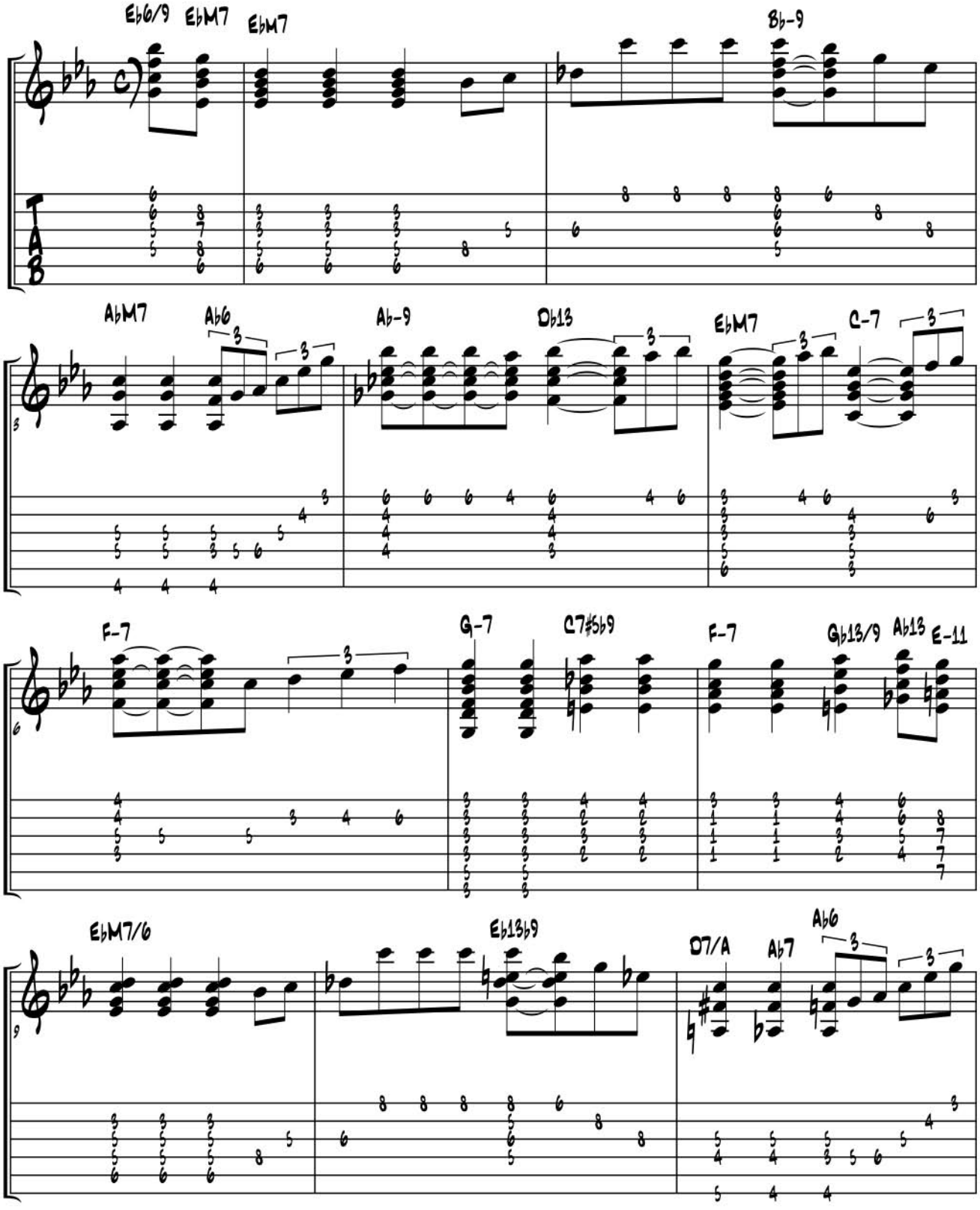

E-7
19

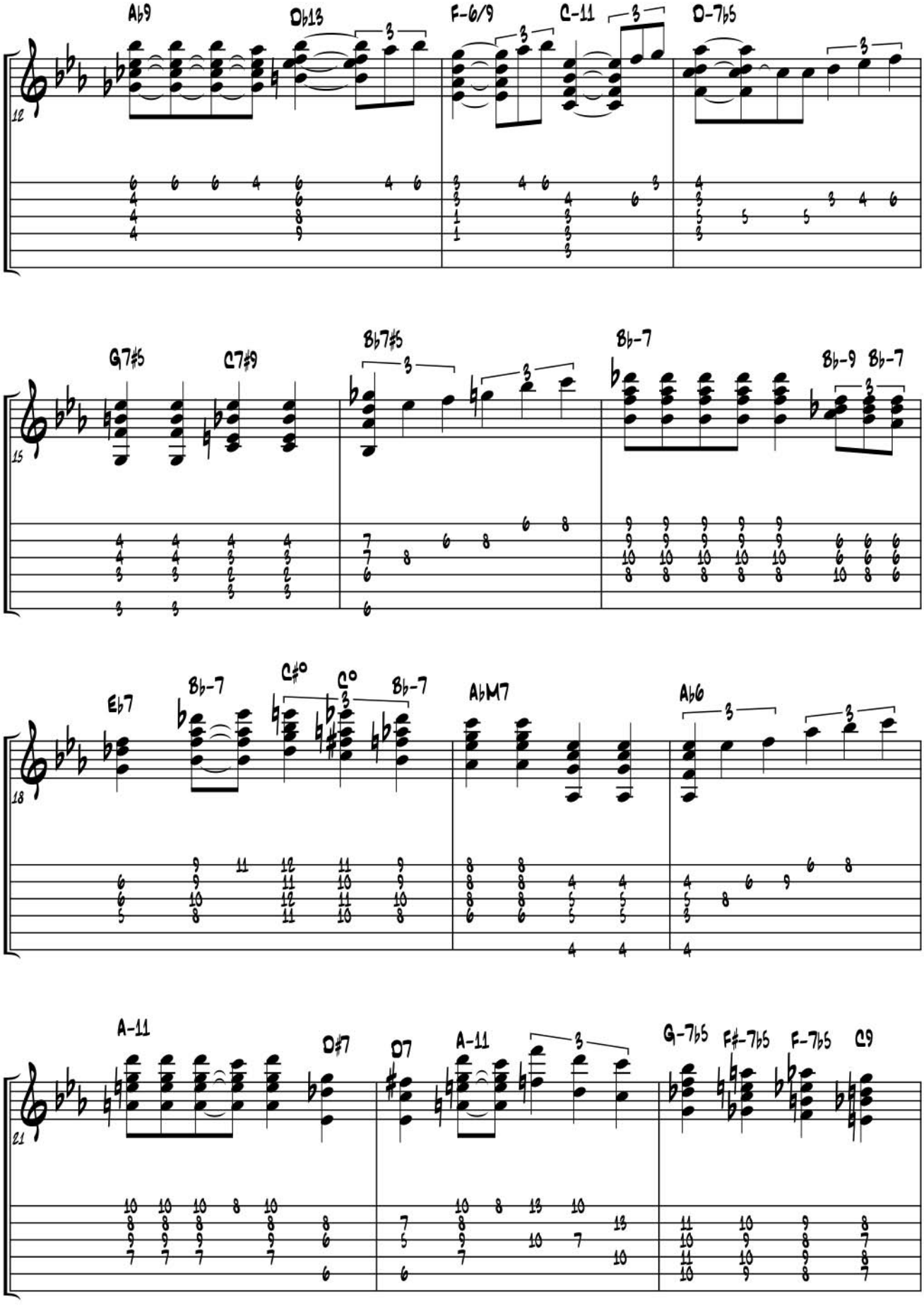
Misty is a classic ballad and is easy to play as a chord melody because the notes fall right under the chords. However, I have spiced things up by using substitutes in the “A” section, which become increasingly harmonically more complex. This arrangement is to be played with a plectrum.

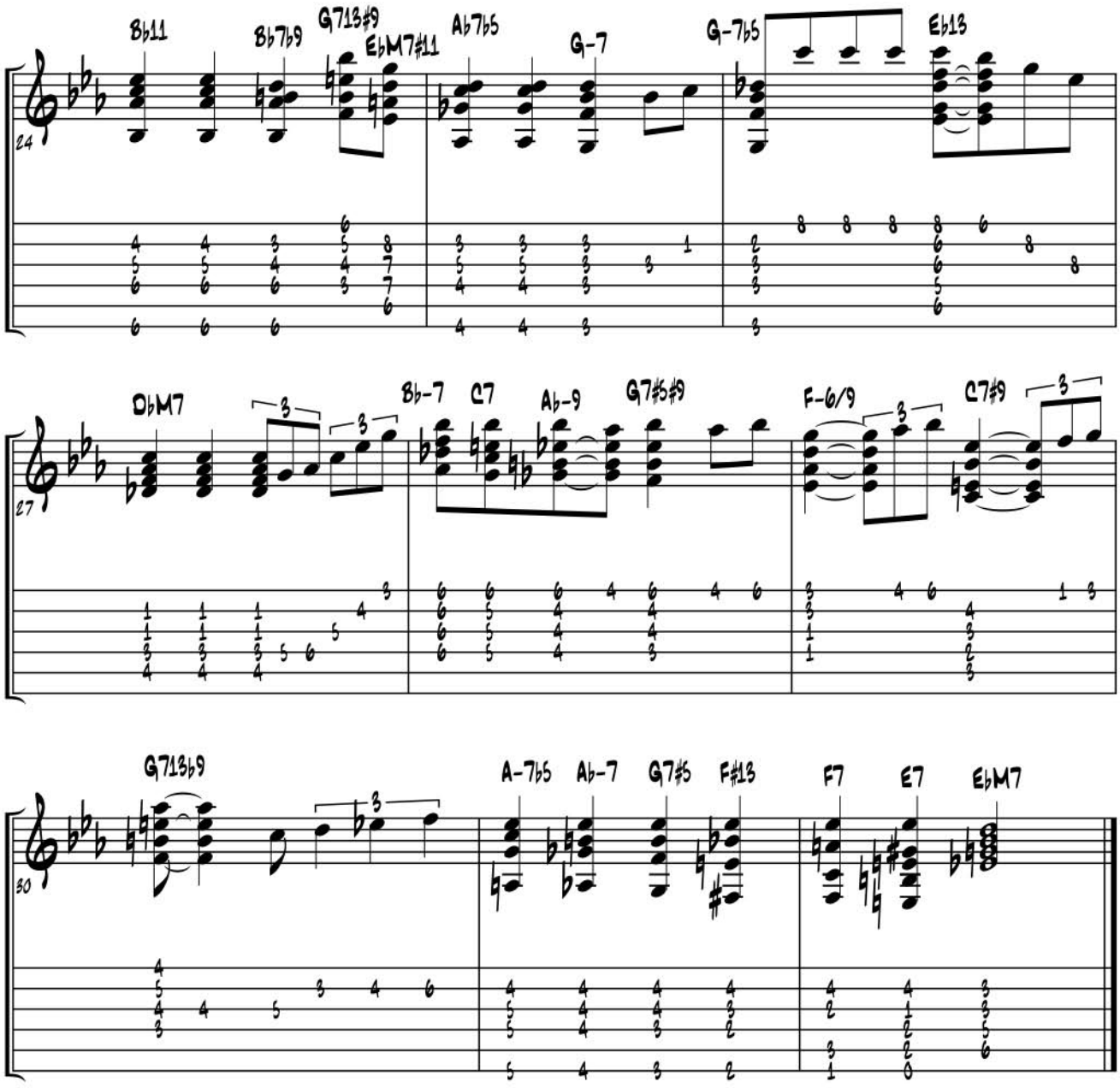
Misty

♩=70

Errol Garner




Ab9
Db13
F-6/9
C-11
D-7b5
12
G7#5
C7#9
Bb7#5
Bb-7
Bb-9
Bb-7
15
Eb7
Bb-7
C#°
C°
Bb-7
AbM7
Ab6
18
A-11
D#7
D7
A-11
G-7b5
F#-7b5
F-7b5
C9
21

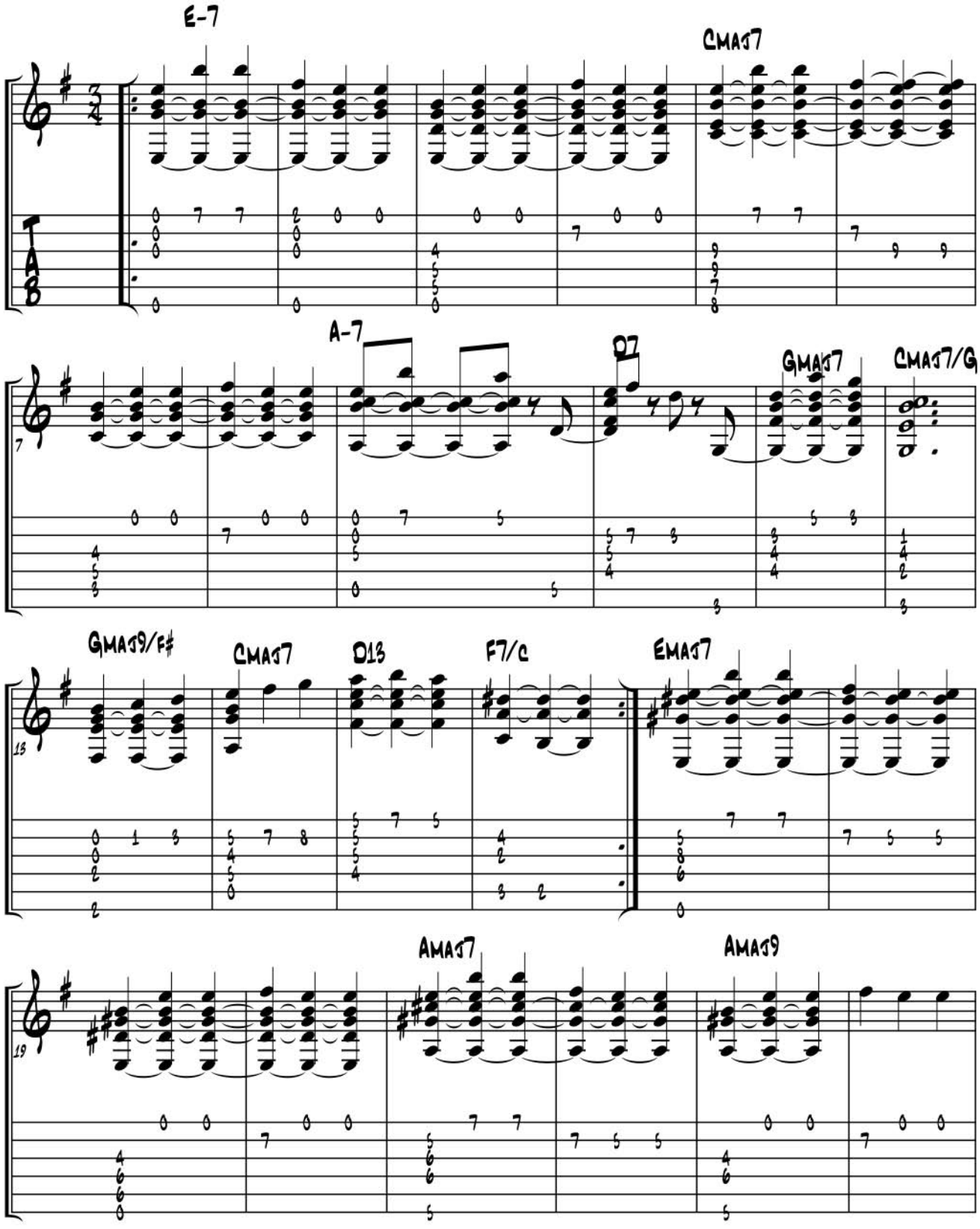

24
Bb11
Bb7b9
G713#9
EbM7#11
Ab7b5
G-7
G-7b5
Eb13
27
DbM7
Bb-7
C7
Ab-9
G7#5#9
F-6/9
C7#9
30
G713b9
A-7b5
Ab-7
G7#5
F#13
F7
E7
EbM7

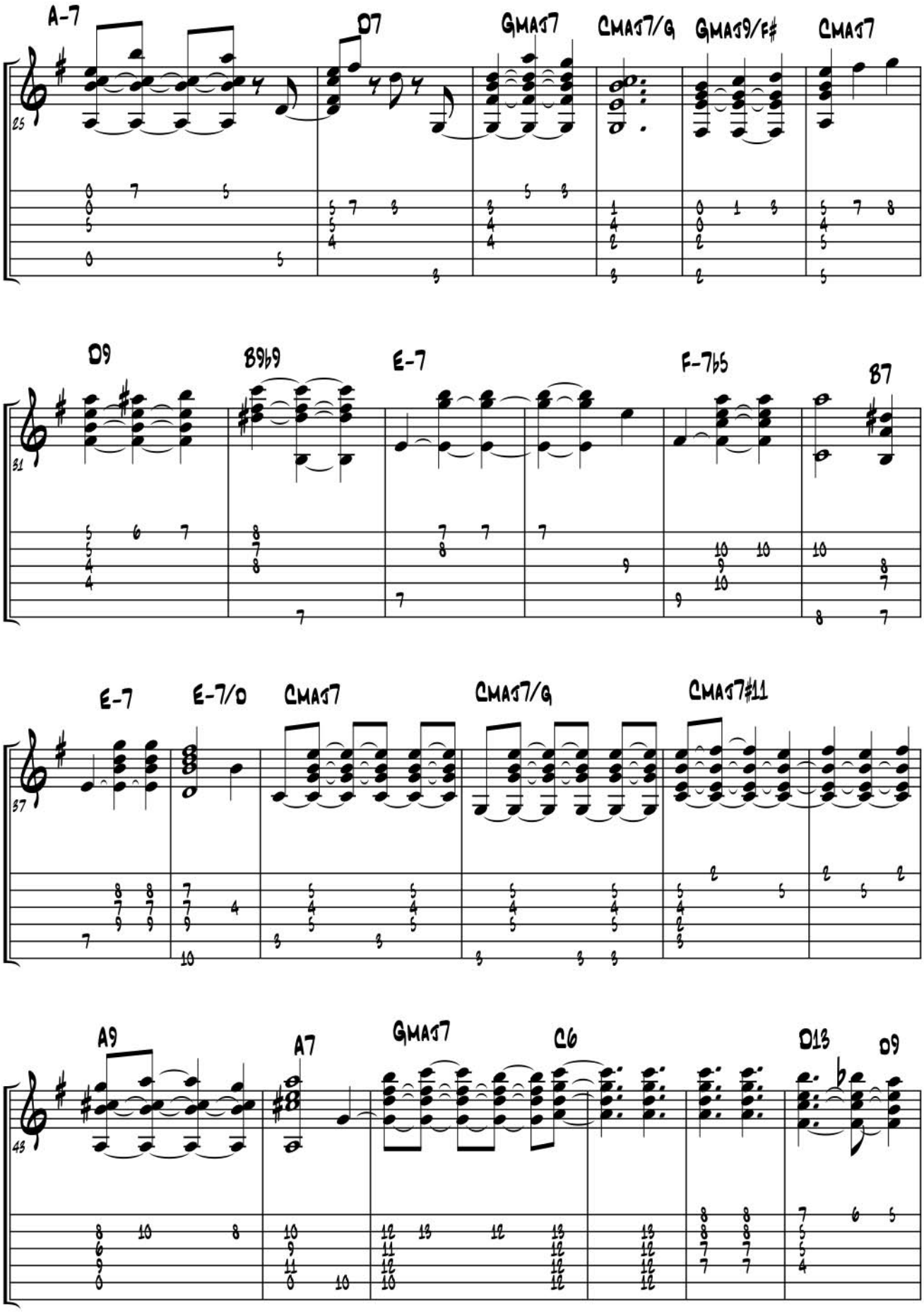
My Favourite Things is possibly a more challenging arrangement. A swing feel is difficult to achieve with parts of the tune, but I have added some interesting harmonisations, and open string voicings to give a more contemporary feel. False harmonics can be used in the opening bar (not notated, see video).

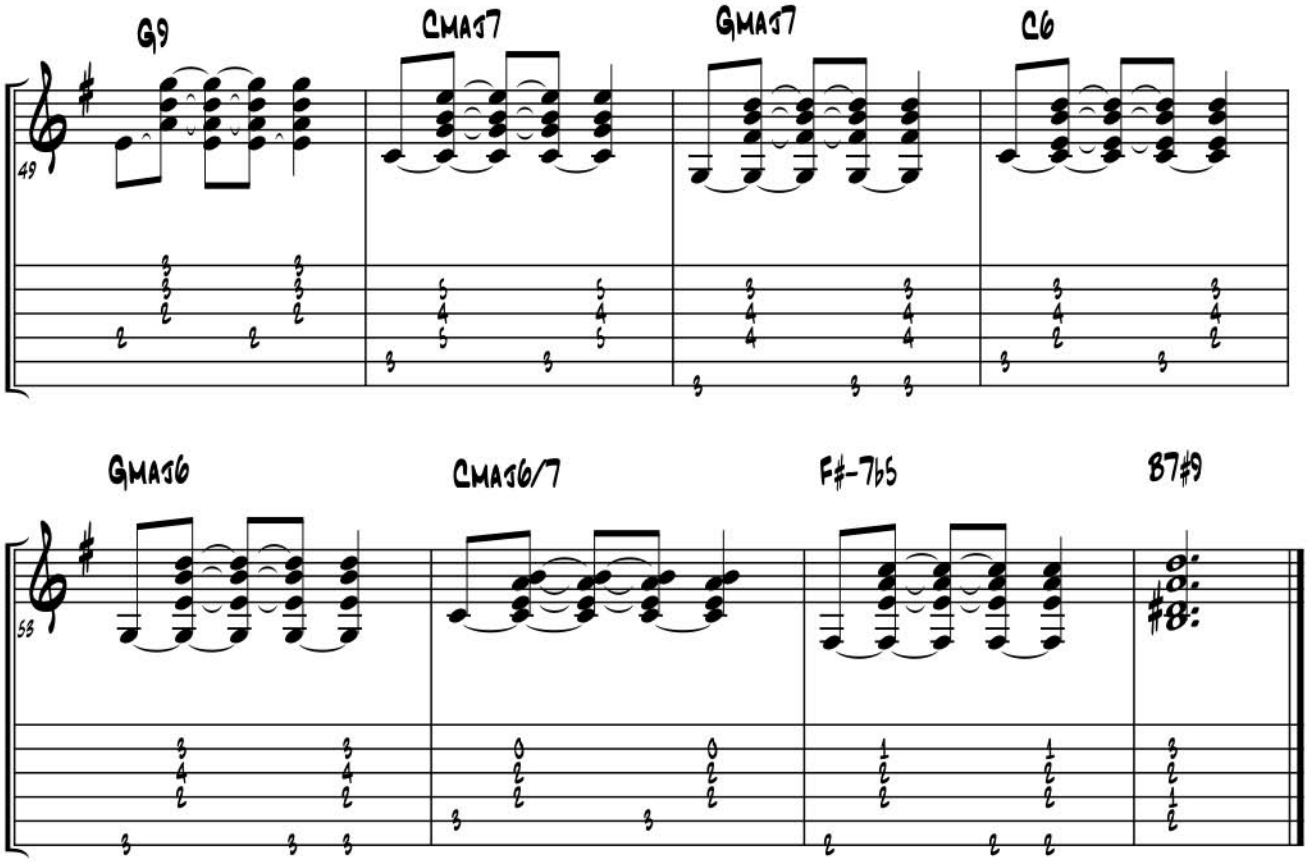
My Favourite Things

♩=130

Oscar Hammerstein




A-7
D7
GMAJ7
CMAJ7/G
GMAJ9/F#
CMAJ7
25
D9
B9b9
E-7
F-7b5
B7
31
E-7
E-7/D
CMAJ7
CMAJ7/G
CMAJ7#11
37
A9
A7
GMAJ7
C6
D13
D9
43


G9
CMAJ7
GMAJ7
C6
49

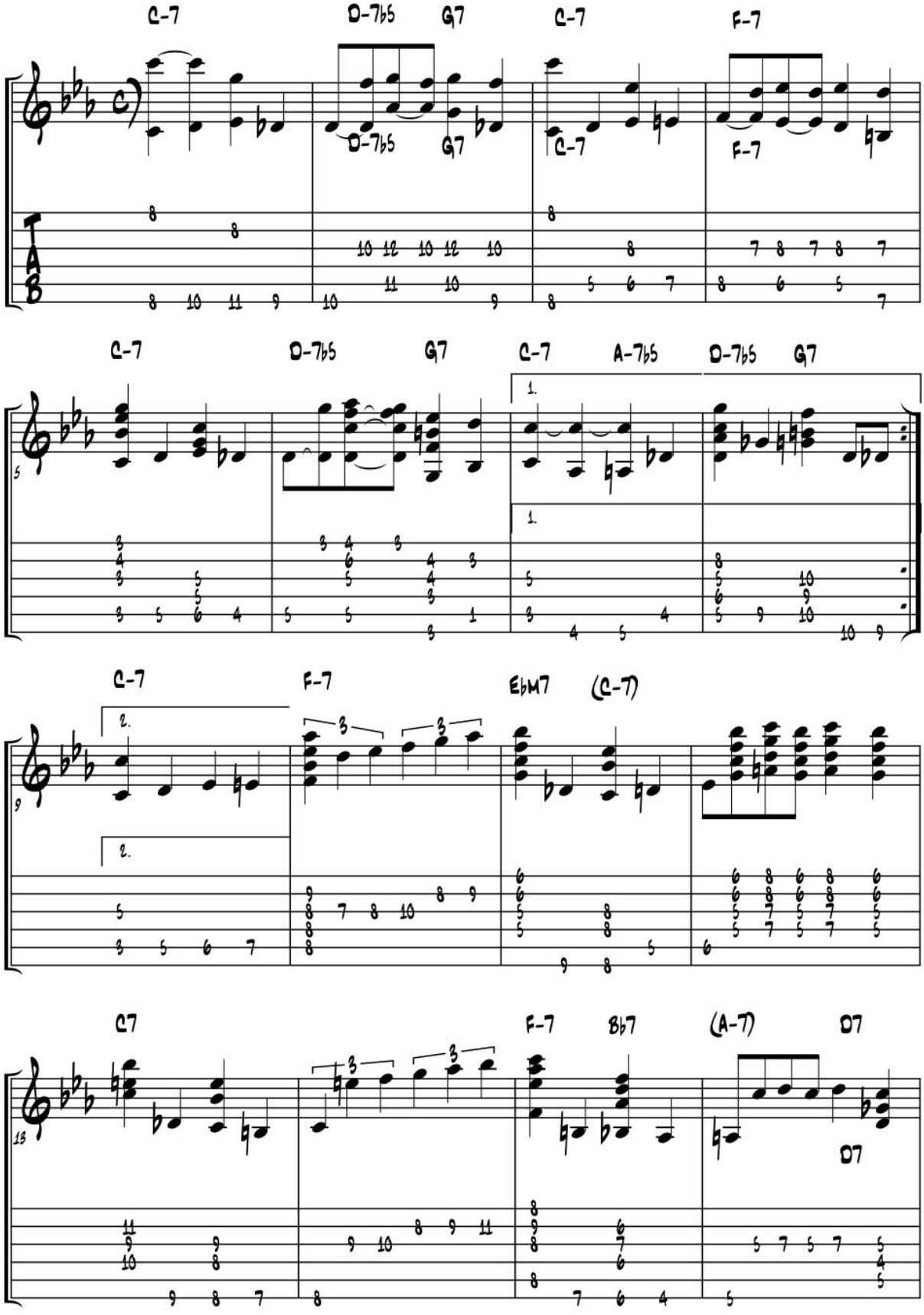
GMAJ6
CMAJ6/7
F#-7b5
B7#9
53

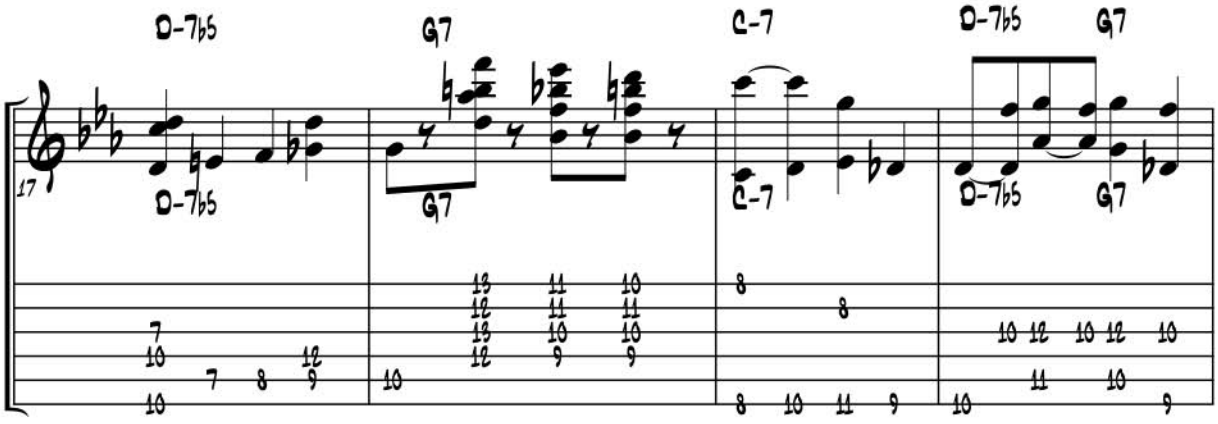
Softly as in the Morning Sunrise, is another easy melody that allows for a walking bass line. The challenge is try and keep the bass line smooth and flowing as the melody notes force the left hand into position changes up and down the fret board. This is also a great technique builder for developing walking bass line accompaniment. For ease of learning, break down the arrangement into chords, melody and bass, then when you have familiarised yourself with all parts, start piecing it together.

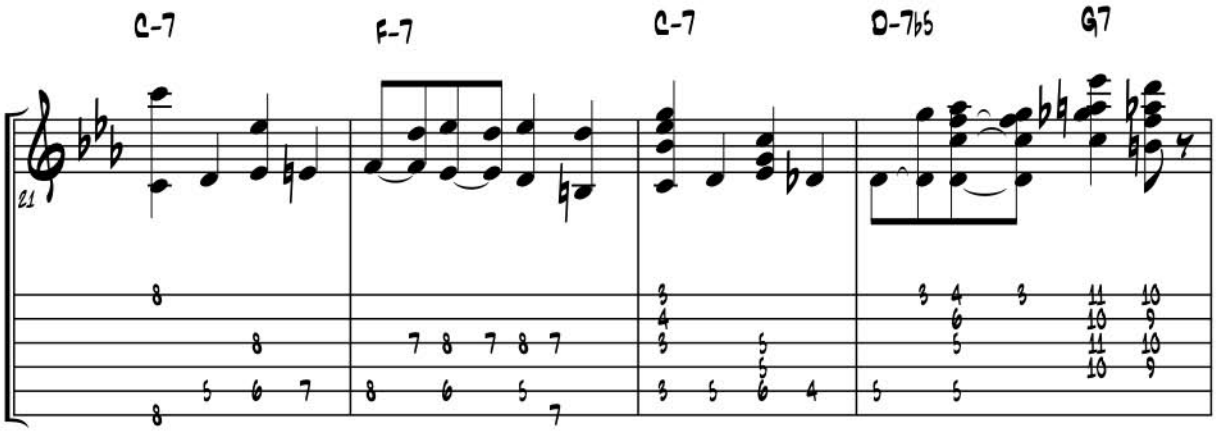
♩ = 120

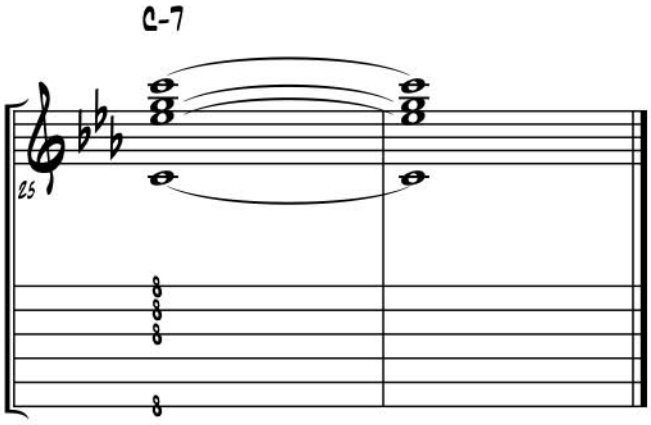
Softly, As In The Morning Sunrise

Sigmund Romberg




D-7b5
G7
C-7
D-7b5
G7
17


C-7
F-7
C-7
D-7b5
G7
21

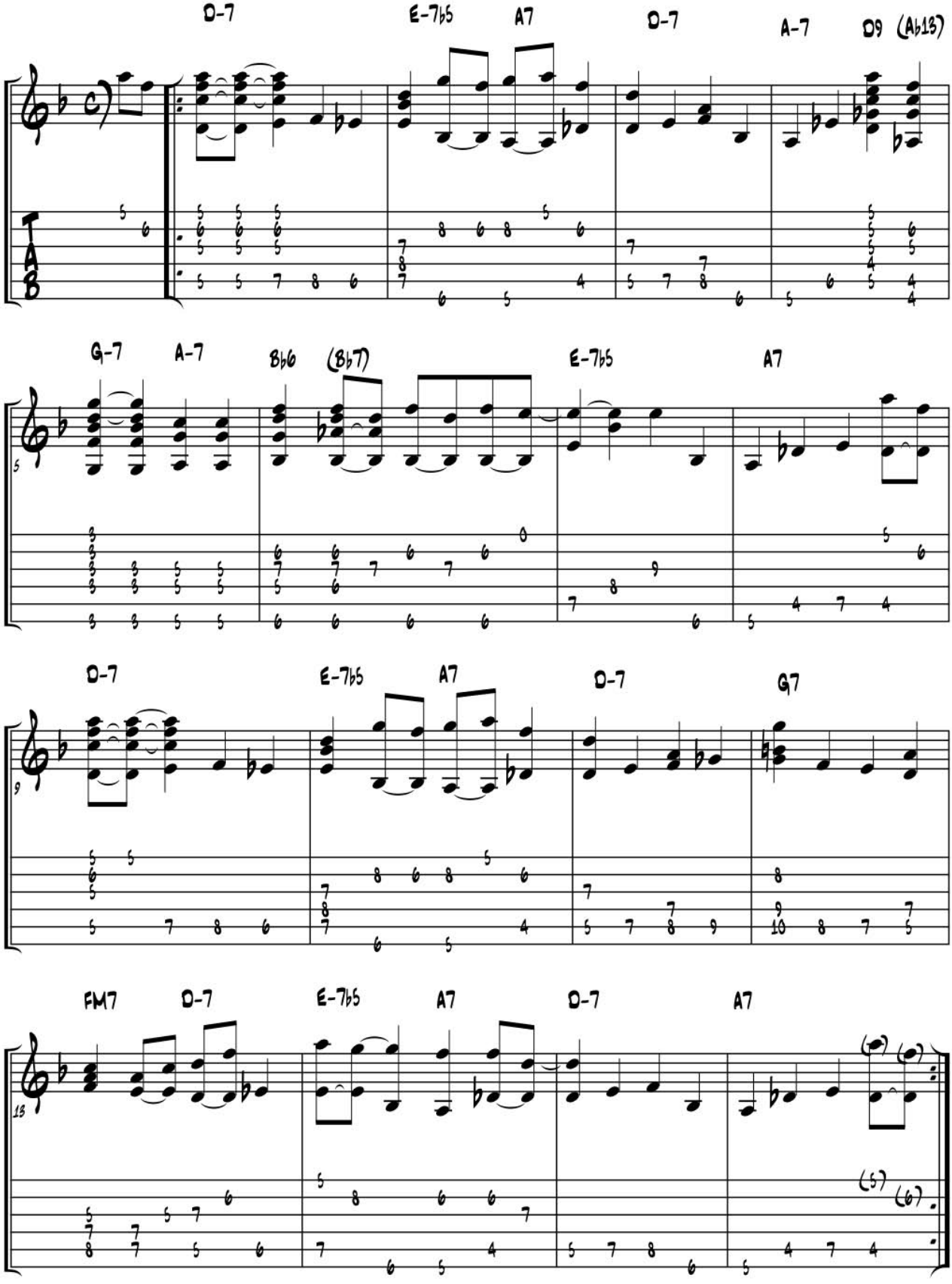

C-7
25

Summertime uses a walking bass line to keep the pulse going. The challenge is to keep it flowing but as an accompaniment to the melody, which should predominate. As with the other walking bass line arrangements learn each part —bass, chords, and melody— in isolation before attempting to play the piece as a whole. This has the huge benefit of making you analyse what is going on, as well as equipping you with techniques that can be used elsewhere.

Summertime

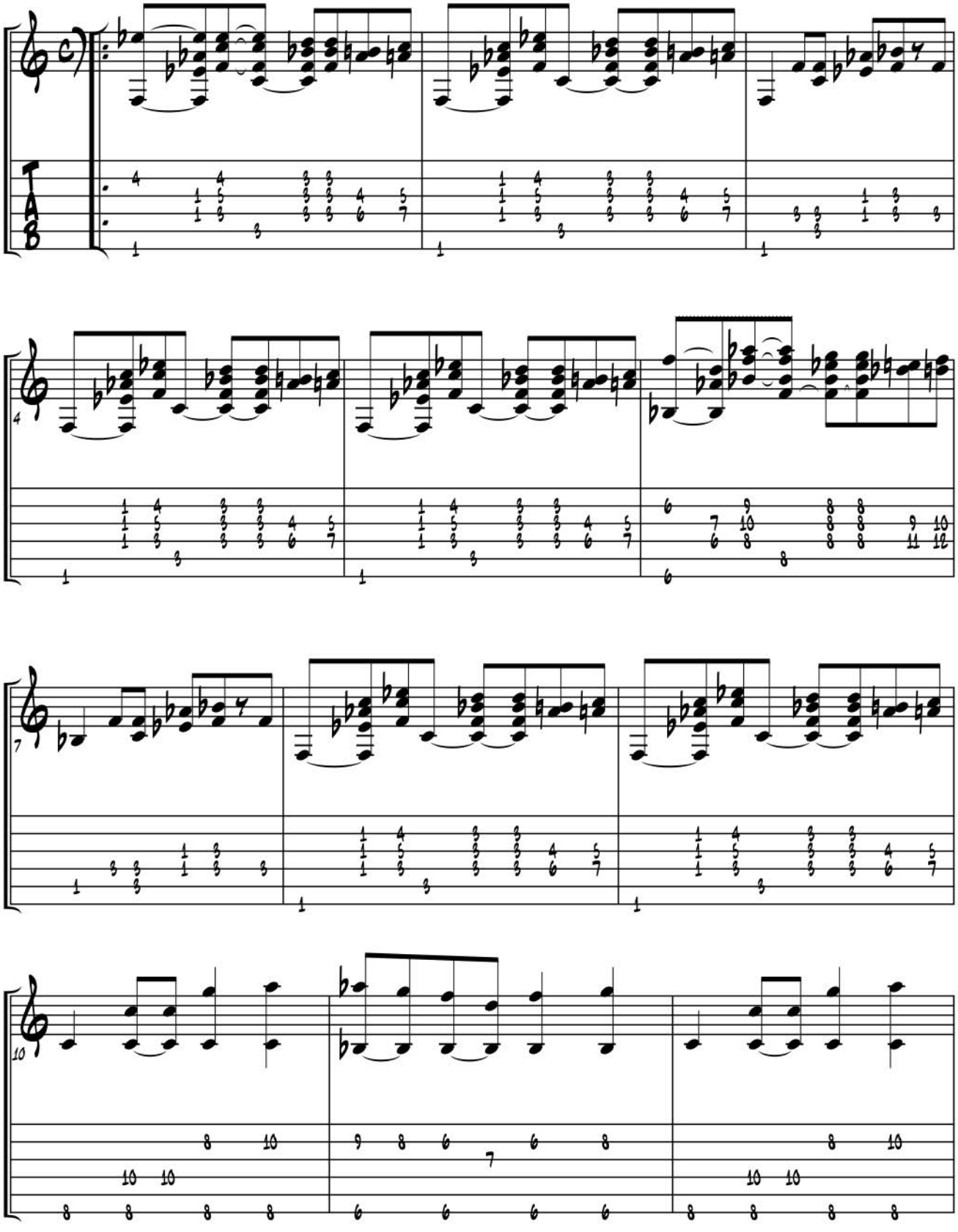
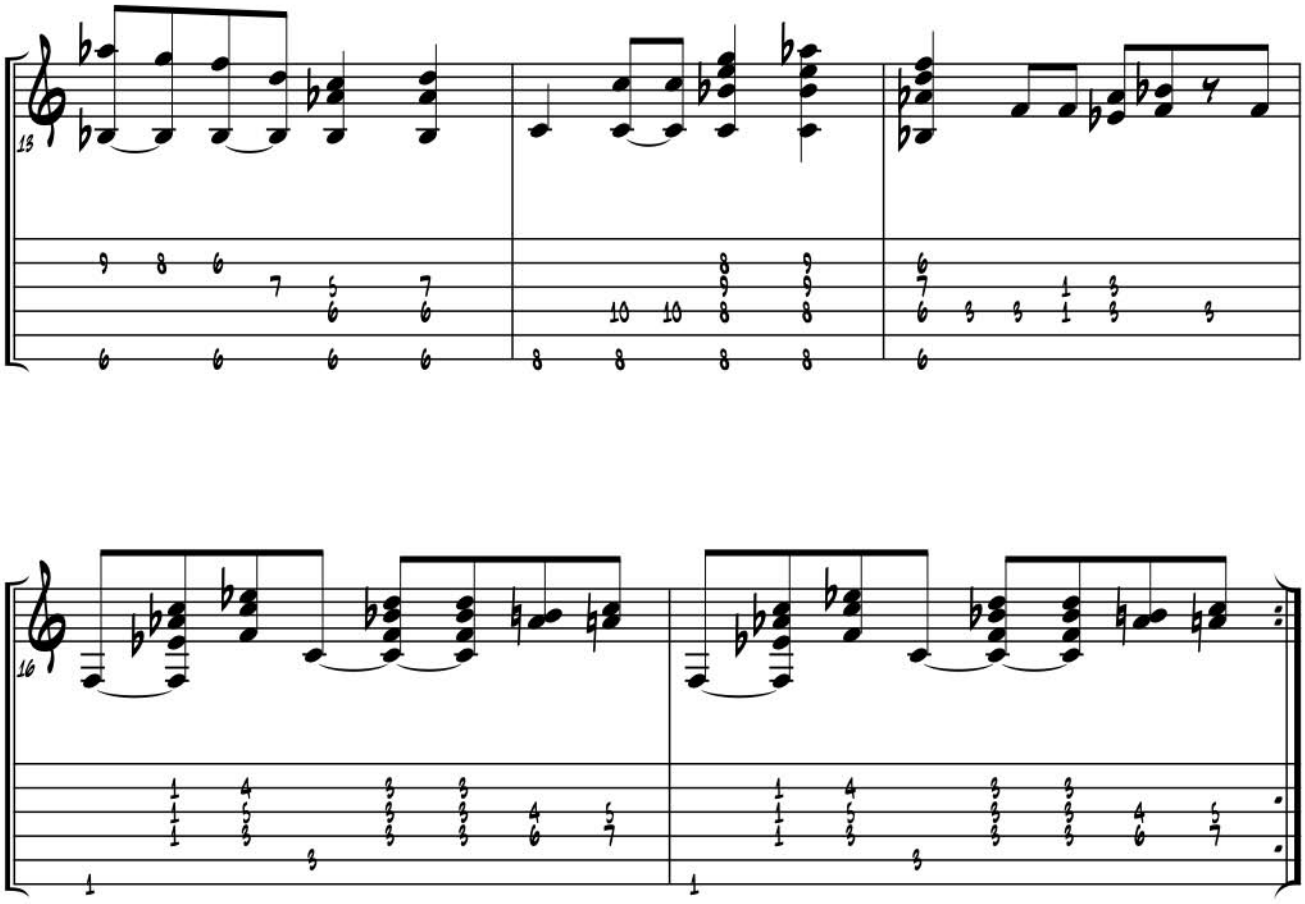
♩=120

Gershwin



Watermelon Man, is similar to Cantaloupe Island, in that a chordal riff is predominant and a simple melody sits on top. Make sure the melody notes ring out, as the temptation is to put too much emphasis on the funky groove. As with most of the arrangements in this book, learning the different parts – chords, melody, and bass– separately may make it a bit easier.

♩=120

Watermelon Man

Herbie Hancock