Queen

KEEP YOURSELF ALIVE

Words and Music by Brian May

Figure 1—Intro, Verse, and Chorus

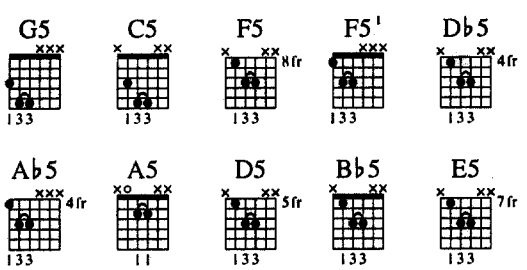
This Brian May composition, released in Summer 1973, was Queen's first single. It was also a standout track from their debut album, *Queen.* In this spirited rocker, Brian immediately establishes a driving post-Zep mood, a cappella, by means of a low-register, single-note gallop figure on F—made raspier by the scratchy sound of his serrated-edge English sixpence pick. He colors the figure with his unmistakable Vox AC-30 distortion tone, heavy palm muting, and swirling phased signal processing. (That's real tape phasing you hear on the track. According to Brian, the tape was taken off the sync head, put through a couple of delays, and then returned to the playback head.)

After four measures, the rhythm figure is moved from F to A, and at that point, a two-guitar texture is heard. Gtr. 1 continues the galloping rhythm, now in octaves, while Gtr. 2 begins doubling the figure loosely and then introduces a bluesy bent-dyad riff. Here, Brian applies the same two-string bending approach favored by T-Bone Walker, popularized by Chuck Berry, and seized by practically every rock guitarist since.

The verse (0:36) finds Brian again resorting to a palm-muted gallop figure on the low strings, punctuated by power chords. Note the unusual chord progression in this section. The F, B♭, and C chords in the first five measures are normal I, IV, and V chords in F, but Brian gives us a harmonic surprise in measures 19 and 20 when he abruptly moves through D♭ and A♭ (borrowed from the parallel minor, F minor). It is this sort of sophisticated and unexpected movement in a rock composition that distinguishes many a noteworthy Queen song and is a hallmark of their unique style.

The chorus (1:04) provides another harmonic surprise. This time the tune modulates to the key of D major for its catchy main theme. Note that Brian cleverly begins to weave in his signature guitar orchestration with a tasty A7 arpeggio line (Fill 1, Gtr. 3) to lead into the section. Another Queen trademark is found in measure 25, where Brian (Gtr. 1) plays a descending, low-register counterline that complements the upper melody played by Gtr. 2 in the arrangement. This creates an orchestral, melodic sound that effectively contrasts the more predictable and common power-chord texture heard just previously. Clearly, Brian was thinking and recording orchestrally as far back as their first record.

Fig.

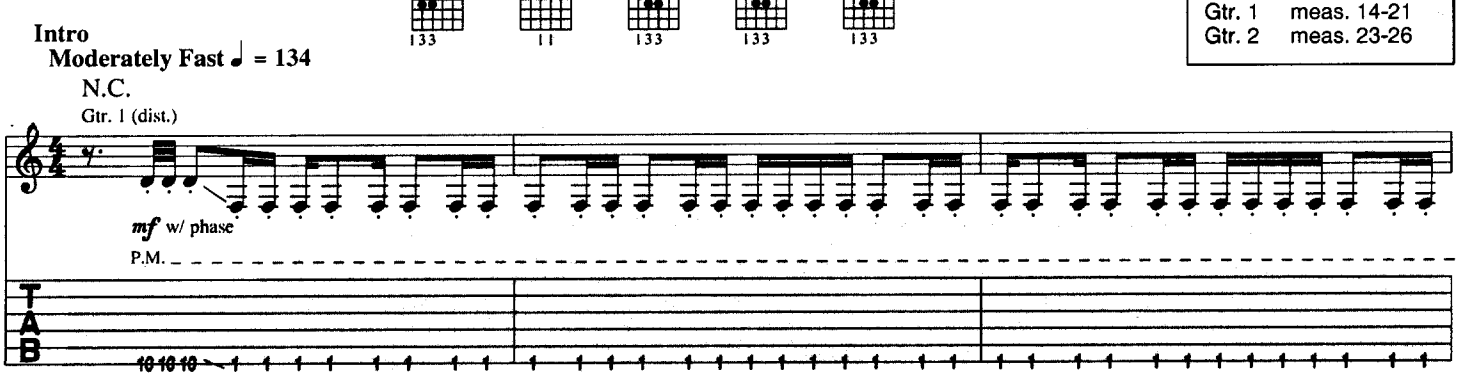


3 Featured Guitars (right channel on audio)

Gtr. 1	meas. 1-4
Gtr. 2	meas. 5-13
Gtr. 1	meas. 14-22
Gtr. 2	meas. 23-26

4 Slow Demos

Gtr. 1	meas. 1-4
Gtr. 2	meas. 7-8
Gtr. 1	meas. 14-21
Gtr. 2	meas. 23-26



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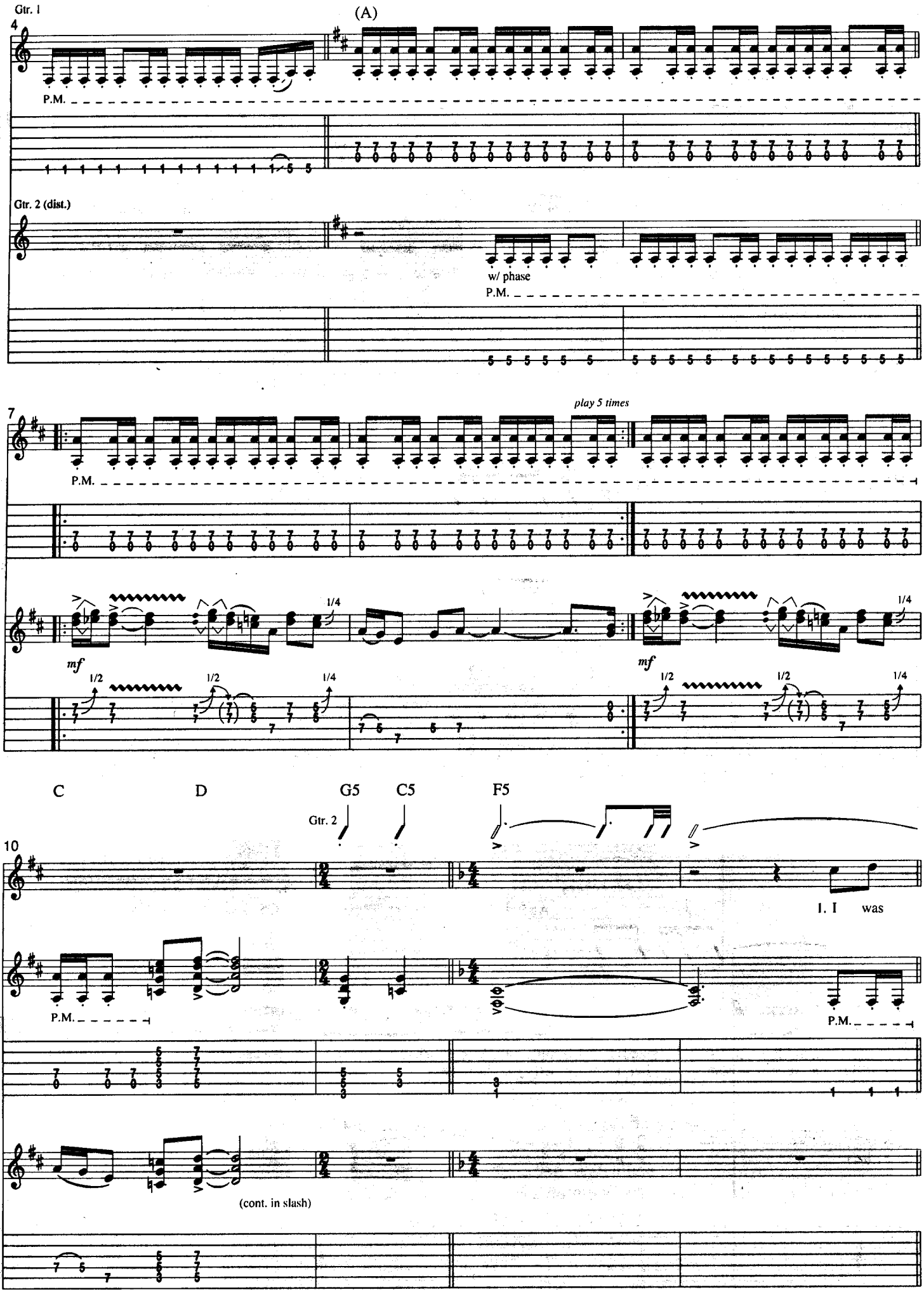

Gtr. 1
(A)
P.M.
Gtr. 2 (dist.)
w/ phase
P.M.
play 5 times
P.M.
mf
1/2
1/4
mf
C
D
G5
C5
F5
Gtr. 2
I. I was
P.M.
P.M.
(cont. in slash)

Verse 0:36

F5

Gtr. 2 tacet
N.C.(B♭)

(F)

14

told a mil-lion times _ of all the trou - bles in my _ way, tried to grow a lit - tle wis - er lit-tle
sold a mil-lion mir - rors in a shop in Al - ley_Way, but I nev - er saw my face in an - y

Gtr. 1

P.M.
simile on repeats

* Played behind the beat.

Gtr. 2

F5

C5

P.M.

17

bet - ter ev - 'ry day. _ But if I crossed a mil-lion riv - ers an' I rode _
win-dow, an - y day. _ Well, they say your folks are tell - ing you,

P.M.

* Played ahead of the beat.

A♭5

C5

F5

19

_ a mil-lion miles _ then I'd still be where I start - ed, bread an' but-ter for _ a smile. _ Well, I
"Be a su-per - star," but I tell you just be sa - tis - fied and

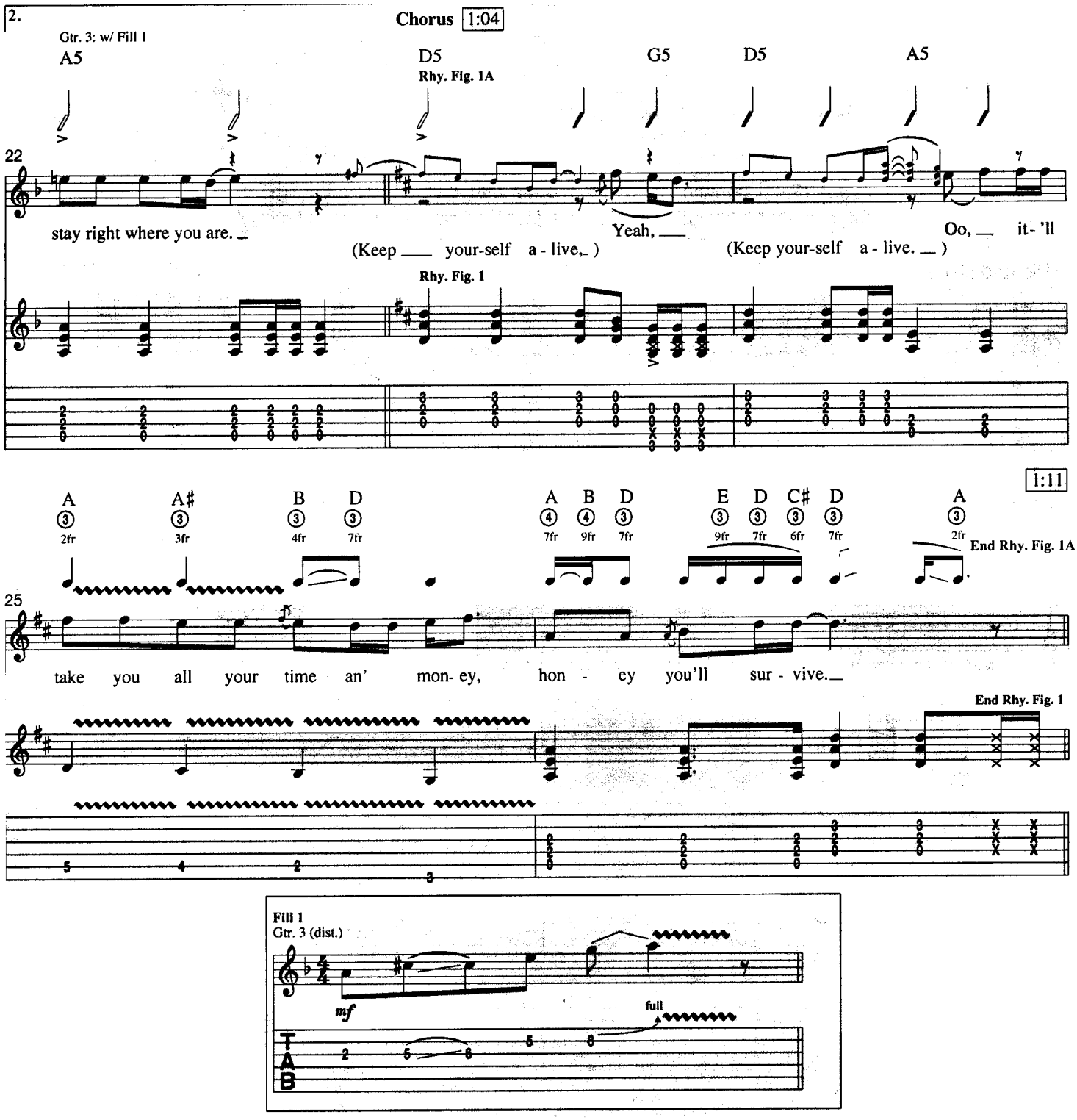


Figure 2—Guitar Solo and Chorus

"Keep Yourself Alive" introduced the world to the singular multi-guitar layering talents of Brian May. May's take on overdubbing and arranging guitar voices was distinct from that of his predecessors. Compared with Jimmy Page's strategies, which resulted in a guitar army, Brian's produced a complex web of sounds which were more akin to a guitar choir or a guitar orchestra. This solo is a case in point.

Brian begins at 2:30 with Gtrs. 2, 5, and 6 as an ensemble group. With these three guitars he develops a triadic texture that effectively balances *parallel harmony* with *counterpoint*. Notice the different types of motion, both rhythmic and melodic. Especially noteworthy is measure 3, where Gtrs. 5 and 6 move in contrary melodic motion, while Gtr. 2 seems to have a separate melody that still manages to harmonize with the lower guitars at crucial points in the line. (Notice that Gtr. 2 generally has lead-type independence

though it is definitely part of the three-part harmony.) In measure 4, a second battery of guitars, Gtrs. 3 and 4, creates a counterpoint figure in two-part harmony that is maintained throughout the rest of the solo. This duet is voiced in thirds. Beneath all of this, Gtr. 1 plays heavy power chords in accompaniment.

Brian's tone is unique and immediately recognizable in these sections. He used a custom preamp, built by bassist John Deacon, plus his signature Vox AC-30 for the harmony guitar passages.

The ensuing chorus (2:44) contains a definitive Brian May parallel-harmony figure. Played by three guitars in measures 19 and 20, it is a climbing melody voiced in first inversion triads. Check out the combination of diatonic and chromatic melody in this dramatic and climactic phrase.

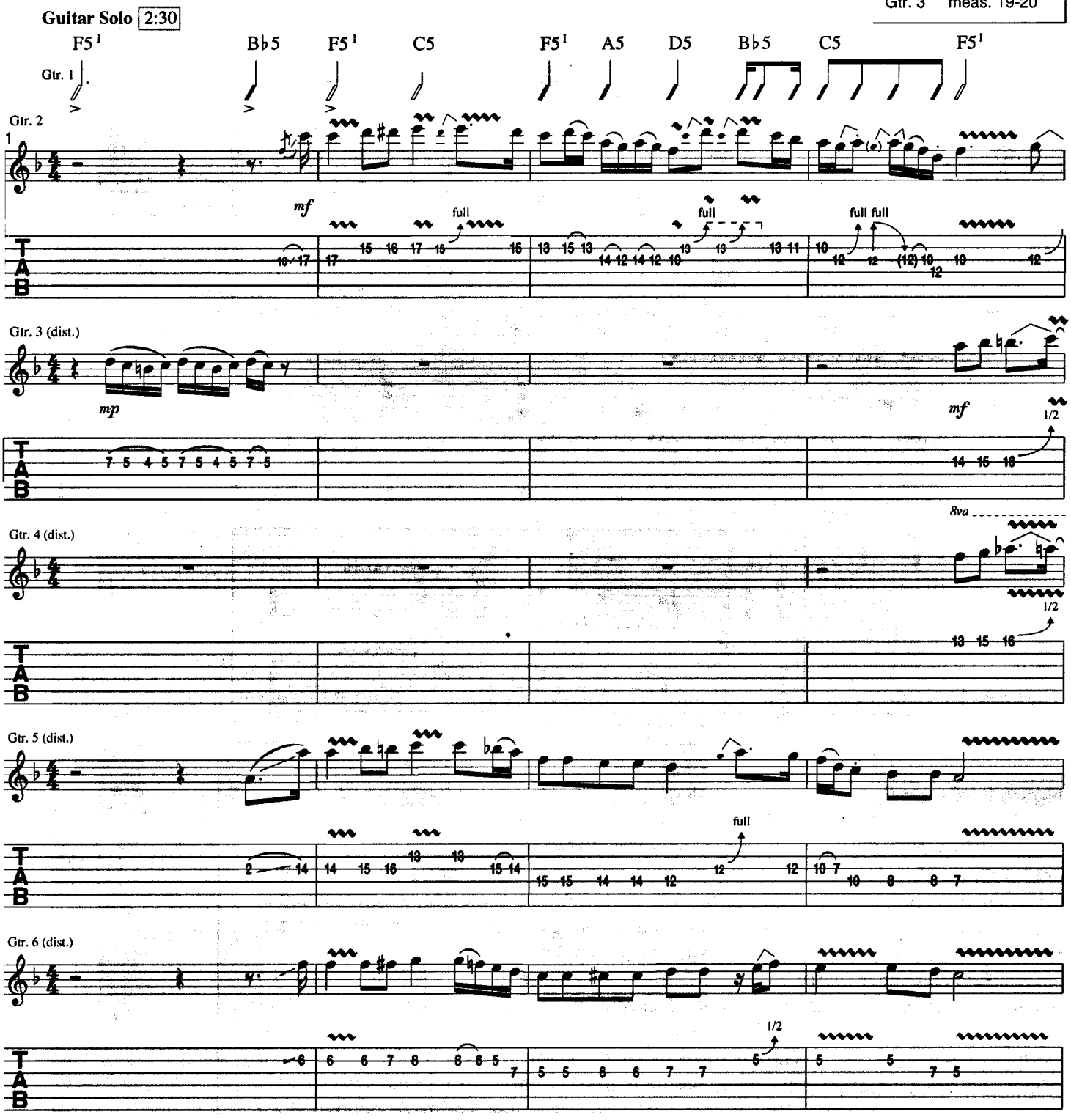
5

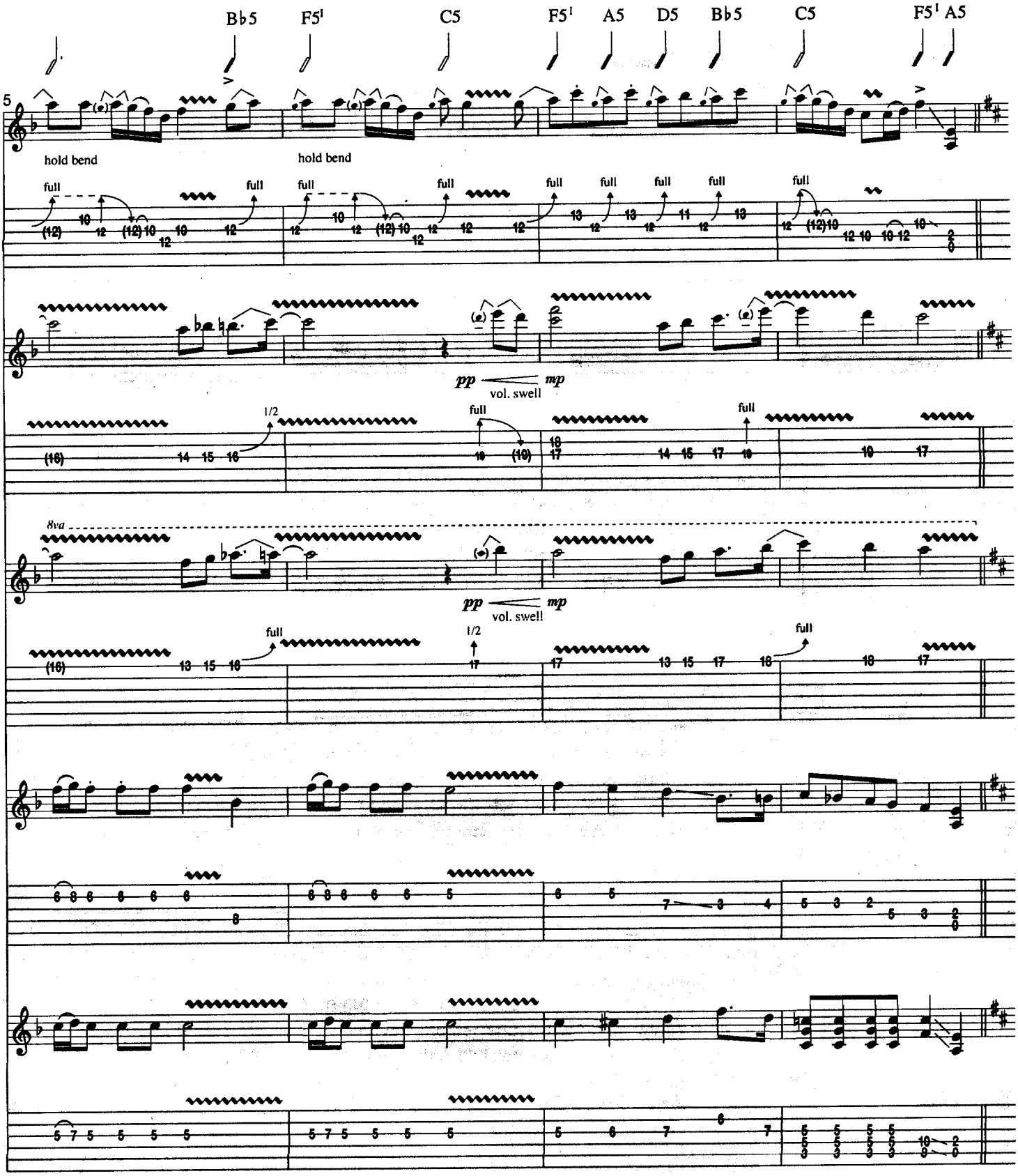
6

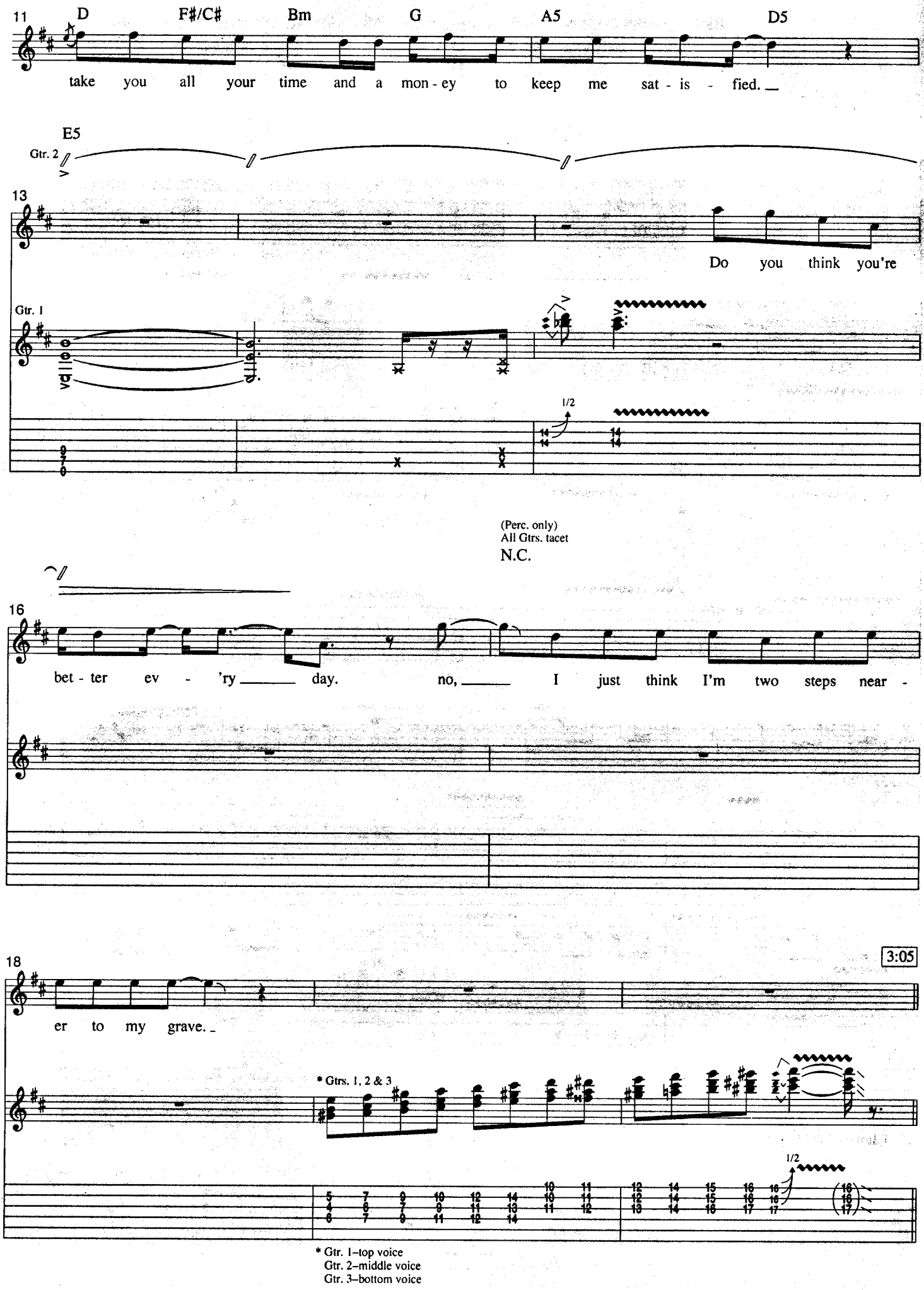
Featured Guitars
Gtr. 2 meas. 1-13
Gtr. 1 meas. 14-20

Slow Demos
Gtr. 2 meas. 1-8
Gtr. 1 meas. 19-20
Gtr. 2 meas. 19-20
Gtr. 3 meas. 19-20

Fig. 2




B♭5
F5¹
C5
F5¹
A5
D5
B♭5
C5
F5¹ A5
5
hold bend
hold bend
full
pp
mp
vol. swell
1/2
8va
Chorus 2:44
Gtrs. 1 & 2: w/ Rhy. Figs. 1 & 1A, simile
D5
G5
D5
A5
9
(Keep your self a - live, __
Whoa, ____
Keep your - self a - live. ____
oh, ____)


11
D
F♯/C♯
Bm
G
A5
D5
take you all your time and a mon - ey to keep me sat - is - fied.
E5
Gtr. 2
13
Do you think you're
Gtr. 1
1/2
(Perc. only)
All Gtrs. tacet
N.C.
16
bet - ter ev - 'ry day. no, I just think I'm two steps near -
18
3:05
er to my grave.
* Gtrs. 1, 2 & 3
1/2
* Gtr. 1–top voice
Gtr. 2–middle voice
Gtr. 3–bottom voice

Doing Alright

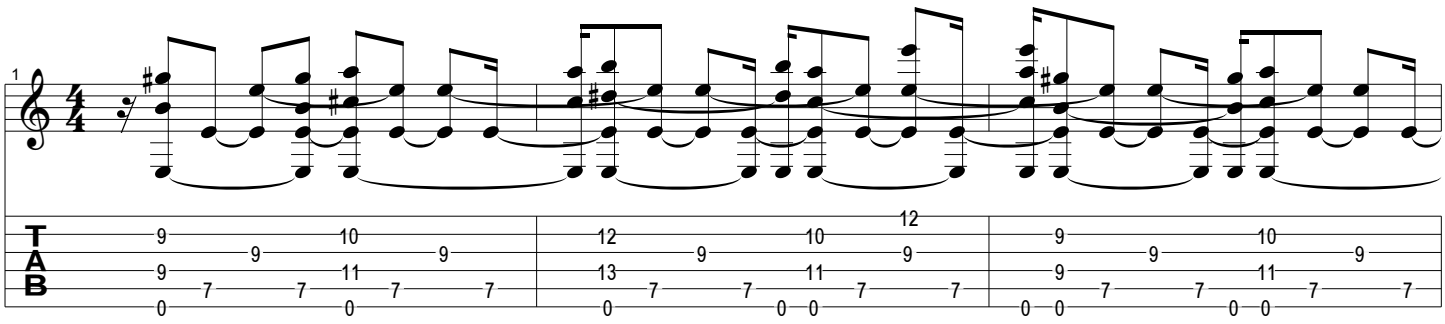
Queen

Queen

Words & Music by Brian May / Tim Staffel

♩ = 73

Intro



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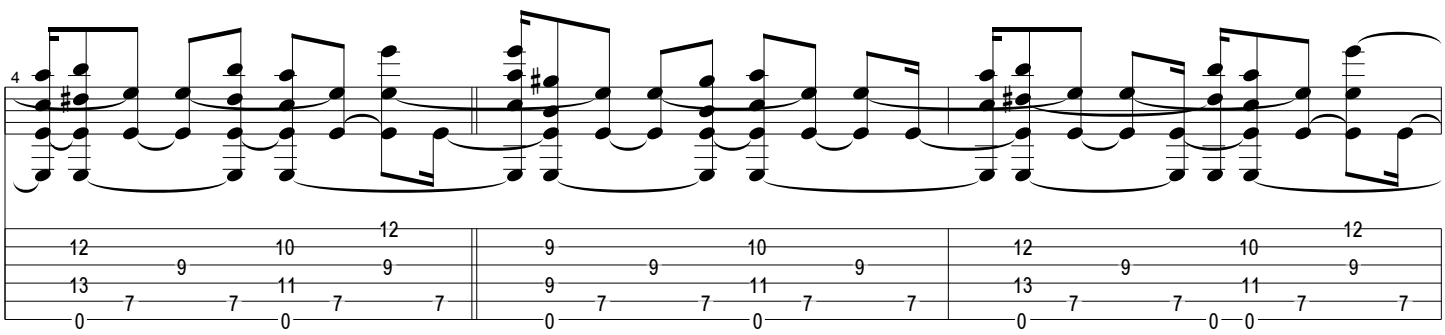

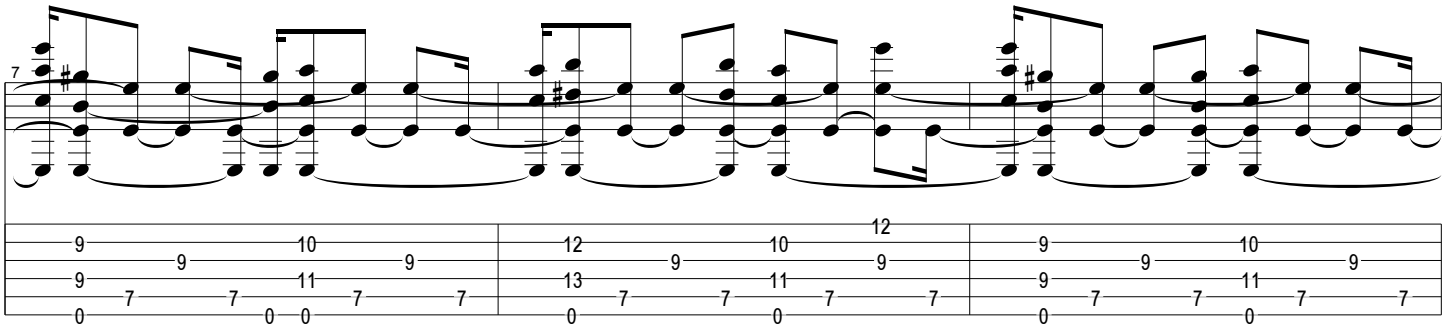

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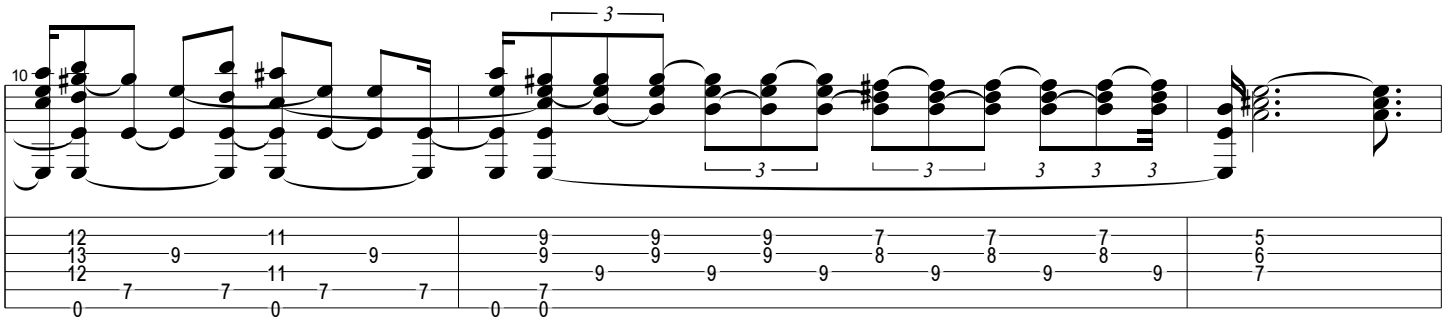

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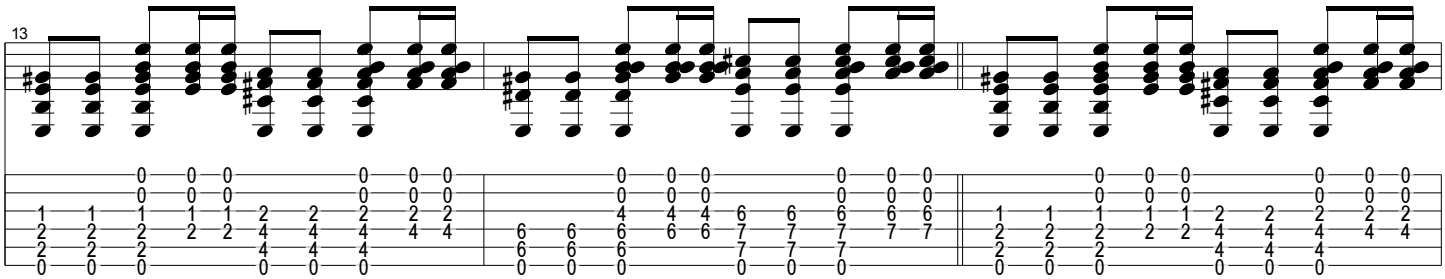
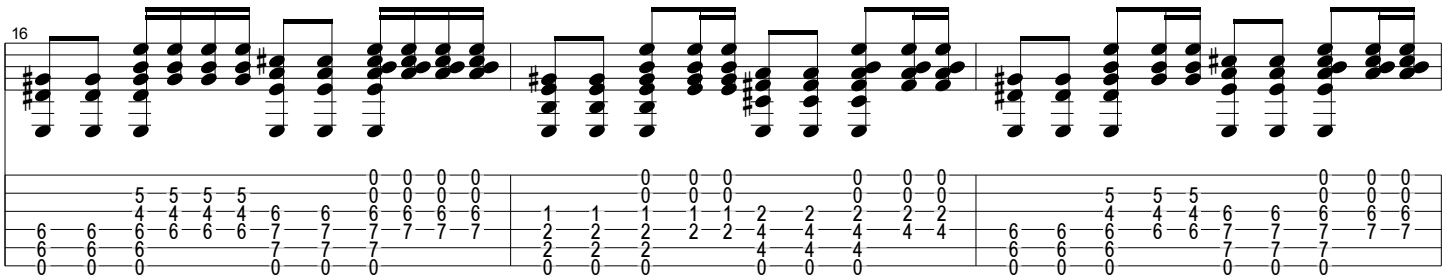
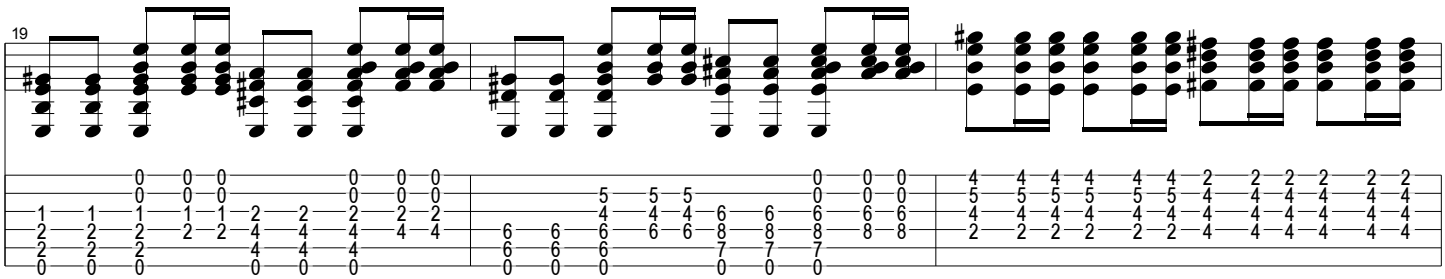
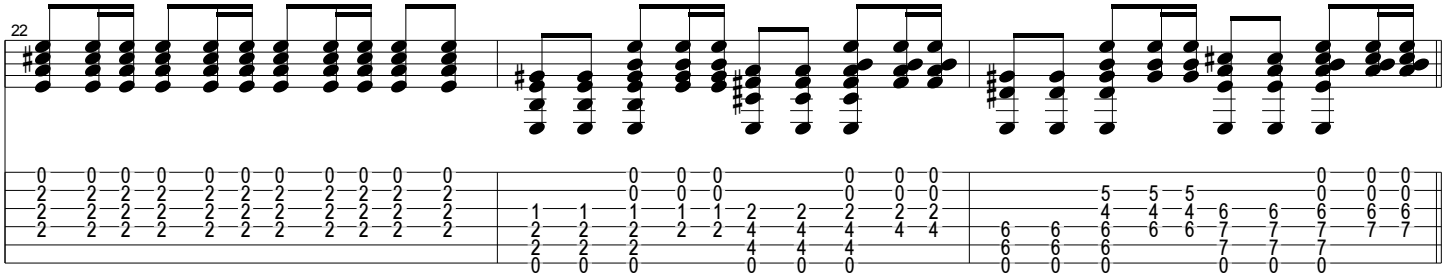




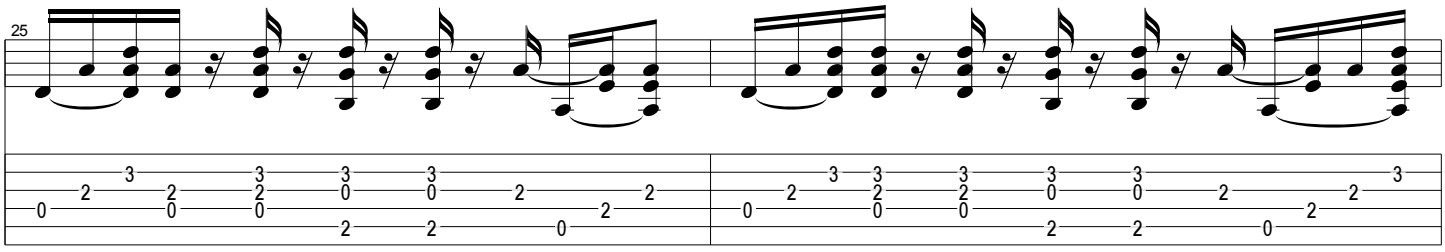


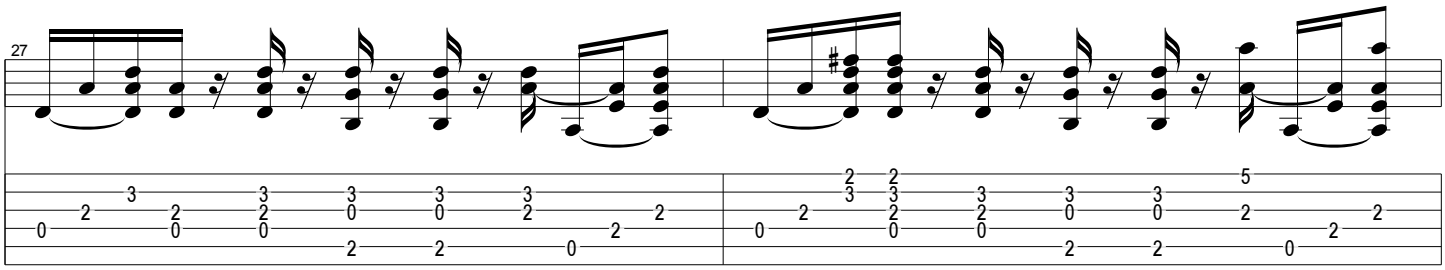


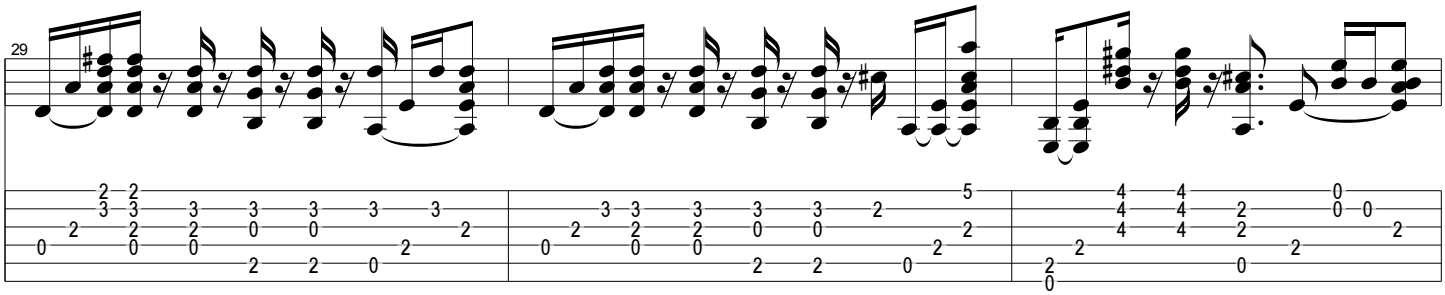
B1

♩ = **90**

tempo 90

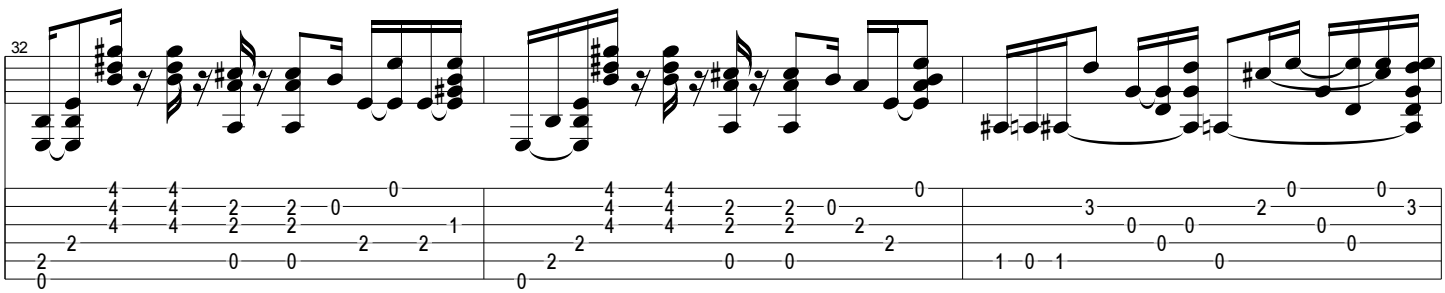






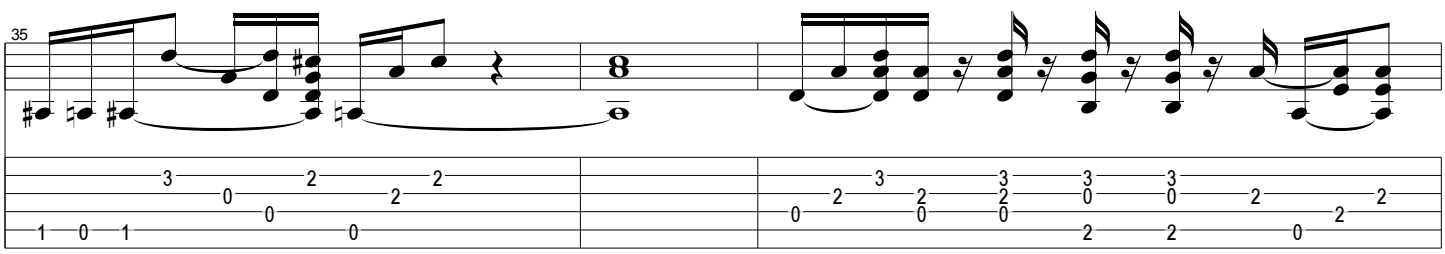
♩ = **85**

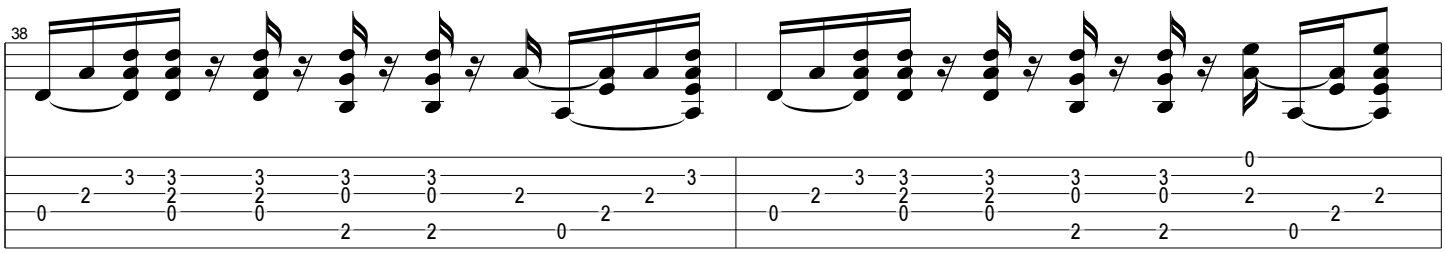
tempo 85

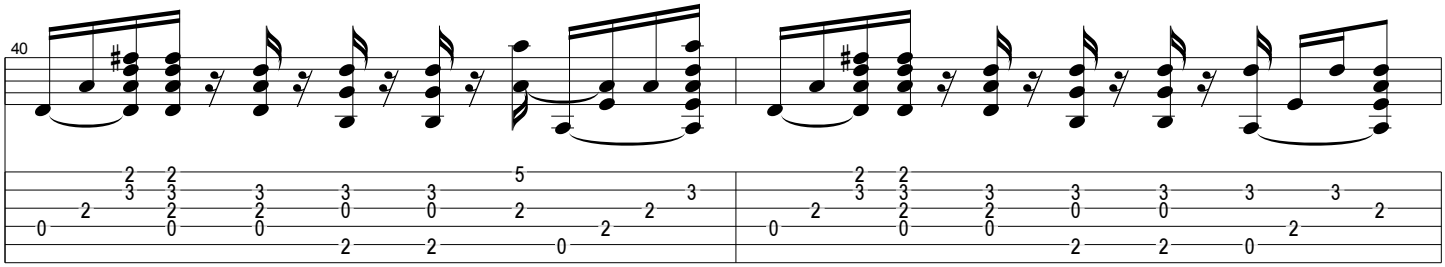


♩ = **94**

tempo 95







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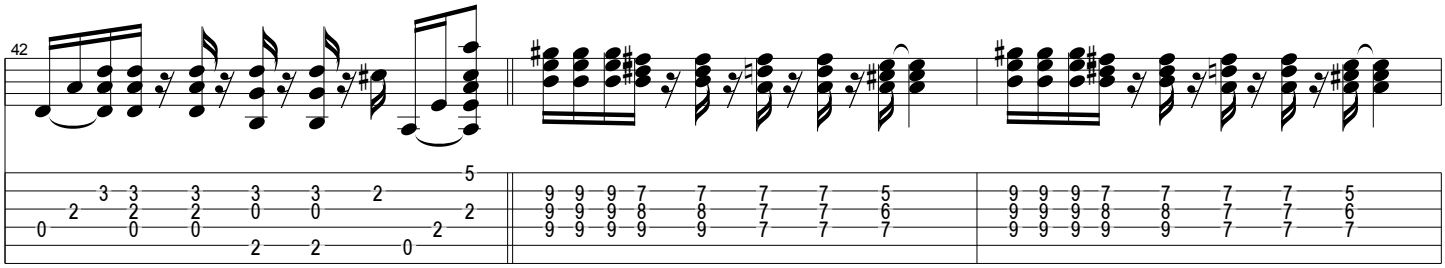

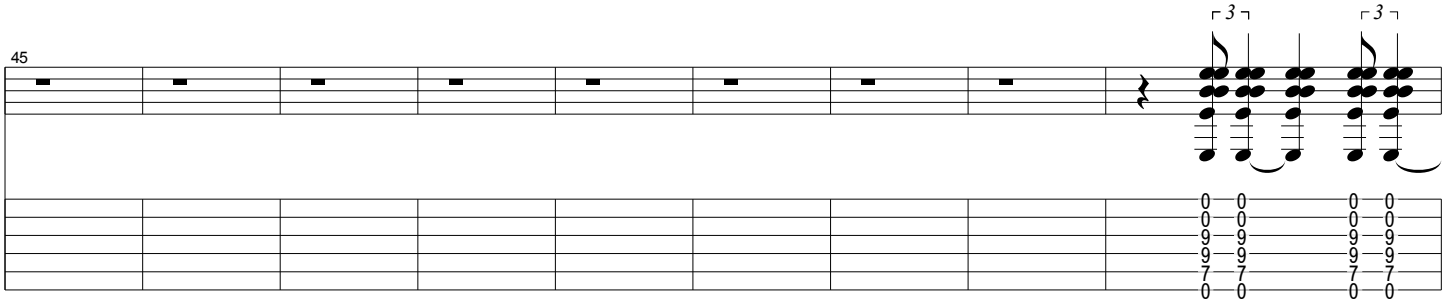

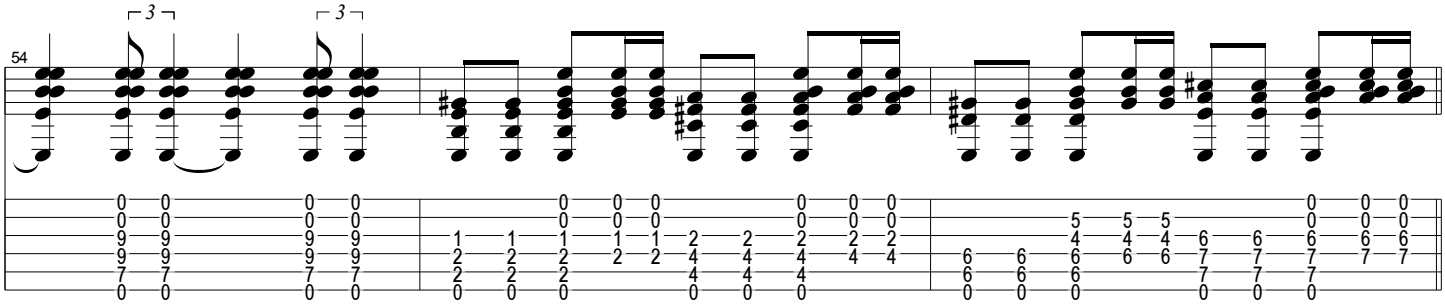

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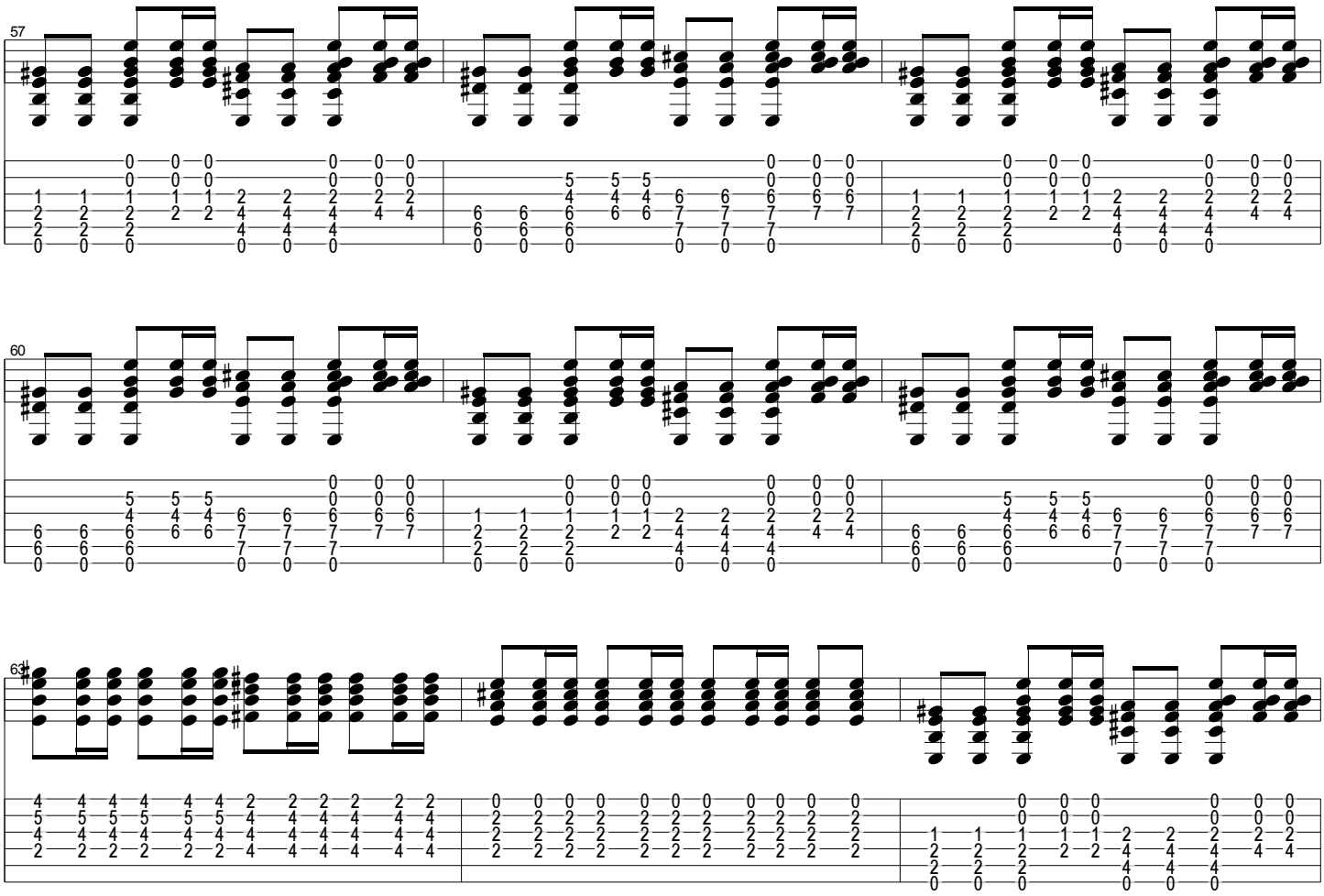

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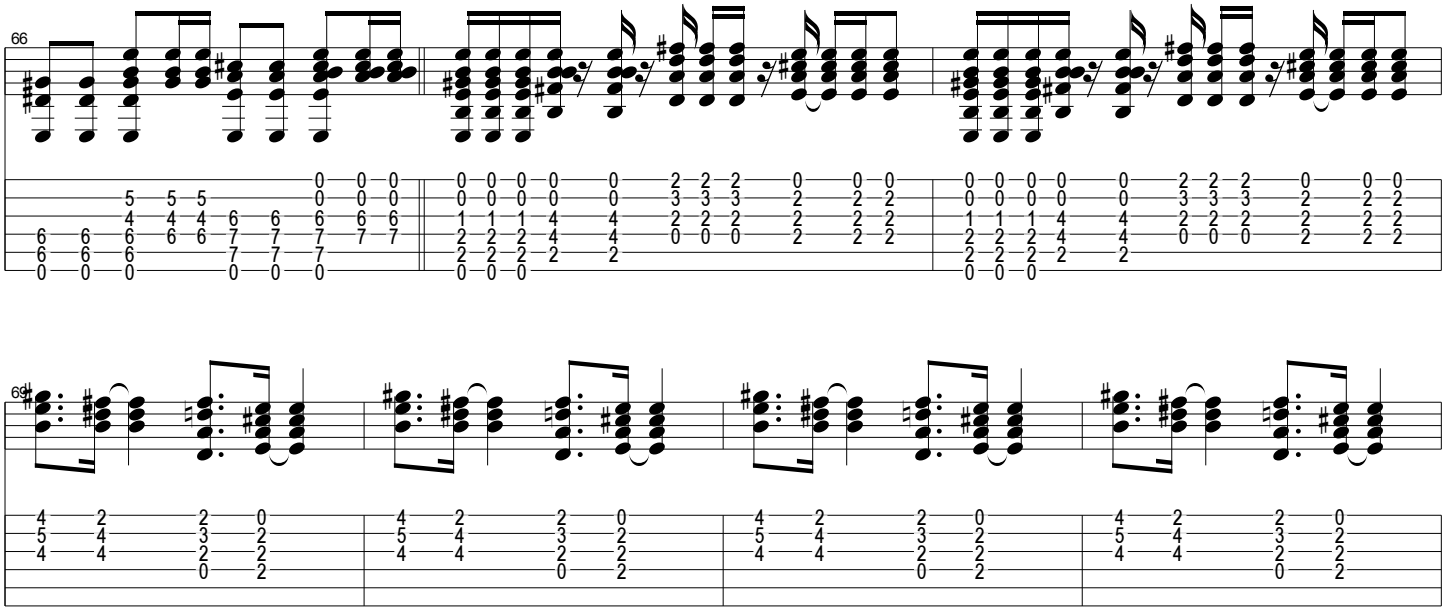
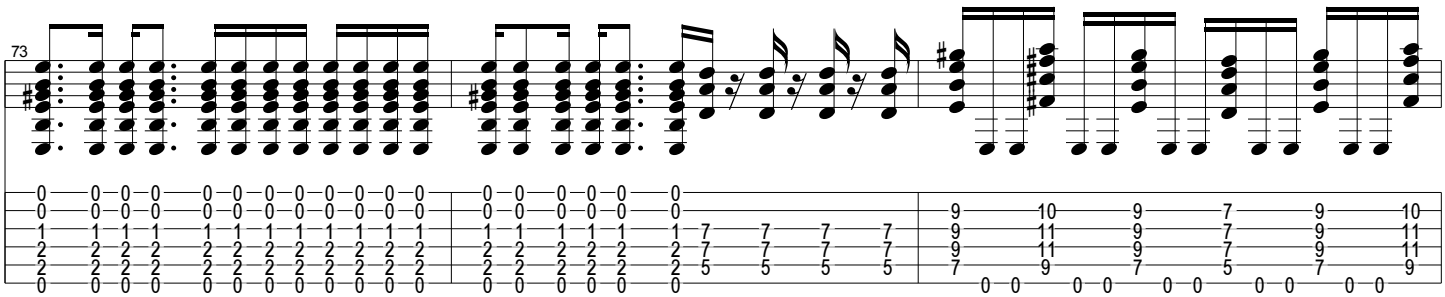
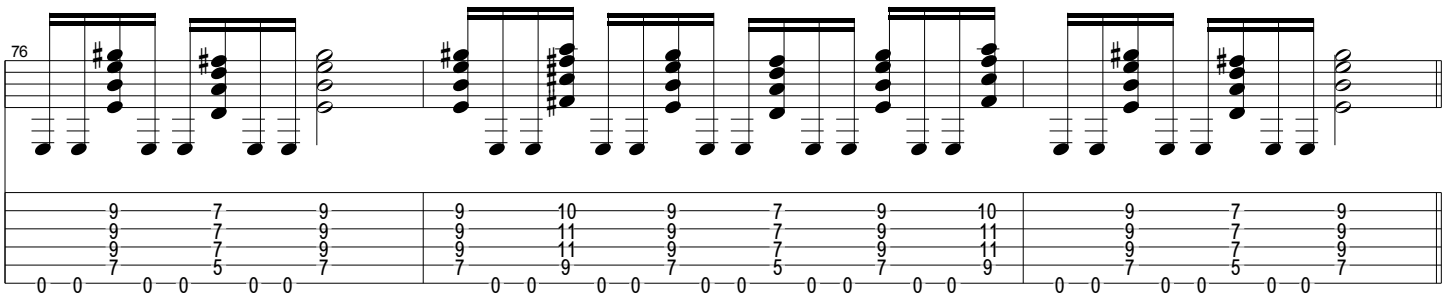
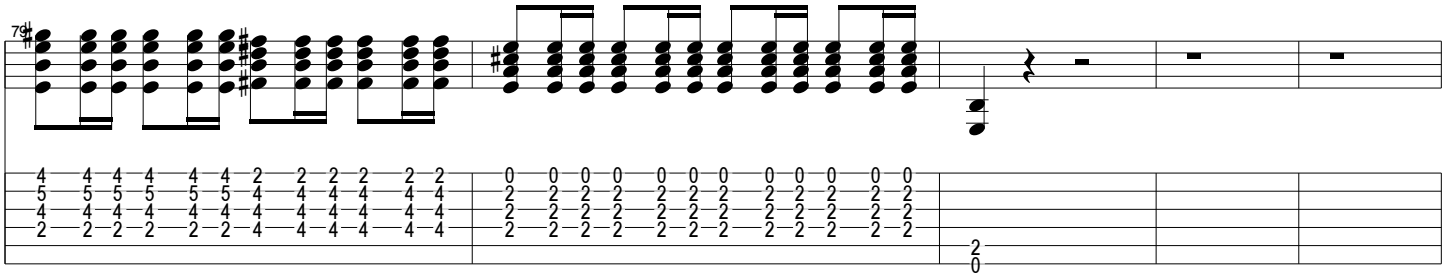


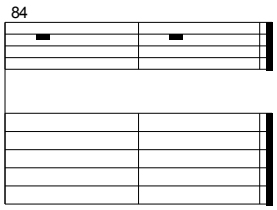




Outro

♩ = 75



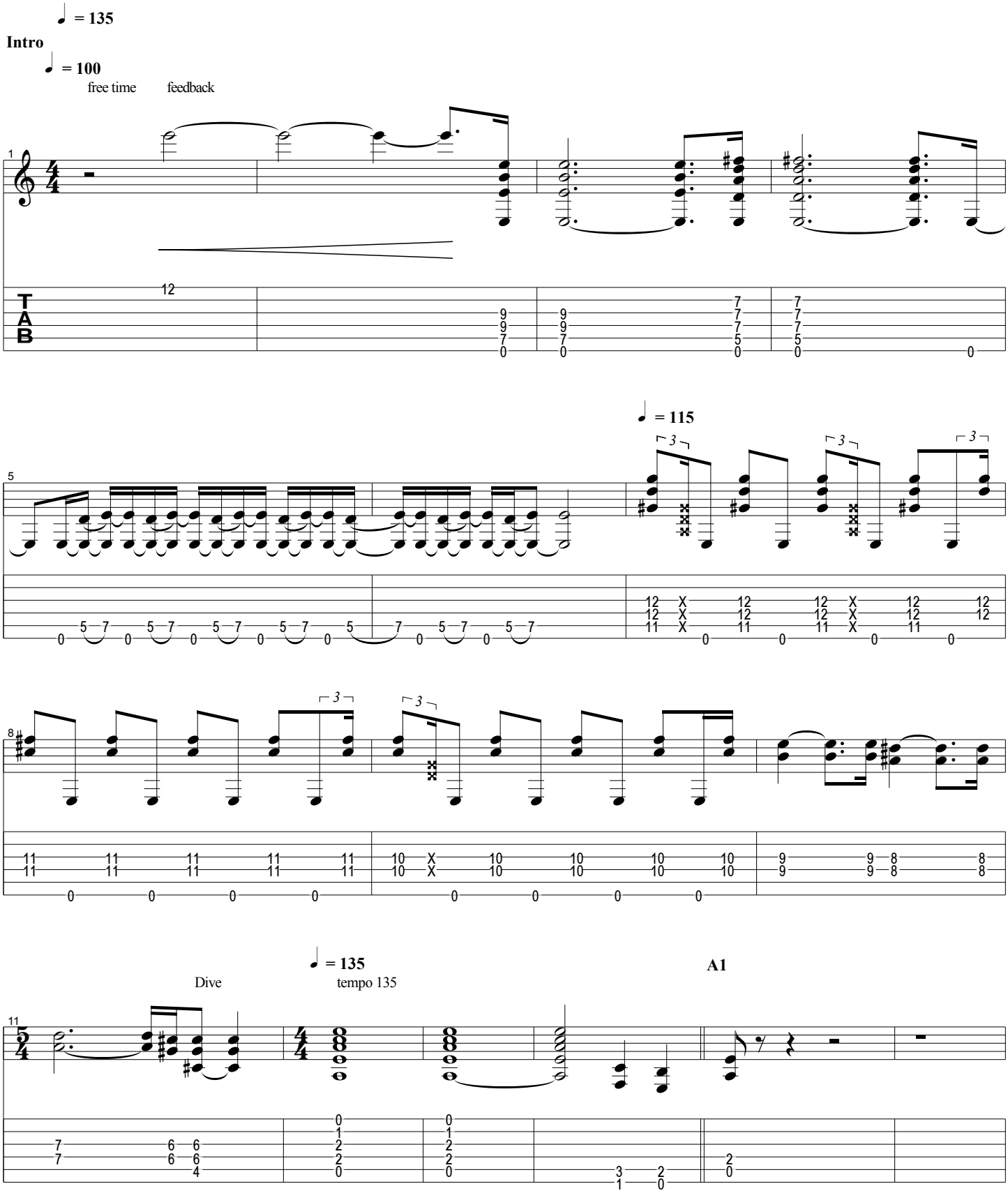


Great King Rat

Queen

Queen

Words & Music by Freddie Mercury



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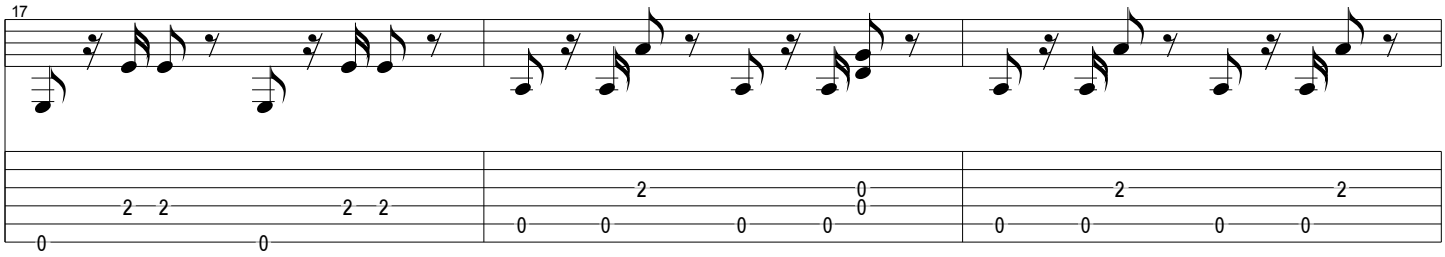

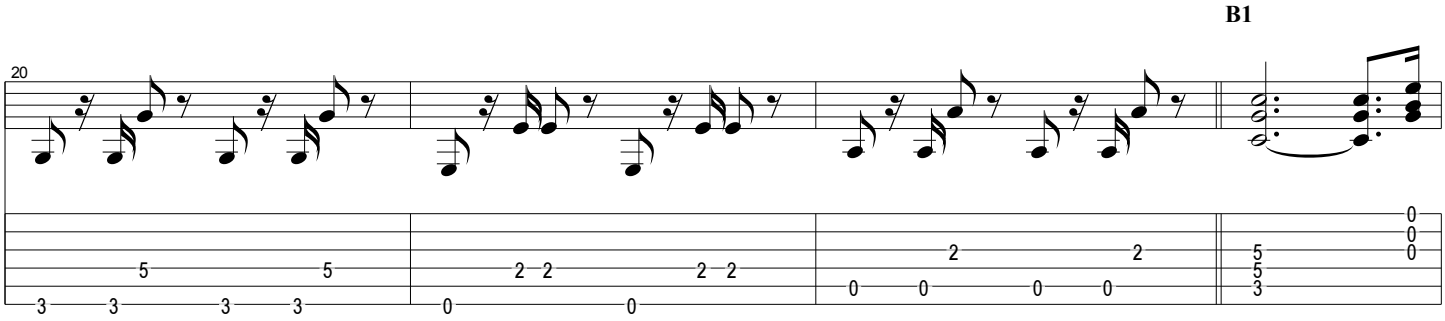

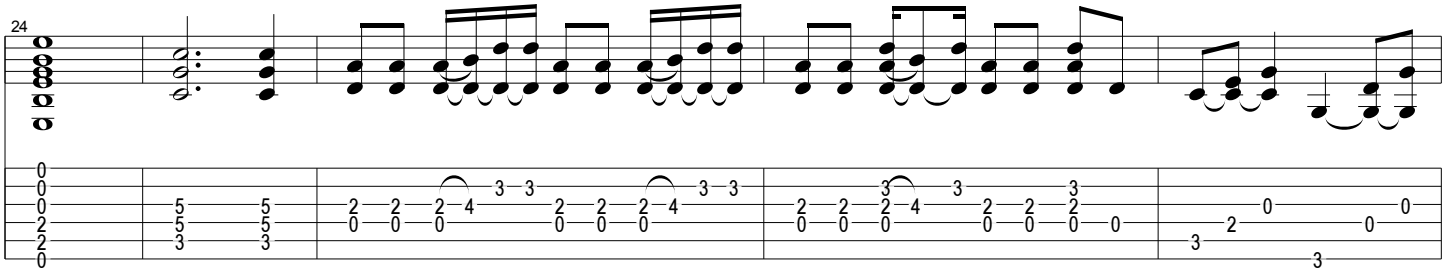

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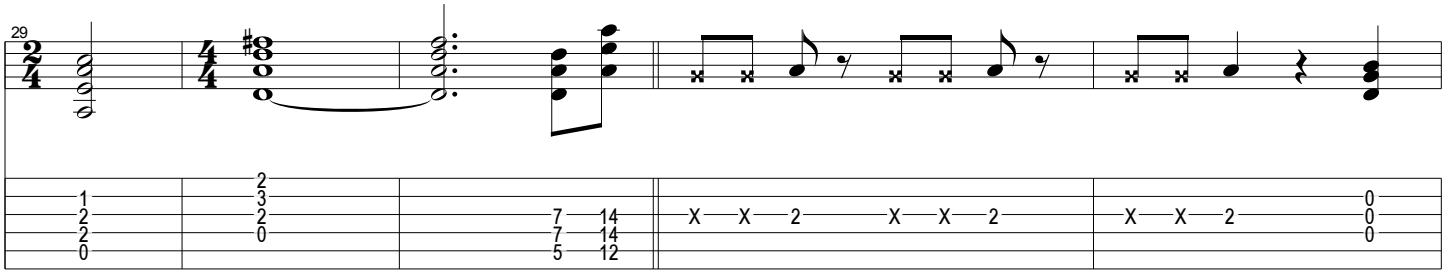

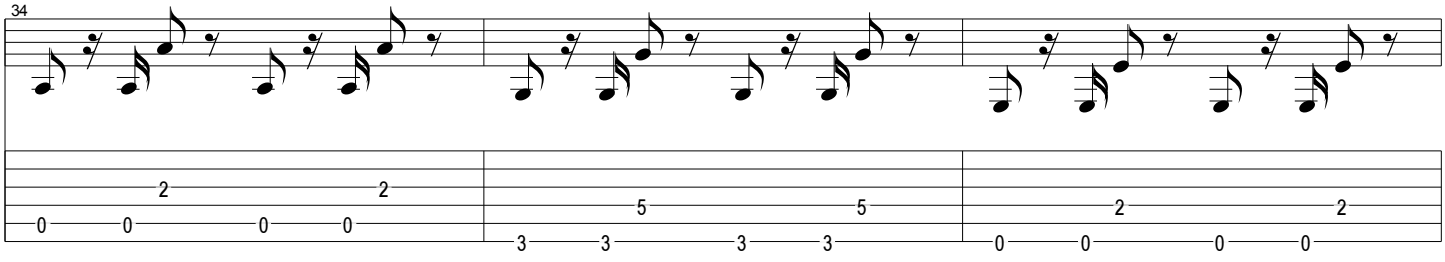

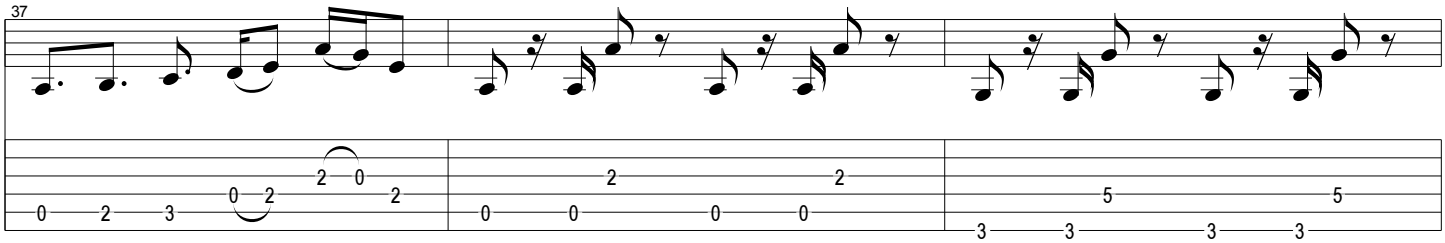

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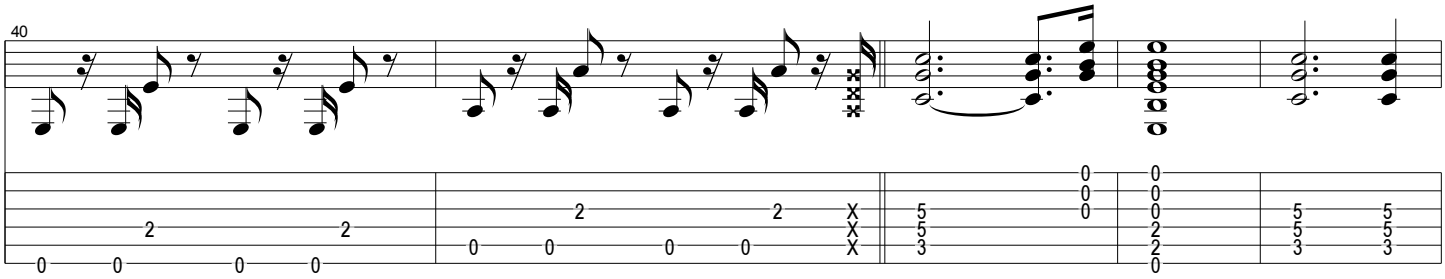
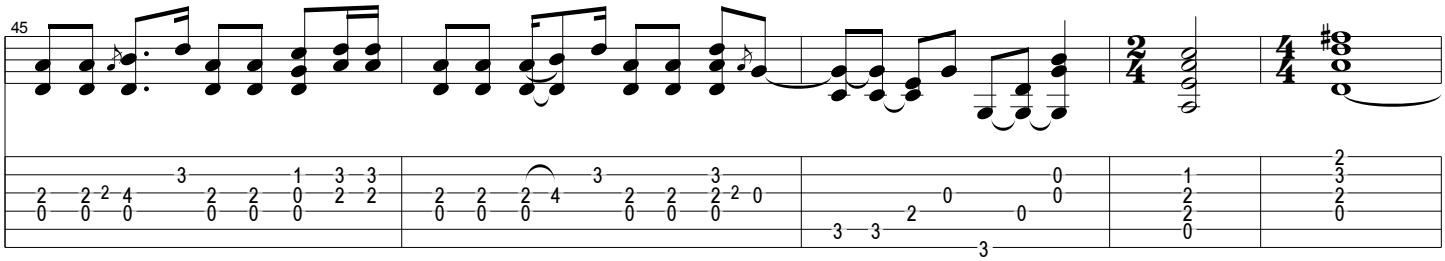
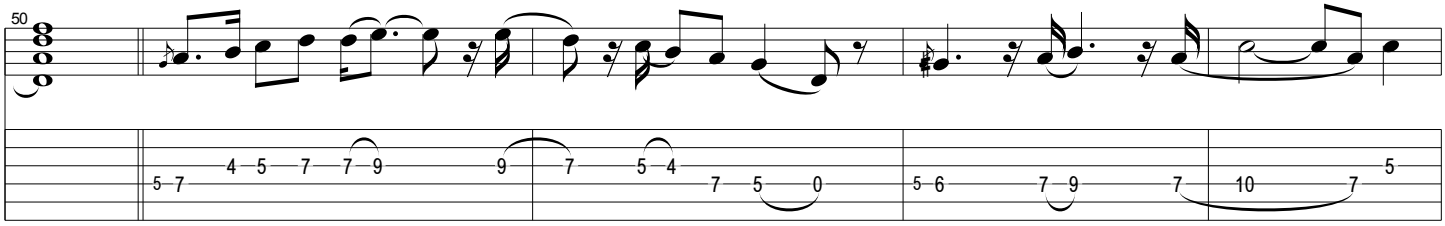
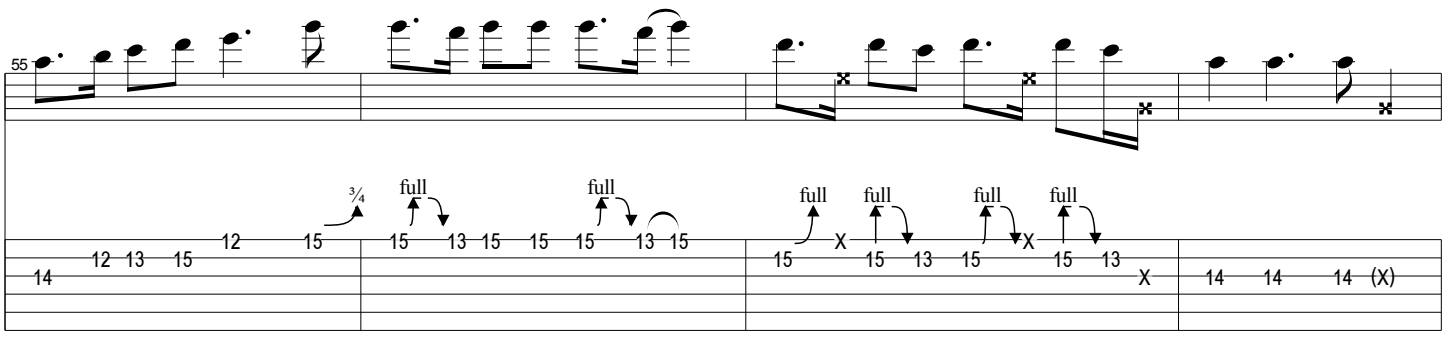
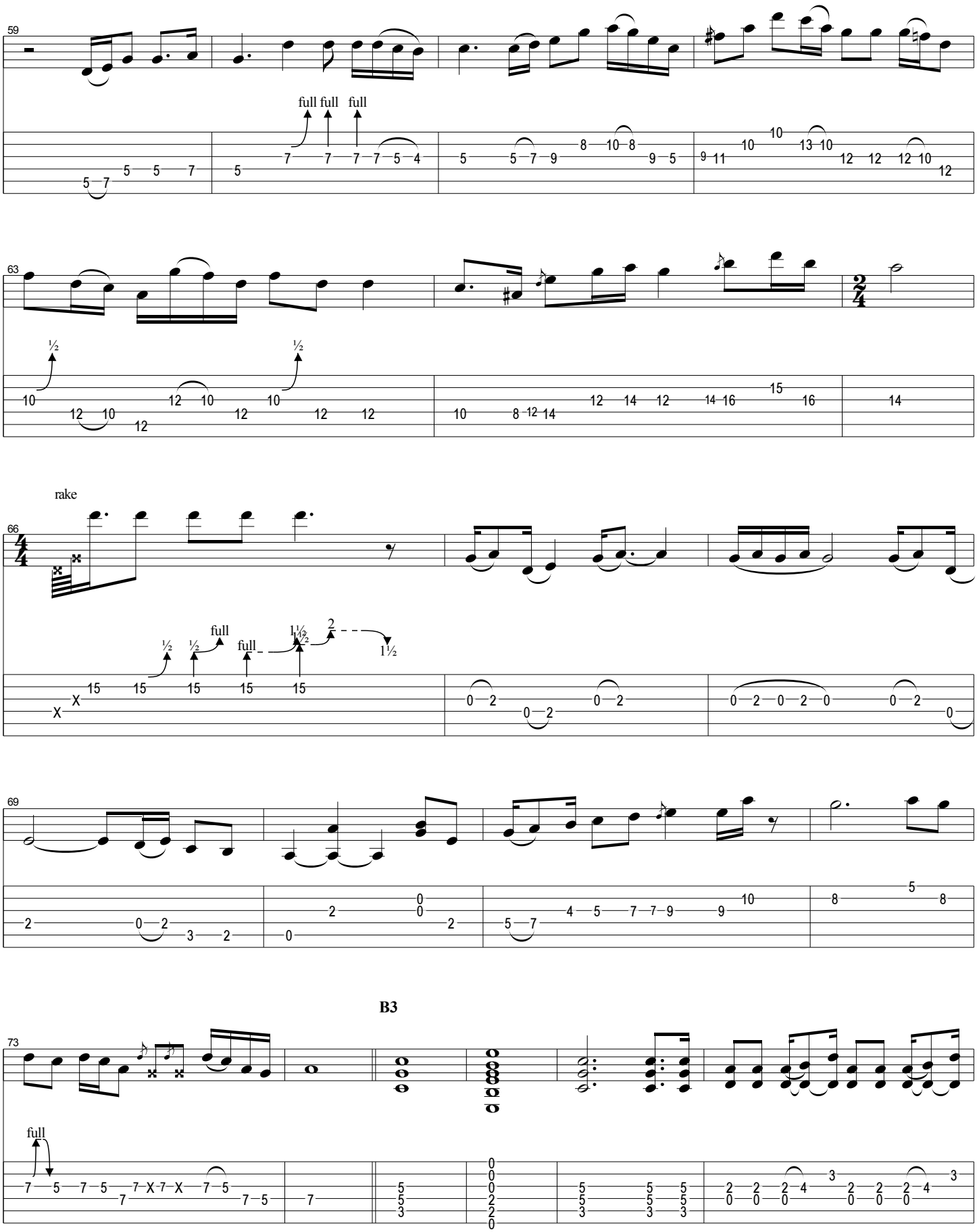




Solo 1



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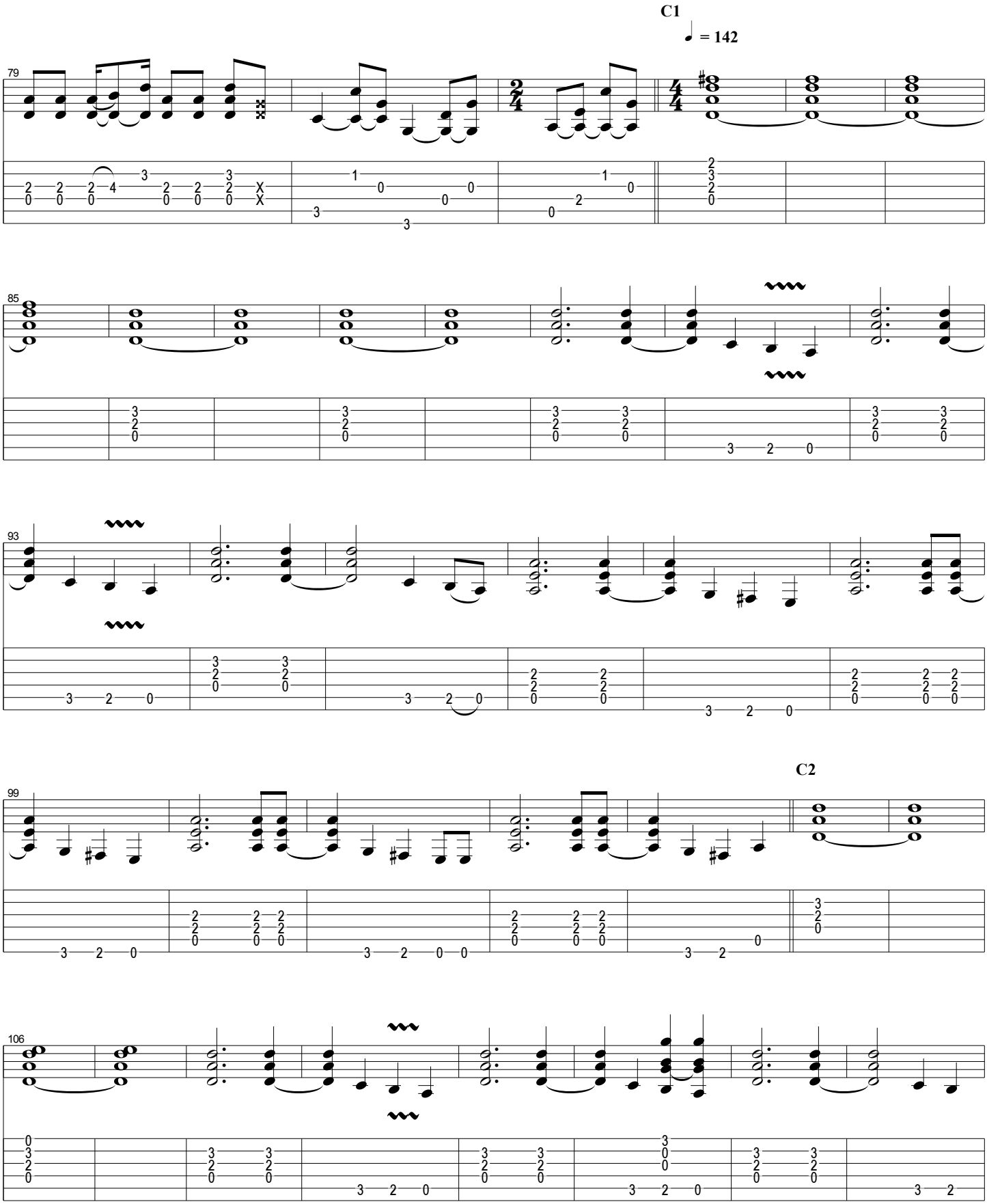
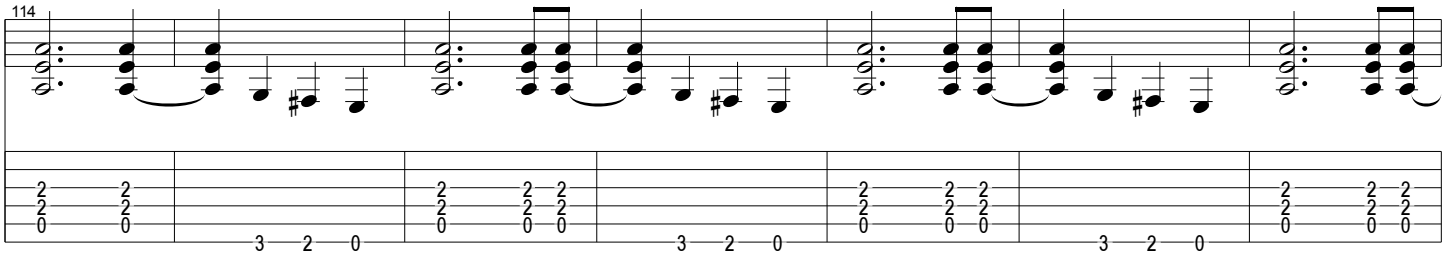
full full full
63
½
66
rake
full
69
B3
73
full


C1
= 142
79
85
93
99
C2
106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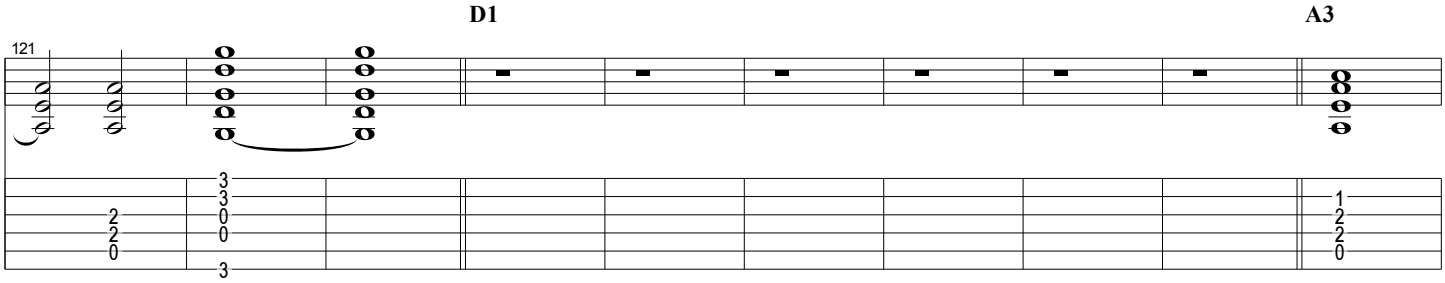
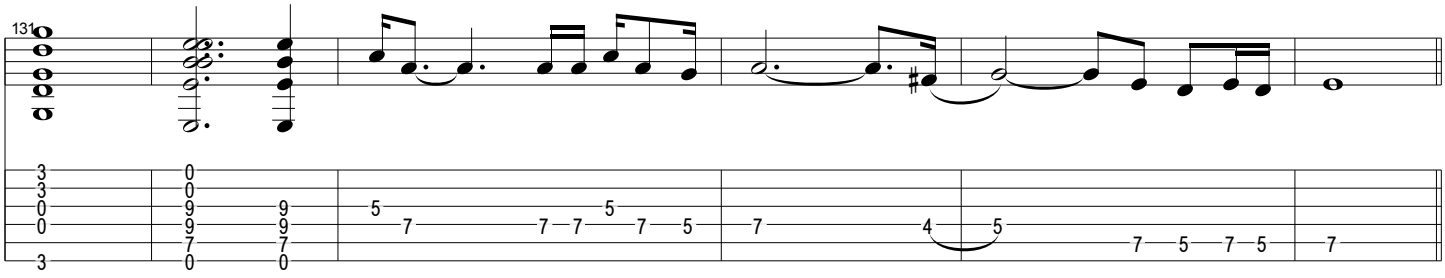

D1
A3
121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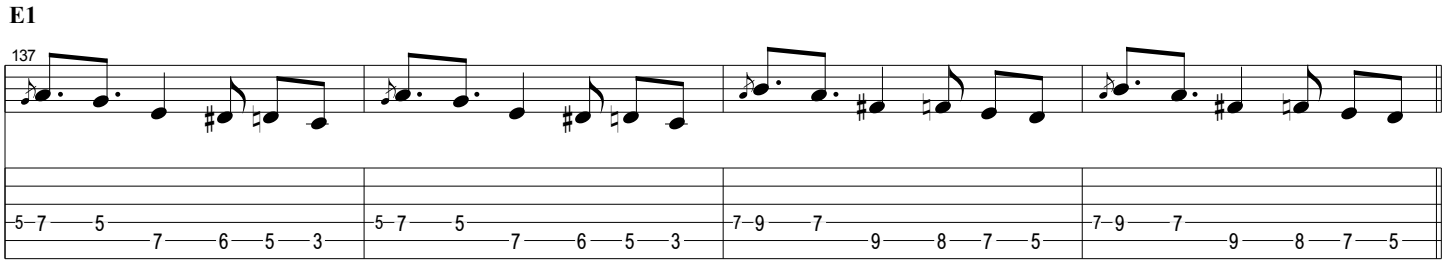
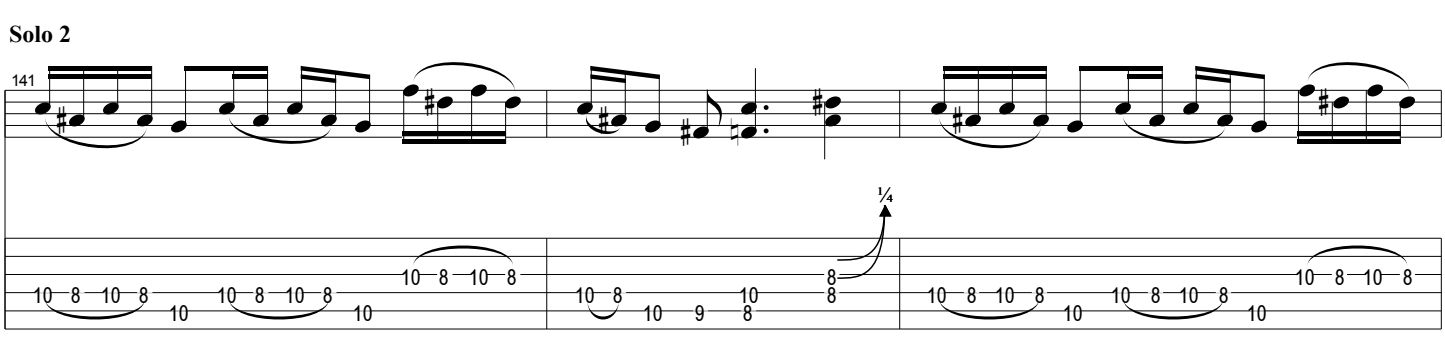
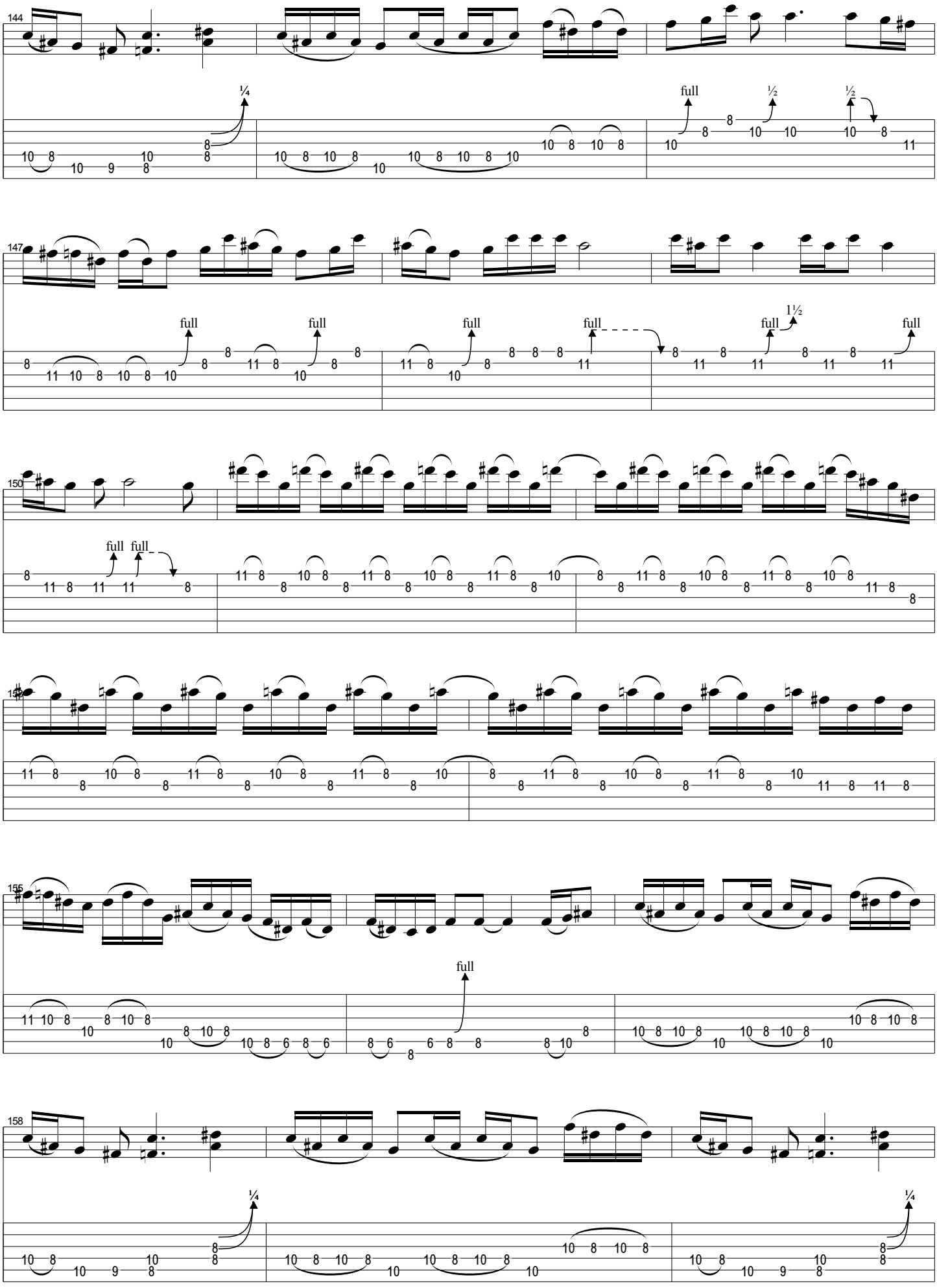

E1
137


Solo 2
141
1/4


144
¼
full
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full
150
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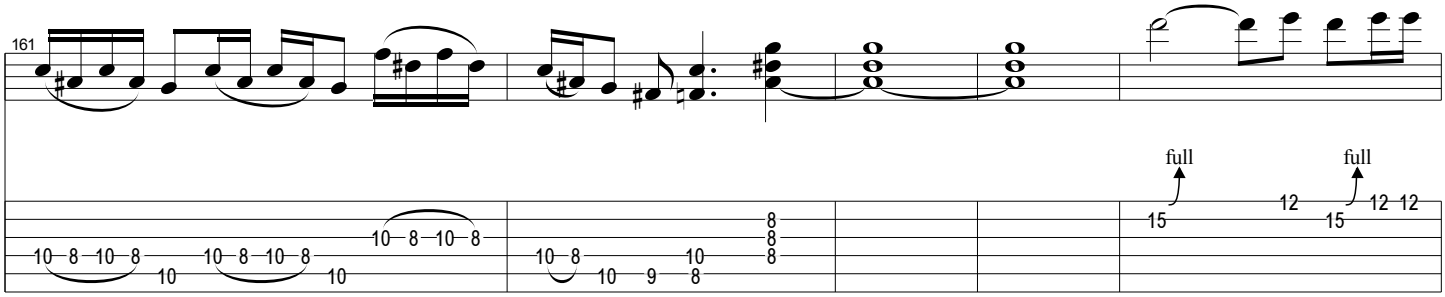
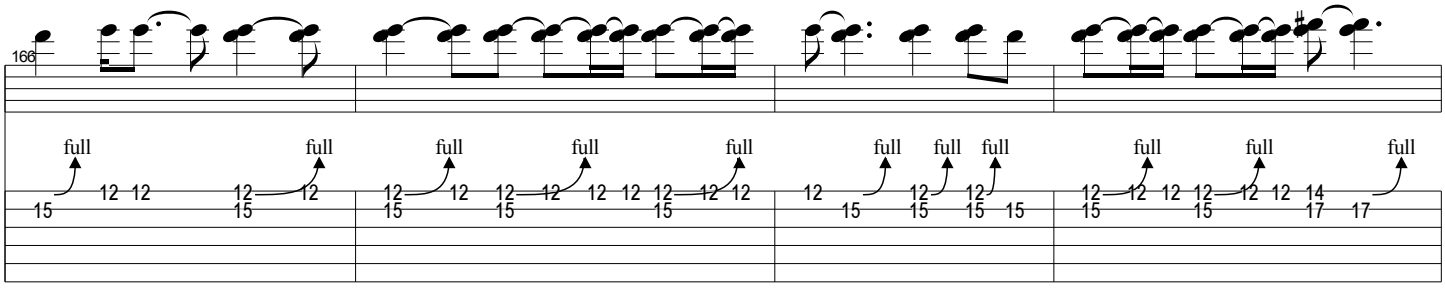
full
155
full
158
¼
¼





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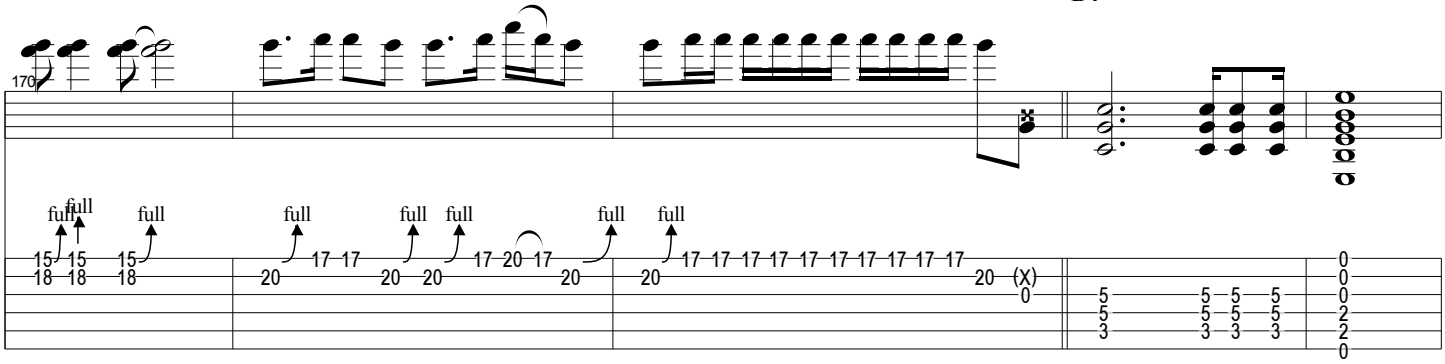
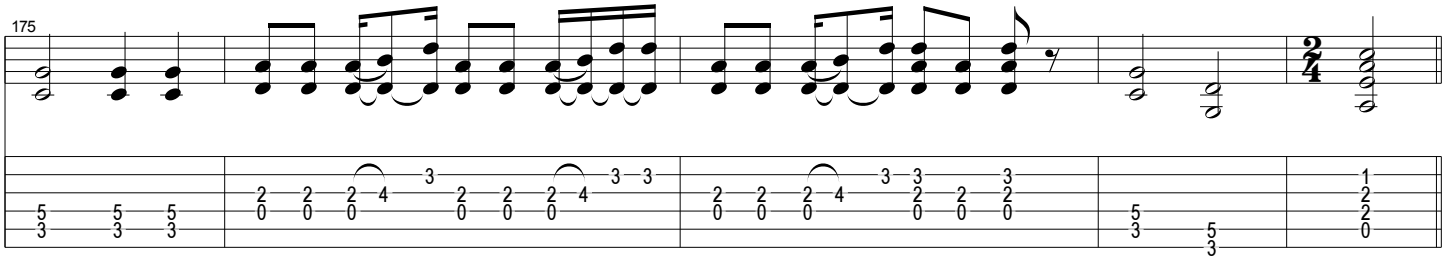
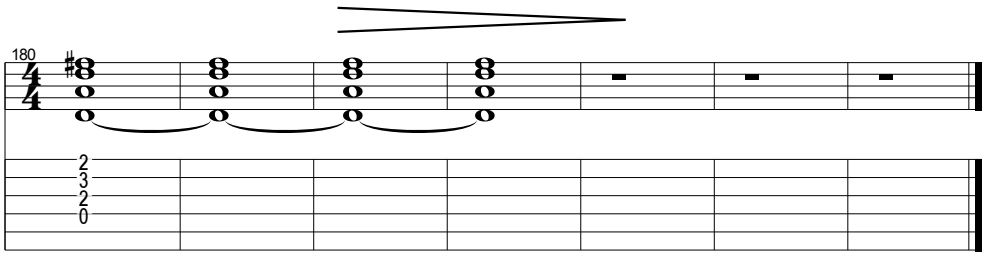




Outro

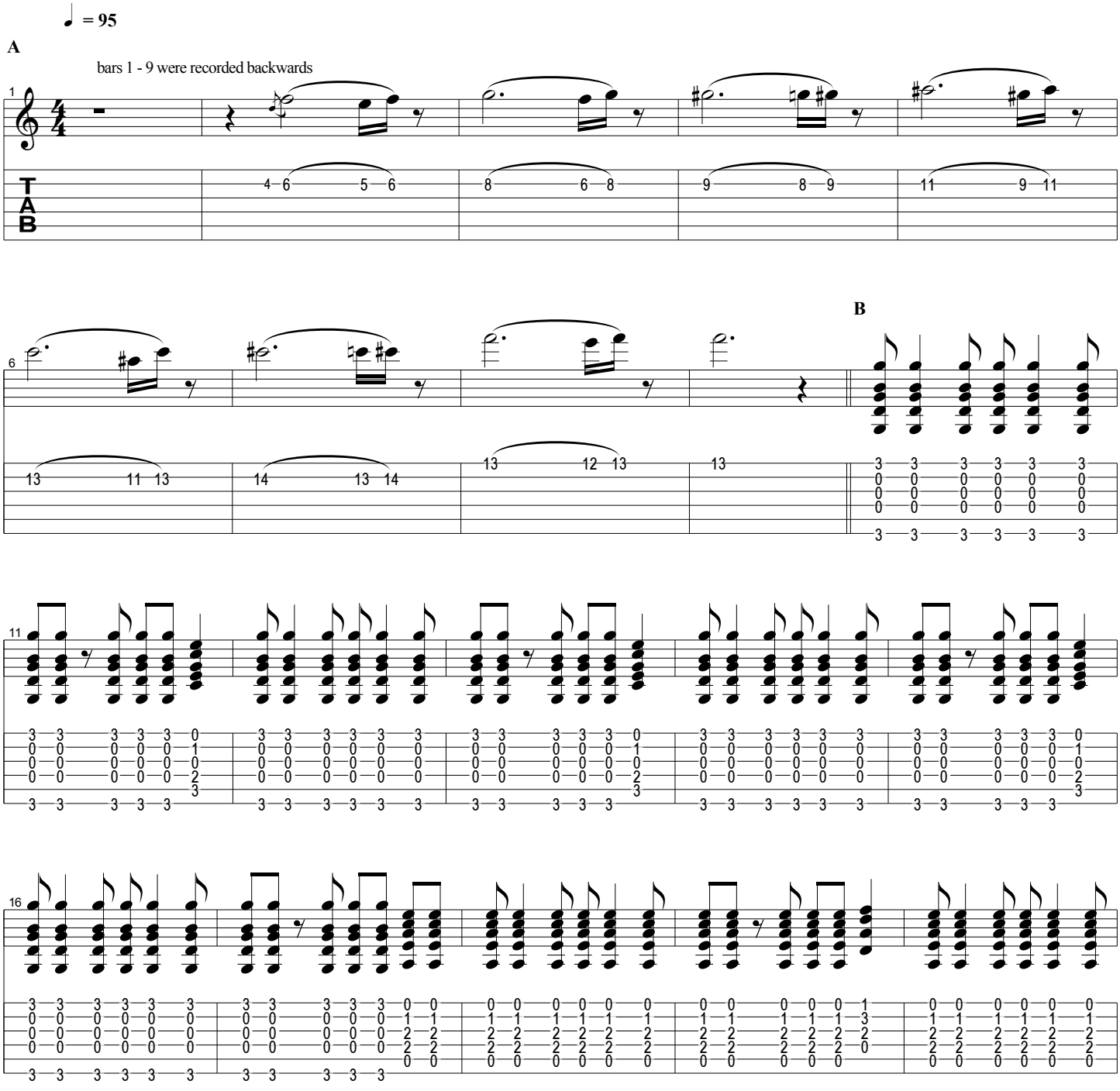


My Fairy King

Queen

Queen

Words & Music by Freddie Mercury



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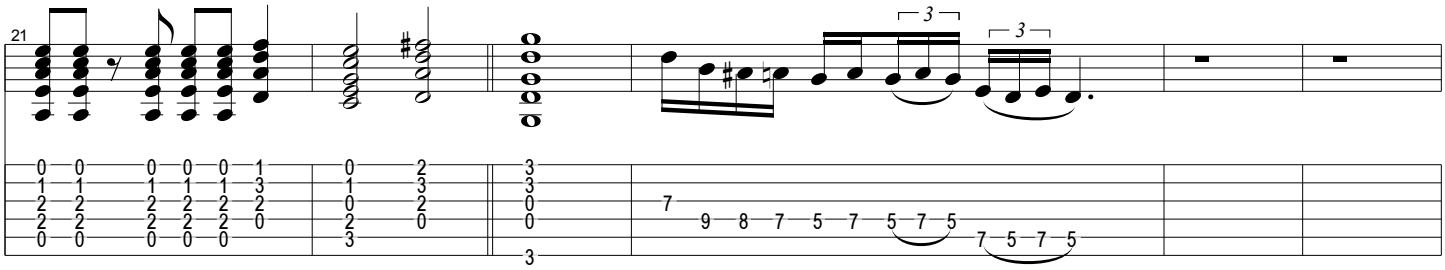
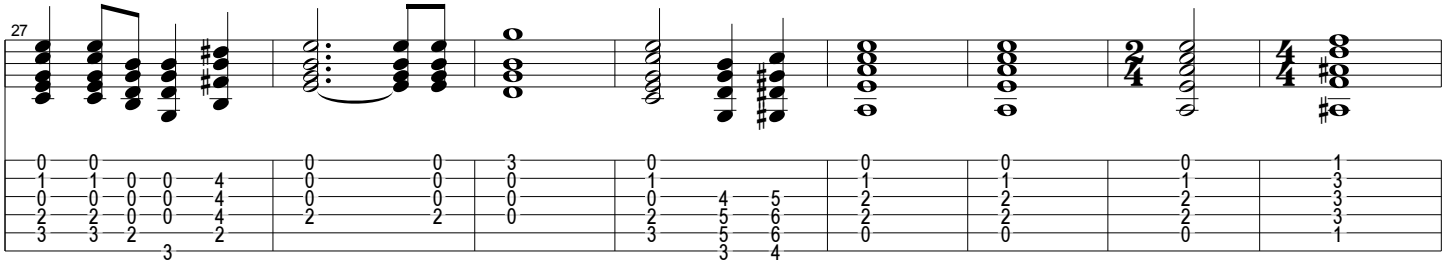
C





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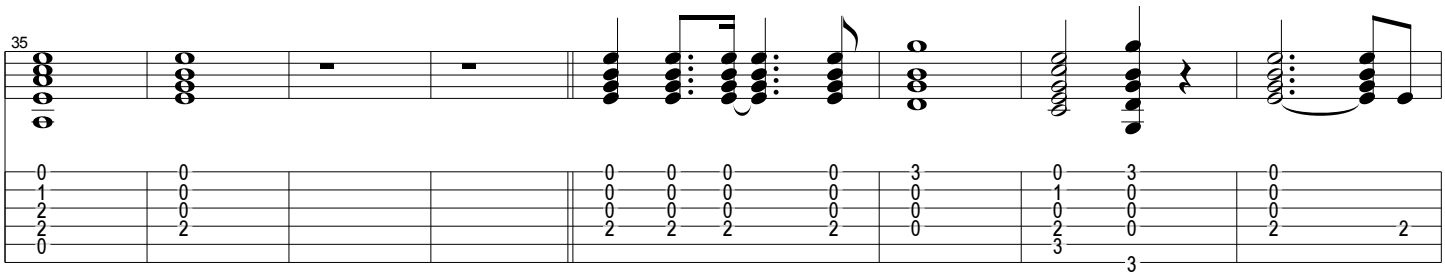

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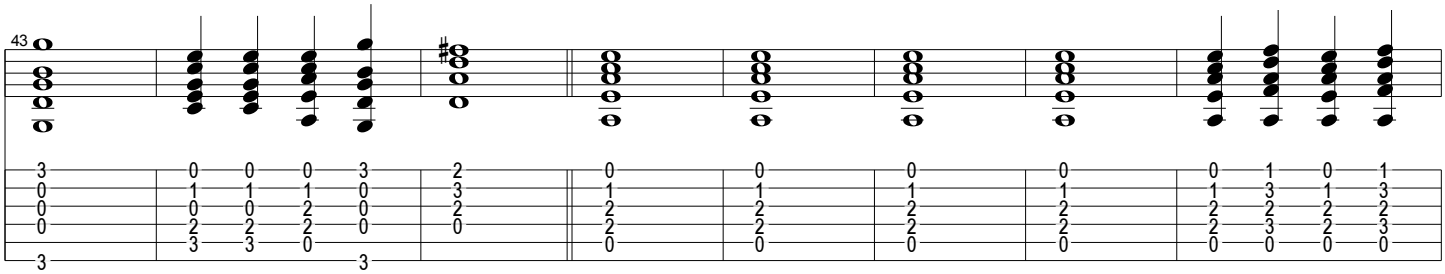

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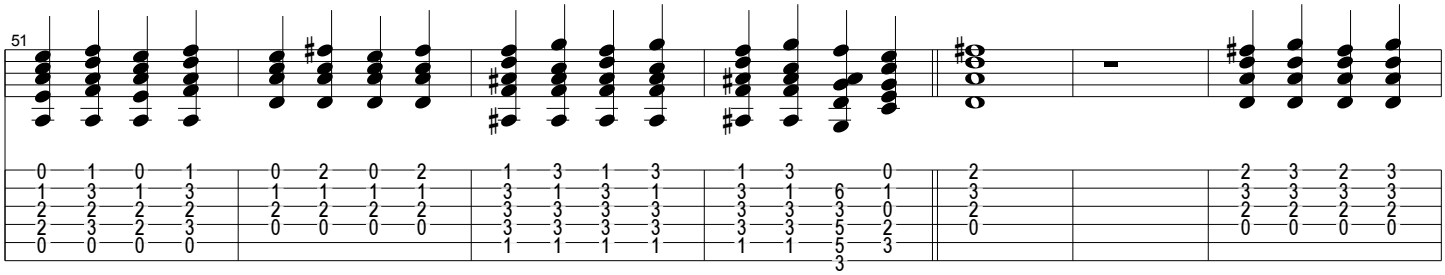
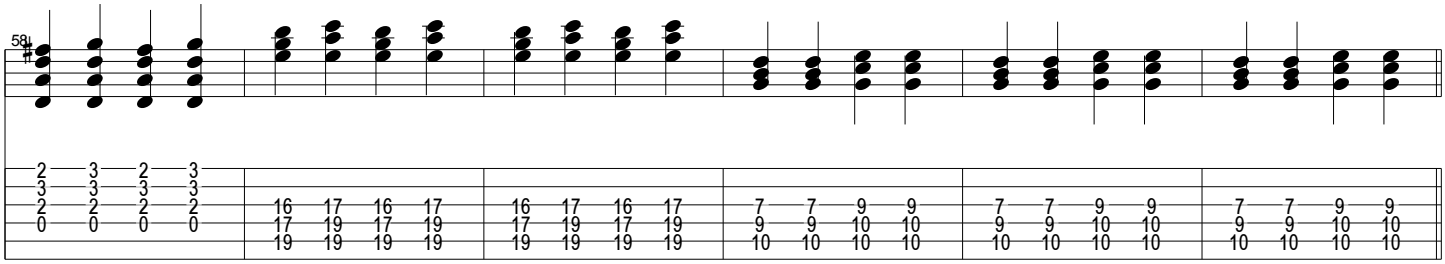
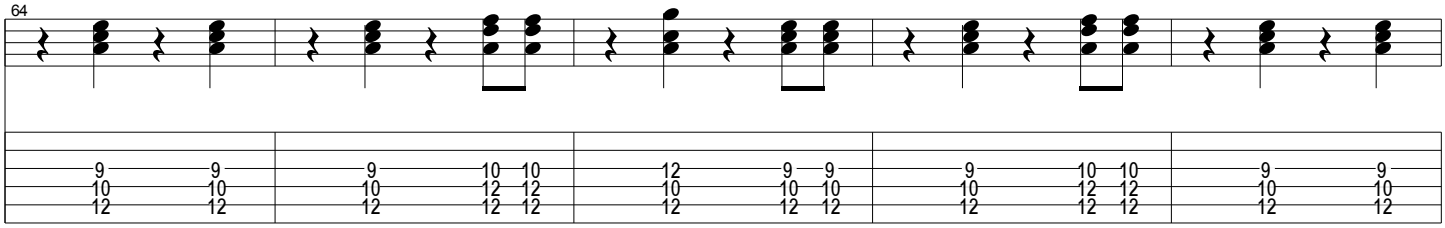




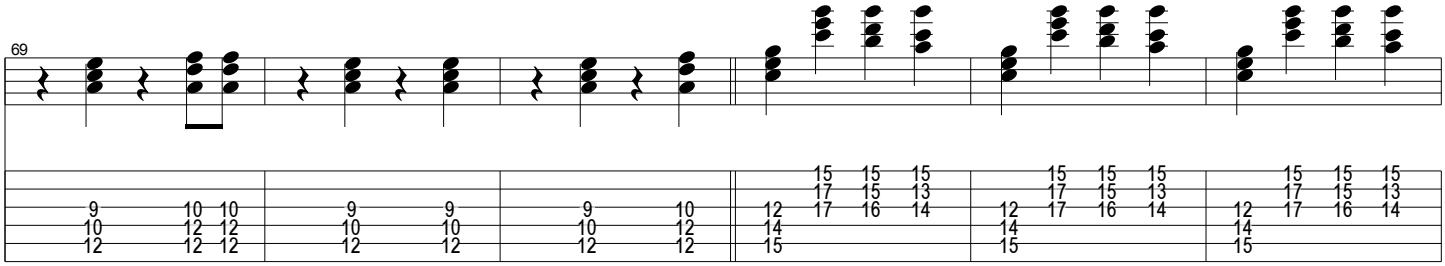
G

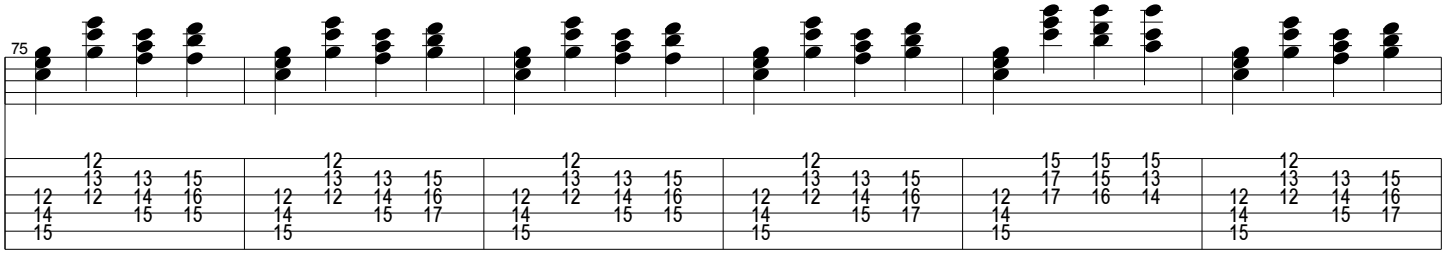
♩ = **190**

tempo 190



H





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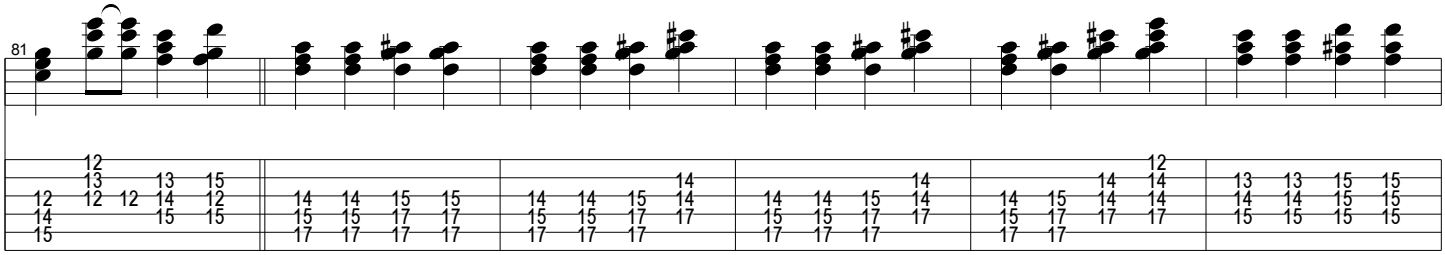

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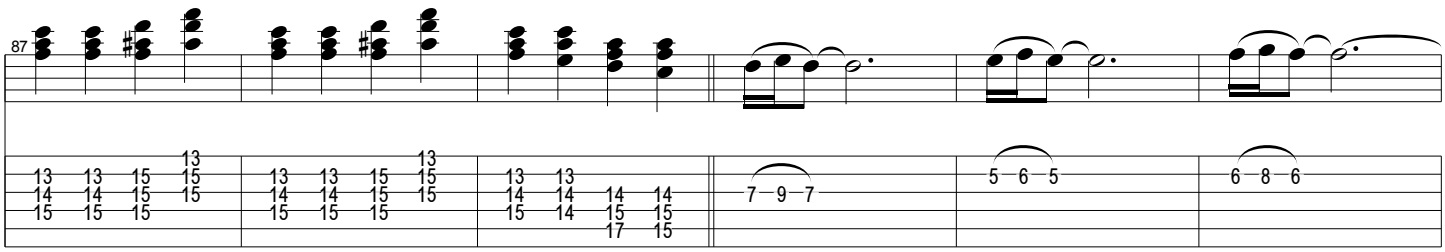
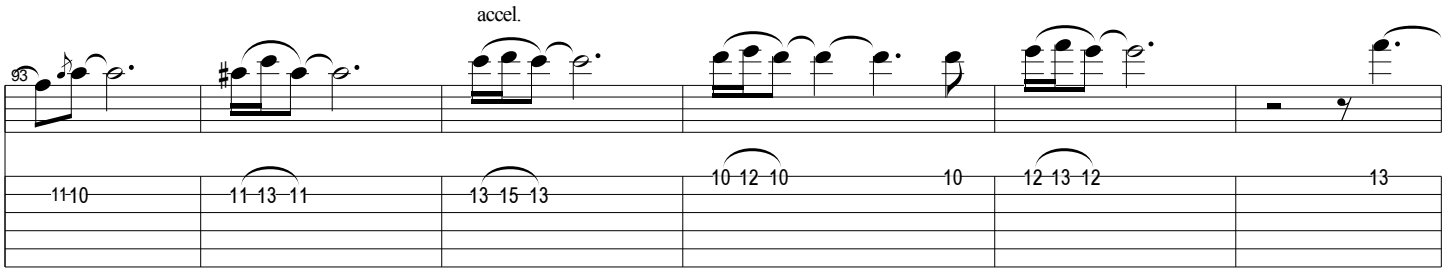
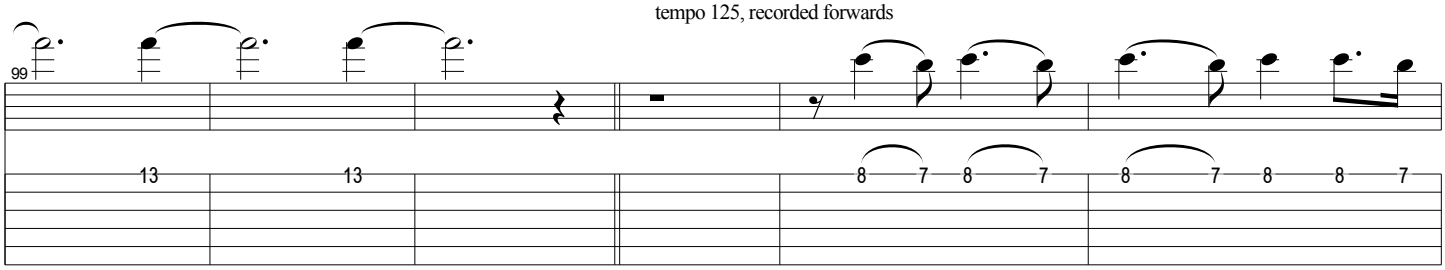
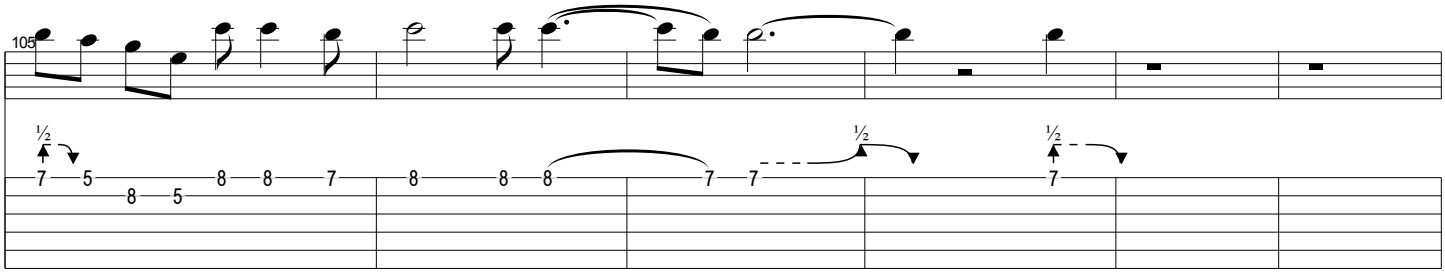




K

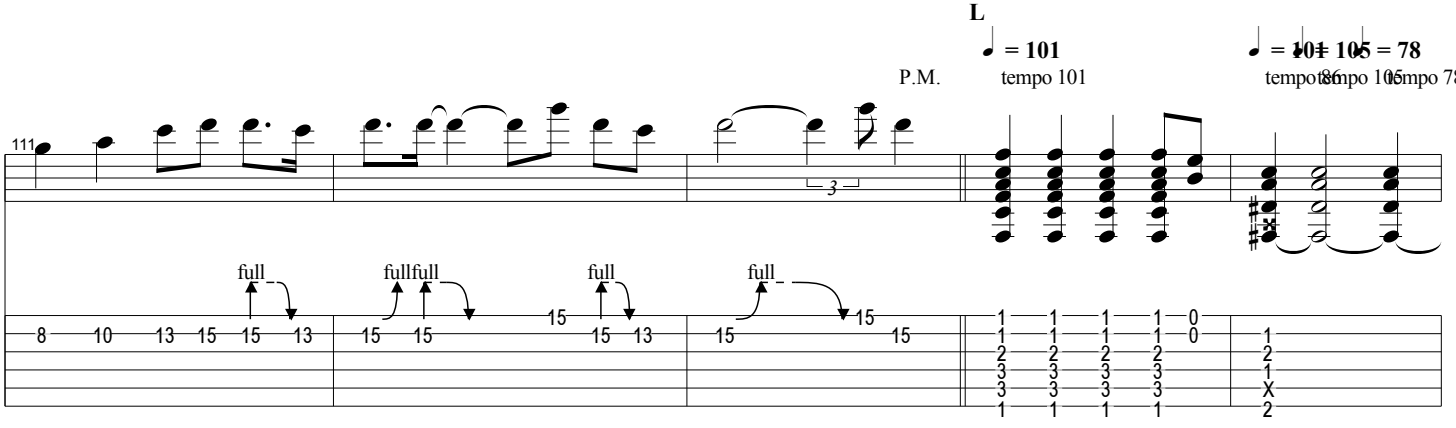
tempo 125, recorded forwards

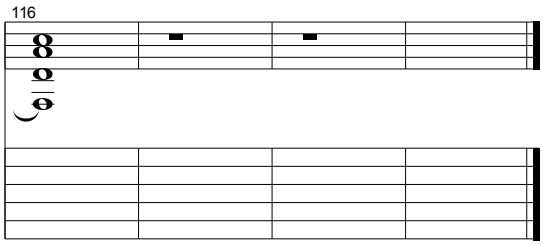




L

P.M.



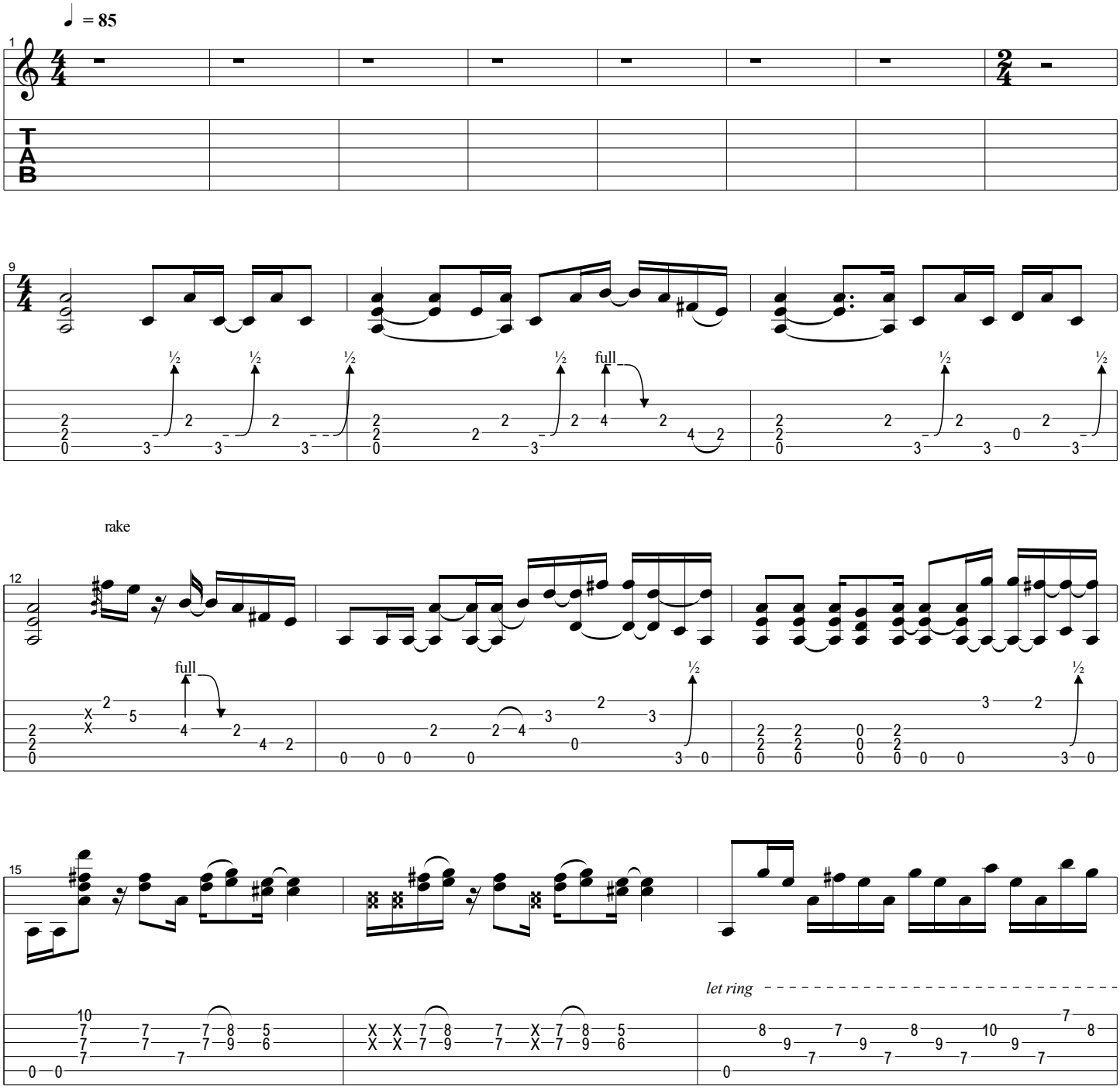

116

Liar

Queen

Queen

Words & Music by Freddie Mercury



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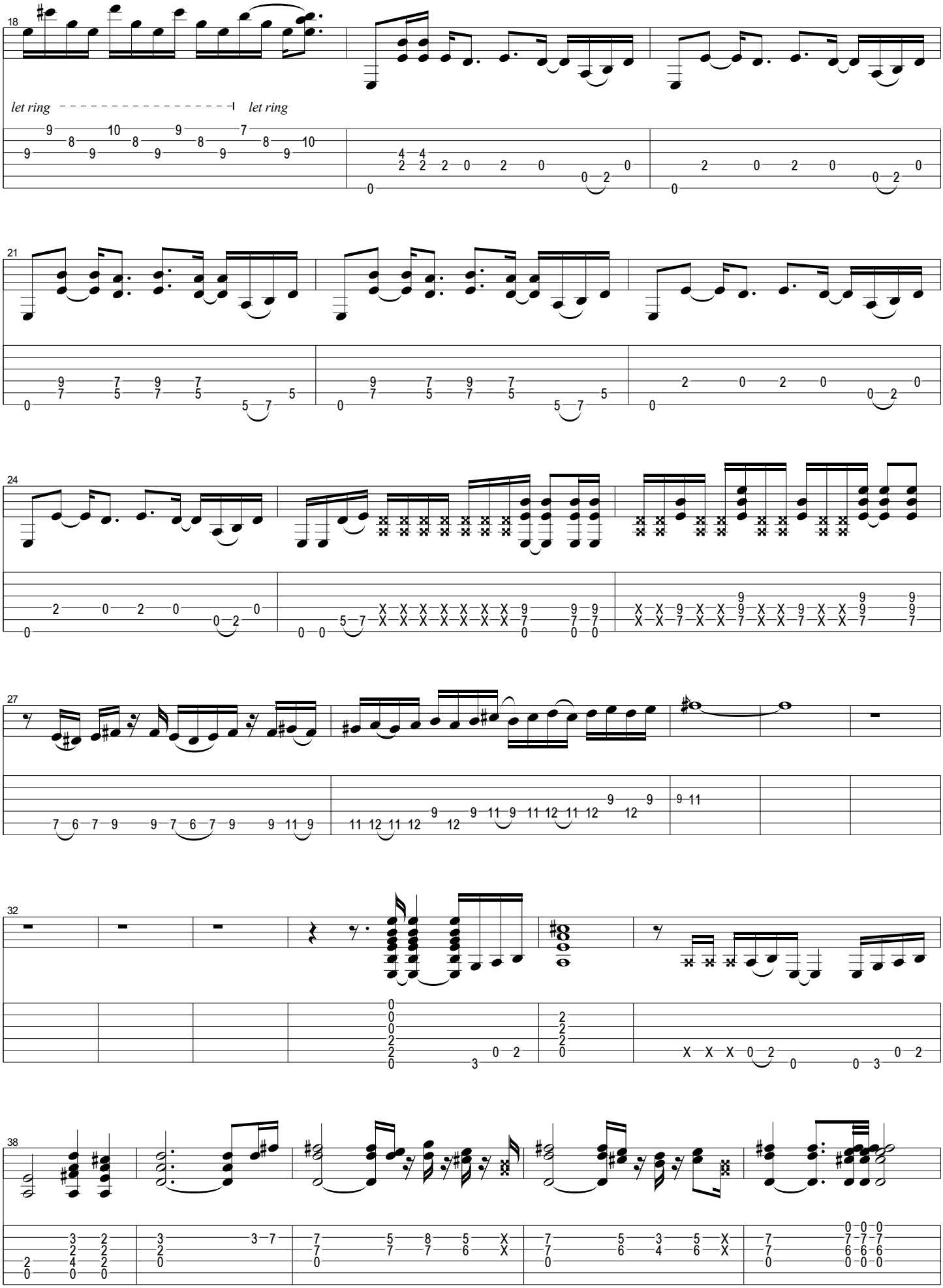
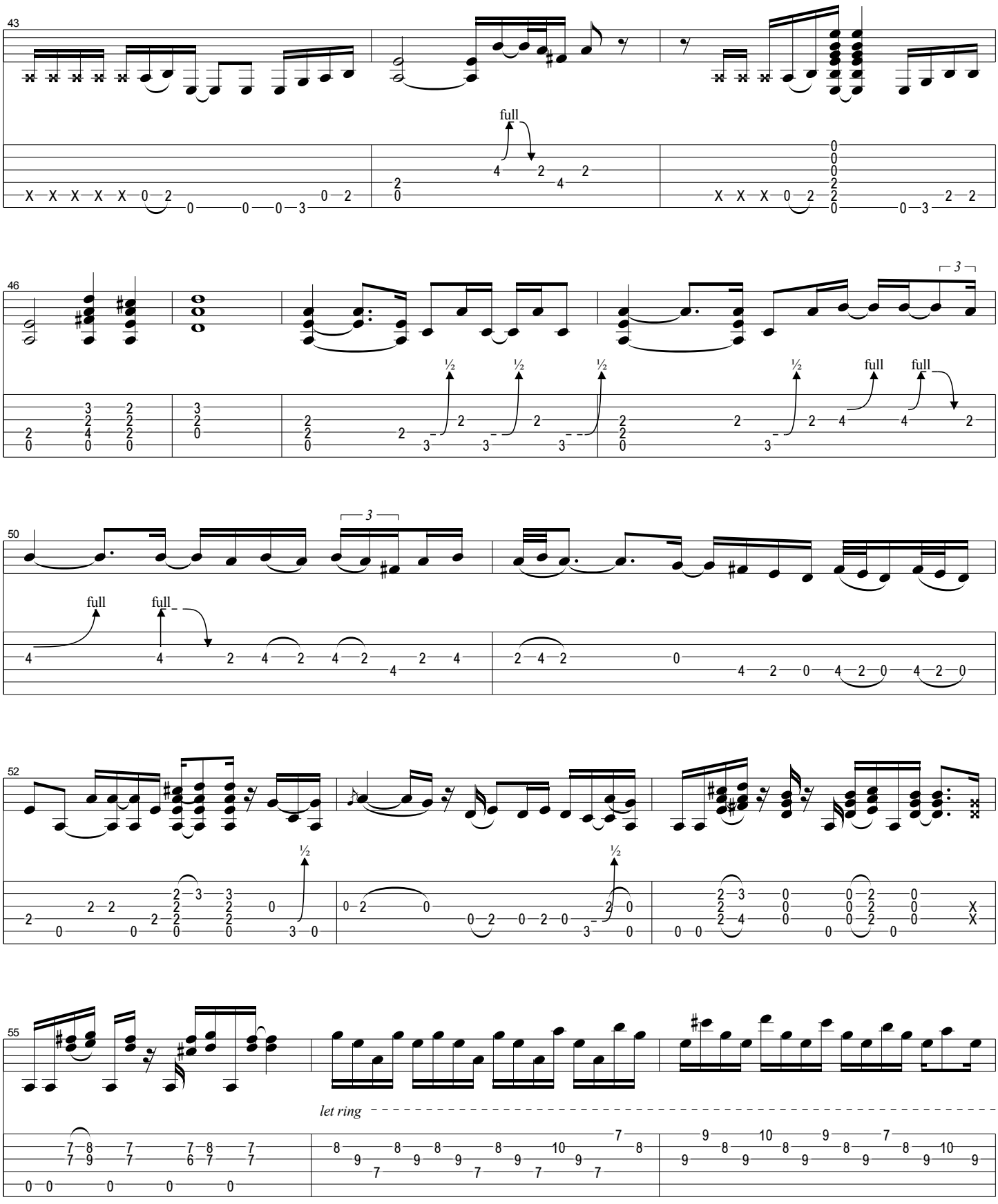
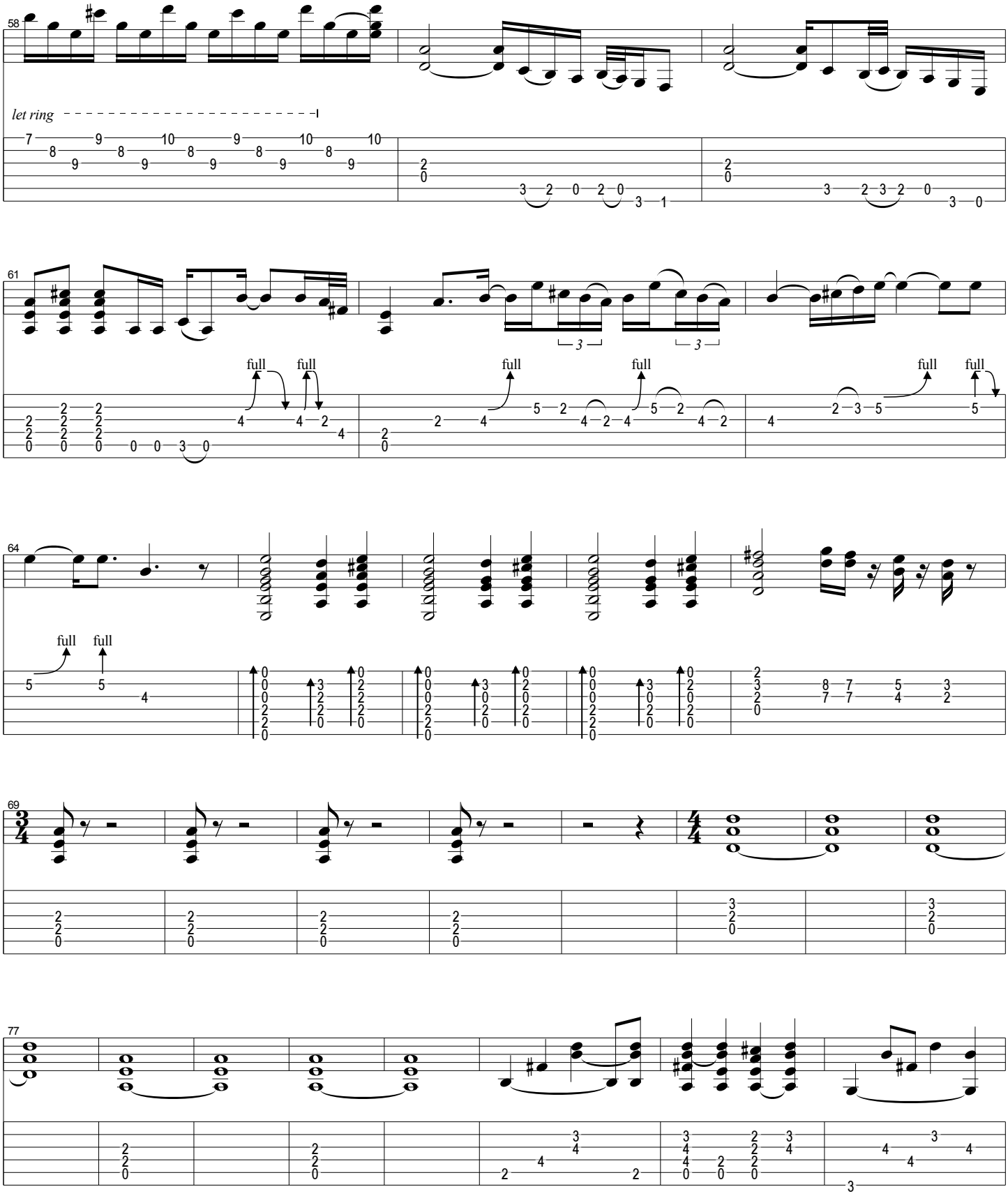
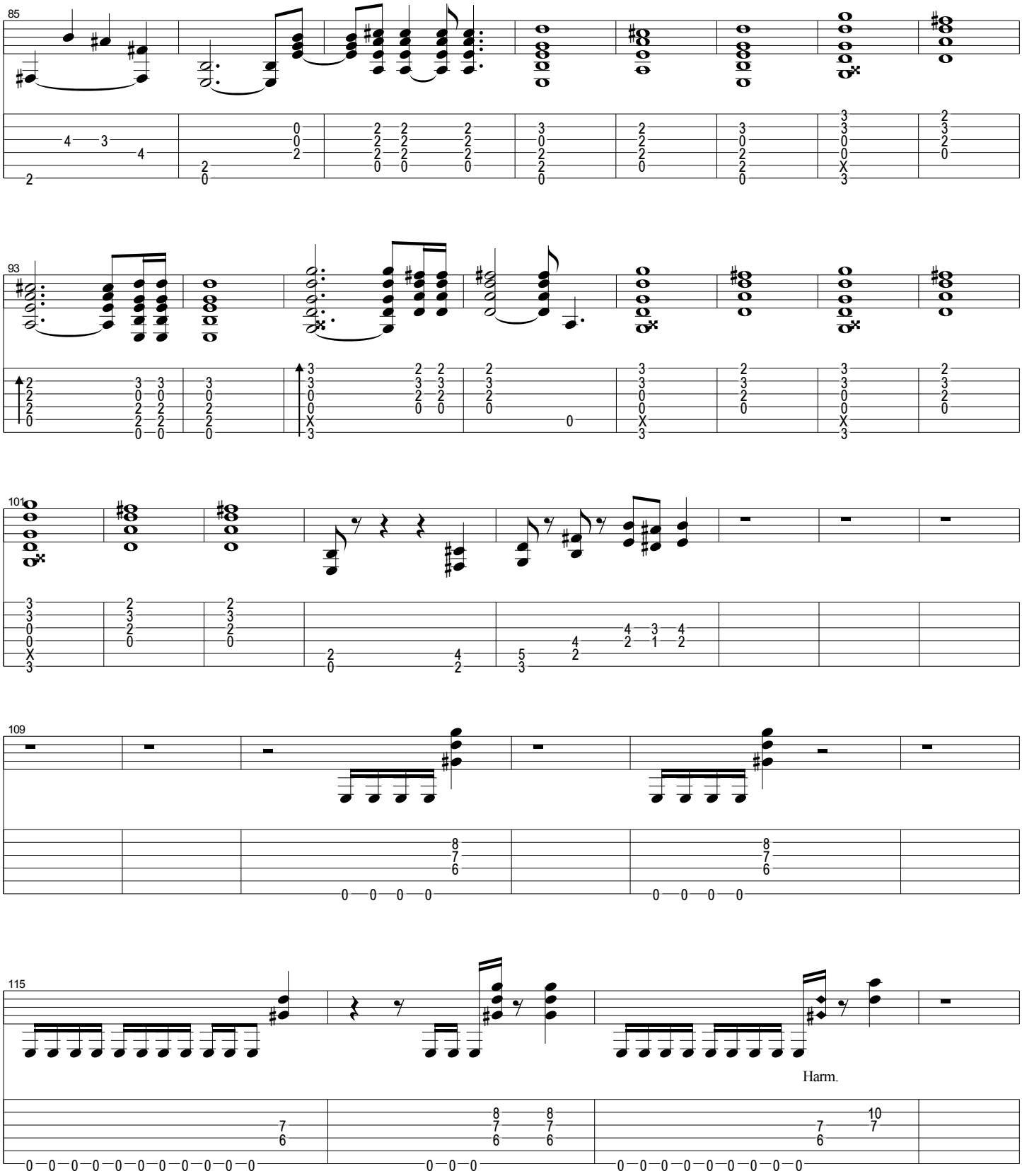
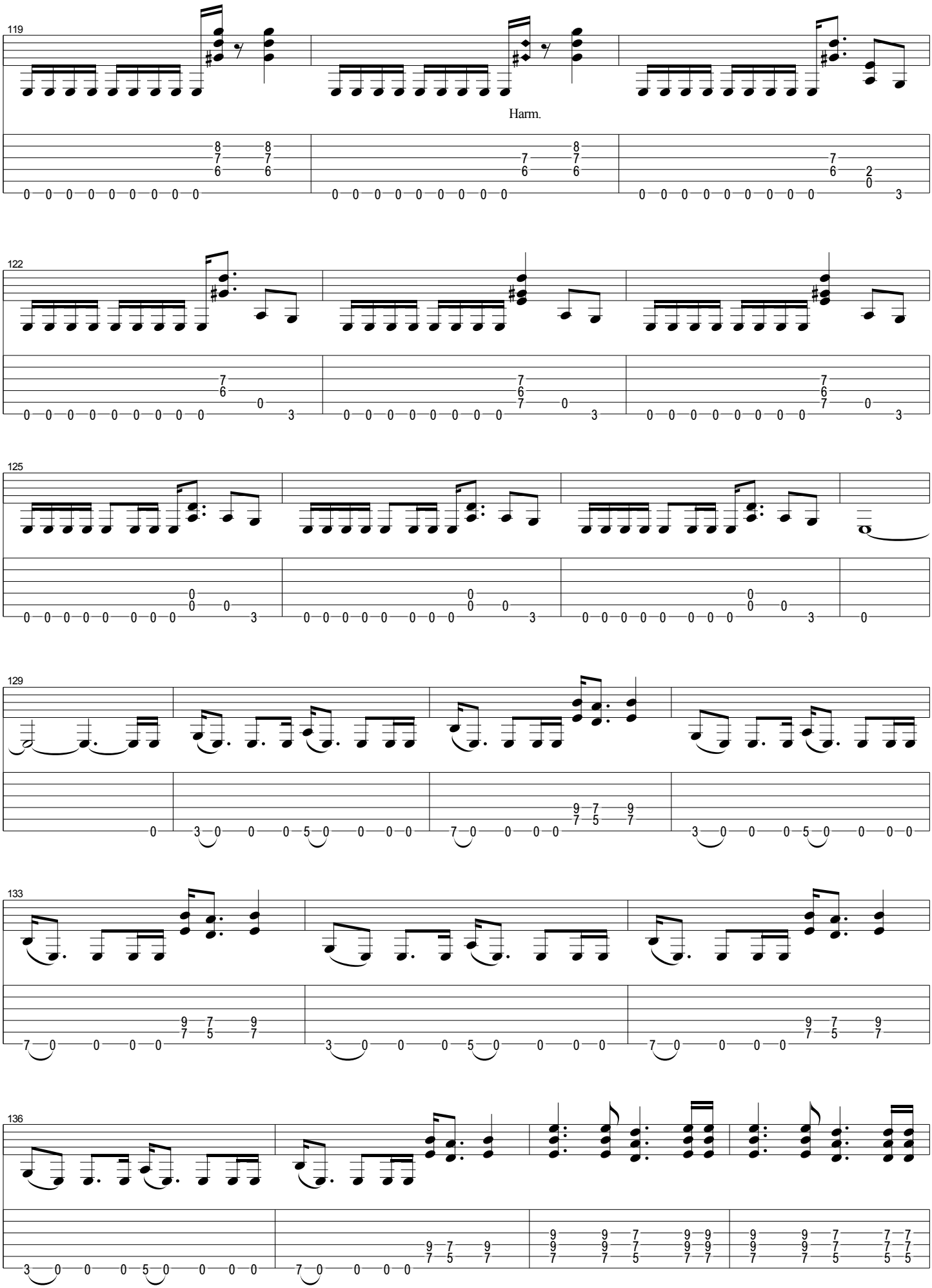
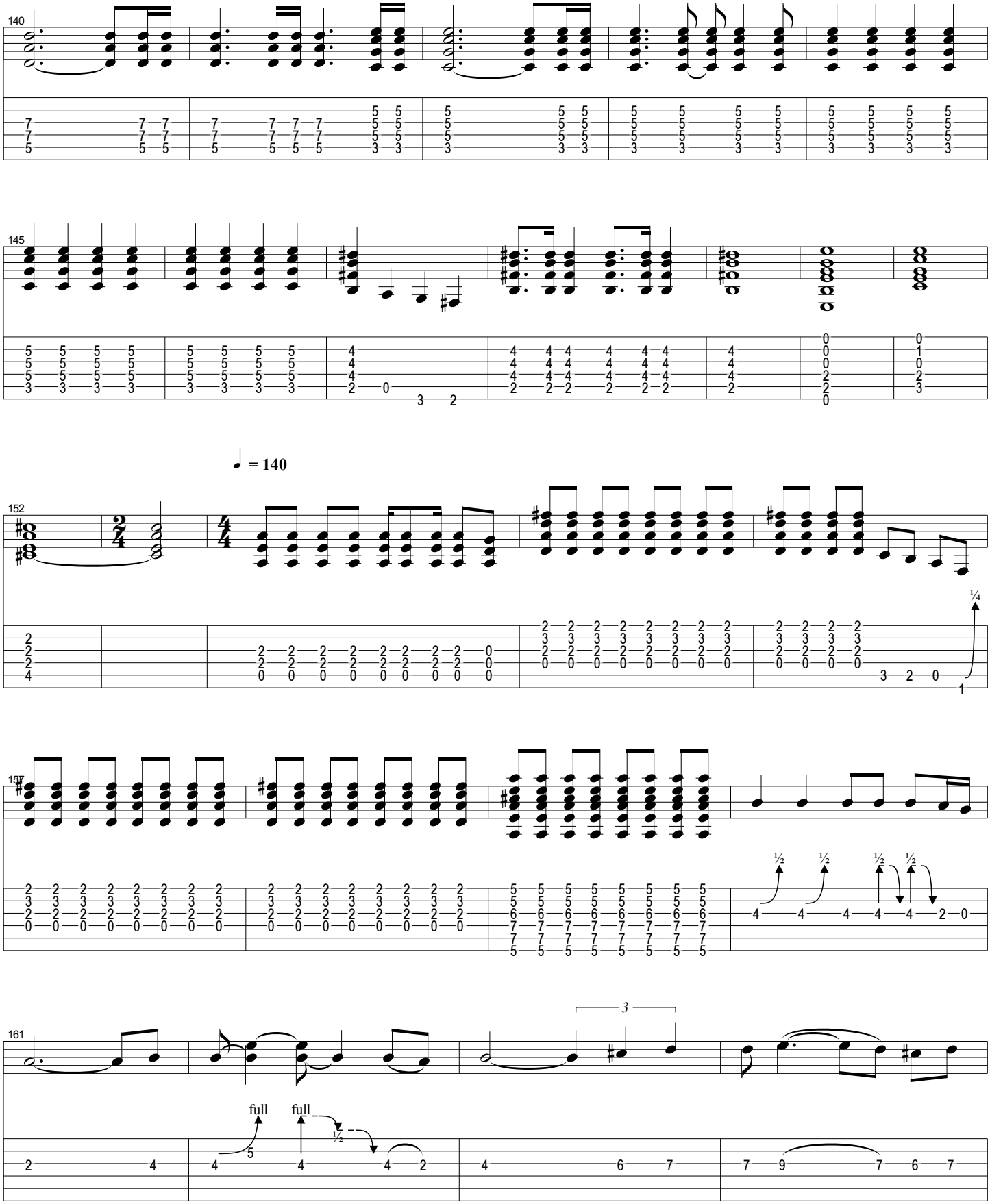

18
let ring
let ring
21
24
27
32
38

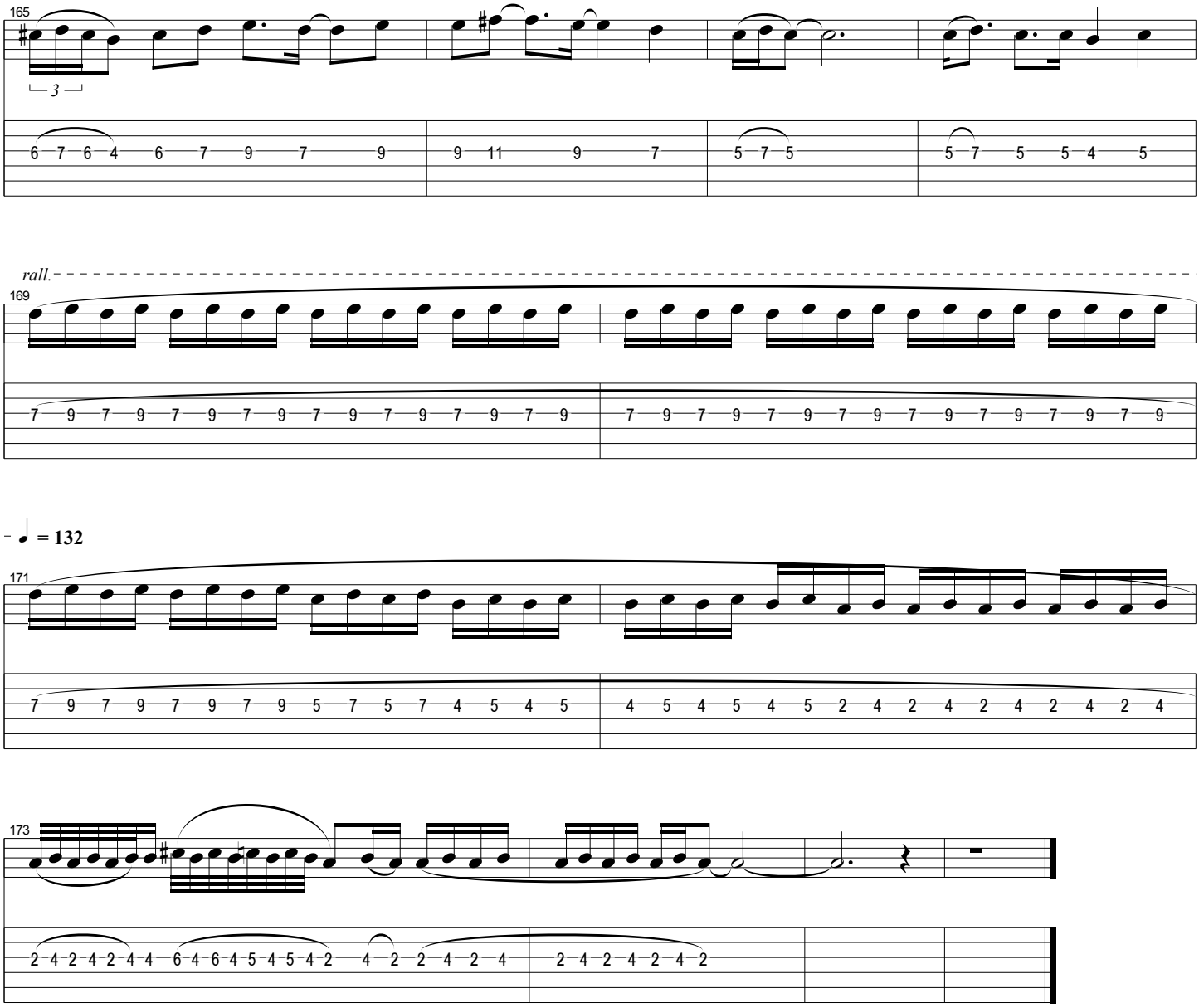

43
full
46
3
½
full
50
3
full
full
52
½
55
let ring


58
let ring
61
full
full
full
full
full
full
64
full
full
69
77


85
93
101
109
115
Harm.


119
Harm.
122
125
129
133
136


140
145
♩ = 140
152
157
161
full
full
3

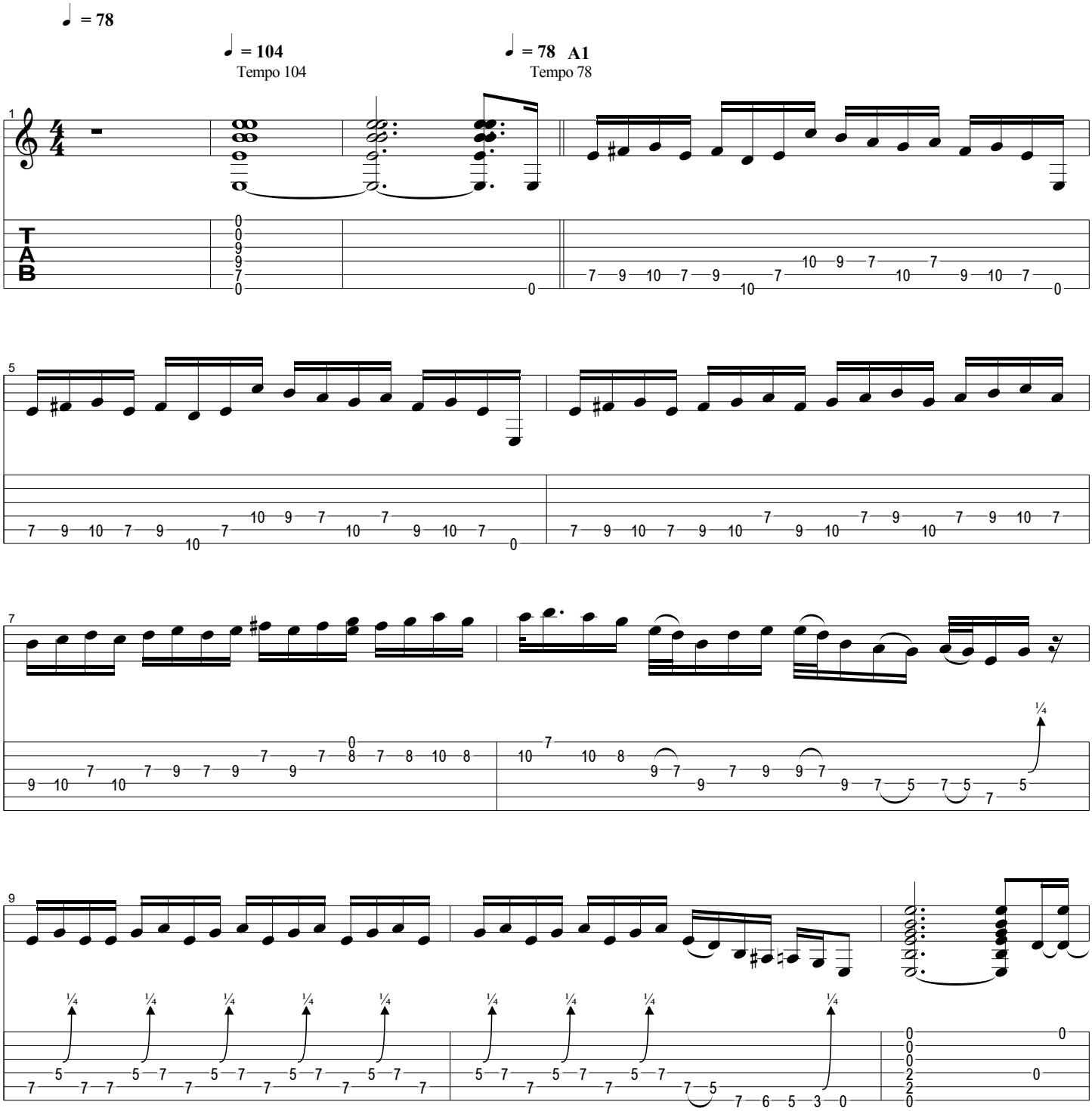

165
3
6 7 6 4 6 7 9 7 9
9 11 9 7
5 7 5
5 7 5 5 4 5
rall.
169
7 9 7 9 7 9 7 9 7 9 7 9 7 9 7 9
7 9 7 9 7 9 7 9 7 9 7 9 7 9 7 9
♩ = 132
171
7 9 7 9 7 9 7 9 5 7 5 7 4 5 4 5
4 5 4 5 4 5 2 4 2 4 2 4 2 4 2 4
173
2 4 2 4 2 4 4 6 4 6 4 5 4 5 4 2 4 2 2 4 2 4
2 4 2 4 2 4 2

The Night Comes Down

Queen

Queen

Words & Music by Brian May



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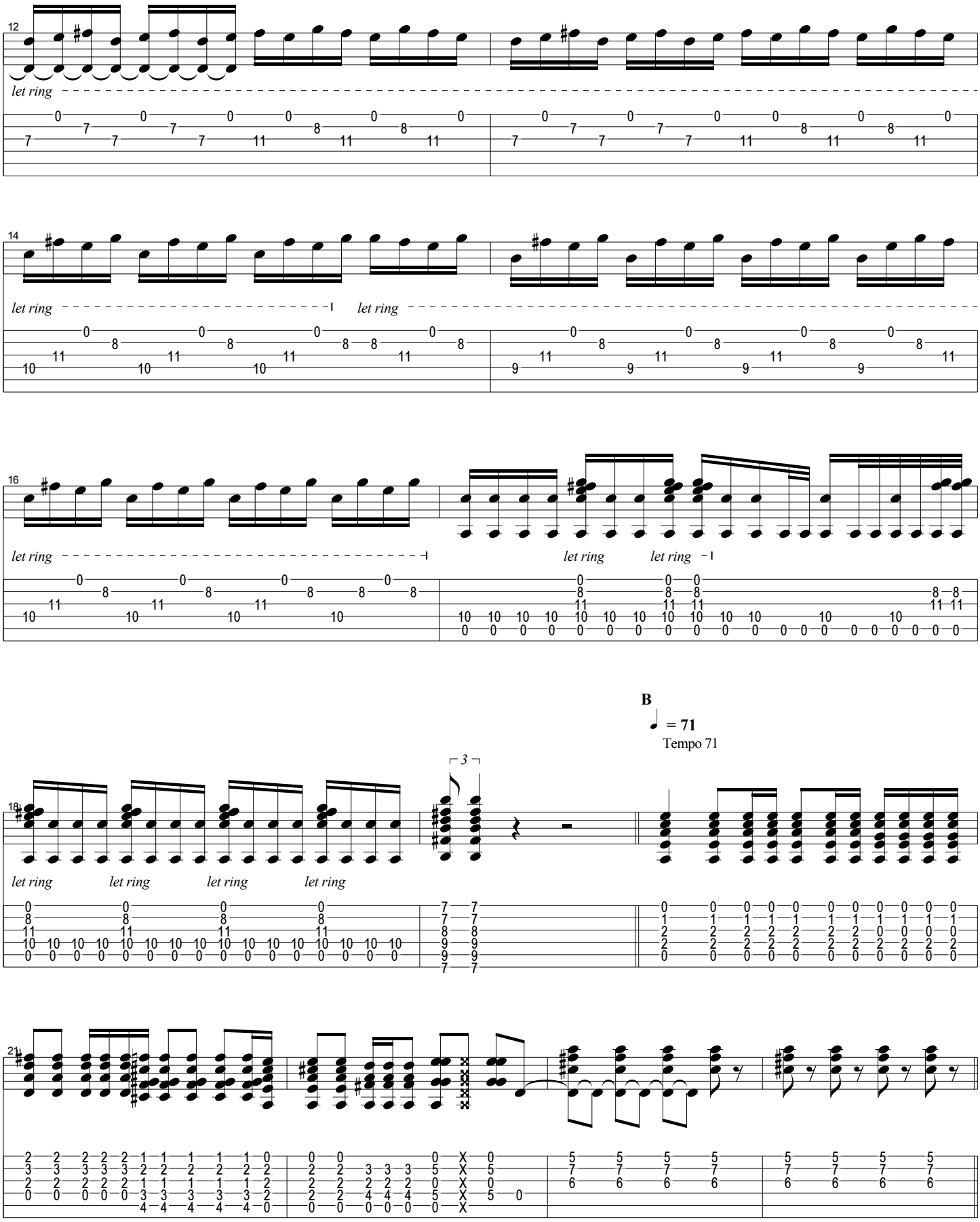
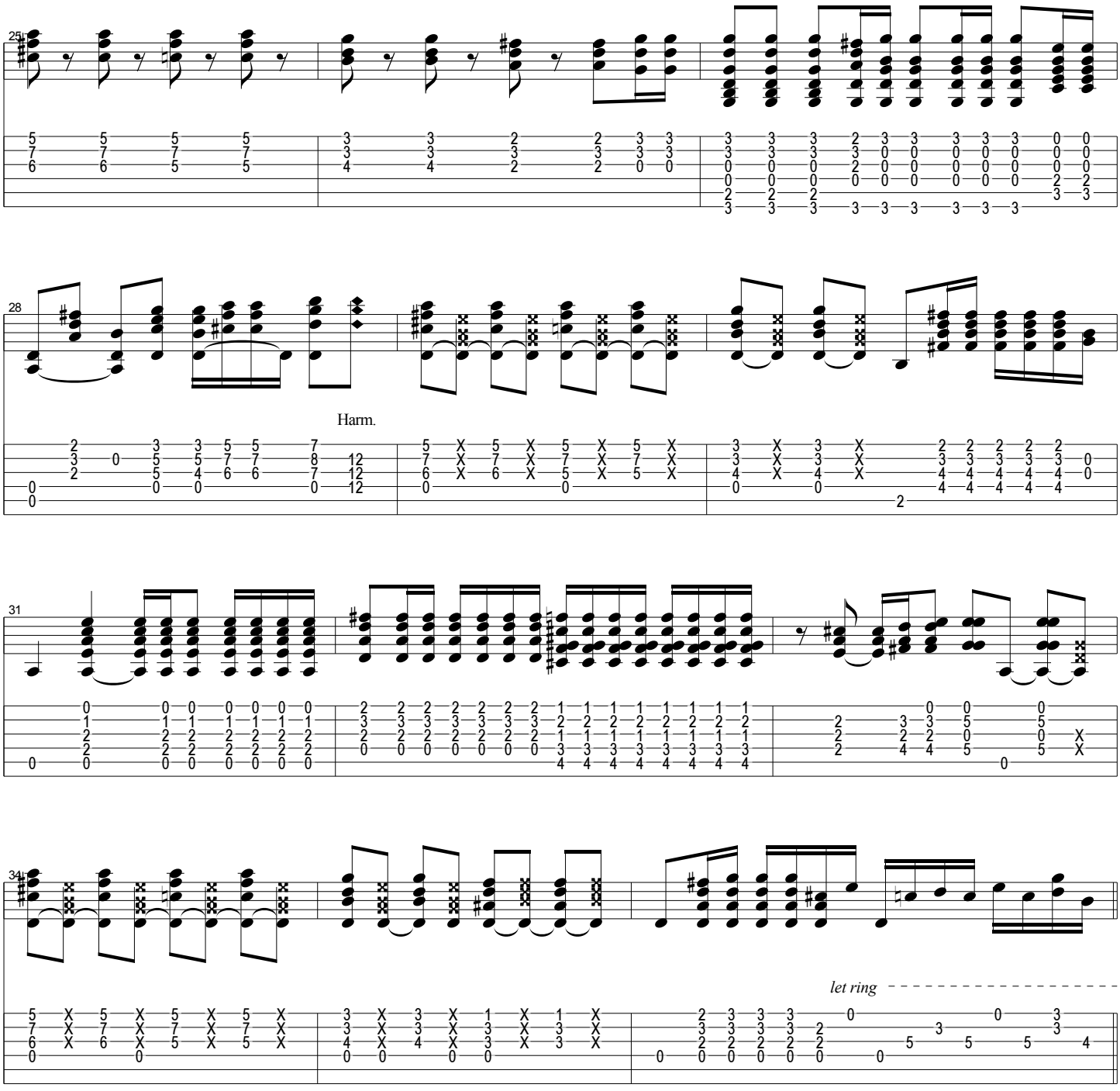
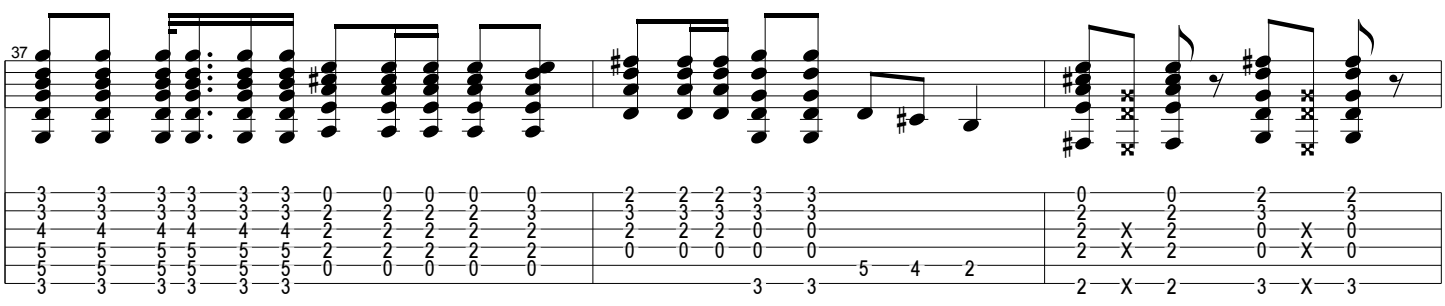
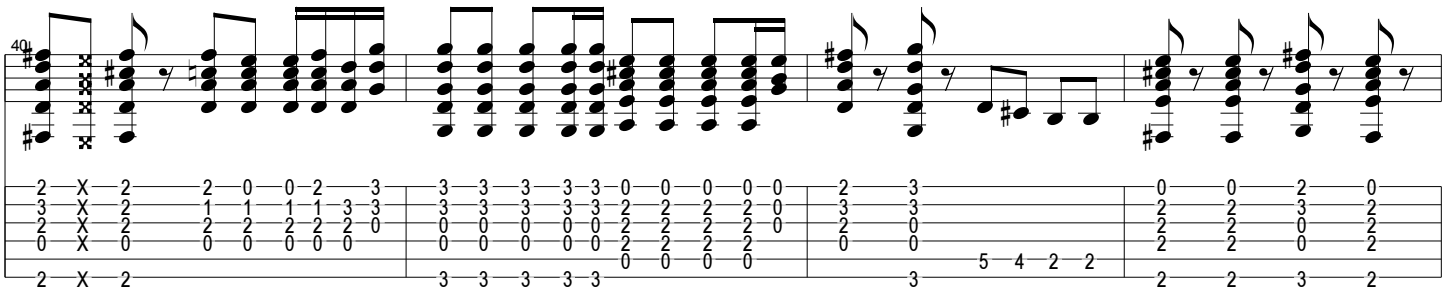

12
let ring
14
let ring
let ring
16
let ring
let ring
let ring
B
= 71
Tempo 71
18
3
let ring
let ring
let ring
let ring
21

C1

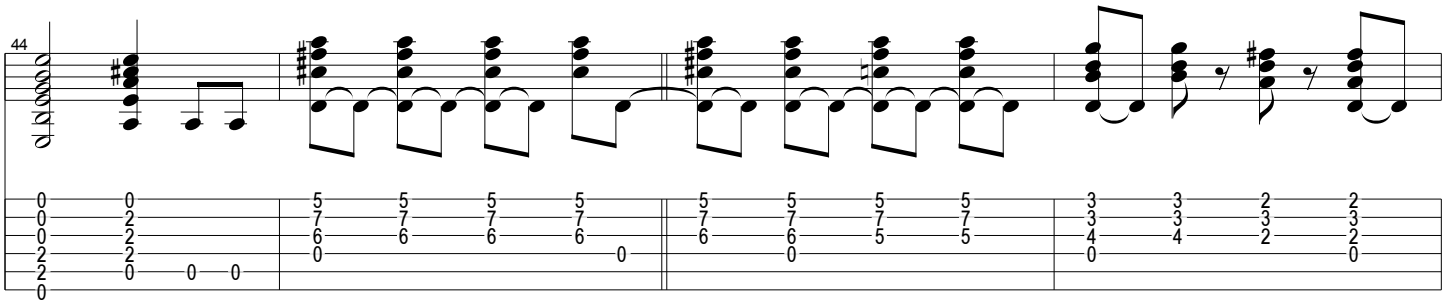


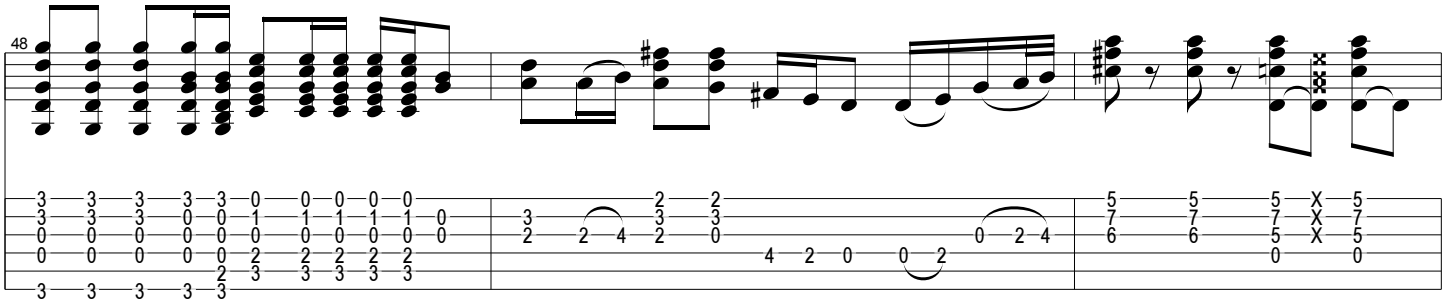
D1

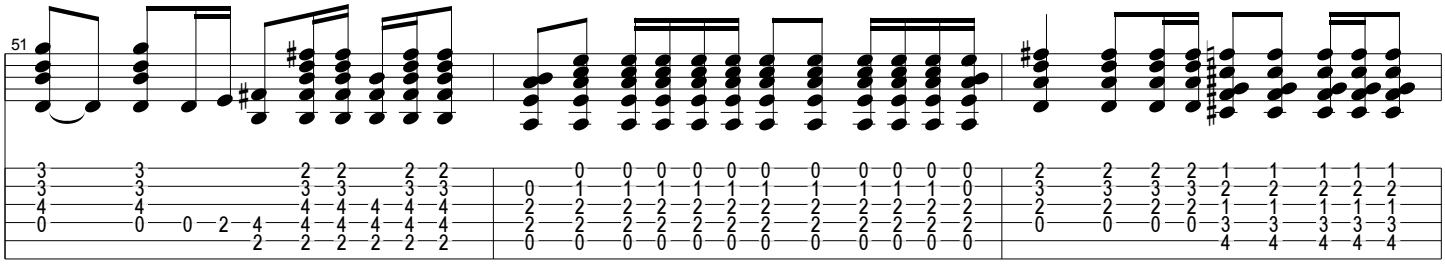


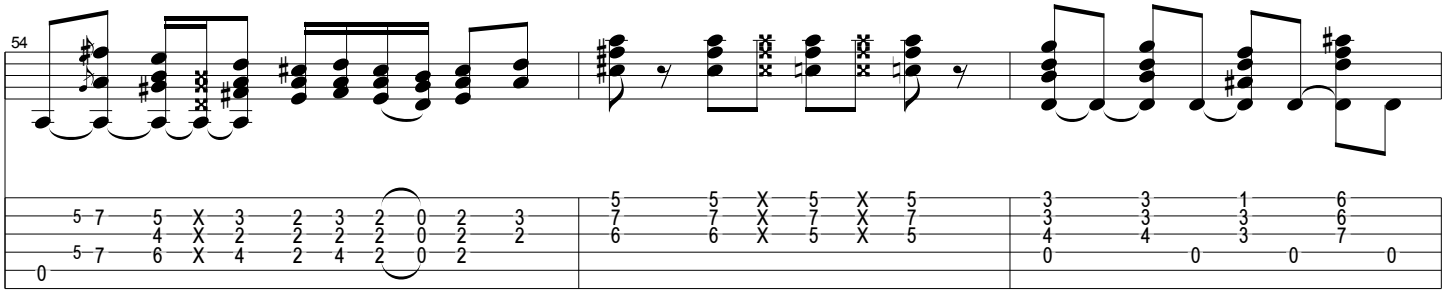


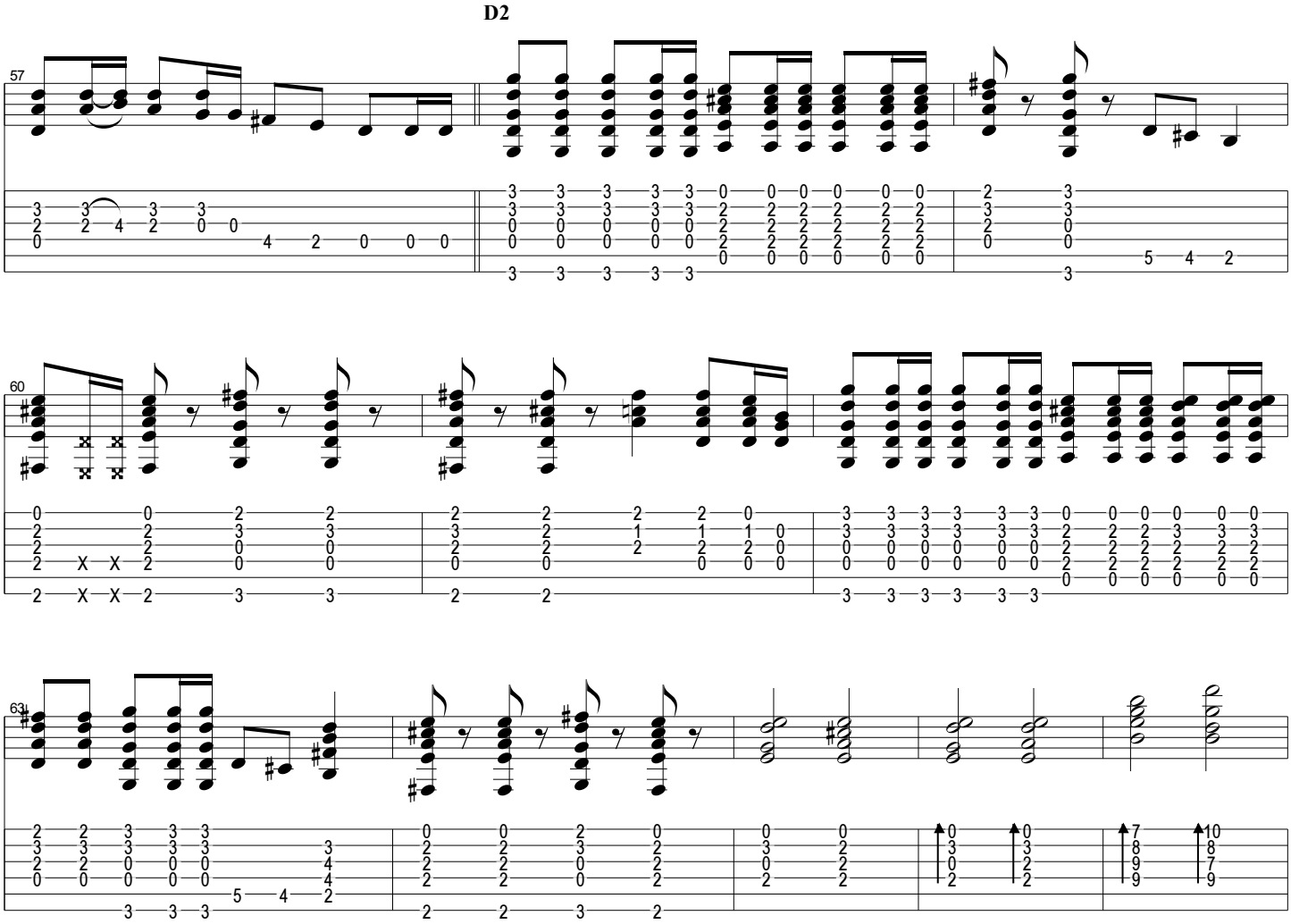
C2

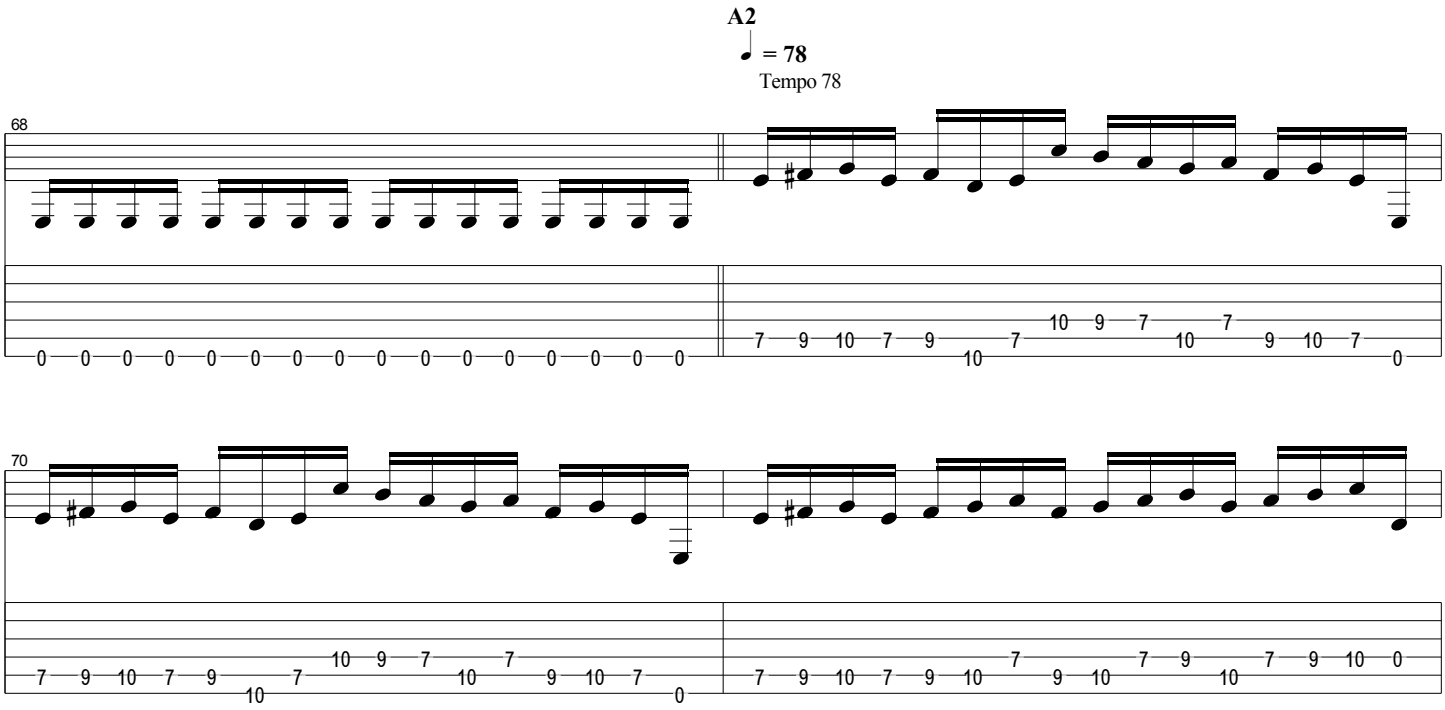


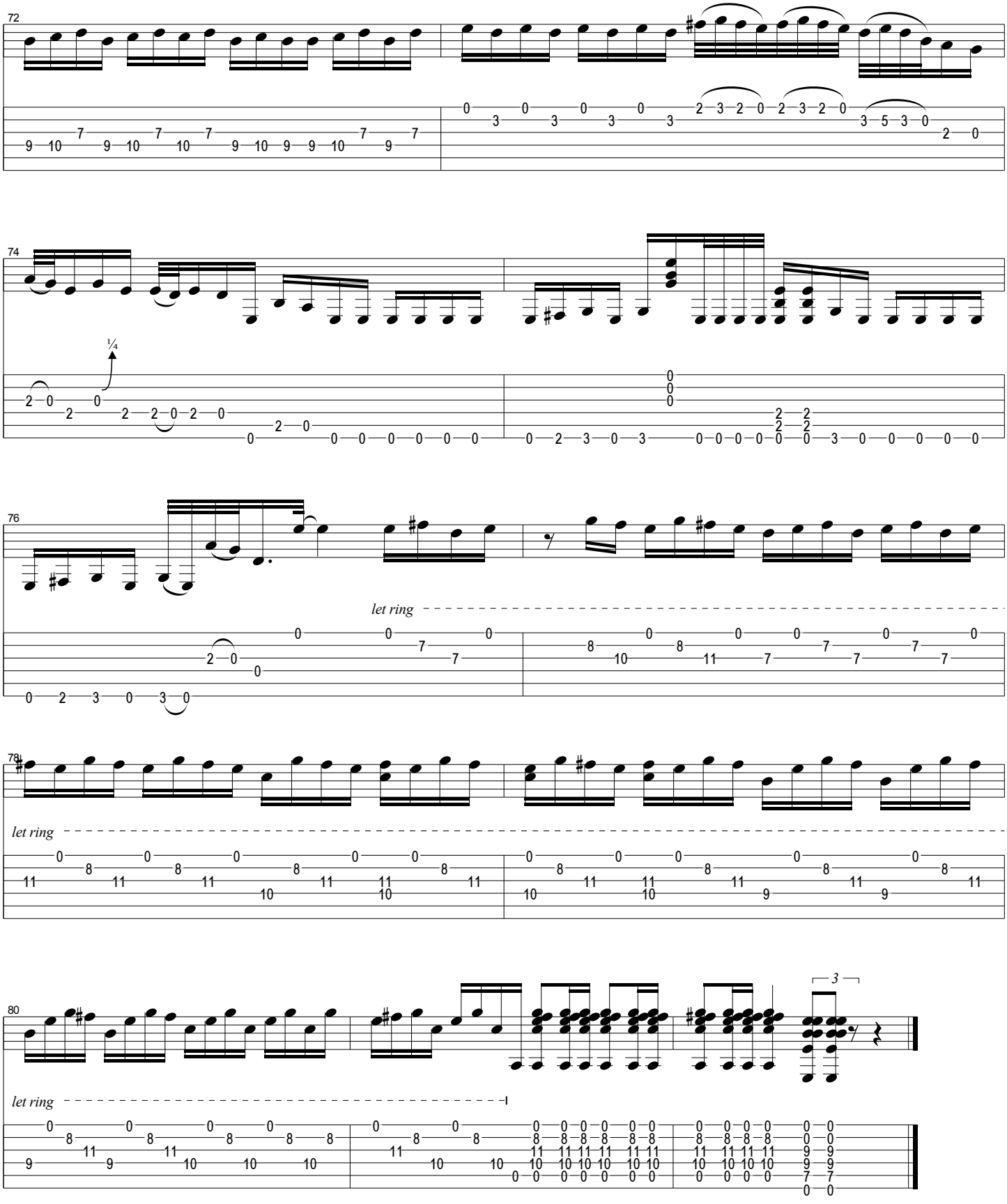







D2
57
60
63


A2
= 78
Tempo 78
68
70

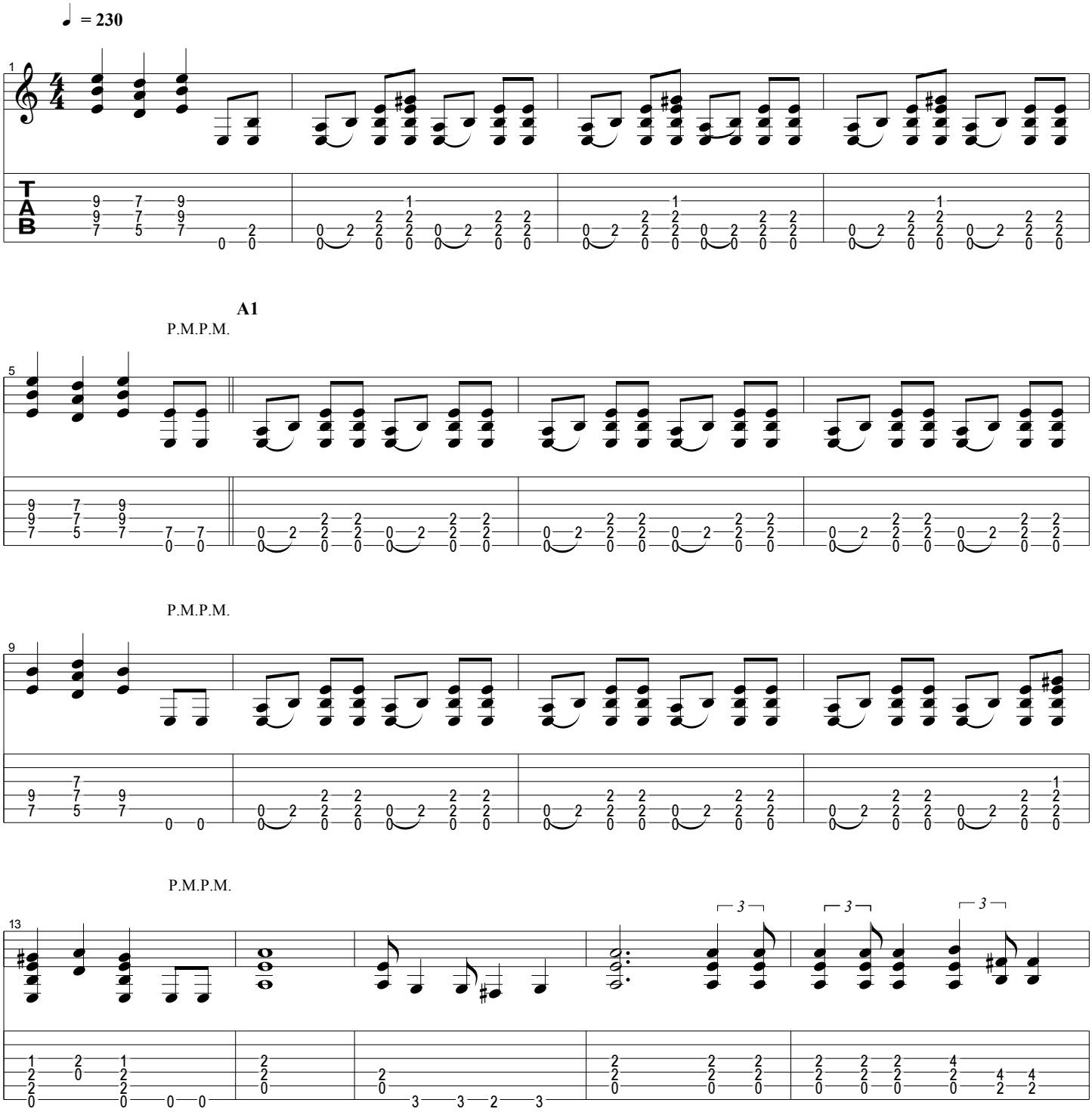

72
74
¼
76
let ring
78
let ring
80
3
let ring

Modern Times Rock ´n´ Roll

Queen

Queen

Words & Music by Roger Taylor



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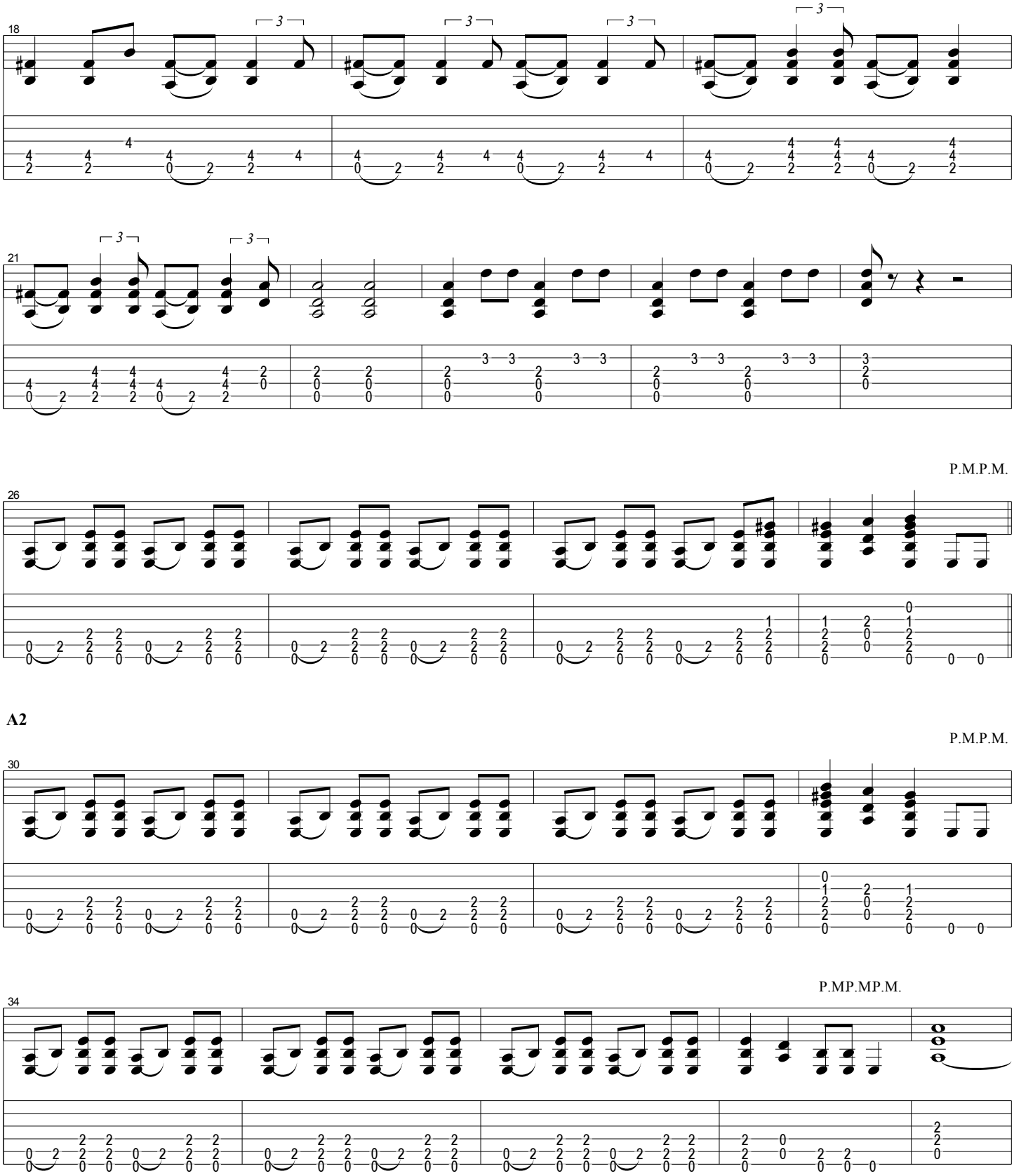
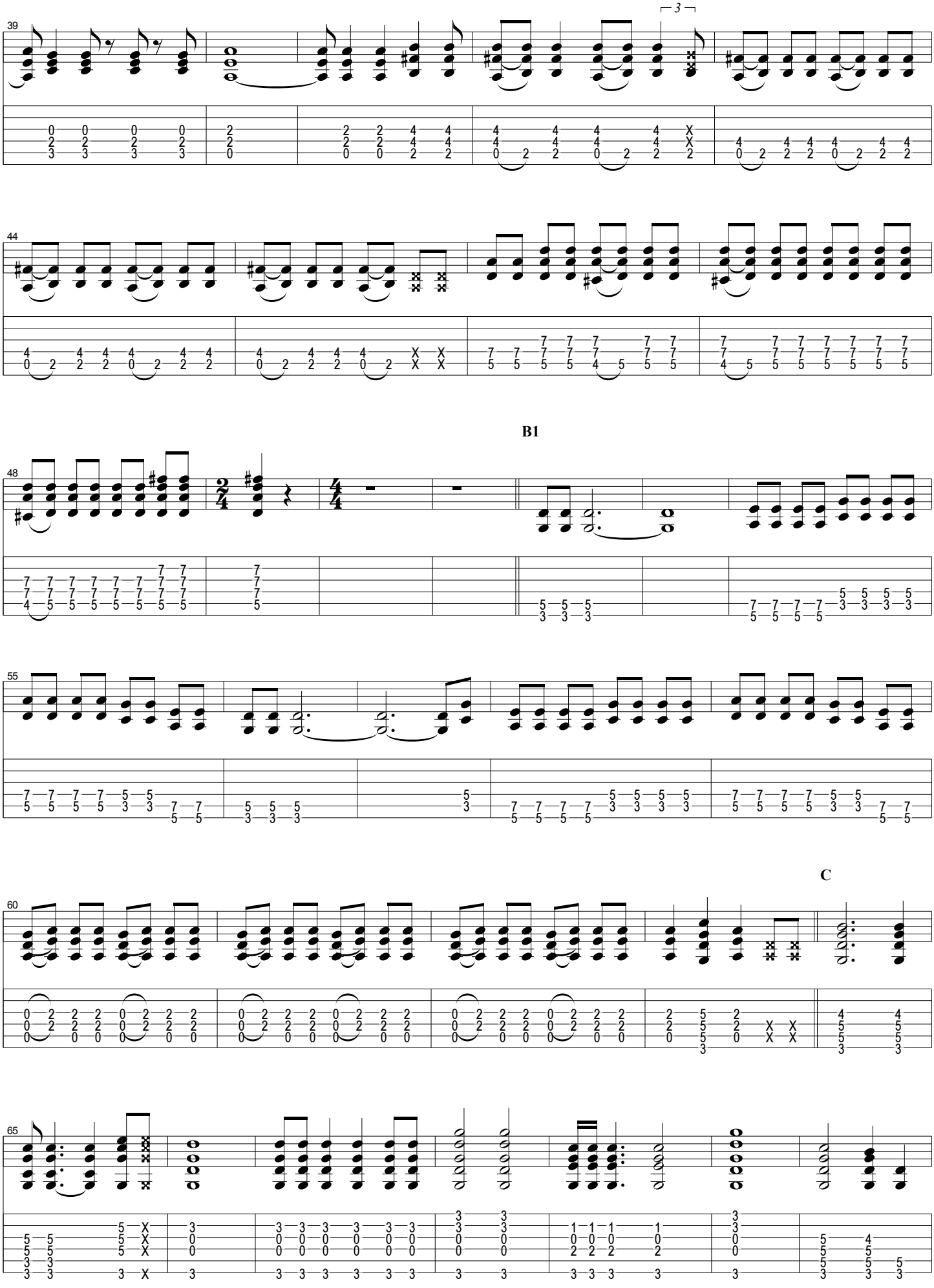
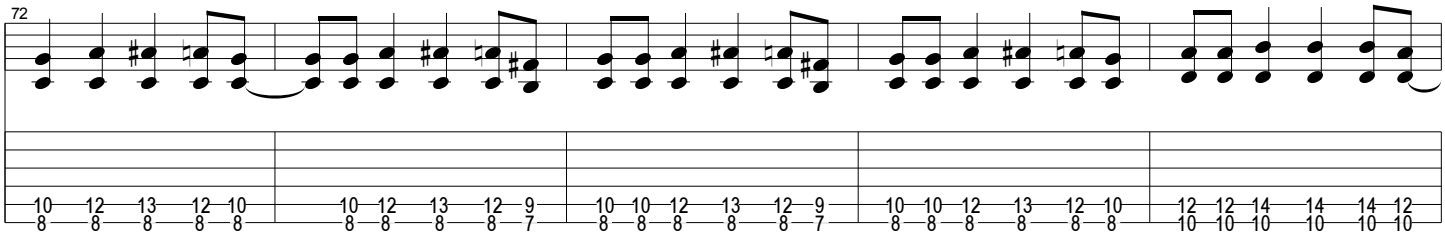
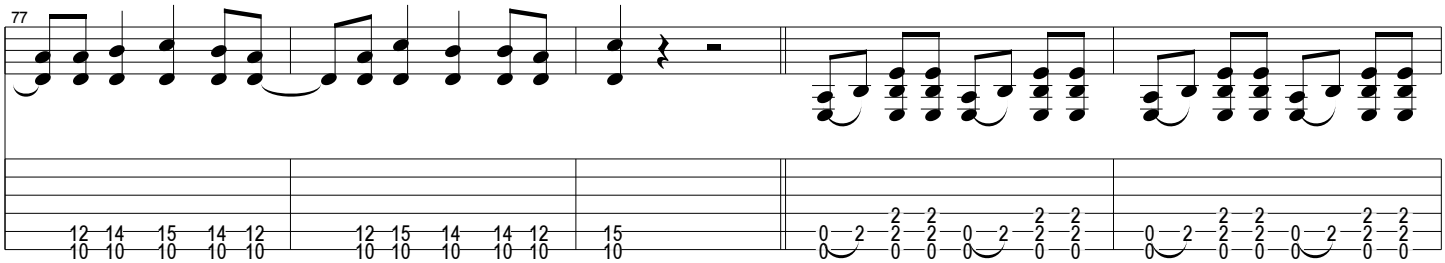
Palm mute the next 4 bars



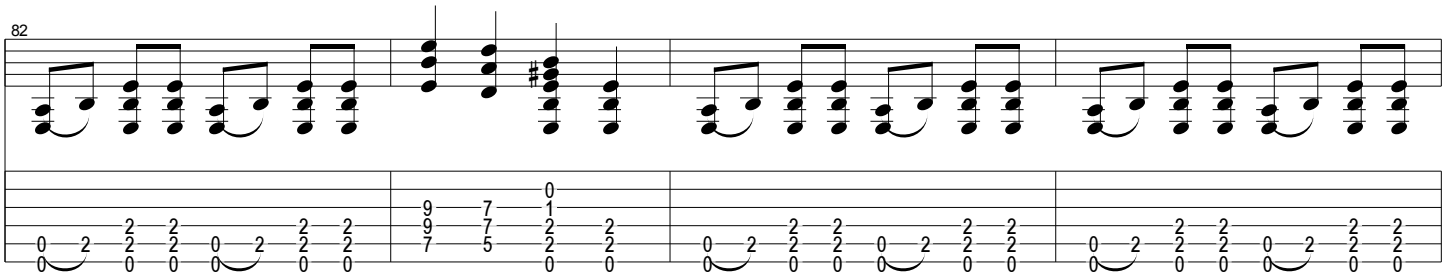

39
3
44
B1
48
55
C
60
65

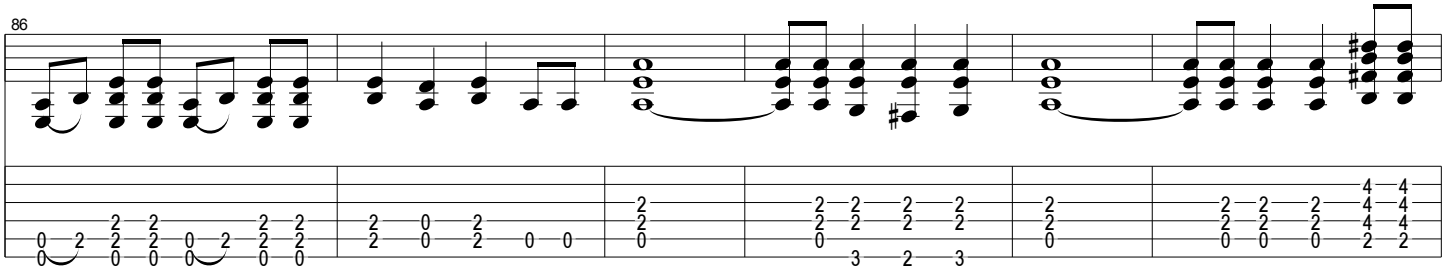


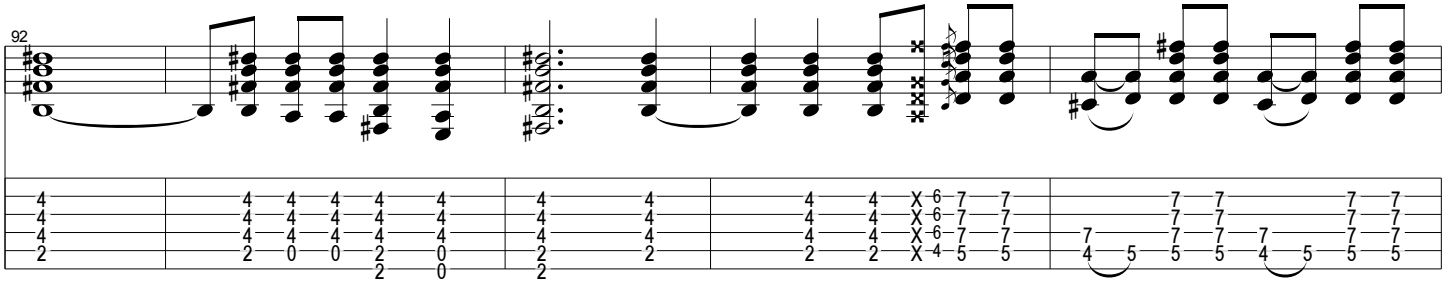
A3



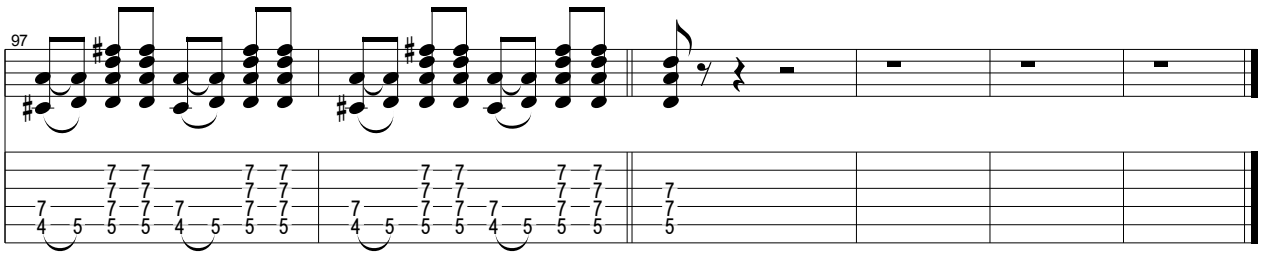
P.M.







Outro

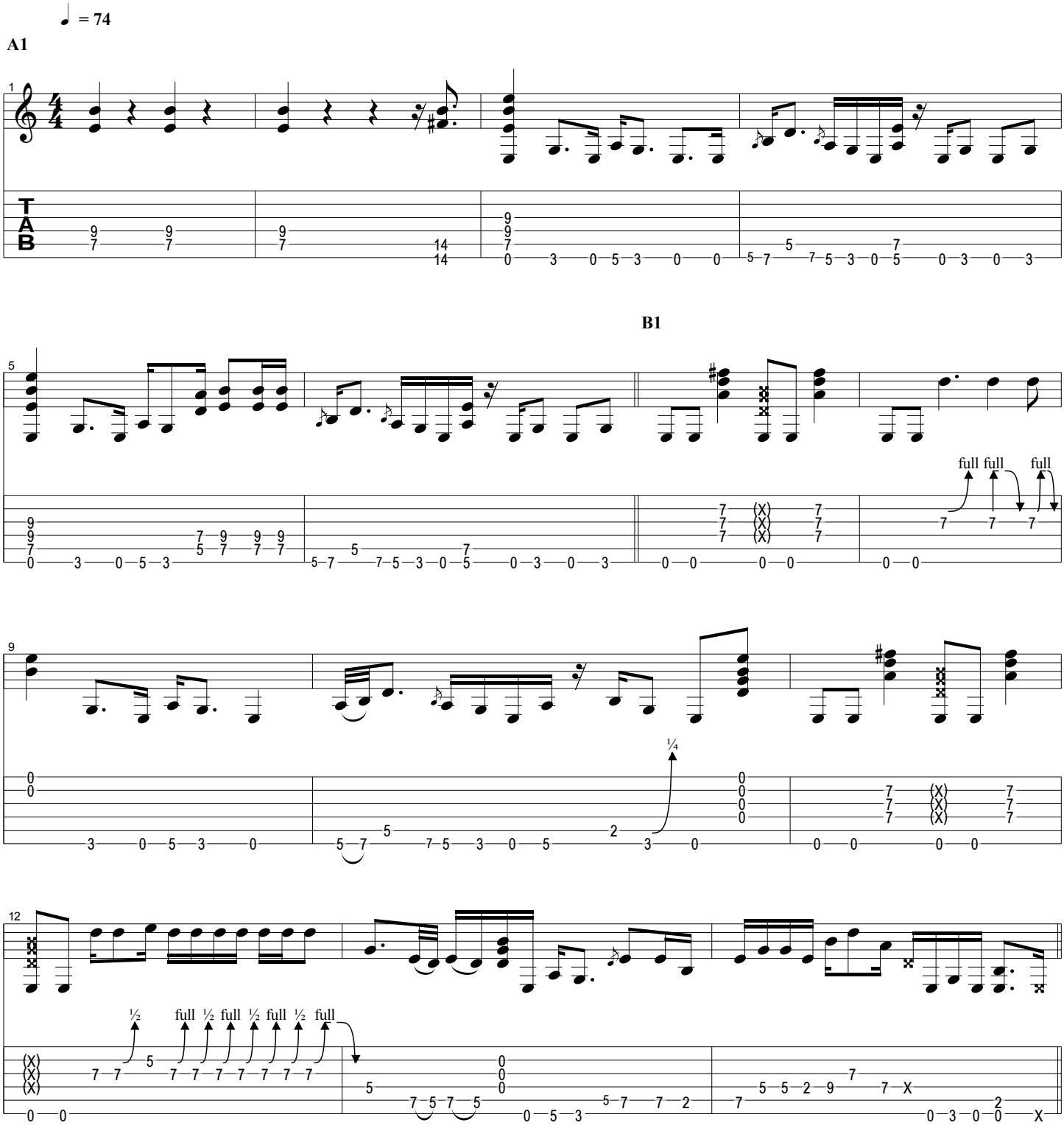


Son and Daughter

Queen

Queen

Words & Music by Brian May



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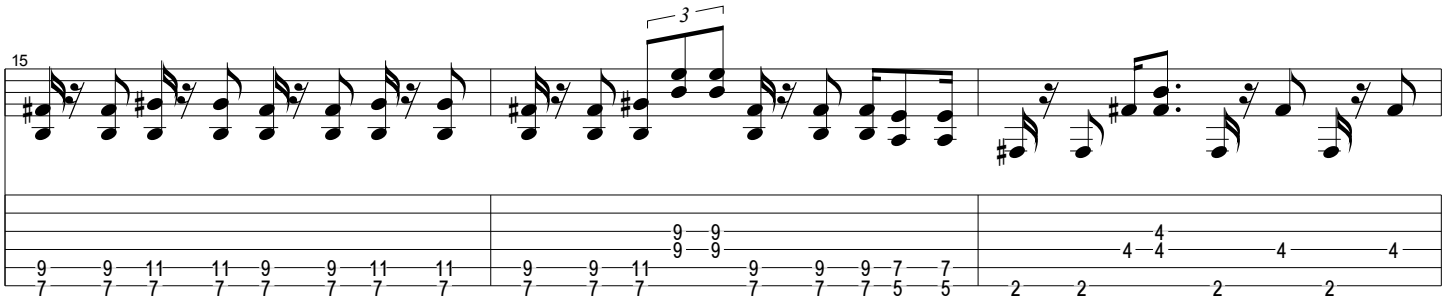
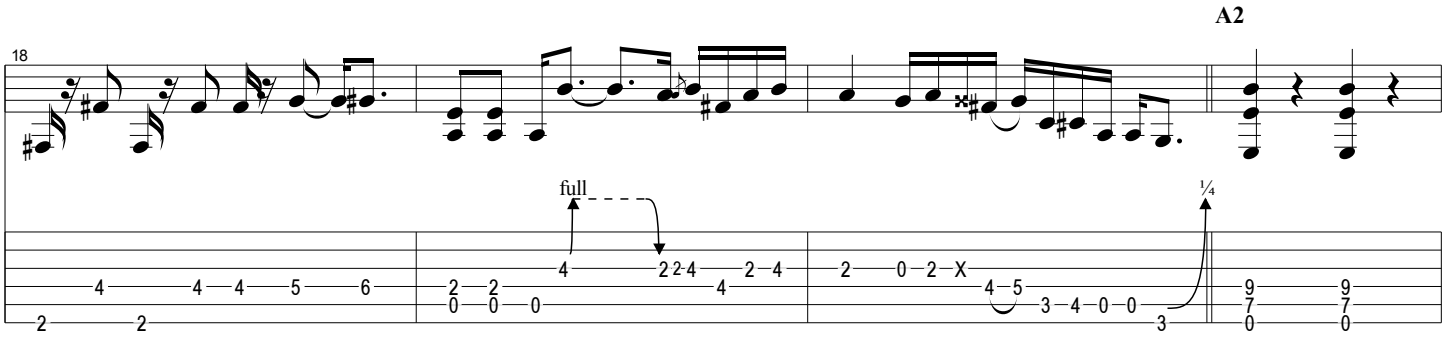
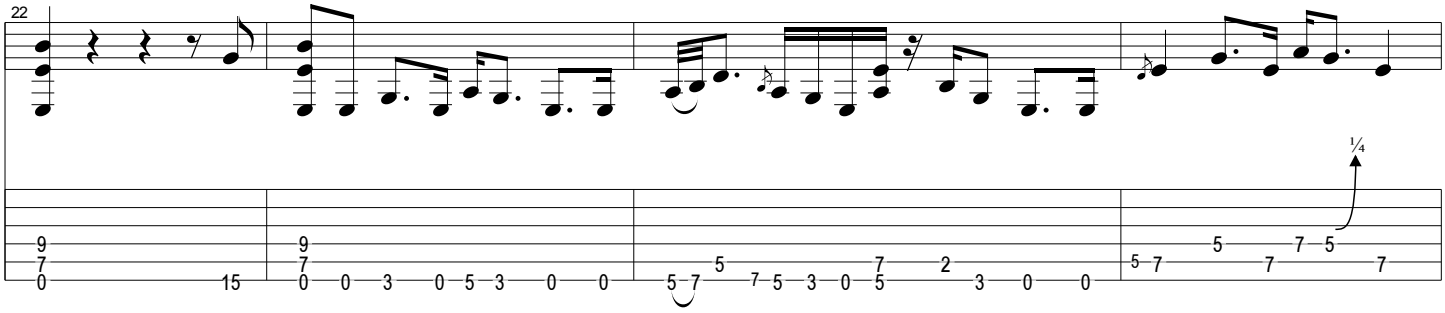
C1

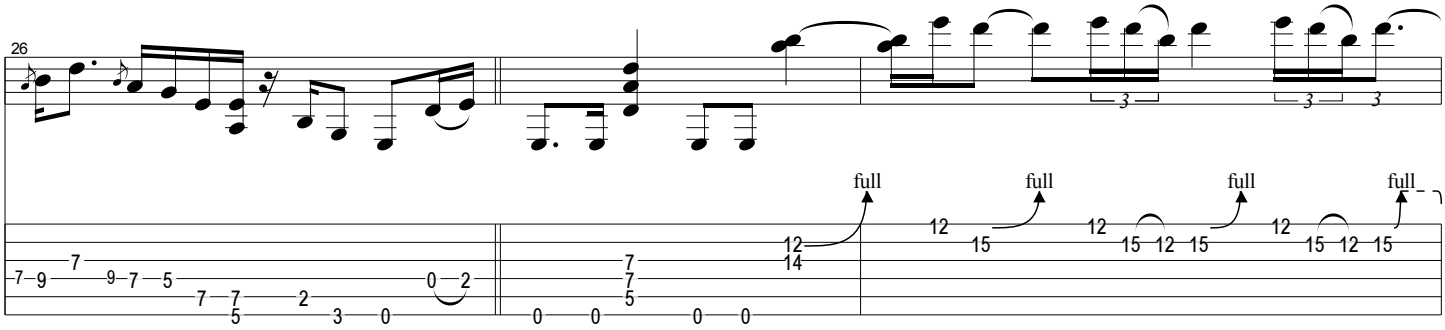

15
3

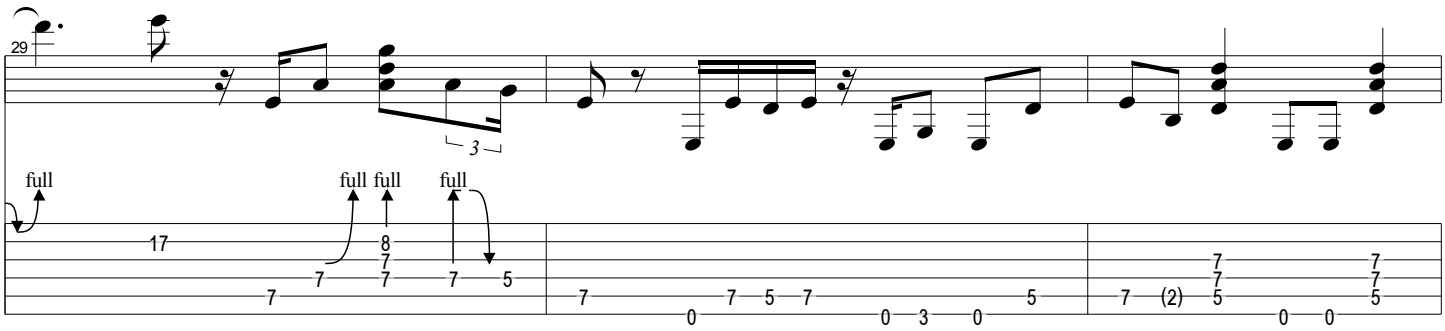

18
full
¼

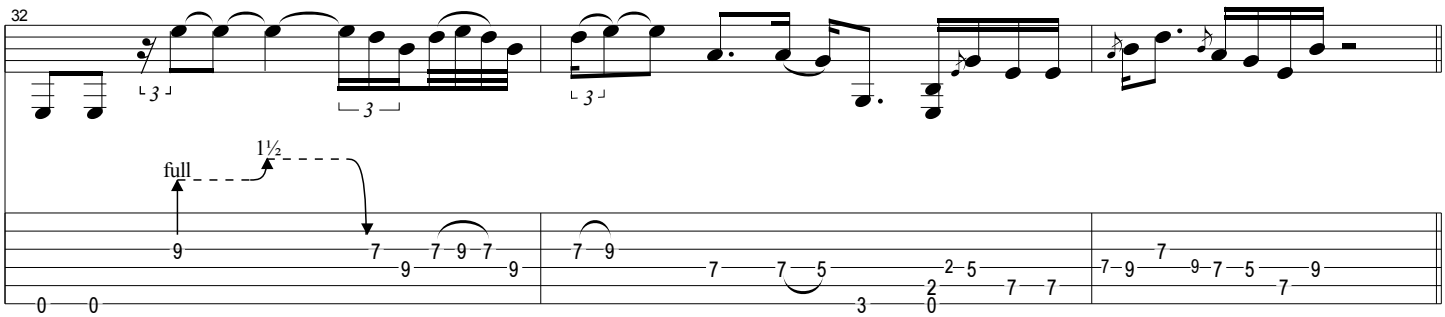
A2


22
¼

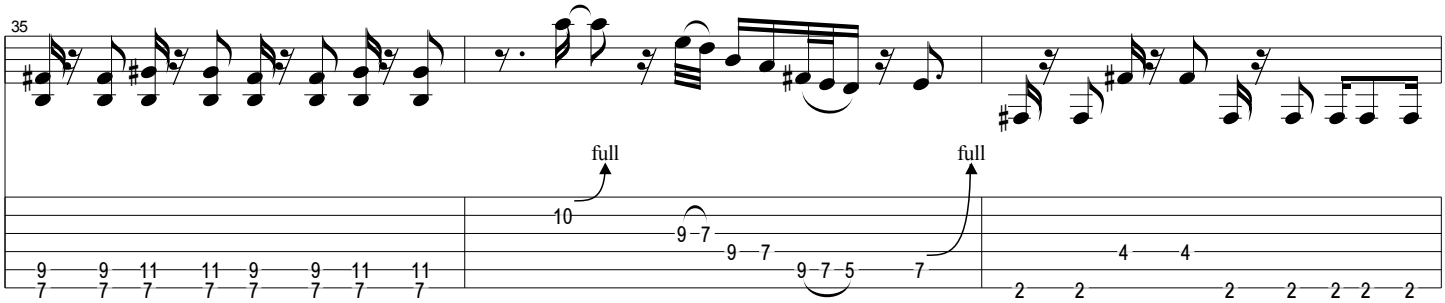
B2

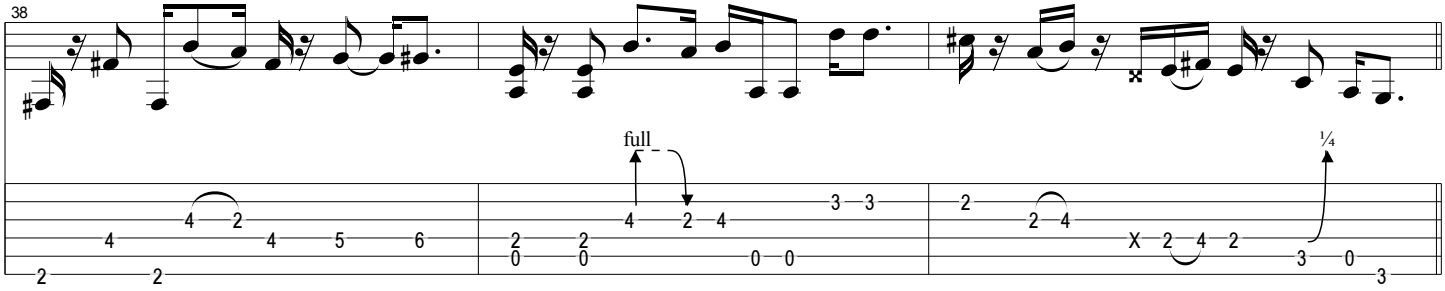

26
3
full
full
full
full


29
3
full
full
full
full

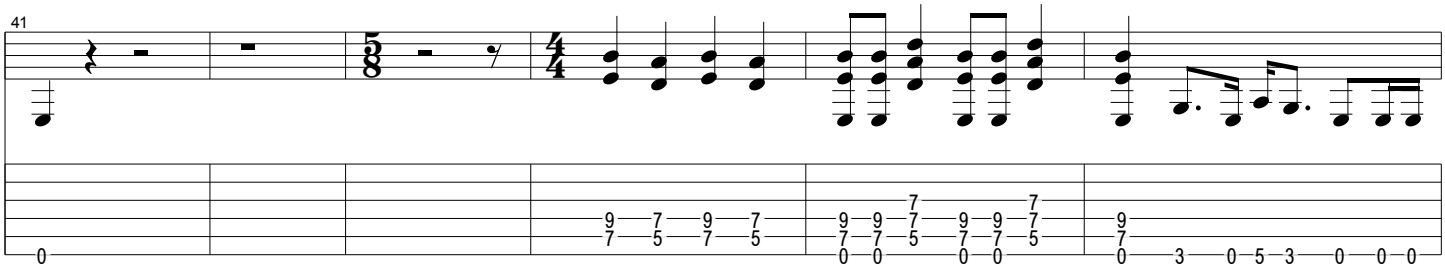


C2





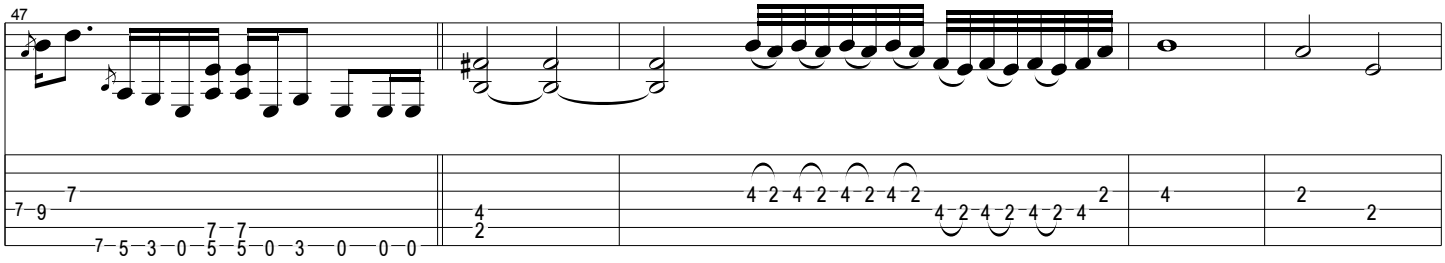
A3

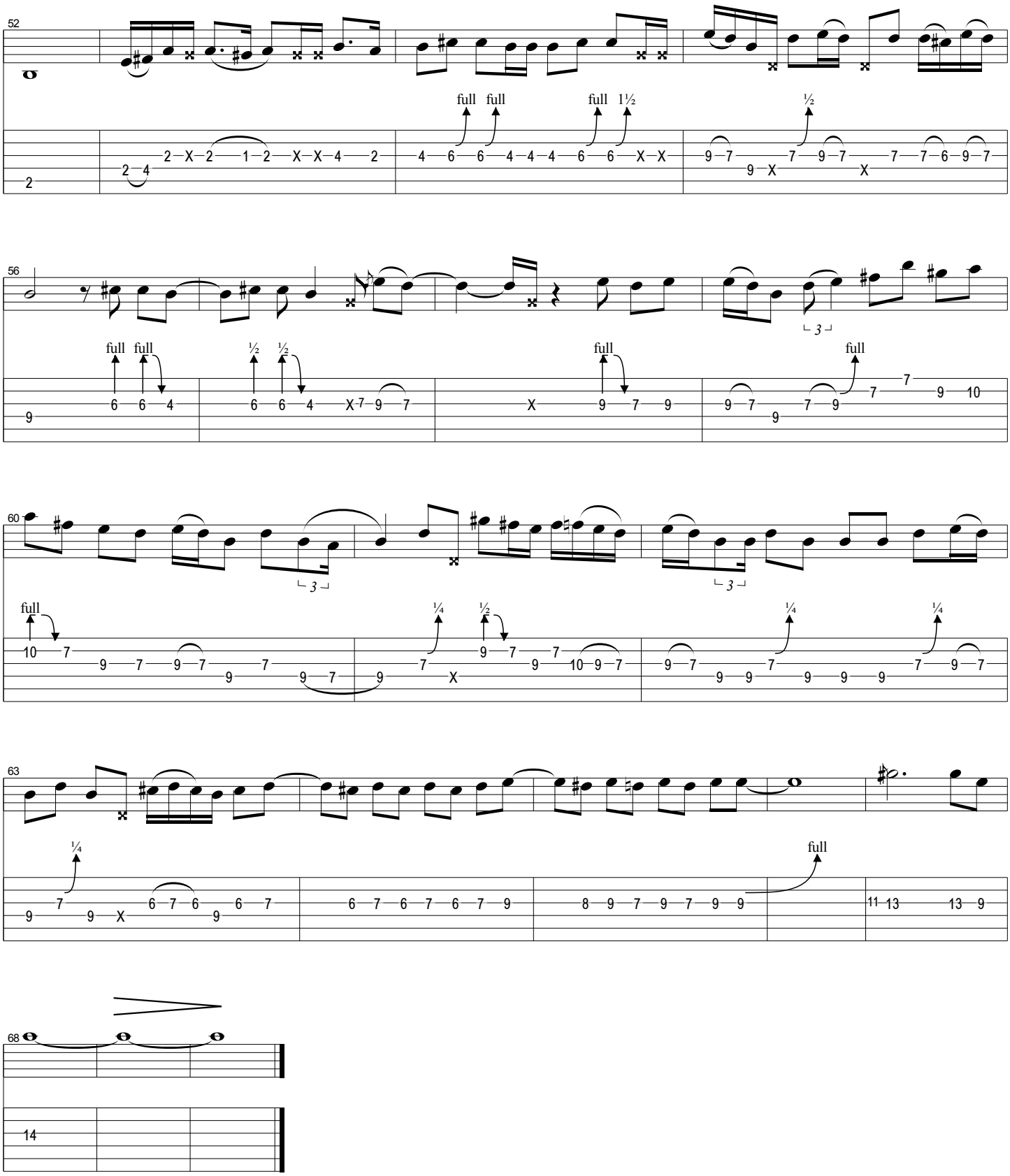


D

♩ = **94**

tempo 94accel.




52
full full full 1½ ½
56
full full ½ ½ full full
60
full ¼ ½ ¼ ¼
63
¼ full
68
14

Jesus

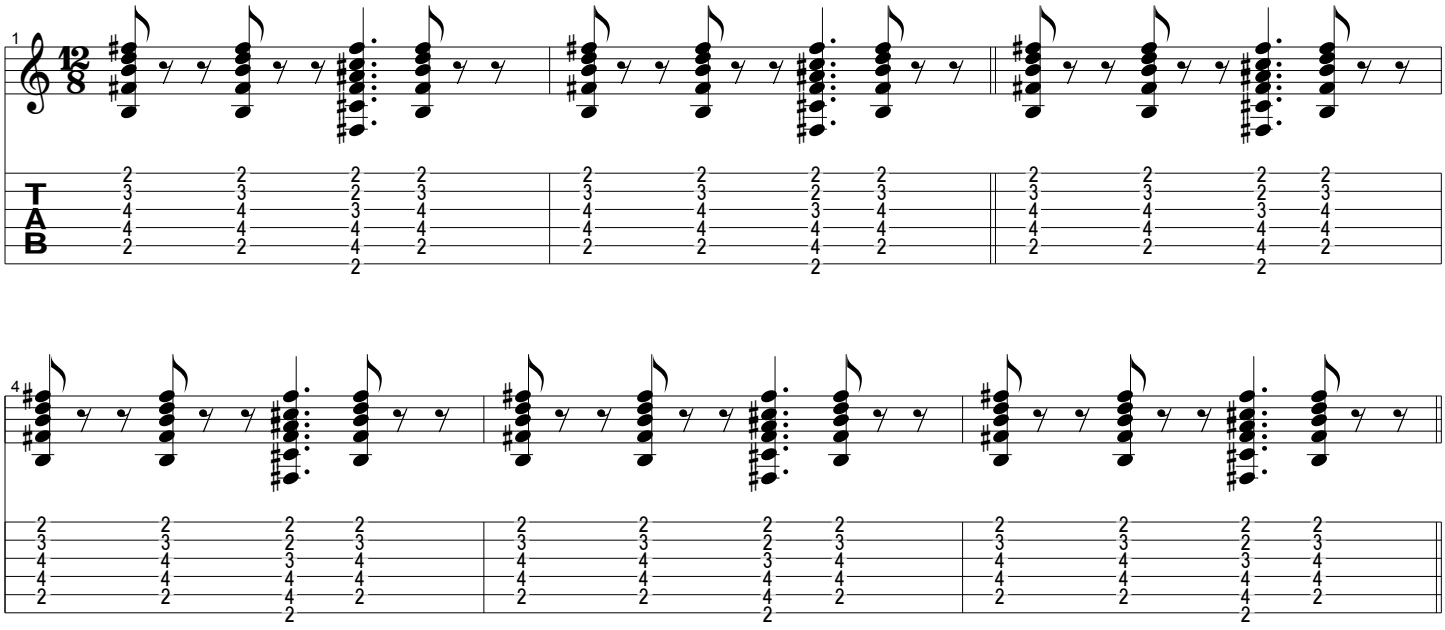
Queen

Queen

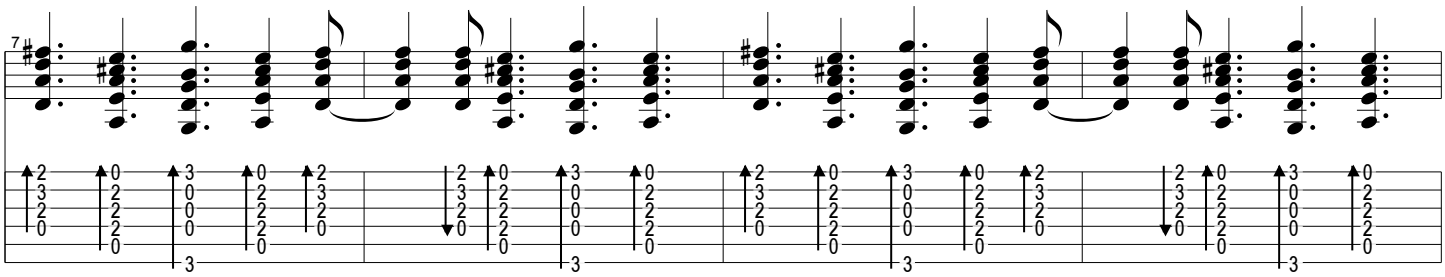
Words & Music by Freddie Mercury

♩ = 114

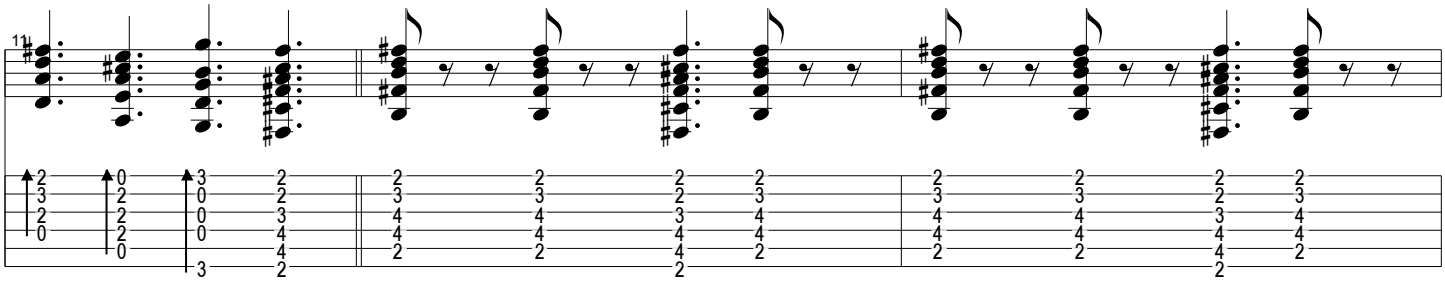
Verse 1



Chorus 1



Verse 2



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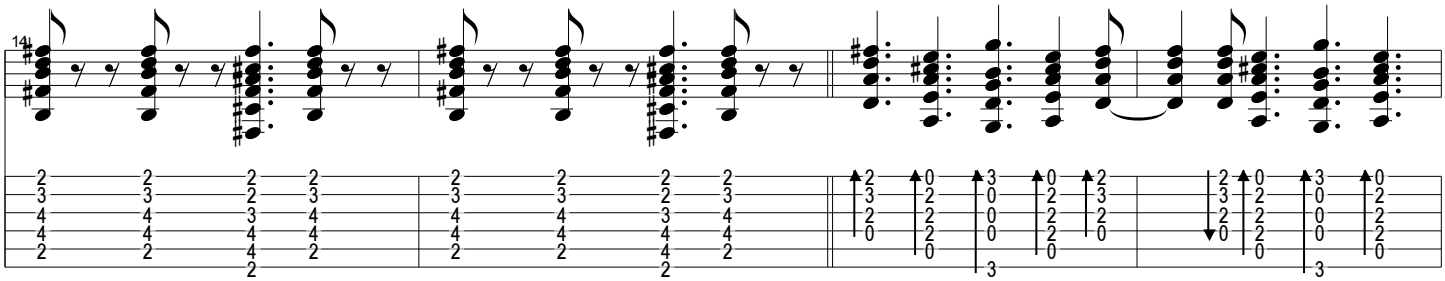
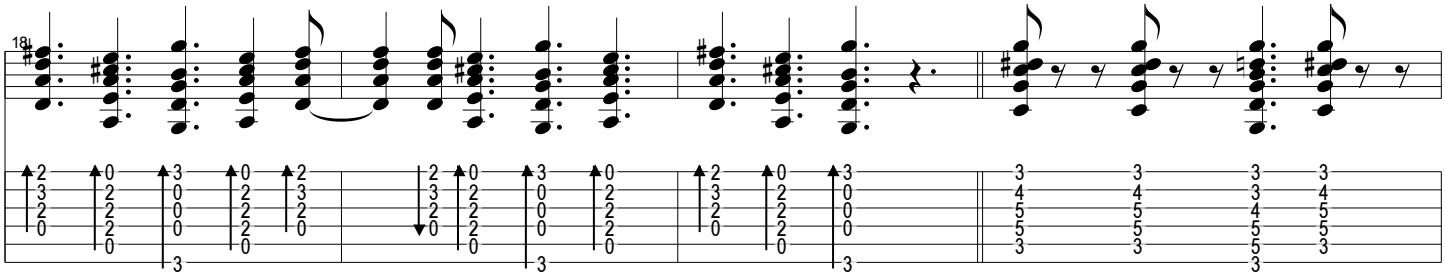
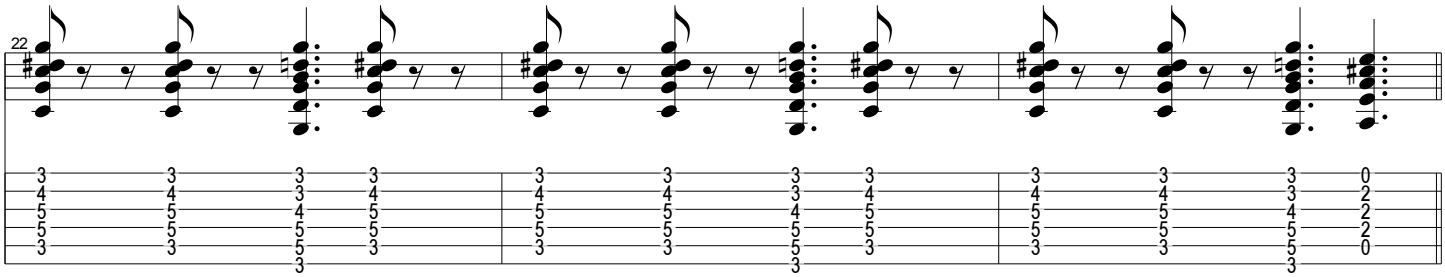
Chorus 2

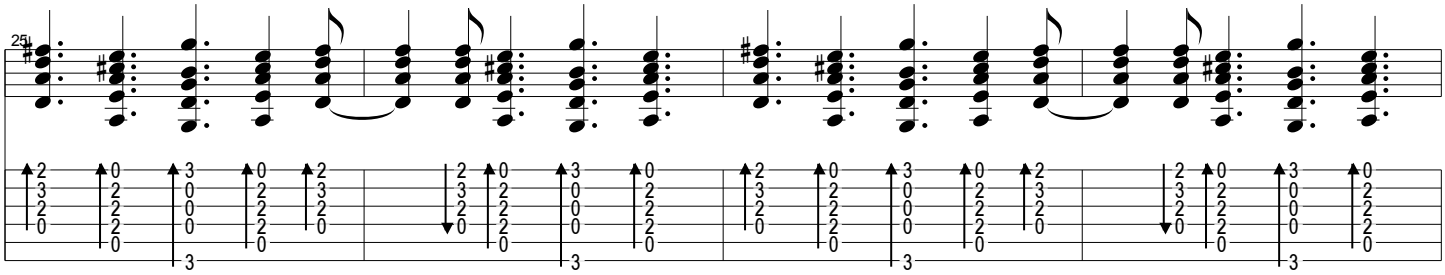


Verse 3

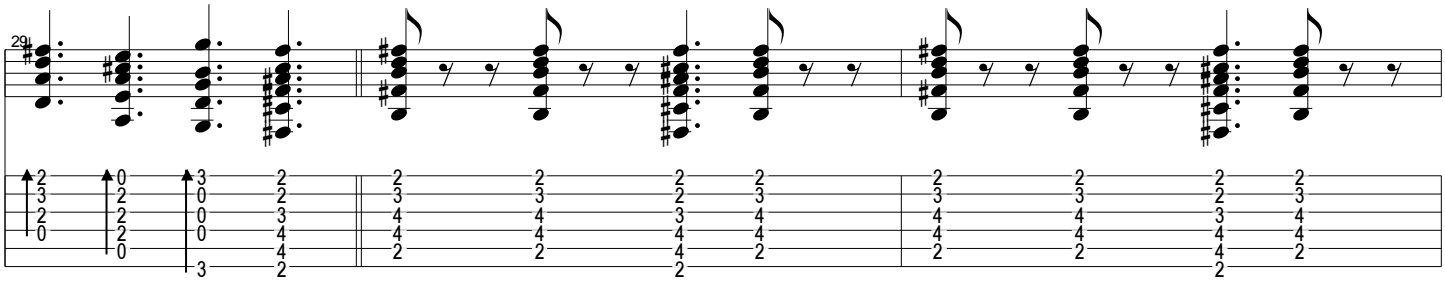


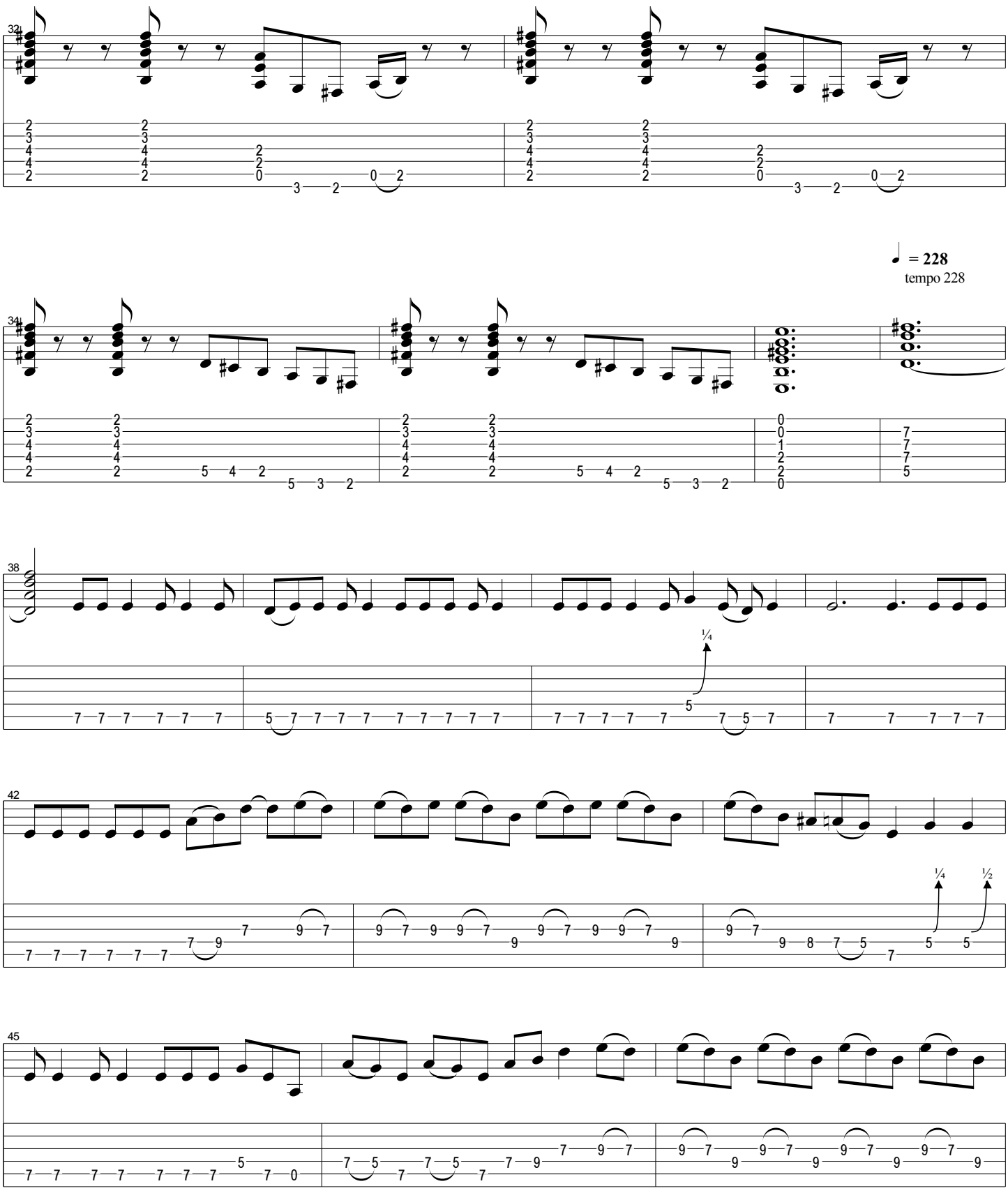


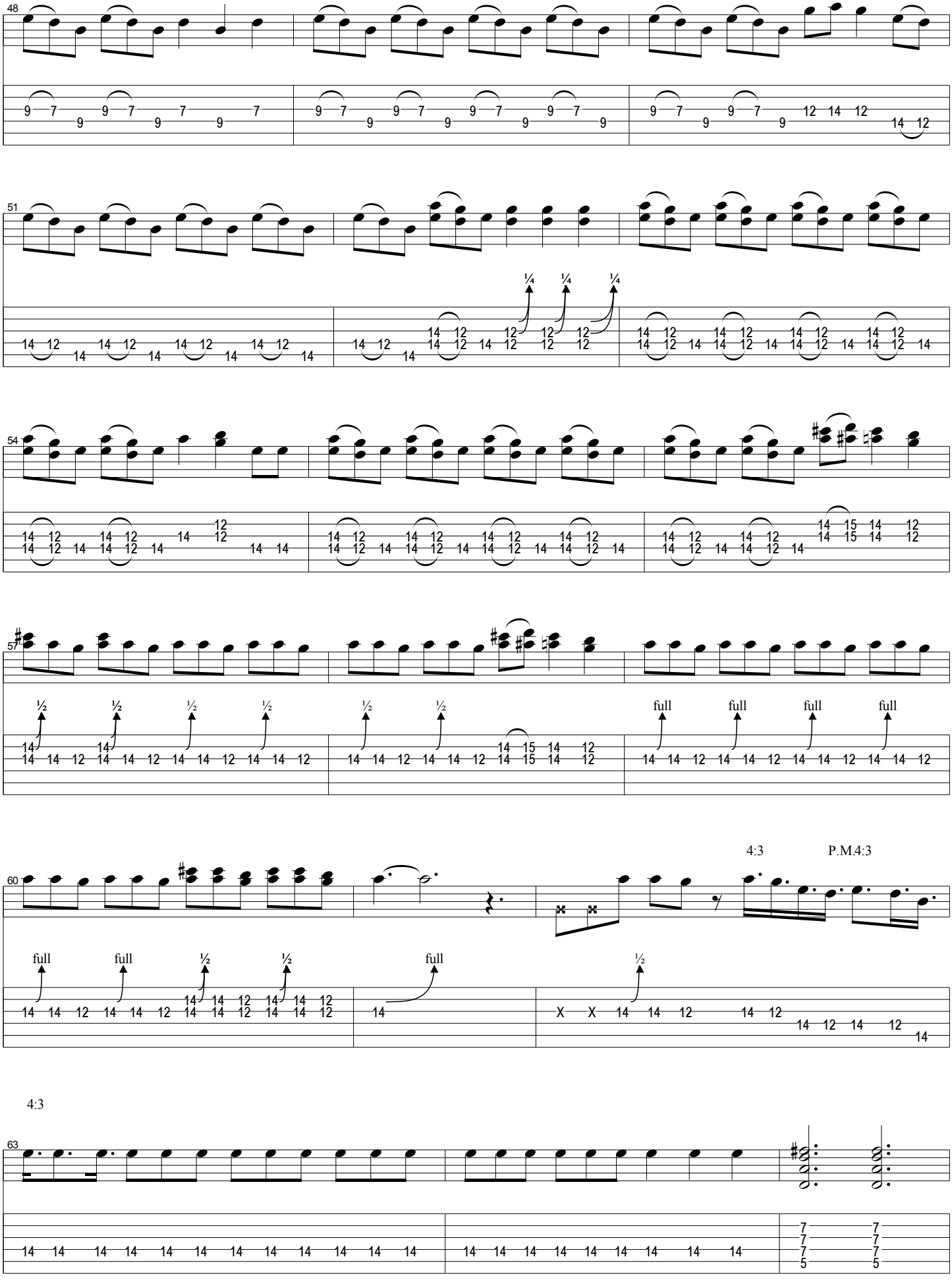
Chorus 3

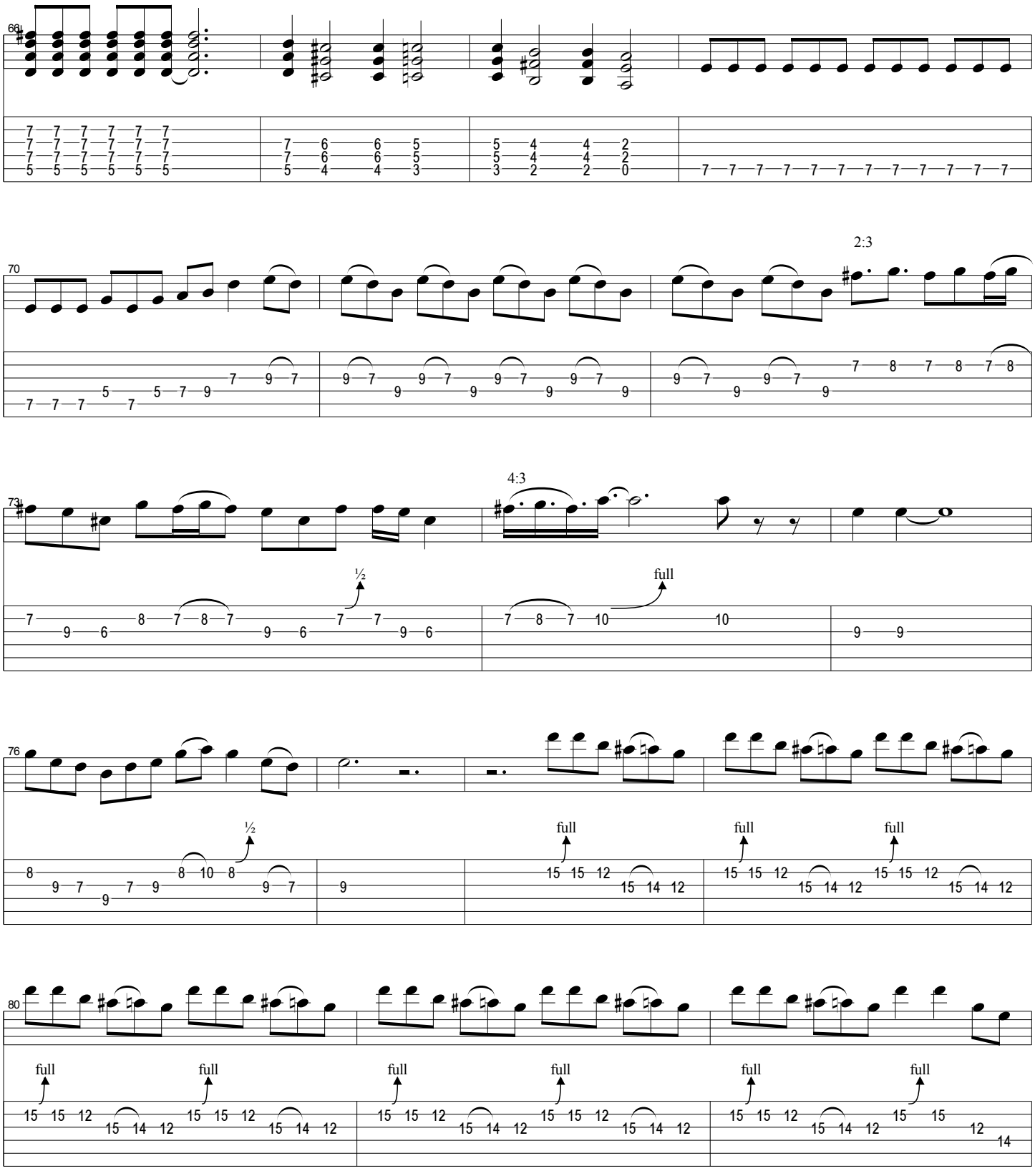


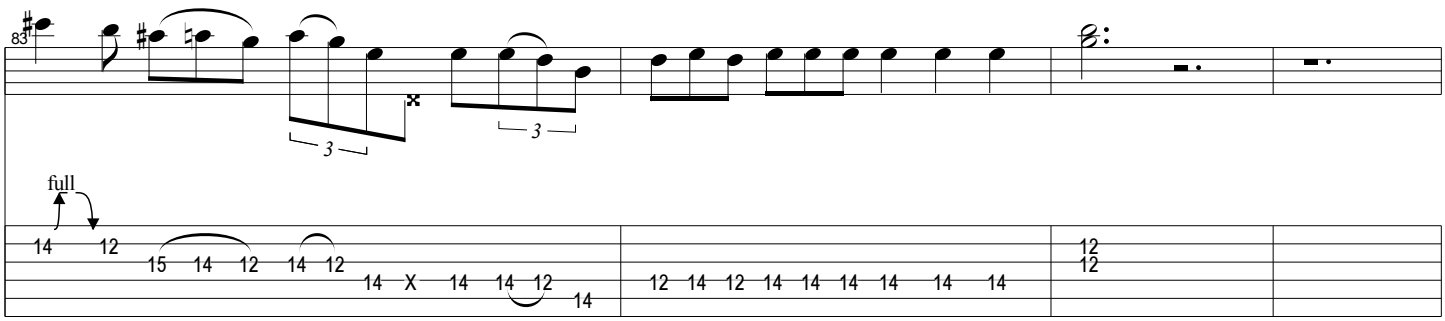
Solo




32
♩ = 228
tempo 228
34
38
42
45


48
51
¼ ¼ ¼
54
57
½ ½ ½ ½ ½ ½
full full full full
60
4:3
P.M.4:3
full full ½ ½ full ½
4:3
63

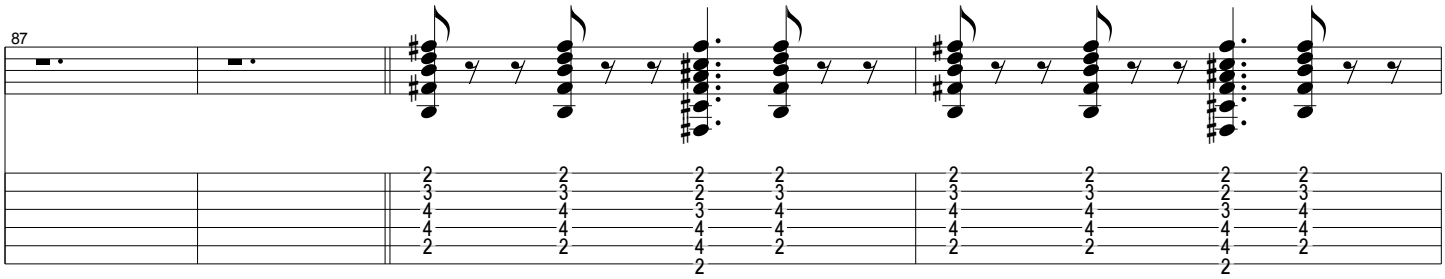

66
70
2:3
73
4:3
½
full
76
½
full
full
full
80
full
full
full
full
full
full



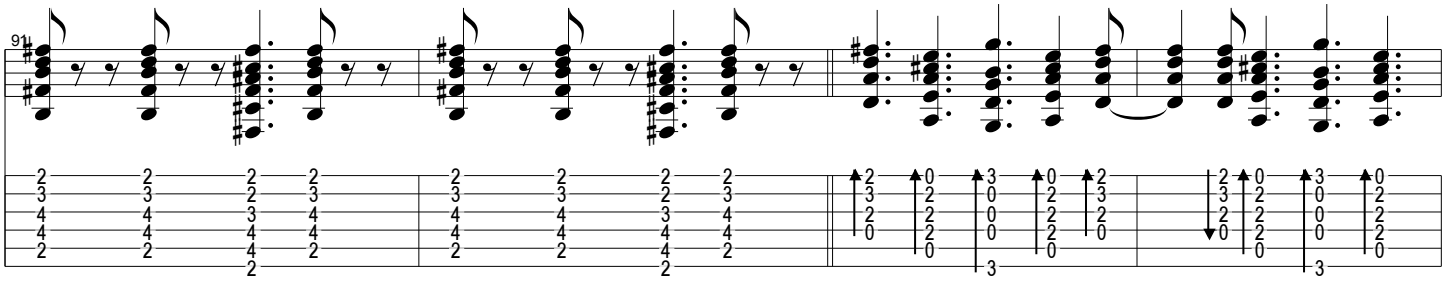
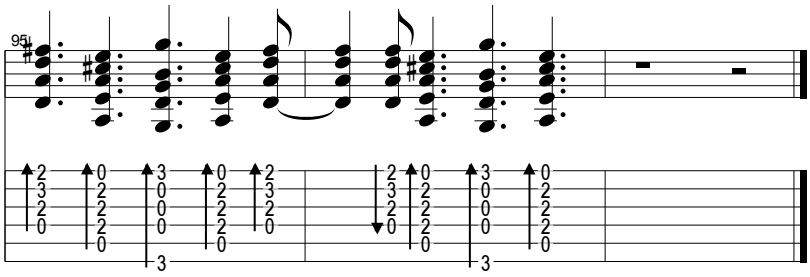
Verse 4

♩ = 114

tempo 114



Chorus 4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