rockschool®

BASS GRADE 4

BASS

GRADE 4

9 Tracks for GRADE 4

The Original ROCKSCHOOL ~ EST. 1991 ~



Songs from

SKUNK ANANSIE, PAUL WELLER, SAM FENDER, JAMES TAYLOR, PEARL JAM, THE SUPREMES

R&I

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rockschool®

BASS

Grade 4

Performance pieces, technical exercises, supporting tests
and guidance for Rockschool contemporary music examinations

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RSL Awarding the Contemporary Arts

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Welcome to Rockschool Bass Grade 4

Welcome to the Rockschool Bass Syllabus 2024. This syllabus is designed to support musicians in their progression from Debut to Grade 8 through an engaging and rigorous pathway, covering all the genres, stylistic elements, techniques and musical skills required for success as a contemporary musician.

All candidates should read the accompanying syllabus guide when using this grade book. This can be downloaded from the RSL website: ***www.rslawards.com***

Rockschool Exams

At each grade you have the option of taking one of two different types of examination:

- **Grade Exam**

  A grade exam is made up of the following components:

Grade Exam Overview		Available Marks
Performance Pieces	*Piece 1*	20
	Piece 2	20
	Piece 3	20
Technical Exercises	*Scales*, *Arpeggios (guitar and bass)*, *Rudiments (drums)* and *Technical Studies*	15
Supporting Tests	**(Debut)** *Sight Reading* **only** **(Grades 1–5)** Choice of *Sight Reading* **or** *Improvisation & Interpretation* **(Grades 6–8)** *Quick Study Piece* **only**	10
	(All grades) *Ear Tests*	10
	(All grades) *General Musicianship Questions* (5 questions)	5
	TOTAL	**100**

- **Performance Certificate**

  For a Performance Certificate you are required to perform five performance pieces only.

Performance Certificate Overview		Available Marks
Performance Pieces	*Piece 1*	20
	Piece 2	20
	Piece 3	20
	Piece 4	20
	Piece 5	20
	TOTAL	**100**

There are various face to face and digital exam options available. Please visit ***www.rslawards.com/graded-music-exams*** for further information.

Book Contents

All elements required to participate in a Rockschool exam can be found in this grade book. These are as follows:

Performance Pieces

Nine specially commissioned pieces, arranged and benchmarked for each grade:

- Three new Rockschool pieces ('Rockschool Originals') composed exclusively for the syllabus, and written to explore the stylistic features and techniques that encompass a variety of contemporary music styles.
- Six 'Hit Tune' arrangements of songs in popular music styles, arranged for the grade. Each of these is preceded by a Fact File, containing a short biography and photo of the artist, along with recommended listening information.

Technical Exercises

Exercises should be prepared within the indicated parameters and tempo (or tempo range). Pay careful attention to text in this section, some exercise options are chosen by the candidate, others are chosen by the examiner.

Supporting Tests

There are three types of supporting tests in the exam, listed below. For these tests, you will be required to show a variety of musical skills in response to a previously unseen example shown to you by the examiner. Examples of each type of test are given in the book.

- *Sight Reading* (Debut)
  Sight Reading **or** *Improvisation & Interpretation* (Grades 1–5)
  Quick Study Piece (Grades 6–8)
  These tests focus on candidates following a score or lead sheet presented by the examiner. At Grades 1–5, you may choose either a Sight Reading test or an Improvisation & Interpretation test. At Grades 4 and 5 the Sight Reading tests contain a small degree of improvisation, and the Improvisation & Interpretation tests contain a small degree of sight reading. At Grades 6–8 you must perform a mandatory Quick Study Piece which contains a combination of sight reading and improvisation and interpretation skills.

- *Ear Tests*
  These tests focus on candidates being able to recall rhythmic and melodic examples, and (at certain grades) identify an example from a score.

- *General Musicianship Questions*
  In this last section you will be asked five questions by the examiner, relating to your choice of piece performed in the exam. Details of these questions can be found in this grade book.

General Information

You will find information on exam procedures, including online examination entry, marking schemes, information on Free Choice Pieces and guidance around interpretation and improvisation.

All candidates should read the accompanying syllabus guide when using this grade book. This can be downloaded from the RSL website: ***www.rslawards.com***

Audio

In hardcopy books, all accompanying audio can be downloaded using the unique download code and URL found on the title page (page 1) of the book. In digital editions the audio is included in the download.

Shared Repertoire

RSL's Shared Repertoire are songs featured across each grade level in our guitar, bass, and drums syllabuses. They provide candidates with the opportunity to play our music with other musicians of a similar level in a live band setting, using our benchmarked repertoire to make music together.

Look for the  symbol at the top of the page to see which songs are Shared Repertoire.

Fingering/Sticking Annotation

Any fingering (guitar and bass) or sticking (drums) annotation is given as a guide only, and will not be assessed.

Interpretation

The assumed starting point in an exam is that notation will be performed as written. However, it is fine to alter the written notation, personalising the content by way of interpretation. In this event, it is important to ensure that such adaptation is technically of equivalent demand and stylistically appropriate. It is important to ensure the interpreted bars do not amount to (or run the risk of appearing to be) a simplification of the written part. Any simplification will be reflected in the marks.

Notes:

- If interpreting, ensure this is not so wide-ranging that the performance loses the basis of the original. Up to 50% would be considered the maximum permitted amount.
- Where pieces contain performance indications to, e.g., solo, *ad lib.*, improvise, develop, etc., these are stipulated opportunities to also develop personalised content. Candidates are strongly recommended to take advantage of these opportunities.
- Interpretation can include a small degree of physical adaptation to suit the candidate. For example, where hand stretches do not facilitate the required notated parts.
- For the avoidance of doubt in the exam, we recommend candidates inform the examiner at the beginning of the exam where, and to what extent, any parts have been interpreted.
- If in doubt you can submit any adaptation enquiries to ***info@rslawards.com***

E-book Upgrade

Upgrade your learning experience! The interactive e-book gives you the ability to jam along with, slow down and loop tricky passages of your favourite pieces, whilst receiving automated instantaneous feedback* so you can achieve your goals with confidence. Visit ***www.rslawards.com/downloads*** for further details.

** Instantaneous feedback currently available for guitar and bass only.*

Inspiring sounds from Rockschool and IK Multimedia

Rockschool has partnered with IK Multimedia to bring you a range of guitar and bass tones, that match perfectly with your book. In fact, we have created tones that match every song, across all nine graded books in this edition of the Guitar and Bass syllabus. The tones are available for the AmpliTube software, ToneX pedals and iRig interfaces. This means you can take great sounds with you wherever you go. You can even access them with your smartphone or tablet.

The best bit...? All the presets are free to download. You can even use the free version of AmpliTube to access the tones.

Visit ***www.rslawards.com/ikmultimedia*** to get started or scan the QR code below.

Weak

Artist: Skunk Anansie
Source: *Paranoid and Sunburnt* (Album, 1995) / *Weak* (Single, 1996)
Genre: Alternative Rock

The fourth single from their debut album, 'Weak' is one of Skunk Anansie's best known songs; describing the end of a tumultuous and controlling relationship. It was successful in the UK on its initial release, peaking at number 20 on the singles chart, and it was later covered by Rod Stewart.

Skunk Anansie are a British rock band who formed in 1994. Their musical style stood out from other popular acts of the day during the peak of the britpop movement, with them taking greater influence from alternative rock and grunge music. Their signature sound is largely thanks to the distinctive and powerful vocals provided by lead singer Skin. The band released several studio albums and toured extensively during the early part of their career, with Skin becoming the first black British woman to headline Glastonbury in 1999. The group disbanded in the early 2000s to pursue other musical projects and solo careers, but reunited in 2010 and continue to release new music. Lead singer Skin received an OBE in 2023 for her services to music.

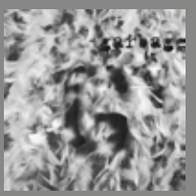


Classic Rock Magazine / Future *via Getty Images*

Recommended Listening



Nirvana *Nevermind* (1991)
A large influence on Skunk Anansie's sound, this legendary album from Nirvana gave way to a meteoric rise to fame, with its combination of raw, grungy sound and catchy songs, including the massive hits 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' and 'In Bloom'.
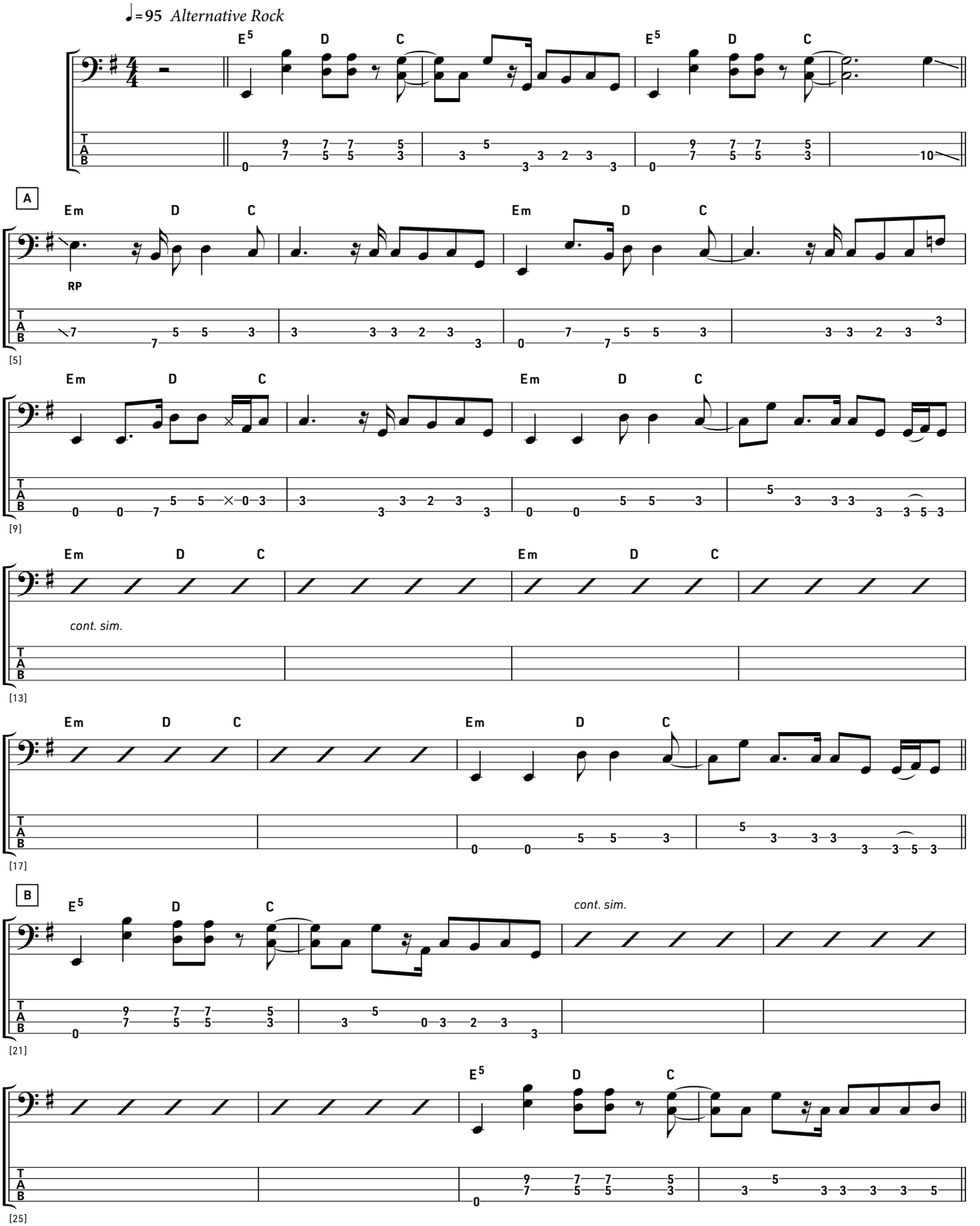


Garbage *Garbage* (1995)
Formed in 1993 by Scottish singer Shirley Manson alongside American band members, Garbage honed a sound of their own that was distinctly alternative, whilst also radio friendly; a rare combination! This album includes their signature song 'Only Happy When It Rains'.
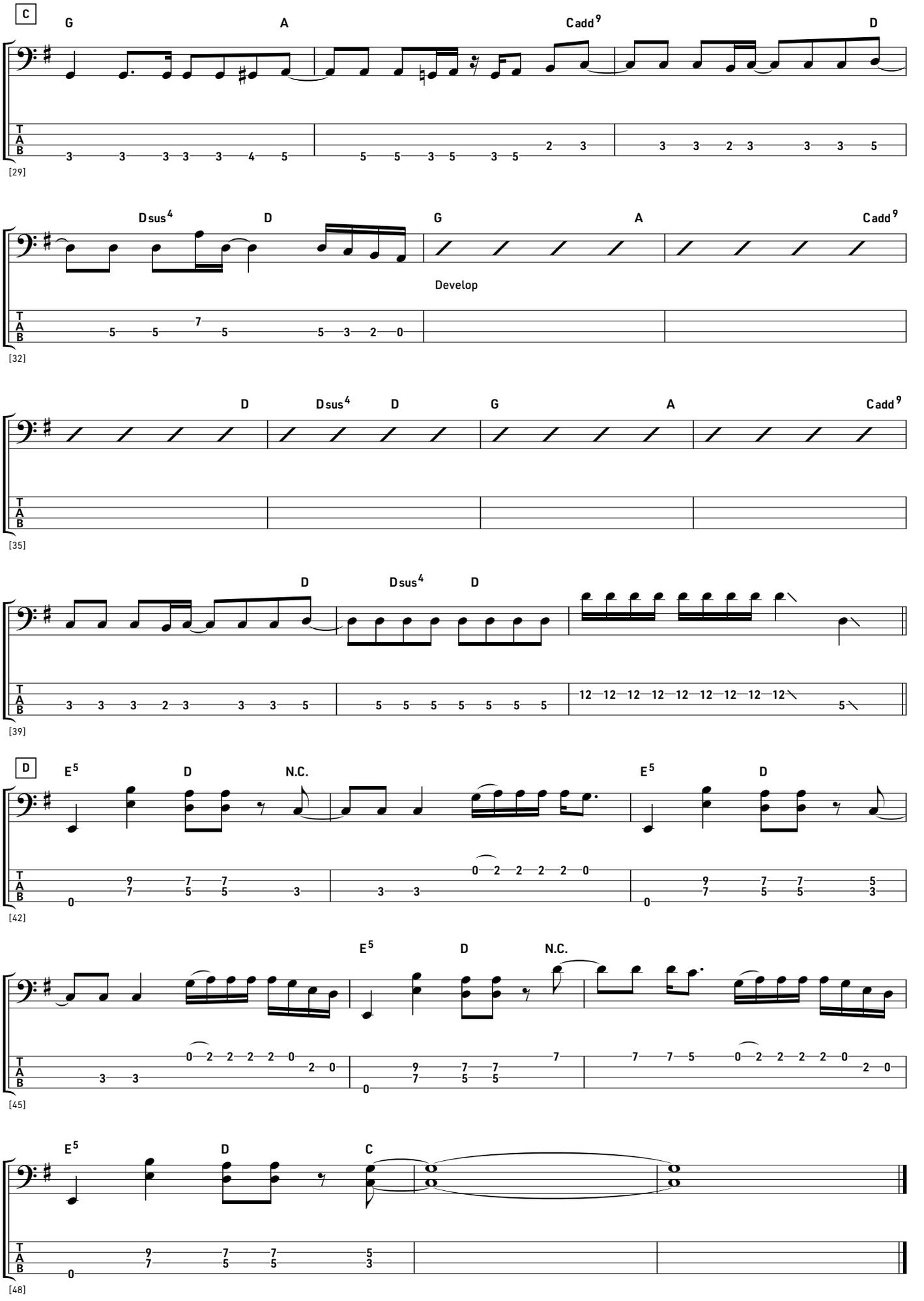
Weak

Words and Music by Deborah Dyer, Robert France,
Martin Kent and Richard Lewis

Skunk Anansie



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C
G
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[42]
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N.C.
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[48]

Alive

Artist: Pearl Jam
Source: *Ten* (Album, 1991)
Genre: Grunge

Prior to the formation of Pearl Jam, guitarist Andrew Gossard had written the music for what would become 'Alive' for his previous band Mother Love Bone. However, it wasn't until the addition of Vedder's signature baritone vocals and poignant lyrics that the song as we know it today was born. 'Alive' went on to become one of the biggest hits off their debut album *Ten*.

The early '90s saw a surge in popularity of grunge music, with Pearl Jam at the forefront of this movement alongside contemporaries such as Nirvana and Alice in Chains. They achieved a notable amount of commercial success, stemming from their debut album, which remained on the Billboard Album Chart for five years.

'Jeremy', 'Even Flow' and 'Alive' helped define the grunge and post-grunge sound. The influence and legacy of Pearl Jam, particularly Vedder's distinctive vocal delivery, can be heard in a wide range of bands, such as Creed, Silverchair and Puddle of Mudd. Pearl Jam remain active to this day and are due to release their 12th studio album in 2024.



Frans Schellekens / Redferns *via Getty Images*

Recommended Listening



Stone Temple Pilots *Thank You* (2002)
Despite early comparisons between Eddie Vedder and Scott Weiland, Stone Temple Pilots carved their own path and became a highly successful band of the alt-rock scene. This compilation contains many of their greatest hits, such as 'Plush' and 'Vasoline'.
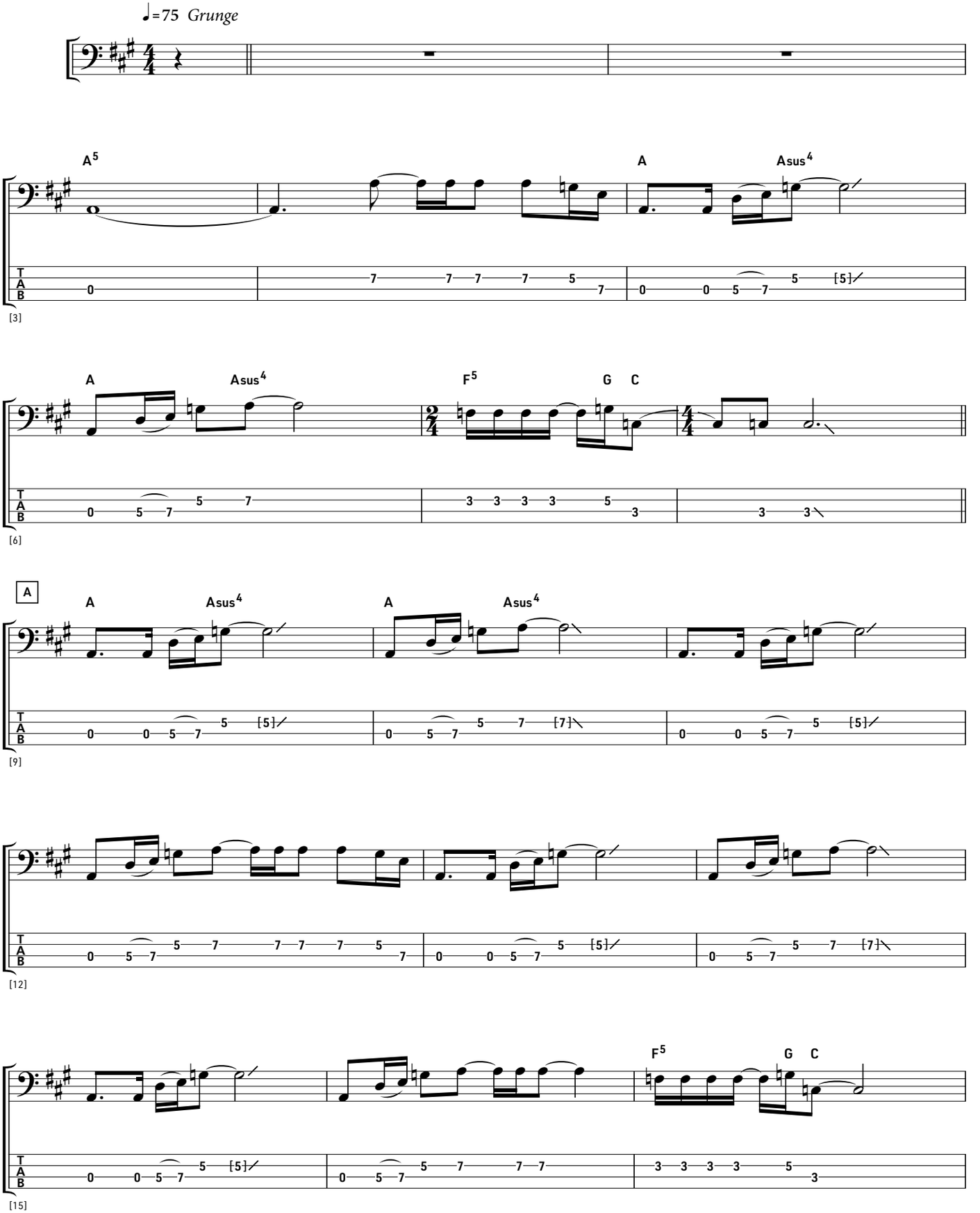


Alice in Chains *Dirt* (1992)
Alice in Chains refined and perfected their own darker and metal-tinted style of grunge music in the '90s, with a gritty tone, vocal harmonies and guitar solos. *Dirt* remains the band's most successful album, having debuted at number 6 on the Billboard 200.
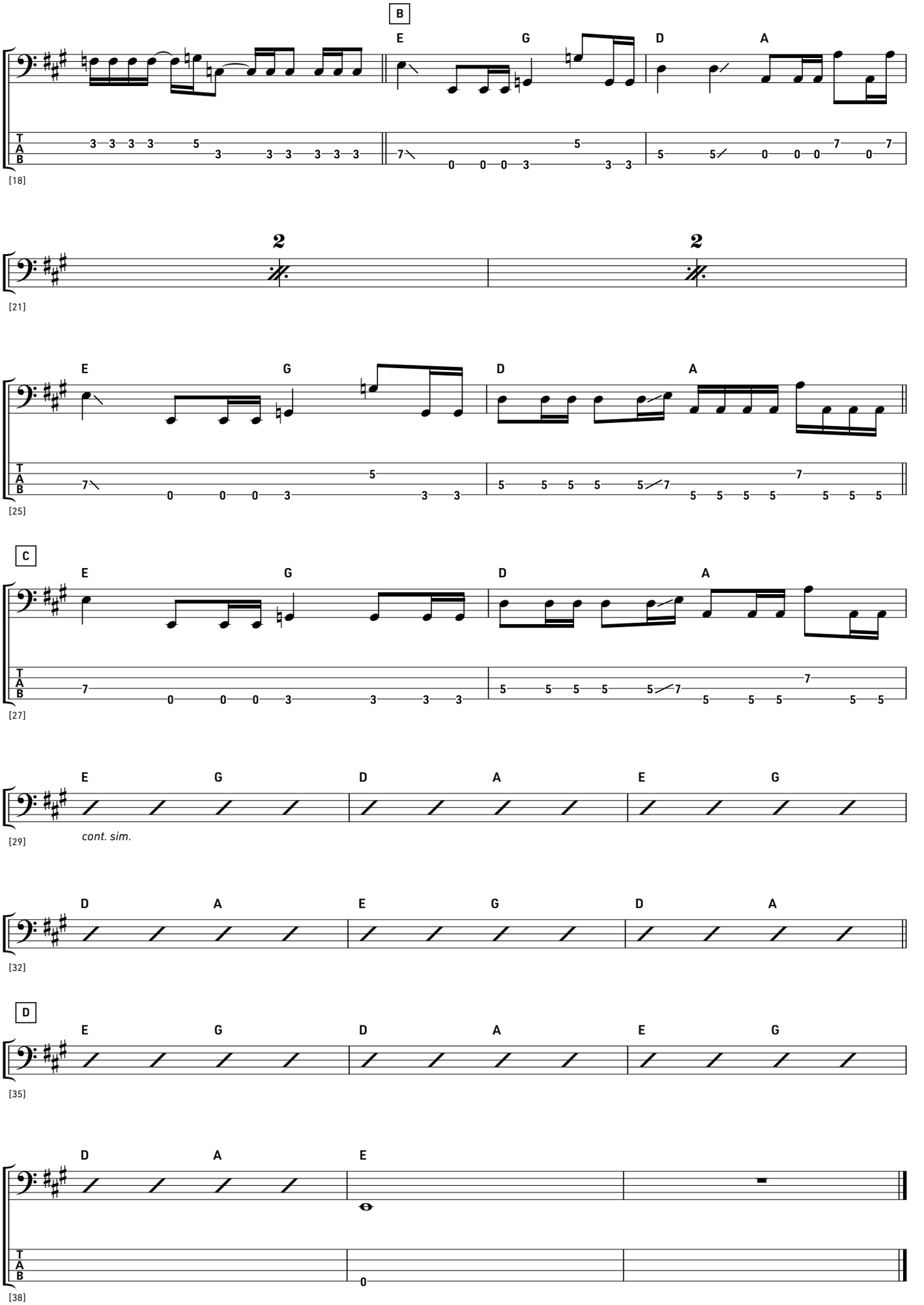
Alive

Words by Eddie Vedder
Music by Stone Gossard

Pearl Jam



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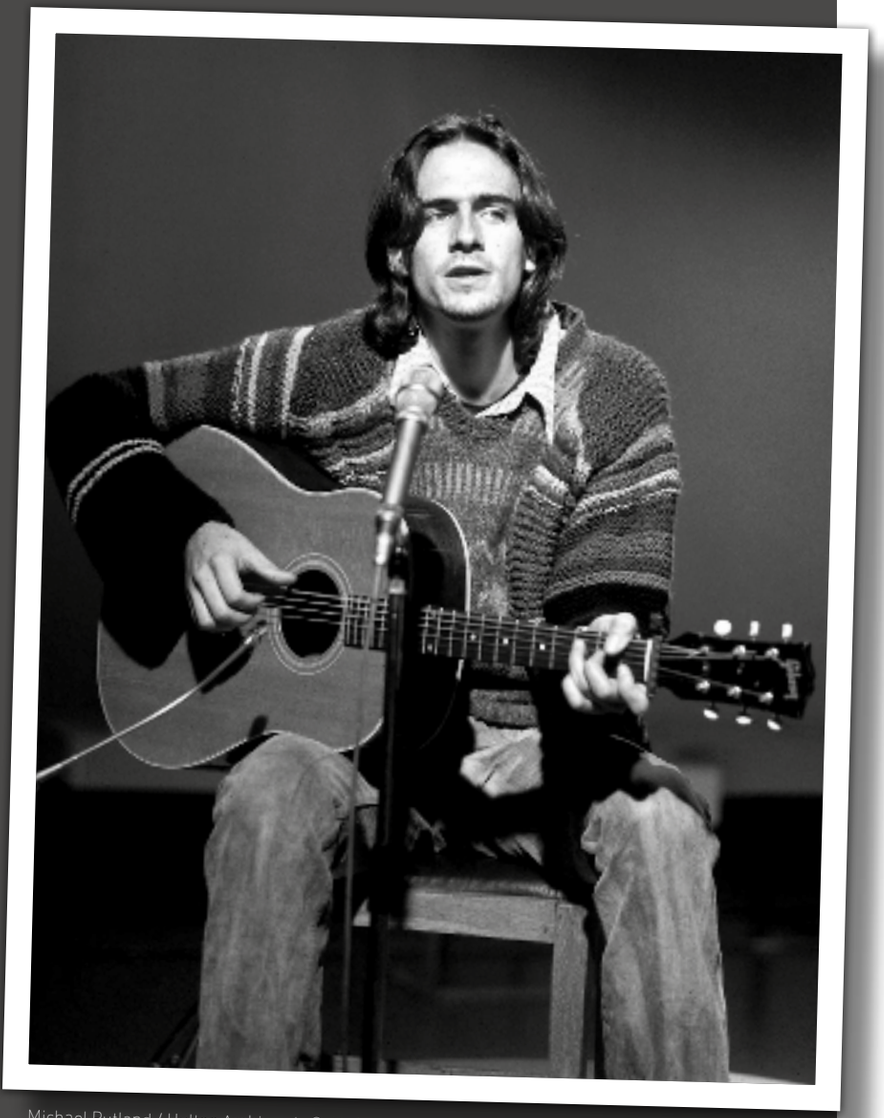

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Your Smiling Face

Artist: James Taylor
Source: *JT* (Album, 1977)
Genre: Soft Rock

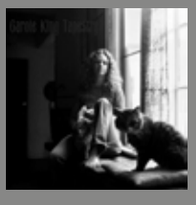
A Billboard top 20 hit, 'Your Smiling Face' celebrates Taylor's love for his then wife Carly Simon. The song featured on his eighth studio album, which he made after signing with Columbia Records. 'Handy Man', which was the first track on side two of the vinyl, won the Grammy Award for Best Male Pop Vocal Performance in 1978.

James Taylor is a singer-songwriter who rose to prominence throughout the '70s, at a time when his contemporaries, such as Randy Newman and Joni Mitchell, were also achieving critical and commercial success. Taylor's first breakthrough success came with his second studio album *Sweet Baby James*. His collaboration with renowned songwriter Carole King resulted in timeless classics such as 'Fire and Rain'. He has continued to record and produce music in the decades that followed, releasing his twentieth album in 2020. Taylor has received numerous awards over his career, including six Grammy Awards and the Presidential Medal of Freedom.



Michael Putland / Hulton Archive *via Getty Images*

Recommended Listening



Carole King *Tapestry* (1971)
Renowned American songwriter Carole King is responsible for the composition of many pop hits for other musicians, as well as being a solo artist in her own right. *Tapestry* showcases some of her most well-known songs, including 'You've Got a Friend'.
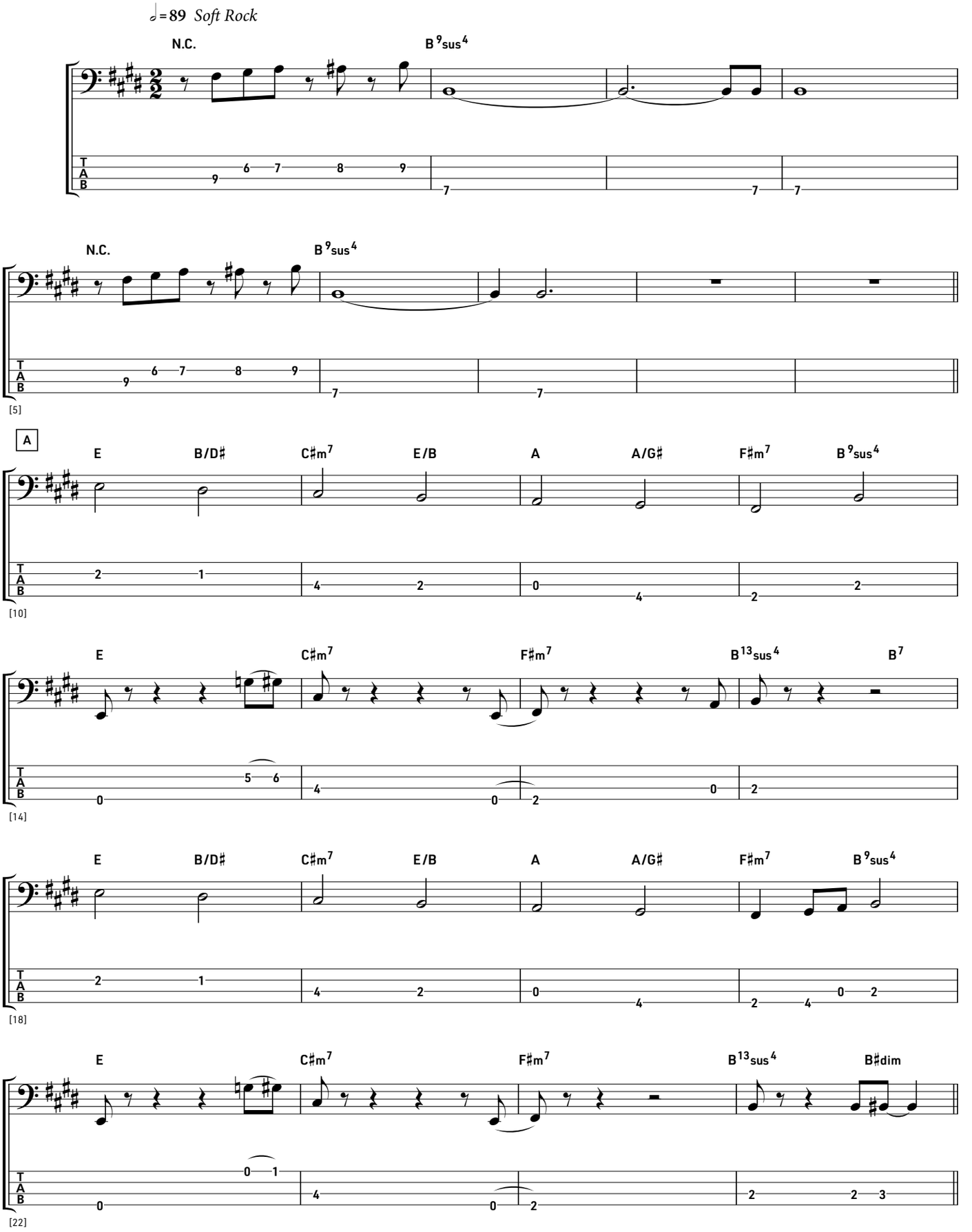


Simon and Garfunkel *Bridge Over Troubled Water* (1970)
Garfunkel is one of many collaborators to have worked with James Taylor, but he is primarily known as being one half of the famed folk-rock duo Simon and Garfunkel. In their final studio album prior to their split, the duo released a slew of accessible and memorable songs that remain fan favourites, such as 'Bridge Over Troubled Water' and 'Cecilia'.
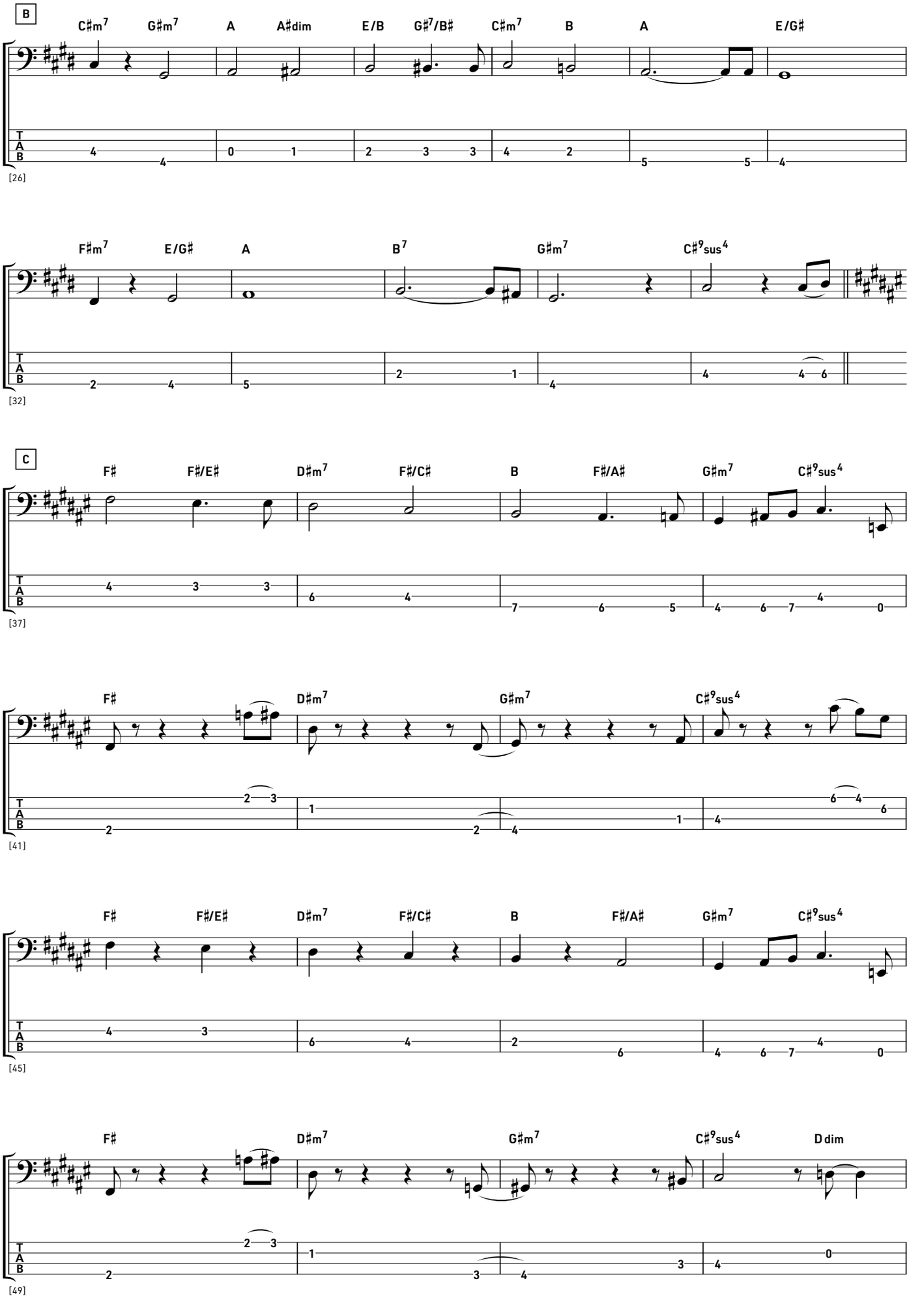
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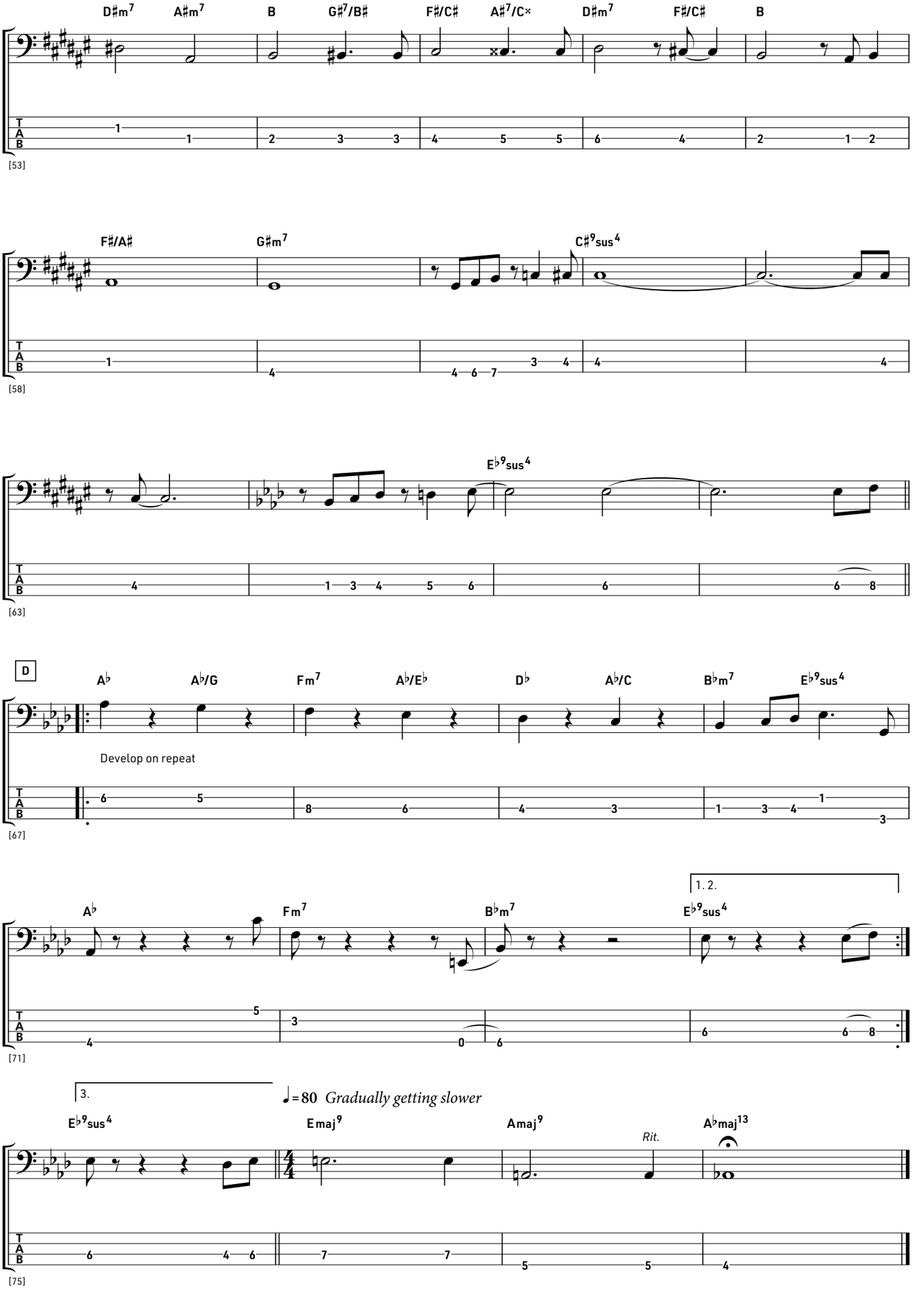
Words and Music by James Taylor

James Taylor



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B
C♯m7 G♯m7 A A♯dim E/B G♯7/B♯ C♯m7 B A E/G♯
[26]
F♯m7 E/G♯ A B7 G♯m7 C♯9sus4
[32]
C
F♯ F♯/E♯ D♯m7 F♯/C♯ B F♯/A♯ G♯m7 C♯9sus4
[37]
F♯ D♯m7 G♯m7 C♯9sus4
[41]
F♯ F♯/E♯ D♯m7 F♯/C♯ B F♯/A♯ G♯m7 C♯9sus4
[45]
F♯ D♯m7 G♯m7 C♯9sus4 D dim
[49]

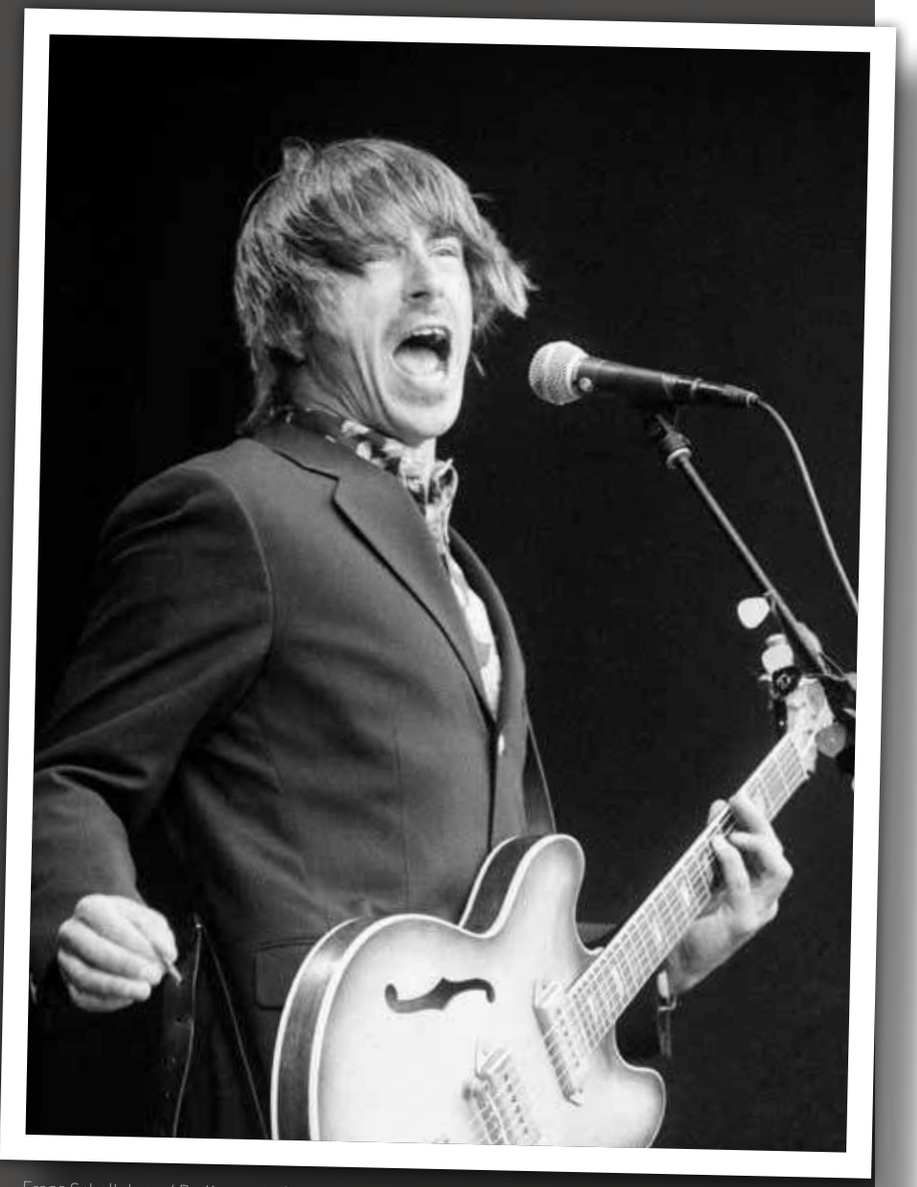

D♯m7 A♯m7 B G♯7/B♯ F♯/C♯ A♯7/C× D♯m7 F♯/C♯ B
[53]
F♯/A♯ G♯m7 C♯9sus4
[58]
E♭9sus4
[63]
D
A♭ A♭/G Fm7 A♭/E♭ D♭ A♭/C B♭m7 E♭9sus4
Develop on repeat
[67]
1. 2.
A♭ Fm7 B♭m7 E♭9sus4
[71]
3.
♩=80 Gradually getting slower
E♭9sus4 Emaj9 Amaj9 Rit. A♭maj13
[75]

The Changingman

Artist: Paul Weller
Source: *Stanley Road* (Album, 1995)
Genre: Pop Rock / Blues Rock

'The Changingman' was released as part of Weller's third studio album *Stanley Road*, a record that benefited from the rising popularity of britpop music at that time and was helped in no small part by featuring Oasis's Noel Gallgher as a guest artist. The song became one of his first hit singles as a solo artist, reaching the top 10 in the UK singles chart.

Highly revered by critics and fellow musicians alike, Paul Weller's long and varied career has made him a household name in the British music scene. From his days fronting mod rock legends The Jam, to his work with Steve White and Mick Talbot as part of sophisti-pop outfit The Style Council, he has released numerous hit songs throughout the '70s and '80s. In 1990, Weller began a successful solo career, winning multiple BRIT awards. Some of his more well-known releases include the britpop-adjacent *Stanley Road*, and his ambitious double album *22 Dreams*.



Frans Schellekens / Redferns *via Getty Images*

Recommended Listening



The Jam *Snap* (1983)
Paul Weller's initial claim to fame was as lead singer of British band The Jam, who were at the forefront of the mod revival movement in the UK. They had a slew of hit songs in the '70s and '80s, including 'Going Underground' and 'A Town Called Malice'.
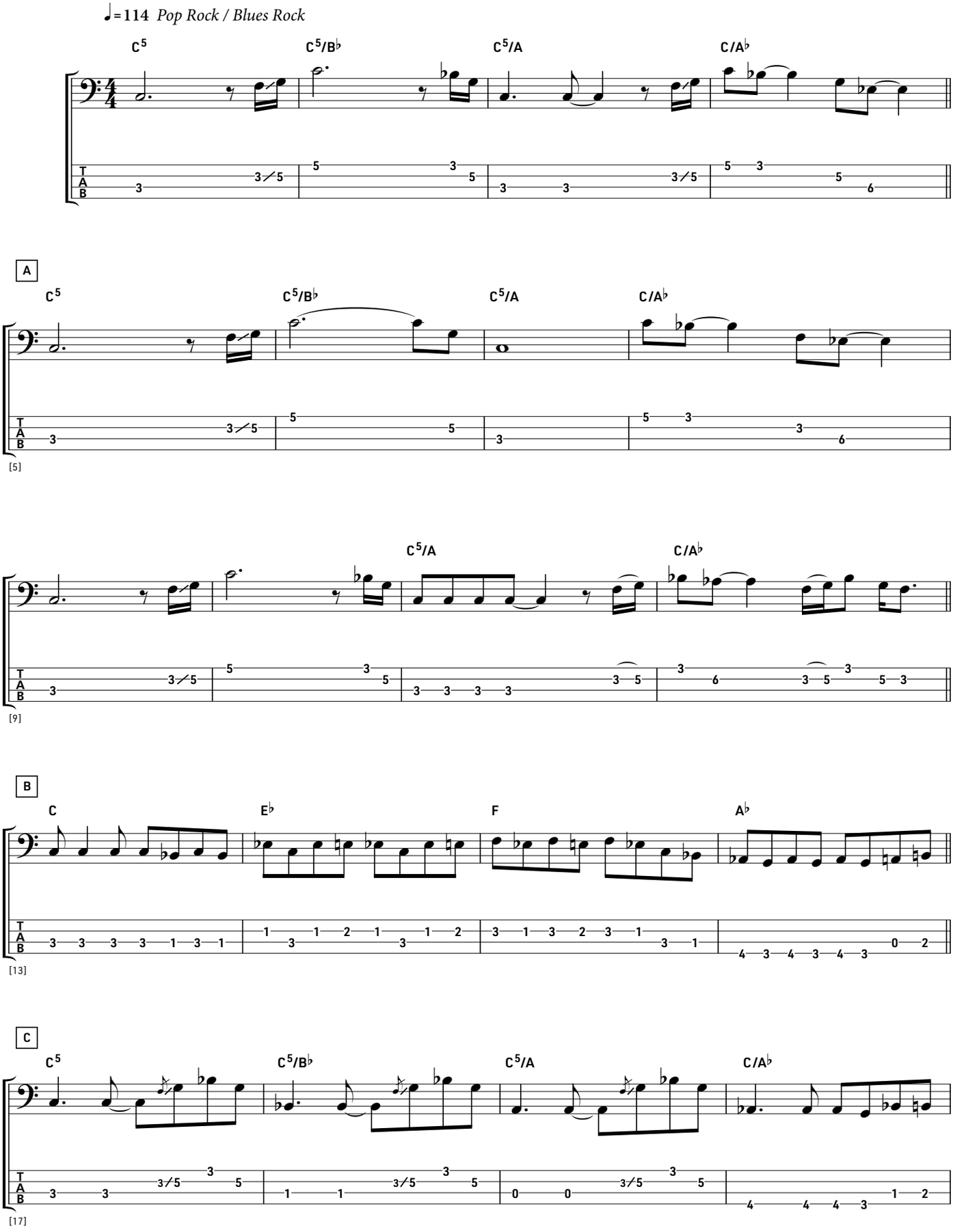


Oasis *(What's the Story) Morning Glory* (1995)
Weller has performed and collaborated with britpop giants Oasis several times, including on their highly acclaimed *(What's the Story) Morning Glory?*. His contributions can be heard on the tracks 'Untitled' and 'Champagne Supernova'.

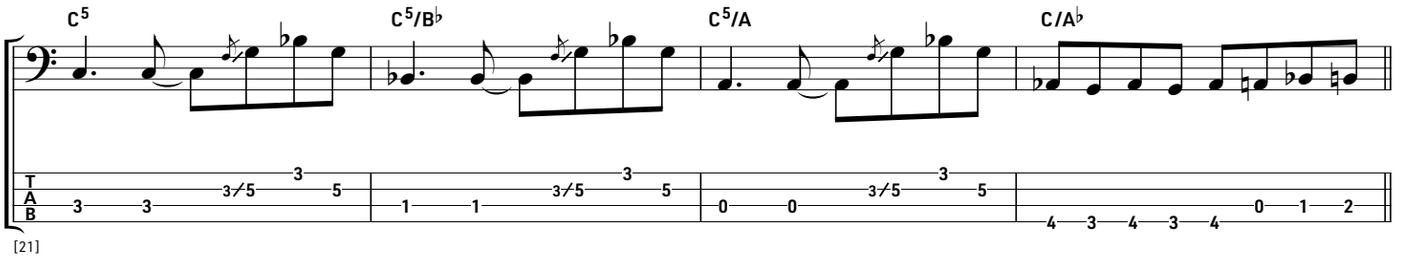
The Changingman

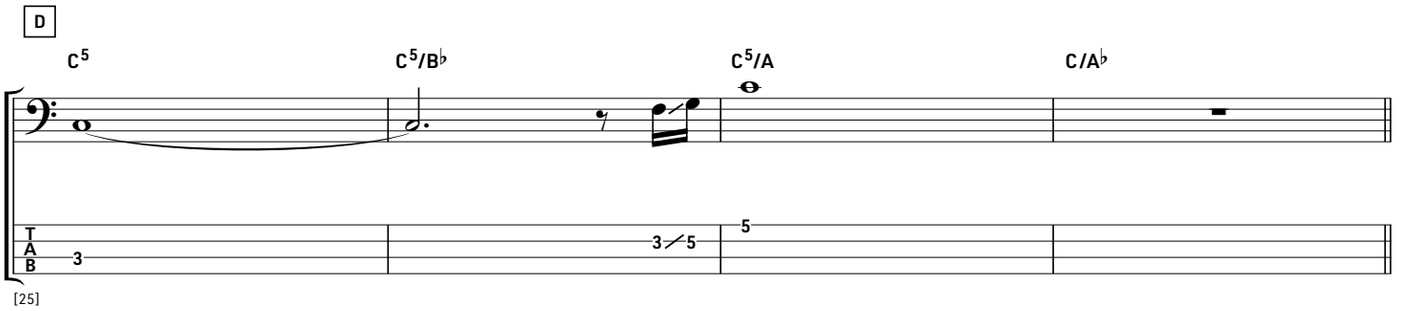
Words and Music by Paul Weller and Brendan Lynch

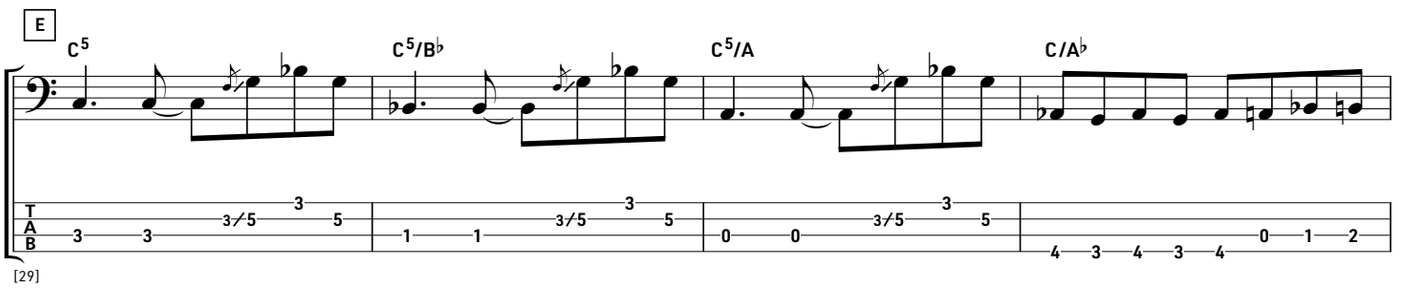
Paul Weller

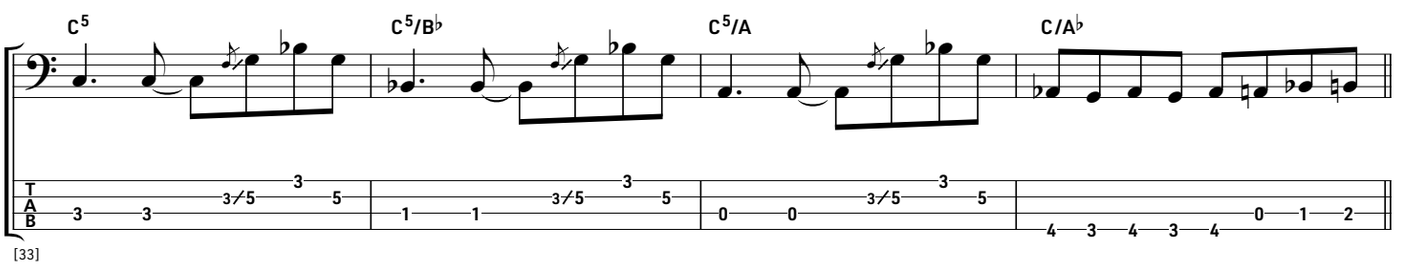


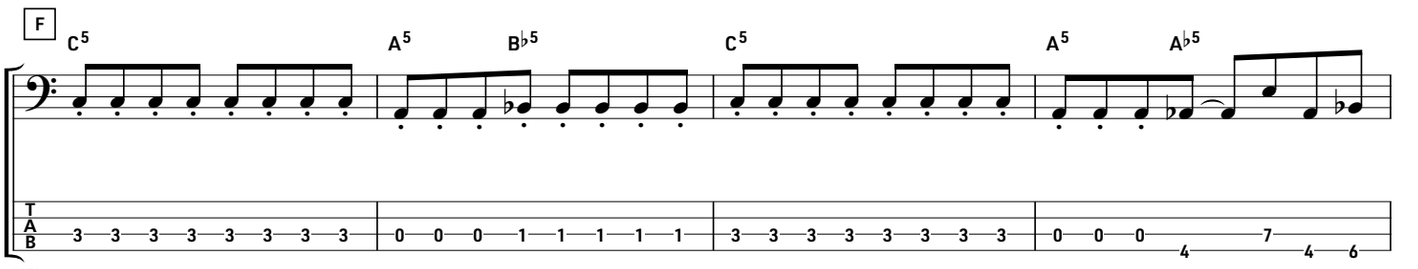
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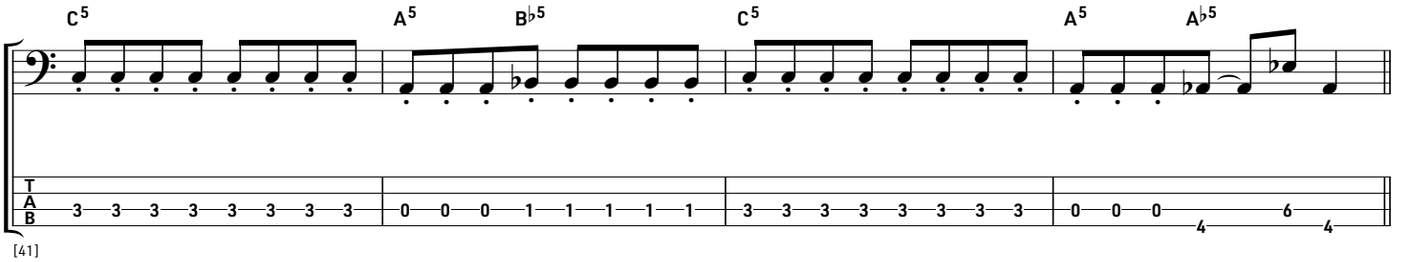

C5
C5/B♭
C5/A
C/A♭
T
A
B
[21]

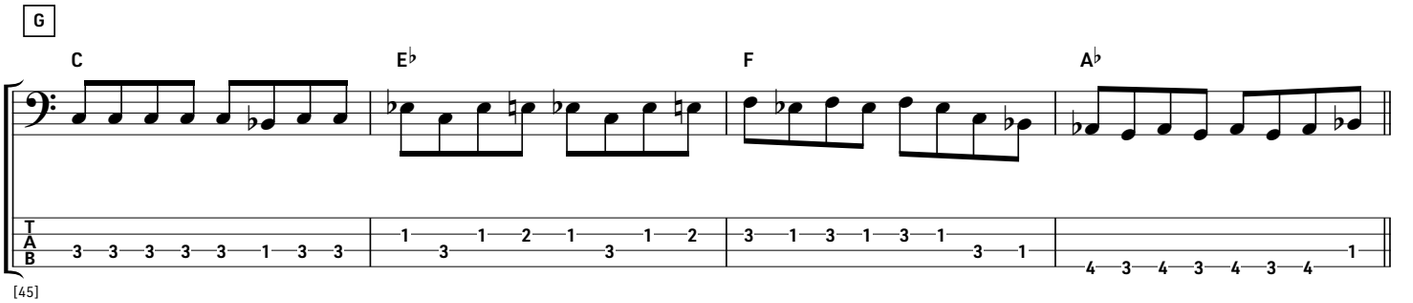

D
C5
C5/B♭
C5/A
C/A♭
T
A
B
[25]

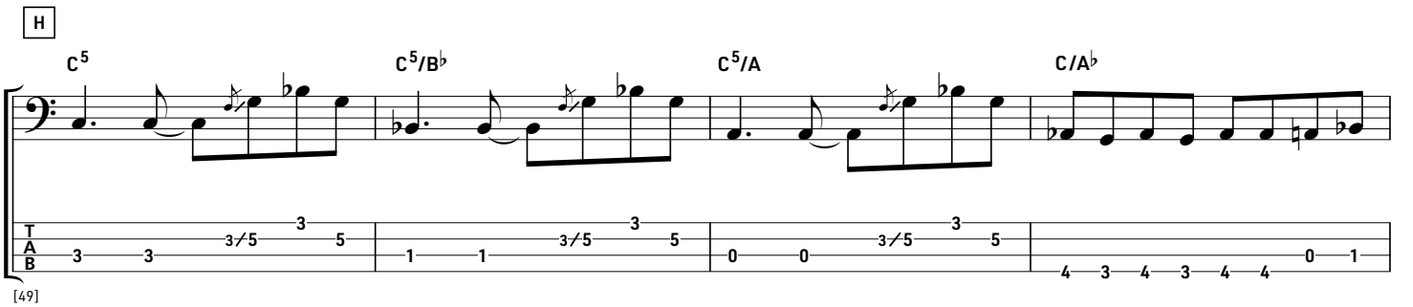

E
C5
C5/B♭
C5/A
C/A♭
T
A
B
[29]

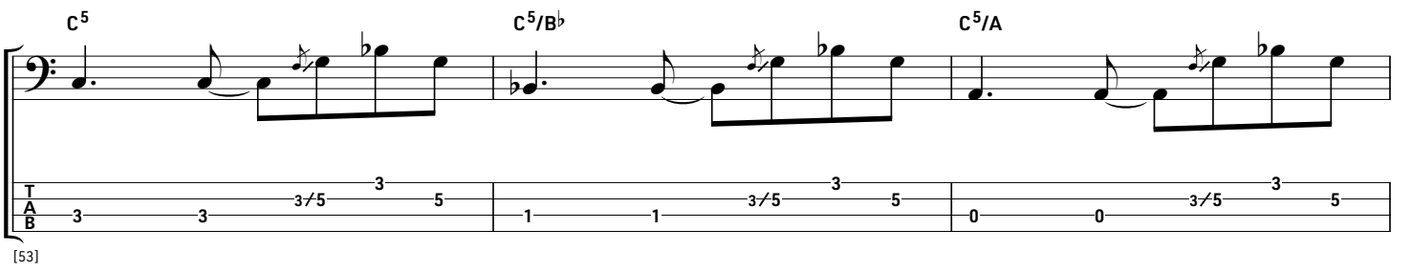

C5
C5/B♭
C5/A
C/A♭
T
A
B
[33]

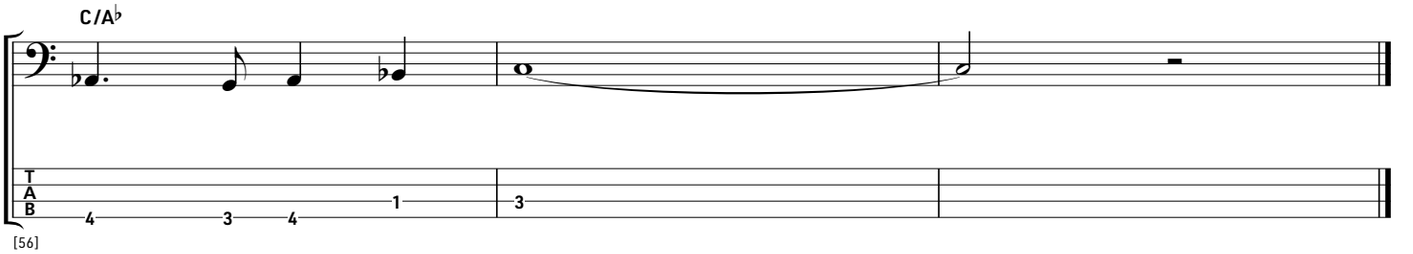

F
C5
A5
B♭5
C5
A5
A♭5
T
A
B
[37]


C5
A5
B♭5
C5
A5
A♭5
[41]


G
C
E♭
F
A♭
[45]


H
C5
C5/B♭
C5/A
C/A♭
[49]


C5
C5/B♭
C5/A
[53]

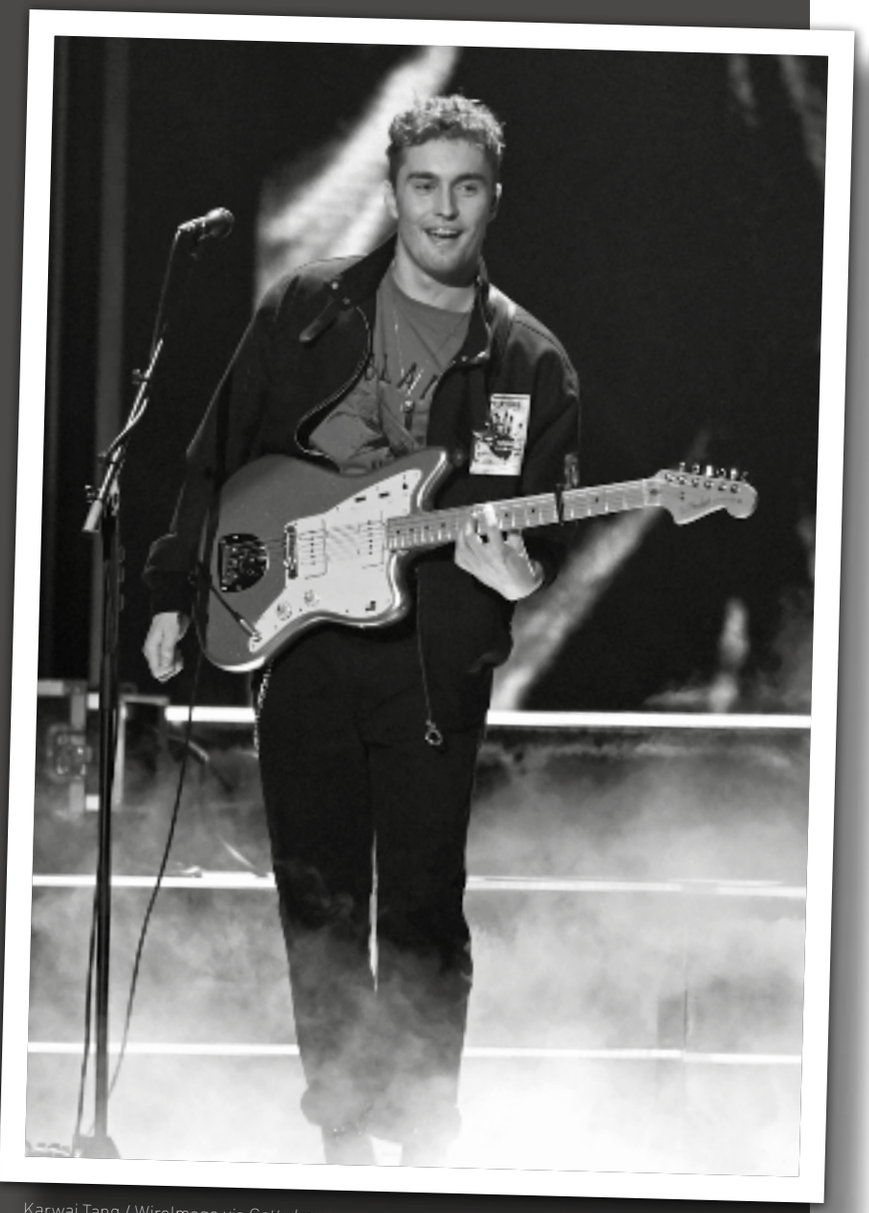

C/A♭
[56]

Getting Started

Artist: Sam Fender
Source: *Seventeen Going Under* (Album, 2021)
Genre: Heartland Rock / Indie Rock

From Sam Fender's critically acclaimed second album, 'Getting Started' is an autobiographical song detailing a period of Fender's early adulthood and the struggles he faced at the time. Like many of the songs on the album, it has an audible influence from American heartland rock music of the '80s, applied in a more contemporary setting, with parallels being drawn with Tom Petty and Bruce Springsteen.

Born and raised in the town of North Shields in Northeast England, Sam Fender developed an interest in music at a young age, getting his first guitar when he was 8 years old. He was scouted by a manager while playing in a local pub. After releasing his first EP and touring extensively, he won the Critics' Choice Award at the 2019 BRIT Awards. Both his debut and second album topped the UK album charts and gained international success. Outside of music, Fender has also done work as an actor and model, being featured in GQ magazine.



Karwai Tang / WireImage *via Getty Images*

Recommended Listening



Bruce Springsteen *Born to Run* (1975)
Nicknamed 'The Boss', Bruce Springsteen is arguably the biggest icon of heartland rock. He gained global popularity for his distinctive musical style and lyrics. The album *Born to Run* showcases Springsteen during his peak.
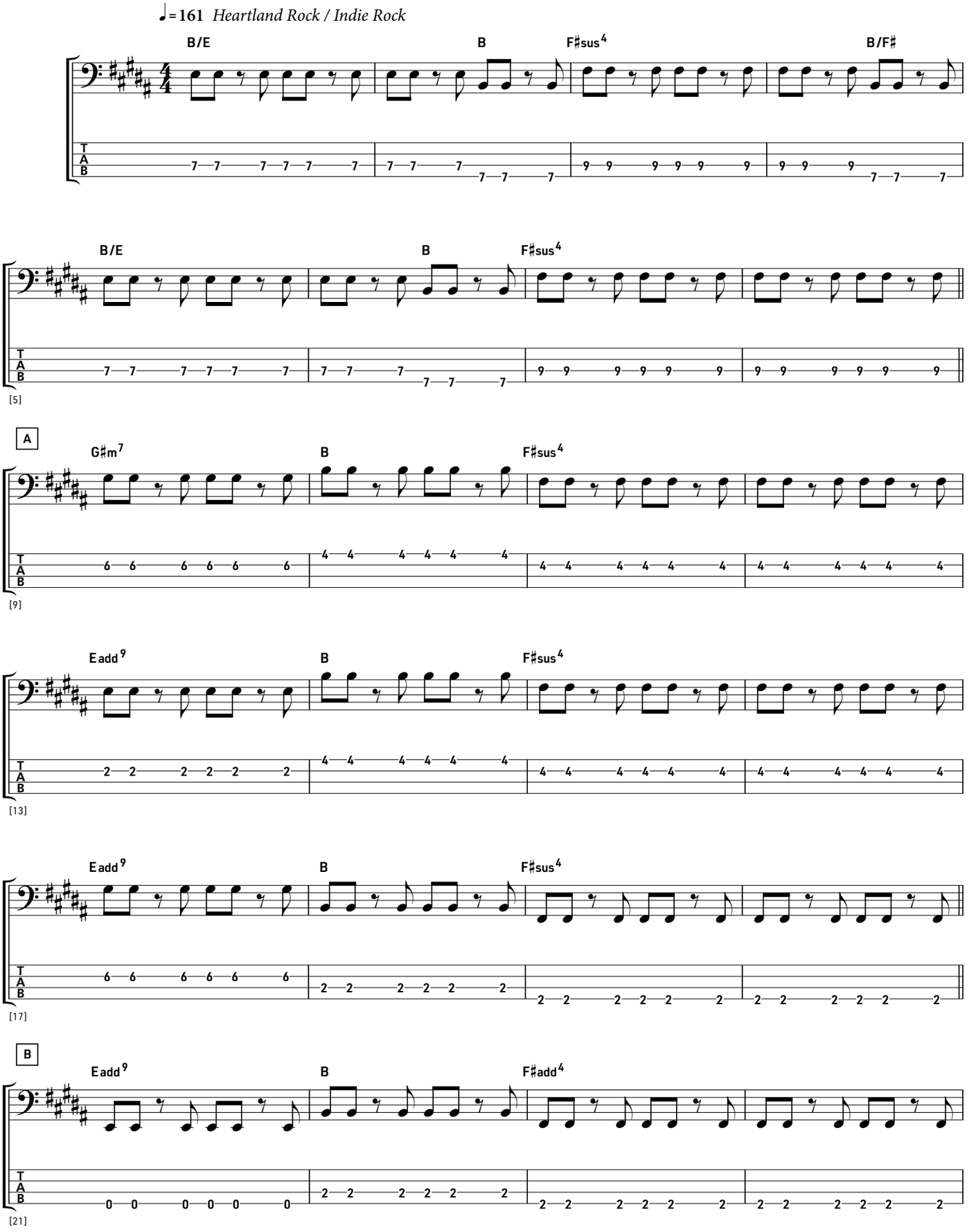


The War on Drugs *Lost in the Dream* (2014)
Decades after the genre's development, heartland rock has evolved into many forms alongside other musical styles. The War on Drugs have taken heartland rock tropes and reused them with more modern indie rock sensibilities.

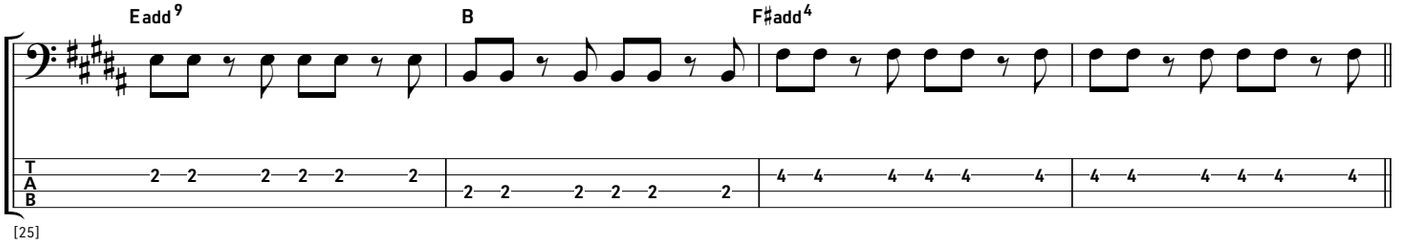
Getting Started

Words and Music by Sam Fender

Sam Fender

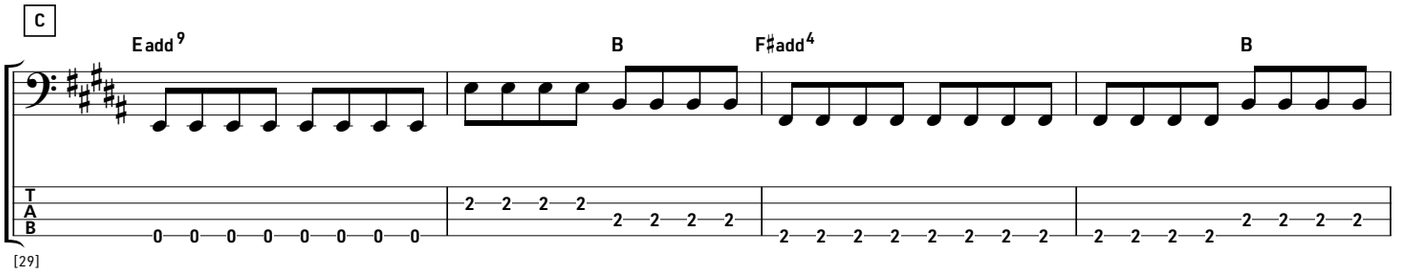


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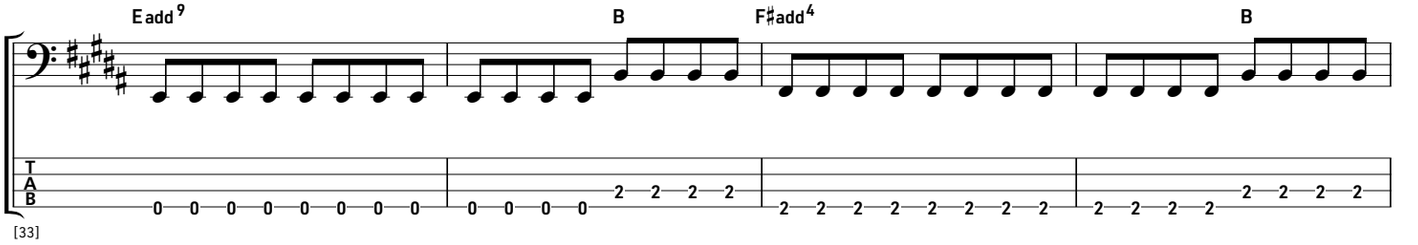


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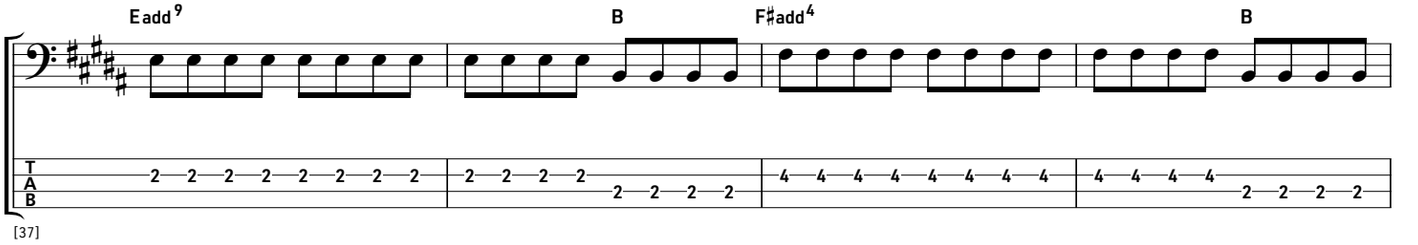
C



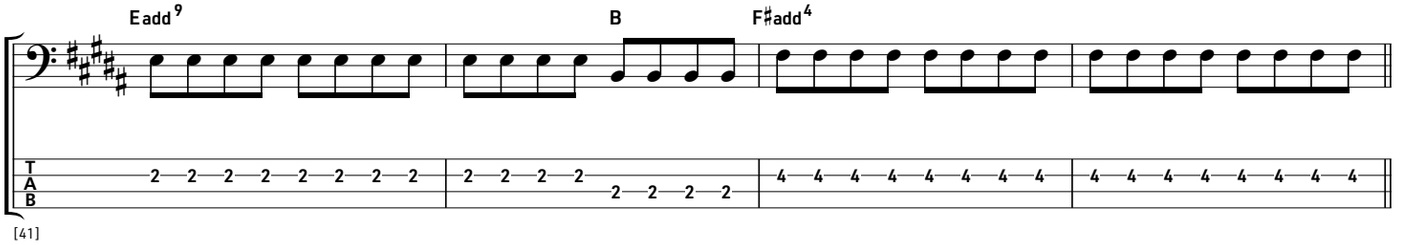
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[33]

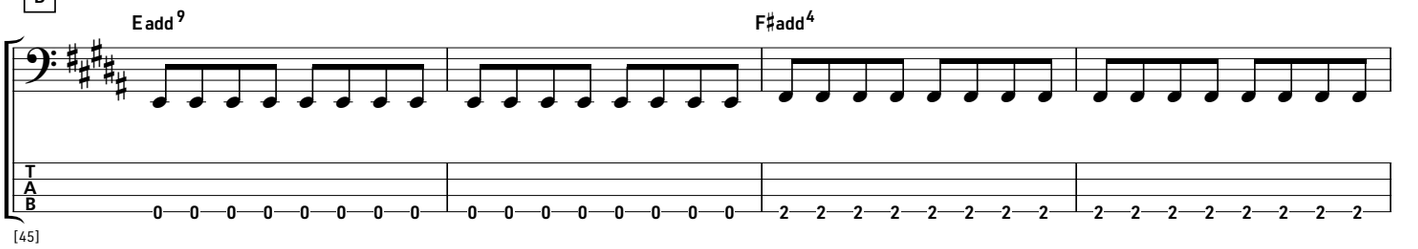


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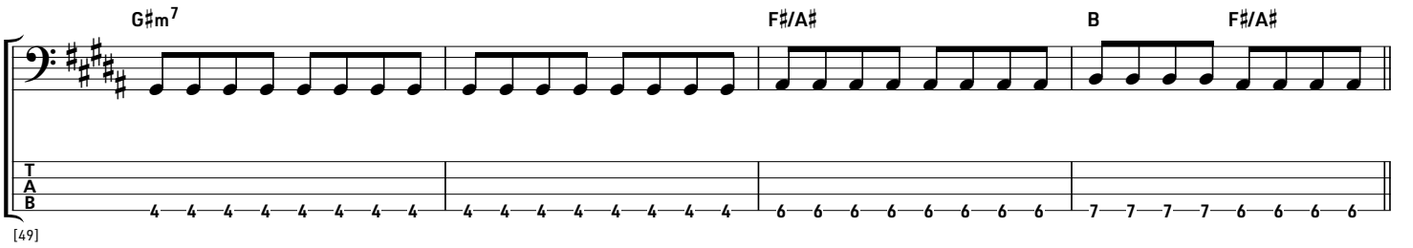


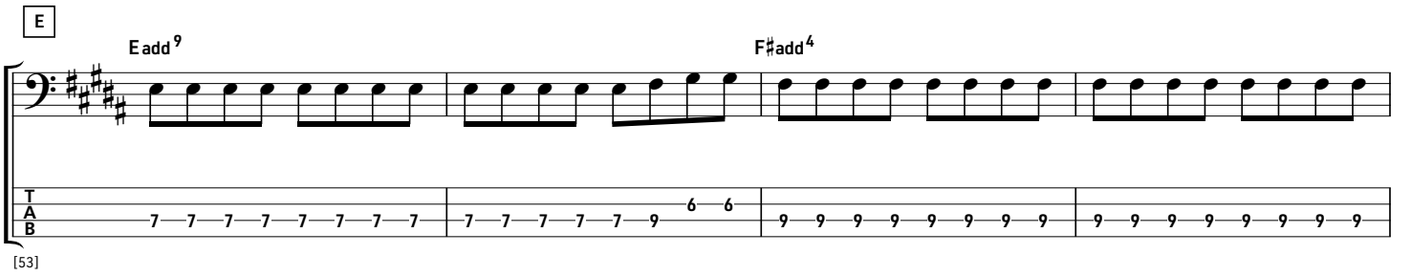
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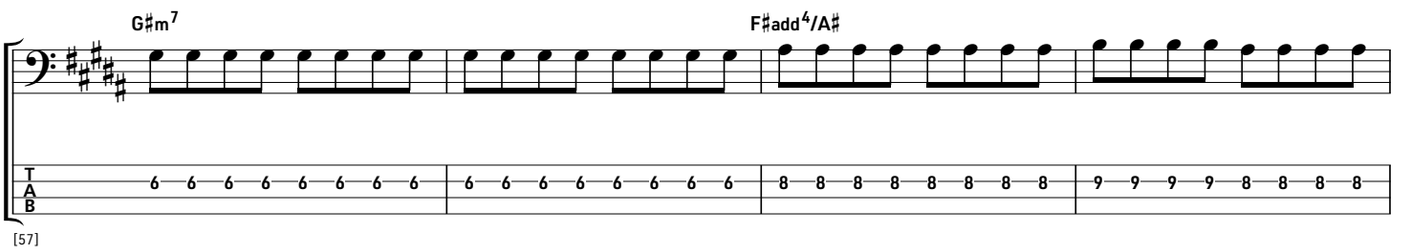
D

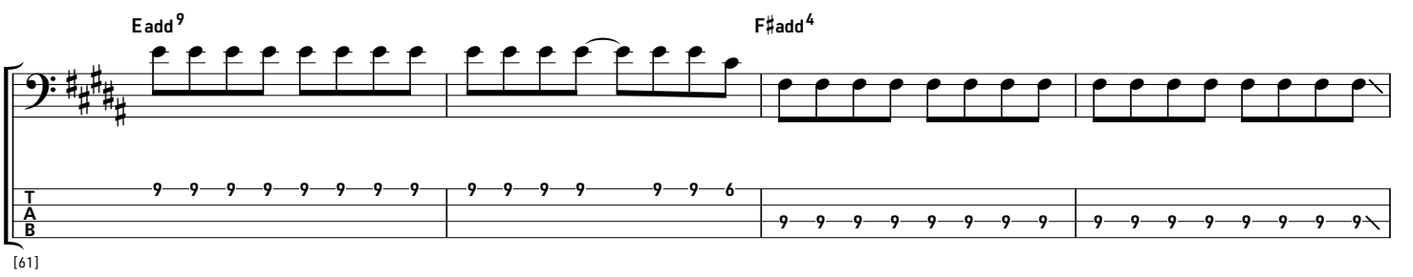


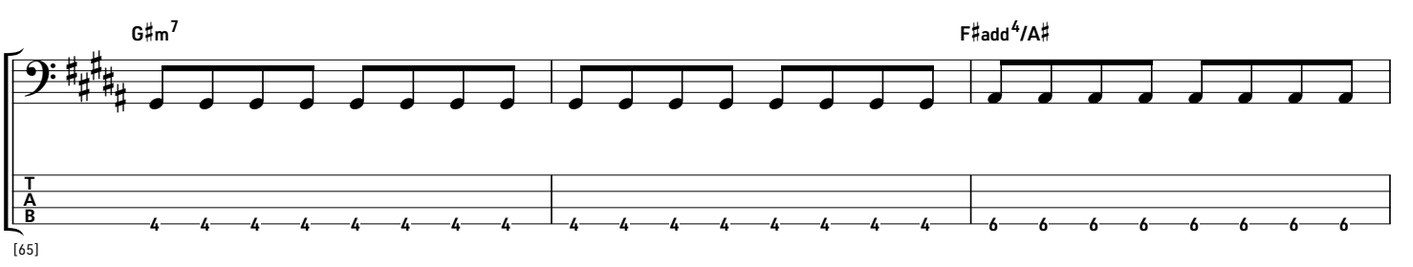
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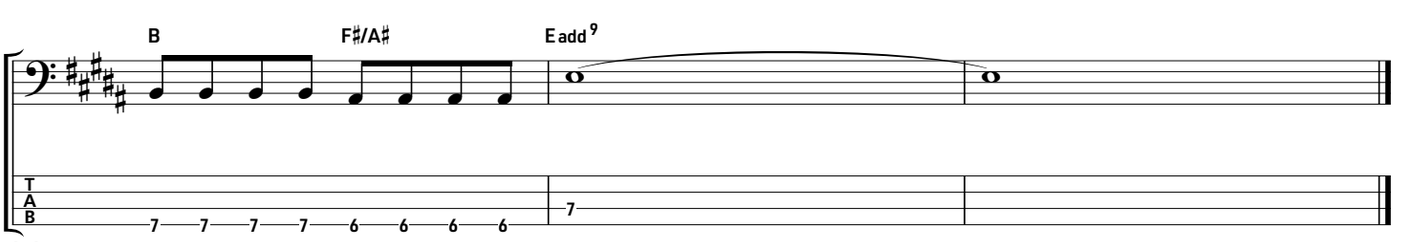

G♯m7
F♯/A♯
B
F♯/A♯
[49]


E
Eadd9
F♯add4
[53]


G♯m7
F♯add4/A♯
[57]


Eadd9
F♯add4
[61]


G♯m7
F♯add4/A♯
[65]


B
F♯/A♯
Eadd9
[68]

You Can't Hurry Love

Artist: The Supremes
Source: *The Supremes A' Go-Go* (Album, 1966)
Genre: Soul

'You Can't Hurry Love' is a high-energy, gospel-influenced single and the signature song of The Supremes. Being their seventh number 1 hit in the US, it was released at the peak of their popularity, with future global superstar Diana Ross shining as lead vocalist. It was one of several songs penned for them by Motown songwriting team Holland-Dozier-Holland. The song's legacy was further cemented in the '80s, due to Phil Collin's popular rendition, which peaked at number 1 in the UK single chart.

The Supremes formed in a Michigan high school under the name The Primettes. They signed to Motown Records in the early '60s and changed their name to The Supremes. The group scored multiple number 1 hits during this decade, becoming an internationally recognised act thanks to songs such as 'Baby Love' and 'Stop! In the Name of Love'. They continued to release music throughout the '70s, despite Diana Ross' departure, and gave their final live performance in 1977, disbanding shortly after. The Supremes are considered to be one of the defining groups from the motown era, having a huge influence on contemporary R&B and soul music, one that continues to this day.



Michael Ochs Archives / Michael Ochs Archives *via Getty Images*

Recommended Listening



The Ronettes *The Best of the Ronettes* (1992)
The Ronettes were a staple group of what is commonly known as the Brill Building music scene and released many hit songs during the '60s, including the enormously popular 'Be My Baby'.
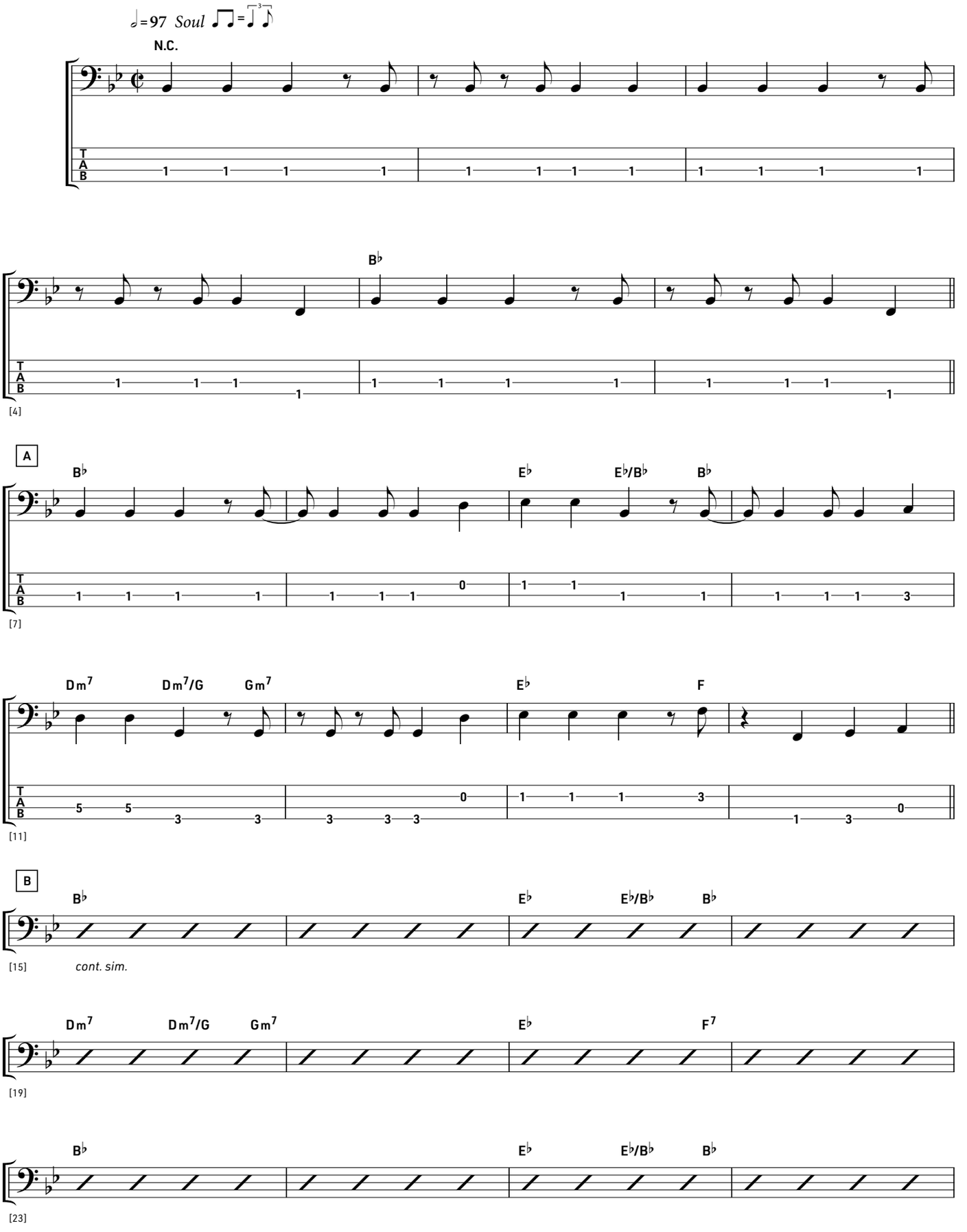


Martha & the Vandellas *Watchout!* (1966)
Another motown contemporary of The Supremes, Martha & The Vandellas' fourth studio album contains a range of R&B and soul music typical of the motown era. Their biggest hit single 'Jimmy Mack' can also be found on *Watchout!*
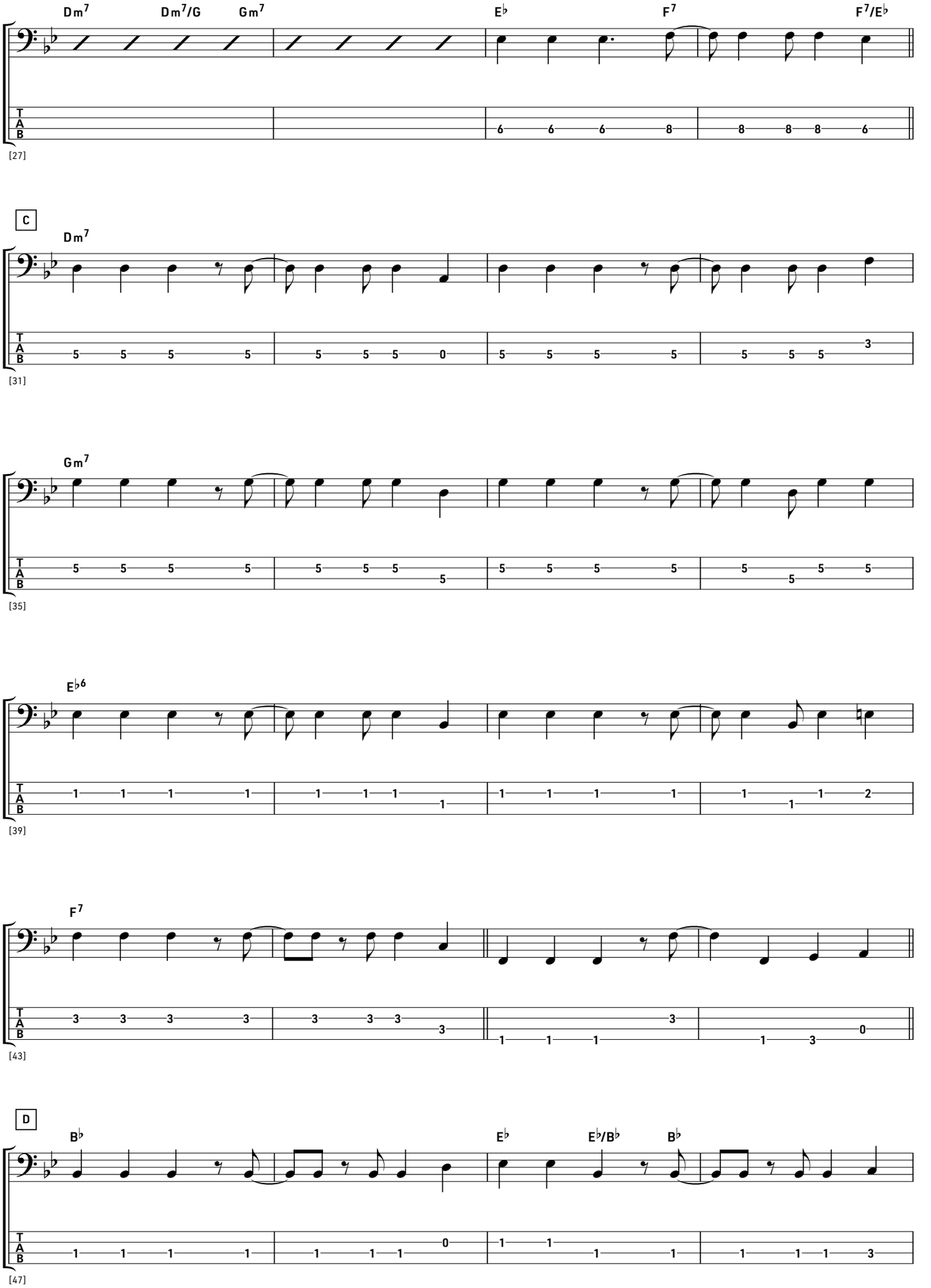
You Can't Hurry Love

Words and Music by Edward Holland Jr.,
Lamont Dozier and Brian Holland

The Supremes



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Dm7
Dm7/G
Gm7
E♭
F7
F7/E♭
[27]
C
Dm7
[31]
Gm7
[35]
E♭6
[39]
F7
[43]
D
B♭
E♭
E♭/B♭
B♭
[47]

rockschool® *Originals*

From the very beginning in 1991, Rockschool has been commissioning world-leading professionals to compose original pieces for our contemporary music grade exams. *Rockschool Originals* provide musicians with a diverse, innovative, and engaging selection of repertoire for use in their exams. These carefully benchmarked works explore a wide variety of genres, and introduce players to stylistic elements and techniques that are typical of that genre.

Conjunction

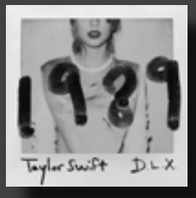
If there was a soundtrack to driving down a sunny US boulevard on a hot summer's day, 'Conjunction' would be it; evoking the classic sounds of the R&B and funk scenes that were hugely popular in the '70s, thanks to artists such as James Brown, The Meters and Tower of Power. Tight rhythmic control is a must to accurately portray the syncopation and subtle rhythmic variations. Don't forget your sunglasses!



Recommended Listening **James Brown** *The Payback* (1973)
James Brown is no stranger to commercial success and has produced an enormous catalogue of soul and funk classics. *The Payback* is yet another definitive album, with the formerly rejected blaxploitation soundtrack becoming a groove-heavy cornerstone of the genre.

Promise

The '80s saw the birth of soft rock – a new genre spearheaded by artists such as Christopher Cross, The Doobie Brothers and Toto. Identifiable by its laid-back feel, it usually features high production values, fusing elements of pop and rock music with more syncopated grooves, harmonic modulations and technically accomplished instrumental performances. With a recent resurgence, its influence can be heard in the work of contemporary artists such as John Mayer, The 1975, and Taylor Swift.



Recommended Listening **Taylor Swift** *1989* (2014)
Pop icon Taylor Swift made the transition from writing predominately country music to releasing what would be considered more mainstream fare, eventually fine-tuning her signature brand of nostalgic pop. Highlights of *1989* include 'Shake It Off' and 'Bad Blood'.
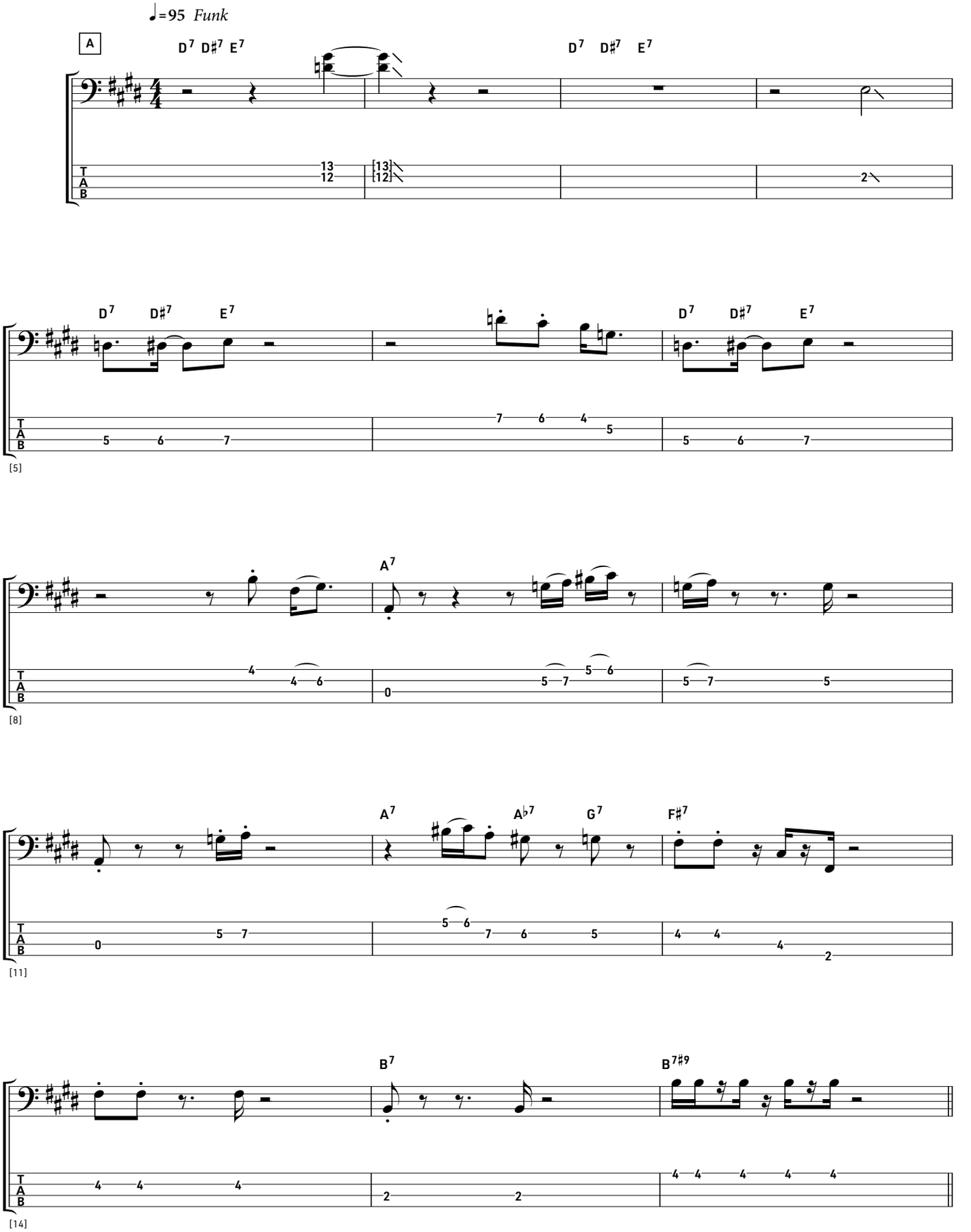
The Jump

'The Jump' leaps head first into the timeless mid-tempo shuffle, a style that has remained popular since its rise to prominence in the 1950s. Used by everyone from Elvis to Eric Clapton, it has formed the bedrock for countless hits. Whilst the guitar takes centre stage here, the real stars of the show are the walking bassline and steady swung drums, that provide a stable base for the guitar to solo over.
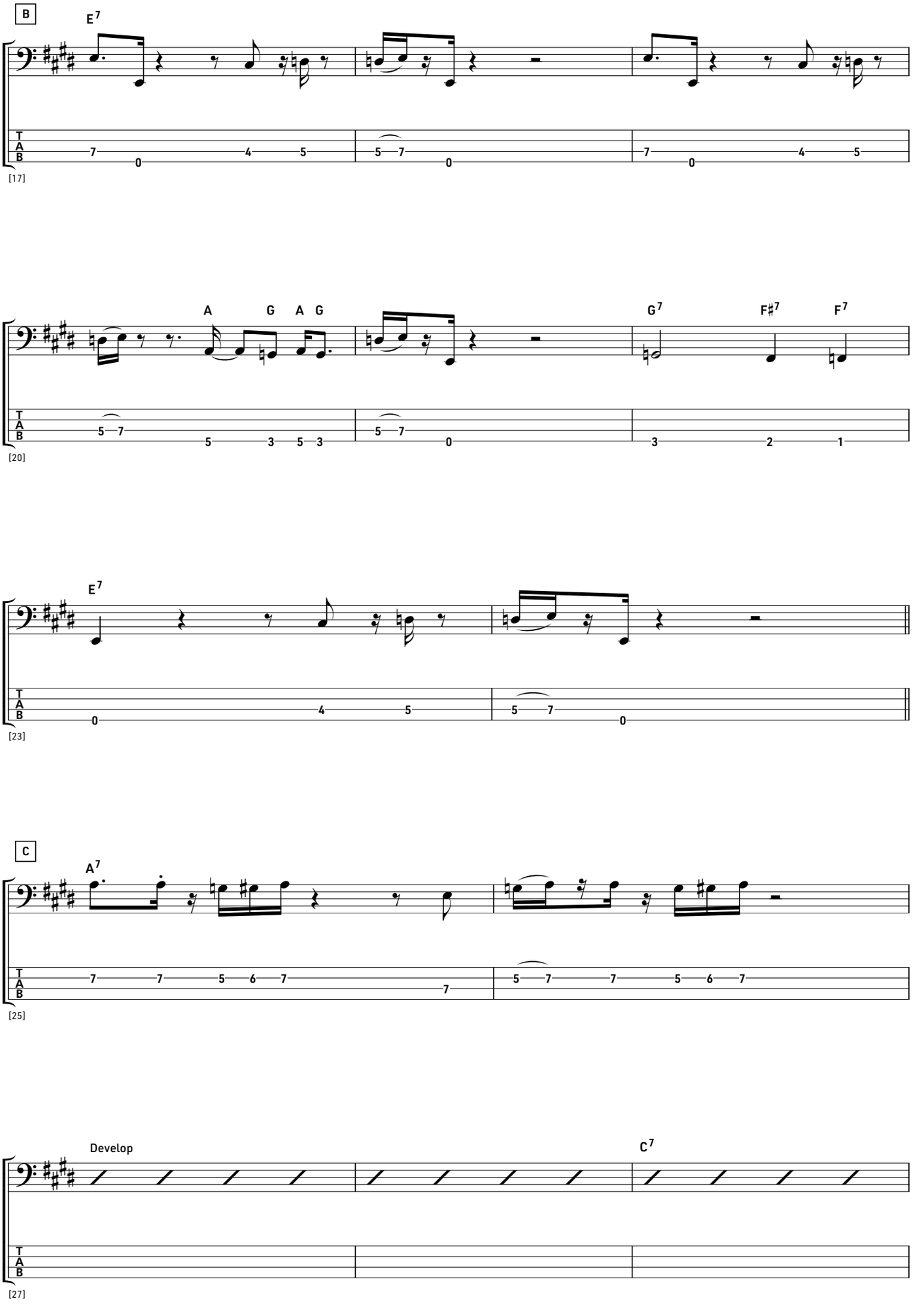


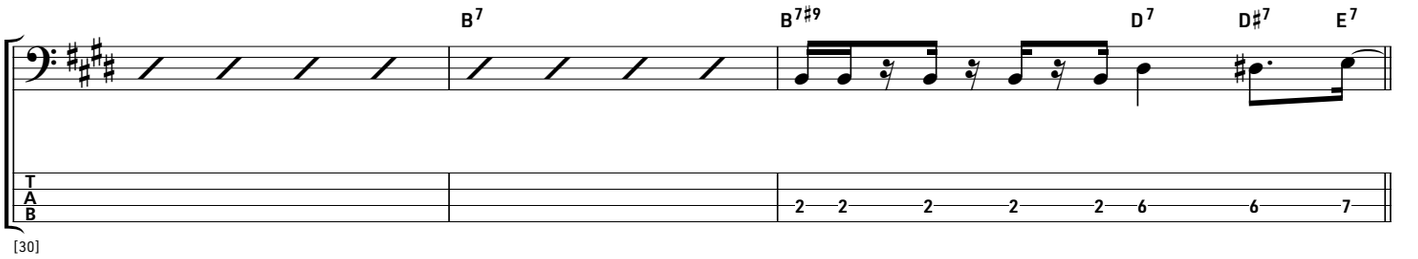
Recommended Listening **Muddy Waters** *The Chess Box* (1989)
Legendary blues guitarist Muddy Waters helped pave the way for blues rock, establishing the Chicago blues sound, he became an important influence for Jimi Hendrix, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Eric Clapton and many more!
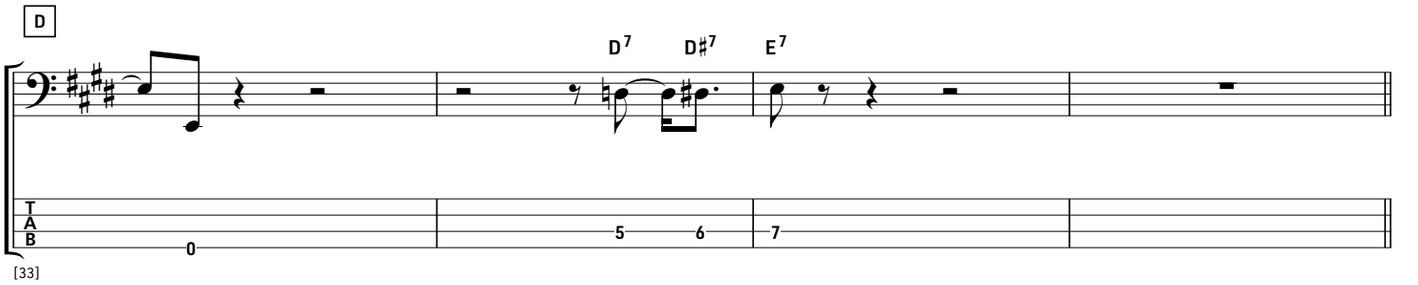
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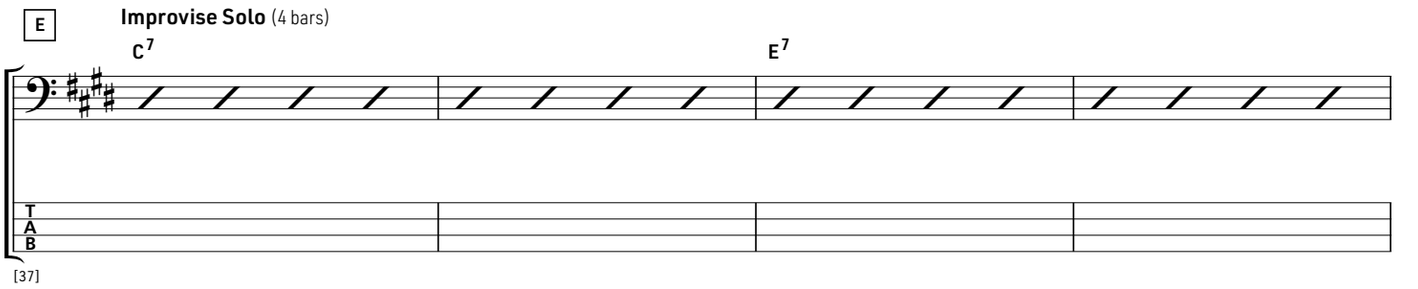


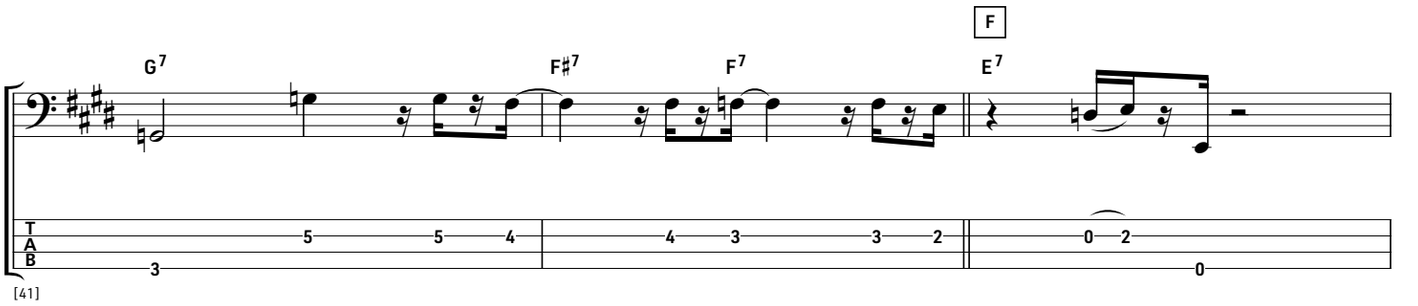
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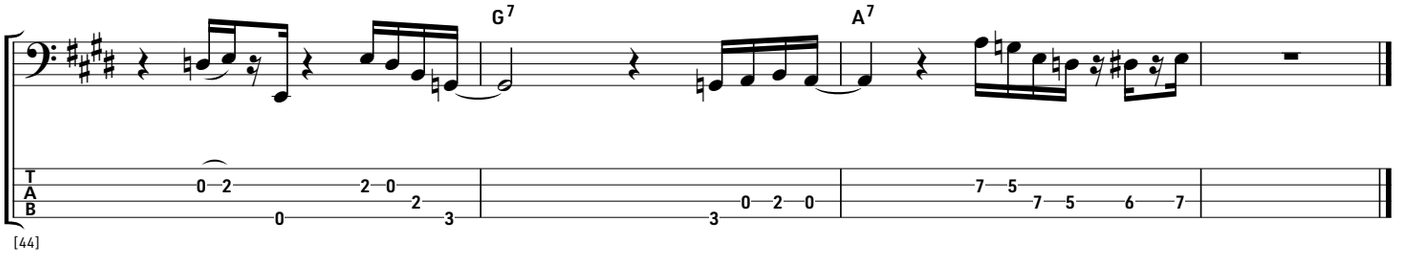

B
E7
[17]
A
G
A
G
G7
F♯7
F7
[20]
E7
[23]
C
A7
[25]
Develop
C7
[27]


B7
B7♯9
D7
D♯7
E7
[30]


D
D7
D♯7
E7
[33]
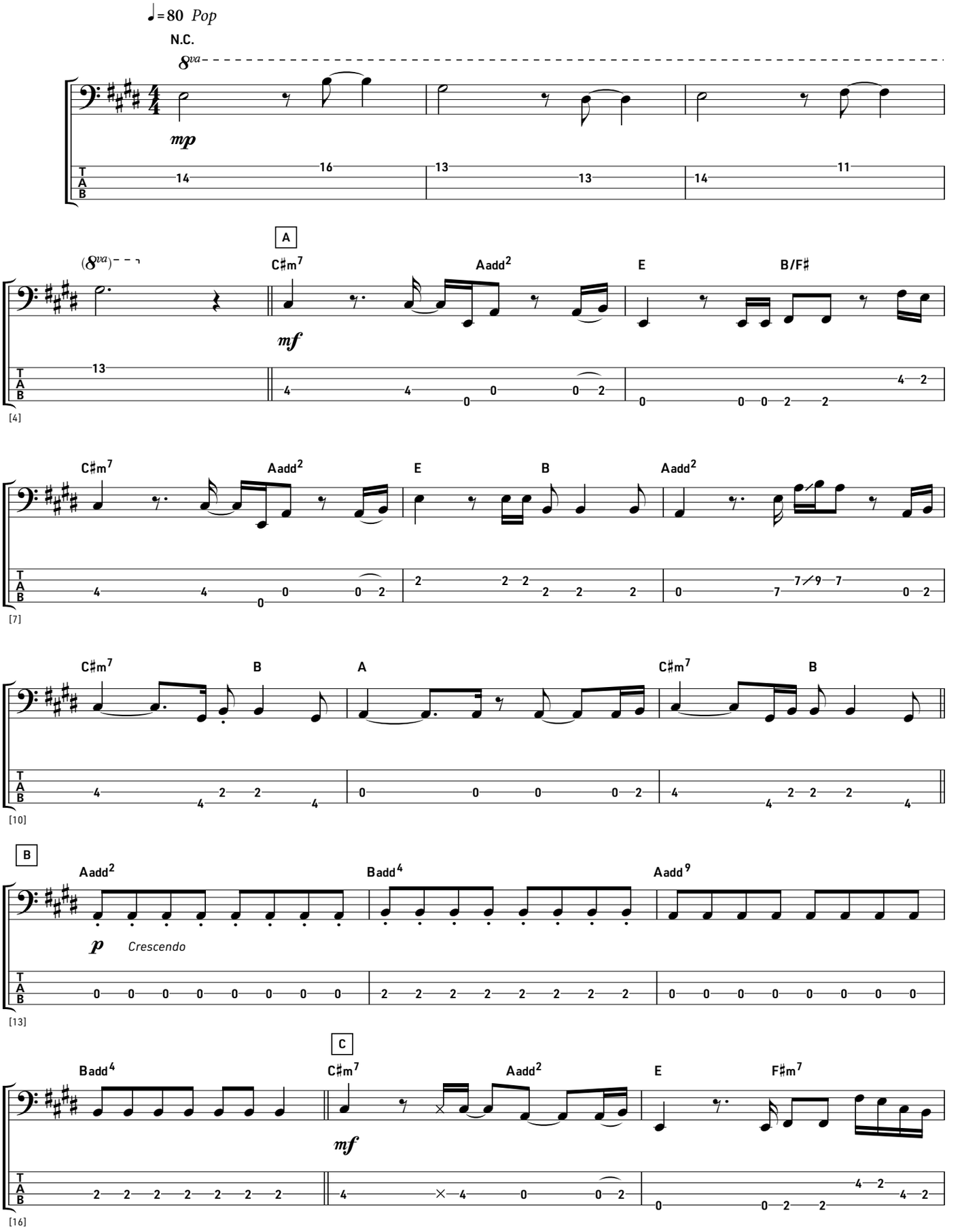

E
Improvise Solo (4 bars)
C7
E7
[37]


G7
F♯7
F7
F
E7
[41]
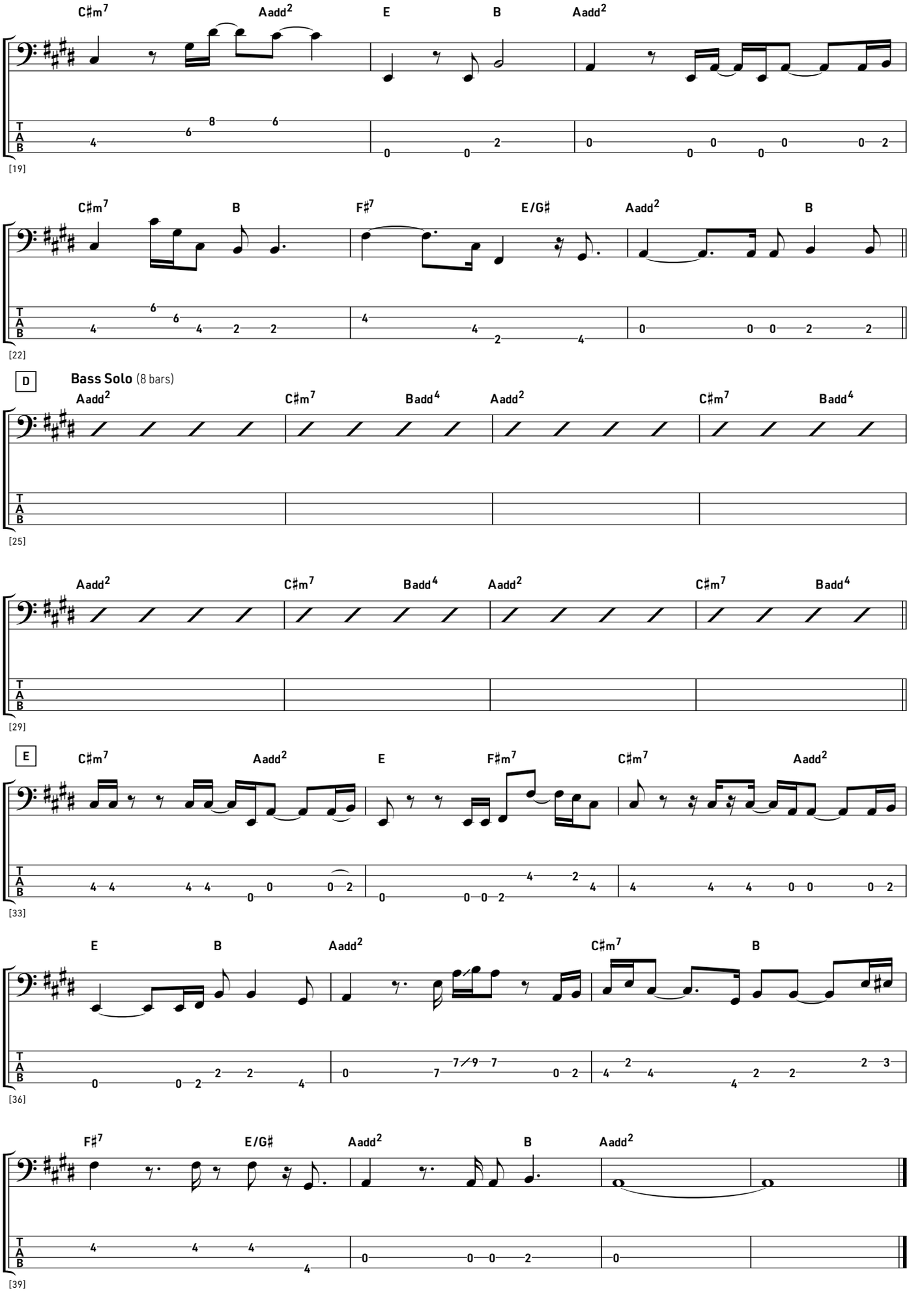

G7
A7
[44]

Promise

Rockschool Original
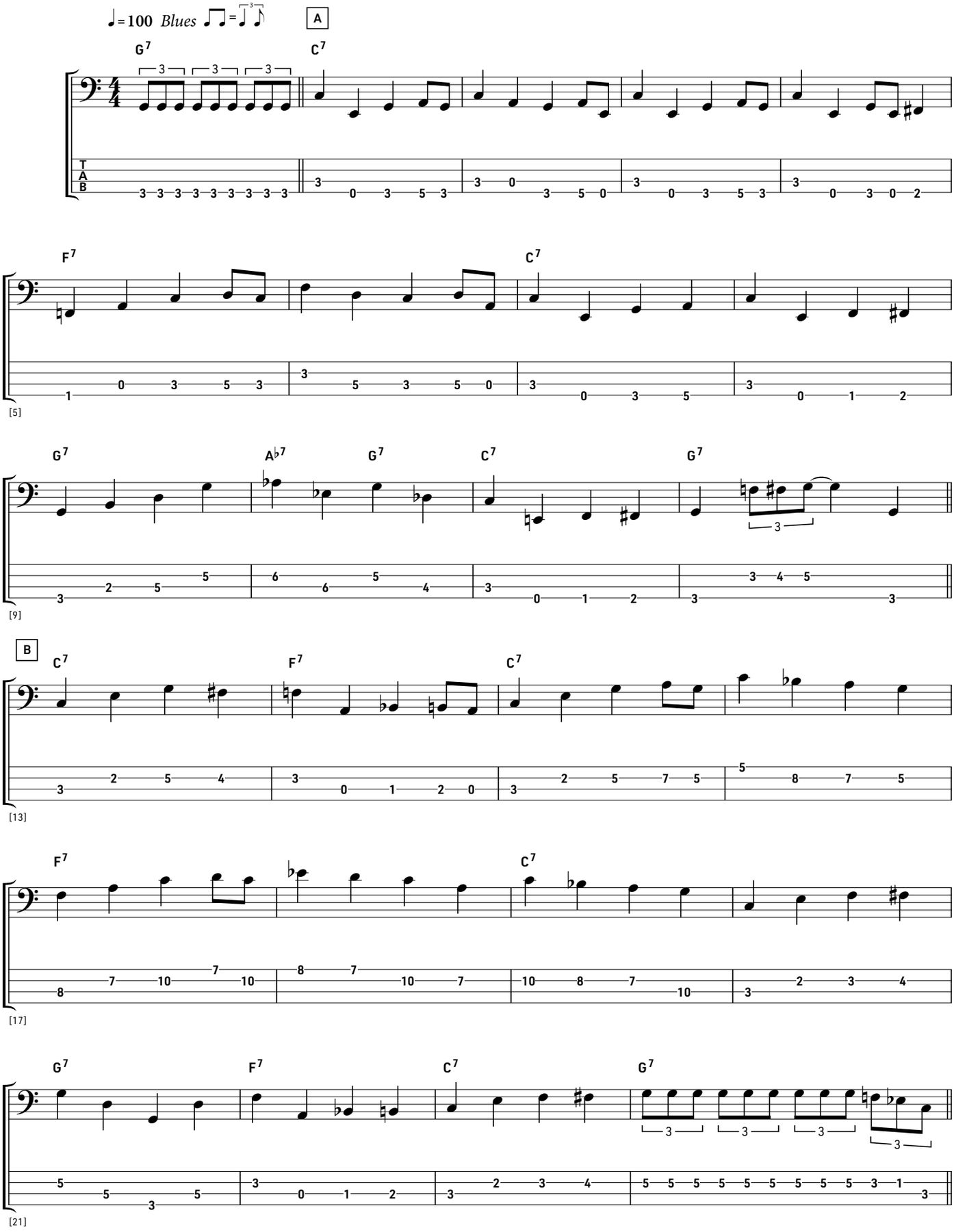


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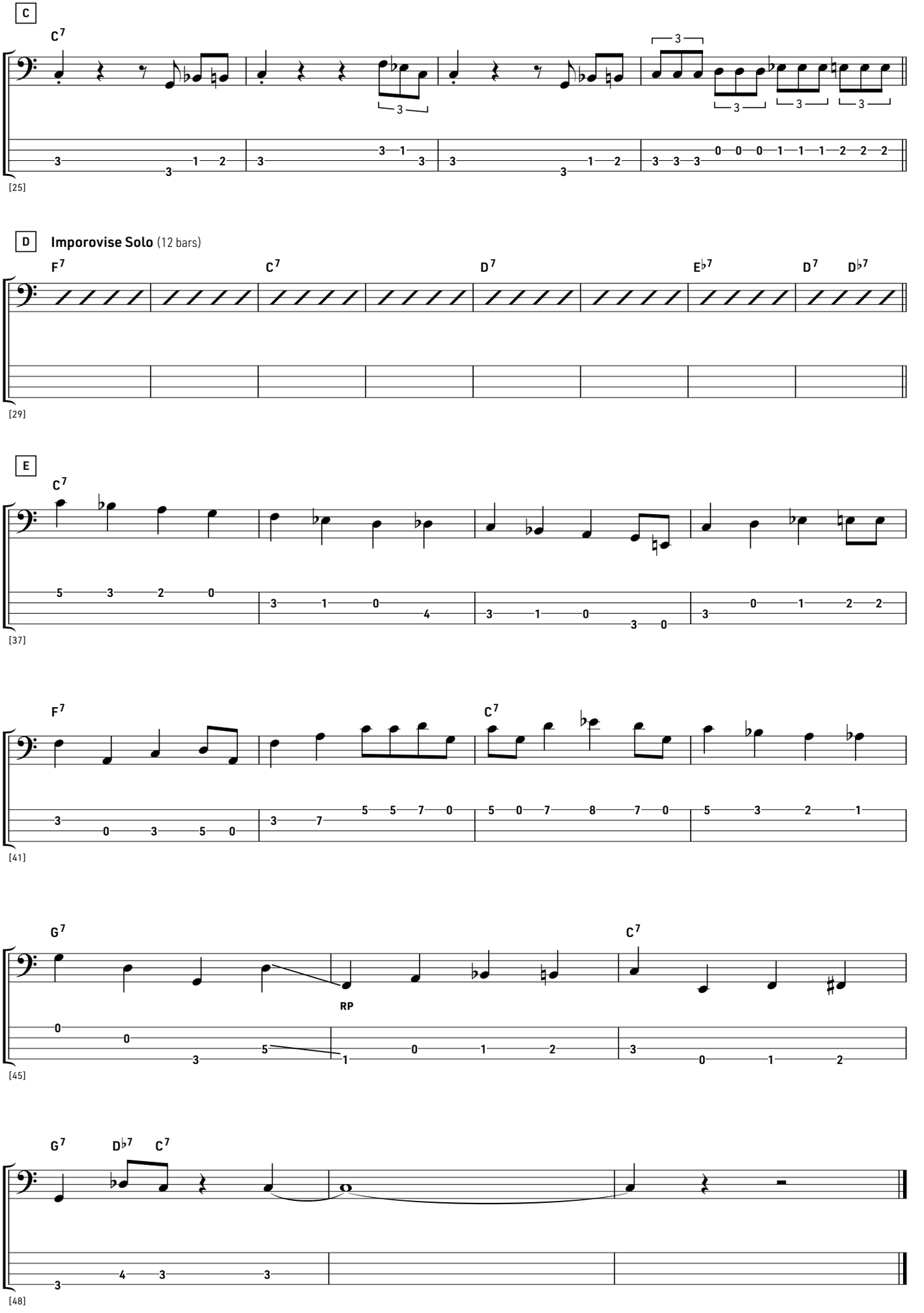

C♯m7
Aadd2
E
B
Aadd2
[19]
C♯m7
B
F♯7
E/G♯
Aadd2
B
[22]
D
Bass Solo (8 bars)
Aadd2
C♯m7
Badd4
Aadd2
C♯m7
Badd4
[25]
Aadd2
C♯m7
Badd4
Aadd2
C♯m7
Badd4
[29]
E
C♯m7
Aadd2
E
F♯m7
C♯m7
Aadd2
[33]
E
B
Aadd2
C♯m7
B
[36]
F♯7
E/G♯
Aadd2
B
Aadd2
[39]

The Jump

Rockschool Original



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C
C7
[25]
D
Imporovise Solo (12 bars)
F7
C7
D7
E♭7
D7
D♭7
[29]
E
C7
[37]
F7
C7
[41]
G7
RP
C7
[45]
G7
D♭7
C7
[48]

Technical Exercises
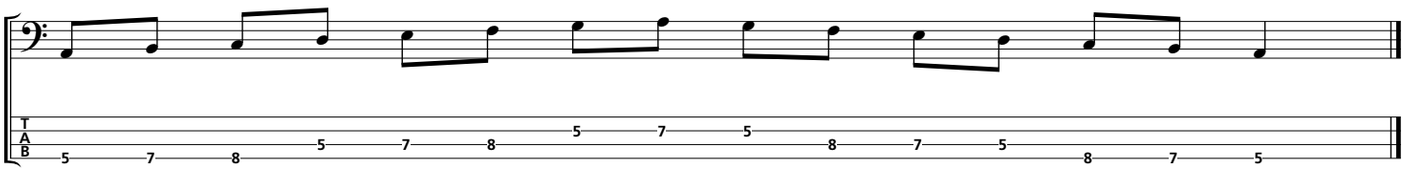
In this section the examiner will ask you to play a selection of exercises drawn from each of the three groups shown below. Groups A and B contain examples of the scales and arpeggios you can use when playing the pieces. In Group C you will be asked to prepare the bassline riff exercise and play it to the backing track in the exam. You do not need to memorise the exercises (and can use the book in the exam) but the examiner will be looking for the speed of your response. The examiner will also give credit for the level of your musicality.

Groups A and B should be prepared on the starting notes indicated. Before you start the section you will be asked whether you would like to play the exercises along with the click or hear a single bar of click before you commence the test. The tempo is ♩ = 80.

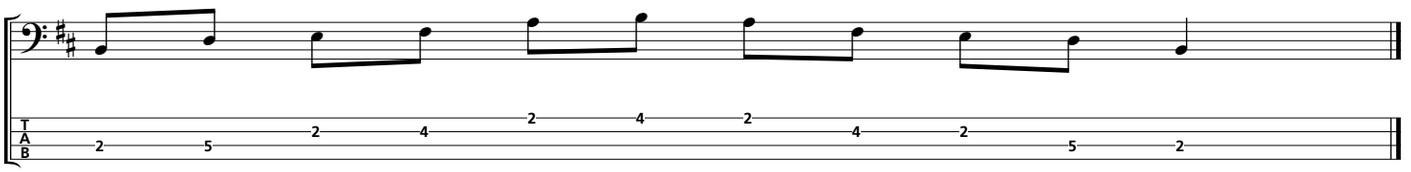
Group A: Scales

One octave prepared from the starting notes A, B, C and D

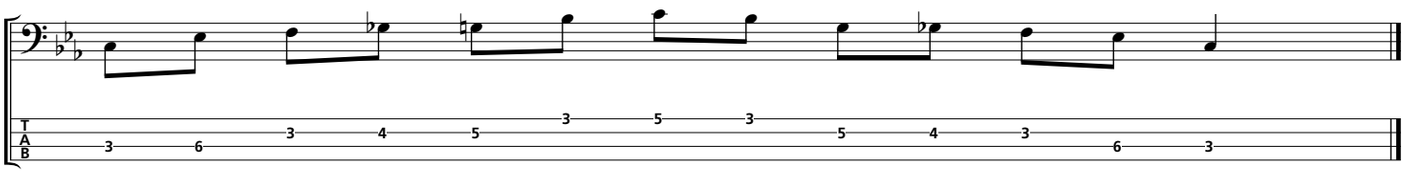
1. Natural minor scale (A natural minor scale shown)



2. Minor pentatonic scale (B minor pentatonic scale shown)
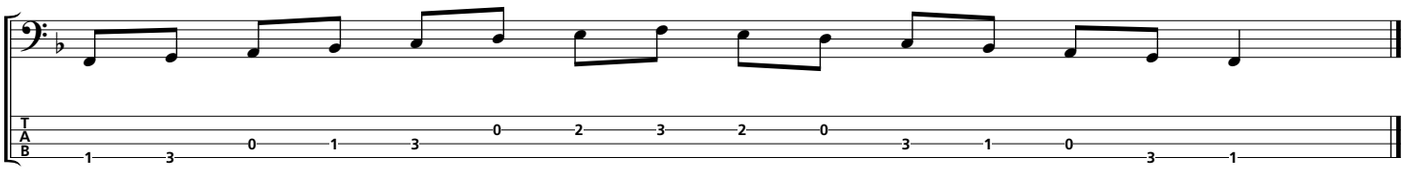


3. Blues scale (C blues scale shown)
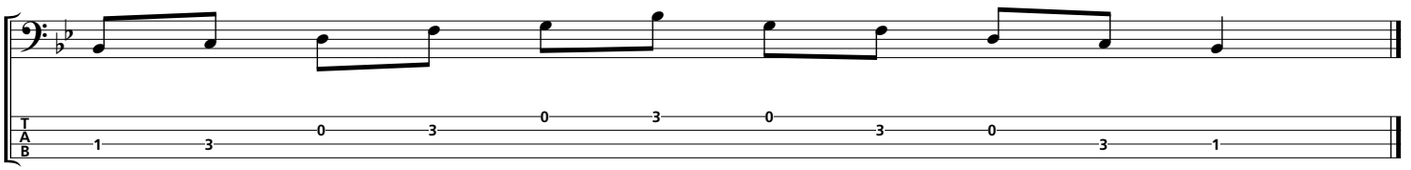


One octave from the starting notes F and B♭

1. Major scale (F major scale shown)



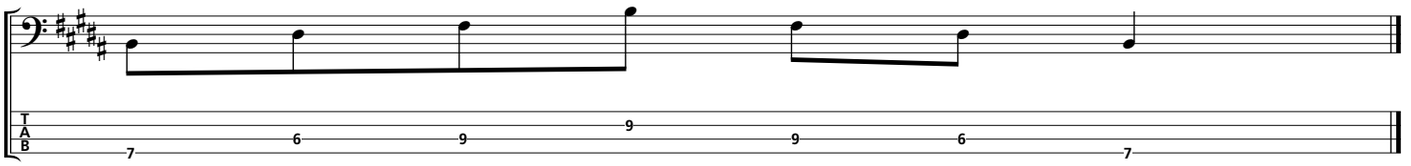
2. Major pentatonic scale (B♭ major pentatonic scale shown)



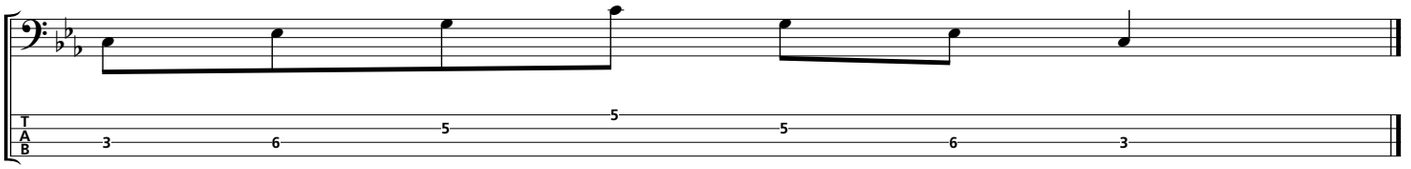
Group B: Arpeggios

One octave prepared from the starting notes A, B, C and D

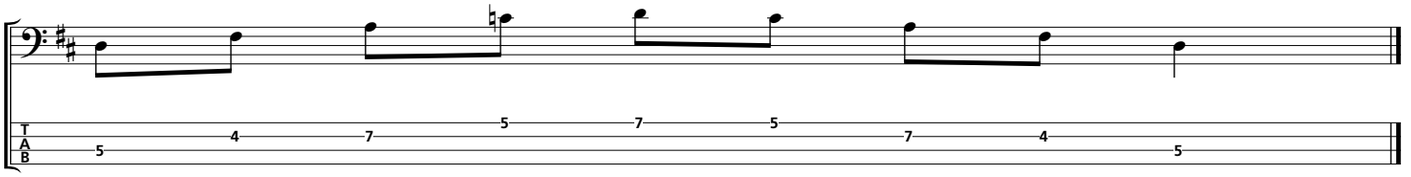
1. Major arpeggio (B major arpeggio shown)



2. Minor arpeggio (C minor arpeggio shown)

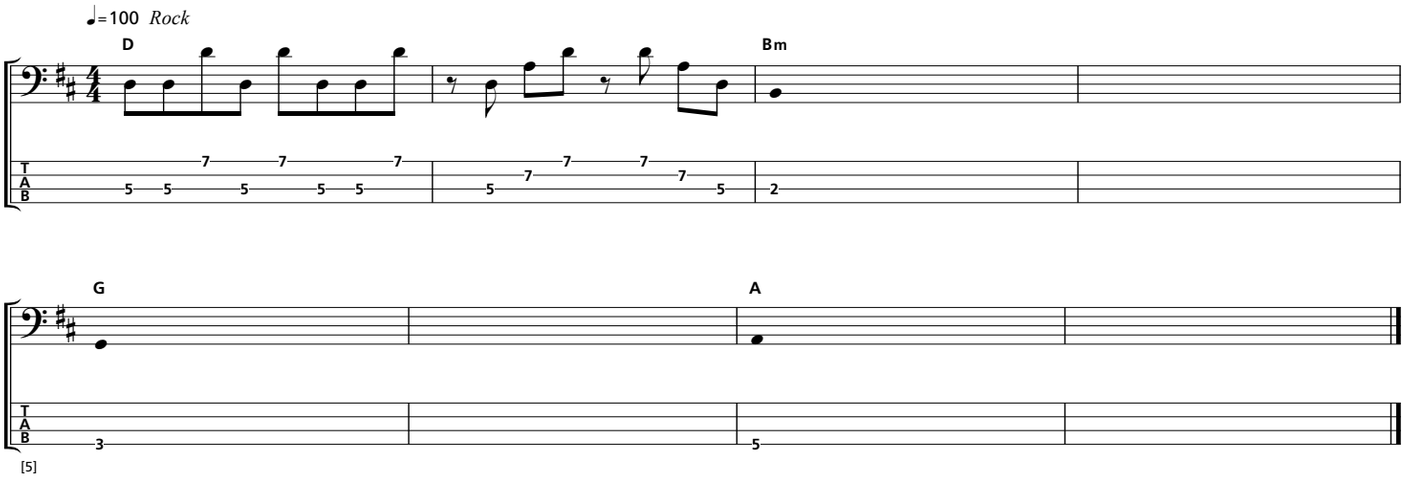


3. Dominant ^{7} arpeggio (D dominant ^{7} arpeggio shown)



Group C: Riff

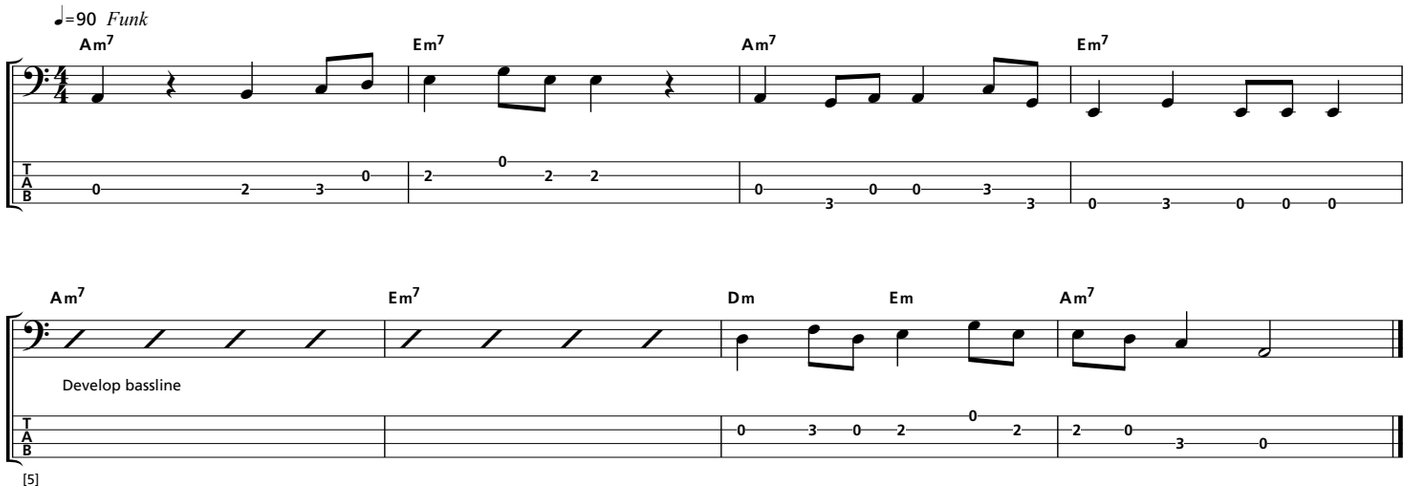
In the exam you will be asked to play the following riff to a backing track. The riff shown in bars 1 and 2 should be played in the same rhythmic and melodic shape in bars 3–8, maintaining the same melodic sequence. All notes played must be diatonic to the key signature. The root note of the pattern to be played is shown in the music in bars 3, 5 and 7. The tempo is ♩ = 100.



Sight Reading

In the exam, you have a choice between either a Sight Reading test or an Improvisation & Interpretation test. The examiner will ask you which one you wish to choose before commencing. Once you have decided you cannot change your mind.

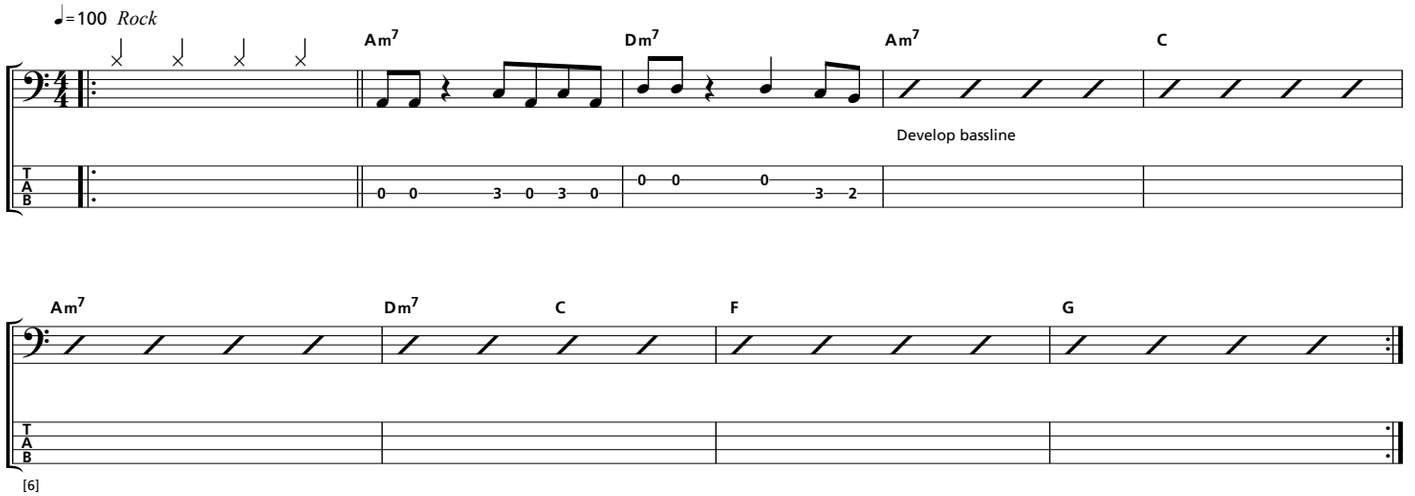
At this level there is an element of improvisation. This is in the form of a two bar development of the bassline. The piece will be composed in the style of rock, funk or blues and will have chord symbols throughout. The test is eight bars long and is in one of the following keys: D major or G major, or D minor or A minor. The examiner will allow you 90 seconds to prepare it and will set the tempo for you. The tempo is ♩= 80–90.



Improvisation & Interpretation

In the exam, you have a choice between either a Sight Reading test or an Improvisation & Interpretation test. The examiner will ask you which one you wish to choose before commencing. Once you have decided you cannot change your mind.

In Grade 4, the Improvisation & Interpretation tests contain a small amount of sight reading. This consists of a two bar section of groove notation at the beginning of each test. You will be asked to play the notated bassline and complete the test using an improvised line as indicated. This is played to a backing track of no more than eight bars. The test will be given in one of the four following keys: D major or G major, or D minor or A minor. You have 30 seconds to prepare then you will be allowed to practise during the first playing of the backing track before playing it to the examiner on the second playing of the backing track. This test is continuous with a one bar count-in at the beginning and after the practice session. The tempo is ♩= 90–100.



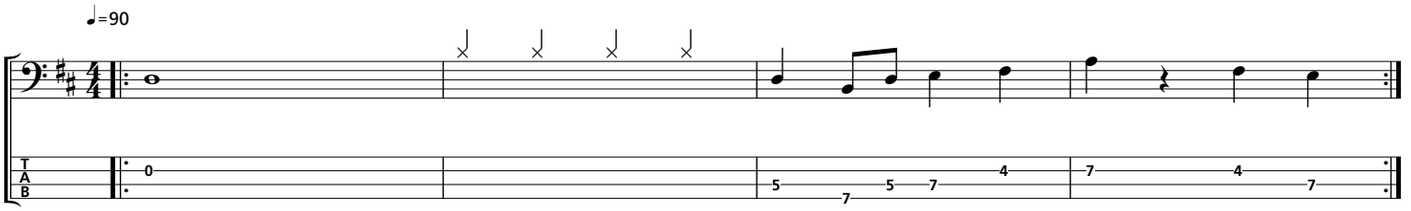
Ear Tests

There are two Ear Tests in this grade. The examiner will play each test to you twice. You will find one example of each type of test printed below.

Test 1: Melodic Recall

The examiner will play you a two bar melody with a drum backing using either the D major pentatonic or B minor pentatonic scales. The first note of the melody will be the root note and the first interval will be descending. You will play the melody back on your instrument. You will hear the test twice.

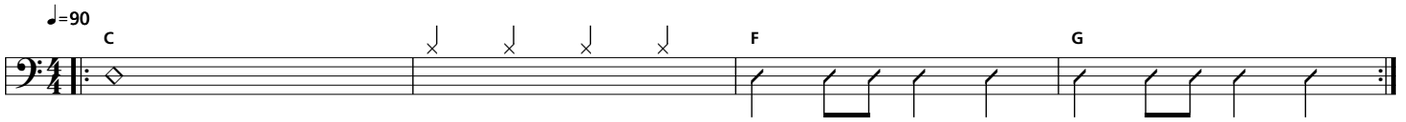
Each time the test is played the sequence is: count-in, root note, count-in, melody. There will be a short gap for you to practise after you have heard the test for the second time. You will hear the count-in and root note for the third time followed by a vocal count-in and you will then play the melody to the drum backing. The tempo is ♩= 90.



Test 2: Harmonic Recall

The examiner will play you a tonic chord followed by a two bar chord sequence in the key of C major played to a guitar and drum backing. The sequence will be drawn from the I, IV and V chords and may occur in any combination. You will be asked to play the root notes of the chord sequence to the guitar and drum backing in the rhythm shown in the example below. You will then be asked to identify the chords. This rhythm will be used in all examples of this test given in the exam. You will hear the test twice.

Each time the test is played the sequence is: count-in, tonic, count-in, chords. There will be a short gap for you to practise after you have heard the test for the second time. You will hear the count-in and tonic for the third time followed by a vocal count-in and you will then play the root notes of the chords to the drum backing. You should then name the chord sequence. The tempo is ♩= 90.



General Musicianship Questions

In this part of the exam you will be asked five questions. Four of these questions will be about general music knowledge and the fifth question asked will be about your instrument.

Music Knowledge

The examiner will ask you four music knowledge questions based on a piece of music that you have played in the exam. You will nominate the piece of music about which the questions will be asked. The scale question at the end of the list of subjects is mandatory.

In Grade 4 you will be asked:

- The names of pitches
- The meaning of the time signature and the key signature markings
- Repeat marks, first and second time bars, **D.C.**, **D.S.**, **al Coda** and **al Fine** markings
- Whole, half, quarter, eighth note, triplet eighth notes and 16th note values
- Whole, half, quarter, eighth note and 16th-note rests and rest combinations
- The construction of major, minor or dominant ^{7} chords
- One type of scale that can be used appropriately in the solo section of the piece you have played

Instrument Knowledge

The examiner will also ask you one question regarding your instrument.

In Grade 4 you will be asked to identify/explain:

- Any part or control on your bass
- The function of the volume and tone controls on your guitar
- The tone settings for the piece you have played on the amp and why you have chosen these settings

Further Information

Tips on how to approach this part of this exam can be found in the Syllabus Guide for guitar and on the Rockschool website: ***www.rslawards.com***

Marking Schemes

Grade Exams | Debut to Grade 8

ELEMENT	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Performance Piece 1	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 2	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 3	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Technical Exercises	9–10 out of 15	11–12 out of 15	13 + out of 15
Sight Reading ***or*** Improvisation & Interpretation	6 out of 10	7–8 out of 10	9 + out of 10
Ear Tests	6 out of 10	7–8 out of 10	9 + out of 10
General Musicianship Questions	3 out of 5	4 out of 5	5 out of 5
TOTAL MARKS	**60%+**	**74%+**	**90%+**

Performance Certificates | Debut to Grade 8

ELEMENT	PASS	MERIT	DISTINCTION
Performance Piece 1	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 2	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 3	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 4	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
Performance Piece 5	12–14 out of 20	15–17 out of 20	18+ out of 20
TOTAL MARKS	**60%+**	**75%+**	**90%+**

Entering RSL Exams

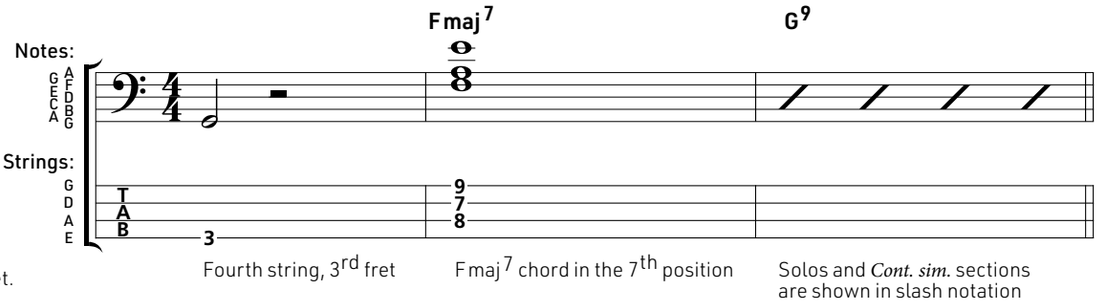
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- All candidates should ensure they bring their own grade syllabus book to the exam or have proof of digital purchase ready to show the examiner.
- All Grade 6–8 candidates must ensure that they bring valid photo ID to their exam.

Bass Notation Explained

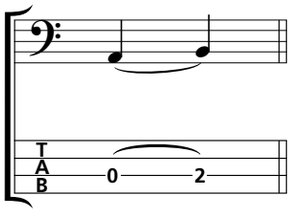
THE MUSICAL STAVE shows pitches and rhythms and is divided by lines into bars. Pitches are named after the first seven letters of the alphabet.

TABLATURE graphically represents the guitar fingerboard. Each horizontal line represents a string and each number represents a fret.

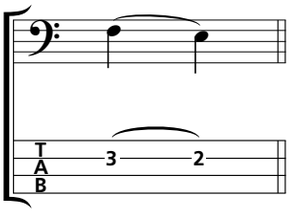


Definitions For Special Bass Guitar Notation

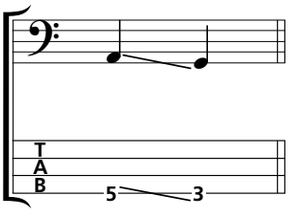
HAMMER-ON: Pick the lower note then sound the higher note by fretting it without picking.



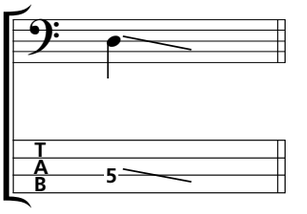
PULL-OFF: Pick the higher note then sound the lower note by lifting your finger without picking.



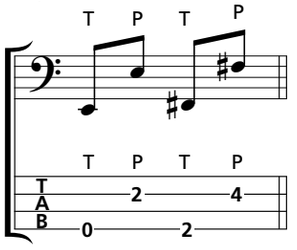
SLIDE: Pick the first note and slide to the next. If the line connects (as below) the second note is not repicked.



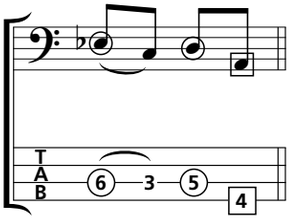
GLISSANDO: Slide off of a note at the end of its rhythmic value. The note that follows is repicked.



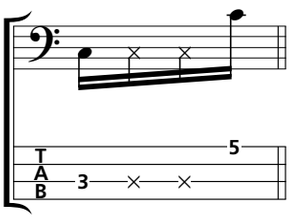
SLAP STYLE: Slap bass technique is indicated through the letters T (thumb) and P (pull).



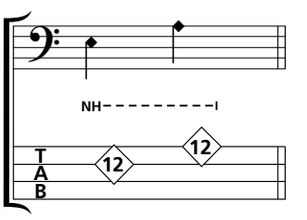
TAPPING: Sound note by tapping the string – circles denote a picking hand tap, squares a fretting hand tap.



DEAD (GHOST) NOTES: Pick the string while the note is muted by your fretting hand.



NATURAL HARMONICS: Lightly touch the string above the indicated fret then pick to sound a harmonic.





(accent) ▪ Accentuate note (play it louder).



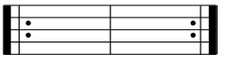
(staccato) ▪ Shorten time value of note.



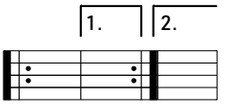
▪ Fermata (Pause)

D.𝄋. al Coda ▪ Go back to the sign (𝄋), then play until the bar marked **To Coda** 𝌆 then skip to the section marked 𝌆 **Coda**.

D.C. al Fine ▪ Go back to the beginning of the song and play until the bar marked ***Fine*** (end).



▪ Repeat the bars between the repeat signs.



▪ When a repeated section has different endings, play the first ending only the first time and the second ending only the second time.

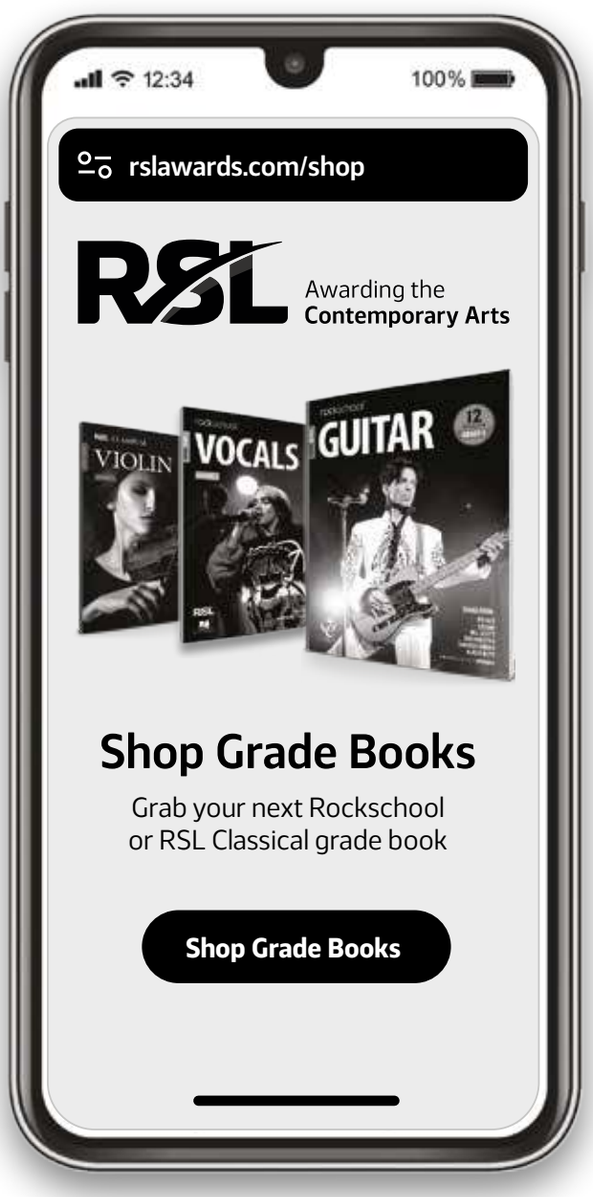


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