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# Tommy Emmanuel

## Fingerstyle Guitar Method

MEL BAY PUBLICATIONS, INC., #4 INDUSTRIAL DRIVE, PACIFIC, MO 63069

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# Tommy Emmanuel

## Fingerstyle Guitar Method

**by Tommy Emmanuel**
**transcribed by Deyan Bratic**

Cover photograph by Sara Corwin

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0



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# Holding Position

**Folk or Jazz Position**

If the guitar is held properly, it will feel comfortable to you. Although there are many ways to hold the guitar, there are basically two sitting positions: the folk or jazz and the classical positions. Either position may be used, but for most of the material contained in this book, the folk sitting position is recommended.

In the ***folk or jazz sitting position***, the guitar is held with the waist of the guitar resting on the right leg. The side of the guitar sits flat on the leg with the neck extending to the left. The neck should be tilted upward slightly so the left arm does not rest on the left leg. Both feet should be flat on the floor, although many guitarists prefer to elevate the right leg by using a footstool. The right arm rests on the top of the guitar just beyond the elbow. The right hand should be placed over and to the back (towards the bridge) of the sound hole. Whether using a pick or the fingers, the right-hand fingers should be bent slightly. The right-hand fingers may touch the top of the guitar, but they should not be stationary. They move when stroking the strings.

**Classical Position**

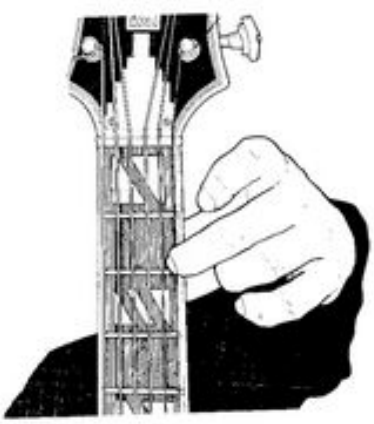
In the ***classical sitting position***, the left foot is elevated (with a foot stool), and the guitar rests on the left leg. The body of the guitar also rests on the inside of the right leg. The body of the guitar should rest flat on the left leg. The neck of the guitar should be on about a 45° angle. The right arm rests on the top of the guitar just beyond the elbow. The right hand should be placed to the back (towards the bridge) of the sound hole. Lean forward slightly, touching the top/back of the guitar body. Sit so the right foot is pointing forward.

The left hand should be positioned with the thumb touching the back of the guitar neck. Do not bend the thumb forward. The thumb should be vertical, touching the neck at the knuckle. Do not position the thumb parallel with the neck. The palm of the left hand should not touch the guitar neck. The left wrist may bend *slightly*, but be careful not to exaggerate the bend.

**Left-Hand Thumb**

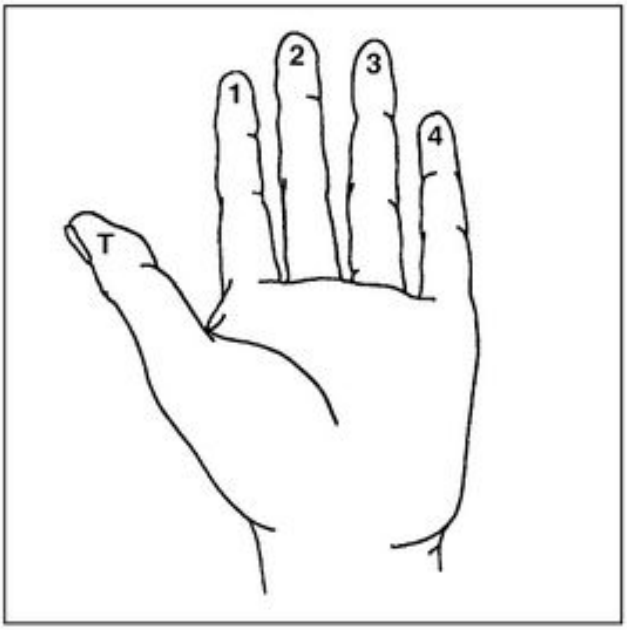
When placing a left-hand finger on the string, "square" the finger and push on the string using the tip of the finger. (The fingernails must be short so the tip of the finger can be used.) The finger should be positioned just behind and touching (when possible) the fret wire. Placing the finger too low in the fret may result in a buzz, and placing the finger on top of the fret wire may cause a muted sound. The left-hand knuckles should run parallel with the guitar neck. This makes it possible to reach higher frets with the left-hand third and fourth fingers without turning the wrist. Again, be careful not to bring the left-hand thumb over the top of the guitar neck, and do not touch the guitar neck with the palm of the hand. When pushing on the string, it is as though the guitar neck and string are being pinched between the thumb and finger.

Push the string firmly enough to get a sound, but don't over push. To determine the correct amount of pressure, touch the string with the left-hand finger and gradually apply pressure. Pick the string over and over. When a clear sound occurs, that's the amount of pressure to use.

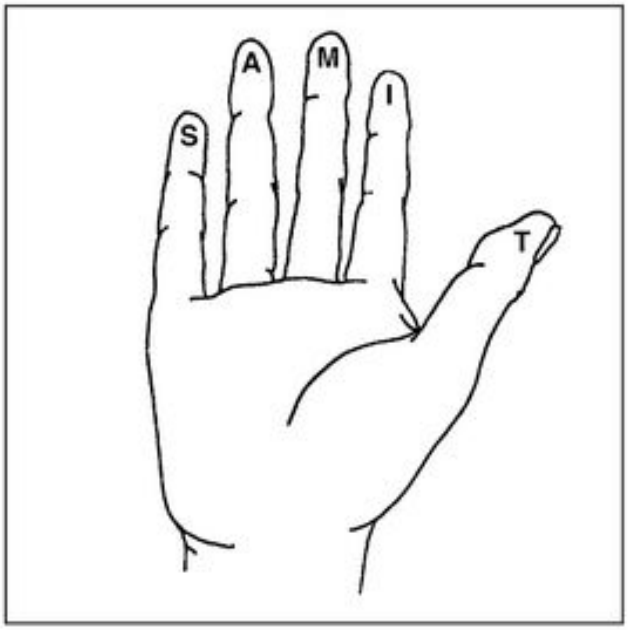


**Fingering Notes**

# Fingerstyle Notation




**LEFT HAND**




**RIGHT HAND**

**T** Thumb

**I** Index Finger

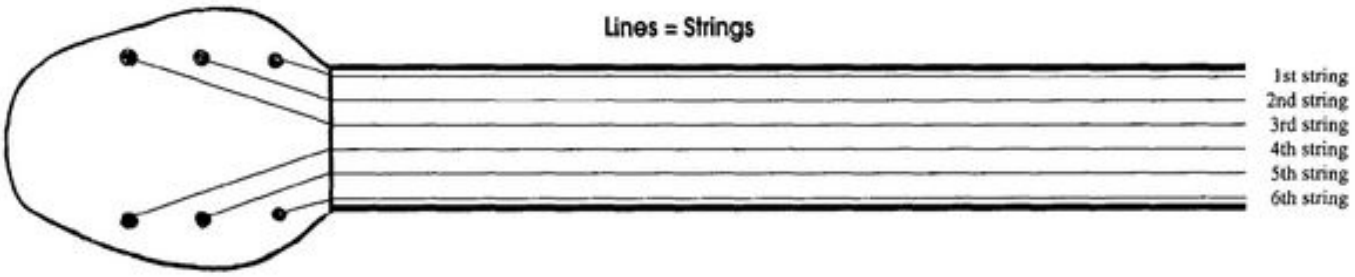
**M** Middle Finger

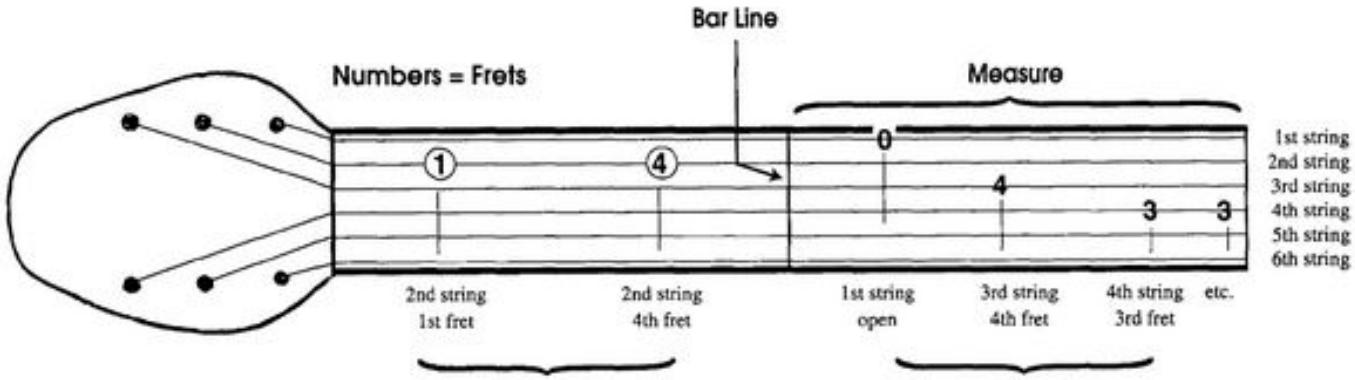
**A** Ring Finger

# Learning to Read Tablature

Tablature is a way of writing guitar music which tells you where to find notes. In tablature:

**Lines = Strings**
**Numbers = Frets**



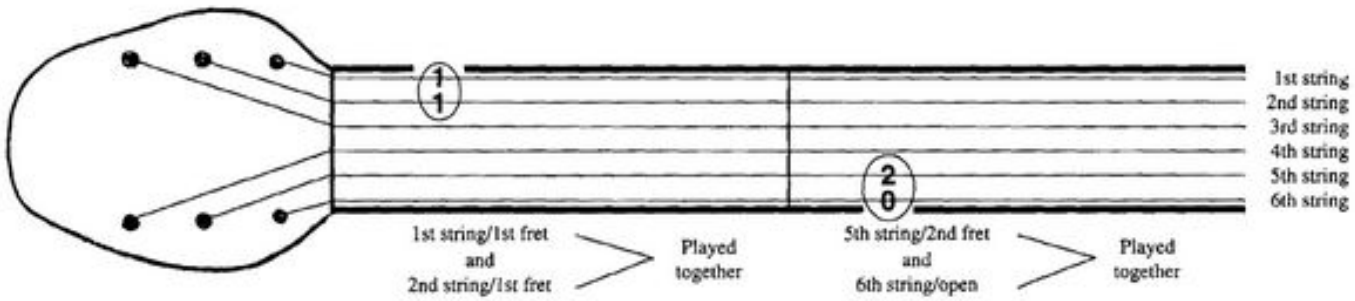




**Circled numbers with stems are half notes = 2 counts**

**Numbers with stems are quarter notes = 1 count**

# Playing Several Notes at Once

When numbers appear right above one another, more than one string is played at the same time.




**Circled numbers without stems are whole notes = 4 counts**

# Dictation Notes with Tommy Emmanuel

*Getting Started on Fingerstyle…*

**GETTING PREPARED**

- Make sure your guitar is set up so it is comfortable for you to play.
- Choose a good set of strings
- Get in tune…

**TUNING**

- If you have an electronic tuner and you just tune acoustically, that is fine.
- If you plug into a tuner, make sure you turn the microphone off.
- When you have a pick up in your guitar and you plug into the tuner, put the midrange flat out or on the lever, whichever you understand. That gives the tuner, a real accurate tuner, a sparky signal and you will be able to get your guitar really and truly in tune.
- It is always a good idea to practice tuning up as well as playing the guitar so you can get use to your guitar sounding in tune. After a while you will find that you will end up training your own ear into what the sound of being in tune really is.

**NAILS…ACRYLIC NAILS, NO NAILS OR FINGERPICKS**

- What works for you?
- What sound are you going for?

**CHOICE OF THUMBPICK**

- I use Dunlop medium thumb pick… not too big, small, thin, or thick… it is right in the middle, like a plectrum, but it is wrapped around your thumb.
- Some people use the slick picks, which are thinner.
- It depends on what kind of dynamic or strength you play with. Personally, if I use a slick pick, it would probably fly across the room after the first bass note.
- I like something that hangs on to my thumb, doesn't make it turn blue on the end and it sticks on your thumb properly.
- The thumb pick should be pushed back so when you look at your thumb it is covering the end of your nail, where it meets the flesh, first knuckle joint. When I look down at my thumb, it looks like there is 1/2 inch of thumb sticking out.
- The thumb has to be independent to the fingers. It is important that you develop the thumb first before you do anything with the fingers. You have to start training it. This takes time and dedication.
- In the key C, pick C, F, and G to play. Put your fingers down on the place of the guitar where the fret guard is, down at the mouth. I rest the heal of my palm, the corner of the heal down and I take a little bit of resonance out of the string to give it that music sound. Leave your fingers down and start with the A string on the 3rd fret of the C chord. When you can get this slow and steady and use to it, go to C, G, and C.
- It is very important that with each chord change, I start the bass note on the root note. When I am playing in C, the first note you play is C. Whatever chord you are playing, the first bass note should be the root note, the note of that chord.
- Practice slowly. Keep the fingers down. Do in any key, E, A, G, B, A…
- Practice until you can get a good feel, groove going and playing the thumb without the fingers coming up. Get the thumb going first.
- It is important for you to become good at tapping your foot when you play. Chet use to say, pat your foot. It will help you with your groove and your time. It will put a bit of bounce and confidence into your playing and timing. You need to have a good time.
- I always tap my foot on 1 and 3. The only time I don't tap on 1 and 3 is in an extreme situation where I would play a song where for me to get the right feel on it I would tap on the other beat or where I would tap like a bass drummer.

- Get use to the sound and feel. Let it happen naturally and be aware of it at all times. Get use to the sound Boom Chick Boom Chick…. I am looking for feel and groove, good, good sound.
- When you get the thumb and fingers independent from one another move your little finger down and bring the three fingers up and play third finger on the first string, second finger on the second string and first finger on the third string.
- Get the thumb going, spell out a chord, the little finger is anchored down on the scratch guard and spell out the chords. That is the first step. If you can do that, playing it in time and tapping your foot, that is what you need to be doing.
- The next step is where I add a little accent beat, skip beat where we do this 1, 2, 3, 4, ba bop, ba bop, while you keep the thumb going. That is against what the thumb is playing.
- The next step is to spell out the chords with your fingers. The thumb keeps going and you have second finger second string, first finger third string, and first string second finger. Practice that with tapping the foot and keeping the bass as constant as you can.
- When you can do that and play it all in time, practice that over and over. Your fingers are going to get sore. Keep going with that. Take breaks.

**LEARNING A TUNE**

- The first tune I usually teach is "Freight Train." It is a great old tune. The reason I chose it is the melody is on top of the chord. So I am playing the melody with my little finger…fingering with my little finger while holding the C chord, G, C, F to A, E, C. The best way to do this is to learn in sections and piece it together. Don't try to learn the whole thing right through straight away.
- Try to get that smooth. Keep the bass going. Boom, Chick, Boom, Chick…. I usually do a D minor. Again… There is a few different ways of doing it on the G7th and 9th, 2nd finger on the G string and E string on the third fret, third finger on the F, first finger on the A, 3rd string on 2nd fret. Little finger on the second string on the third fret
- Practice in sections. Go over and over until you can get through the melody. Give yourself time. It takes some time to get that together.

**DIFFERENT WAYS OF PLAYING BASS**

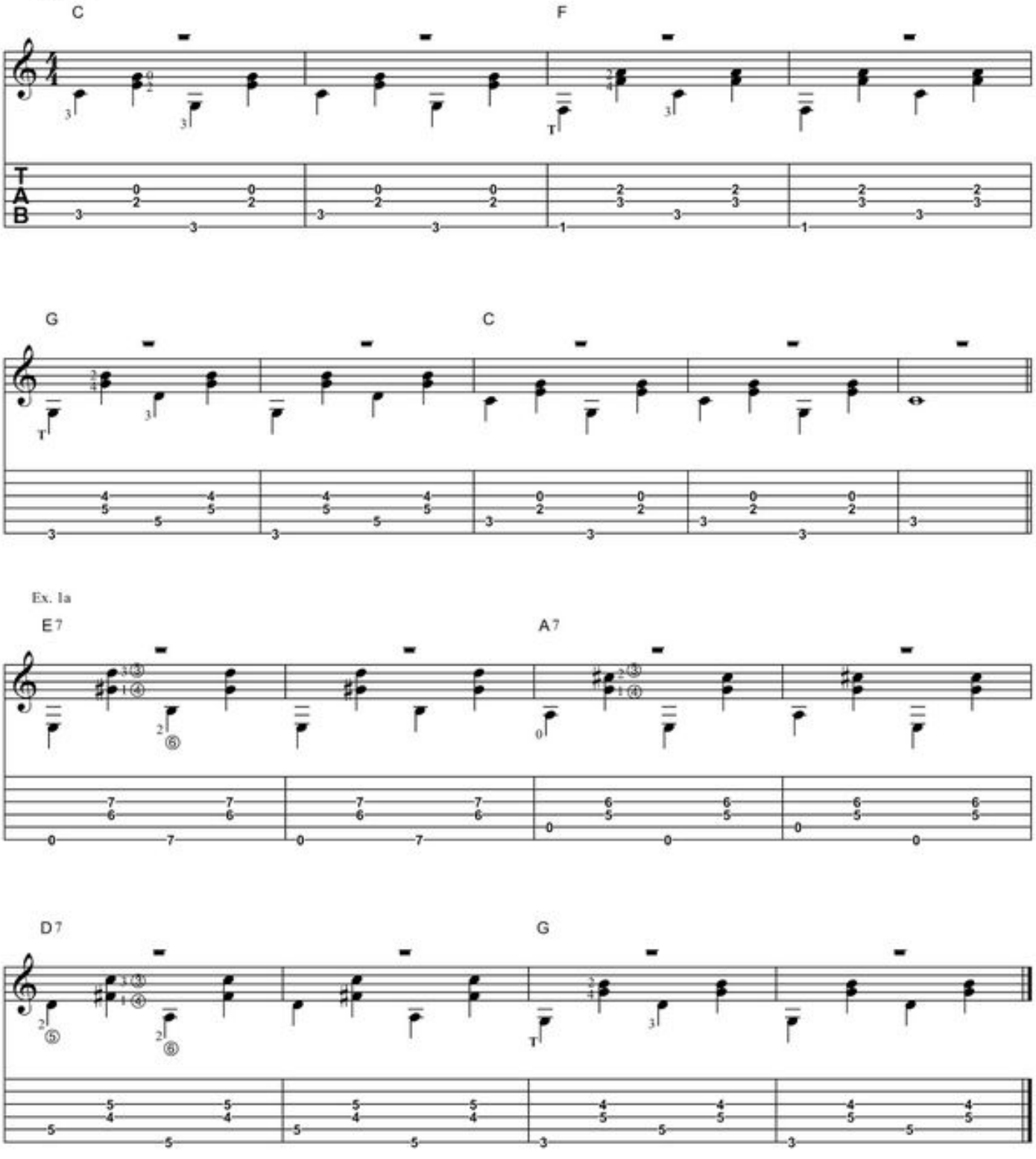
- In a more subtle open way, demonstrates…
- This is a nice little exercise to practices…demonstrates…
- You can increase the speed…demonstrates…
- Has a very nice sound.
- Using that kind of idea with a song of mine called "Mister Guitar" which is dedicated to Chet Atkins, once you get a hold of this fingerstyle, you can work this tune out.
- The first time around I play the tune like this…demonstrates…
- The bass is a lot more subtle and spells out the chords.
- That is the first part, then you can go into the Boom Chick bass and mute the bass the second time around.
- First time…demonstrates….second time…demonstrates…muted bass.
- Once you get a feeling for that in some of the songs that you play you may want to play one verse with the bass a bit more open and then mute it on the second time around, stuff like that.
- On my song, "Dixie McQuire"… demonstrates… first time around… demonstrates… second time… demonstrates… during that song I used some open bass and muted bass. It is really up to you where you use it and how you use it. You just have to train your ears to the different sounds. See if you can find as much of the Chet Atkins earlier stuff as you can. Stuff from the 60's and 70's was wonderful to learn. Check the album Chet Atkins Alone, the original one. This has a beautiful version of me and Bobbie McGee. This is what really helped me when I was young.

# Getting Started On Fingerstyle Guitar

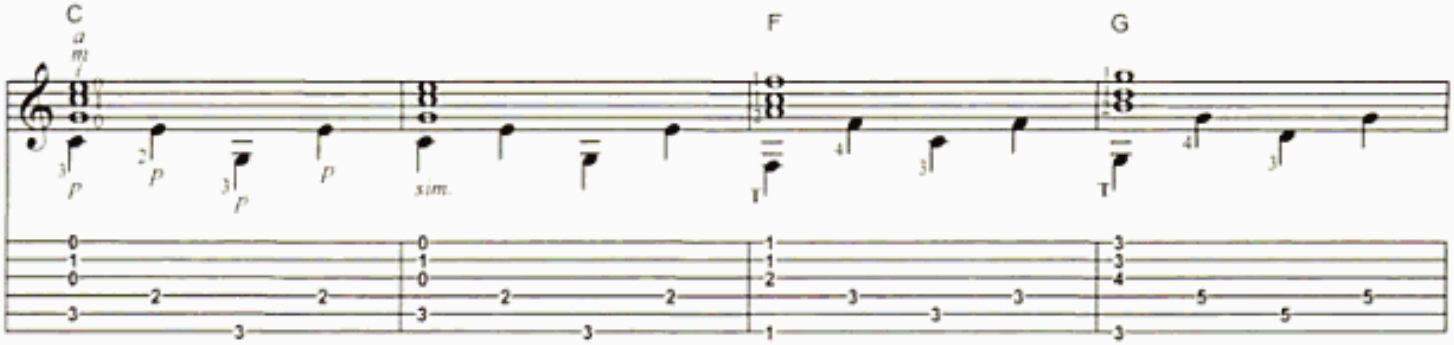
Tommy Emmanuel

## Tom's Thumb

Example 1



Ex. 2

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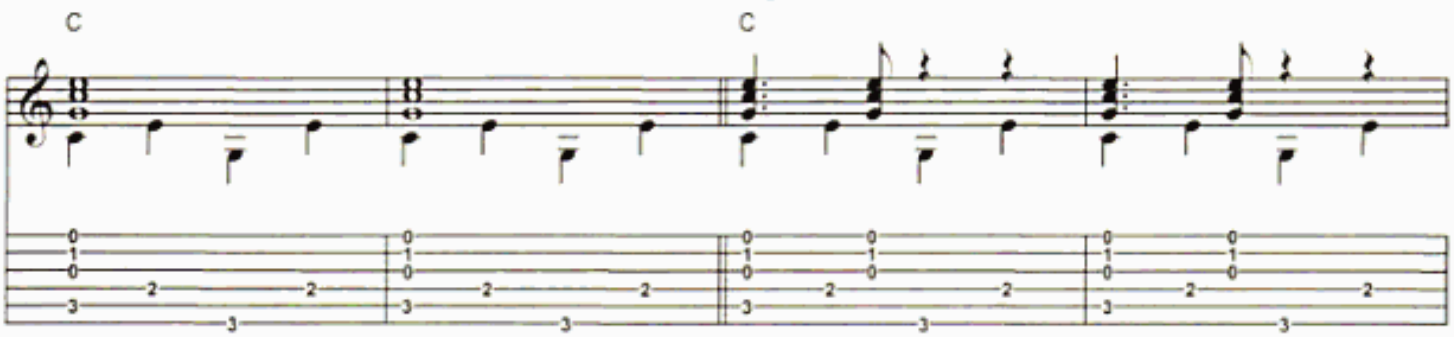


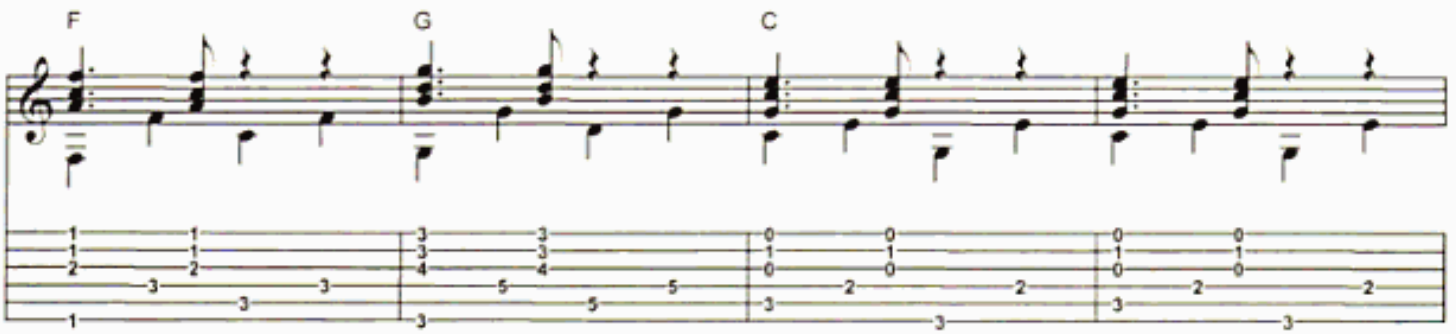


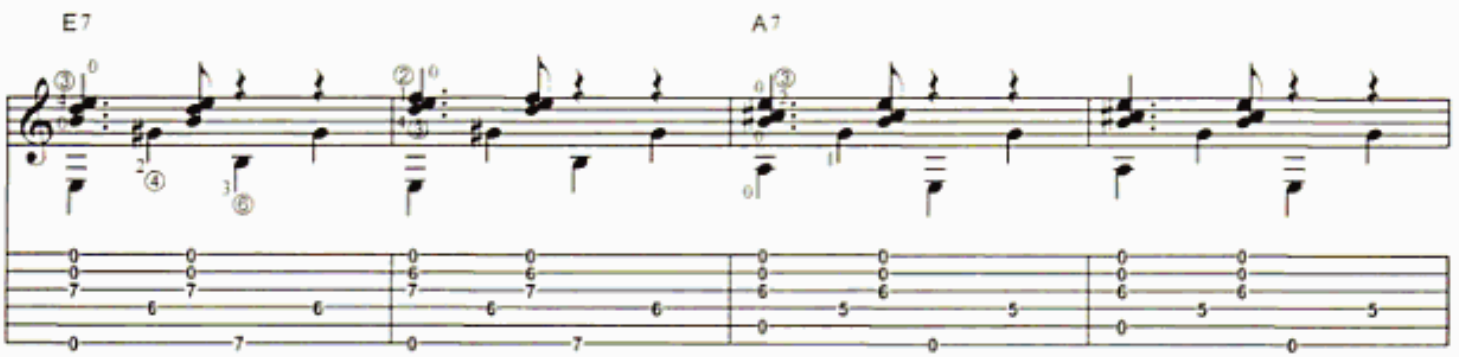


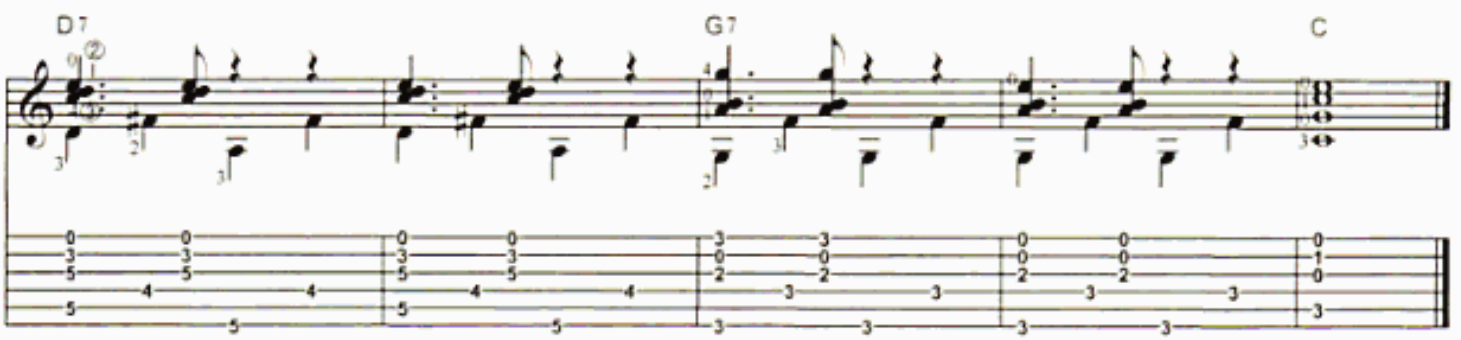

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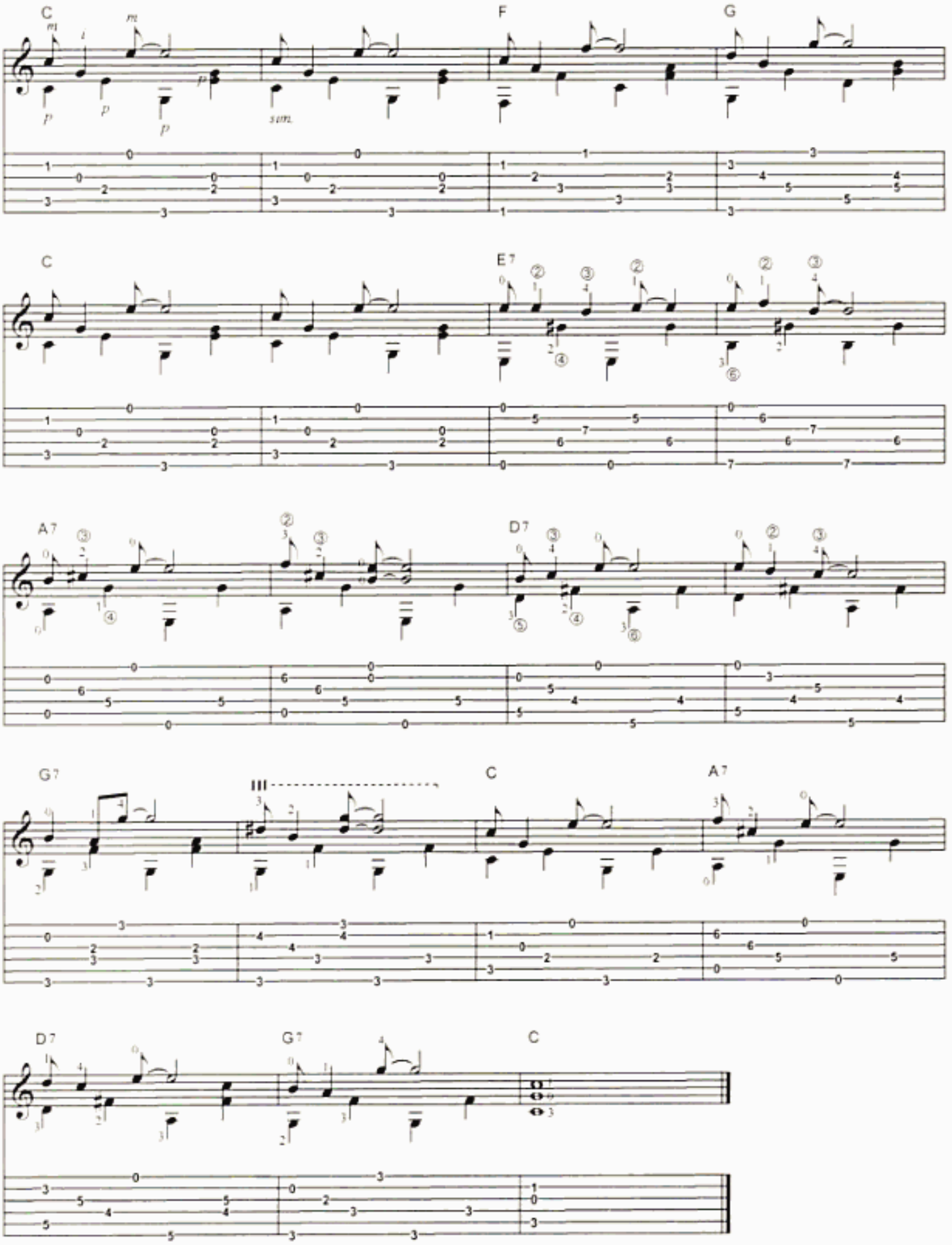

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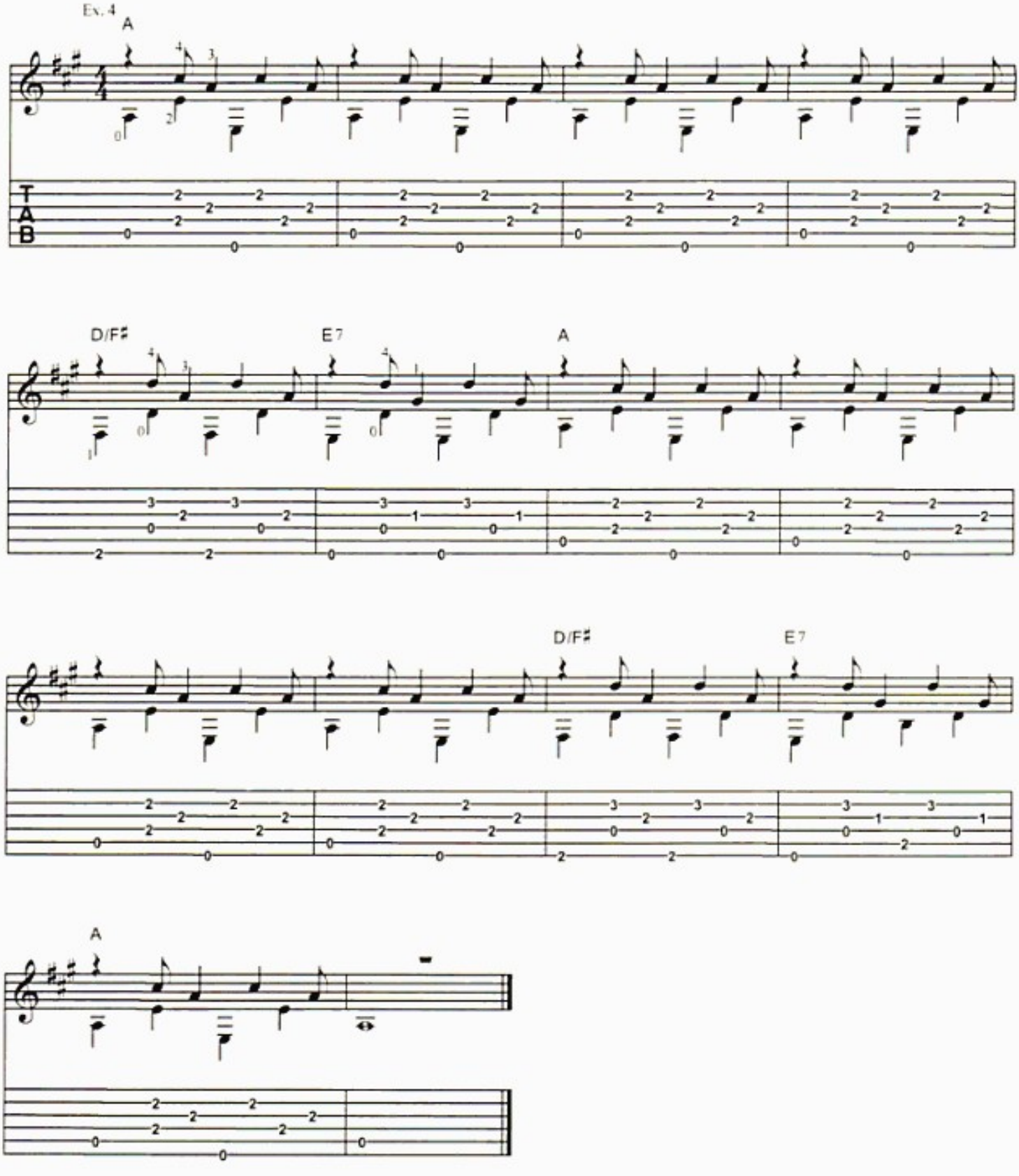
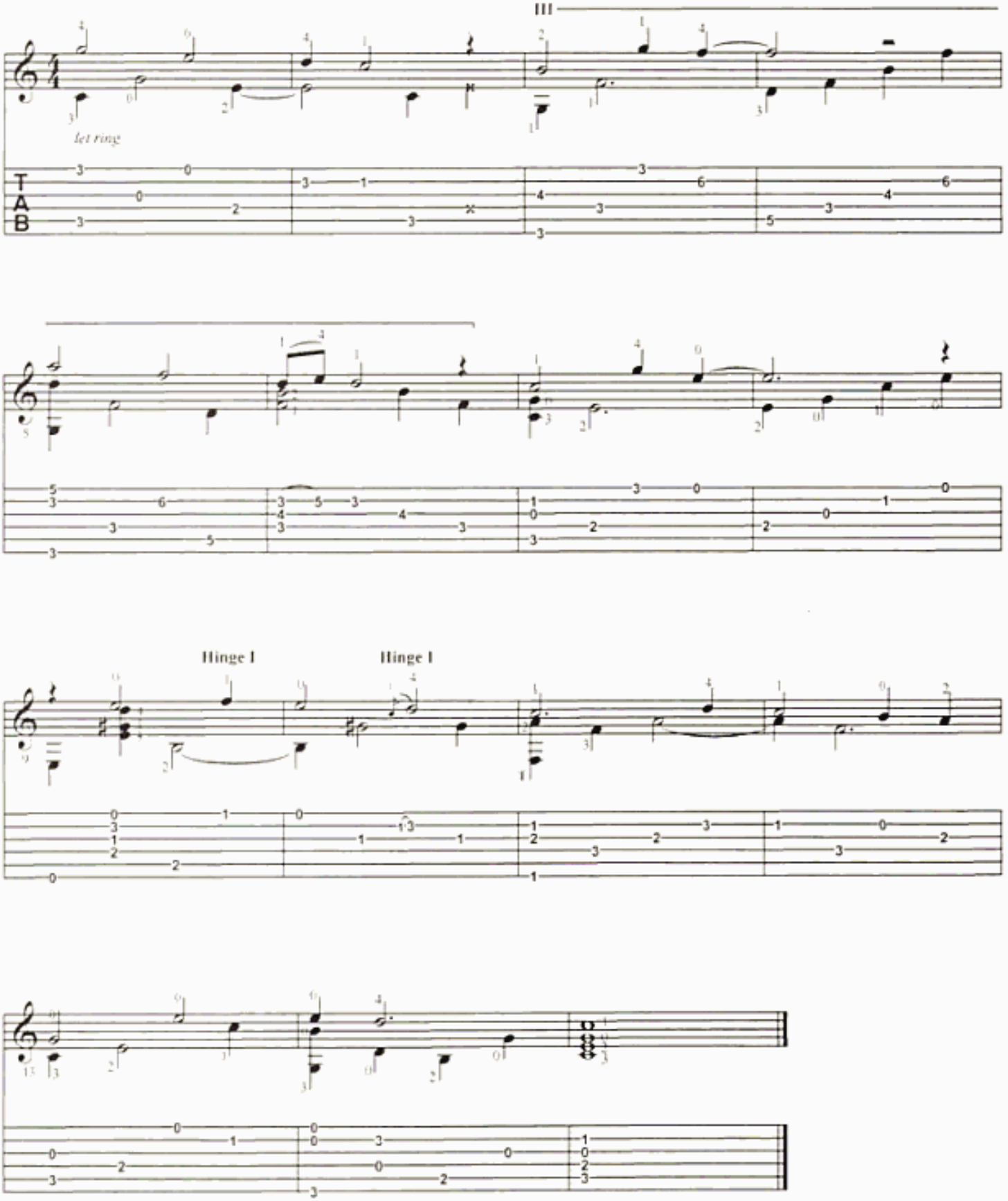
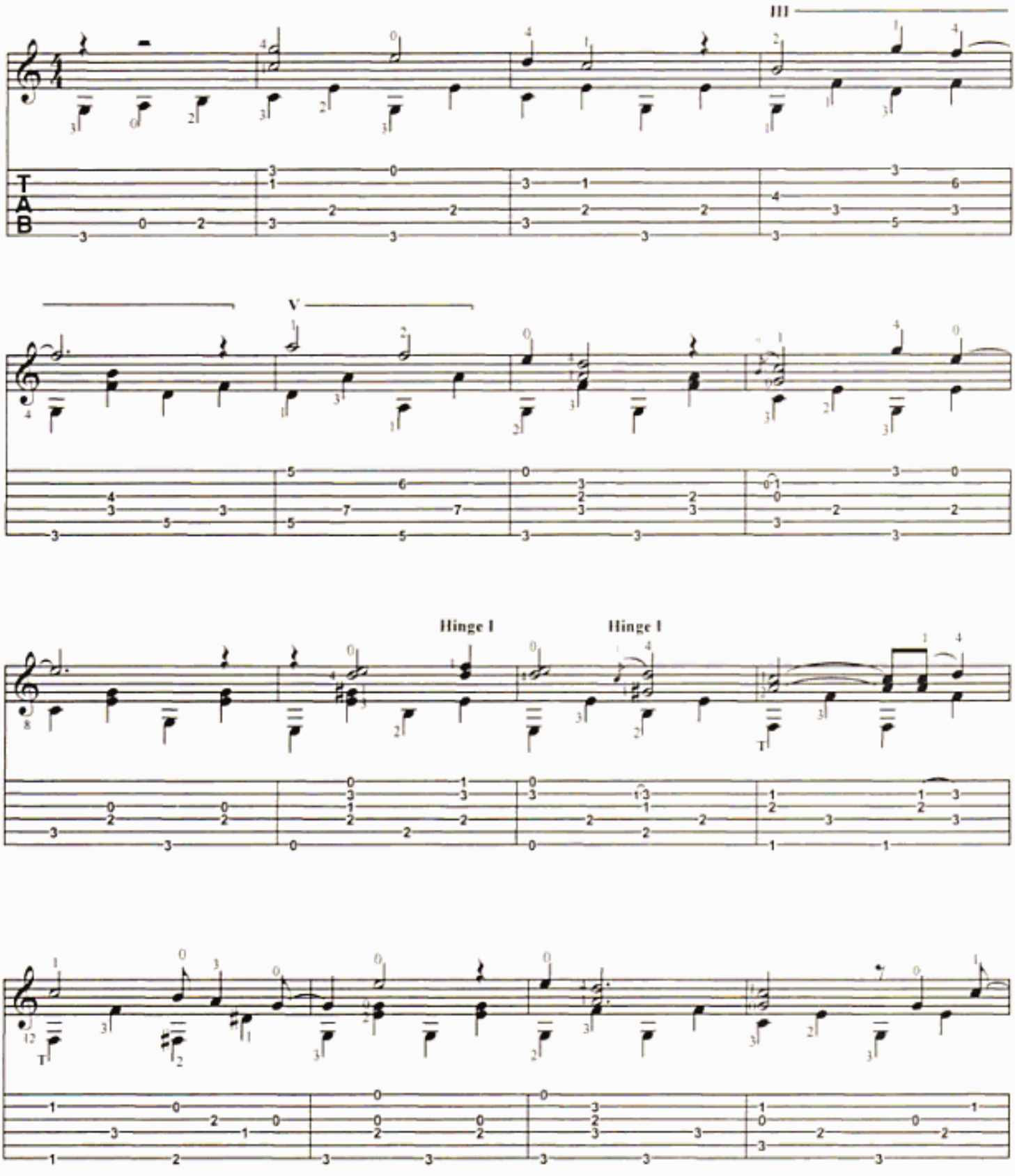


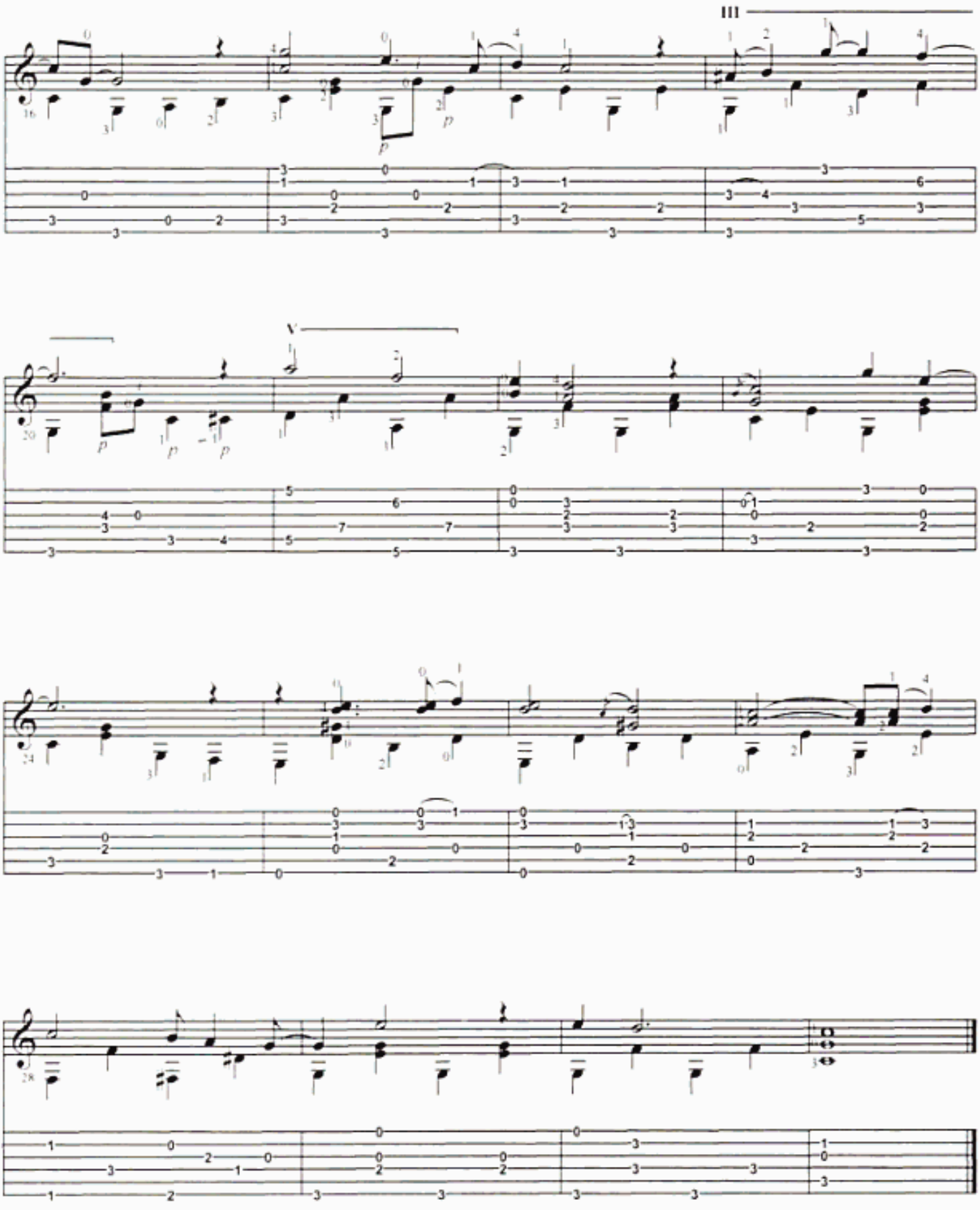
# Freight Train

Ex. 5 ("Freight Train" - simplified version)



# Freight Train

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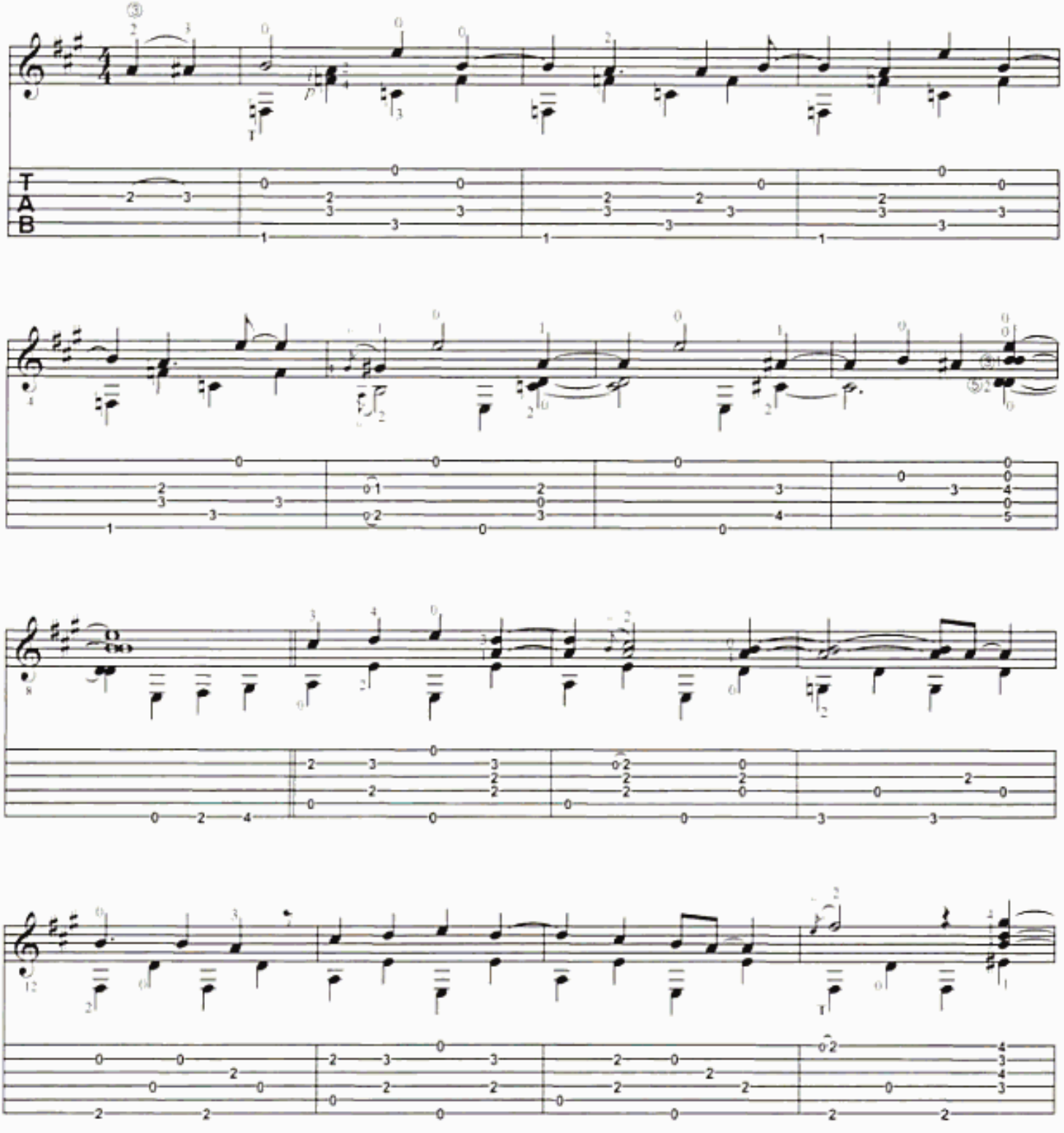
Urheberrechtlich geschütztes Material

# Mr. Guitar

Tommy Emmanuel



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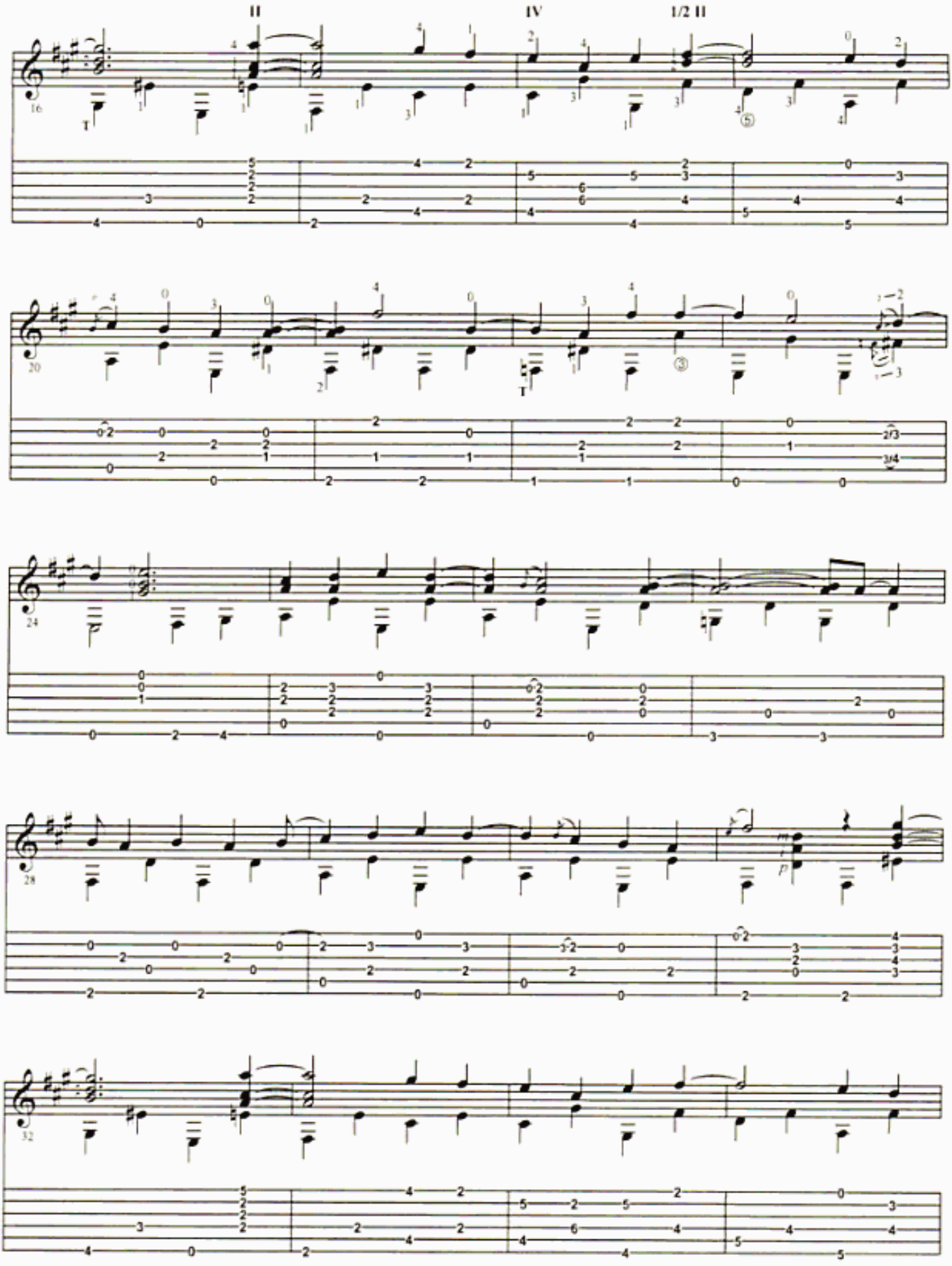
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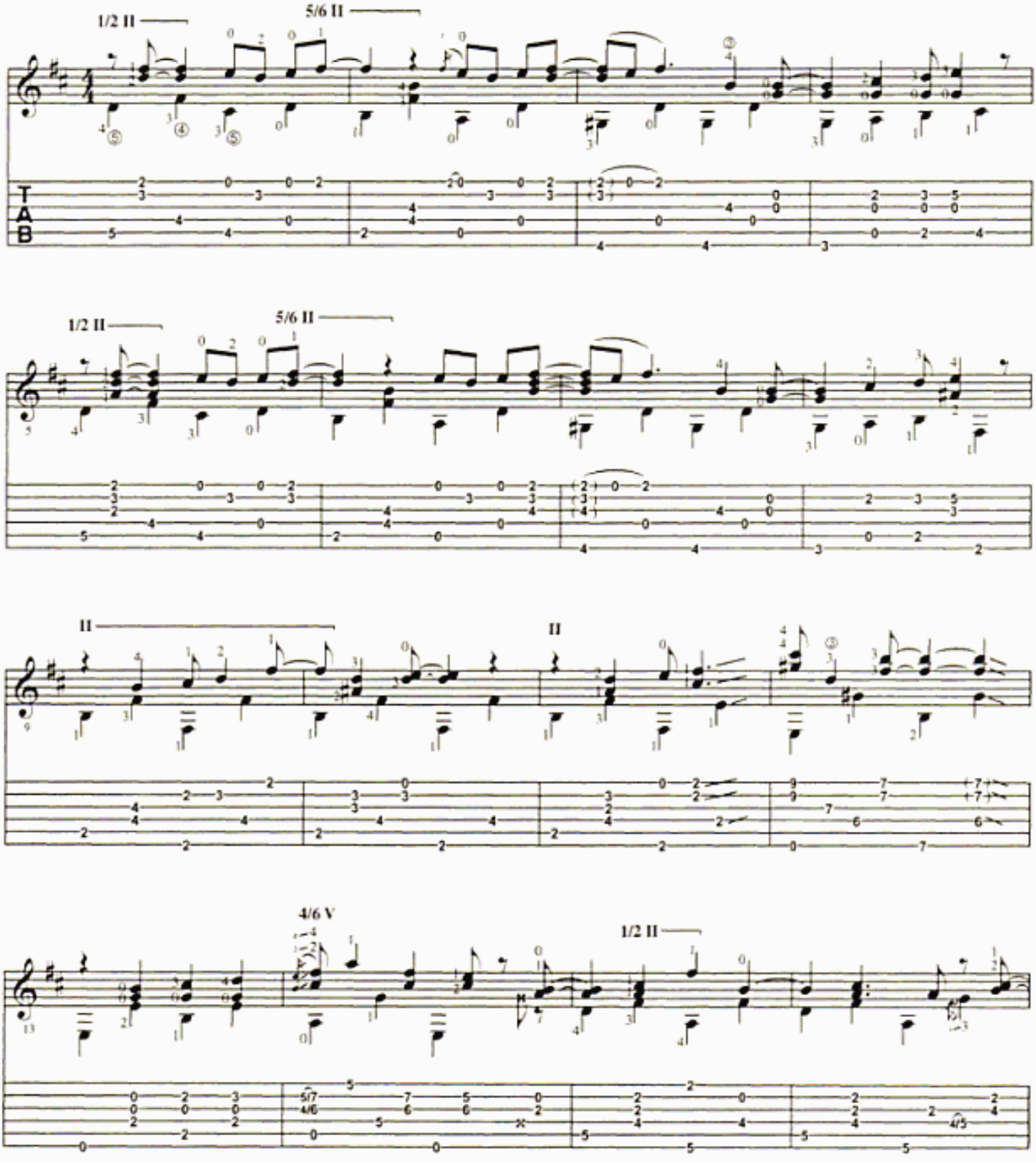
# Dixie McGuire

Tommy Emmanuel

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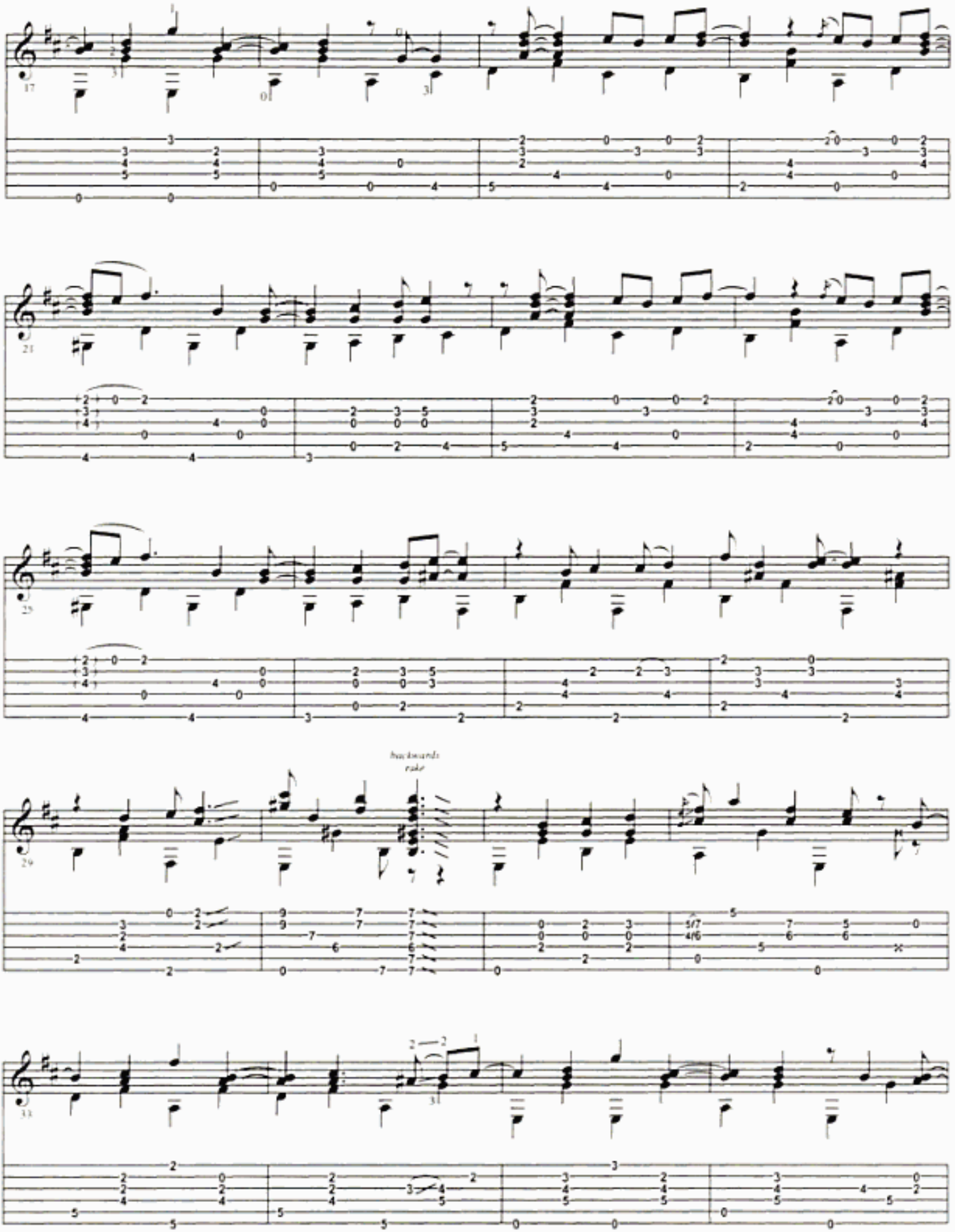
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backwards
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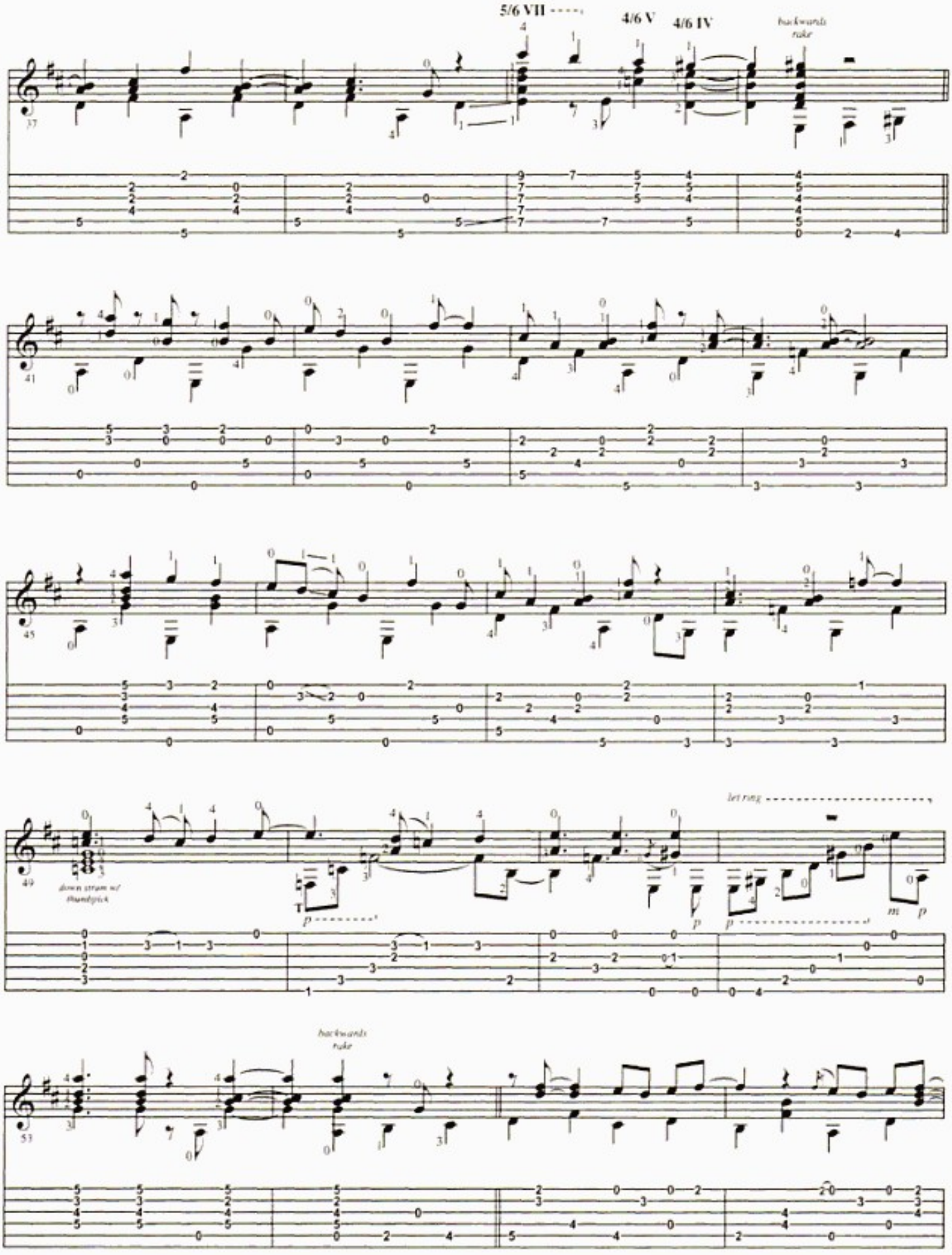
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down stroke w/ thumbpick
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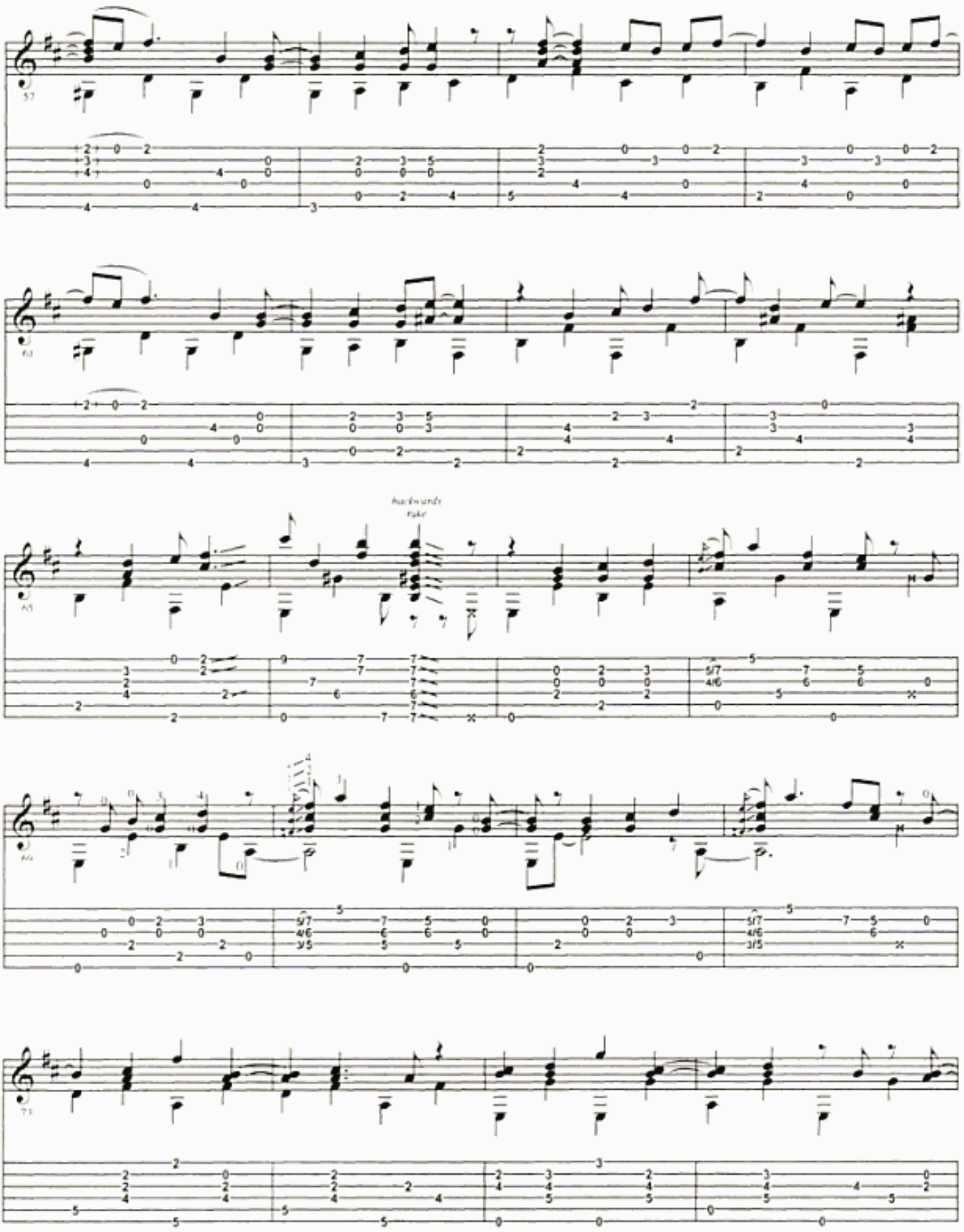
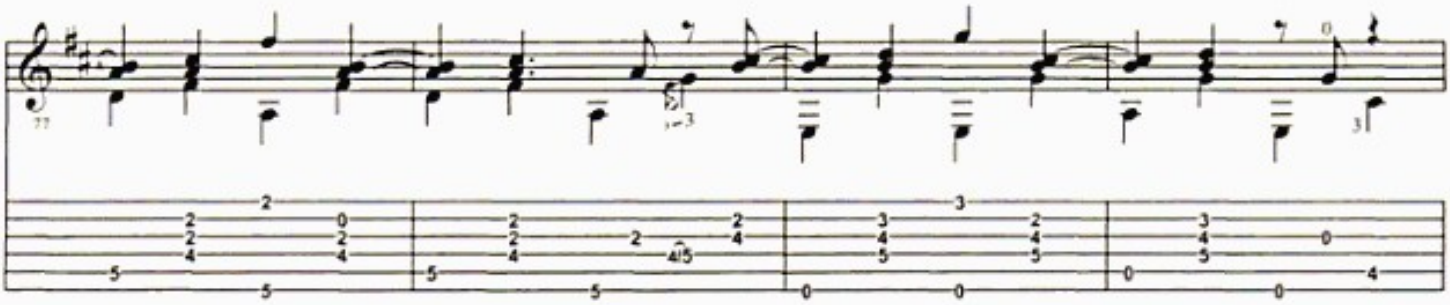
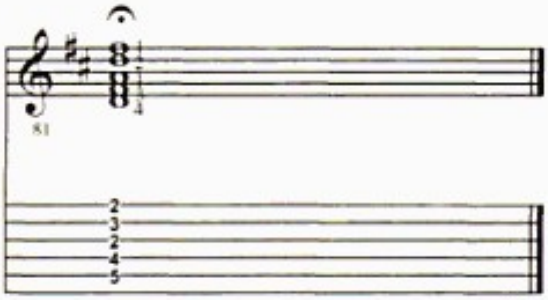




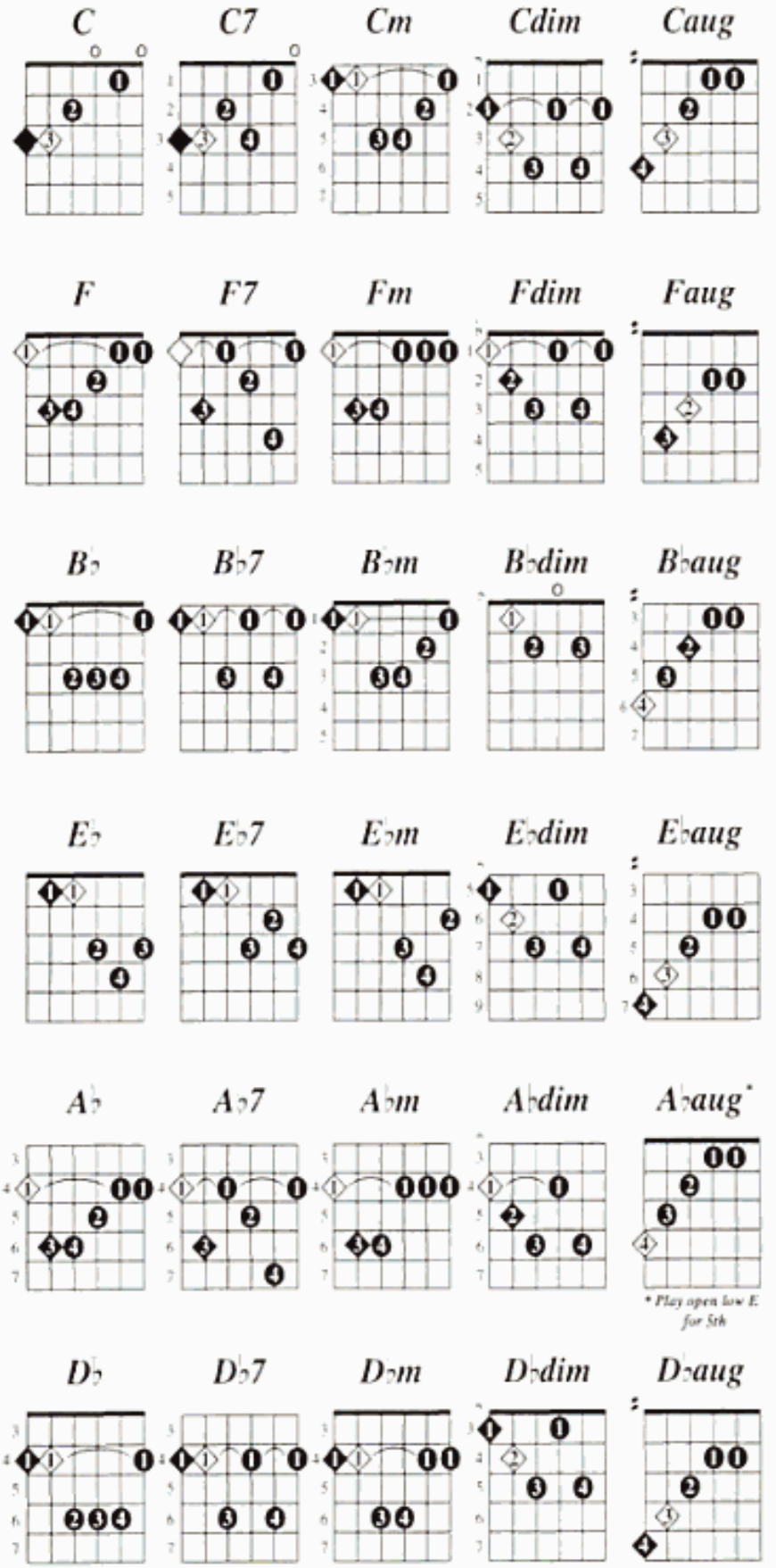


# Thumbpickers Chord Chart

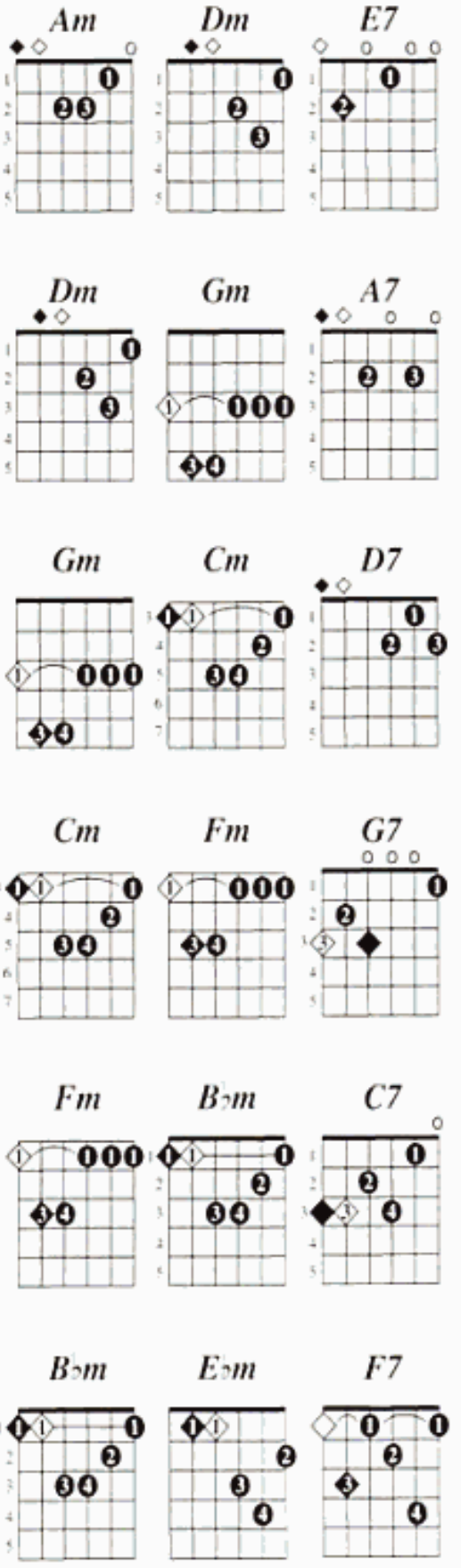
◇ = Root

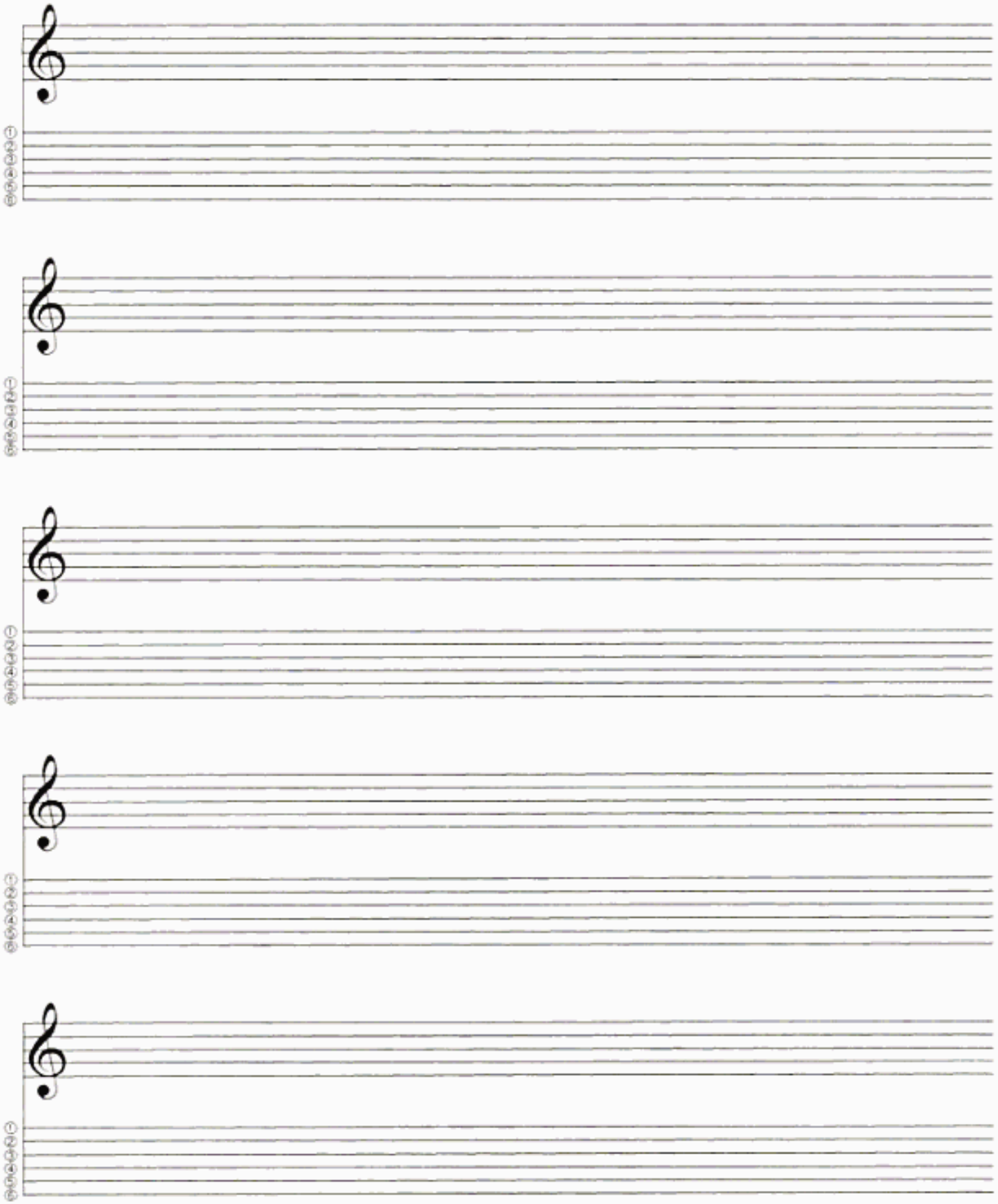
◆ = 5th

## Major Key




## Relative Minor

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