KEYBOARD *signature licks*

CD INCLUDED

BEST OF BLUES PIANO

A STEP-BY-STEP BREAKDOWN OF THE PIANO STYLES AND TECHNIQUES OF DR. JOHN, PETE JOHNSON, PROFESSOR LONGHAIR, PINETOP PERKINS, AND MORE

BY TODD LOWRY

HAL•LEONARD

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This book/CD is a guide to various styles and techniques used by several great blues pianists. The fourteen pianists presented here represent a broad spectrum of piano blues from its early origins to its modern form.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BLUES PIANO

Two related styles of African-American piano music, ragtime and blues, arose spontaneously in the American south during the late 1800s. Both styles represented an amalgamation of African and European musical traditions.

Ragtime took its left hand from the "oom-pah, oom-pah," downbeat-upbeat pattern of military marching bands. This left-hand pattern later became the basis for the "stride" piano styles of Fats Waller and James P. Johnson. On top of this stride bass the ragtime right hand grafted syncopated melodies inspired by African drum rhythms. In fact, the word "ragtime" comes from these "ragged" or syncopated rhythms. The right hand in ragtime generally plays single-note melodies, with occasional octaves, 3rds, or 6ths to thicken the line.

Ragtime was already a viable piano style in 1893 when the classically trained composer Scott Joplin heard it being played at the Chicago World's Fair. He went home to Sedalia, Missouri and began to compose original rags, the first of which was published in 1897. In 1899, Joplin published his "Maple Leaf Rag," and sheet music sales of this and his subsequent rags were incredible. Ragtime became a popular craze from about 1900 to 1917. Just about every one of the 230 brothels or "sporting houses" in New Orleans had a house pianist (known as a "professor") who would play rags, light classics, and, often, blues, on the parlor piano. Jelly Roll Morton began his career as a house pianist at such a "sporting house." Popular composers such as Irving Berlin tried to capitalize on the ragtime craze with songs like "Alexander's Ragtime Band" (which is not a rag at all, since in contains no syncopation). The 1973 movie *The Sting* popularized the ragtime style all over again. Ragtime is music written for the solo piano.

Blues, on the other hand, began as a vocal style among African slaves brought to work in the fields of the American south. The seeds of the blues were the call-and-response pattern of African tribal music, in which a lead singer calls out a musical line and the group responds by repeating the line. The evolution of the blues continued throughout the rural south in the spirituals, work songs, and field hollers sung by African slaves.

Like ragtime, the blues is an amalgamation of African and European musical traditions. It borrows elements of harmony and form from European musical practice, relying on I–IV–V harmony and a strophic form. The form of the blues is three lines of lyrics, with the first line being repeated, in a 12-bar sequence. This three-chord 12-bar chorus is repeated over and over with improvisation.

The African influence is significant in a number of ways: 1) the melody line consists of mostly descending phrases; 2) the scale contains "blue" notes—i.e. flatted 7ths, 5ths, and 3rds; 3) the voice has an open quality, employing bent notes, glissandos, melismata, and falsetto; and, 4) there is much polyrhythmic interplay.

The original blues style was primarily a vocal form. Eventually the blues expanded from a purely vocal musical style to instrumental. Early blues musicians were usually self-taught and impoverished, but blessed with imagination and resourcefulness. They often used "found" instruments such as the washboard, kazoo, jug, or slide whistle or even made their own instruments such as one-stringed guitar-like instruments.

Blues piano styles had their origin in the rough and tumble roadside barrelhouses of the railroad, mining, lumber, and turpentine camps of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Barrelhouses were cheap drinking establishments with barrels stacked along the walls for sitting purposes and a dirt floor for dancing. In those days, most such establishments had a beat-up upright piano in the corner. Pianists drifted from town to town looking for a place to play. They would hop a freight train, travel by steamship or by foot to the next town and look for a barrelhouse. Odds were good that the place would have a splintered upright. Several pianists in this book, such as Cow Cow Davenport and Memphis Slim, began their careers as wandering barrelhouse musicians.

The pianos in these places were subject to constant abuse from patrons, changing humidity, weekend beer baths, and cigarette burns. The musicians, usually self-taught, adapted to the rough audiences and the mechanical limitations of the instruments with remarkable ingenuity, incorporating the limitations of the instruments into the characteristics of the style. Here pianists had to develop a rhythmic, aggressive style to be heard above the crowd and to keep pace with the rowdy atmosphere. Barrelhouse players didn't "tickle the ivories," they crushed them. The trick was to make the piano heard. So the barrelhouse style featured repetitious left-hand patterns and a pounding right hand.

Barrelhouse blues piano was a cruder style than ragtime. Instead of the "stride" left hand, the typical blues left hand consisted of alternating 5ths and 6ths on each beat. In fact, this left hand is still known as the "barrelhouse" style. It is also clear that the early seeds of boogie woogie piano were sown in the barrelhouses. Most of the early barrelhouse players are long forgotten, having lived fast and died young in an era before recording technology was available. However, when blues pianists began to be recorded in the 1920s, barrelhouse players such as Cow Cow Davenport made some of the earliest recordings.

In 1917, the Secretary of the Navy closed Storyville, the red-light district in New Orleans, throwing hundreds of black musicians out of work. As a result, many moved north up the Mississippi from New Orleans to Memphis, St. Louis, Kansas City, and beyond. Thus, we can credit the Secretary of the Navy, at least partially, for the dissemination of blues and jazz in America.

About the same time, southern blacks began migrating north to urban centers looking for better jobs. Chicago more than doubled its black population between 1910 and 1920. It became the home to such pianists as Jelly Roll Morton, Cow Cow Davenport, Jimmy Yancey, and Pine Top Smith. Blues pianists began to play at rent parties, a fascinating institution that arose in Chicago and other northern urban centers in response to high rents. By charging admission to a party given in his apartment, a tenant was able to raise enough money to keep a roof over his head.

Sometime during this period, barrelhouse morphed into boogie woogie, although early forms of boogie woogie could be heard in the South during the early 1900s. The essence of boogie woogie style is its blues structure, fast pace, propulsive "eight-to-the-bar" left-hand figures outlining chords, and free-wheeling, polyrhythmic blues licks in the right hand. The style demanded skillful hand independence. Boogie woogie was popularized by Jimmy Yancey and Pine Top Smith in Chicago and Pete Johnson in Kansas City. Pine Top Smith is generally credited with introducing the term "boogie woogie" into widespread use starting in 1929 when he recorded his "Pine Top's Boogie Woogie."

Like the word "jazz," we don't know where the term "boogie woogie" came from. Some scholars think it might be a variation on the African words "bogi" or "buga" that mean "dance" and "drum beat." Cow Cow Davenport thought it came from the urban legends of the "boogie man," since blues was then often considered to be devilish music. In modern parlance, "boogie on down" and "boogie the night away" simply mean to party and dance.

Boogie woogie became a national craze after talent scout and music impresario John Hammond presented the 1938 and 1939 "Spirituals to Swing" concerts at Carnegie Hall in New York. On the bill were boogie woogie pianists Pete Johnson from Kansas City, and Meade "Lux" Lewis and Albert Ammons, both from Chicago. The boogie woogie style quickly caught on—not just in blues, but in popular music. Songs such as "Boogie Woogie

Bugle Boy" and "Beat Me Daddy, Eight to the Bar" became huge popular hits. The boogie woogie style became a foundation of the swing and jump blues styles of the 1940s and rockabilly and rock 'n' roll of the 1950s. The height of the boogie woogie craze was from 1939 to the end of World War II.

After the war, blues piano, which had developed in barrelhouses, began to reach increasingly sophisticated audiences—both black and white. The smooth stylist Jay McShann made his name in Kansas City. On the west coast, jazz-blues pianists such as Nat King Cole, Charles Brown, and Ray Charles became very popular with mixed audiences. The west coast style is sometimes even characterized as "supper club blues" since it featured swing rhythms, sophisticated substitute harmonies, and smooth vocals. The Chicago blues style, what we generally consider "modern blues," arose in the late 1940s and 1950s. It had its origin in delta blues with such artists as Muddy Waters and Elmore James. However, as these delta musicians migrated to Chicago, they found that urban audiences wanted a louder, faster, bigger sound. One acoustic musician could not fill a club. Thus, the acoustic guitar was replaced by an electric guitar. Bass, drums, piano, and blues harp usually filled out the lineup, and this combination became the standard Chicago-style blues group. Memphis Slim achieved much success in Chicago starting in the early 1950s. The Chicago style also saw the rise of the featured instrumentalist as a star. One such instrumentalist was Otis Spann, the piano player in Muddy Waters's band who became a star in his own right. Later, Pinetop Perkins replaced Spann as Waters's pianist, and Perkins also achieved success as a soloist.

Meanwhile, back in New Orleans, the pervasive party atmosphere of the "Big Easy" and the blend of different cultures there—European, African-American, Cajun, and Caribbean—led to a vibrant blues scene. A hip-shaking blues piano style had developed, typified by Professor Longhair, that incorporated a syncopated bass line based in Caribbean rhythms. Fats Domino incorporated the New Orleans style into his mainstream rock 'n' roll hits, and Dr. John continues the tradition today as a living encyclopedia of New Orleans piano styles.

In the history of American music, the importance of the blues cannot be overestimated. The blues is probably *the* primal structure in American popular music. Because it encompasses the human condition, blues music is timeless. The spirit and flavor of the blues pervades almost all jazz, and its effect can be clearly felt in rock (e.g. Eric Clapton or the Rolling Stones), country (e.g. Hank Williams), R&B, and pop. Although the term "blues" originally connoted melancholy or lament, the spirit of blues music is often something else. There are certainly many lament blues in a slow tempo, but the blues is also often played with great rhythmic vitality, and it often sounds joyous and life-affirming.

The piano has never occupied as prominent a place in blues as the guitar. Nevertheless, there have been great blues piano virtuosos throughout the decades. Hopefully, this book will contribute to a greater appreciation and grasp of their styles.

A NOTE ABOUT THE TRANSCRIPTIONS

Every attempt has been made to faithfully notate the music as originally recorded within the limited boundaries of musical notation. However, some of the musical examples are so idiosyncratic that an "exact" transcription is virtually impossible. (An example is Otis Spann's piano solo on "Diving Duck.") In other cases, the original recordings or the original instruments are of such poor quality that it's sometimes difficult to make out exactly what is being played. Therefore, the transcriptions in this book should be looked upon as tools to master certain techniques of the rich blues piano tradition.

CAPSULE BIOGRAPHIES

JELLY ROLL MORTON

Jelly Roll Morton was born Ferdinand La Menthe, New Orleans, in 1890. Later he took his stepfather's last name, Morton, to keep from being called "Frenchy." He was a mulatto Creole whose father abandoned the family and whose mother died when he was young.

Morton studied classical piano and began playing ragtime and blues piano in the Storyville brothels at the tender age of twelve. When his great grandmother found out, she kicked him out of the house, and he left New Orleans.

He traveled for many years around the South, working as a pianist, club manager, comedian, pool shark, gambler, and pimp. He took his nickname from his 1915 composition "Jelly Roll Blues." After he moved to Chicago in 1923, he started making successful recordings with his band, the Red Hot Peppers. Unfortunately, by 1930 popular tastes had shifted, and his record label dropped him.

In 1938 he was living in Washington, D.C. where he was the bouncer, host, cook, bartender, emcee, waiter, and musician at a dive called "The Jungle Club." He was at the lowest point in his life when music historian Alan Lomax found him and made a series of historic recordings for the Library of Congress. In these recordings Morton reminisced, sang, and played, and the recordings remain a priceless musical, historical, and social document.

A lifelong braggart, Morton claimed in a testy letter to *Down Beat* in 1938 that he had invented jazz in 1902 (when he was twelve). Despite this absurd claim, Morton is legitimately considered to be the first great jazz composer, a pioneer in working improvisation into the structure of his compositions. Morton represents the common roots and the link between ragtime, blues, and jazz. His style is basically ragtime with regard to form and harmony, and blues-based in its melodic lines and crushed notes. Morton died in Los Angeles in 1941.

COW COW DAVENPORT

Charles "Cow Cow" Davenport was born in 1894 in Anniston, Alabama. He learned to play piano and organ in his father's church. It looked as though he was going to follow his father into the ministry until he was expelled from the Alabama Theological Seminary in 1911 for playing ragtime on the seminary piano. He then took up the life of a medicine show musician. He performed throughout the south with his wife, who was a snake charmer.

He moved to Chicago in the 1920s, where he played rent parties. He derived his nickname from his song "Cow Cow Blues," recorded in 1927. This song is considered to be one of the earliest recorded examples of boogie woogie. Unable to support himself as a musician, he dropped out of music in 1935. He died in Cleveland in 1955.

JIMMY YANCEY

Jimmy Yancey was born in Chicago in 1894. Born the son of a vaudeville guitarist, from the age of six he toured the U.S. and Europe as a singer and tap dancer in vaudeville shows. In fact, he once gave a command performance at Buckingham Palace for King George V. He taught himself to play piano at age fifteen and eventually settled down in Chicago, where from 1925 to his death he served as a groundskeeper at Comiskey Park, home of the Chicago White Sox baseball team.

He played locally at rent parties and had considerable influence on other pianists, such as Pine Top Smith and Meade "Lux" Lewis. He was instrumental in the development of the boogie woogie style in the late 1920s, but didn't record until the late 1930s. He died in Chicago in 1951. He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1986.

CLARENCE "PINE TOP" SMITH

Clarence "Pine Top" Smith was born in Troy, Alabama in 1904. After a career in vaudeville as a pianist and tap-dancer, he moved to Chicago in 1928. He was encouraged by Cow Cow Davenport and he exerted a strong influence on the boogie woogie players Meade "Lux" Lewis and Pete Johnson. Recorded in 1928, his "Pine Top's Boogie Woogie" was the first recorded piece to use the term "boogie woogie" in the title. Smith was accidentally shot and killed during a fracas in a dancehall where he was performing in 1929. He was only twenty-four years old.

PETE JOHNSON

Pete Johnson was born in Kansas City, Missouri in 1904 in a room above a saloon. While just in fifth grade he had to drop out of school and begin working odd jobs—shining shoes, ushering at a movie theatre, loading freight cars, and working in a slaughterhouse among them.

He was part of the vibrant Kansas City scene in the 1920s and 1930s and became an excellent boogie woogie player. He was also an in-demand accompanist to blues singers, especially Joe Turner, with whom he performed his entire life.

In 1938, the impresario John Hammond brought Johnson to New York's Carnegie Hall as part of the first "Spirituals to Swing" concert. He played with Albert Ammons and Meade "Lux" Lewis as the Boogie Woogie Trio. Johnson died in Buffalo, NY in 1967.

MEADE "LUX" LEWIS

Meade "Lux" Lewis was born in Chicago in 1905. He was influenced by Jimmy Yancey and Fats Waller. He played in Chicago bars and clubs before recording his masterpiece "Honky Tonk Train Blues" in 1927. However, he remained in obscurity and was out of the music business for many years until 1935, when jazz impresario John Hammond, who had searched for Lewis for years, found him working at a car wash in Chicago. Hammond put Lewis on stage in Carnegie Hall with Pete Johnson and Albert Ammons in the 1938 "Spirituals to Swing" concert. This concert led to the popular boogie woogie craze.

Lewis's technical ability, energetic cross-rhythms, and remarkable invention made him one of the most important figures in boogie woogie. After the craze passed, however, Lewis had a difficult time making a living in music. He died in Minneapolis in 1964.

JAY McSHANN

Jay "Hootie" McShann was born in Muskogee, Oklahoma in 1916. He taught himself to play piano and played in a number of bands in Arizona, New Mexico, and Oklahoma before settling in Kansas City during the mid 1930s.

McShann was an outstanding pianist with a smooth technique that outstripped most of his contemporaries. In Kansas City he assembled a very strong band that included a young Charlie Parker on alto sax. One day Parker and McShann were riding in a car when they hit a stray chicken (or yardbird). Parker insisted that they pull over so that he could retrieve the chicken to have it fried up by his landlady. This story got around, and that's how Charlie Parker got his distinctive nickname "Yardbird" or "Bird." "Confessin' the Blues" was a big hit for McShann in 1940.

MEMPHIS SLIM

Memphis Slim was born Peter Chatman in 1915 in Memphis, Tennessee. He taught himself to play piano while hanging out at clubs and bars on Beale Street in Memphis. In 1931 he began the life of a wandering musician, playing throughout the south before winding up in Chicago in 1939.

He combined the barrelhouse/boogie woogie piano style with a sophisticated vocal delivery. He backed up well-known musicians such as Sonny Boy Williamson and Big Bill Broonzy before leading his own band beginning in 1946. He enjoyed a number of R&B hits in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and his song "Everyday (I Have the Blues)" has become an important blues standard.

He performed as a duo with bassist/songwriter Willie Dixon on a long European tour in 1960, and in 1961 he moved to Paris, France, where he lived until his death in 1988. In Paris, Memphis Slim was treated as a blues demigod, his 6 foot 6 inch height and regal bearing adding to his kingly status. He was chauffeured around in a Rolls Royce to his club dates.

CHARLES BROWN

Charles Brown was born in 1922 in Texas City, Texas. He was raised by his grandparents and learned church organ at their insistence. He graduated from college with a B.S. in chemistry and became a chemistry teacher. However, in 1943, while living and teaching in Los Angeles, he realized that he could make more money working as a pianist and singer.

The top act in L.A. at the time was the Nat "King" Cole trio. Brown's elegant, jazz-inflected piano style and smooth, blues ballad singing is very similar to Cole's. Cole went on to mainstream success as a pop singer, and Brown's trio also achieved great success in the 1940s and 1950s.

However, eventually Brown's star waned, and he slipped into semi-obscurity. But in the 1990s he was hired by Bonnie Raitt to open for her on her U.S. tour, and Brown followed that career boost with another round of successful albums and performances. Brown died in 1999.

OTIS SPANN

Otis Spann was born in 1930 in Jackson, Mississippi. He learned piano by ear and became a semi-pro boxer and football player before settling in Chicago in 1951.

In 1953 he joined Muddy Waters's band, where he remained until 1969. He was an ideal accompanist and became a major blues singer and pianist in his own right. He is Chicago's leading postwar blues pianist. Spann died tragically of cancer in 1970, at the height of his career.

PINETOP PERKINS

Willie "Pinetop" Perkins was born in 1913 in Belzoni, Mississippi. He was a barrelhouse player from his youth and took his nickname from his admiration for Clarence "Pine Top" Smith.

He traveled throughout Mississippi and Arkansas, playing piano behind Robert Nighthawk and Sonny Boy Williamson. In the 1950s he split his time between St. Louis and Chicago. In 1969 he replaced Otis Spann in Muddy Waters's band and spent the next twelve years with Waters.

A real late-bloomer, Perkins's biggest success came in the late 1980s and 1990s as a featured headliner when he was in his seventies and eighties. At the date of this writing Perkins was still performing at age 90.

PROFESSOR LONGHAIR

Professor Longhair was born Henry Roeland Byrd in 1918 in Bogalusa, Louisiana. He received some musical instruction from his mother, but he didn't develop any serious interest in music until his late teens. Although he played occasional gigs, he wasn't

noticed as a musician until 1947. It was then that he acquired the name "Professor Longhair" due to the ponytail he sported while playing at the Caldonia Inn, a popular New Orleans watering hole for black transvestites.

"Fess" developed a synthesis of boogie woogie, stride, mambo, rumba, and calypso that influenced every New Orleans pianist to come after him. Like many New Orleans musicians, he combined his musical activities with more lucrative pursuits, such as being a professional gambler, pool shark, and general wheeler 'n' dealer.

He released a number of records in the 1950s but never attained much commercial success outside of New Orleans. By the mid 1960s he was off the music scene entirely, working as a janitor, when he was found by some young blues aficionados who were putting the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival together. His exciting 1971 performance at that festival put him back on the map. In 1976 Paul McCartney hired him to play a private party on the Queen Mary riverboat. His 1980 album "Crawfish Fiesta" is the best of his career and a bona fide blues classic. He died in New Orleans in 1980.

FATS DOMINO

Fats Domino was born Antoine Domino in 1928 in New Orleans. He dropped out of school in the fourth grade to work in a factory. While playing in a club as a teenager, he was heard by producer Dave Bartholomew and the president of Imperial Records who immediately signed Domino to the label. Beginning in 1949 his recordings were successful. In 1956 he recorded his most successful record, "Blueberry Hill." Domino sold more records than any other black rock 'n' roll artist in the 1950s, attracting both black and white listeners.

Like Professor Longhair, Domino's music was derived from the rich mixture of the various musical styles found in New Orleans. These include traditional jazz, Latin rhythms, boogie woogie, Cajun, and blues. By 1964, his audience had dwindled. But he has remained a successful oldies act. He is also one of the original inductees into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

DR. JOHN

Dr. John was born Malcolm "Mac" Rebennack in New Orleans in 1941. The son of a record store owner, he grew up listening to the rich tradition of New Orleans music, especially that of Professor Longhair. By age three he had already developed an interest in music by picking out tunes on the family piano.

By age 17 he was fronting his own band as a guitarist and playing record sessions. However, in 1960, as an innocent bystander to a fight, he was accidentally shot in the left index finger. Unable to bend guitar strings like before, he switched to piano.

In the late 1960s and 1970s he became known for his outlandish shows that featured feathered robes, plumed headdresses, chicken bone necklaces, voodoo rituals, virtuosic piano playing, and his distinct vocal growl. He has made numerous albums in several genres and has become the unofficial "keeper of the flame" for New Orleans music, a virtual living encyclopedia of blues and boogie piano styles.

THE RECORDING

Follow the audio track icons (◆) in the book to find your spot on the CD. The icons are placed after the figure numbers at the top of each figure. When more than one icon appears after a figure, the first track listed is a recording of the figure in full, and the following tracks are notable individual keyboard parts played as slow demos. Featured keyboard parts on the full-band tracks are isolated on one side of the stereo mix, so you can closely analyze them for further study, or pan them out and jam along with the band when you have learned the parts.

THE PEARLS

From the Jelly Roll Morton album *The Pearls – The Library of Congress Recordings, Vol. 3*

By Ferd "Jelly Roll" Morton
Recorded in 1938

Morton composed "The Pearls" as a valentine to a Kansas City waitress. The title refers to its form, with each of its several sections designed as an exquisite miniature unto itself, like pearls on a necklace. "The Pearls" is actually *not* a blues. However, Morton fused a number of idioms, including blues, ragtime, and Hispanic music, into his early form of jazz.

Notice the "swing eighths" marking after the tempo indication at the beginning. This marking means that whenever you see eighth notes, they are to be played as "swing eighths." That is, the second of each pair of eighth notes is played on the last *third* of the beat rather than on the midpoint between beats. This underlying triplet rhythmic feel is central to both jazz swing and blues shuffles. This rhythm creates a skipping and loping feel with a strong sense of forward propulsion. The vast majority of songs in this book are played with swing eighths, so make sure that you understand this concept before continuing.

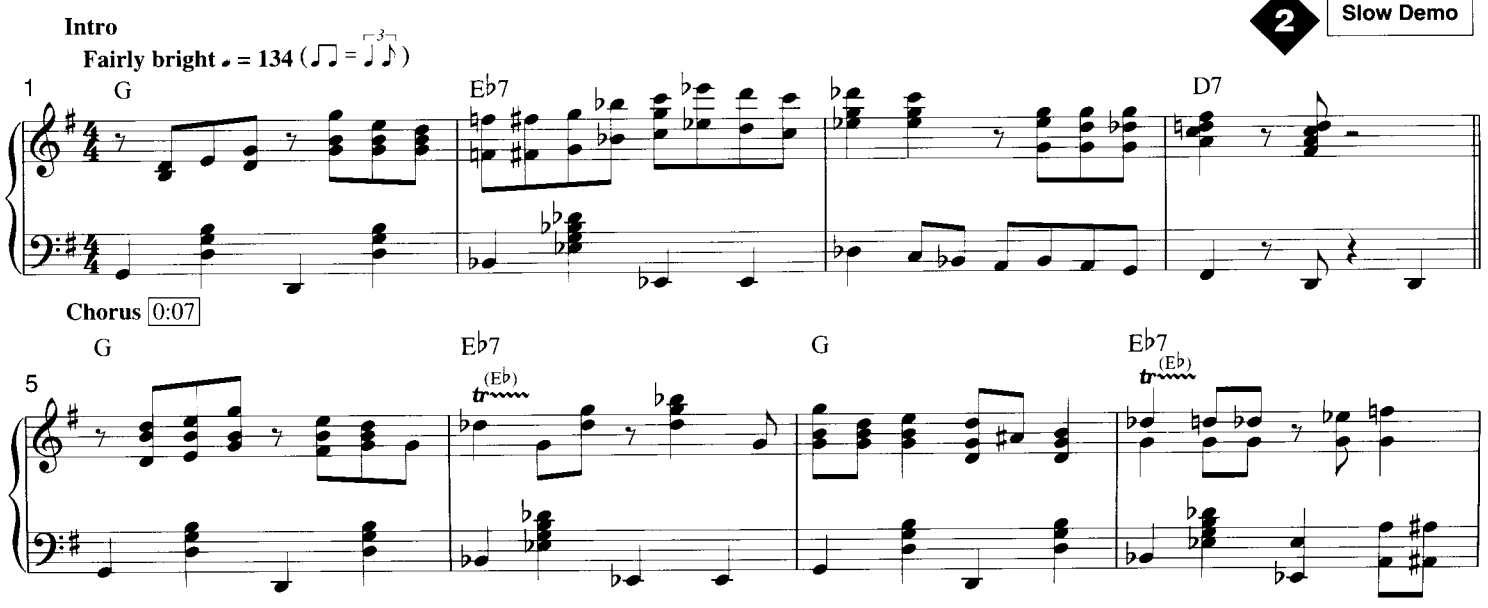
Figure 1 – Intro and Chorus

The stride-style left hand Morton uses in this piece resembles ragtime, but ragtime was played with straight eighth notes, whereas Morton's music really swings. The ragtime-like melody in the right hand is thickened with octaves, 3rds, and occasional chords. The section is marked by the harmonically adventurous use of the ♭VI chord (E♭7 in the key of G).

Morton's use of grace notes in bars 19 and 20 is a common blues piano technique. A *grace note* is a quick ornamental tone played directly before a main note. The two (or more) notes are usually connected in music notation with a slur marking. Grace notes in the blues are often called "crushed notes." Sometimes we also refer to the use of a grace note as "bending a note" because it sounds similar to a guitar player bending a string. Obviously, each note on a piano is a discrete pitch, so we can't actually bend a note like a guitar player can. However, we use grace notes on the piano as the closest approximation. Grace notes (or crushed notes) are a staple of blues piano and will appear throughout this book.

1 Full Band
2 Slow Demo

Fig. 1



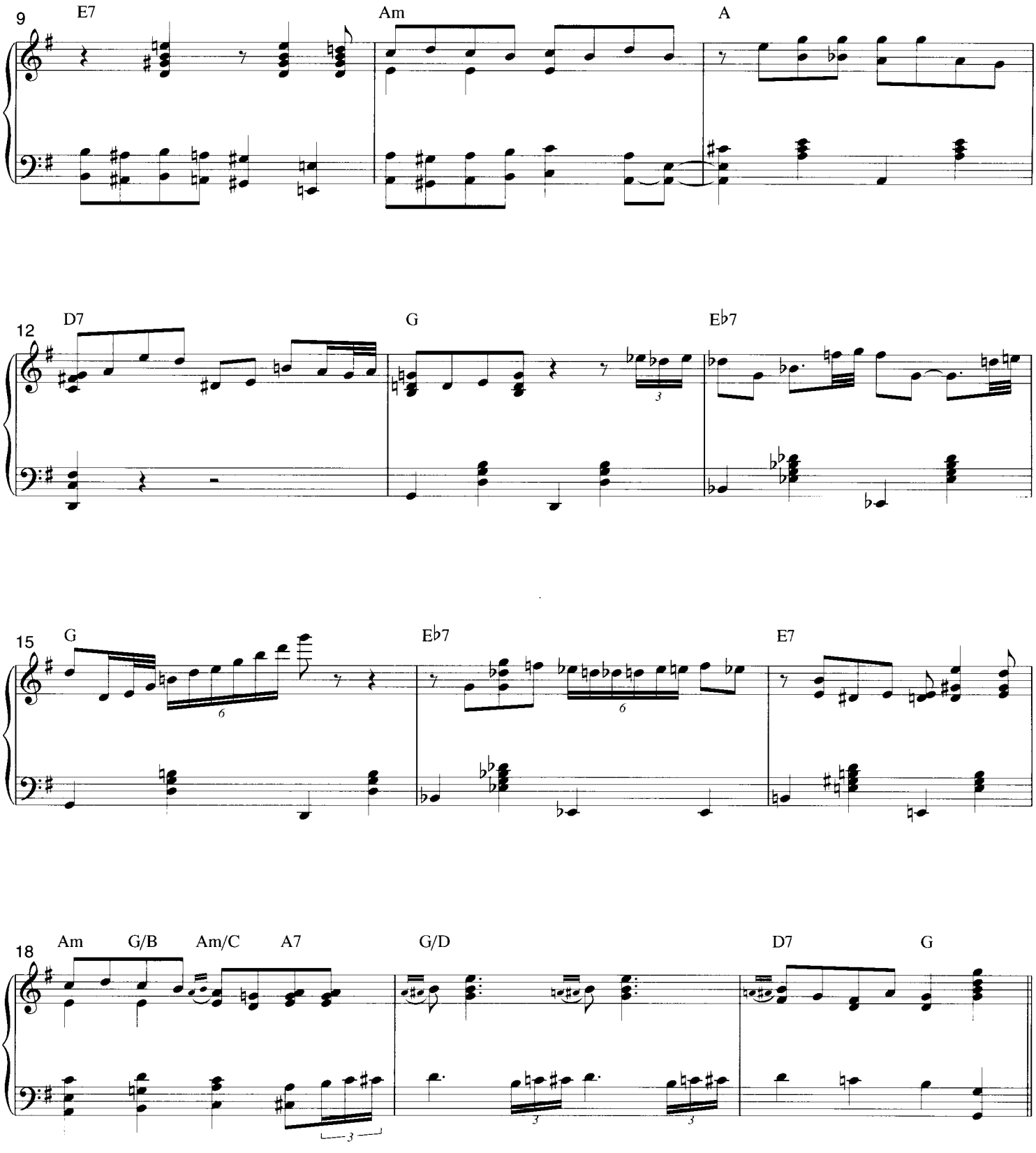


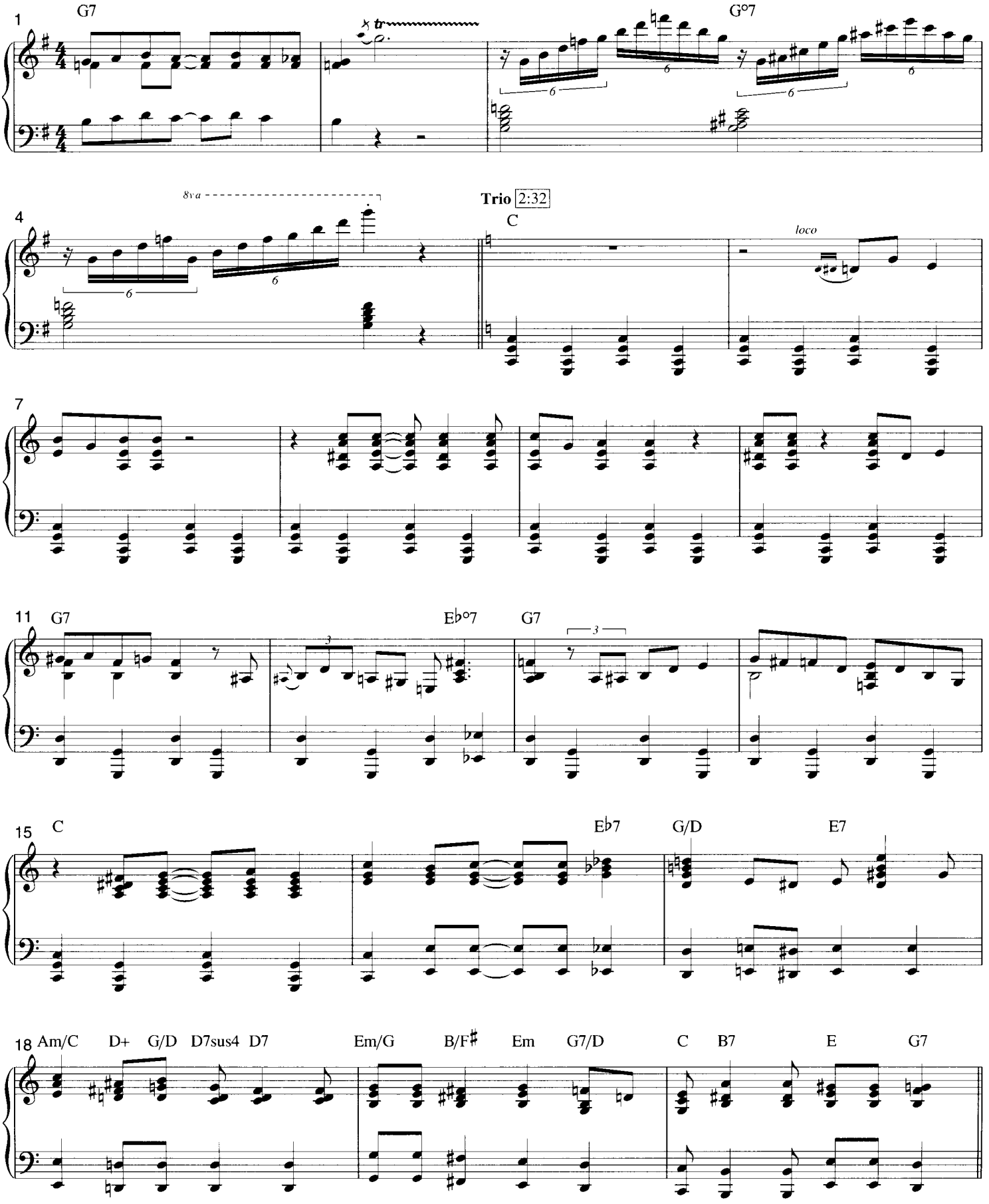
Figure 2 – Break and Trio

Figure 2 begins with a hallmark of Morton's style, a "break." In Morton's band arrangements the band would fall silent, and the solo piano would play the break. The break here modulates from the previous section, which is in the key of G major, to the next section, which is in C major. The break is followed by the trio section that uses C and G pedal tones in a march-like bass. Note Morton's use of grace notes in measure 6.

Fig. 2

3 Full Band
4 Slow Demo
meas. 1-4

Break 2:26



COW COW BLUES

From the compilation album
Encyclopedia of Boogie Woogie

Words and Music by Charles Davenport
Originally recorded in 1928

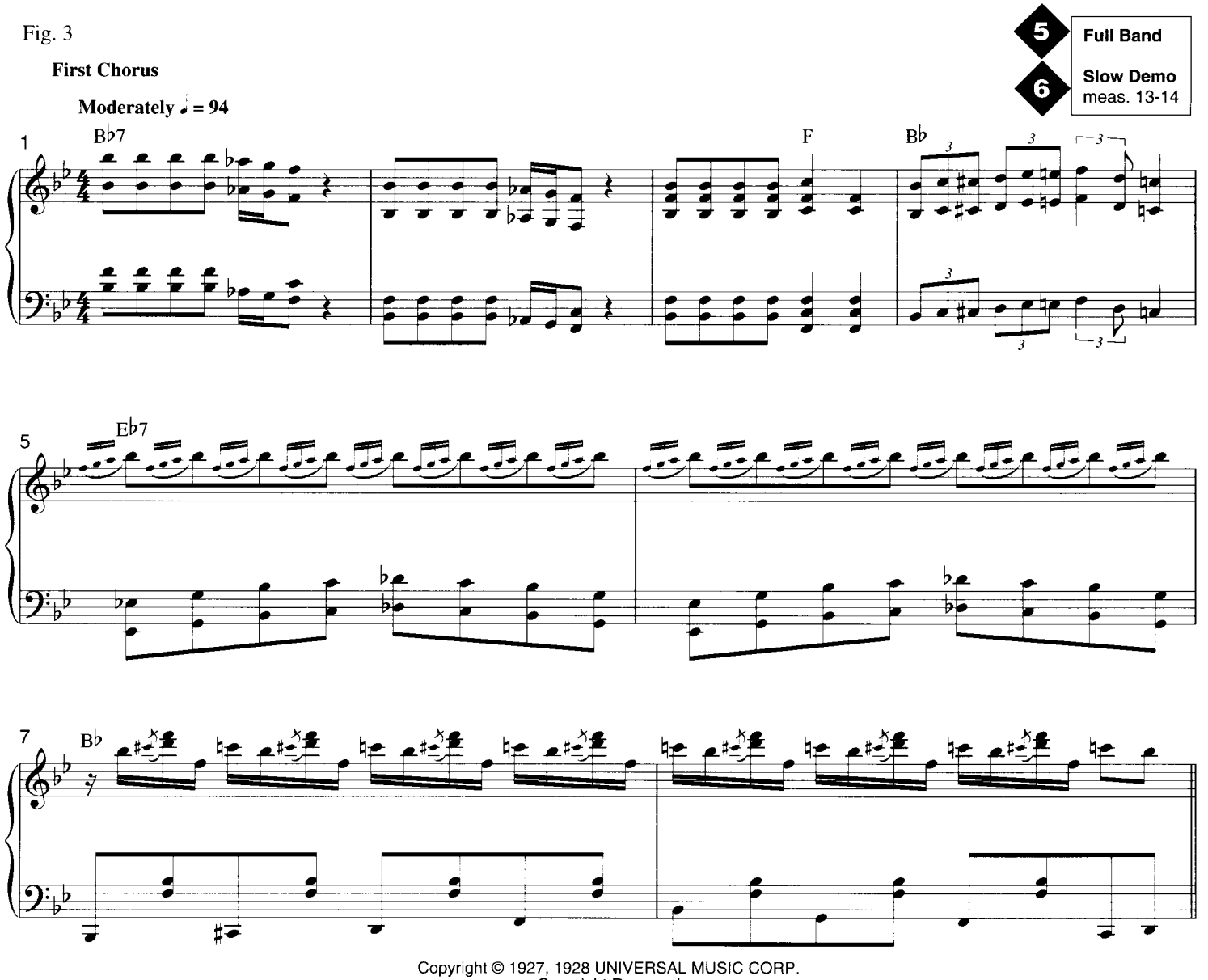
"Cow Cow Blues" is one of the earliest recordings of boogie woogie. This powerful, medium tempo piece is one of only a few musical selections in this book in which eighth notes are played straight—i.e., without swing. This excerpt represents the first two choruses of a 12-bar blues.

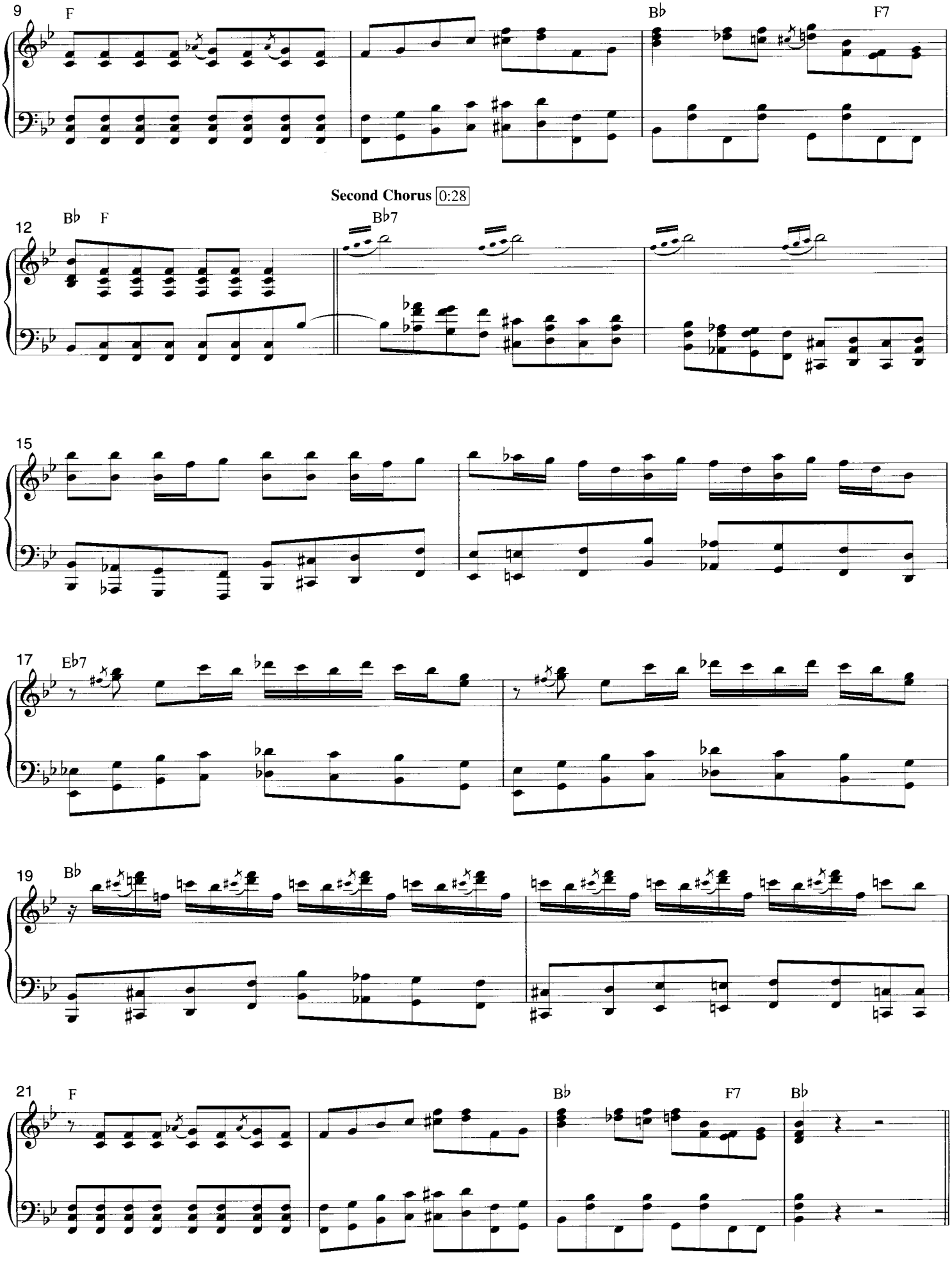
Figure 3 – Two Choruses

This piece uses many open 5ths and parallel octaves, lending it a "primitive" quality. The left hand pattern in measures 5 and 6 is a bass pattern that has pervaded blues and boogie woogie until the present day. Here it is being used way back in 1928. Measures 7 and 8 use a left-hand pattern that's more closely related to stride.

The grace-note "slides" at measure 5 are intended to imitate a train whistle. Note that the right-hand figure at measures 7 and 8 uses grace notes sliding from the minor 3rd of the B♭ chord (C♯) to the major 3rd (D). Also note the crushed notes in measure 9. In measure 16 the same four notes (A♭, G, F, and D) are repeated with rhythmic variation. Repetition of notes with rhythmic variation is a common blues technique.

Fig. 3




9
F
B♭
F7
Second Chorus 0:28
12
B♭
F
B♭7
15
17
E♭7
19
B♭
21
F
B♭
F7
B♭

CRYIN' IN MY SLEEP

From the compilation album
Boogie Woogie Stomp

Words and Music by Jimmy Yancey
Originally recorded in 1940

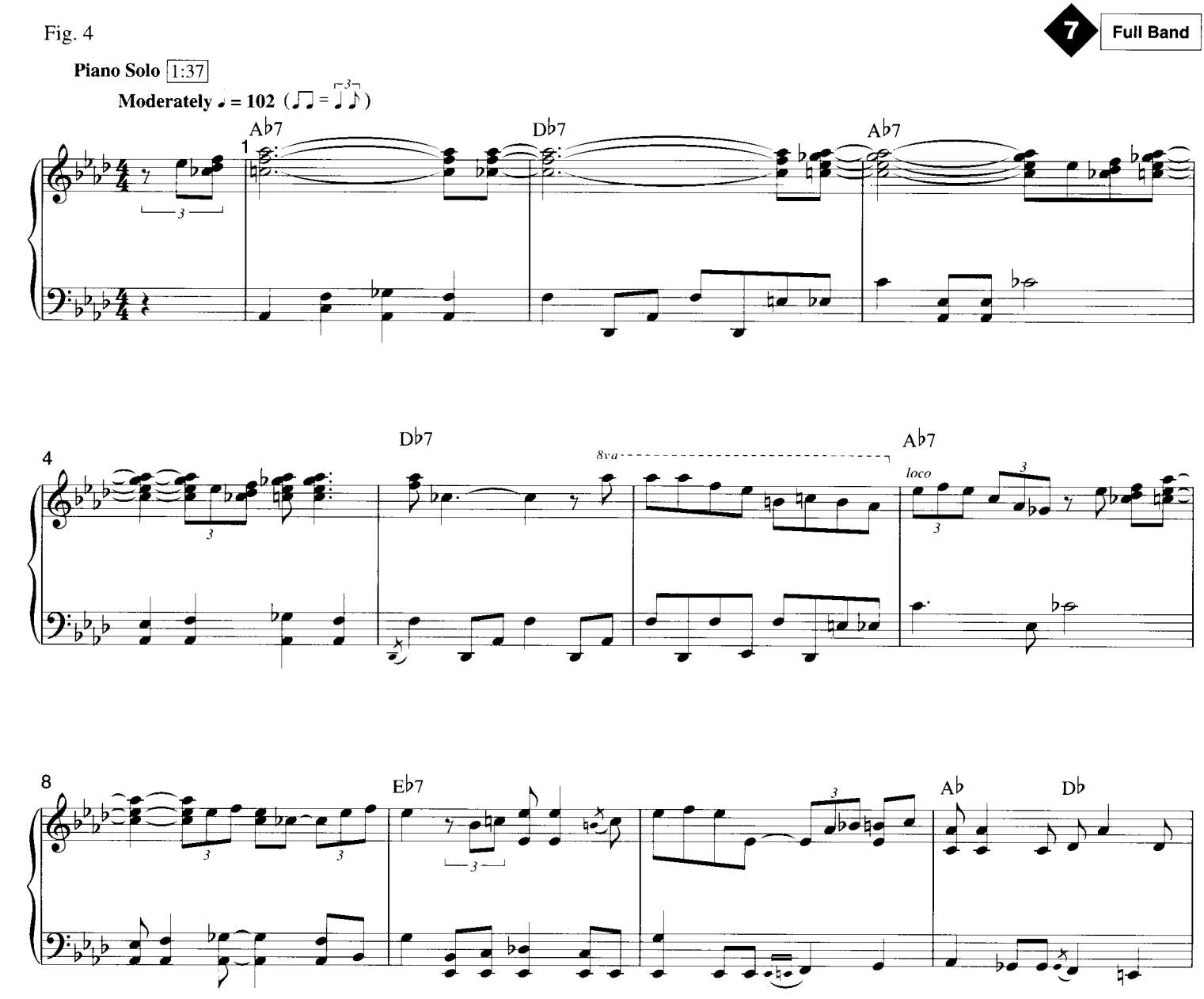
Blues can be in any key, of course. Most of the pieces in this book are in C, F, or G. This song, however, is in the somewhat unusual key (for blues, at least) of A♭. The piano solo here represents three choruses of the 12-bar blues.

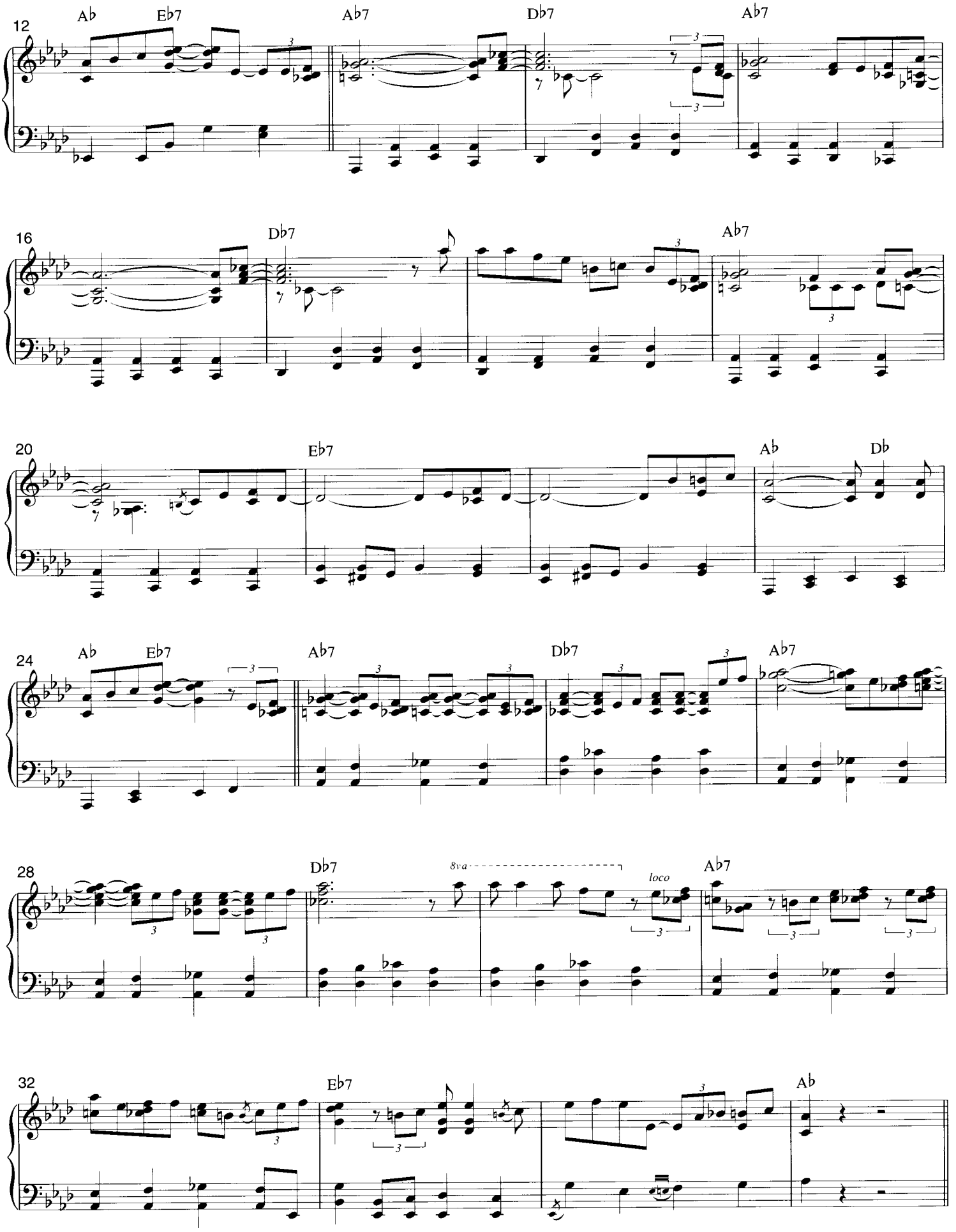
Figure 4 – Piano Solo (Three Choruses)

Yancey uses the initial three-note melodic lick (E♭–F–A♭) throughout the piece as a kind of theme. He also alternates the minor 3rd of A♭ (C♭) with the major third (C). Octaves, 3rds, and 6ths fill out the right hand. The left hand uses a variety of techniques. The pattern in measure 5 is a typical barrelhouse blues pattern. There is a bit of walking bass in measures 10 and 11, while the left hand in measure 13 combines walking bass with a barrelhouse pattern.

Measure 6 includes a melodic riff that is repeated in measure 19. Also, note the grace notes in the left hand in measure 10 and 34.

Fig. 4




12
Ab
Eb7
Ab7
Db7
Ab7
16
Db7
Ab7
20
Eb7
Ab
Db
24
Ab
Eb7
Ab7
Db7
Ab7
28
Db7
8va
loco
Ab7
32
Eb7
Ab

(THE ORIGINAL) BOOGIE WOOGIE

From the compilation album *Boogie Woogie Stomp*

By Clarence "Pine Top" Smith
Originally recorded in 1928

This was the first piece of recorded music to use the term "boogie woogie" in the title. Five 12-bar choruses are notated here.

Figure 5 – Five Choruses

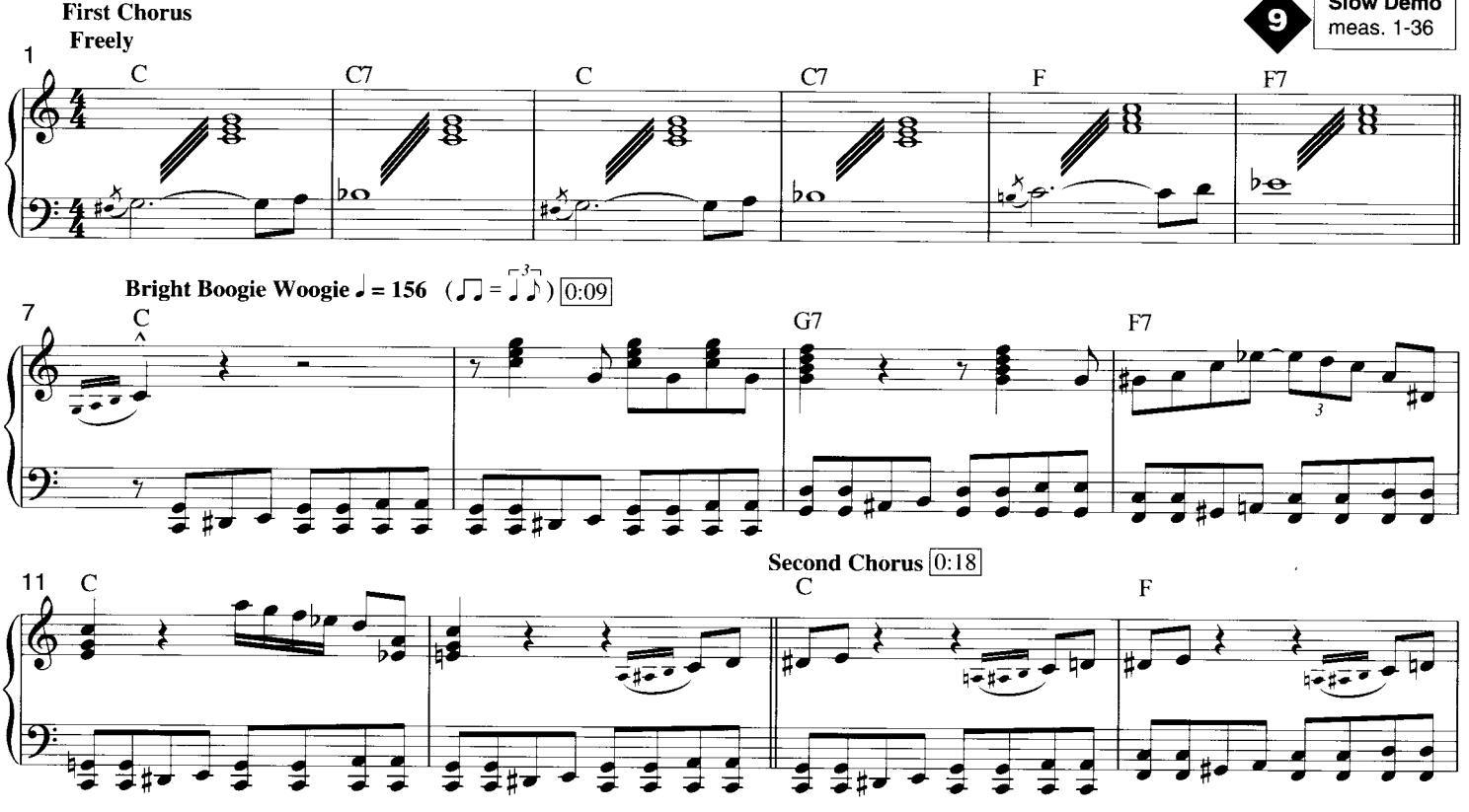
The song begins with a series of tremolos. A *tremolo* is a rapid alternation between two or more notes. Sometimes a tremolo is called a *roll*. In this instance, the song begins with a tremolo between a G bass note in the left hand and a root-position C major triad in the right hand. The moving note in the left hand turns the chord into C7. This pattern is repeated verbatim in measures 3 and 4 and then is repeated a 4th higher in measures 5 and 6. Tremolos are very common in boogie woogie and blues piano, and there will be many examples of them throughout this book.

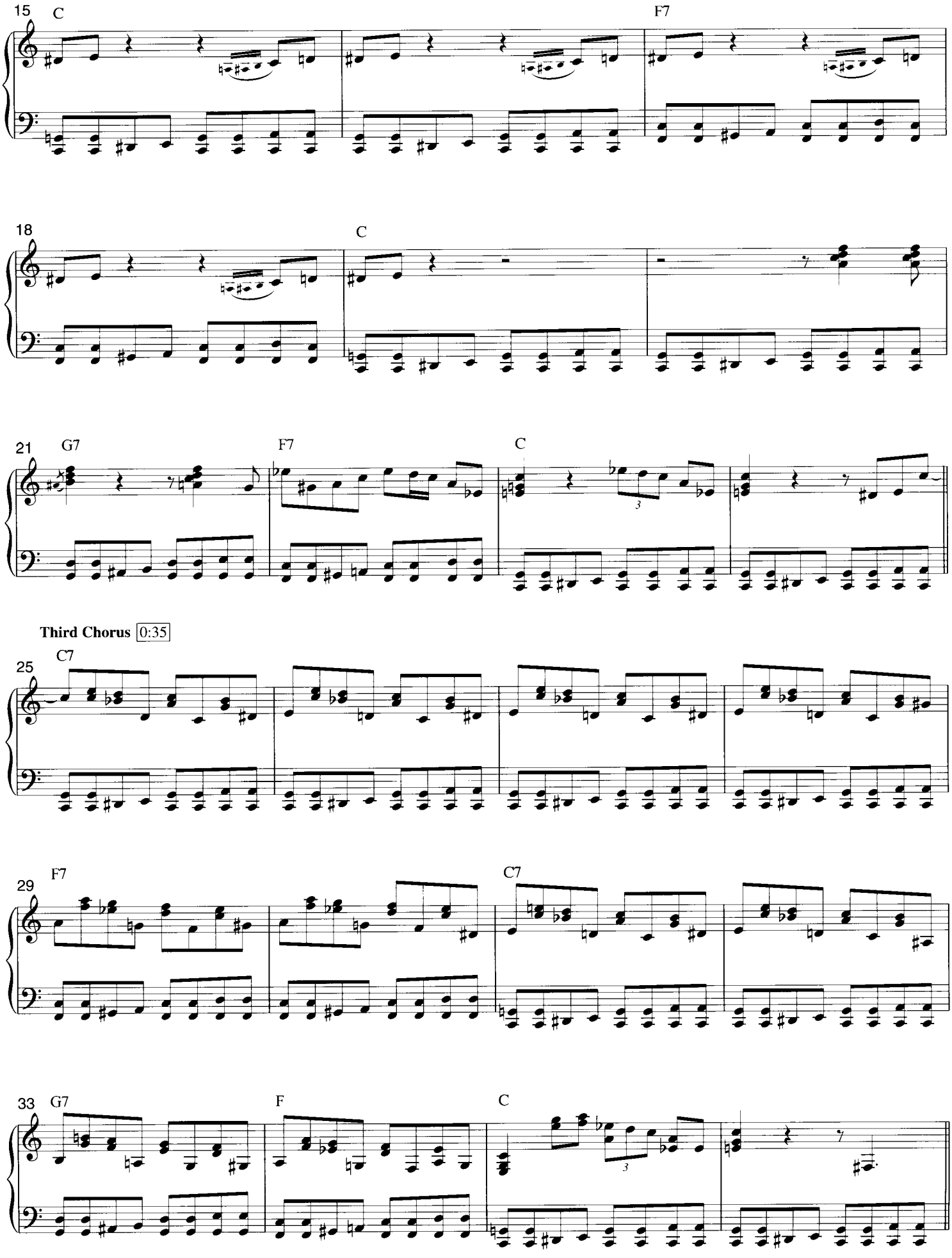
At measure 7 the piece launches into its rollicking boogie woogie feel. The left-hand pattern remains constant throughout. The riff in measure 13 uses grace notes and emphasizes both the minor 3rd of the key of C (E♭ or D♯) and the major 3rd (E). This riff is repeated verbatim seven times, even over the changing chords. Repetition is a standard boogie woogie and blues device.

Measure 25 contains a typical boogie woogie pattern based on 3rds and octaves. This same pattern is repeated in sequence fashion on each subsequent chord. The fourth chorus (beginning at measure 37) emphasizes rhythm rather than melody, with chords in a punchy, syncopated rhythm. Measure 49 briefly reintroduces a tremolo.

Fig. 5

8 Full Band
9 Slow Demo
meas. 1-36




15
C
F7
18
C
21
G7
F7
C
Third Chorus 0:35
25
C7
29
F7
C7
33
G7
F
C

Fourth Chorus 0:53

37 C6

41 F9 C6

45 G7 F9 C6 G

Fifth Chorus 1:10

49 C+9

L.H.

53 F7 C7

57 G7 F7 C

ROLL 'EM PETE

From the compilation album
Boogie Woogie Stomp

Words and Music by Pete Johnson and Joe Turner
Originally recorded in 1938

This is one of the most famous boogie woogie pieces. It is also somewhat unusual in that it is a vocal/piano piece and not strictly a solo piano piece. Fig. 6 represents the intro and first two vocal choruses.

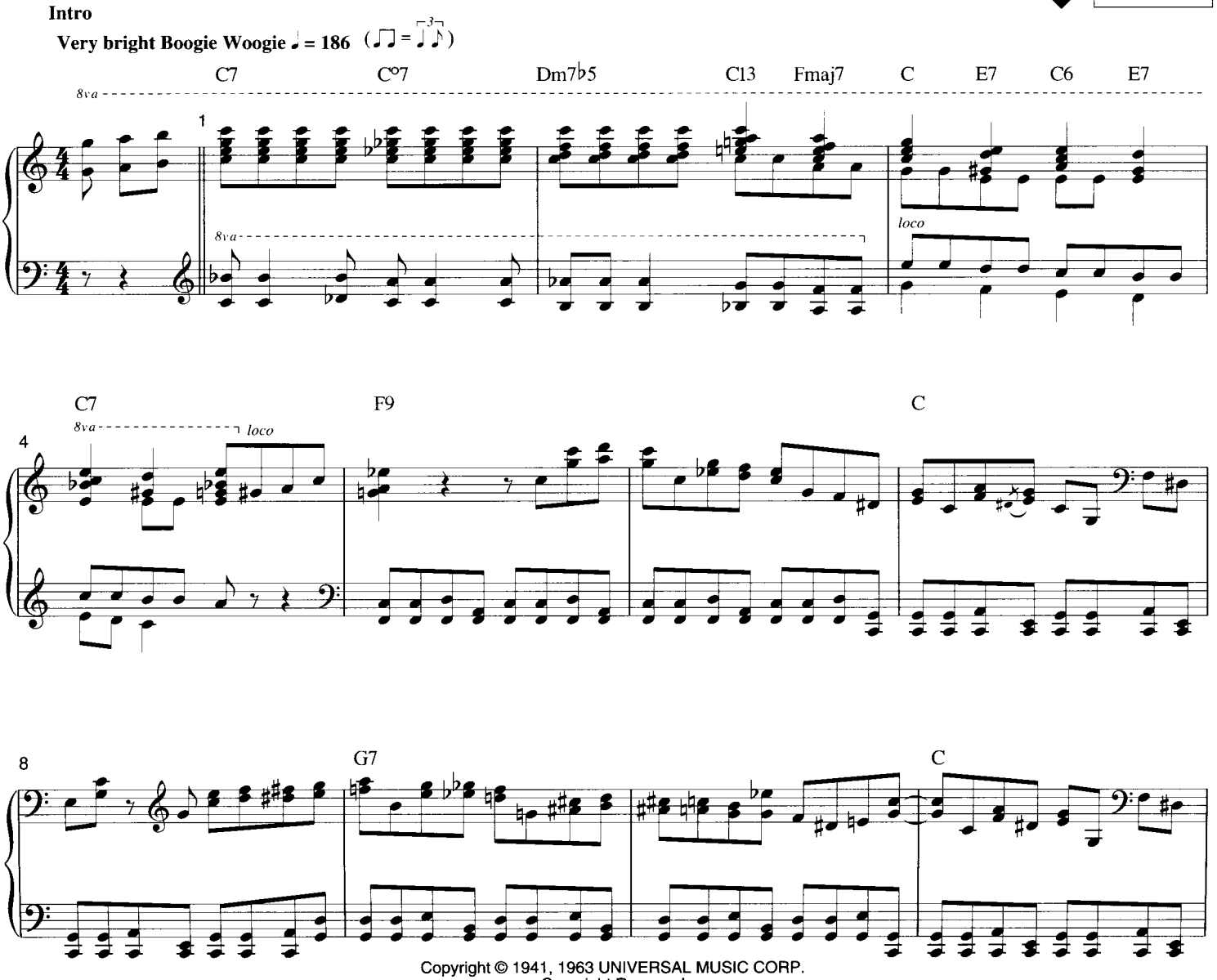
Figure 6 – Intro, First Vocal Chorus, and Second Vocal Chorus

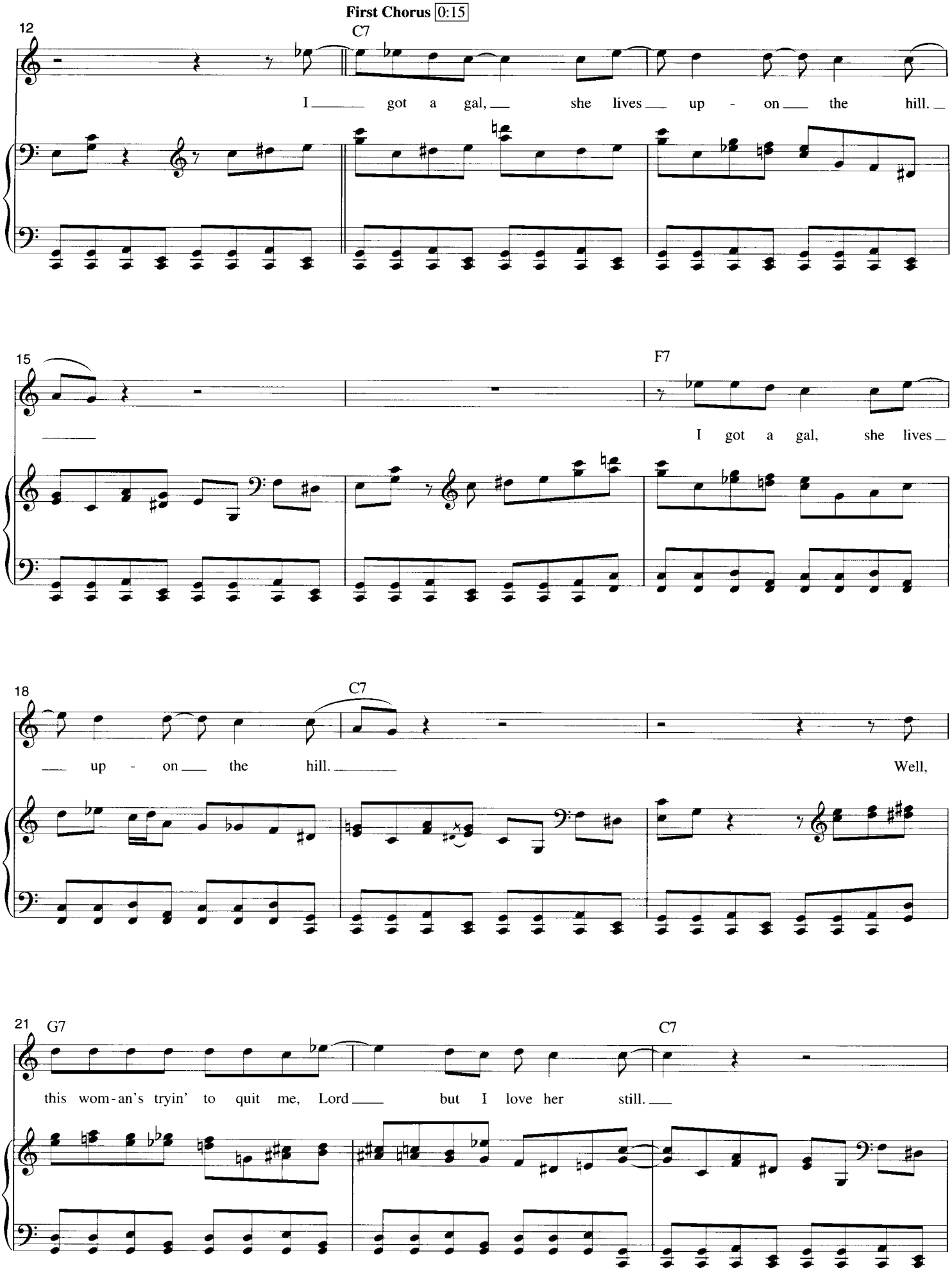
The intro uses a nifty series of descending chords before it launches into its boogie woogie feel at measure 5. The left-hand pattern, very similar to the one used in "Pinetop's Boogie Woogie," will remain constant throughout. The right hand is also similar to "Pinetop's Boogie," relying heavily on parallel 3rds such as in measures 8 and 9.

The pattern beginning at measure 25 is fairly simple—chords in rhythmic punches on the "and" of each beat 4.

10 Full Band
11 Slow Demo
meas. 1-24

Fig. 6




First Chorus 0:15
12
C7
I got a gal, she lives up - on the hill.
15
F7
I got a gal, she lives
18
C7
up - on the hill.
Well,
21
G7
C7
this wom-an's tryin' to quit me, Lord but I love her still.

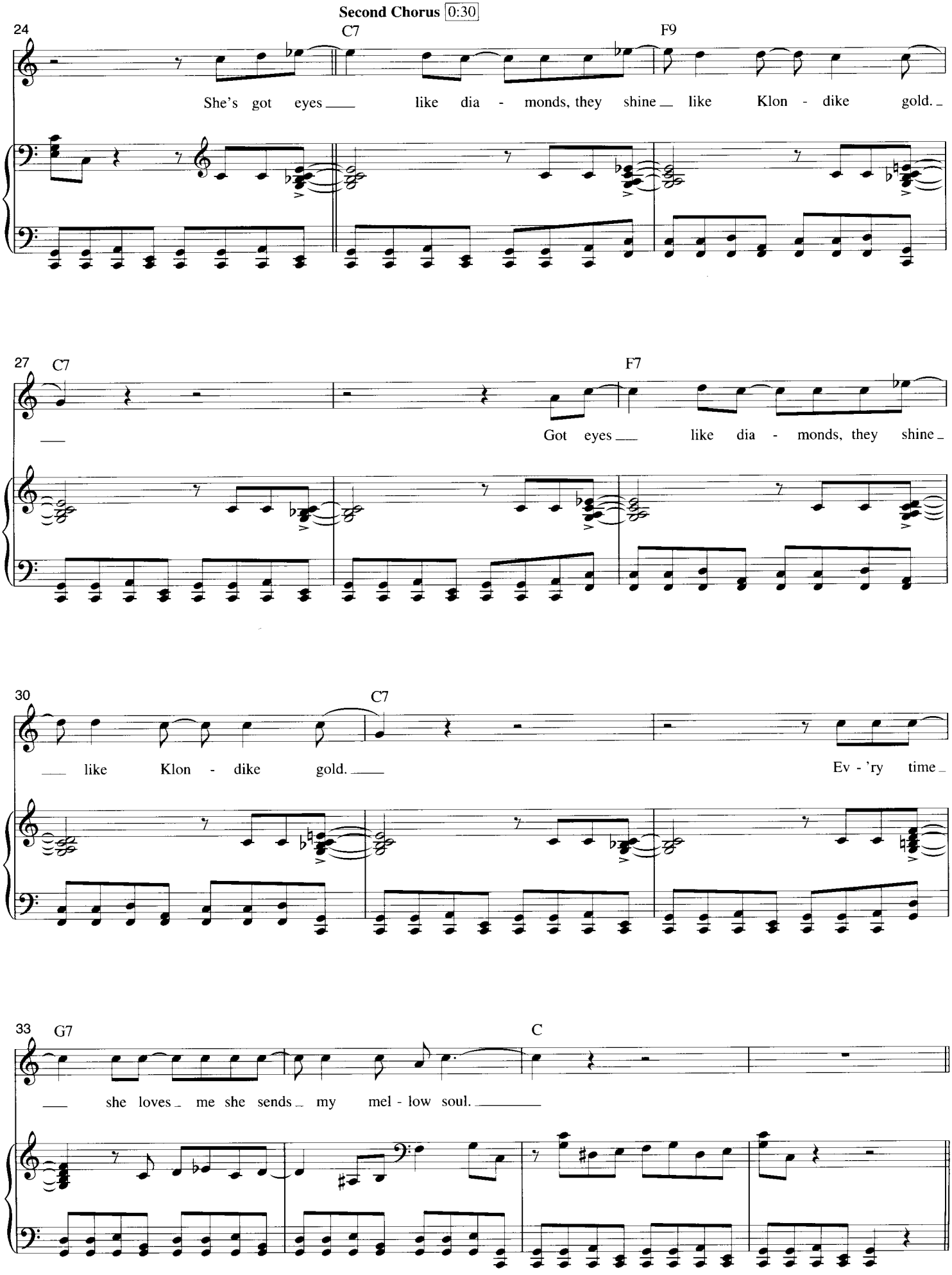
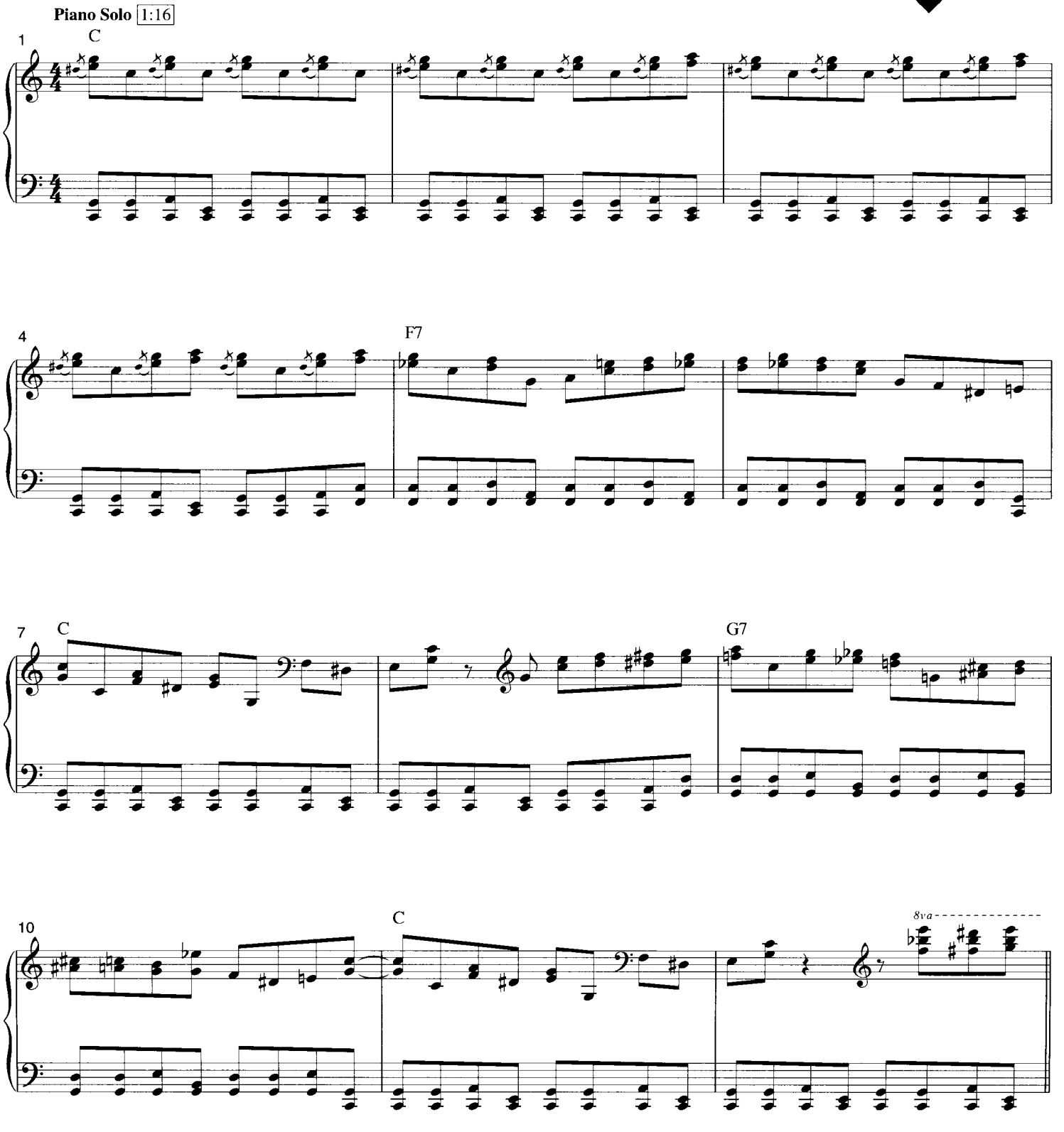

Second Chorus 0:30
24
C7
F9
She's got eyes like dia - monds, they shine like Klon - dike gold.
27
C7
F7
Got eyes like dia - monds, they shine
30
C7
like Klon - dike gold.
Ev - 'ry time
33
G7
C
she loves me she sends my mel - low soul.

Figure 7 – Piano Solo (Two Choruses)

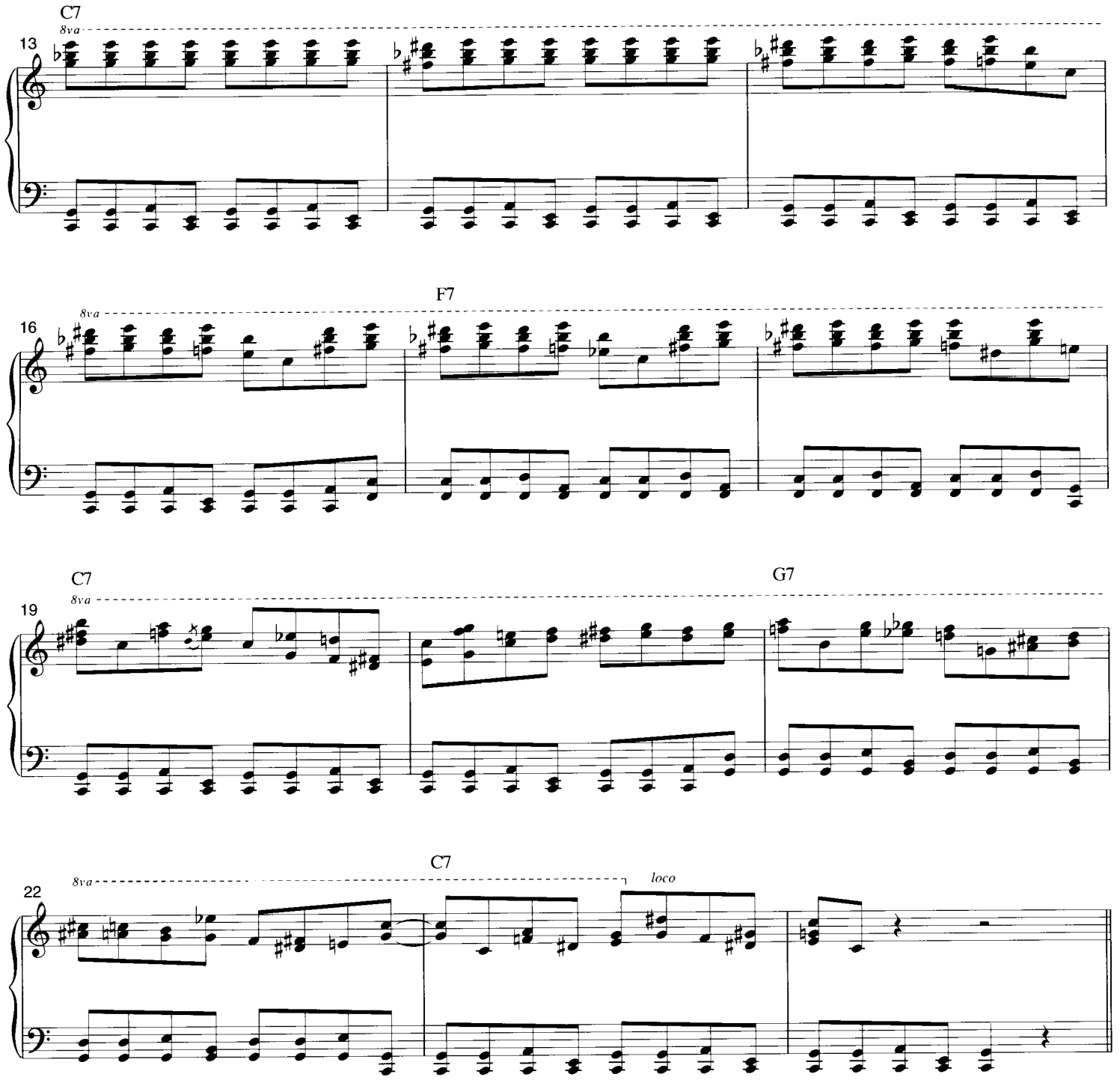
Measure 1 features grace notes sliding from the minor 3rd to the major 3rd of C. This figure is repeated on every beat for four measures. At measure 12 right-hand triads are repeated in eighth notes in the high register of the piano. This technique foreshadows the rollicking 1950s rock 'n' roll style of Jerry Lee Lewis.

12 Full Band
13 Slow Demo

Fig. 7



Second Chorus 1:31



HONKY TONK TRAIN (HONKY TONK TRAIN BLUES)

From the compilation album
Boogie Woogie Stomp

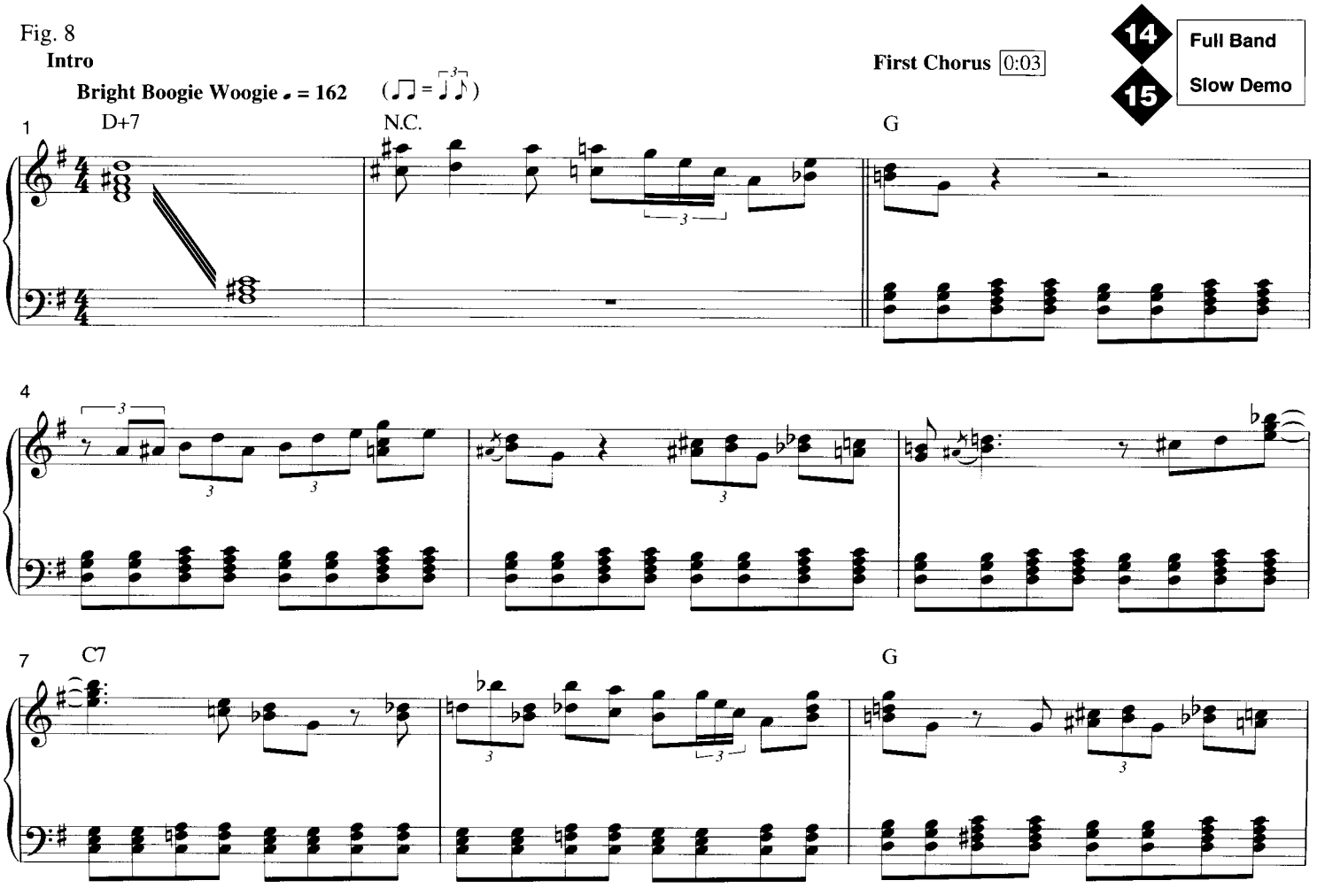
By Meade "Lux" Lewis
Originally recorded in 1935

"Honky Tonk Train Blues" is an undisputed masterpiece of boogie woogie. It's played at an amazing speed, and the intricate cross-rhythms that Lewis sets up between the hands require astonishing independence. The composition was inspired by Lewis's childhood memories of trains. The left hand suggests the chugging engine of a train, while the right hand imitates the train whistles, wheels, and other noises.

Figure 8 – Intro, First, and Second Choruses

A number of standard boogie woogie devices are used here, beginning with the opening tremolo on a D+7 chord. The left-hand pattern beginning in measure 3 is unusual for boogie woogie in that it alternates between the tonic chord (G in second inversion) and the dominant chord (D7). When the chord changes at measure 7, the two alternating chords are C (IV) and F (♭VII).

The right hand in the first chorus relies heavily on almost constant triplet patterns, especially those which alternate the ♭3rd of G major (B♭ or A♯) with the major 3rd (B). Measures 11 and 23 feature a rapid series of crushed notes. In measure 15 Lewis sets up a polyrhythm of 3 against 4 with his use of quarter-note triplets in the right hand.



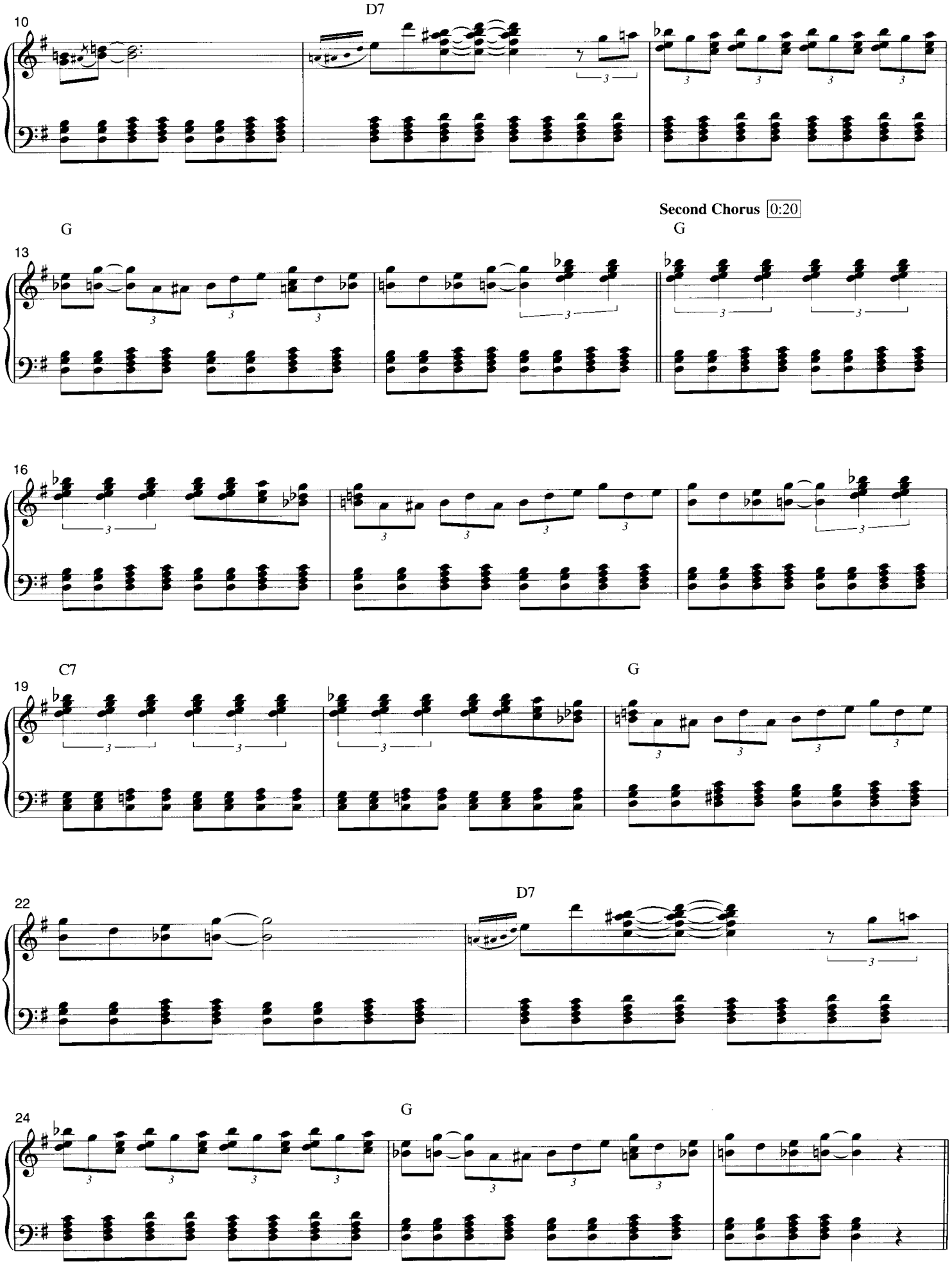

D7
10
G
13
Second Chorus 0:20
G
16
C7
19
G
D7
22
G
24

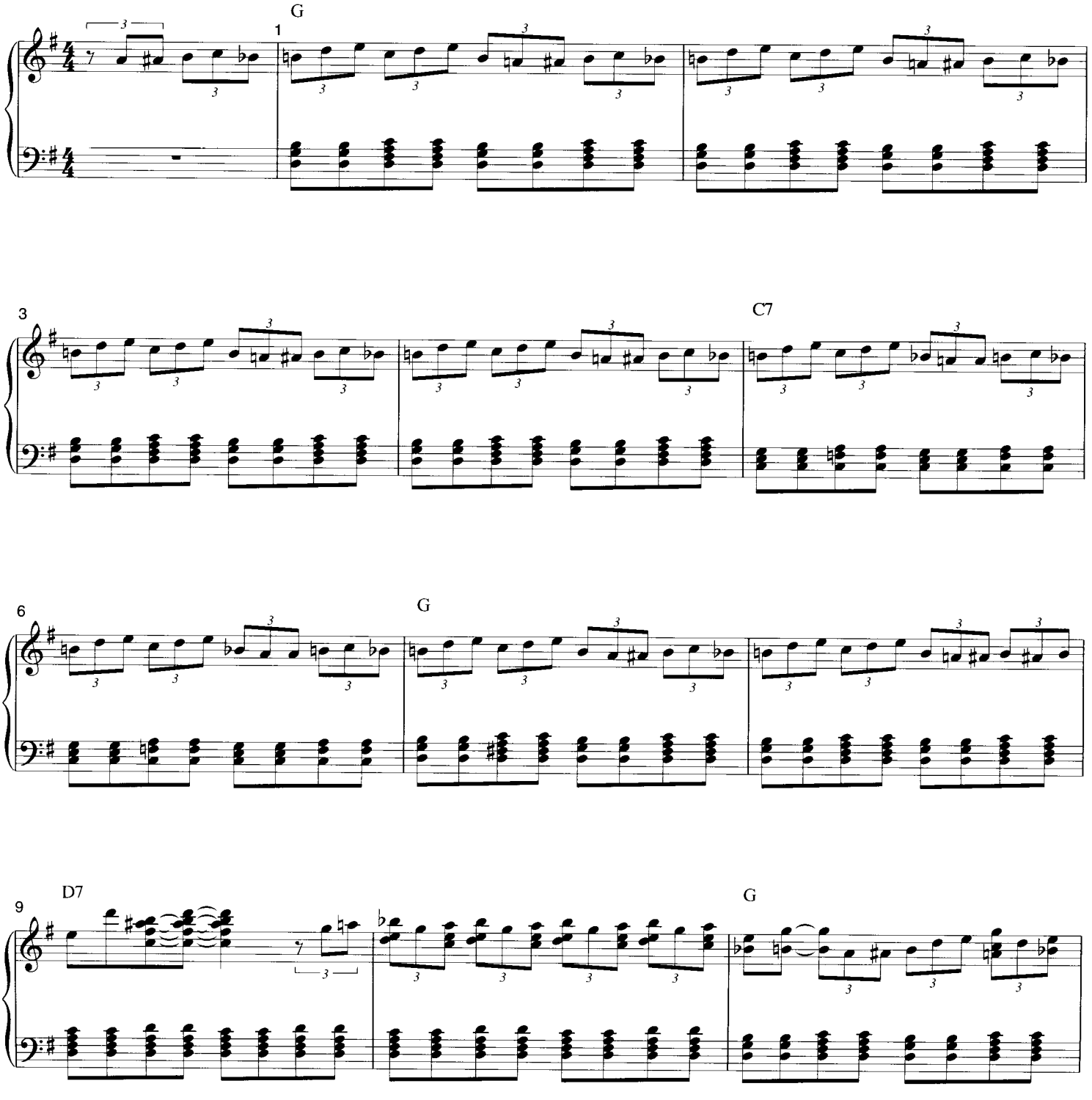
Figure 9 – Fifth and Sixth Choruses

Beginning in measure 13 Lewis makes use of clusters. A *cluster* is a group of notes that are played together but do not normally belong together as a chord. The right-hand clusters in measures 13 and 14 could be analyzed as G6 and G7 chords. However, they are discordant with the chords played by the left hand. Lewis uses clusters in a rhythmically exciting way with syncopation in measures 13–17 and propulsive polyrhythms in 19–20. To play the six-note cluster in measure 19 with only five fingers, you must strike both the lower F and G with your right thumb.

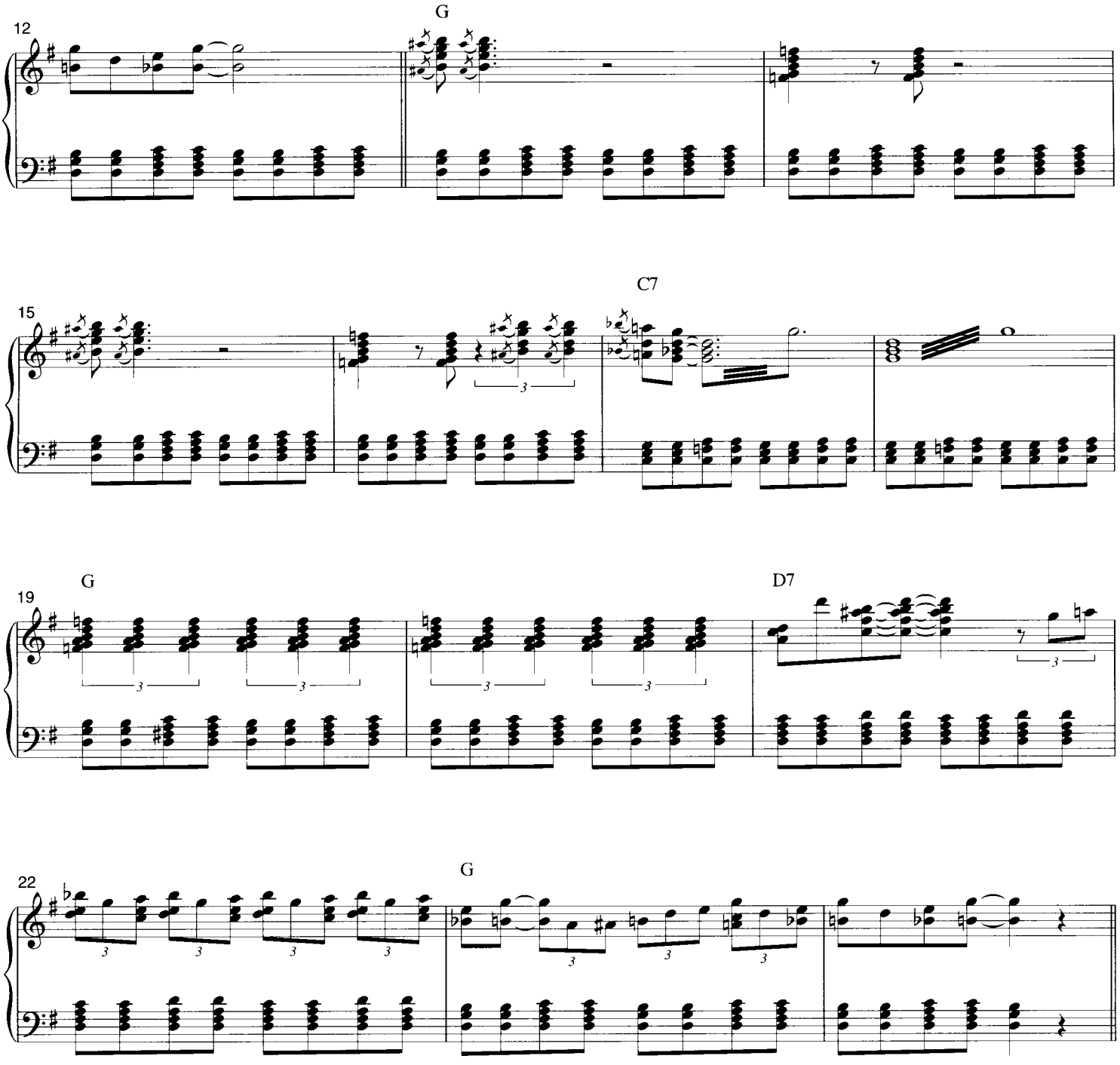
Fig. 9

16 Full Band

17 Slow Demo
meas. 5-12



Sixth Chorus 1:30



CONFESSIN' THE BLUES

From the Jay McShann album *Jumpin' the Blues*

Words and Music by Walter Brown and Jay McShann
Recorded in 1941

Jay McShann was an outstanding pianist with a smooth technique, who played in a very relaxed manner.

Figure 10 – Intro and Vocal Chorus

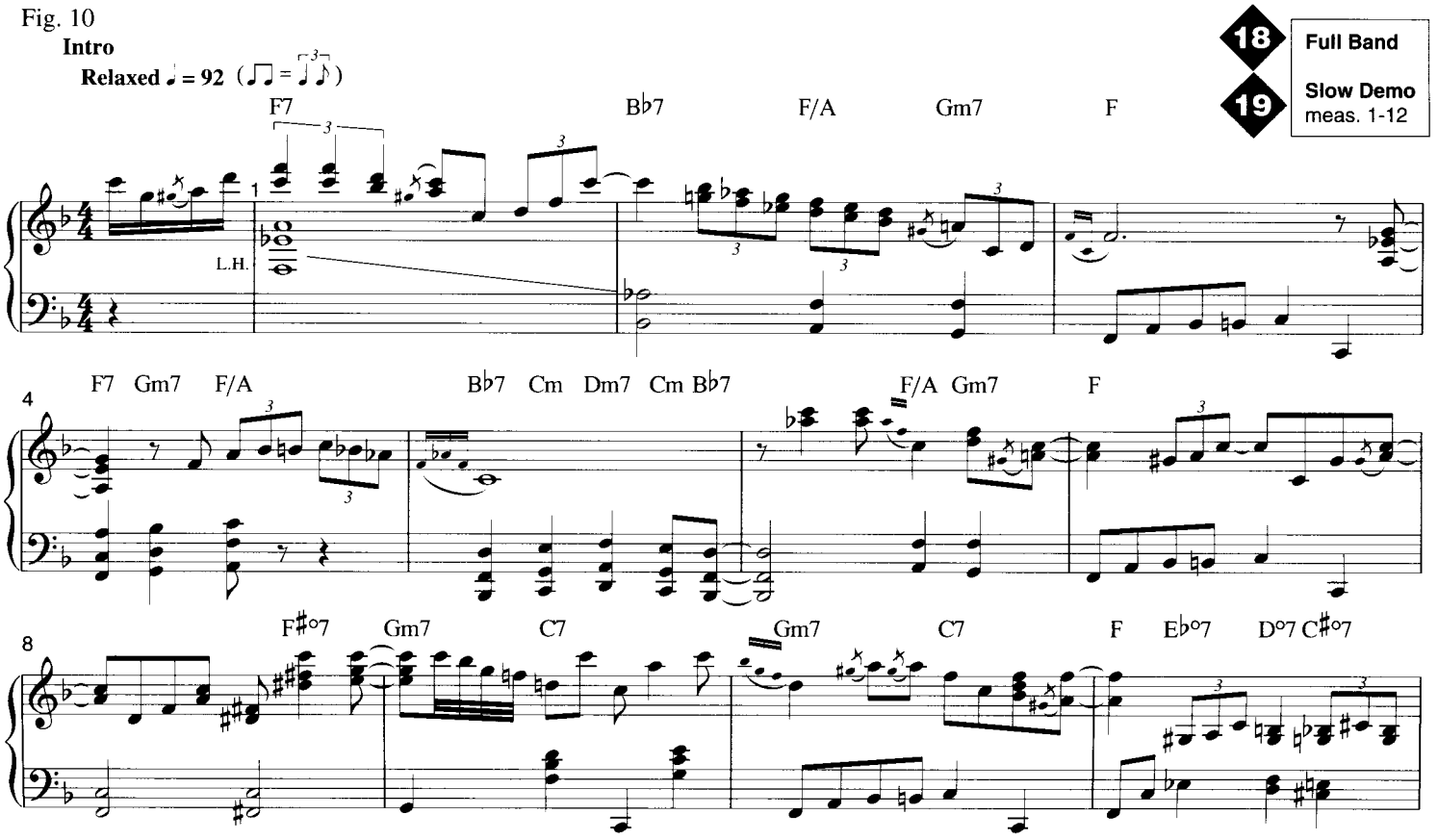
The intro is a 12-bar blues chorus with slightly modified chord changes, including passing chords in measures 4 and 5. The left hand in the intro is a mixture of various techniques. At measure 9 it's a typical "boom-chuck, boom-chuck" stride pattern. Elsewhere the left hand uses triads (measure 1), intervals of a 6th and 7th (measure 2), left-hand fills (measures 3, 7, and 10), walking 10ths (measures 4 and 5), and walking bass (measure 11).

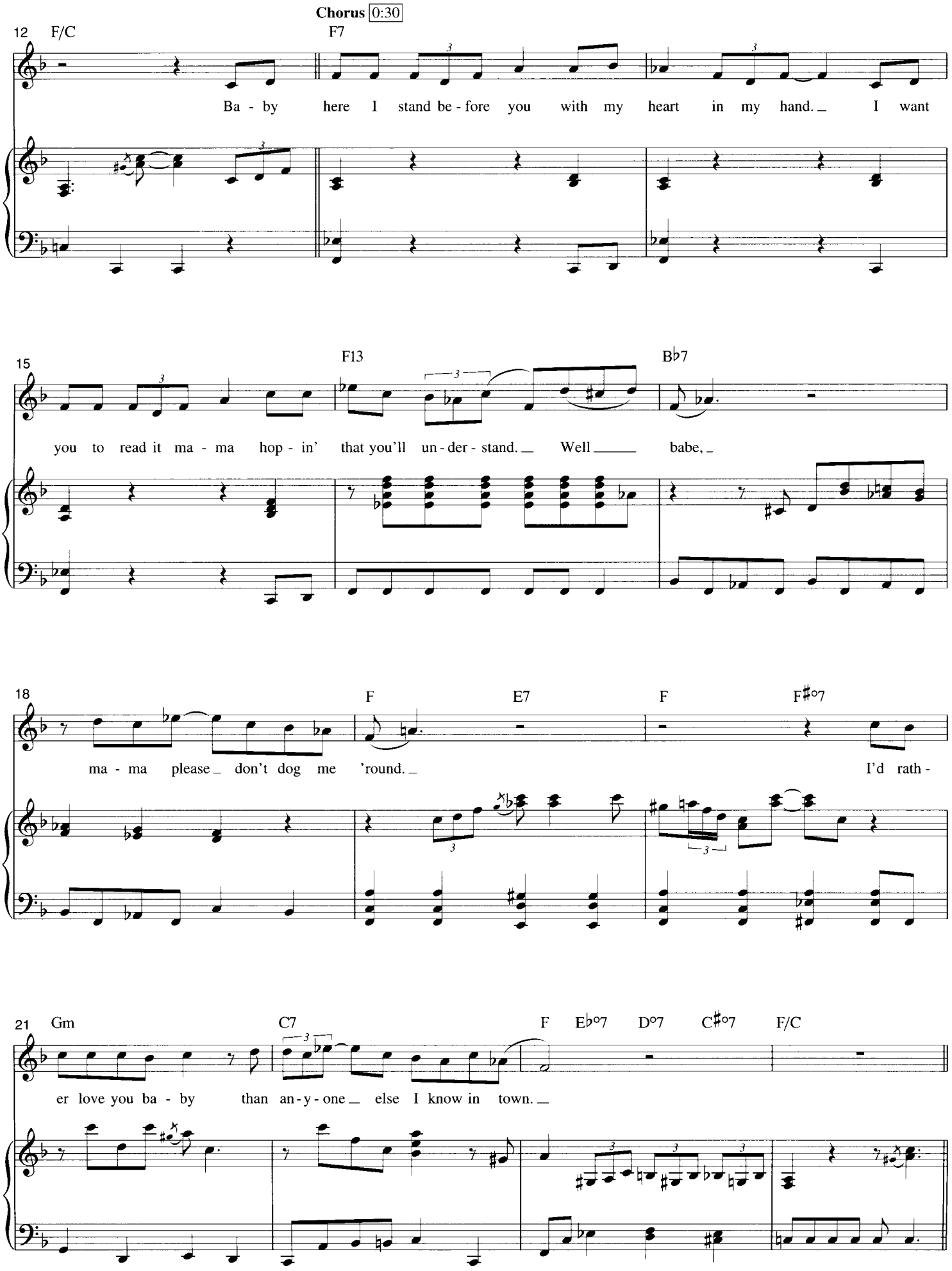
The right hand primarily uses the "major" blues scale. There are two blues scales for any key. The "traditional" F blues scale consists of the notes F, A♭, B♭, B♮, C, and E♭. The F "major" blues scale consists of the notes F, G, A♭, A♮ C, and D. It's essentially an F major pentatonic scale with an added A♭.

At the vocal chorus (measure 13) McShann accompanies himself sparely as he sings. There is a nice spread voicing of the F13 chord at measure 16. The *voicing* of a chord is essentially the chord "shape." It dictates how the notes of the chord are vertically arranged, how they are spaced, whether any notes in the chord are doubled, and whether the chord is in root position or an inversion. Chord voicings can be an expressive device in themselves.

The left hand uses a boogie woogie pattern at measure 19. Measures 19 and 20 use triads in a spread voicing. The chord pattern in measures 11–12 and 23–24 is a standard blues turnaround. A *turnaround* is a chord progression at the end of a 12-bar chorus that leads back (or "turns around") to the beginning of another 12-bar chorus.

Fig. 10




Chorus 0:30
12 F/C
F7
Ba - by here I stand be - fore you with my heart in my hand. I want
15
F13
B♭7
you to read it ma - ma hop - in' that you'll un - der - stand. Well babe,
18
F
E7
F
F♯°7
ma - ma please don't dog me 'round. I'd rath -
21 Gm
C7
F
E♭°7
D°7
C♯°7
F/C
er love you ba - by than an - y - one else I know in town.

EVERYDAY I HAVE THE BLUES

From the Memphis Slim album
The Folkway Years: 1959 – 1973

Words and Music by Peter Chatman
Recorded in 1960

This version of Memphis Slim's blues standard was recorded while he was performing as a duo with bassist Willie Dixon.

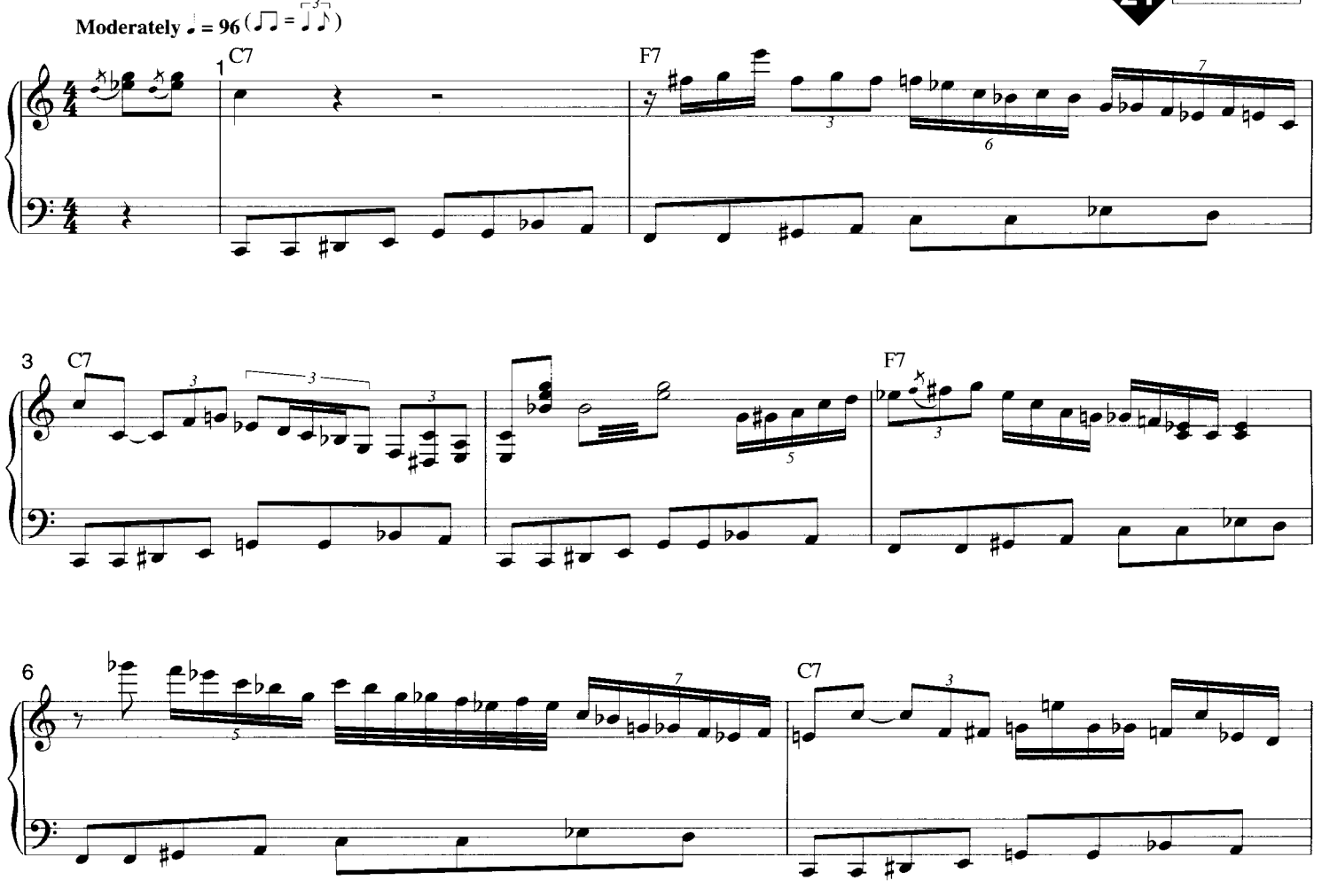
Figure 11 – Intro and Vocal Chorus

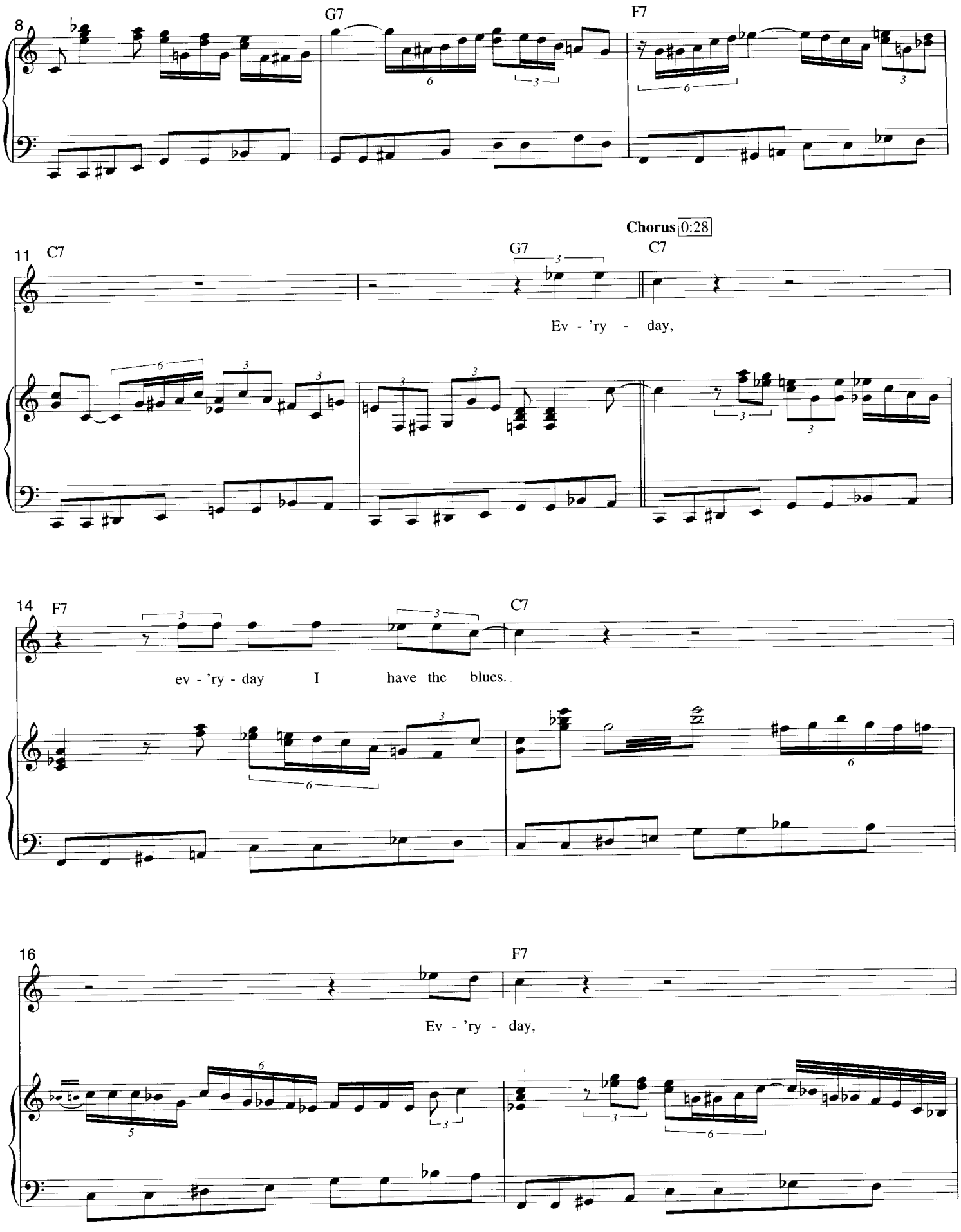
The left hand features a standard boogie woogie pattern throughout. The right hand in the intro consists primarily of single-note runs based on the traditional C blues scale (C–E♭–F–F♯–G–B♭). At times, such as in measure 6, these runs are lightning-fast. Note the use of tremolo at measure 4 and parallel 3rds in measure 8.

In the vocal chorus, beginning at measure 13, Memphis Slim sings and accompanies himself. Again he's primarily using blues scale runs. He incorporates parallel 6ths in measure 19. The pattern in measures 23 and 24 is a standard blues turnaround.

Fig. 11

20 Full Band
21 Slow Demo




8
G7
F7
Chorus 0:28
11
C7
G7
C7
Ev - 'ry - day,
14
F7
C7
ev - 'ry - day I have the blues.
16
F7
Ev - 'ry - day,

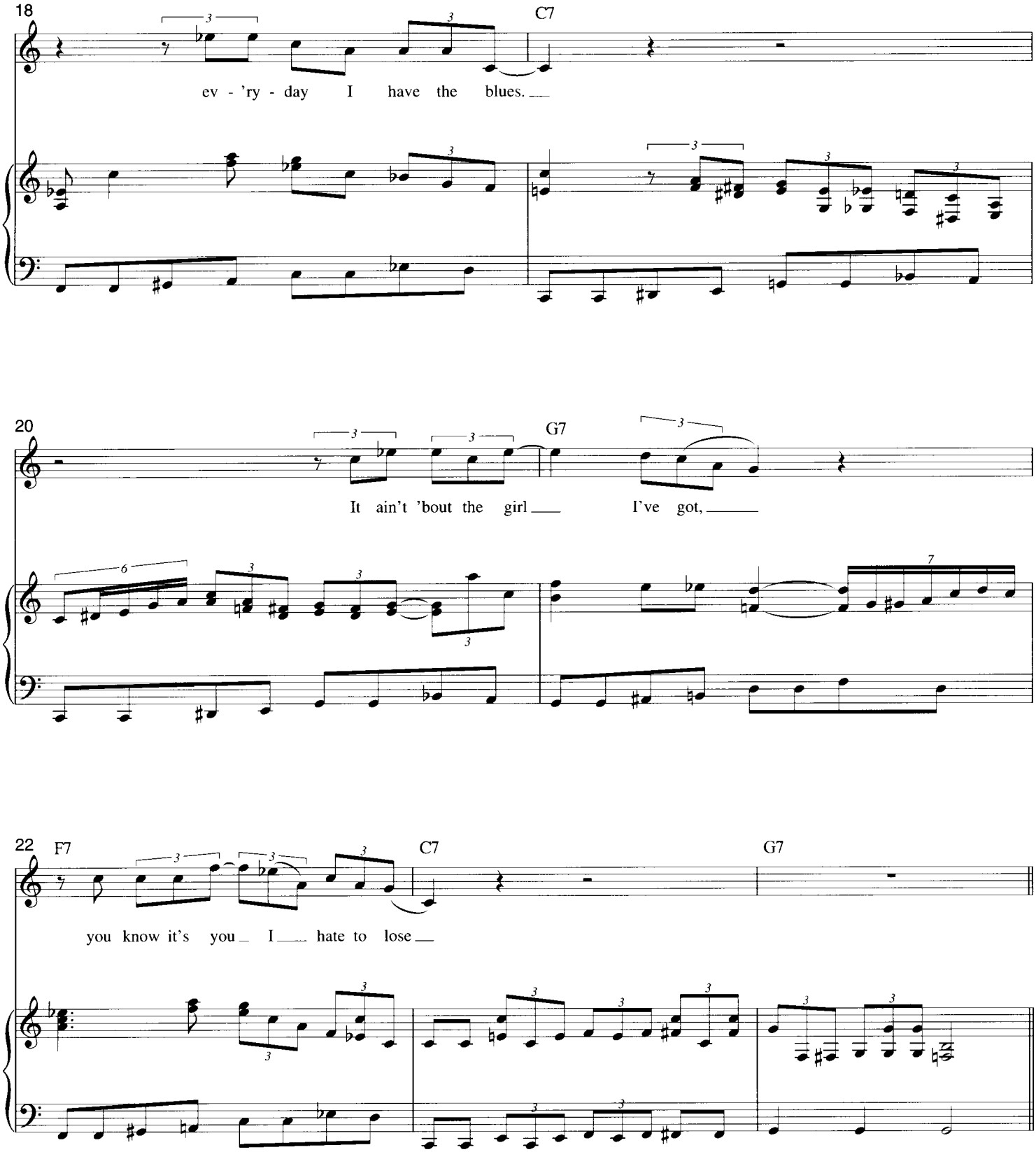
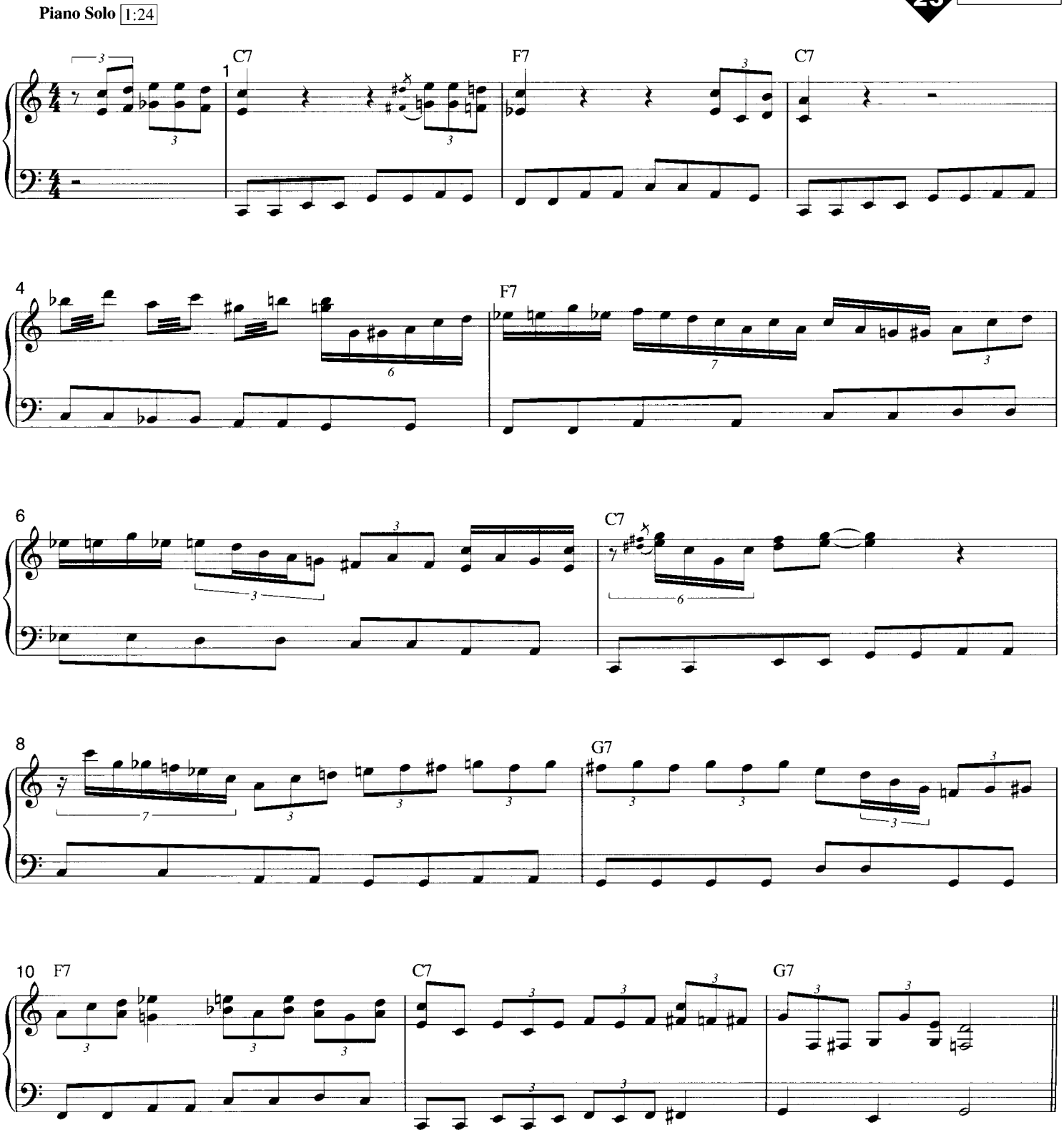

18
C7
ev - 'ry - day I have the blues.
20
G7
It ain't 'bout the girl I've got,
22
F7
C7
G7
you know it's you I hate to lose

Figure 12 – Piano Solo

Here is Memphis Slim's piano solo on one 12-bar blues chorus. The boogie woogie left hand is now slightly simplified and includes some scale passages in measures 4 and 6. The right hand begins using parallel 6ths in measures 1–3. At measure 4 the right hand plays tremolo 3rds moving down the scale on each beat. Measures 11 and 12 represent essentially the same turnaround as in the previous example.

22 Full Band
23 Slow Demo

Fig. 12



ROUTE 66

From the Charles Brown album *One More for the Road*

By Bobby Troup
Recorded in 1989

The piano solo reproduced here represents two choruses of the 12-bar blues and appears at the end of the recording. The overall feel is laid-back and relaxed, typical of Charles Brown and the West Coast blues style.

Figure 13 – Piano Solo (Two Choruses) and Coda

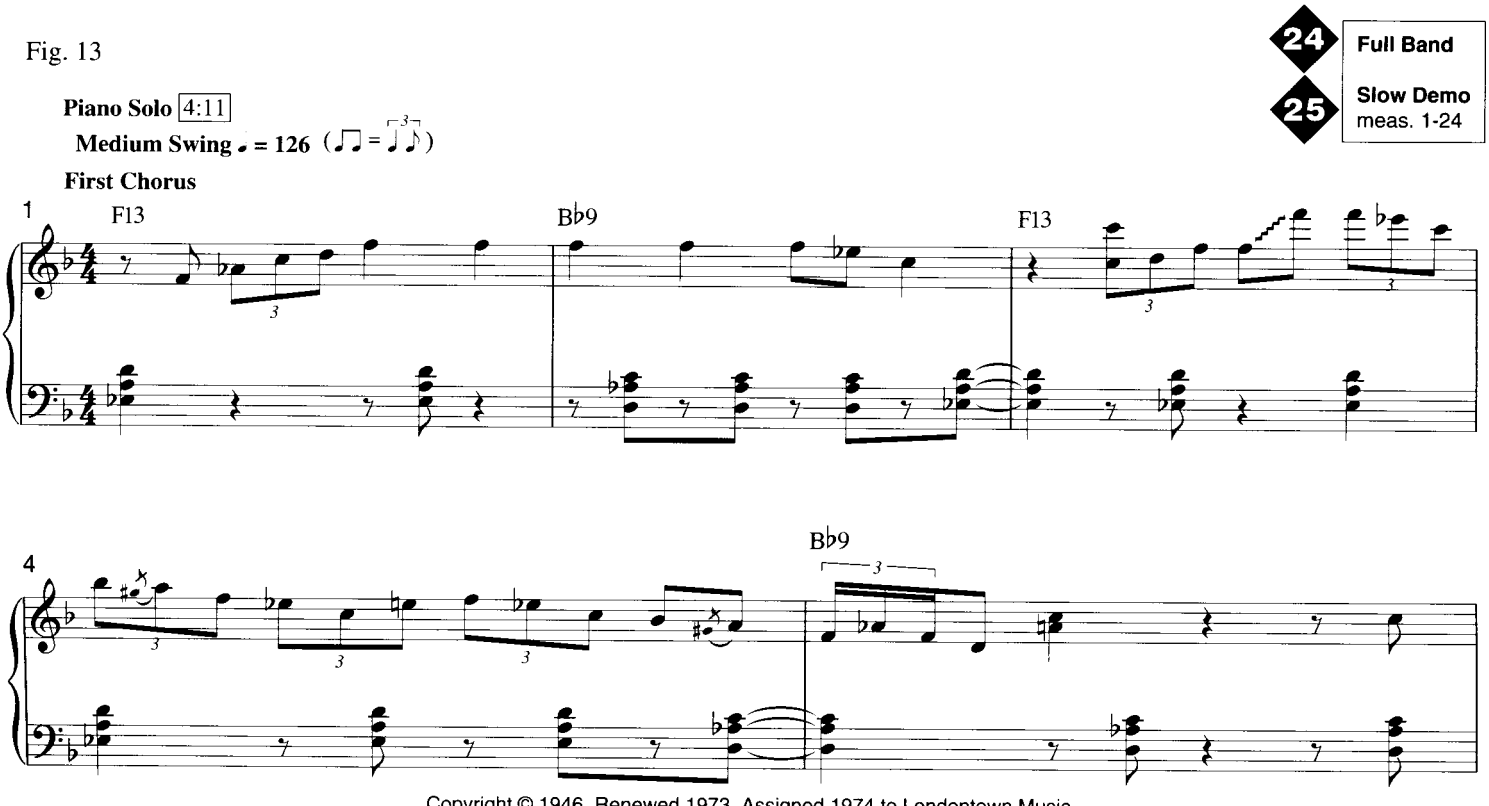
First, note the *glissando* in measure 3. A *glissando*, abbreviated as *gliss*, is a classic blues and rock 'n' roll keyboard effect. The early piano rocker Jerry Lee Lewis just about built his career out of this effect. A gliss is a rapid scale passage performed by quickly sliding over the keys (usually over the white keys, although a black key glissando is also possible). A glissando is represented in the score by a wavy line starting on a note and going up or down on the staff. Most glissandos are descending, but this one is ascending. It is performed by using the back and nail of the right middle finger to slide quickly up the keyboard.

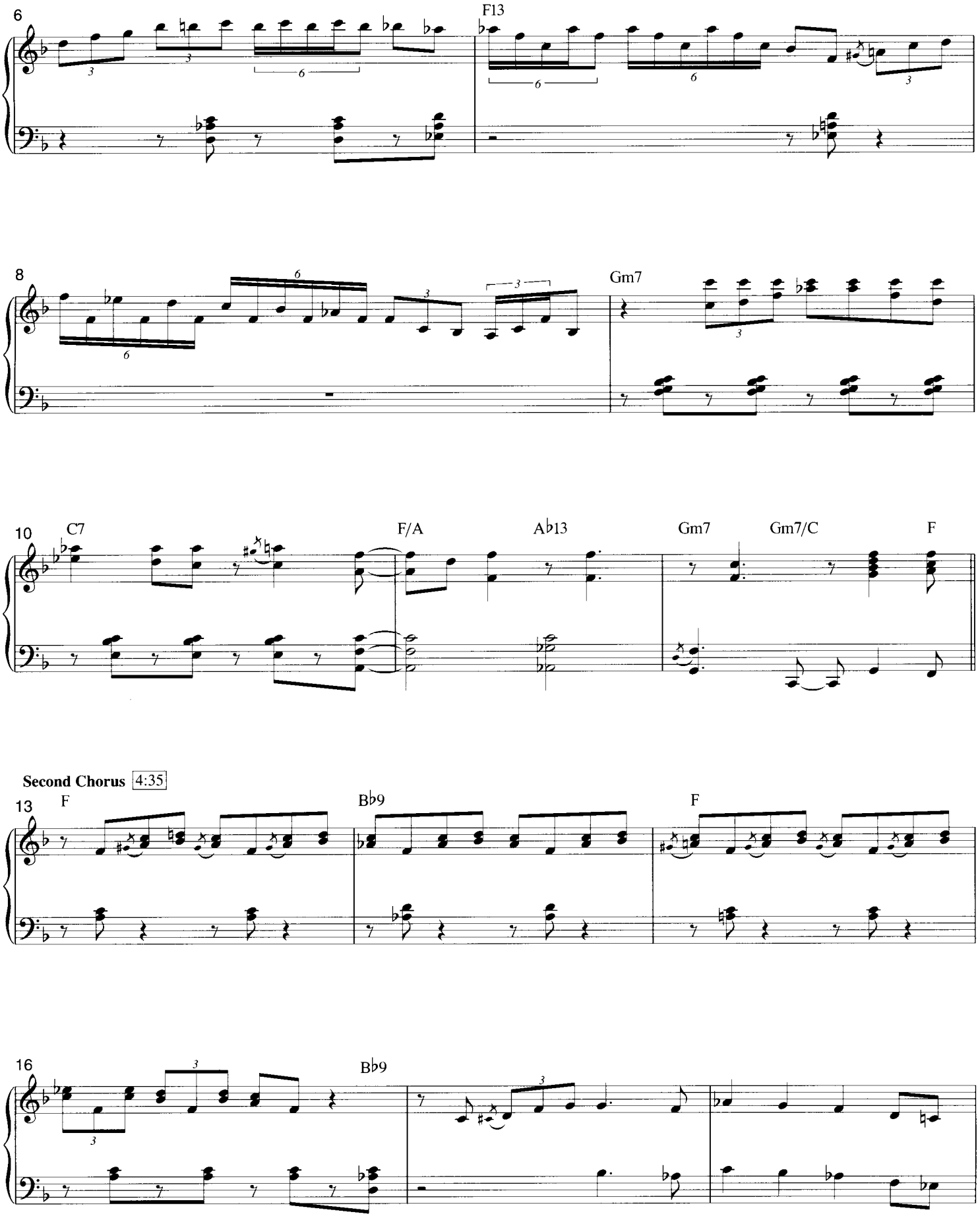
The right hand in the first chorus consists primarily of single-note runs and blues licks using both the traditional F blues scale and the F major blues scale (1–2–♭3–♮3–5–6). Blues lick double stops are used in measures 9 and 10. The blues lick in measure 9, based on the F major blues scale, appears in the lower notes, while the 5th of the key (C) is repeated on top of the double stops.

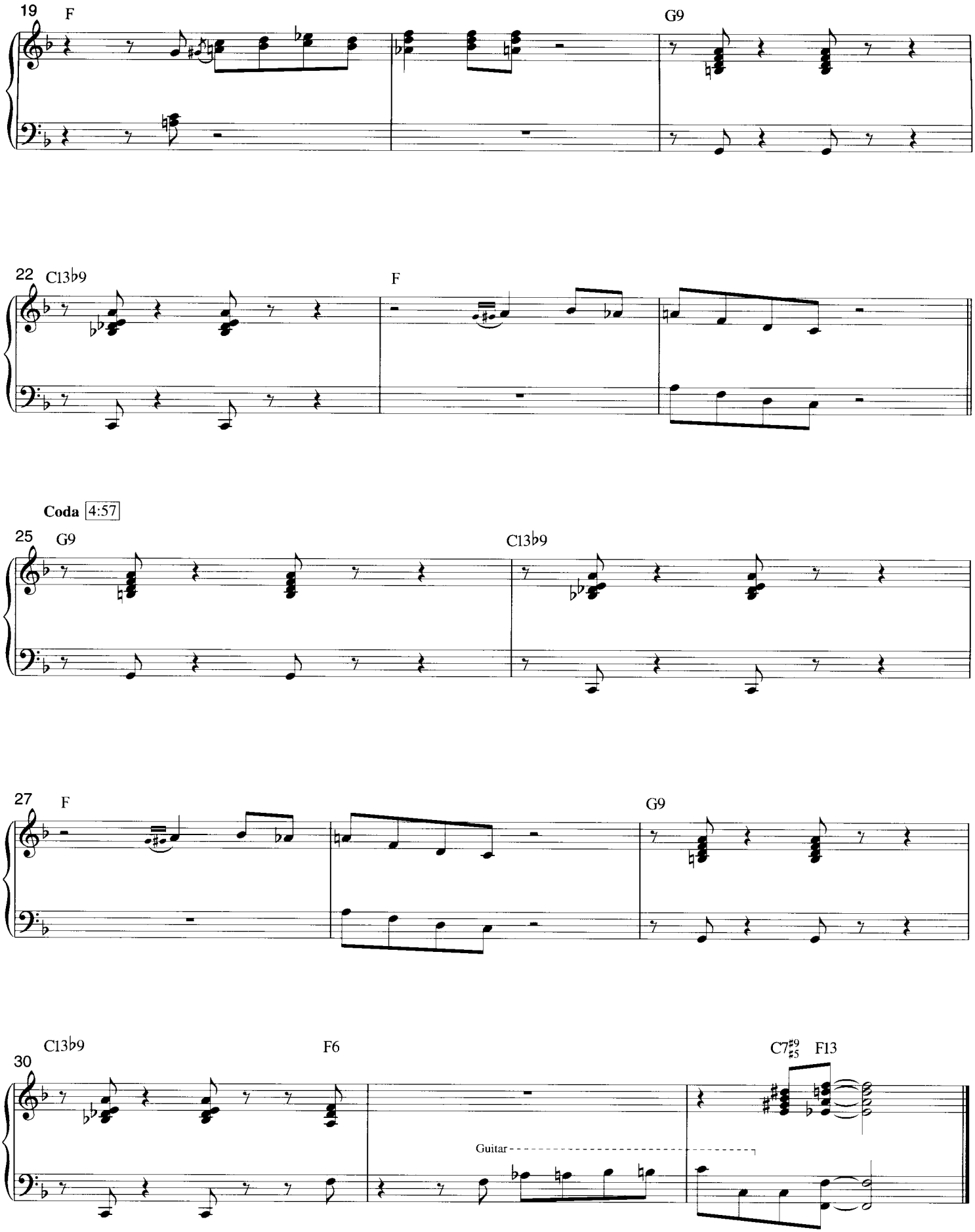
The left hand in the first chorus uses 13th chords in rootless voicings, an accompaniment more common in modern jazz piano than in blues. A nice turnaround is featured in measures 11–12. The second chorus, beginning at measure 13, uses a right-hand lick based on 3rds. The left-hand voicings become even sparser here—simply two-note intervals. There is a nice line based on 6ths in measures 17 and 18. The last chord (F13) features a nice spread voicing. If your hands are not large enough to play 10ths, you can quickly roll this chord.

Fig. 13

24 Full Band
25 Slow Demo
meas. 1-24




6
F13
8
Gm7
10
C7
F/A
A♭13
Gm7
Gm7/C
F
Second Chorus 4:35
13
F
B♭9
F
16
B♭9


19
F
G9
22
C13♭9
F
Coda
4:57
25
G9
C13♭9
27
F
G9
30
C13♭9
F6
C7♯9♯5
F13
Guitar

DIVING DUCK

From the Otis Spann album
The Bottom of the Blues

Words and Music by Otis Spann
Recorded in 1968

Although this is a slow 12/8 blues, the solo is explosive and impassioned. It is also a virtual compendium of blues techniques. Only the right hand is notated here due to the quality of the recording.

Figure 14 – Piano Solo

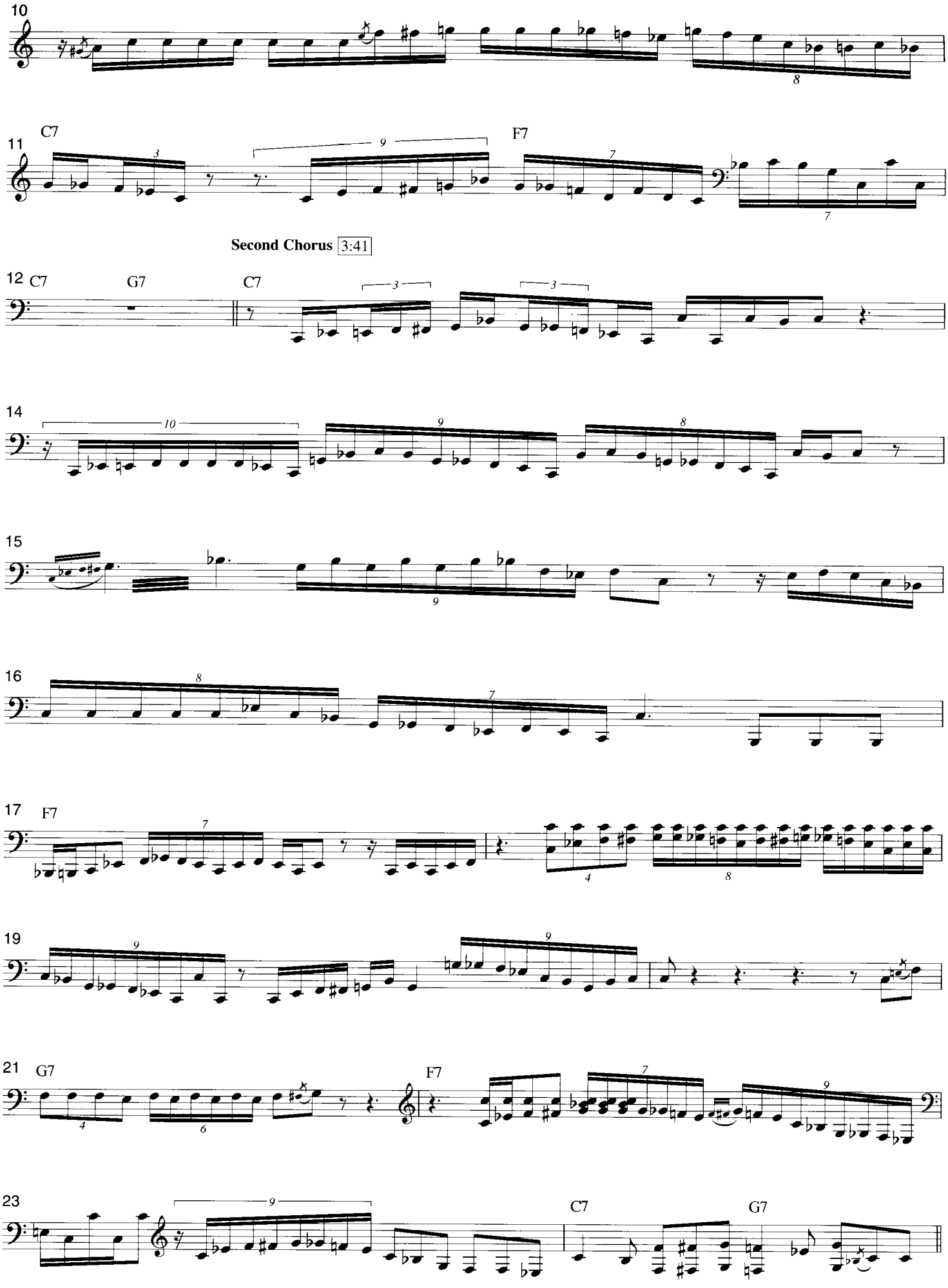
The solo begins with tremolos in measures 1–3 using the notes C and G, the tonic and dominant of the key, respectively. Repeated notes are a common blues technique, and Spann makes substantial and effective use of them throughout this solo. He also repeats short melodic fragments in a rhythmically displaced way in measures 5–6 using the notes F, E♭, and C.

The runs in measures 6, 10, and 11 are based on the traditional C blues scale. Measure 8 features a very short descending gliss, sometimes called a "fall-off." Measure 9 uses repeated notes in an interval of a major 3rd.

The second chorus begins at measure 13, and the right hand plays in the low bass register of the piano. This is an unusual register for a blues piano solo, but it's very effective. Also note the tremolo at measure 15, the repeated notes in measure 16, and the double stops in measure 18, using the tonic note on top and blues licks on the bottom.

Fig. 14

26 Full Band
27 Slow Demo


10
11
C7
F7
Second Chorus 3:41
12 C7
G7
C7
14
15
16
17 F7
19
21 G7
F7
23
C7
G7

CALDONIA (WHAT MAKES YOUR BIG HEAD SO HARD?)

From the Pinetop Perkins album *Live at Antone's, Vol. 1*

Words and Music by Fleecie Moore
Recorded in 1995

Originally a hit for Louis Jordan, "Caldonia" is a rollicking jump blues with nonsensical, light-hearted lyrics. This solo by Pinetop Perkins is an example of using a minimum of musical materials for maximum effect. The left hand is indiscernable on the recording, so only the right hand is reproduced here.

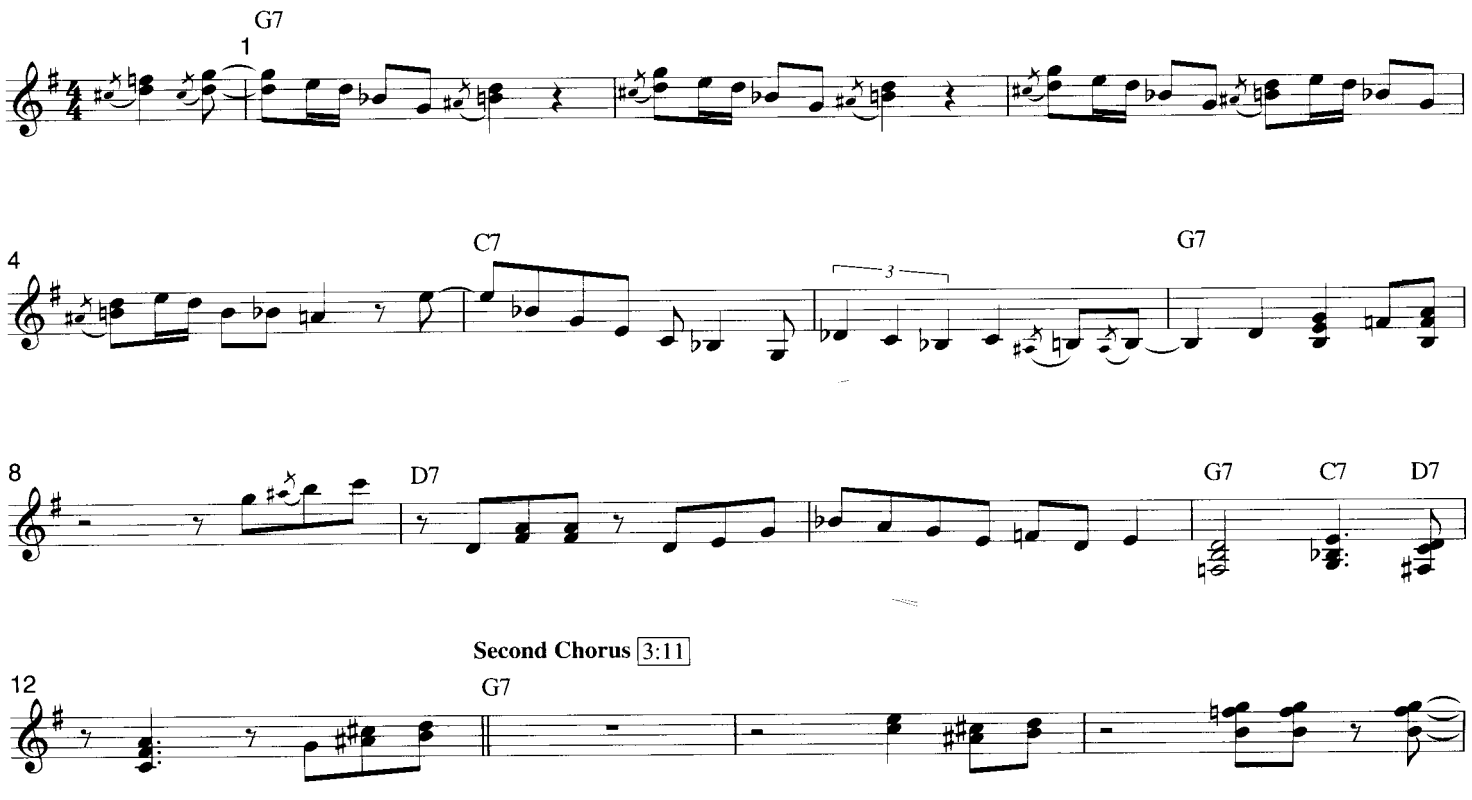
Figure 15 – Piano Solo (Four Choruses)

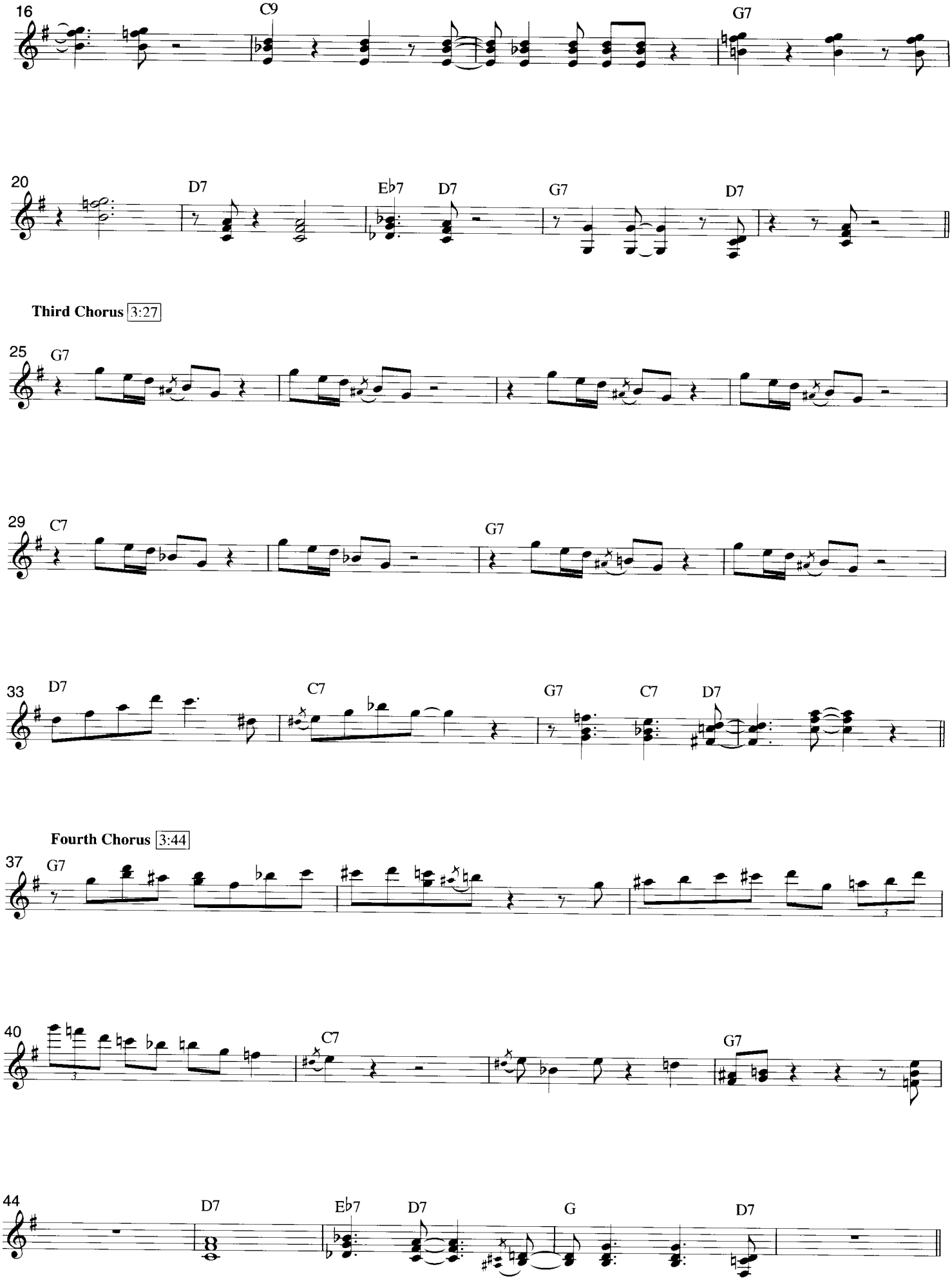
The piano solo mainly uses the G "major" blues scale (G–A–B♭–B–D–E). It begins with a riff in measure 1 that is then repeated almost note-for-note twice before repeating a fragment of the original riff twice. The three-note riff on beats 3 and 4 in measure 12 is simple, but effective. Slightly altered, it is repeated in measure 14.

Measure 25 features a riff beginning on beat 2. In the next measure the same riff is repeated beginning on beat 1. Measures 27–28 repeat the previous two measures, and in measure 29 the same riff is altered slightly to fit the C7 chord. Ultimately this single riff is played eight times, a great example of using a minimum of musical materials and repetition effectively.

Fig. 15

28 Full Band
29 Slow Demo meas. 37-42




16
C9
G7
20
D7
E♭7
D7
G7
D7
Third Chorus 3:27
25
G7
29
C7
G7
33
D7
C7
G7
C7
D7
Fourth Chorus 3:44
37
G7
40
C7
G7
44
D7
E♭7
D7
G
D7

BIG CHIEF

From the Professor Longhair album

Crawfish Fiesta

By Earl King

Recorded in 1980

"Big Chief" is an infectious party song that incorporates an exotic Caribbean rumba beat in the left hand. Note that this song uses "straight eighths"—that is, the eighth notes are played without swing.

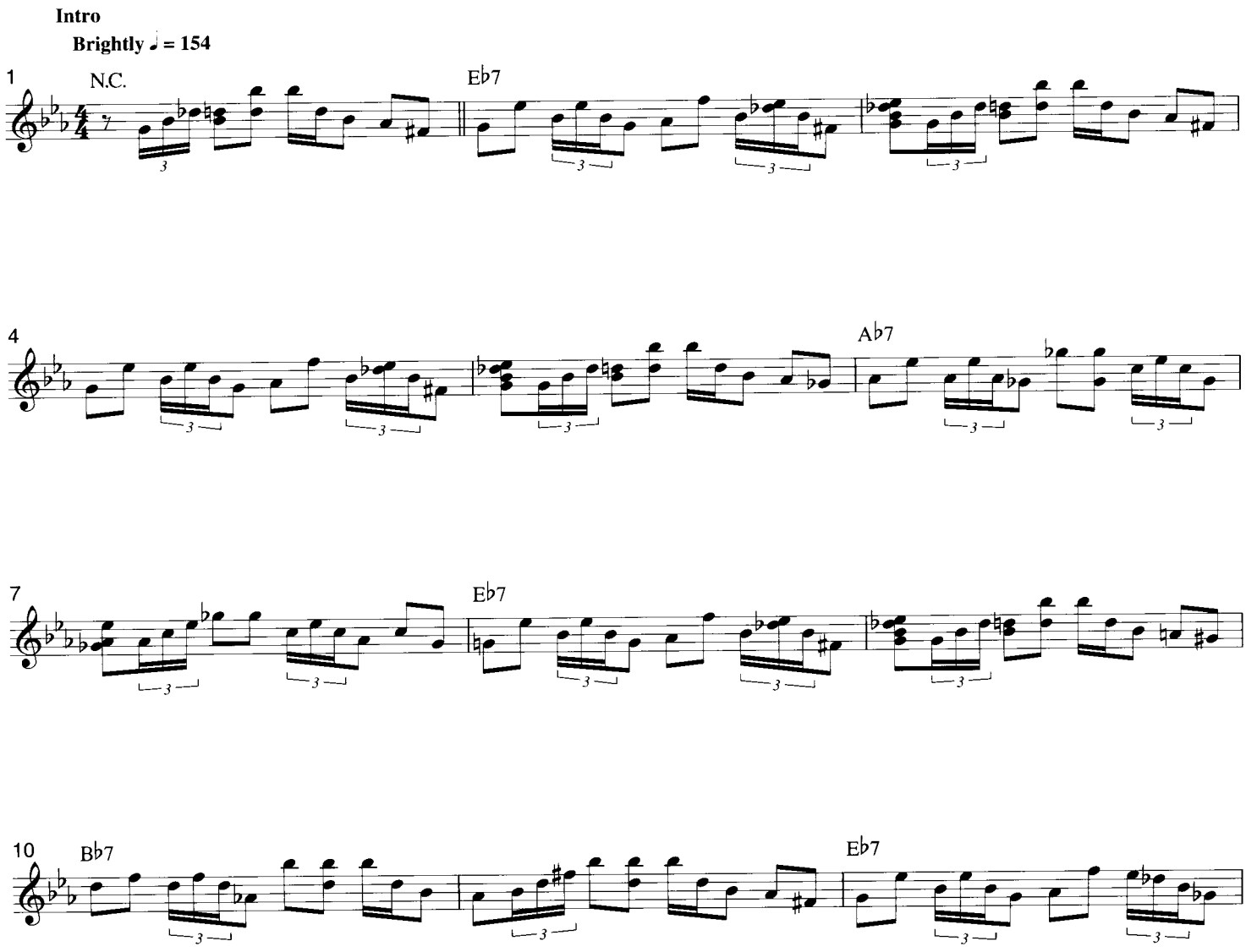
Figure 16 – Intro

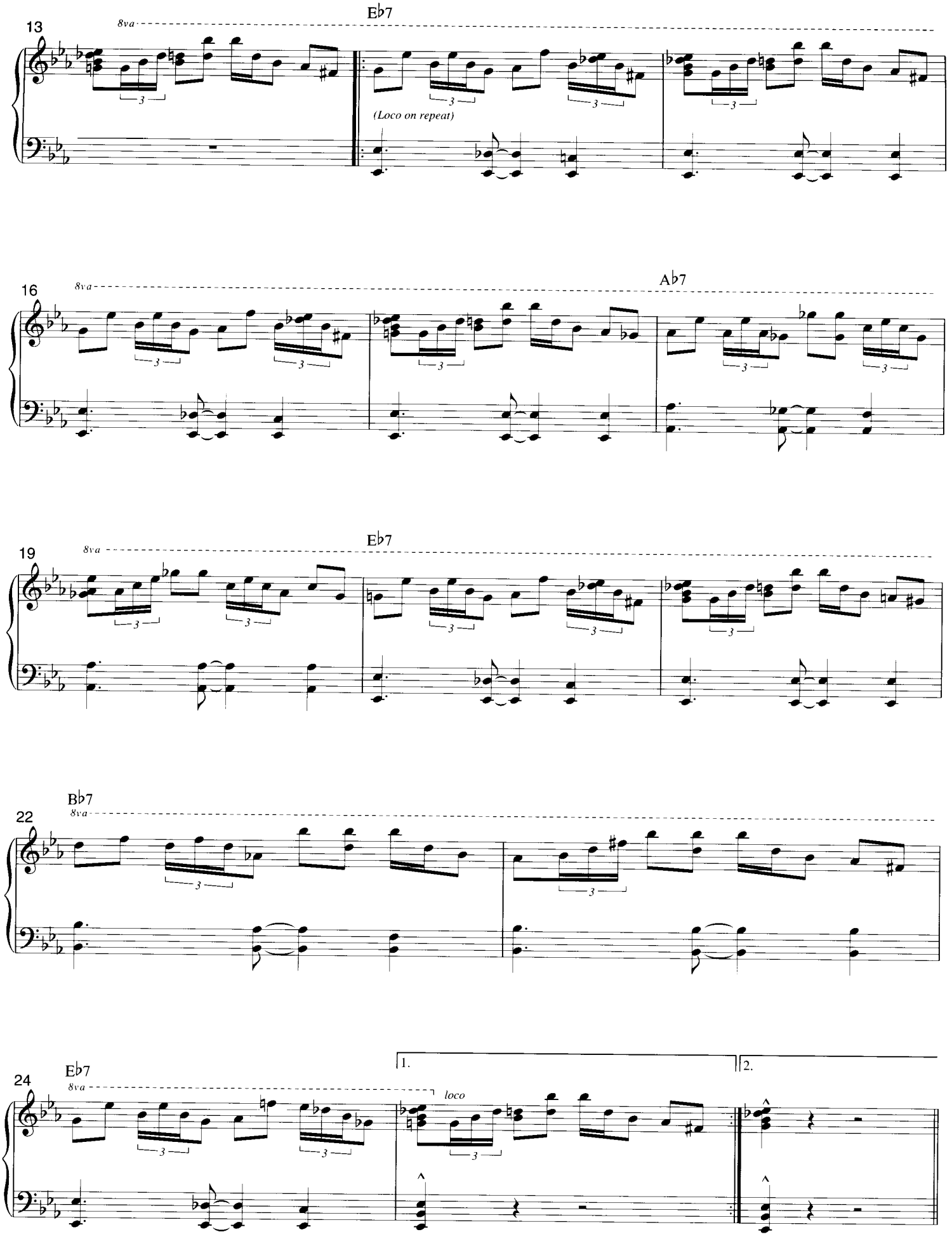
Here is another example of building a rollicking feel out of a minimum of musical materials. The song begins with a rolling figure in the right hand based on broken 7th chords and emphasizing the alternation of the minor 3rd (G♭ or F♯) and the major 3rd (G) of the E♭ major tonic chord. In measure 14, the left hand features double stops in a constant rumba rhythm. This rhythmic feel is often called a "rumba boogie."

30 Full Band

31 Slow Demo
meas. 8-13

Fig. 16




13
E♭7
8va
(Loco on repeat)
16
A♭7
8va
19
E♭7
8va
22
B♭7
8va
24
E♭7
8va
1.
2.
loco

BLUEBERRY HILL

From the Fats Domino album
The Fats Domino Jukebox

Words and Music by Al Lewis, Larry Stock and Vincent Rose
Recorded in 1956

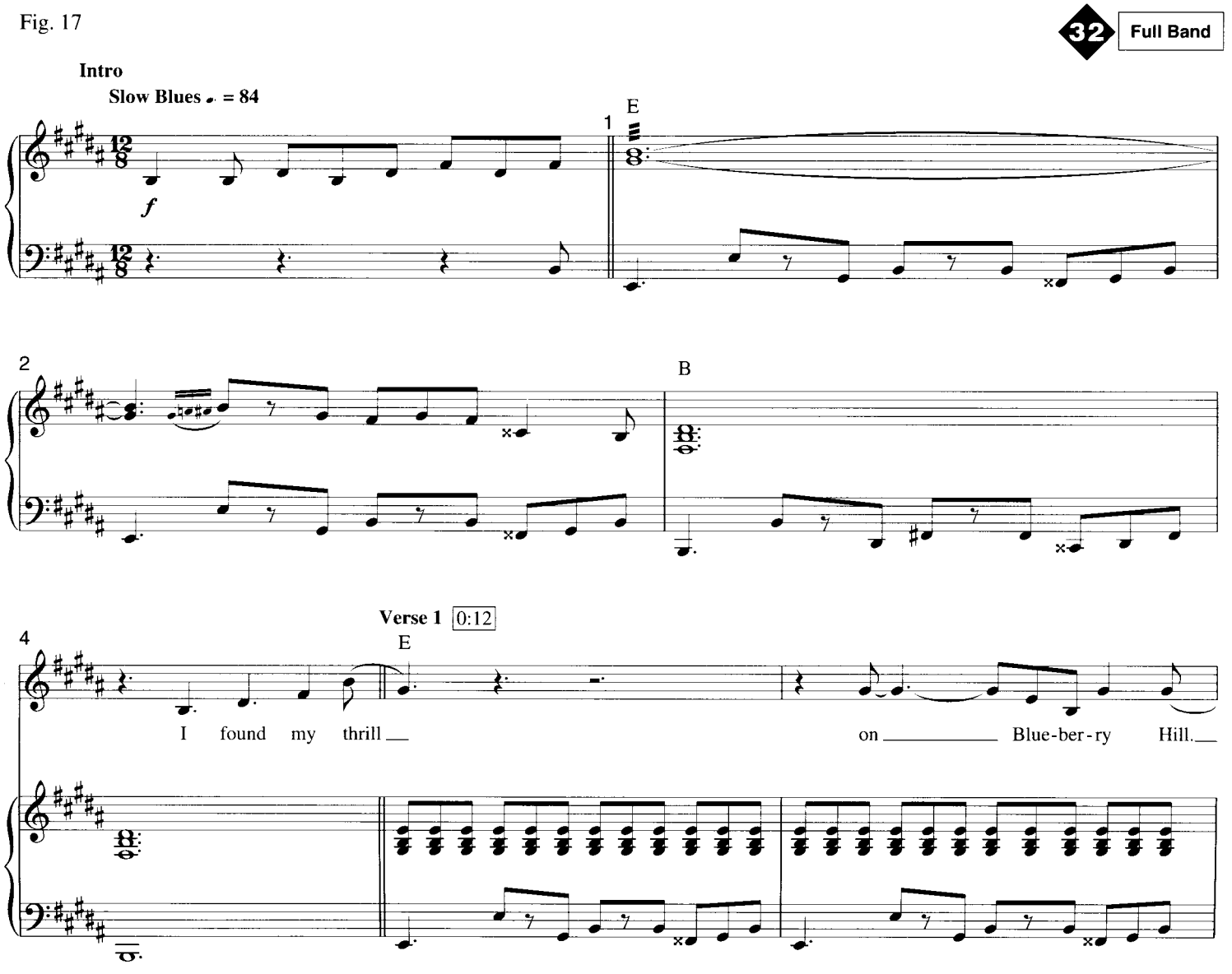
"Blueberry Hill" is Fats Domino's best-remembered single. While not a 12-bar blues, "Blueberry Hill" has become part of the blues repertoire. The song is really a standard 32-bar pop tune in AABA form, like Hoagy Carmichael's "Georgia on My Mind," which is also part of the blues repertoire.

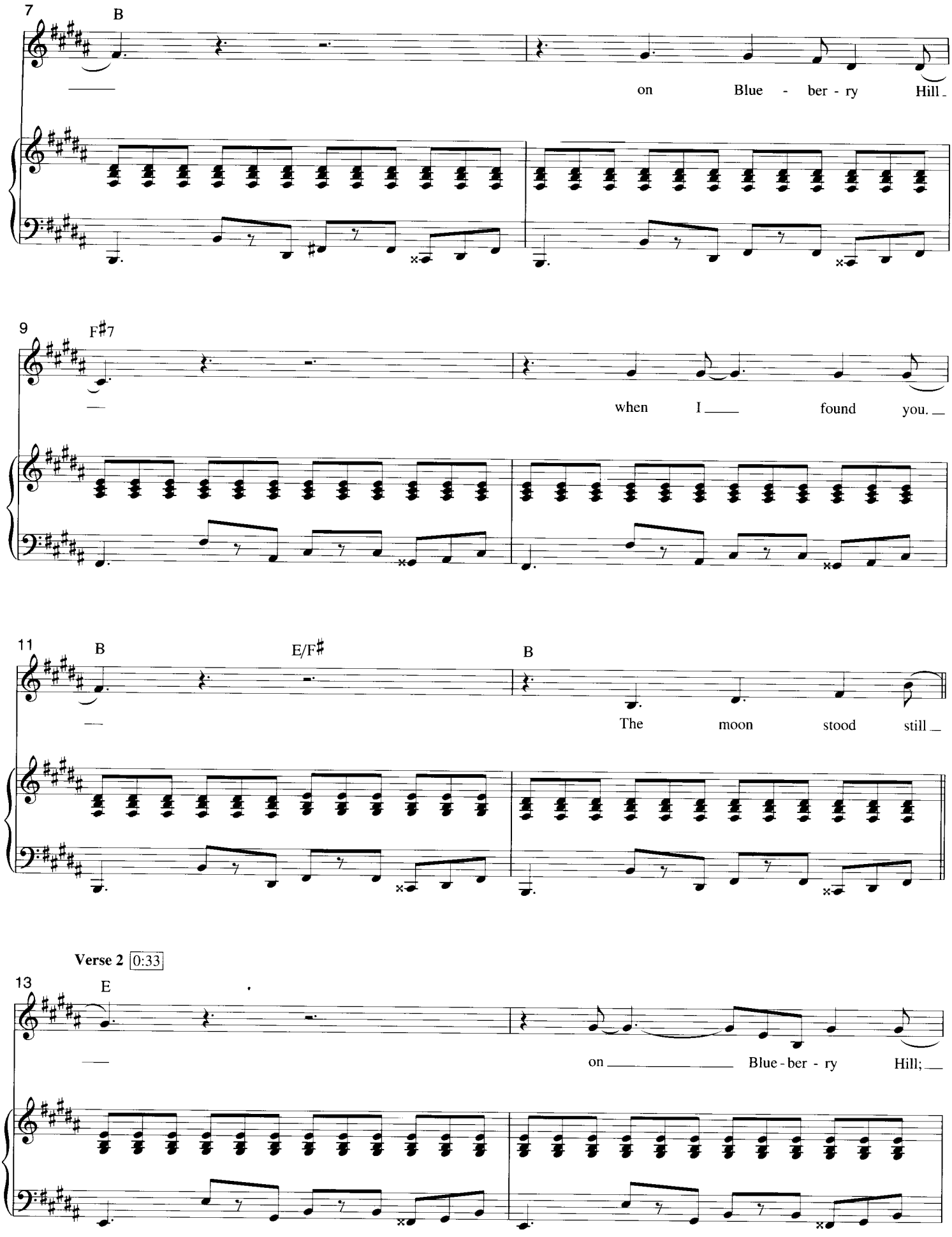
Figure 17 – Intro, First and Second Verses, and Bridge

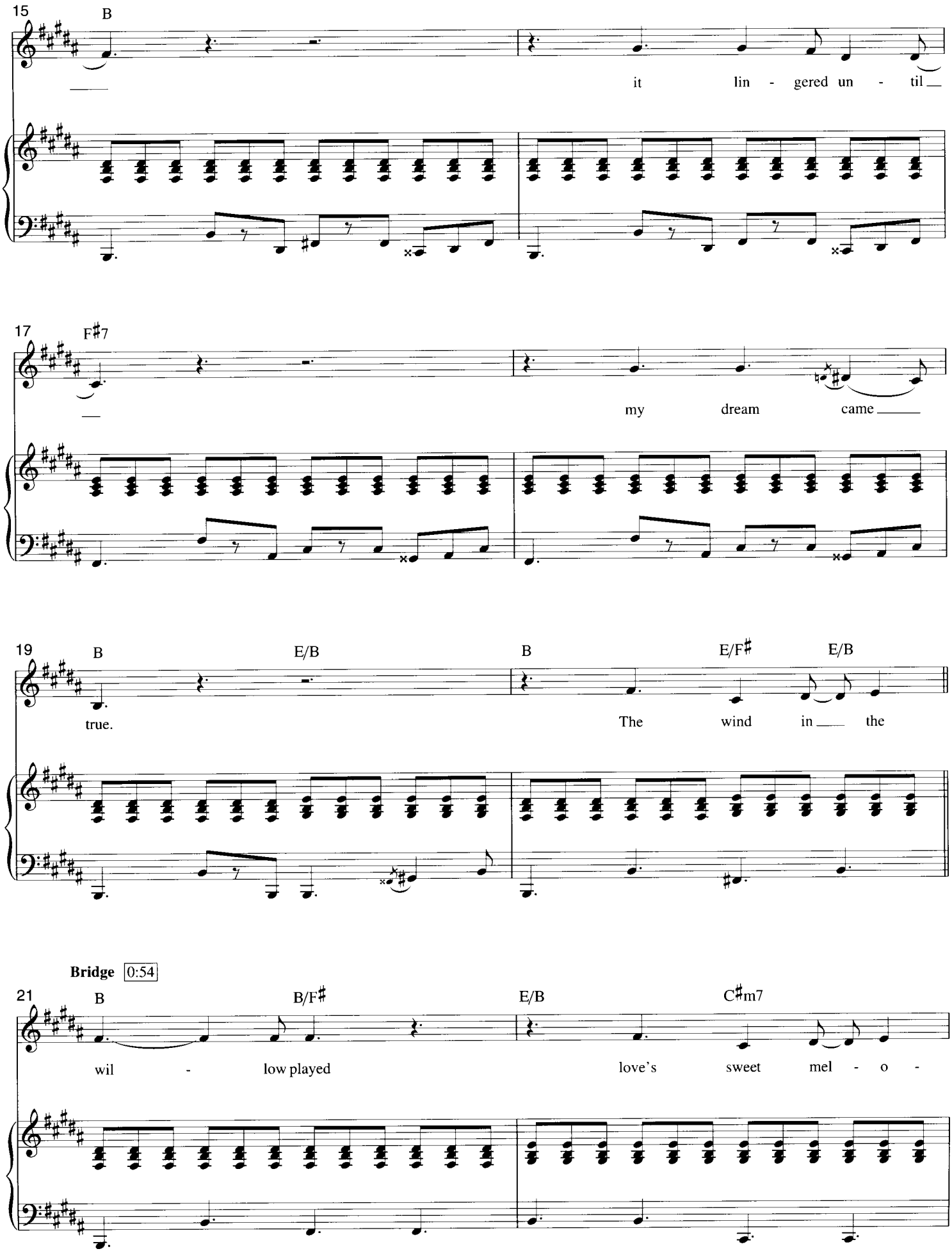
Domino treats the song, a standard from the 1940s, as if it were a slow blues in 12/8 time. The left-hand pattern, based on broken chords, is the most common left-hand pattern used in slow piano blues. The right hand plays triads in constant triplets. As in blues, the harmony in the verse is I–IV–V, although it begins on a IV chord.

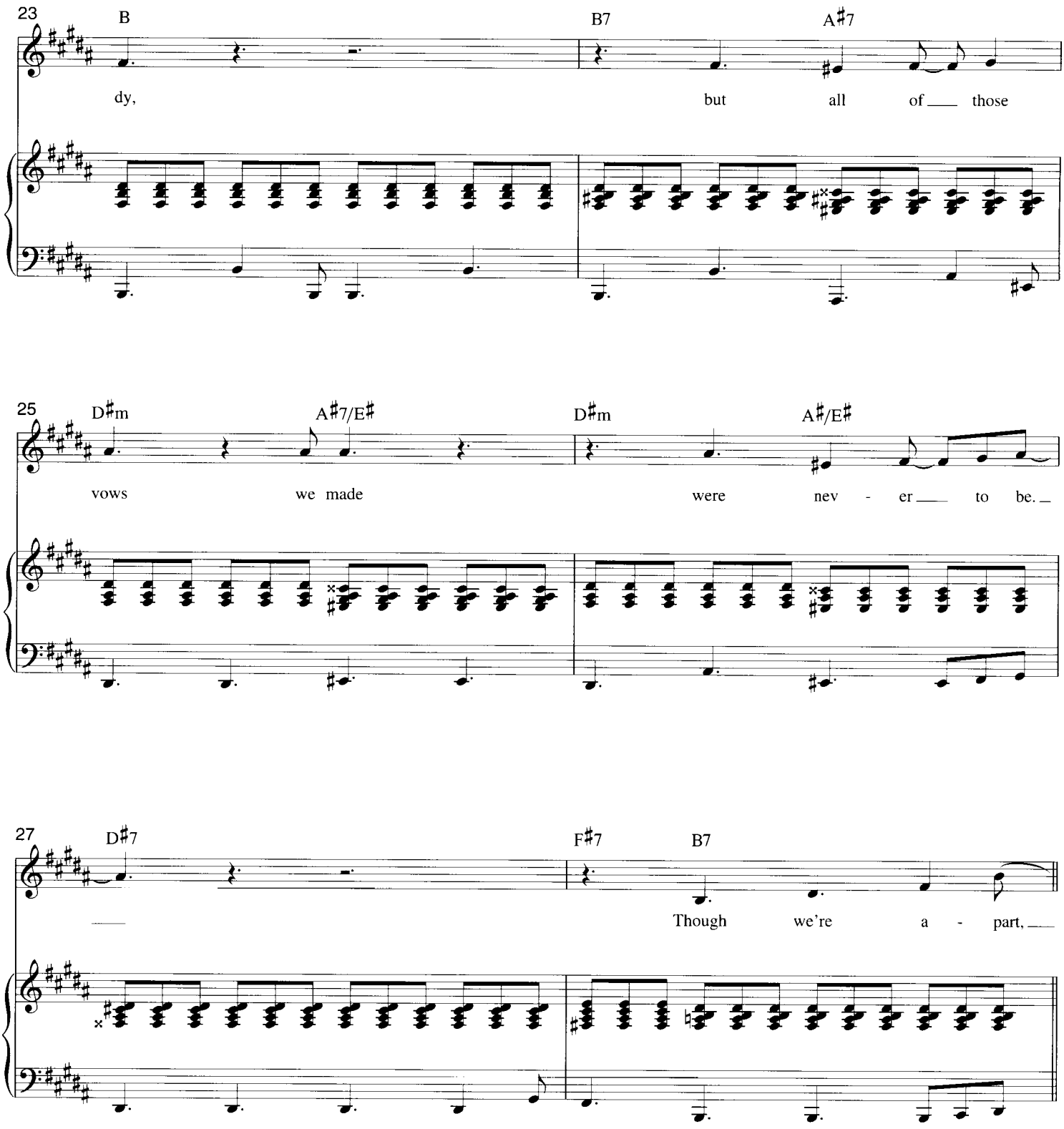
The intro makes use of a right-hand tremolo in measure 2 and a grace-note slide in measure 3. The bridge wanders into some new harmonic territory, but it soon returns to the key of B.

Fig. 17




7
B
on Blue - ber - ry Hill
9
F♯7
when I found you.
11
B
E/F♯
B
The moon stood still
Verse 2 0:33
13
E
on Blue - ber - ry Hill;


15
B
it lin - gered un - til
17
F♯7
my dream came
19
B
E/B
B
E/F♯
E/B
true.
The wind in the
Bridge 0:54
21
B
B/F♯
E/B
C♯m7
wil - low played
love's sweet mel - o -


23
B
B7
A♯7
dy,
but all of ___ those
25
D♯m
A♯7/E♯
D♯m
A♯/E♯
vows we made
were nev - er ___ to be. _
27
D♯7
F♯7
B7
___
Though we're a - part, ___

TIPITINA

From the Dr. John album *Gumbo*

By Henry Roeland Byrd
Recorded in 1972

There are many variations on the 12-bar blues. "Tipitina" is an 8-bar blues. This piece is played with an underlying funky feel, with the eighth notes played straight and not swung.

Figure 18 – Intro

Note that the left-hand pattern is similar to the slow blues pattern of "Blueberry Hill," except that here the eighth notes are played straight.

Fig. 18

33 Full Band
34 Slow Demo

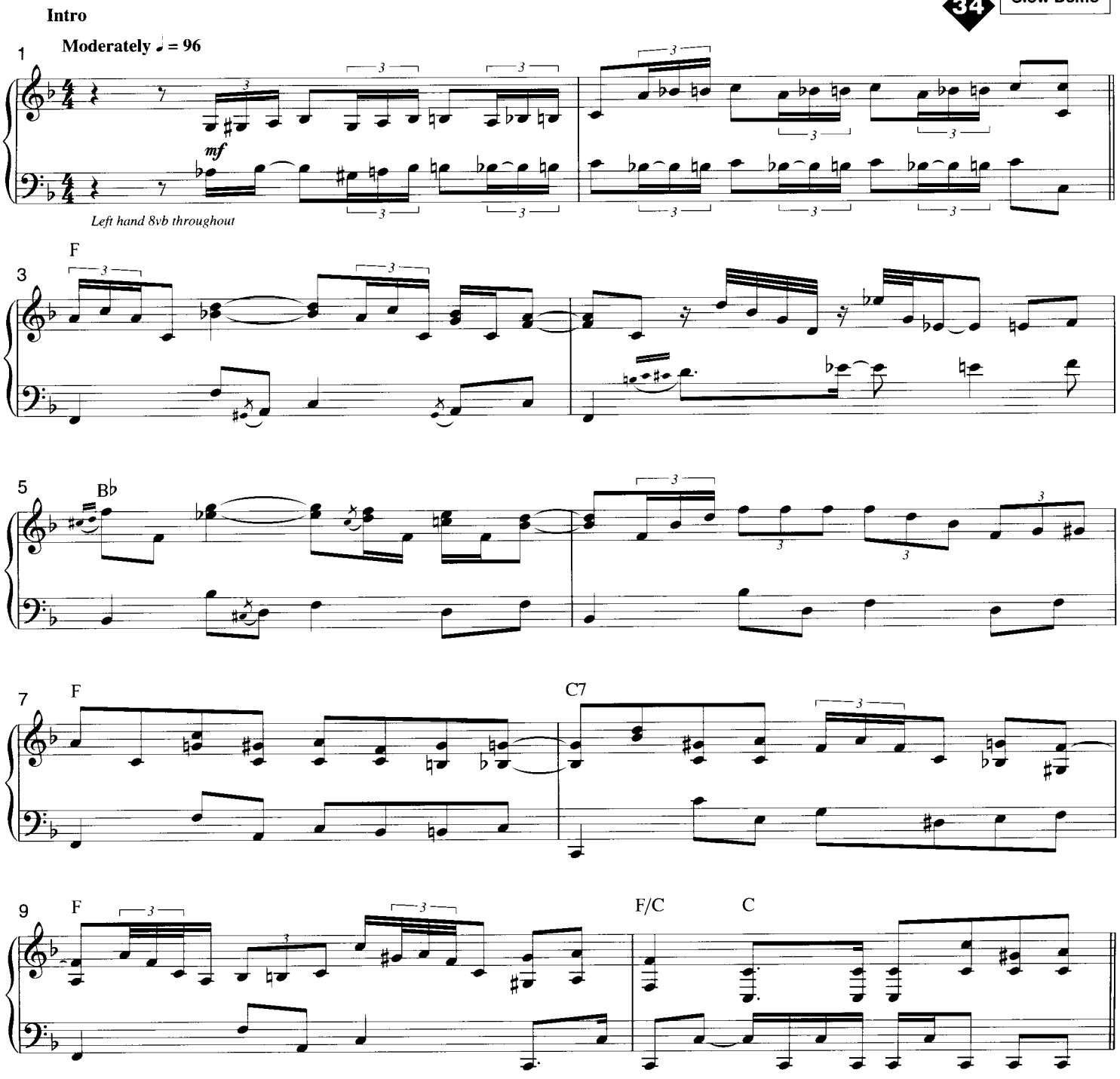


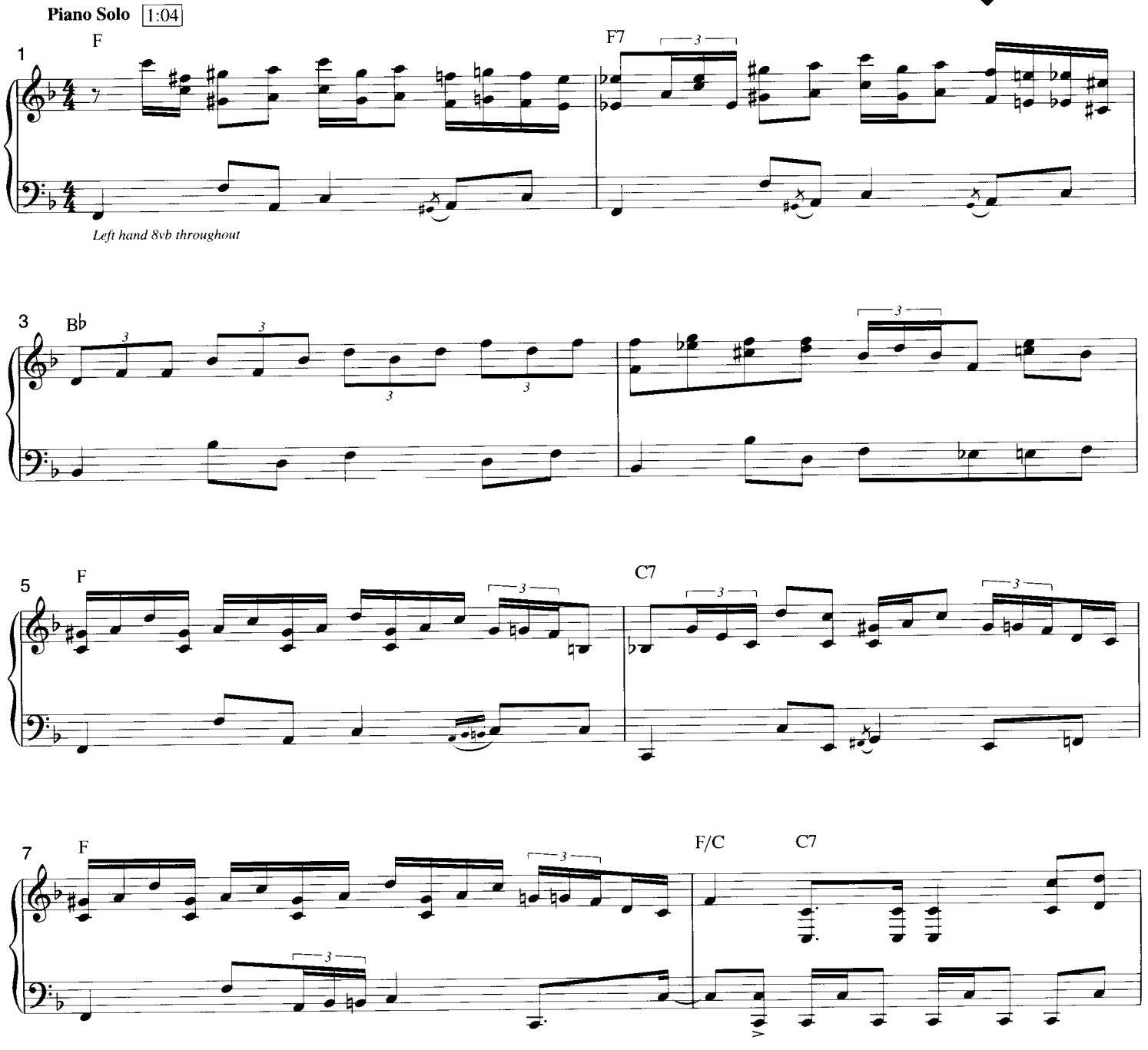
Figure 19 – Piano Solo

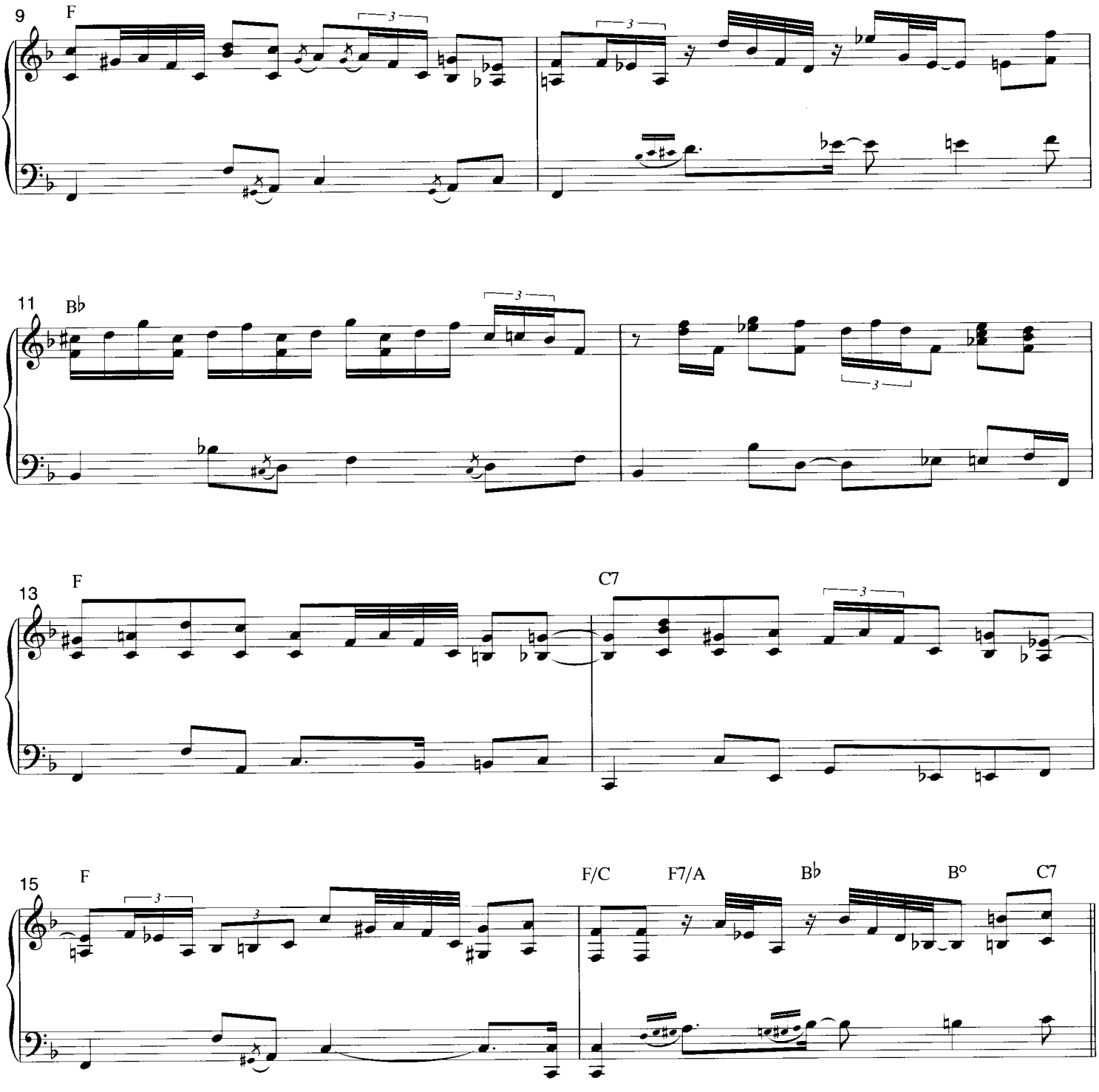
The piano solo represents two 8-bar choruses. The left hand keeps up its broken chord pattern, enlivened by the use of occasional grace-note slides, such as the ones in measures 2, 5, and 16. The right hand makes use of octaves in measures 1–2 and broken-chord figures in 3. Measures 5 and 7 feature a three-note melodic lick (G♯–A–D alternating with G♯–A–C) played in a syncopated rhythm—the three notes are played four times in the span of three beats. Dr. John plays the same lick at measure 11 over the B♭ chord. The short lick on the fourth beat of both measures 6 and 7 is based on the "major" F blues scale (F–G–G♯–A–C–D).

Throughout the entire excerpt Dr. John alternates G♯ (or A♭), which is the minor 3rd of the tonic F chord, with A, the major 3rd. For example, measure 9 contains three separate instances of G♯ sliding into A.

35 Full Band
36 Slow Demo

Fig. 19




9
F
11
B♭
13
F
C7
15
F
F/C
F7/A
B♭
B°
C7

LEARN THE TRADEMARK SONGS AND SOLOS OF THE BLUES PIANO MASTERS

Big Chief ■ PROFESSOR LONGHAIR

Blueberry Hill ■ FATS DOMINO

(The Original) Boogie Woogie ■ PINE TOP SMITH

Caldonia (What Makes Your Big Head So Hard?) ■ PINETOP PERKINS

Confessin' the Blues ■ JAY McSHANN

Cow Cow Blues ■ COW COW DAVENPORT

Cryin' in My Sleep ■ JIMMY YANCEY

Diving Duck ■ OTIS SPANN

Everyday I Have the Blues ■ MEMPHIS SLIM

Honky Tonk Train (Honky Tonk Train Blues) ■ MEADE "LUX" LEWIS

The Pearls ■ JELLY ROLL MORTON

Roll 'Em Pete ■ PETE JOHNSON

Route 66 ■ CHARLES BROWN

Tipitina ■ DR. JOHN

k $9.95, CD $10.00 = Pkg $19.95
Parts not sold separately

0 73999 95841 6
HL 00695841

HAL•LEONARD®

ISBN 0-634-07902-6

9 780634 079023