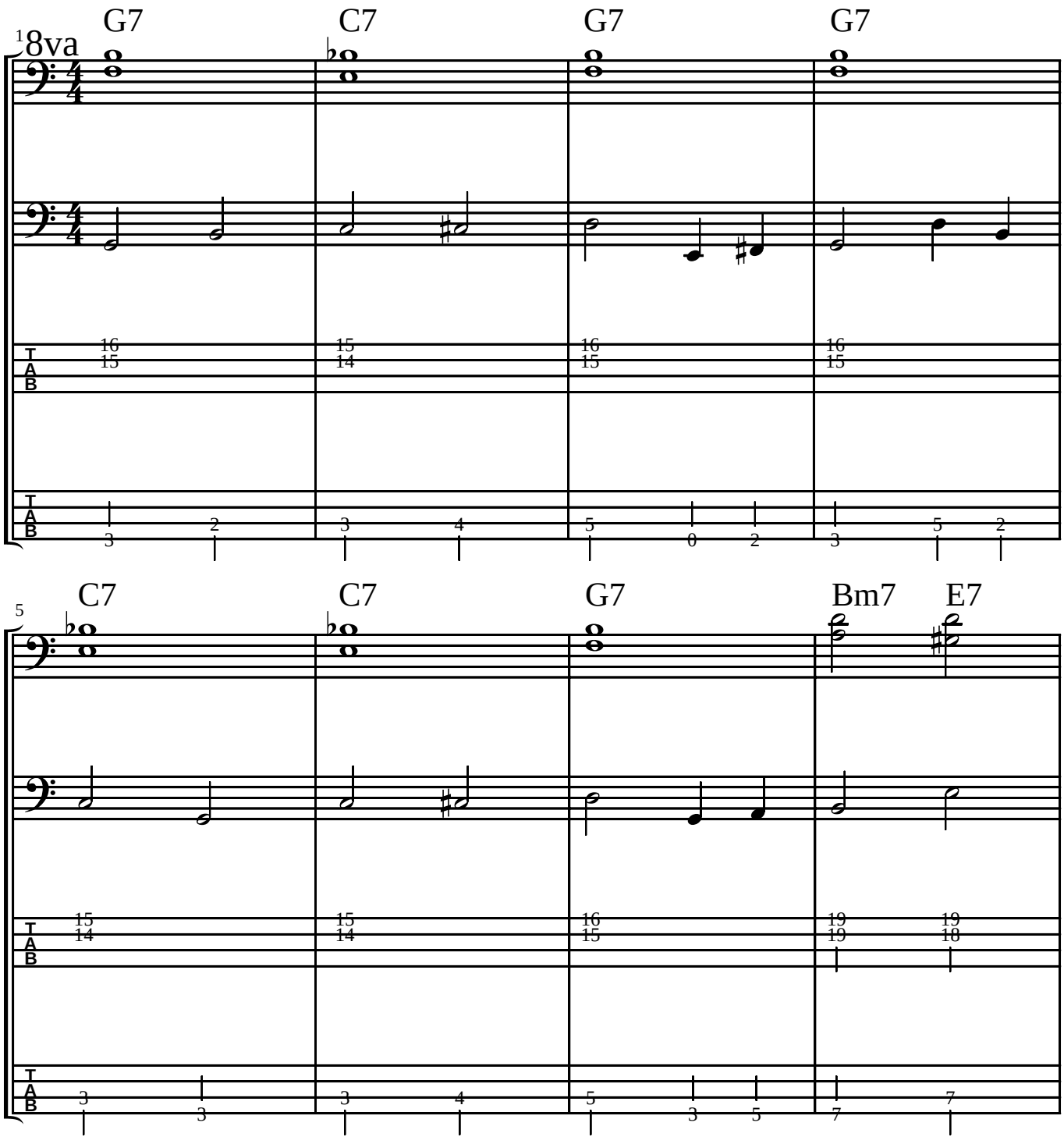
Contemporary Tapping Techniques

The Blues

By Cliff Engel



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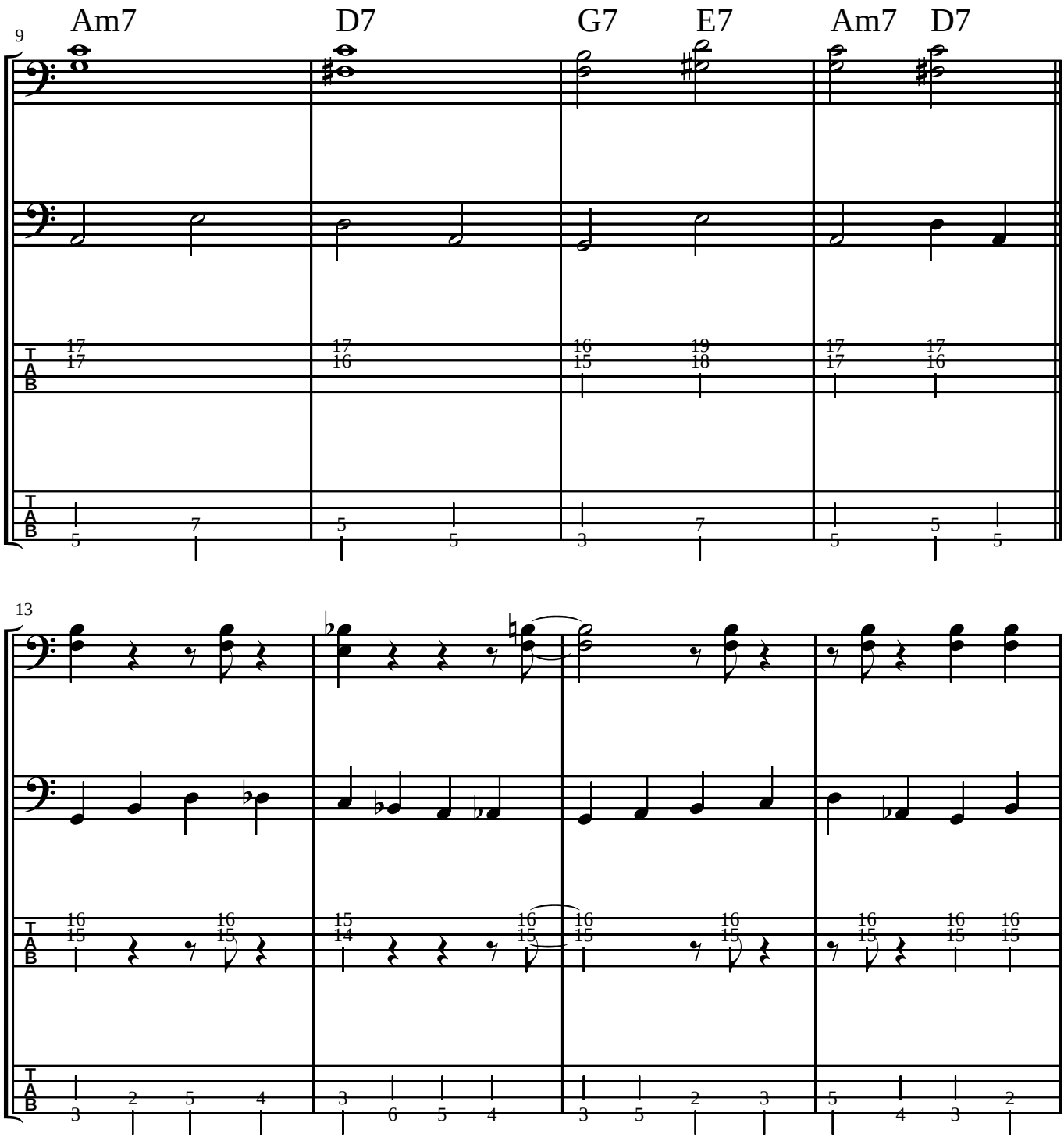
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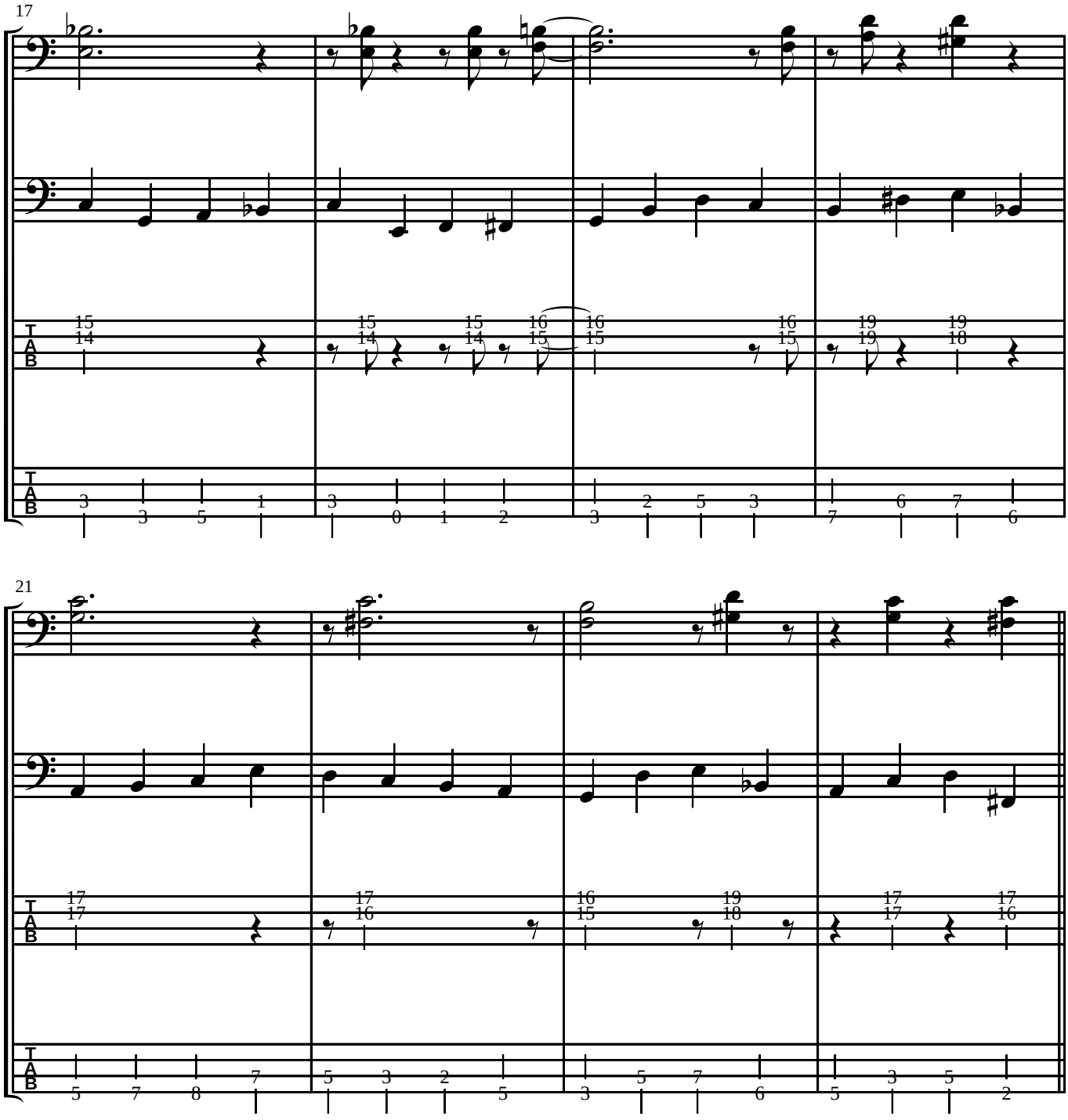
Am7
D7
G7
E7
Am7
D7
13


17
T
A
B
15 15 15 16 16 16 19 19
14 14 14 15 15 15 19 18
3 3 5 1 3 0 1 2 3 2 5 3 7 6 7 6
21
17 17 16 19 17 17
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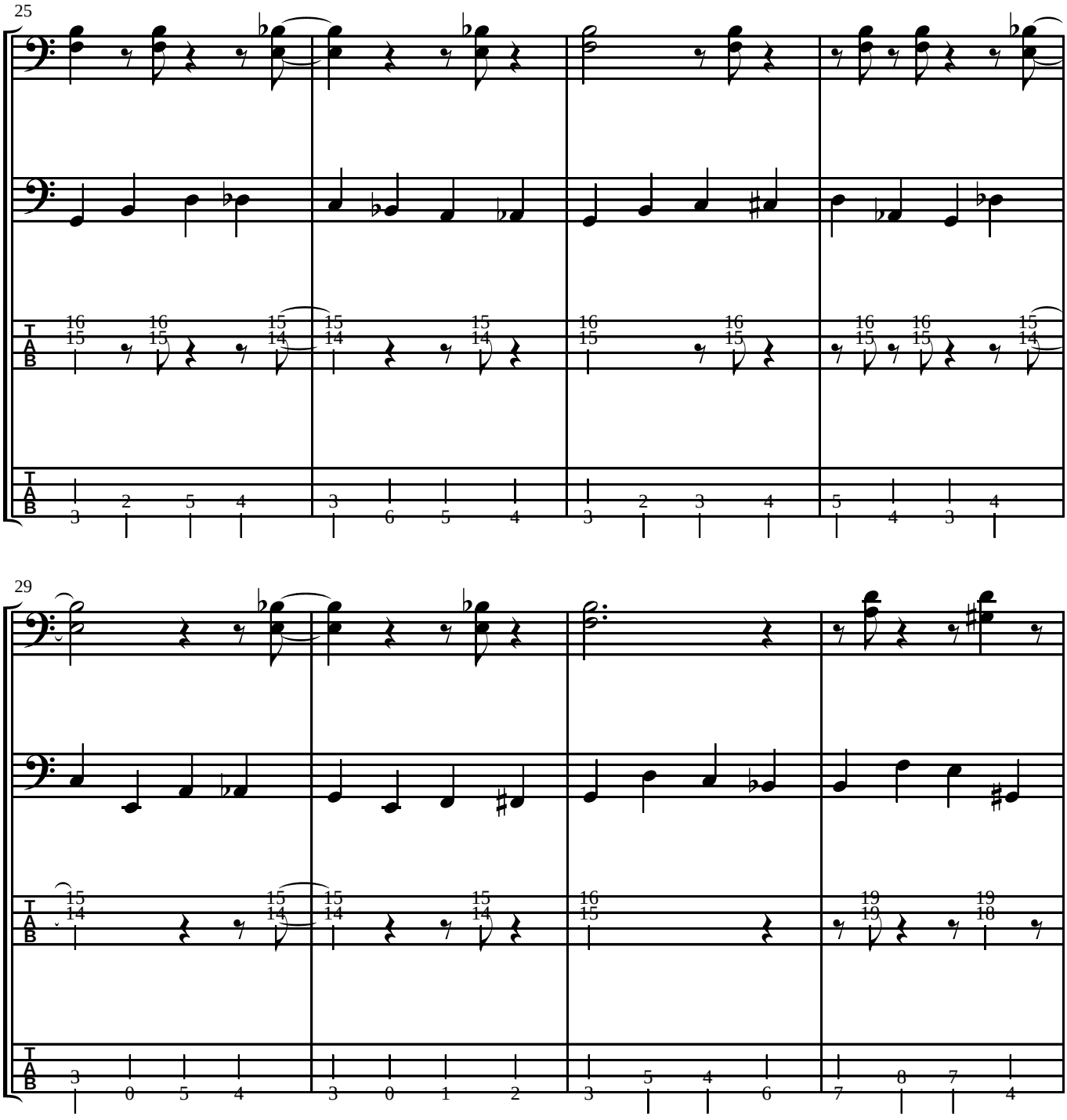
5 7 8 7 5 3 2 5 3 5 7 6 5 3 5 2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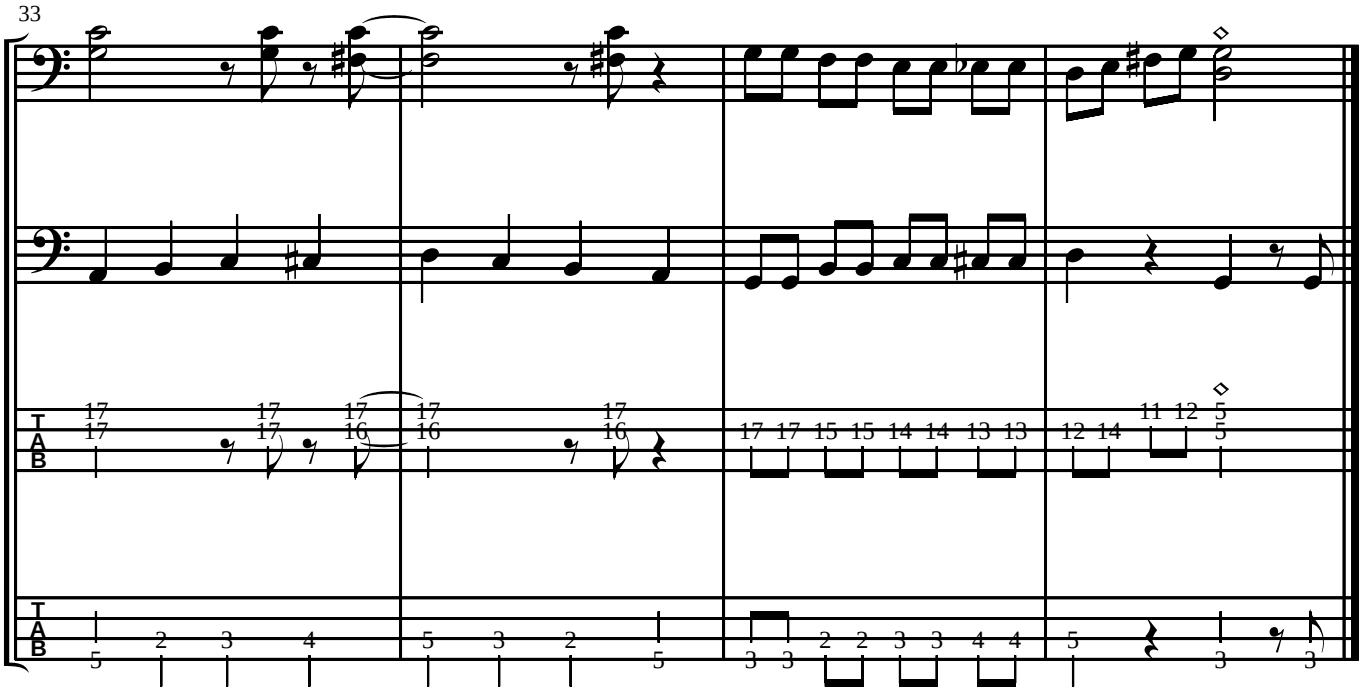

I'd like to take a closer look at two-handed tapping techniques on electric bass and offer some suggestions on how you can begin to effectively incorporate these techniques into your own compositions and performances. Within this lesson, you will find three chorus' of a very common jazz-based blues progression. Using two-handed tapping techniques, this blues progression can be easily performed on a 4-string electric bass in standard tuning. The concept here is really quite simple. Located in the top staff, you will see the chordal accompaniment composed of chord tones which will be tapped with the right hand on the D and G-strings. (Note that the top staff is to be played one octave above where it is notated.) In the bottom staff, I have notated one of the many possible walking lines a jazz bassist could utilize which will be tapped with the left hand on the E and A-strings. I have also included tablature along with the standard notation so you can see the exact positions of the fingerboard that I am using. The tablature has been included to serve only as a source of reference for those fingerings. In some instances, the walking lines could be played in a position other than the one that is indicated in the tablature.

By tapping the blues in this fashion with both hands, you are essentially performing the duties of a bassist and a pianist or guitar player simultaneously. In the first twelve measures, the right hand is outlining the changes with simple chord tones while the left hand plays in "the two feel." During the second chorus, the right hand begins to comp chords similar to the way in which a pianist or guitar player would provide chordal accompaniment while the left hand walks through the changes using arpeggiated, scalar, and chromatic-based walking bass lines. In the final twelve measures, the right hand continues in a similar fashion with more syncopated chordal comping as the left hand smoothly connects the chord changes. Note that on beat three in the final measure I am activating a set of natural harmonics at the fifth fret of the D and G-strings. Although the actual tones that sound are notated as a D and G in standard notation, the tablature demonstrates where the notes are physically located on the fingerboard.