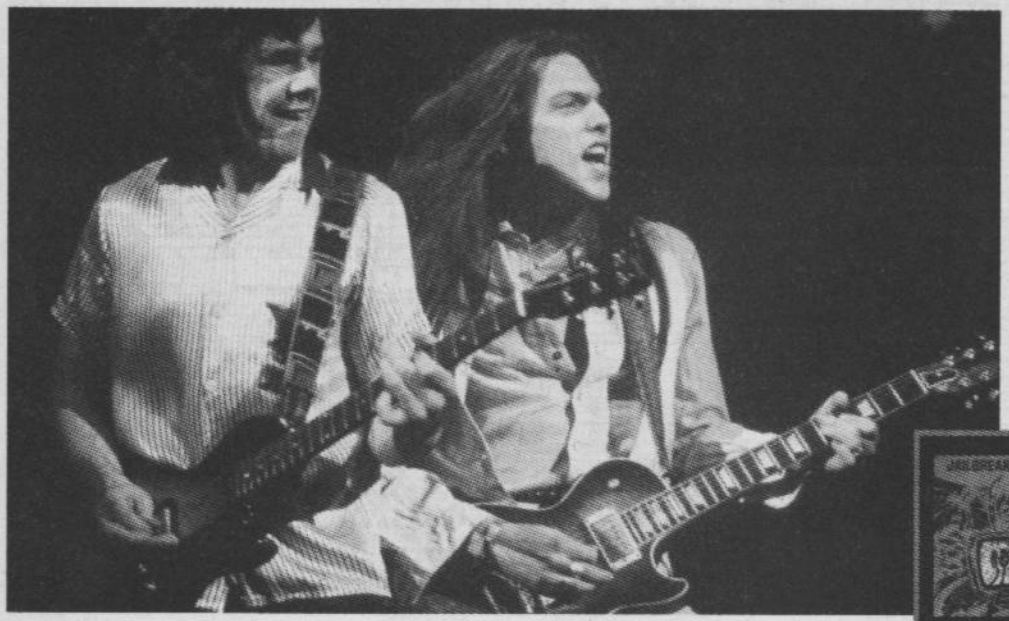
# "The Boys Are Back in Town" Thin Lizzy

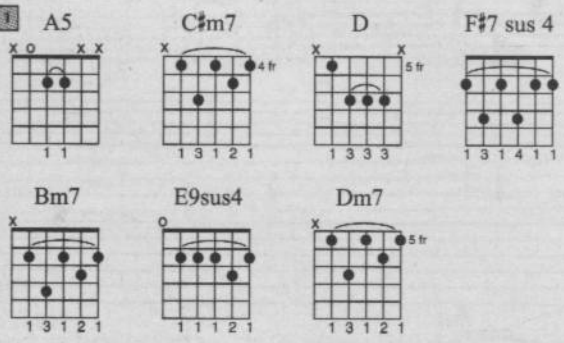


**ALBUM**
*Jailbreak*
(Mercury)

**By Tom Kolb**

It was a long, hard road, but Irish rockers Thin Lizzy finally hit pay dirt in 1976 with the release of their breakthrough album, *Jailbreak*. Formed in 1969 by charismatic singer/songwriter/bassist Phil Lynott, the band underwent several personnel changes—guitarist Gary Moore was in and out of the band several times—before assembling the winning lineup for *Jailbreak*—co-lead guitarists Brian Robertson and Scott Gorham; drummer Brian Downey; and, of course, bassist and lead vocalist Lynott. The album's success was due in no small part to its smash-hit single, "The Boys Are Back in Town." Propelled by a pounding rock-shuffle beat, the song boasts an irresistible shout-along chorus, infectious twin-guitar harmonies, an intriguing chord progression, and a great story line, all topped off with Lynott's captivating, Bruce Springsteen–like vocal delivery.

**Fig. 1**




### THE TUNING

To play along with Phil and the boys, you'll need to tune all of your strings down a half step (low to high: E♭–A♭–D♭–G♭–B♭–E♭). However, to jam with the CD-ROM's play-along track, just stick with standard tuning.

### THE CHORDS

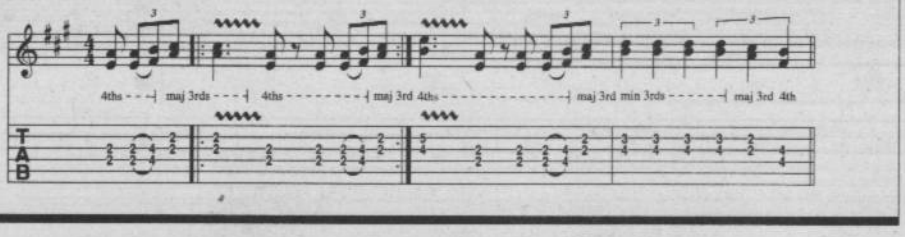
The intro and choruses of "The Boys Are Back in Town" are driven by a straight-ahead I–ii–IV progression (A5–B5–D5). These voicings are standard power-chord fare; what truly makes the song unique is the verse's I–iii–IV–VI–iii–VI–ii7–V progression (A5–C♯m7–D–F♯7sus4–C♯m7–F♯7sus–Bm7–E9sus4). What's going on? Is this a jazz tune? If it weren't for the initial A5 chord and the grinding distorted guitars, it could be. There's even some harmonic substitution—Dm7 stands in for F♯7sus4 in the second section of the verse (bar 12). **Fig. 1** arms you with the voicings you'll need to tackle this part of the song. Be careful not to use an excessive amount of distortion, which will make the chords sound murky, and remember to add the chord-partial accent that occurs on the "and" of almost every beat 3.

### TWIN-GUITAR LEADS

Chord progressions aside, twin-guitar breaks are the real stars of the show here. Liberally sprinkled throughout the song, these leads appear in the interlude that directly follows each chorus, and again in the outro. Similar to the pioneering twin-guitar parts of Duane Allman and Dickey Betts, the majority of Thin Lizzy's lines are crafted from the A major pentatonic scale, with the addition of a 4th (A–B–C♯–D–E–F♯). Additionally, the final interlude draws from the A Mixolydian mode (A–B–C♯–D–E–F♯–G).

As Gtr. 1 plays the main melody, Gtr. 2 harmonizes with a pleasing combination of minor 3rds, major 3rds, and perfect 4ths. **Fig. 2** arranges this passage for one guitar. Notice that at the top of measure 3, the harmony opts for an E/B dyad (4th) rather than an E/C♯ (minor 3rd). Opting for 4ths is common practice when crafting twin-guitar harmony lines in the style of the Allman Brothers.

**Fig. 2**




ADRIAN BOOT/RETNA

**TONE ZONE**
**GUITARS 1–4:** Solidbody
**PICKUP/POSITION:** Humbucker/Bridge
**GAIN:** 6
**EQ:** Bass/Mid/Treble: 3/6/7

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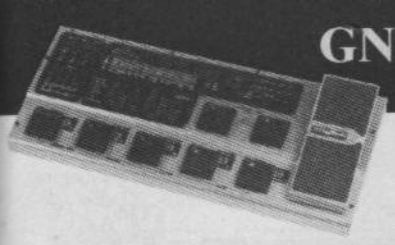


# THE BOYS ARE BACK IN TOWN

## As Recorded by Thin Lizzy

(From the Mercury Recording JAILBREAK)

*Words and Music by Phil Lynott*

TRACK 60
ON THE CD

### Lyrics

**Verse 1**
Guess who just got back today?
Them wild-eyed boys that had been away.
Haven't changed, hadn't much to say,
But man, I still think them cats are crazy.
They were asking if you were around,
How you was, where you could be found.
I told them you were livin' downtown,
Driving all the old men crazy.

**Chorus**
The boys are back in town.
The boys are back in town.
I said, the boys are back in town…

**Verse 2**
You know that chick that used to dance a lot?
Every night she'd be on the floor shakin' what she'd got.
Man, when I tell you she was cool, she was red hot,
I mean she was steamin'.
And that time over at Johnny's place,
Well, this chick got up and she slapped Johnny's face.
Man, we just fell about the place.
If that chick don't wanna know, forget her.

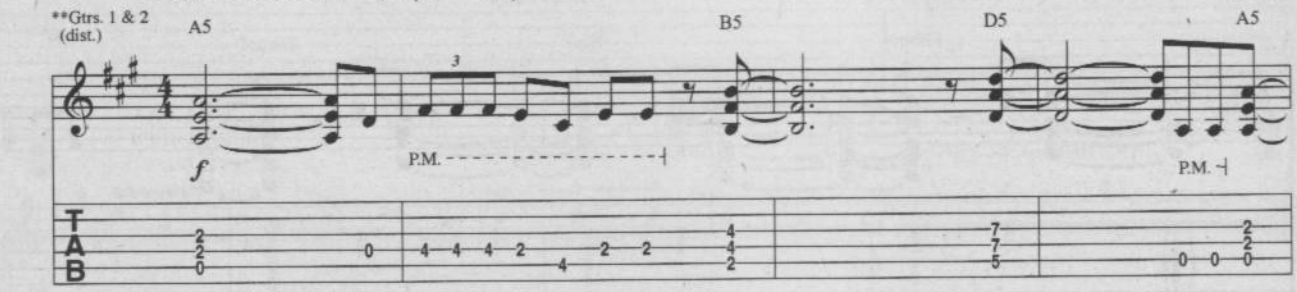
**Bridge**
Spread the word around.
Guess who's back in town?
You spread the word around.

**Verse 3**
Friday night, they'll be dressed to kill
Down at Dino's Bar and Grill.
The drink will flow and blood will spill,
And if the boys want to fight, you'd better let 'em.
That jukebox in the corner blastin' out my favorite songs,
The nights are getting' warmer, it won't be long,
Won't be long till summer comes,
Now that the boys are here again.

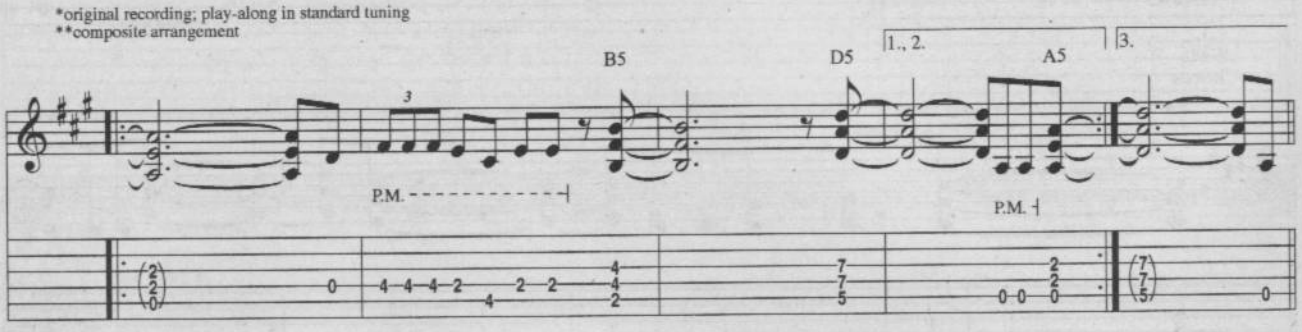
*Tune down 1/2 step:
(low to high) E♭–A♭–D♭–G♭–B♭–E♭

**Intro**

**Moderate Fast Rock ♩ = 128 (♫ = ♩³♪)**




*original recording; play-along in standard tuning
**composite arrangement

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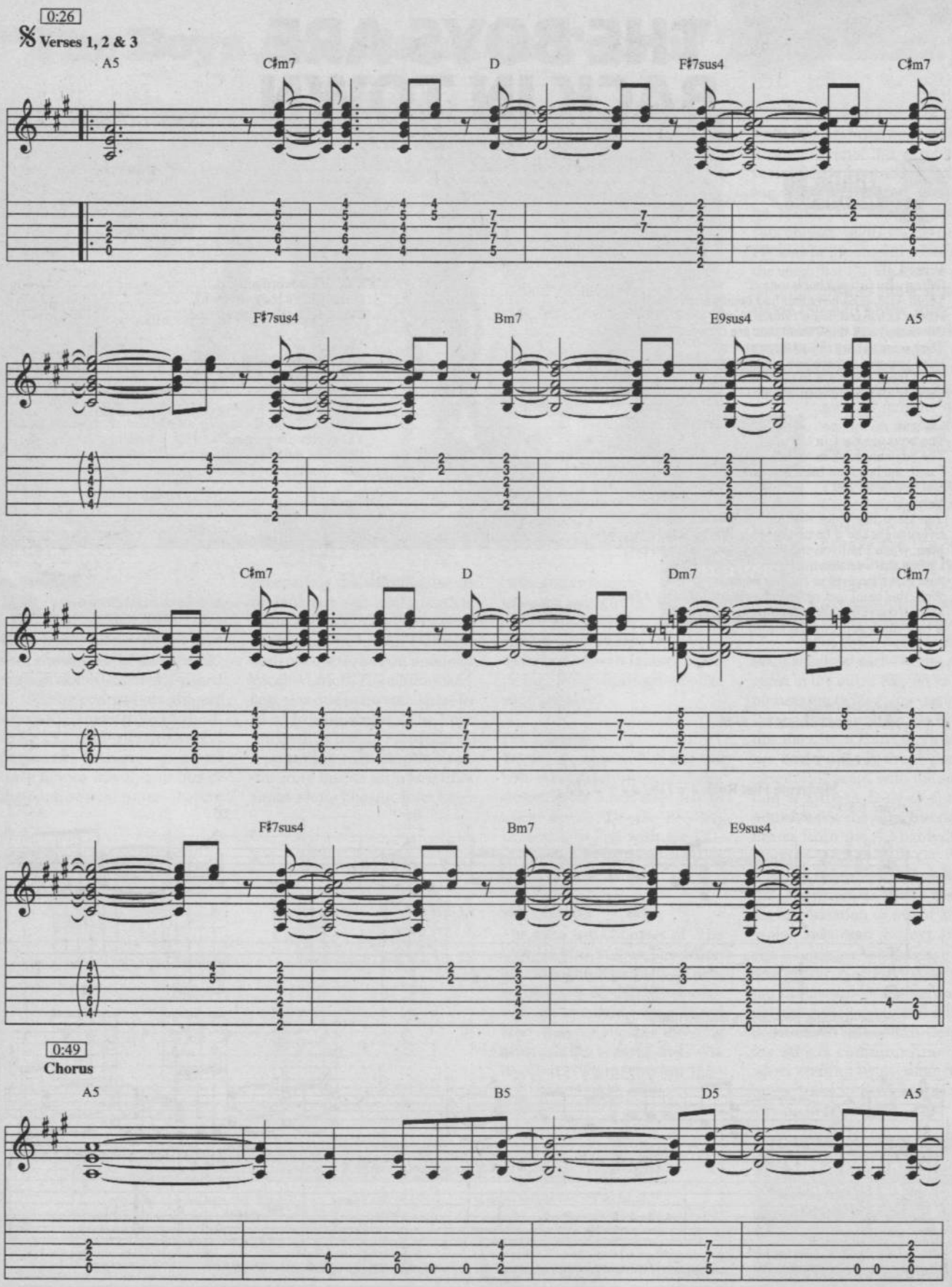

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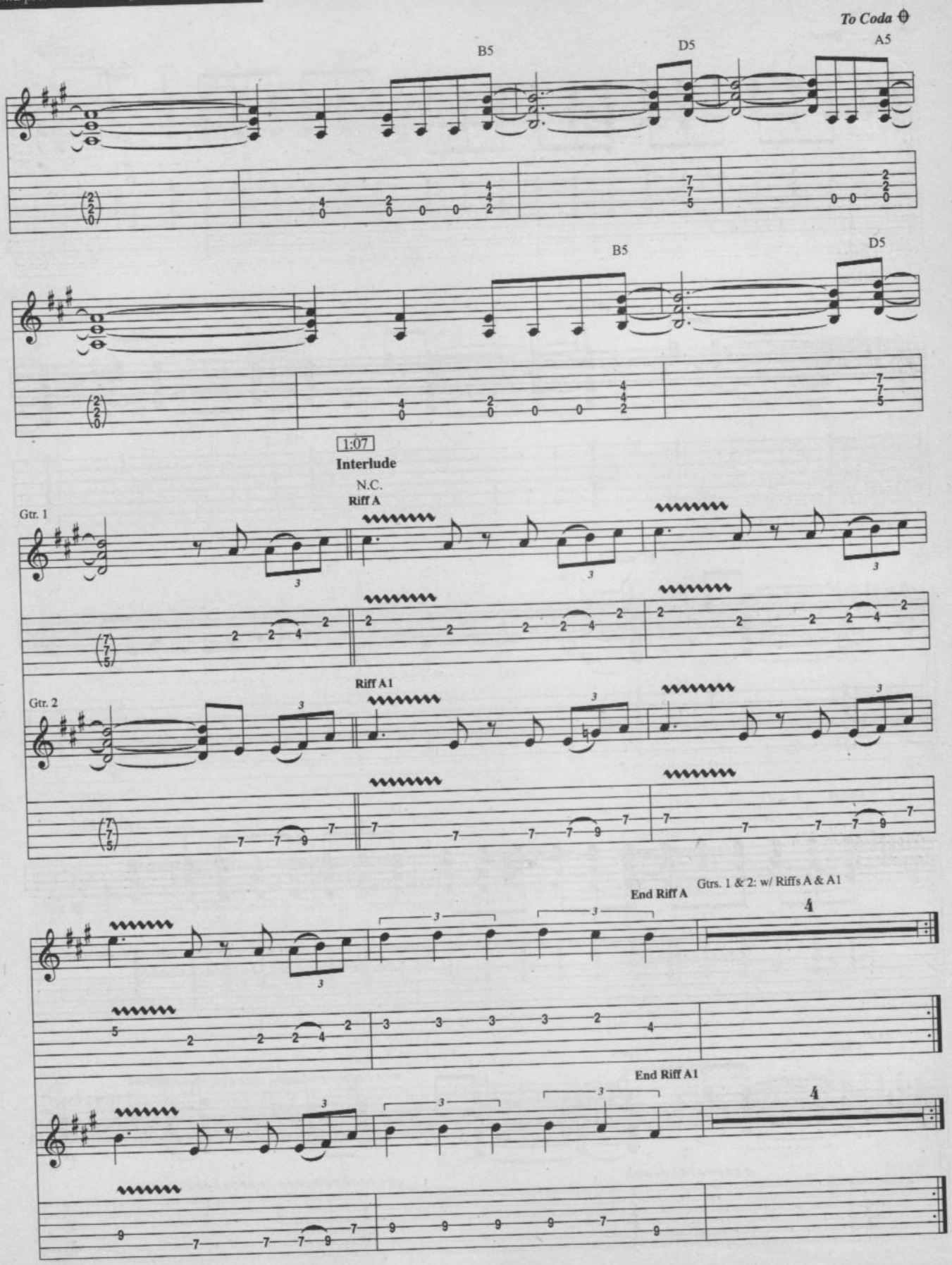

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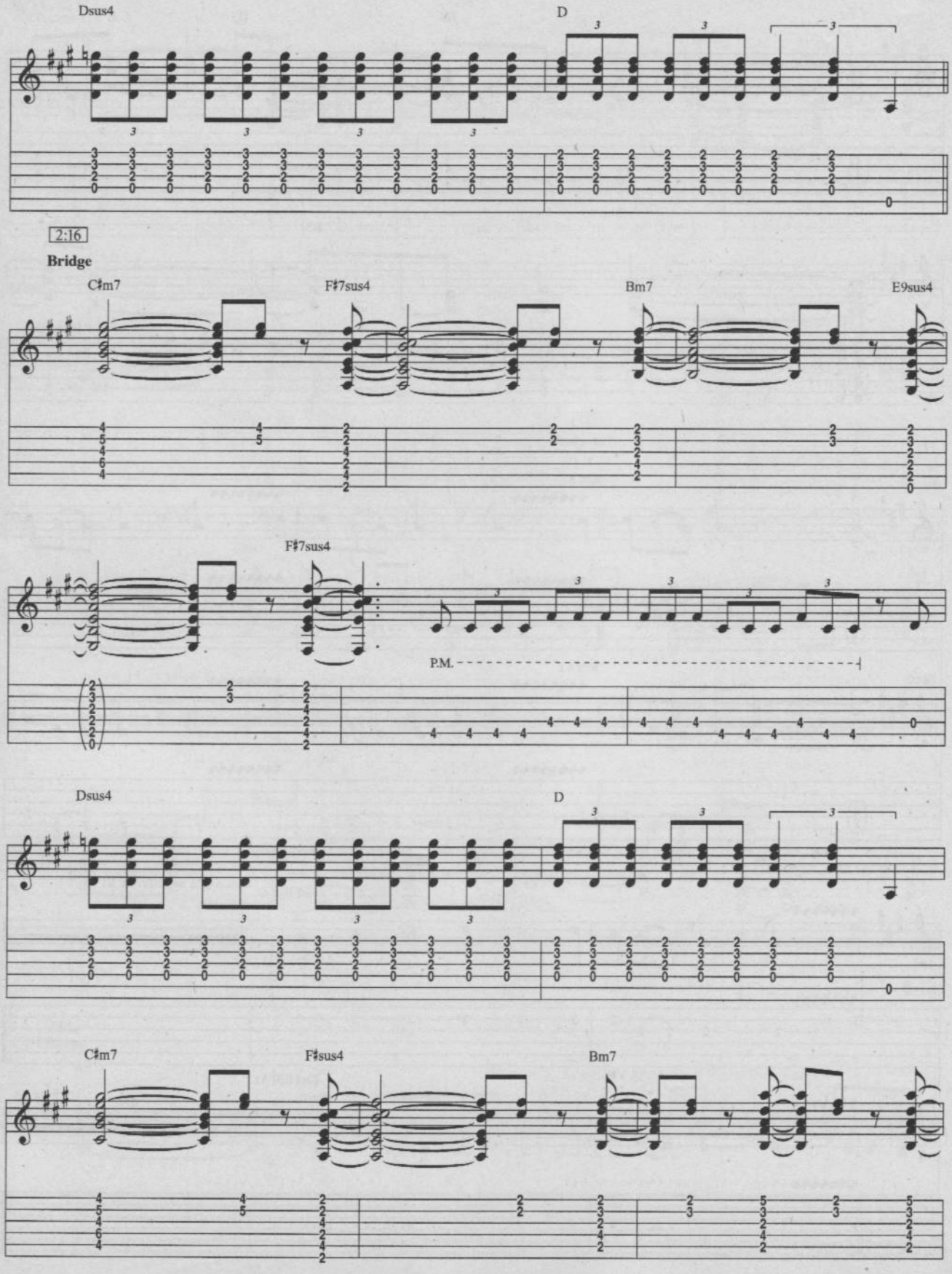

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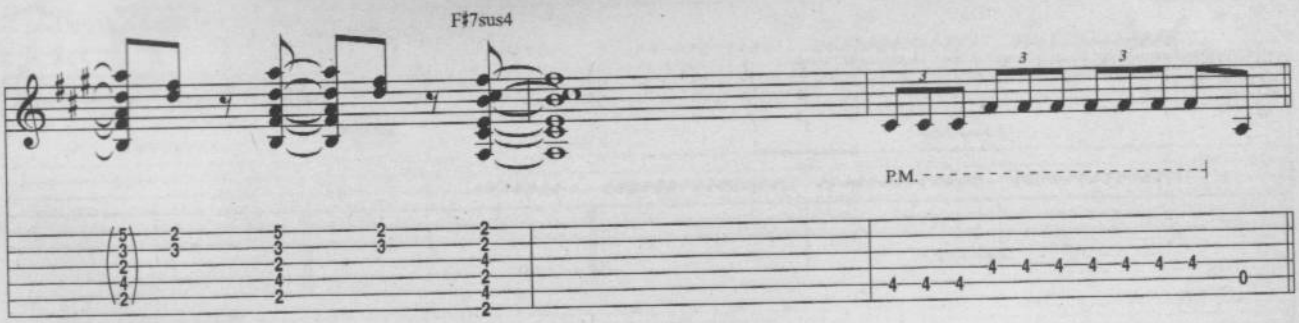
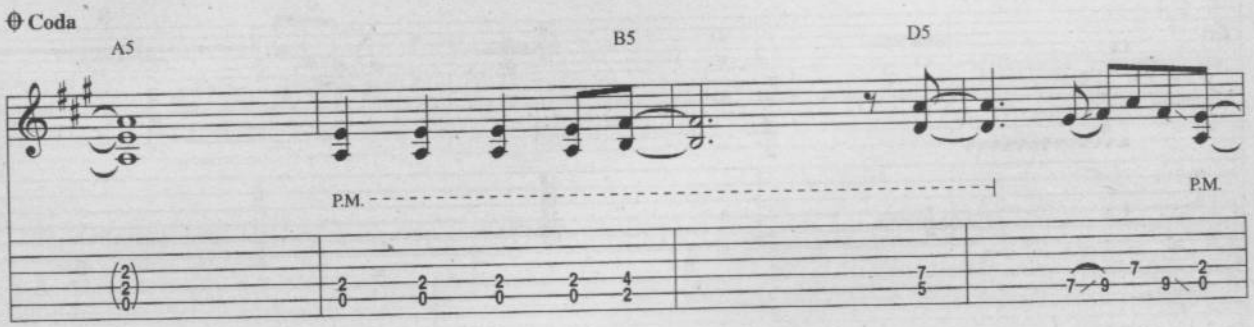
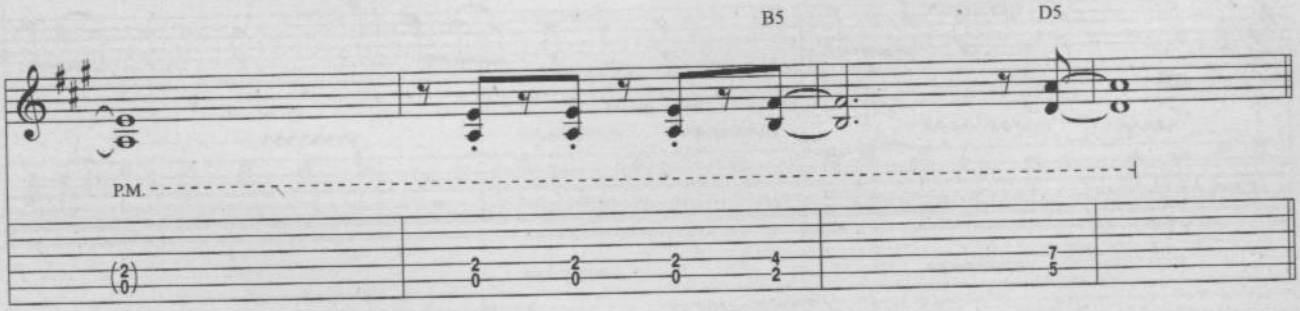
*D.S. al Coda*

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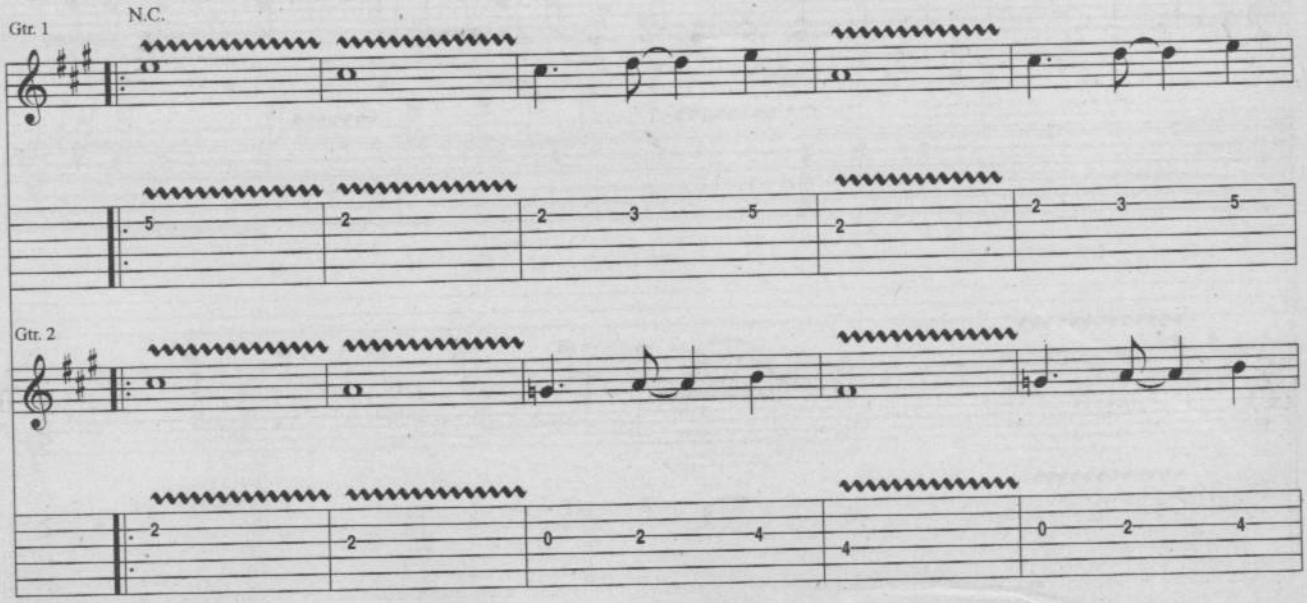
**Interlude**



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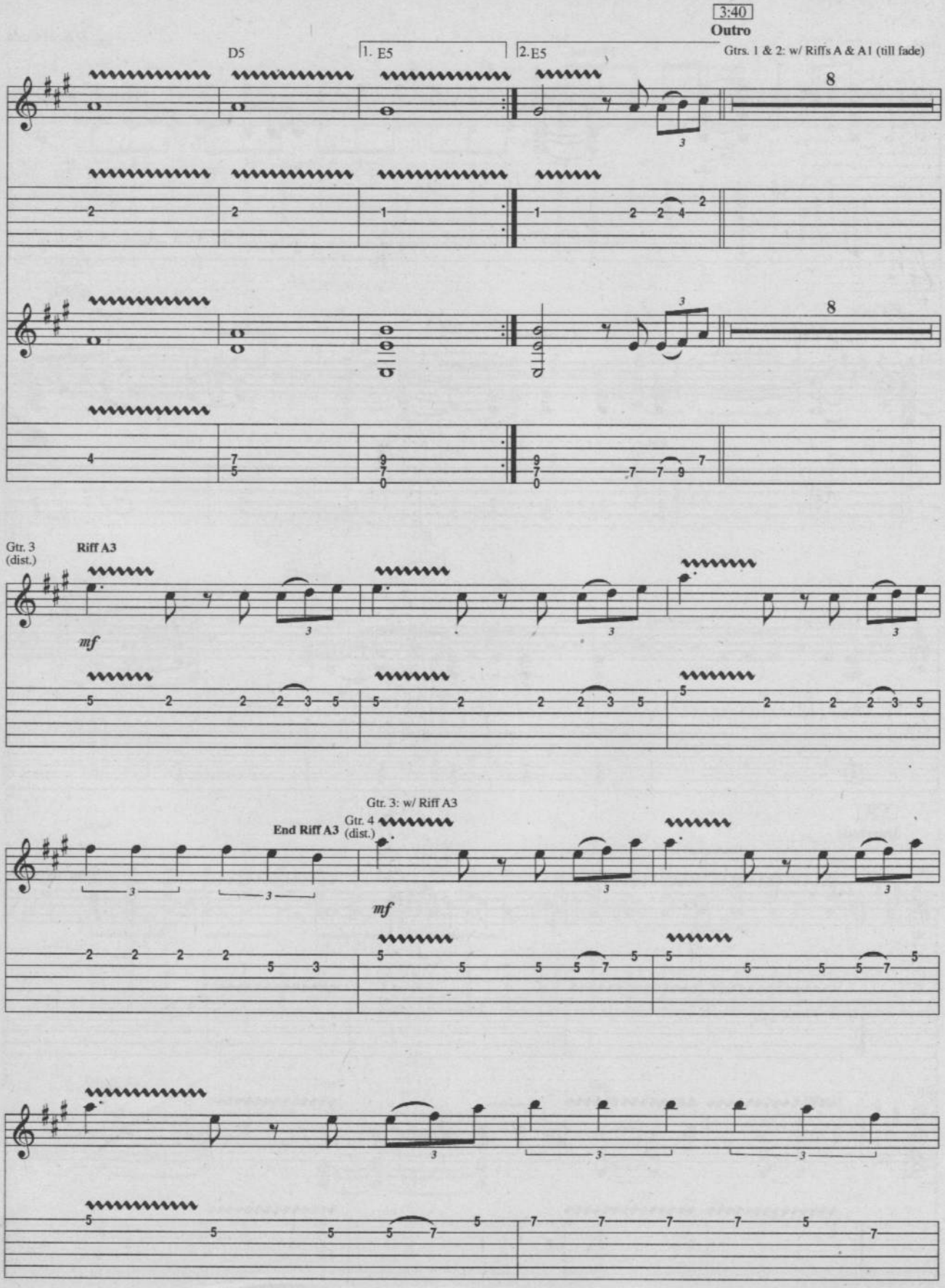
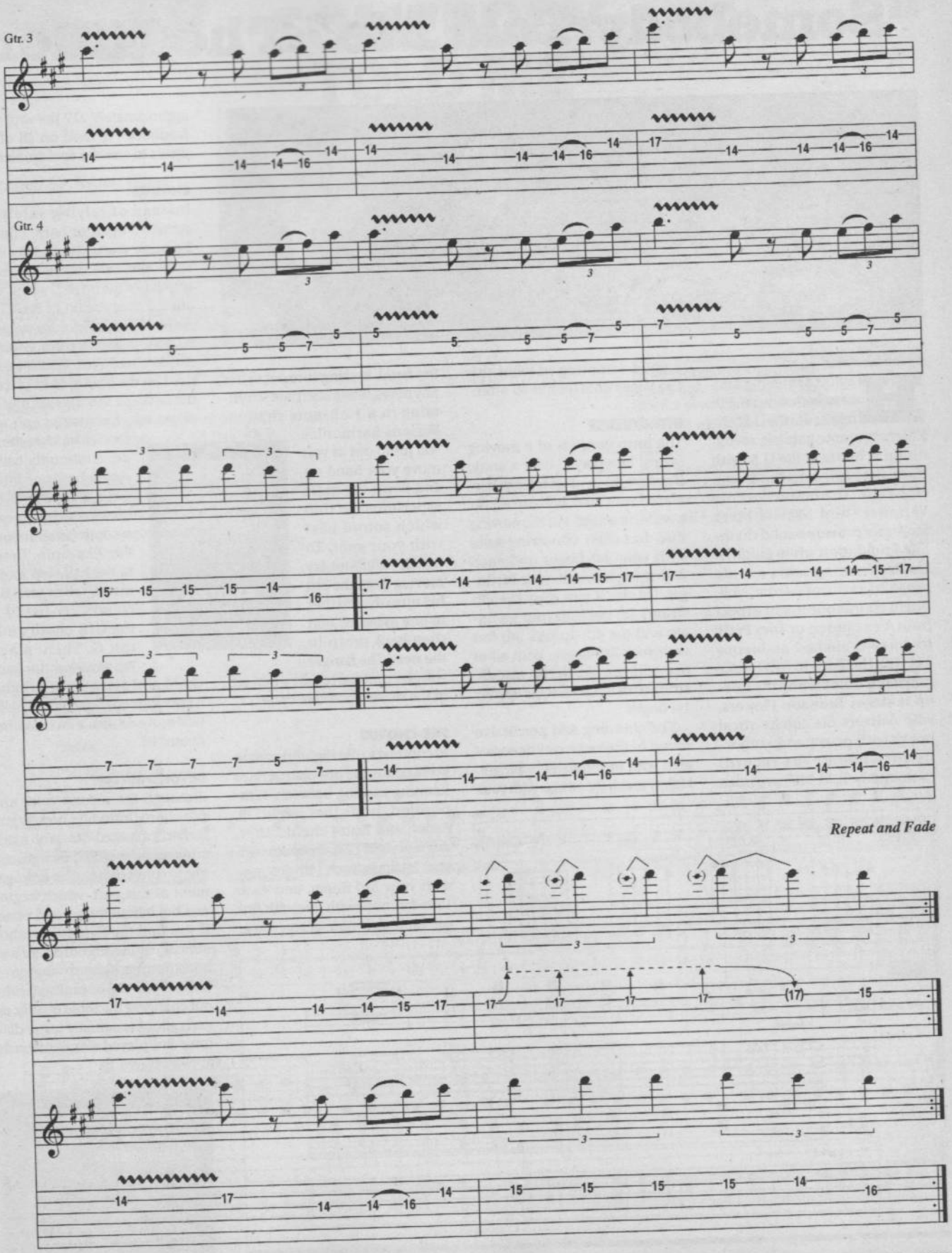
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