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Melodic Study: 12th Street Rag

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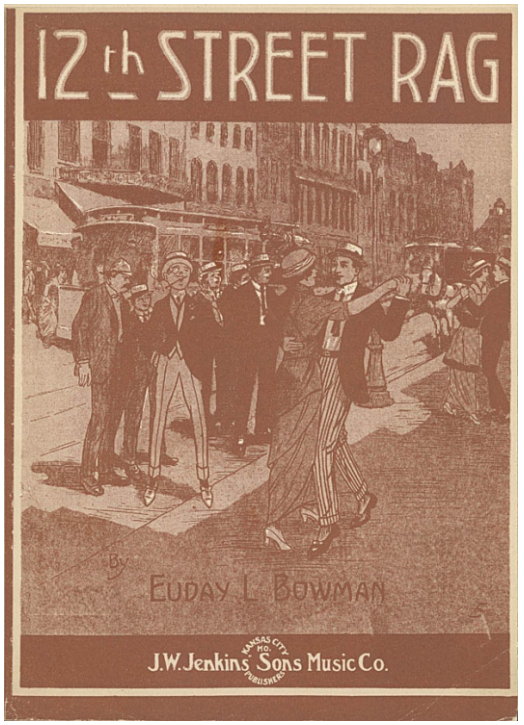
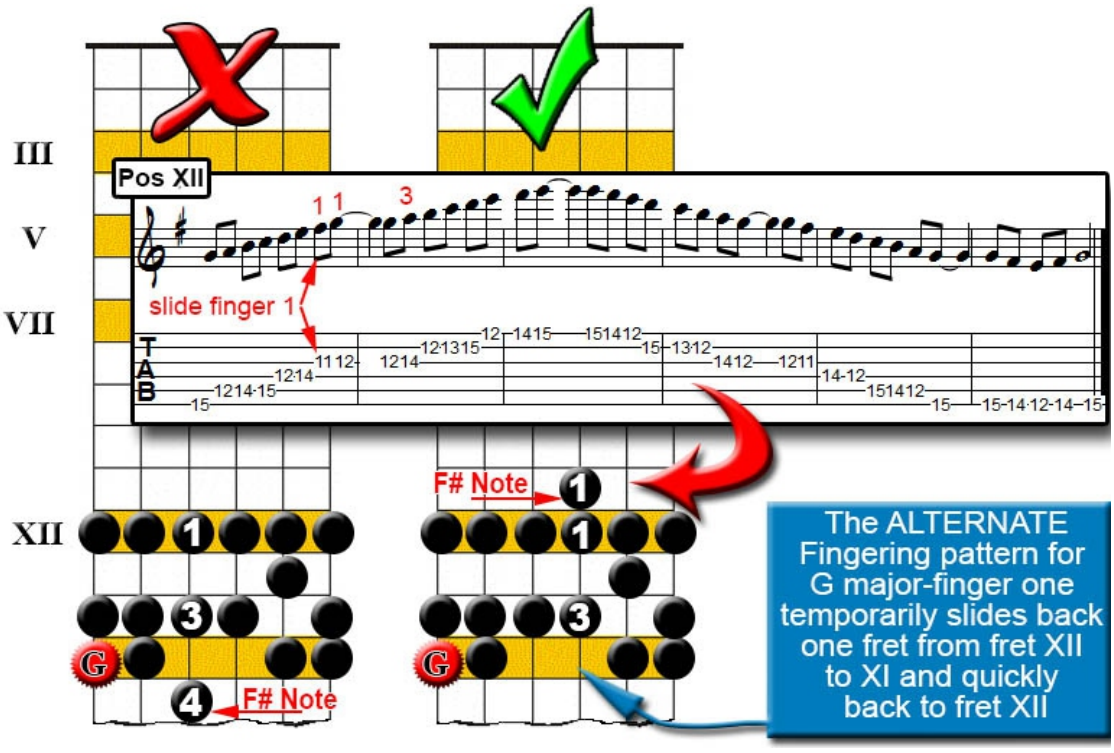
Twelfth Street Rag was published by by a tall lanky Texan named Euday L. Bowman in 1914. Euday played piano in Fort Worth shoeshine parlors and bars, sometimes at private parties. Like his sister, he also gave piano lessons. To pay the bills he even collected and sold scrap paper and worked as a teamster. Bowman cut his teeth in Kansas City, where he played piano in saloons and brothels, naming several of his compositions after streets found in both Fort Worth and Kansas City. Bowman wrote **Twelfth Street Rag** about 1914 and unsuccessfully tried to market the song himself -going into debt in the process. In need of money, he sold the rights to the song to a Kansas City music publisher for a couple of hundred dollars.



Not only was it one of the most famous and best-selling rags of the ragtime era it has become a timeless jazz standard having been recorded by Louis Armstrong ('Pops') and Benny Moten (who had a hit with the song), and it has inspired jazz musicians for decades as their are over 100 recorded versions know to exist. Because of its popularity, **Twelfth Street Rag** reignited an interest in traditional jazz and ragtime and helped authentic jazz elements such as descending and ascending arpeggios, exaggerated syncopation, call-and-response motifs and cycle V root motion claim a place in modern music. The song became a standard and would be recorded by dozens of musicians, including Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Fats Waller, Lionel Hampton, Benny Goodman, Liberace, Count Basie, Bob Wills, and Roy Clark. When **Twelfth Street Rag** eventually brought him a modicum of fame and fortune but he was to sick to enjoy them.

Twelfth Street Rag has had a show business and a music business life, Charlie Chaplin used it as a soundtrack and cartoon serials like Krazy Kat and Sponge Bob have had the tune featured in different episodes. The talk show host, Joe Frankiln broadcasted the song into literally millions of homes between 1950 and 1993 and as a result the song is widely well known and loved. The composition is invariably associated with Franklin.

In 1937, he reclaimed the rights to the song, made his own recording and resold the rights to Shapiro-Bernstein Music Publishers of New York City. He finally realized a little real money for the song, after traveling to New York and appealing for royalties. He was successful but caught pneumonia and died 3 days later. His heir and sister received the money and his possessions.



Twelfth Street Rag is the perfect opportunity to use the alternate fingering because of how many F# notes appear in the song - it makes the song more comfortable to play those fast G - F# - E note sequences that define the tune.

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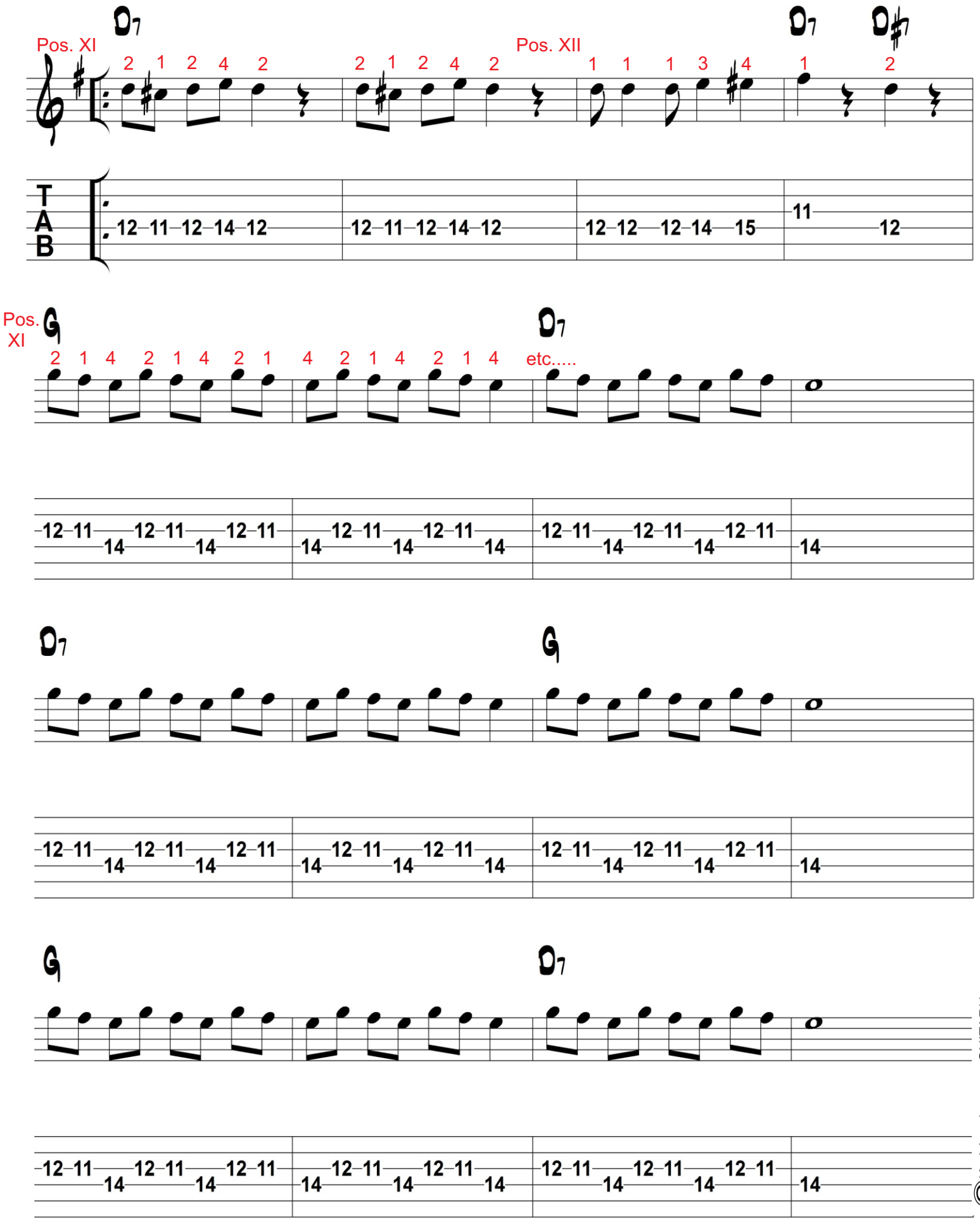
12th Street Rag

Euday L. Bowman



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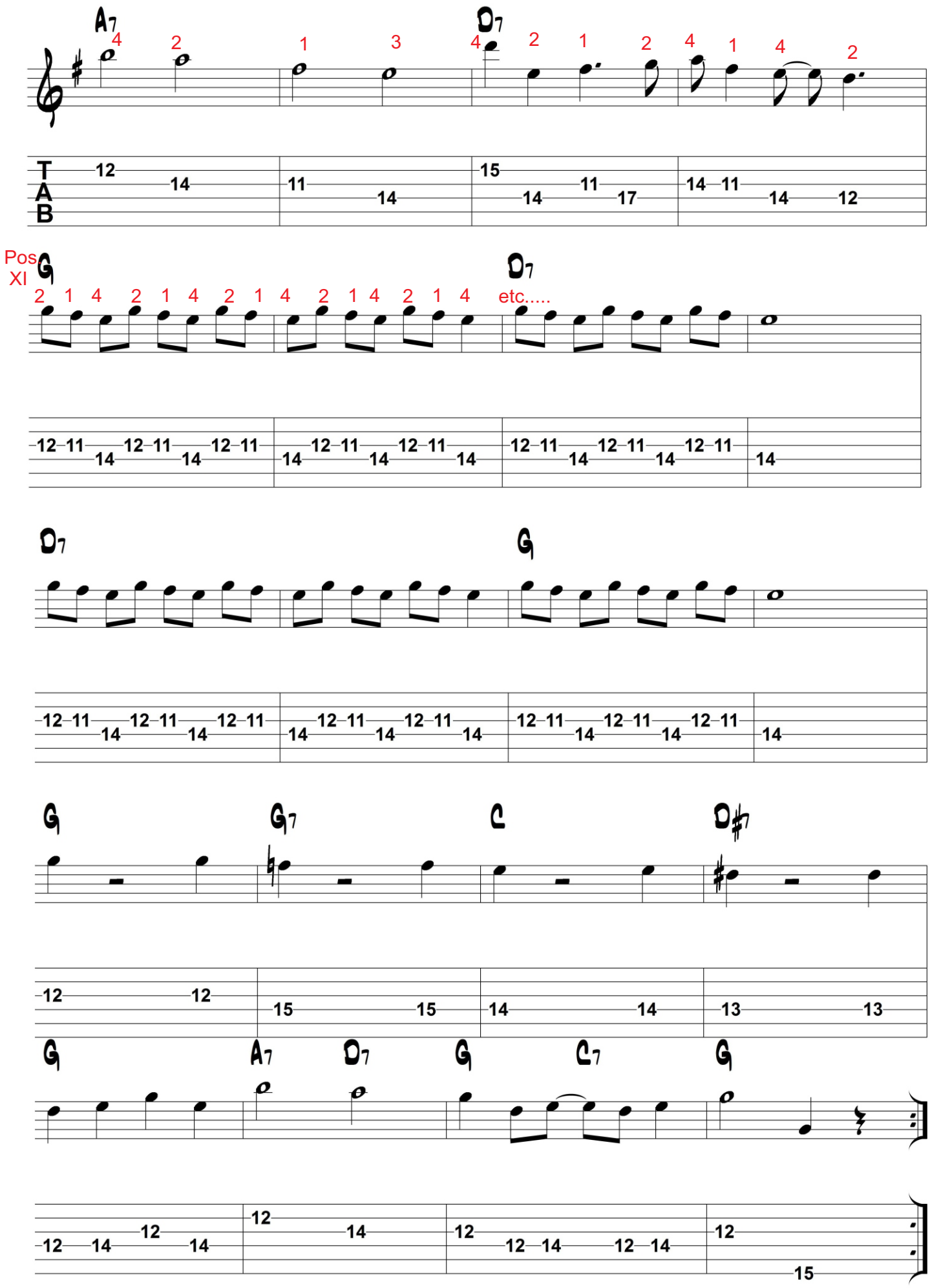
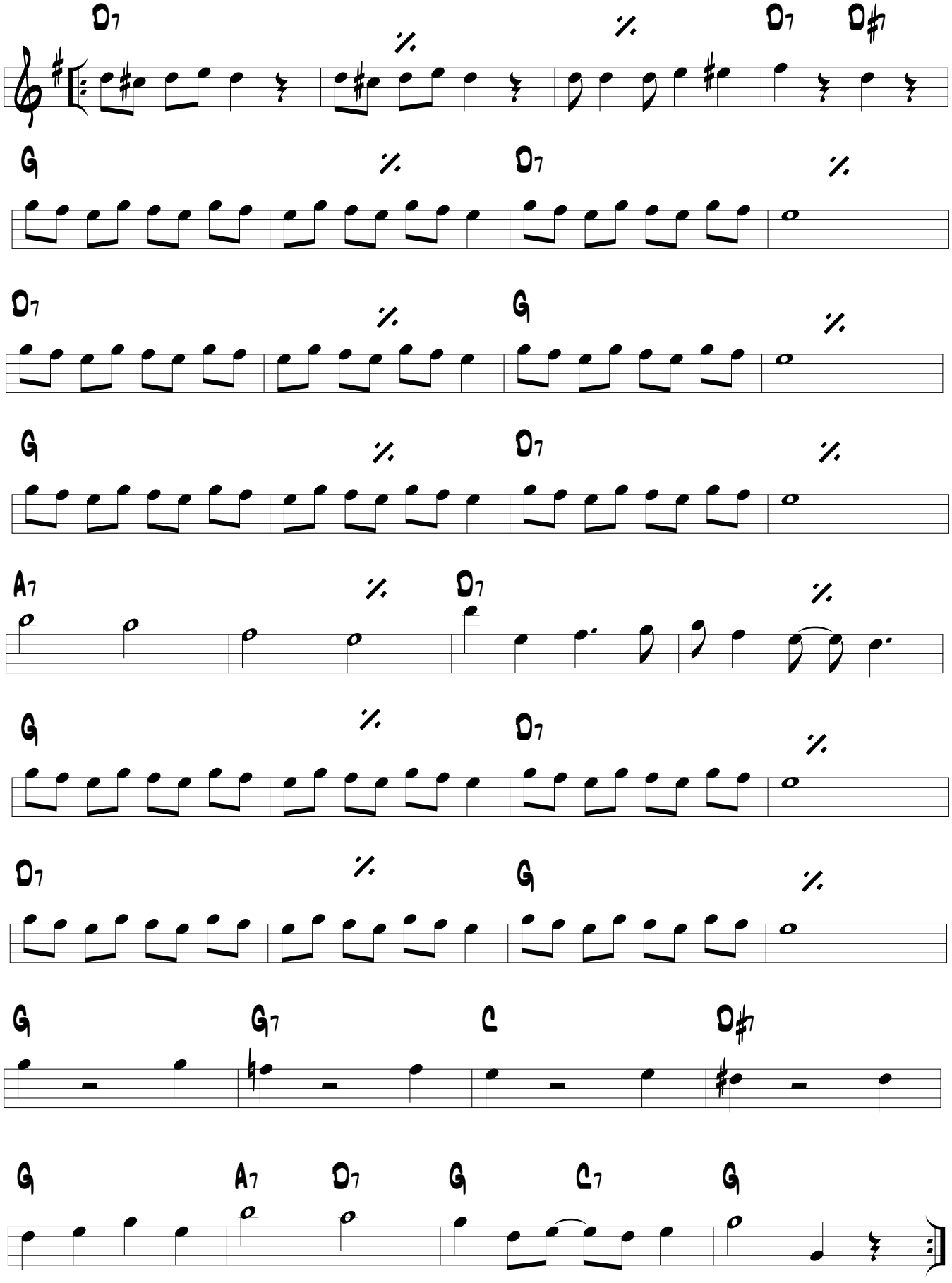
12th street rag page 2



12th Street Rag

Lead Sheet



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