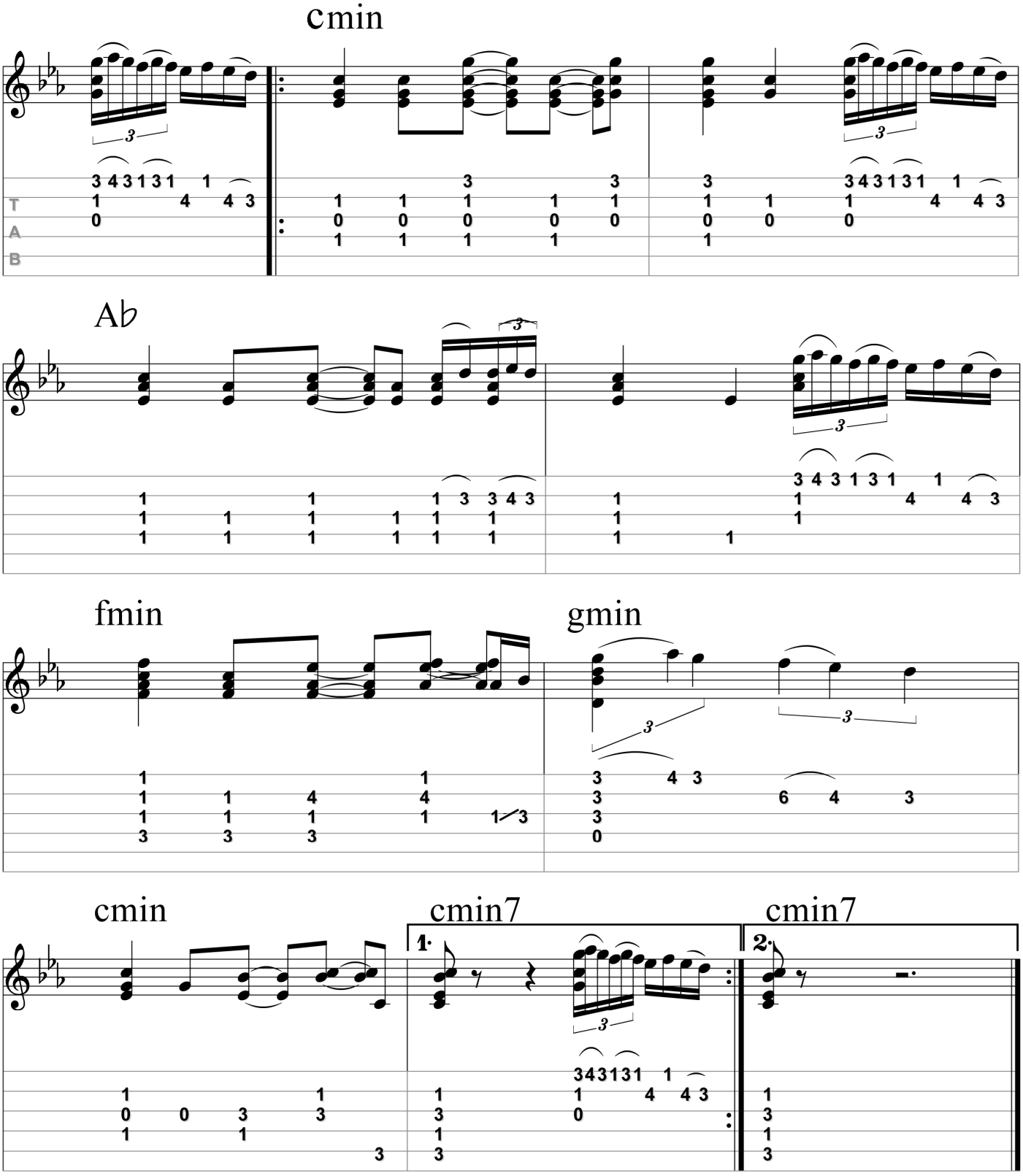
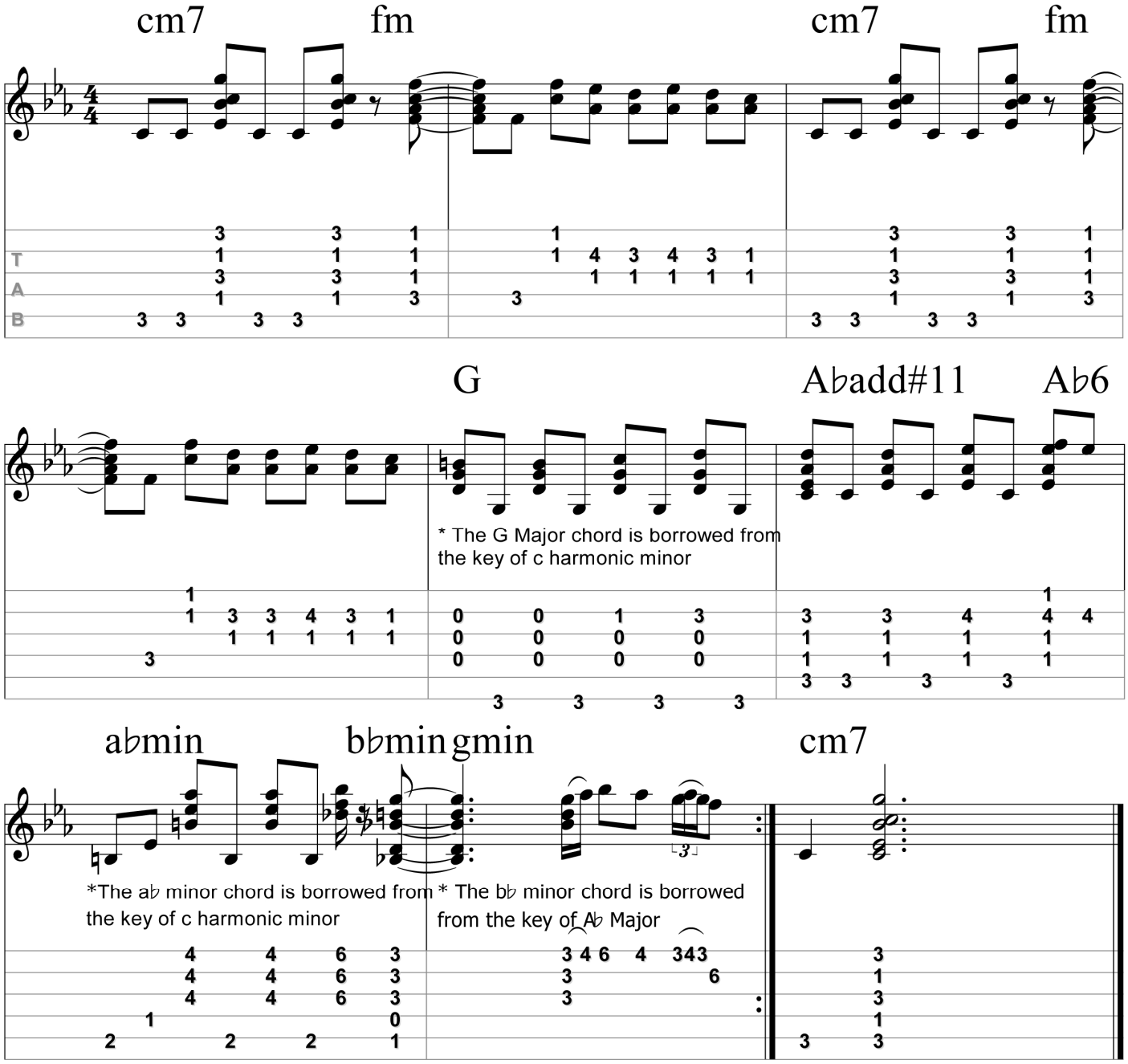
Step 1) pick a key and pick a mode and outline a basic modal progression in the parent key

Let's say we've chosen the key of E^{b} major and want to create a chart in C Aeolian mode. Here we have a basic progression that moves among the degrees vi – IV – ii – iii (of the parent key). I've written some motifs, but if you only care to play through the chords just enough to follow my logic, that's fine too. So far it's not a bad progression, maybe even a little bluesy, but if we want it to be jazzy we're going to have to take it further.

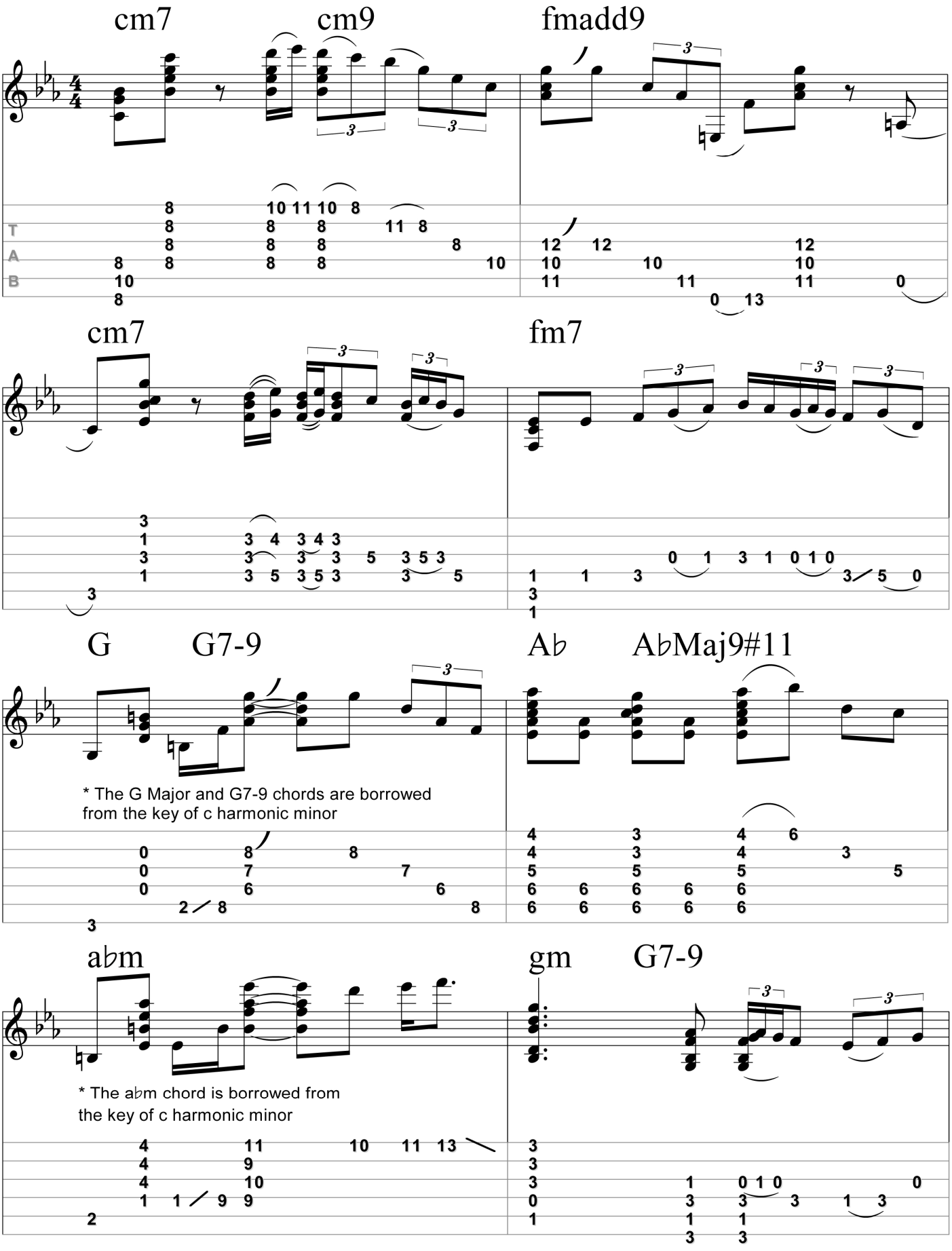


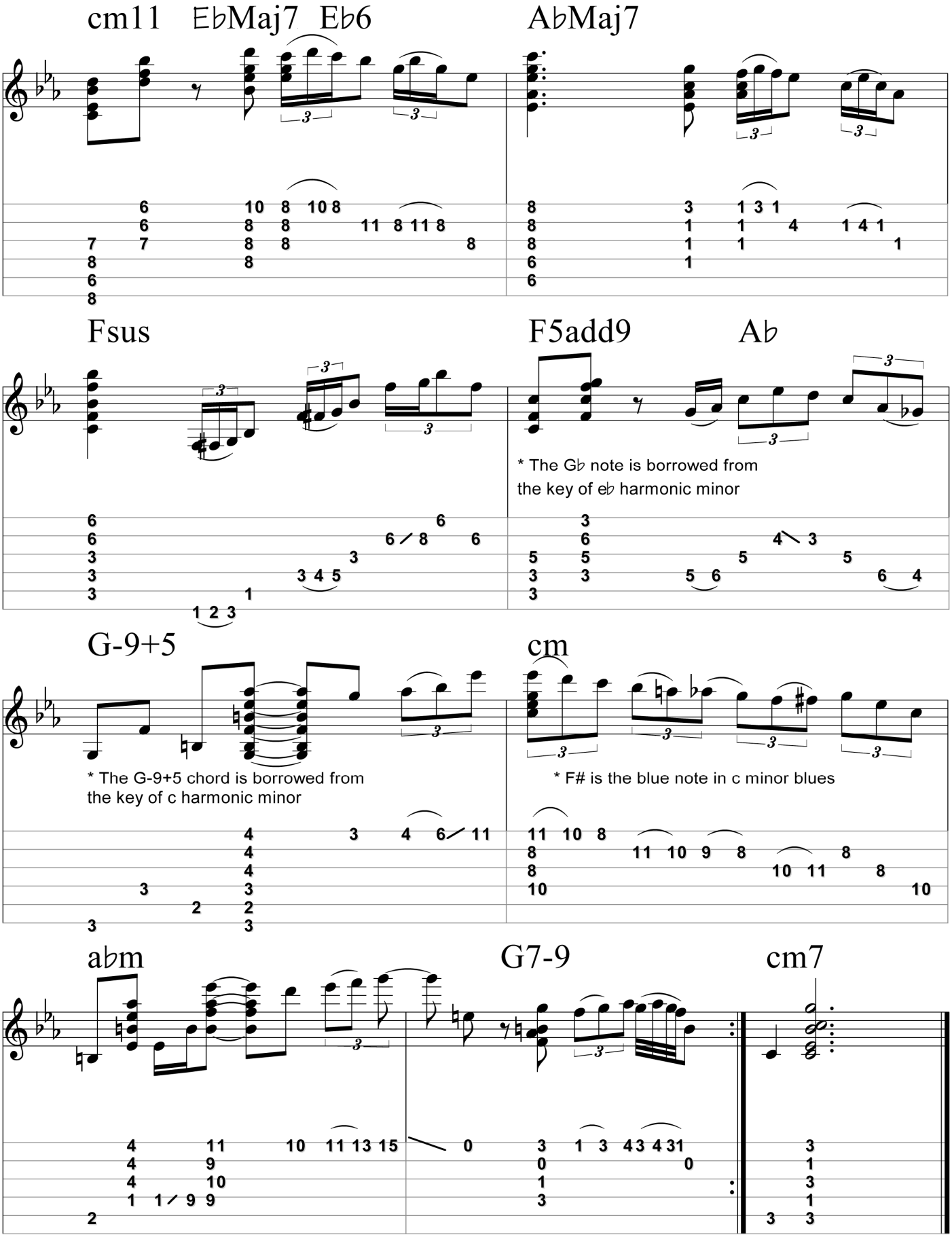
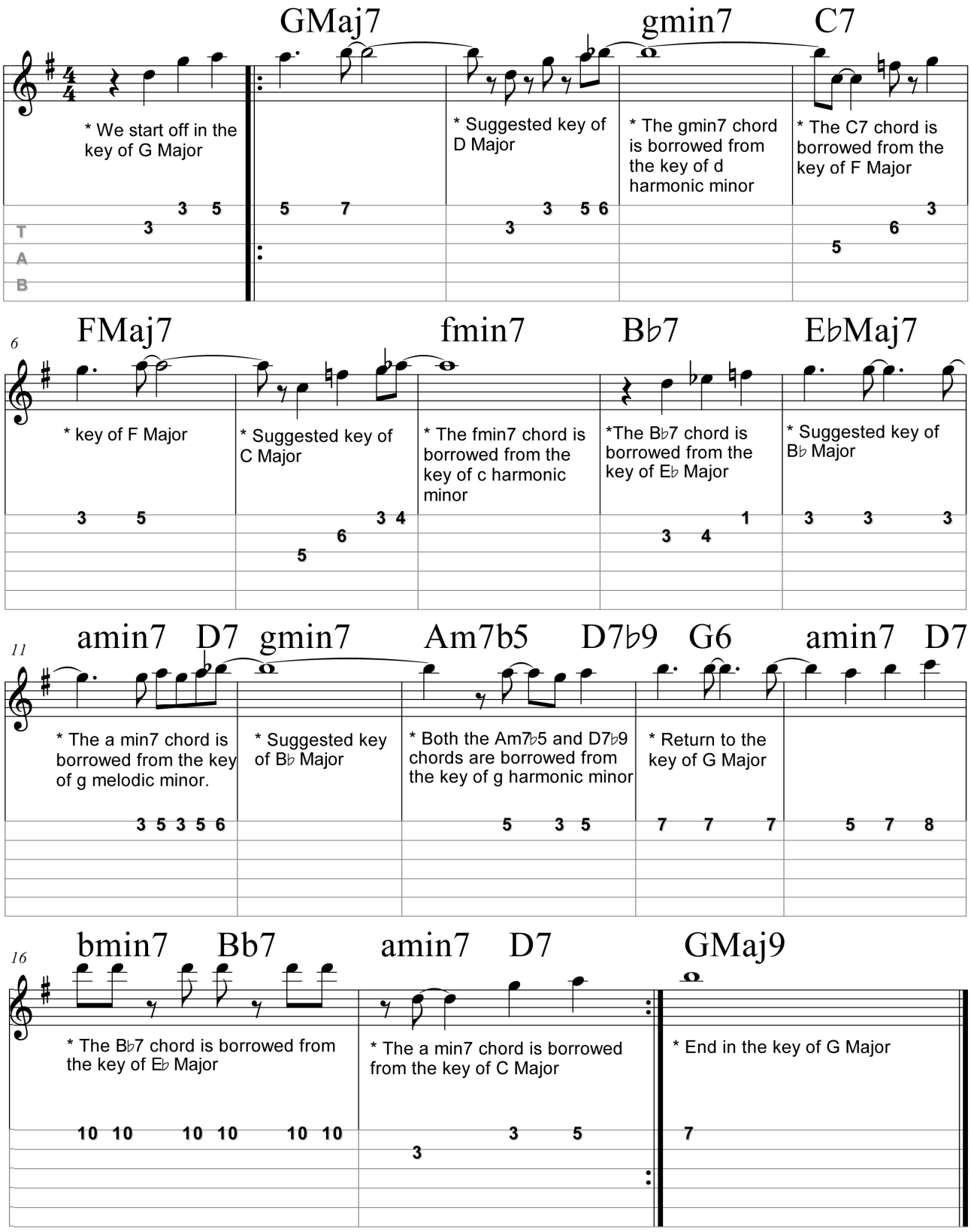
Step 2) incorporate borrowed chords and blue note chords to add color

In this example, we've taken our basic progression and stretched it out a little, adding some borrowed chords along the way. Instead of moving from c minor to A^{b} directly, we juggle c minor, f minor, and add a G before going to the A^{b}, and instead of having a simple turn-around at the end of the progression from F minor to G minor, we throw in some more borrowed chords, A^{b} minor and B^{b} minor, before going to the G minor. Notice the added color and momentum these borrowed chords add. When you do this on your own, you'll want to make notes in your chart, just as I have done here, of where each borrowed chord comes from. This will help guide you later when you're writing more parts or improvising.



Step 3) "jazz it up" by extending the harmonies of the chords in the progression


cm7
cm9
fmadd9
cm7
fm7
G
G7-9
* The G Major and G7-9 chords are borrowed from the key of c harmonic minor
Ab
AbMaj9#11
abm
* The abm chord is borrowed from the key of c harmonic minor
gm
G7-9


cm11
EbMaj7
Eb6
AbMaj7
Fsus
F5add9
Ab
* The Gb note is borrowed from
the key of eb harmonic minor
G-9+5
cm
* The G-9+5 chord is borrowed from
the key of c harmonic minor
* F# is the blue note in c minor blues
abm
G7-9
cm7

How High The Moon