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Published by
JAMEY AEBERSOLD JAZZ, INC.
P.O. BOX 1244
NEW ALBANY, IN 47151-1244
http://www.jazzbooks.com

COVER DESIGN BY PETE GEARHART
Photos on pages 11 and 21 by DUNCAN SCHIEDT

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COLTRANE'S MUSICAL EVOLUTION–THREE PERIODS

John Coltrane's musical evolution spanned the years 1955–1967. During those twelve years there were three major periods in which his playing and the material he used changed considerably.

The first stage was his recordings with Miles Davis on both the Prestige and Columbia record labels and the "Giant Step" period on Atlantic Records. The music with Miles consisted mostly of standards and jazz originals with the usual bebop chord changes. Of course, the famous "Kind of Blue" session (1959) with Miles, Cannonball Adderley and Bill Evans was a major landmark in jazz, for it presaged the coming modal period which runs from the early 60's to the present time. In Trane's case, he was to return to an exhaustive exploration of modal playing in his second stage.

But before doing that, he was still interested in chord changes and, in a spurt of creative energy, he created the "Giant Step" cycle. This cycle was to become incorporated in a number of standards and originals in 1959–60.

The second period belonged to the famous quartet with McCoy Tyner, Elvin Jones and Jimmy Garrison in which modal playing was extensively explored as never before. It is the general feeling among musicians of my age group that this music which was played along the conventional standards of jazz up to that time (steady pulse and chord changes) was probably the most intense small group jazz ever played, in terms of sheer energy. And, of course, the musical influences are still felt, much like Charlie Parker's music was on all musicians after him.

Coltrane's final period from 1965 until his death in 1967 was generally considered avant-garde in approach and content. He employed auxiliary horn and percussion players and the performances were punctuated with extensive use of the saxophone's screaming altissimo range and waves of multi-note lines employing overblown tones (harmonics). The music was mostly "free-form" in both a rhythmical (no steady pulse) and harmonic sense (no ongoing chord or modal cycles). For me, this music had a religious, primordial feeling paradoxically ahead of its time in a musical sense, but harking back to the most primitive tribal music of all cultures.

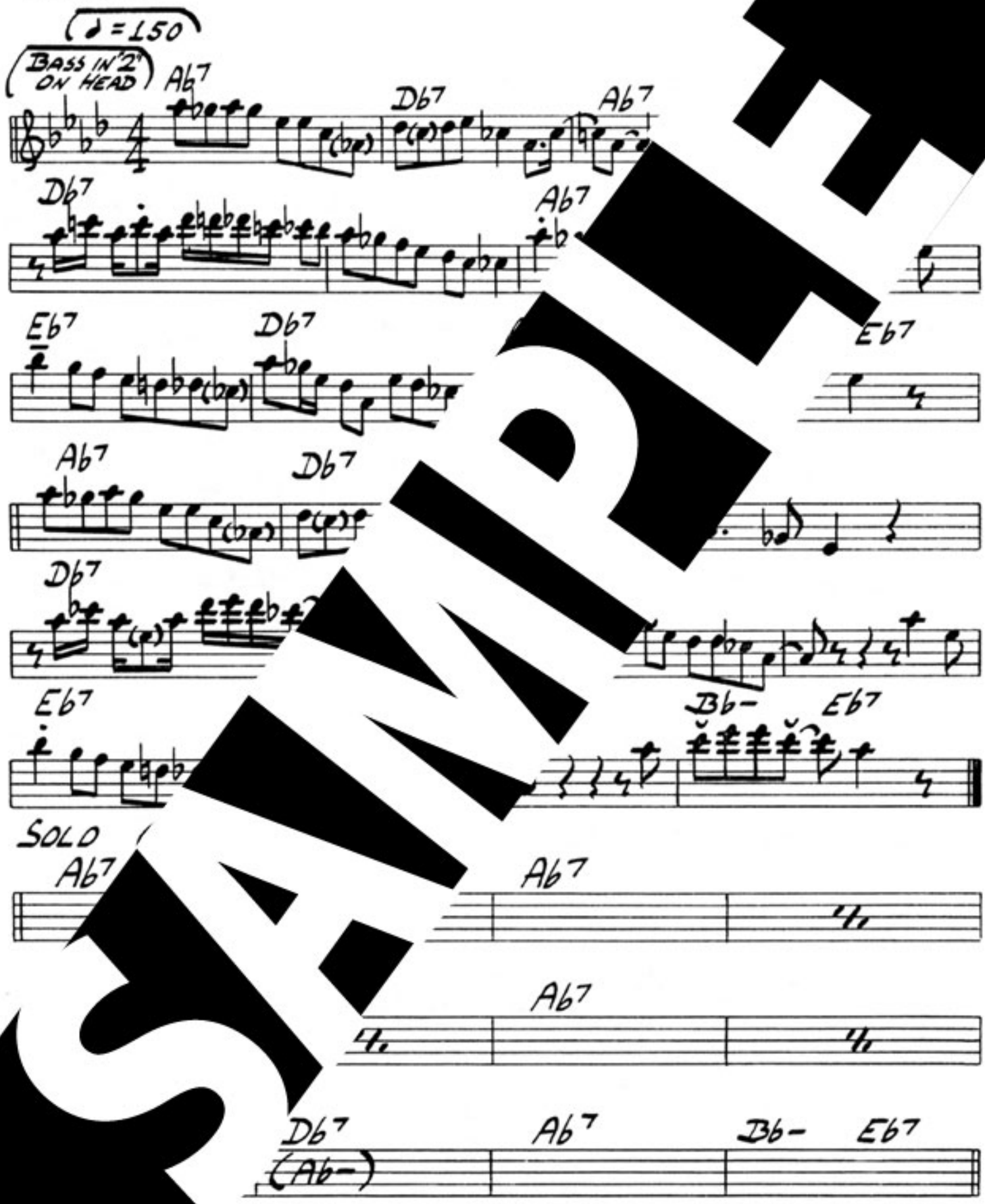
COMPOSITIONS IN PLAY-A-LONG (VOLUMES 27 & 28)
FIRST PERIOD

Mr. P.C. was written for the great bassist Paul Chambers, who was with Miles Davis along with Trane in the 50's, as weil as the main bassist on most of John's recordings as a leader during this period. It is a straight-forward minor blues with no surprising harmonic twists.

Some Other Blues has a slightly different than usual set of changes for the head, but the blowing is, again, a straight-forward F blues.

Up Against The Wall

Play 12 Choruses



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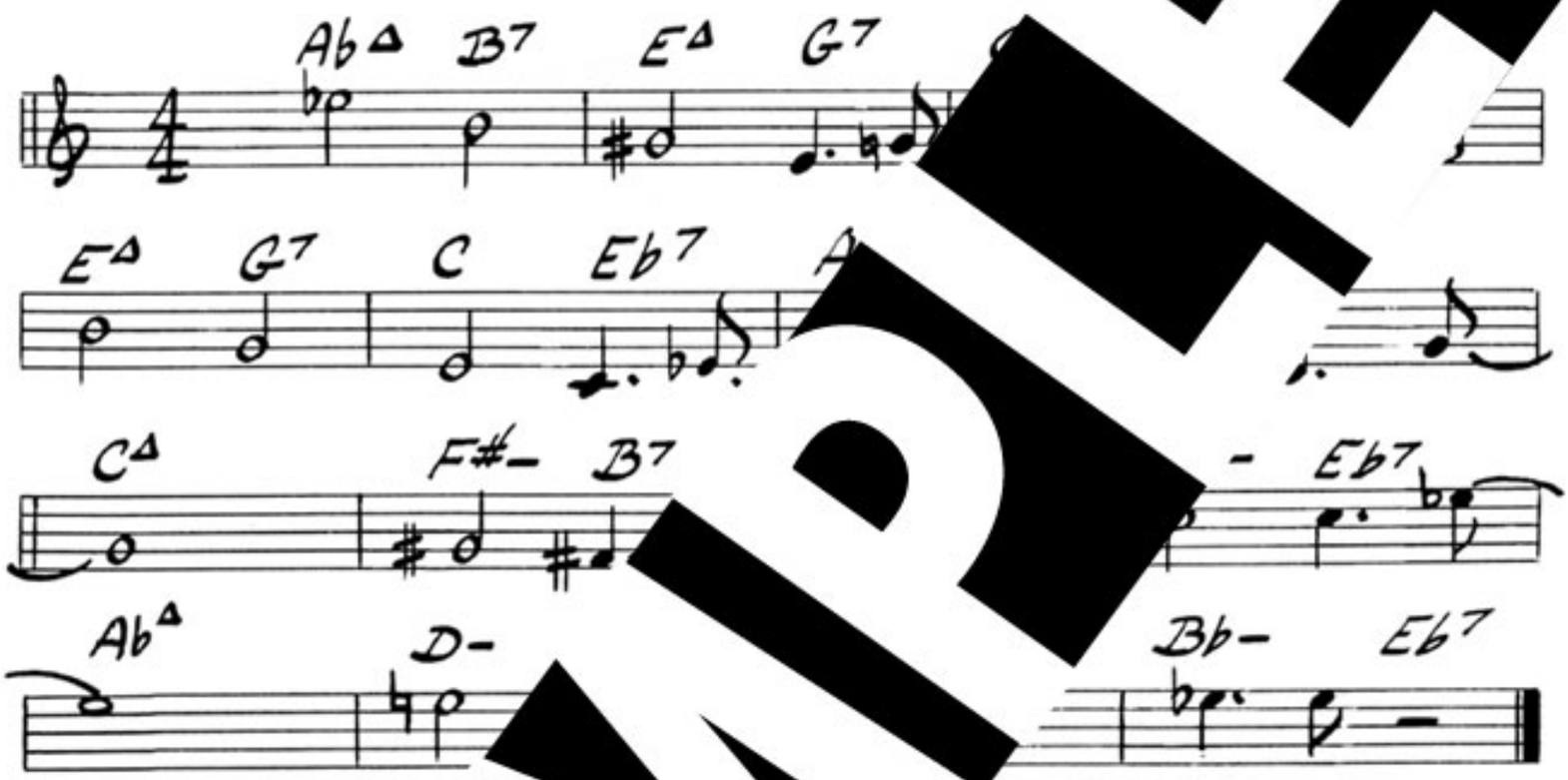
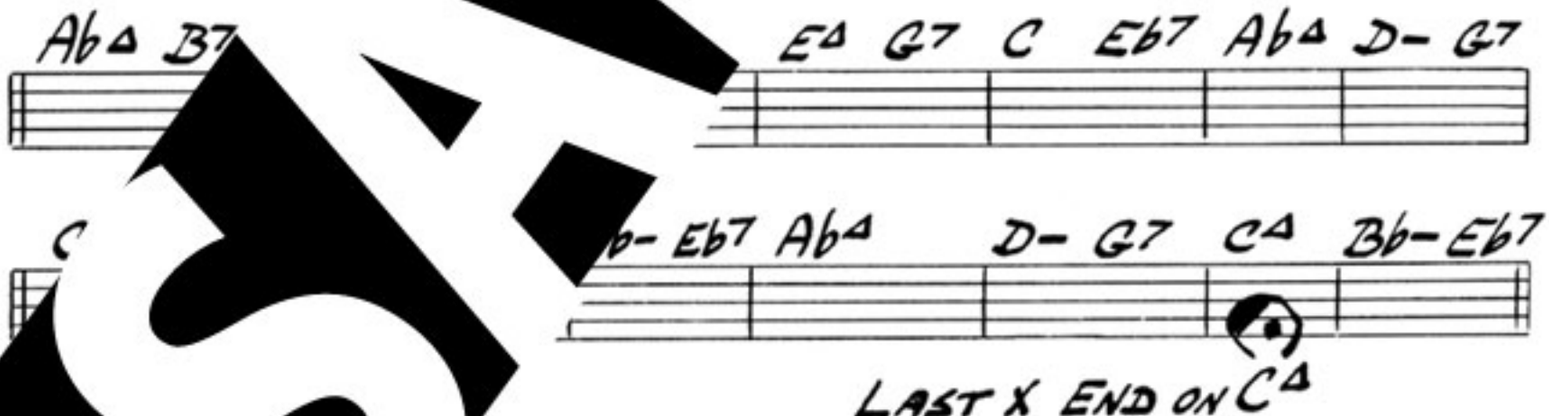
Giant Steps

Slow Version ♩=224, Play 14 Choruses

Faster Version ♩=308, Play 19 Choruses



SOLO



LAST X END ON CΔ

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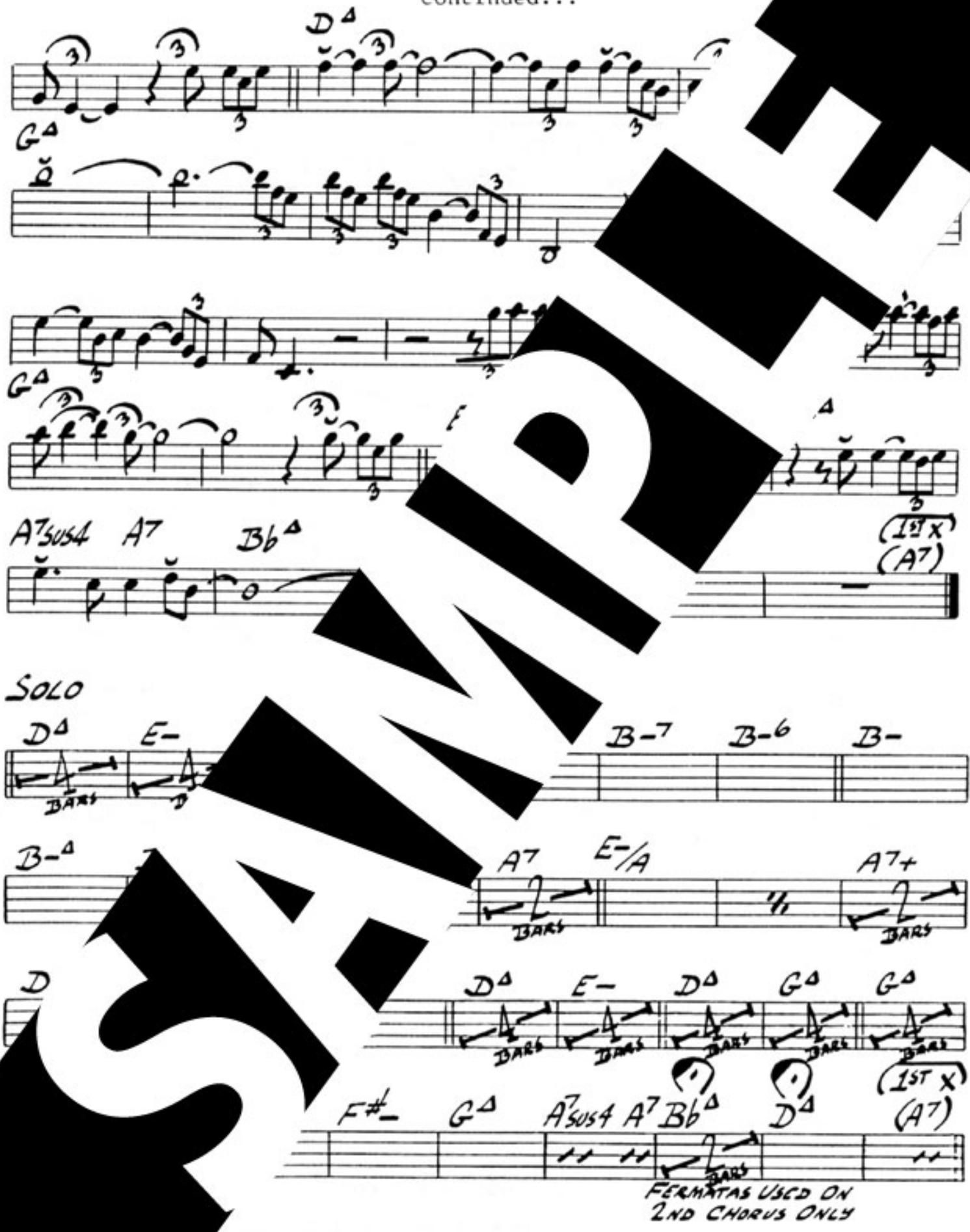
Dear Lord

continued...



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