

JAZZ CON CLAVE - TIPS & FUNDAMENTALS FOR THINKING AND PLAYING IN CLAVE FOR THE JAZZ ENSEMBLE

- 1. ENSEMBLE PLAYS SHORT VERSION OF “FREEHANDS” (Brian Lynch/Eddie Palmieri) ;**
1 chorus ea. alto/tp/tb/piano (with break into montuno); montuno with conga solo 32 mm and then mambo (short); coda on cue. **(7 min.)**

2. INTRODUCTION (5 MIN.)

Emphasis: I speak today not as an expert on Afro-Caribbean music. Rather, I am a jazz musician who feels a love and affinity for Latin music and has been lucky enough to work with some of the masters. Along the way, I have picked up a certain amount of practical knowledge in the process of learning to properly function in a musical environment not originally my own. This experience has given me a certain amount of insight into how to communicate a measure of basic knowledge to the jazz musician unfamiliar with these concepts and applications in order to get he or she up and running.

Having a basic understanding of Afro-Cuban & Afro-Caribbean rhythms is of fundamental importance for the jazz player. A great deal of contemporary jazz is informed by this music, and arguably many of the “advanced” procedures used in today’s jazz, especially in the area of polyrhythm and polymeter, are derived from Afro-Caribbean rhythmic concepts. Also, this rhythmic concept has been a part of the music since the beginning. The seminal jazz pianist, composer, and bandleader Jelly Roll Morton famously stated: “...if you can't manage to put tinges of ‘Spanish’ in your tunes, you will never be able to get the right seasoning, I call it, for jazz.” The “Spanish” tinge Morton referred to and utilized in his own music was the influence of the Cuban *tresillo* and *habanera*, rhythms and rhythmic cells exemplary of Afro-Caribbean musical practice.

Becoming conversant with Afro-Caribbean musical concepts fosters the sort of rhythmic comprehension and security that improves your “swing” in any form of music. I believe that you cannot be a complete jazz player or writer without a working knowledge of this music!

3. EXAMINING THE BASIC CONCEPT OF CLAVE (10 MIN.)

This is a somewhat simplified explanation meant to be of practical use to the jazz player. It’s important to learn about the historical and musical background of Afro-Caribbean music in order to understand the concept of clave fully. Listen to Cuban music and salsa! Some names to seek this music out with, in the idioms of classic Afro-Cuban music, salsa, and Latin Jazz, include (in no particular chronological or stylistic order): **Arsenio Rodriguez, Eddie Palmieri, Alfredo “Chocolate” Armenteros, Benny More, Ray Barretto, Tito Puente, Felix Chappotin, Los Muuequitos De Matanzas, Orquesta Aragon** and countless other artists. Developing a consciousness of the stylistic and historical roots and evolution of Afro-Caribbean music in the same fashion as I learned about jazz has been a great joy and musical blessing for myself, personally.

CLAVE: Is a five stroke pattern over two measures – and the “key” or underlying principle to the rhythmic organization of the music contained within.

Definition (from Rebeca Mauleon’s “Salsa Guidebook For Piano And Ensemble”) :

A five-note, bi-measure pattern which serves as the foundation for all of the rhythmic styles in Afro-Cuban (salsa) music. The clave consists of a "strong" measure containing three notes (also called the tresillo), and a "weak" measure containing two notes, resulting in patterns beginning with either measure, referred to as "three-two" or two-three." There are two types of clave patterns associated with popular (secular) music: son clave and rumba clave. Another type of clave - 6/8 clave - originated in several styles of West African sacred music.

Clave is an example of an “asymmetrical timeline pattern”. In African music, a time-line pattern represents “...the structural core of a musical piece, something like a condensed and extremely concentrated representation of the rhythmic and motional possibilities open to the musicians and dancers”. (<http://www.britannica.com/blackhistory/article-57087>) This asymmetry generates musical forces and flows that can be expressed in terms of positive and negative polarity within the basic clave unit.

Ensemble Demonstration and Audience Participation:

We initiate half note pulse with clapping hands & percussion - audience picks up pulse; then we have audience stand and do simple step to mark off pulse while still clapping.

We then clap clave (3-2) and have audience do same. Encourage them to feel the counterpoint between the pulse and the clave, and experience it as an energy flow or pendulum-like movement.

Talk about Positive – negative poles (see definition above) – then go into: Demonstrate and explain concept of clave direction

Audience claps clave while doing step as above. Ensemble leader delineates sides of clave by saying 1-2, then flips clave direction via repeating number (example: 1-2| 1-2|1-2|2-1|2-1|2-1|1-2 etc.)

Explain rumba clave and its relationship to the 6/8 clave & bell pattern (the triple division of basic pulse as primary and its transformation into duple/quadruple division rhythms)

Ensemble Demonstration and Audience Participation:

Percussionists play 6/8 bell pattern with emphatic basic pulse. Audience pats triplets on legs (while sitting) against this. 6/8 clave is introduced by ensemble leader. Audience picks this up by clapping. On cue, percussionists play clave break and goes into 4/4 rumba clave rhythm.

4. EXPLAINING DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE BASIC “SALSA” RHYTHM (8 MIN.)

Percussion (Ensemble members demonstrate each component rhythm)

1. Basic tumbao – conga (1 drum pattern and 2 drum variation) Definition: The repeated pattern played by the tumbadoras (conga drums), also referred to as marcha (march), emphasizing the fourth beat of the measure, as well as beat 4+
 - a. Demonstrate by scat singing + audience participation
2. Cascara and timbale cencerro
3. Martillo and bongo bell campana
4. Translation to drum set both alone and with conga

Other Rhythm Section Instruments (Ensemble members demonstrate)

1. Bass tumbao
 1. **Definition:** The repeated pattern played by the bass, often accenting beats 2+ and 4. The pattern is a mixture of influences from the styles of the *contradanza* and the *son*.
2. Piano guajeo
3. Jazz chording patterns in clave

There are many different specific rhythmic styles in Afro-Caribbean music. They are associated with specific dance styles. Some of these dance rhythms are *guaracha*, *son*, *danzon*, *cha-cha-cha*, *rumba* (in three forms: *yambu*, *guaguanco*, and *columbia*), and so on.

5. MELODIC PHRASING IN CLAVE – BASICS (8 MIN.)

Aiming for resolution points and where to start syncopating (The “*downbeat/upbeat thing*” (downbeat = 2 side; upbeat = 3 side)

Keying in on the cascara and piano guajeo

Moñas and some typical melodic/rhythmic “licks”

Ensemble Demonstration Guided By Leader

6. ADAPTING A JAZZ TUNE TO CLAVE (8 MIN.)

Example: “Solar”

Ensemble Demonstration

Soloing over clave both in montuno section and on changes.

Demonstration of hybrid solo style (bebop lines resolving in clave or using clave based figures; line playing with awareness of rhythmic vocabulary of clave and polymeter in phrasing (“fix” = four and six or 3 over 2)

7. QUESTIONS AND CLOSING (4 MIN.)

CLINIC TOTAL TIME: 50 MIN