



## Clave Rhythms Worksheet

If you've been following along with *World Rhythms for Didgeridoo* and other recent posts then you know rhythm is one of the most powerful elements in music. With mastery over just a few basic rhythms you can sound like you really know what you are doing on any instrument.

In much of African and Afro-Latin music, a key element is the bell pattern, or clave pattern: a syncopated rhythmic figure that repeats and is the foundation for a musical form. **Clave** literally means "key" in Spanish and it is used to describe the rhythm and the instrument, comprised of two hardwood sticks. Today we are going to look at what is arguably the most popular clave rhythm, the **son clave**.

**Son** (rhymes with zone) or **son cubano**, is an Afro-Cuban style of music that gave birth to salsa and many other styles of contemporary Latin music. Its traditional instrumentation consists of voices, the guitar, tres (a three stringed guitar variant) and afro-Cuban percussion, including the clave instrument.

Son clave can be thought of as a two bar pattern. The most typical is the 3/2 Son Clave, called 3/2 because there are 3 notes in the first bar and 2 notes in the second bar. Here's the count for **3/2 Son Clave**:

||: **1** + 2 + 3 + **4** + | 1 + **2** + **3** + 4 + :||

For those of you who took *World Rhythms for Didgeridoo*, you may have noticed that the first bar of the 3/2 son clave (above) looks familiar. That's because it is the same as **tresillo**, a rhythm we covered (explained below).

Here's the count for **2/3 Son Clave**, which is essentially the 3/2 Son Clave reversed:

||: 1 + **2** + **3** + 4 + | **1** + 2 + 3 + **4** + :||

Here's a more difficult variation called the **Rumba Clave**:

||: **1** + 2 + 3 + 4 + | 1 + **2** + **3** + 4 + :||

Lastly the variation known as the **Bossa Nova Clave** (note the difference in the second bar):

||: **1** + 2 + 3 + **4** + | 1 + **2** + 3 + **4** + :||

The first step to mastering these rhythms is to be able to clap them with a metronome. Once you can do that then applying them to the didgeridoo or any other instrument is a piece of cake.

For your convenience we have included the previous section on Tresillo from *World Rhythms for Didgeridoo*:

### ***Tresillo: Afro-Cuban Rhythm***

Tresillo is a bell pattern essential to Afro-Cuban, Afro-Brazilian and Latin music. Originally brought to the Americas by African slaves, this rhythm is found in most traditional African music and most Latin-American styles.

Tresillo is also known as the **Caribbean Clave**.

There are two ways to conceptualize Tresillo:

- A. Take a pattern of 8 beats and divide it as 3, 3, 2. In other words:

**1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2**

Using the building blocks of 3 and 2 that we learned earlier, this looks like:

**Ha in ha Ha in ha Ha in**

With a metronome you can practice playing this perfectly in time. This will really help to develop your feel for syncopated rhythms.

- B. Use strong exhales (abs) to play notes on beats **1, &(of 2)** and **4**. When you do this rhythm with circular breathing you can inhale in any space between the strong beats. Try to hear your inhales as a rhythmic element. This is what it looks like:

**1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & ,**

**1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &...**

Notice that this count is exactly the same as 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2, it just counted over a steady pulse of four beats and uses subdivision (the upbeats [&s] between the beats)