



# Grooving with the Clave

By Jason Kokoszka

If you have an interest in exploring rhythms from different cultures, the clave should not be overlooked. This Afro-Cuban rhythm has influenced many modern styles of music. For more information on Latin rhythms, check out the current Theory Corner to read an excerpt from Jeff Peretz's book, *Guitar Atlas: Cuba*, which is a wonderful volume for anyone interested in the clave and its many variations.

Please note that the chord symbols above each part reflect the overall basic harmonic structure (when the examples for guitar, keyboard and bass are taken into account). Try these ideas out with your friends; complimentary parts for guitar, keyboard, bass and drums are included below. Dig in, and enjoy!

## Guitar

Our tune kicks off with a rhythmic break for the first two measures before a 3/2 clave begins. This example is harmonically simple, alternating between Dmin and A7. The challenge here lies in the rhythm. There is a great deal of syncopation, and the melody and chords reinforce the clave rhythm. As always, count carefully and have fun!

Chord symbols: Dmin, A7b9, Dmin, A7

1 2 3  
1 3 4 1 3 1 2 3 1 2 1 4 1 2 1 4 2 1 4

T 4 5 5 6 5 8 (8) 5 6 5 8 6 5 8  
A 4 7 7 8 (8) 5 7 5 6 7 6 (6) 5 8 (8) 5 6 5 8 6 5 8  
B 4 4

Chord symbols: Dmin, A7, Dmin, A7, Dmin

2 1 2 1 3 1 2 1 4 3 1 2 3 4 3 1 4 3 1 2 4 3

T 6 5 6 (6) 5 7 5 6 5 5 7 7 (7) 7 6 5 5 5 7 7 (7) 6  
A 7 7 (7) 7 5 5 5 7 7 (7) 7 5 5 5 7 7 (7) 7  
B 5 5 (5) 5 5 5 5 5 5 (5) 5 5 (5)

10 A7 Dmin A7 Dmin Dmin A7 Dmin

3 2 3 2 2 3 2  
 2 4 2 4 4 2 4  
 1 3 1 3 3 1 3

T 5 5 6 6 6 6 5 5 6 6 5 5 6 6  
 A 6 6 7 7 7 7 6 6 7 7 6 6 7 7  
 B 5 5 7 7 7 7 5 5 7 7 5 5 7 7

## Keyboard

Following the rhythmic break, the keyboard plays open chord voicings that emphasize the underlying clave feel. After accompanying the guitar for four measures, the keyboard plays the lead melody before joining the guitar with a four-bar chordal ending. Use these ideas at your next Latin-flavored jam!

Dmin A7b9 Dmin A7 Dmin A7

5 2 1 4 5 4 3 4 5 4 3 1 2 3 4  
 1 5 2 1 5 1 2 2 1 5 1 2

7 Dmin A7 Dmin A7

5 3 5 3 2 3 3 5 3 2 1 1 2 5 4 3 4 5 4 2  
 2 1 5 1 2 2 1 5 1 2

II Dmin A7 Dmin Dmin A7 Dmin

5 3 1 4 2 1 5 3 1 5 3 1 4 2 1 5 3 1

1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1

1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2

## Bass

As with much Cuban-flavored music, the rhythm is more challenging than the melodic or harmonic content. Here is a tumbao pattern one might hear supporting a 3/2 clave. Note that this bassline is made up entirely of chord tones. Watch those ties and have fun!

Dmin A7<sup>b</sup>9 Dmin A7 Dmin A7

1 1 3 1 1 1 1 3 3 1 4 1 3

5 7 7 5 4 5 7 (7) 7 (7) 4 7 5 7

5 (5)

7 Dmin A7 Dmin A7

7 1 4 1 3 1 3 1 3 3 2 3 1 3

5 8 (8) 5 (5) 7 5 7 5 7 (7) 7 (7) 6 7 5 7

5 (5)

II Dmin A7 Dmin Dmin A7 Dmin

II 1 3 1 1 3 3 3 1 1

5 7 (7) 5 (5) 5 7 7 7 (7) 5 (5) 5 5 5

## Drums

Here is a simple but effective groove with the bass drum providing the basic 3/2 clave rhythm and the snare (played with a cross stick) providing other accents on top. Try this out the next time you are playing with a Cuban feel to add some spice!

The image shows a musical score for a drum groove in 3/4 time. It consists of three systems of two staves each. The top staff of each system contains a bass drum line with a 3/2 clave rhythm (represented by quarter and eighth notes) and a snare line with various accents. The bottom staff of each system contains a snare line with a consistent rhythmic pattern. The score is numbered 1, 6, and 10 at the beginning of each system.

For more information on the clave, be sure to check out the Licks and Tricks column in this newsletter, as well as the Amanda Monaco lesson “Introducing the Clave” and the Tom Dempsey lesson “Introduction to Clave.” You can also order Jeff Peretz’s book, *Guitar Atlas: Cuba* at [www.ordermusictoday.com](http://www.ordermusictoday.com).

Not a guitarist? Don’t worry, we’ve got lessons for you too. Keyboardists should check out David Pearl’s Pianist’s Tool Box lesson “Cuban Son.” Bass players will enjoy the intermediate rock bass lessons “The Bo Diddley Groove,” taught by Tracy Walton, and “Introducing the Bo Diddley Groove,” taught by Sharon Ray. Drummers and percussionists will love Kalani’s hand drum seminar lessons “The Clave and the Agogo” and “Salsa Patterns: Mambo and Songo for Two Drums.”

Happy Holidays—be creative, and most importantly have fun!