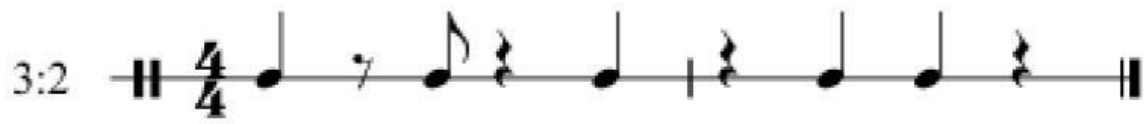
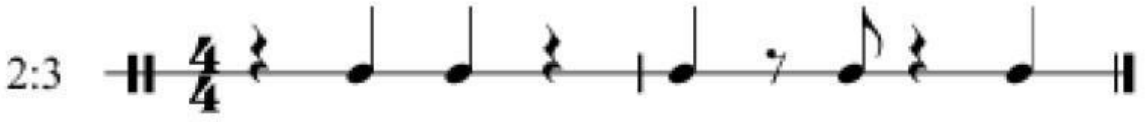
Learning about Rhythm in Salsa

Rhythm is a very important part of Salsa music. The rhythm fundamental to Salsa music is known as **SON CLAVE** (this rhythm came from **SON** music and is played by the **CLAVES**). There are two main variants, known as 2:3 and 3:2 shown below in staff notation and rhythm grid notation.
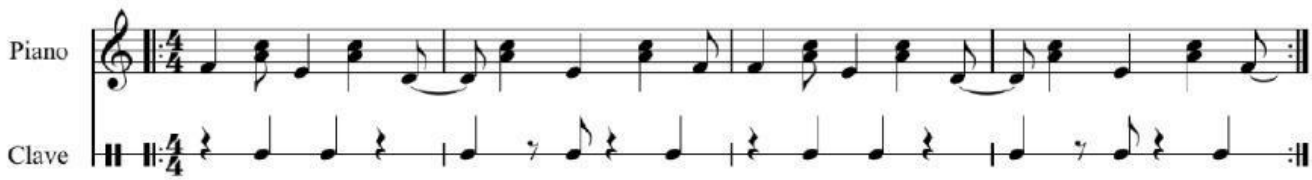




Based on Clave rhythm	1	+	2	+	3	+	4	+	5	+	6	+	7	+	8	+
3 – 2 clave rhythm																
2 – 3 clave rhythm.																

Scan the QR codes above to hear the 3:2 and 2:3 Son Clave rhythms being performed over a regular pulse. Try to focus on the **RHYTHM** rather than the regular beat and try and perform this on whatever instruments you have – even tapping it out on a table or desk. Perform "along with" the audio tracks at first and then try performing the different Son Clave rhythms without.

All other instruments in a Salsa band fit around this rhythm, which is commonly played for the duration of the chorus although often throughout the whole piece. A piece of Salsa music doesn't use the same **SON CLAVE** all the time – it may switch between the two. Salsa is normally in 4/4.

Another characteristic Salsa rhythm is often played by the piano. This is a highly **SYNCOPATED** four-bar rhythm, which the pianist will repeat as an **OSTINATO** or **RIFF** throughout the chorus of the piece. Here is an example of this rhythm based on the chord of F major.



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Scan the QR code and listen to the characteristic piano rhythm used in much Salsa music. You'll also hear the Clave rhythm being performed, in this case a 2:3 Son Clave rhythm.



If you have a keyboard available, try and learn the characteristic Salsa piano rhythm shown above. If you don't you may be able to use online "virtual pianos" or free music software or online sites or you may even be able to programme this into a music sequencing programme.

Scan the QR code and listen to a piece of Salsa focusing on the characteristic Salsa piano rhythm and the Son Clave rhythm.





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