

Debate about the clave direction will always exist. Most feel that the clave must retain its fixed, two-measure relationship, and others, including Los Van Van (a very popular Cuban band), give themselves “clave license” to be able to drop one of the two measures during a song in order to have two weak or strong measures consecutively. I guess ... if you make the rules, you can break them! It happens all the time with my daughter, for example. When we play games, she makes the rules and then changes them in the middle of the game in order to get ahead. With regard to the history of “breaking the rules” musically, analysis can lead to many possible theories. For instance, in the past, drums were used as a communicating tool. If an outsider deciphered the meaning, it could compromise the entire community—hence, the communication would have to change.

There are cultures that still practice this tradition today. One of my ethnomusicology teachers traveled extensively to Nigeria to study the music of a certain tribe. It was not until after seven years of constant travel that the tribesman really told him the meaning of their songs. He thought he had come to understand the meaning of their music after a year of traveling, but the tribesmen had “protected” themselves with lies about the lyrics of songs, their meaning, etc. Overall, we know that nothing stays the same; nothing is static. But let’s underline this, again: In order to change the rules we must truly know them first.

There are two types of clave patterns associated with popular (secular) music: Son Clave (3-2 / 2-3) and Rumba Clave (3-2 / 2-3).



Fig. 1.2 Son Clave 3-2



Fig. 1.3 Son Clave 2-3



Fig. 1.4 Rumba Clave 3-2



Fig. 1.5 Rumba Clave 2-3

Another type of clave: 6/8 clave - Originated in several styles of West African sacred music.



Fig. 1.6 6/8 Bell pattern (seven stroke pattern)



Fig. 1.7 Removal of two strokes makes 6/8 clave (Equivalent of Rumba Clave)

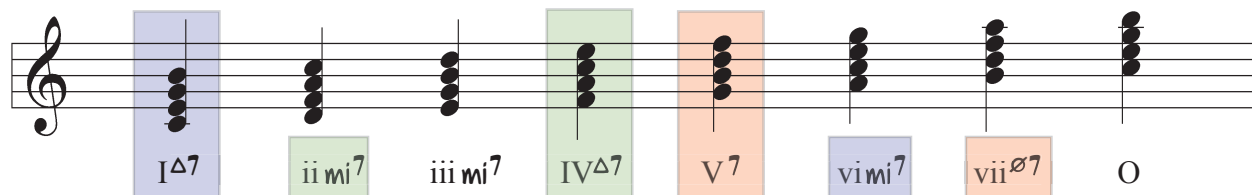
You might have realized, already, that the difference between son and rumba clave lies on beat four of the strong bar. In the son clave, it’s right on beat “four,” while in the rumba clave it’s on the “and of four.” You should practice these rhythms clapping, while tapping quarter notes with your foot: beats “one, two, three and four;” then by tapping half notes with your foot: beats “one and three.” Rumba clave is mostly used in the folkloric genres such as Guaguancó or Conga de Comparsa, among others, but it is also used in modern settings such as Songo and Timba.

# Chapter One

## I-IV-V7

Major progression

CD Vol. 1 tracks [5, 11, 17]



In chapter one we will explore I-IV-V7 progressions in major keys. If we take a C major scale (c-d-e-f-g-a-b-c) as illustrated above and stack thirds diatonically (which means notes only found in our original scale no alterations or 'chromatic notes) in top of our scale notes our tonic chord (I-blue) becomes a major 7th chord. Our sub-dominant chord (IV-green) is also major and our V chord (red) is dominant seventh chord. The smaller colored rectangles represent substitutions for the color they represent: So our ii chord (D mi7-in this case) can be a substitute for our IV Chord. The iv chord can be a substitute for our tonic chord and our vii chord can substitute our dominant chord.

The following montunos will be listed in order of simplicity. We will work in Bb major. (Use CD Vol.1 - tracks 5-11-17)  
EXAMPLE 1.

CLAVE

PIANO

BASS

The above example illustrates how the piano is used to imitate the sound of the Cuban Tres (a stringed instrument with 3 pairs of strings) which is part of the instrumentation for the Cuban music style called "Son Muntuno". It is a very simple line melodic line that follows the rhythmic phrase written right below the clave pattern on the example above. Notice all the upbeat after a strong first downbeat and how that repeats. Most examples will be 4 measures long. Many of them will be a 2 measures phrase repeated. We will also analyze complex montunos with 4 measures phrases. It is important to first learn and internalize the simple montunos since they are the foundation of the Latin piano style. In some cases, montunos were conceptualized imitating the Cuban Tres, in others, a three octave range was developed to overcome the lack of amplification, three octaves sound much louder than one. When you incorporate drums and horns into the equation you will understand the need for three octaves. Try playing an acoustic piano at a salsa band rehearsal without any amplification! You will end up with tendonitis from trying to play so hard.

## EXAMPLE 5.

Example 5 accentuates the clave by hitting a strong 3rd beat on measures 1 and 3.

## EXAMPLE 6.

Example 6 is a variation of ex. 5. It incorporates 10ths to create a thicker sounding voicing.

## EXAMPLE 7.

Example 7 is also a variation of ex 5. It substitutes the second chord with an Eb13 and the Dominant voicing is a D7 (#9,#5). It works better if the bass substitutes the iv chord bass note with the ii chord bas note (A - in this case).

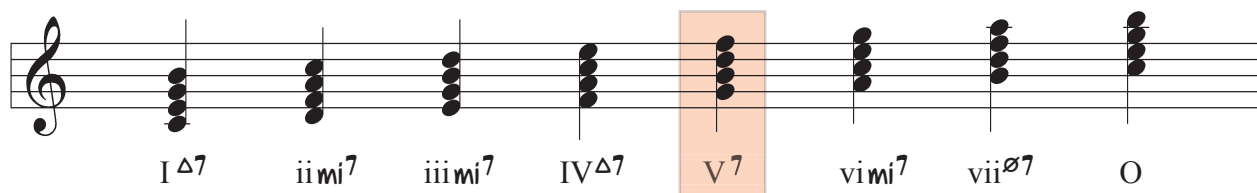
# Chapter

# Three

# V7

*Dominant progression*

*CD Vol. 1 tracks [2,8,14]*



We owe this section pretty much to composer, pianist and bassist, Orestes López (the creator of the Mambo.) And also to his brother Israel “Cachao” López and Dámaso Pérez Prado. But where did the Mambo derive from? The Danzón. Orestes López incorporated on the last part of the “Danzones de Nuevo Ritmo” [new rhythm Danzón], called the “mambo,” piano montunos based on the syncopated beat of the son-playing treseros from Oriente. The Mambo and the Danzón styles have always used the piano on their instrumentation, but again, copying the ever so strong influence from the Cuban Son that had just recently taken over the world with Arsenio Rodriguez. The piano gave these styles an identity, one that could not exist without it.

The following examples are in C7. (Use CD Vol.1 - tracks 2-8-14)

EXAMPLE 1.

CLAVE

PIANO

BASS

What do we see in this new montuno? Or is it new? Rhythmically is the same as in chapters 1 and 2. The I-IV-V7 (pretty much almost every son montuno follows this progression) in major or minor have exactly the same rhythmic structure as this new “rhythm” called mambo. The mambo had to adapt the notes in the chords to the montuno. The first bar outlines a C7 chord: C-E-G-Bb-C with a slight genius change: an octave displacement (the G and Bb) which makes it more interesting (melodically). The second measure acts as a preparation for the 3rd measure which is again C7. Is it a preparation? The ii-V7 universal chord progression: Gmin-C7 in this case. Measure 2 outlines a Gminor chord after the E: G-Bb-D. In this chapter we will begin to explore this relationship: ii - V7. If the montuno would just arpeggiate a C7 chord after 2 minutes (or less) it would become stagnant and boring. That is why we will try to explore many ways of approaching a V7 chord. Sometimes the V7 will become before the ii-min7. This dual relationship fits perfectly with the duality of the clave and music in general: tension and release.

## EXAMPLE 20.

The musical score for Example 20 is written in B-flat major (two flats). It consists of a melody line and piano accompaniment. The melody line is in 4/4 time and features a series of eighth notes and quarter notes, with some rests. The piano accompaniment is in 4/4 time and features a series of eighth notes and quarter notes, with some rests. The key signature is B-flat major, and the time signature is 4/4.

Example 20 creates a very interesting melody via the octaves in which chords are suggested, but it dominates melodically. It seems almost gravitational the strength in which the octaves move diatonically and chromatically.

The octaves move three notes and arpeggiate two. Maybe this relationship again of 3-2 (also given by the clave) tension release is what makes this montuno so strongly rooted but very volatile at the same time. Make sure you have a strong rhythm section while playing this montuno. The tendency to rush the up-beats will be there.



Eddie Palmieri Live @ Jazz Alley, Seattle.

## EXAMPLE 21.

The musical score for Example 21 is written in B-flat major (two flats). It consists of a melody line and piano accompaniment. The melody line is in 4/4 time and features a series of eighth notes and quarter notes, with some rests. The piano accompaniment is in 4/4 time and features a series of eighth notes and quarter notes, with some rests. The key signature is B-flat major, and the time signature is 4/4.

Example 21 also illustrates the use of inversions to move through the chords.

# Chapter Solo Transcriptions

## Nine

We have chosen 5 solo transcriptions from different performers to offer a variety of approaches. Some more modern like Chucho Valdés and Michel Camilo, some very traditional like that of Peruchín or Papo Lucca. Our first solo transcription comes from Eddie Palmieri's song "El Beso" from his CD "Masterpiece." The solo is in 3-2 clave and it is in F minor.



r 3-2 Clave

PIANO

Chords: C7, FMIN

6

Chords: C7, FMIN

10 **C7** **FMIN**

14 **C7** **FMIN**

18 **C7** **FMIN**

22 **C7**

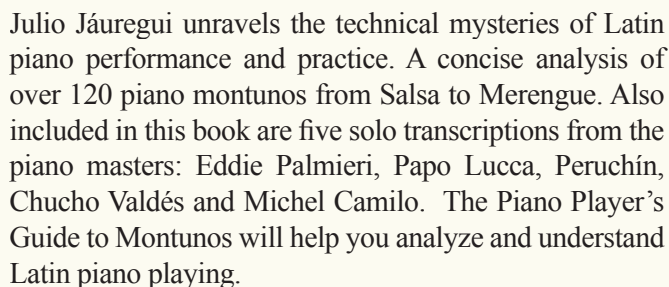
26 **C7** **FMIN**

LARRY HARLOW, PRODUCER AND PIANO MASTER  
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PUERTO RICO



The CD “The Piano Player’s guide to Montunos, CD Edition. Vol. 1” is a great addition to this book. The CD includes 4 minute examples to help you practice the exercises shown on this book. The CD will also help you practice your Latin solos and will help you develop your own montunos. The CD was not sequenced with MIDI, it was recorded LIVE! Featuring Joe Santiago on bass.

This book is for everyone that wants to increase their knowledge and mastery of Latin piano playing, from beginner to advanced levels.

