

# Claves

## Claves



Percussion instrument	
<b>Classification</b>	Hand percussion
<b>Hornbostel–Sachs classification</b>	111.1 (Concussion idiophone)
Playing range	
Single note	

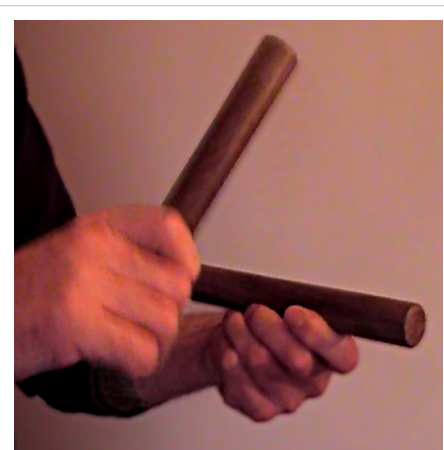
**Claves** (Anglicized pronunciation: *clah-vays*, IPA:[ˈklaves]) are a percussion instrument (idiophone), consisting of a pair of short (about 20–30 cm (7.9–11.8 in), thick dowels. Traditionally they were made of wood, typically rosewood, ebony or grenadilla. Nowadays they are also made of fibreglass or plastics due to the greater durability of these materials. When struck they produce a bright clicking noise. Claves are sometimes hollow and carved in the middle to amplify the sound.

Claves are very important in Afro-Cuban music, such as the son and guaguancó, and in certain types of German minimal techno<sup>[1]</sup>. They are often used to play a repeating rhythmic figure throughout a piece, known as *clave*, a *key pattern* (or *guide-pattern*, *timeline patter*, *phrasing referent*, *bell pattern*) that is also found in African music and Brazilian music.<sup>[2]</sup> One of the better known recordings featuring claves is the Beatles' recording "And I Love Her," in addition to "Magic Bus (song)" by The Who.

Steve Reich's *Music for Pieces of Wood* is written for five pairs of claves.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Technique

The basic principle when playing claves is to allow at least one of them to resonate. The usual technique is to hold one lightly with the thumb and fingertips of the non-dominant hand, with the palm up. This forms the hand into a resonating chamber for the clave. Holding the clave on top of finger nails makes the sound more clear. The other is held by the dominant hand at one end with a firmer grip, much like how one normally holds a drumstick. With the end of this clave, the player strikes the resting clave in the center.



Playing a pair of claves

## Sources

- F. Ortiz, *La Clave*, Editorial Letras Cubanas, La Habana, Cuba, 1995.
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- O. A. Rodríguez, *From Afro-Cuban Music to Salsa*, Piranha, Berlin, 1998.
- E. Uribe, *The Essence of Afro-Cuban Persussion and Drum Set*, Warner Brothers Publications, Miami, Florida, 1996.

## References

- [1] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kBR0DUefJB4>
- [2] Godfried T. Toussaint, "A mathematical analysis of African, Brazilian, and Cuban clave rhythms," *Proceedings of BRIDGES: Mathematical Connections in Art, Music and Science*, Towson University, Towson, MD, July 27–29, 2002, pp. 157–168.
- [3] Steve Reich, *Writings about Music*, New York University Press, 1974.

## External links

- Playing and singing with claves (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4H0DYnV1K4>)

# Article Sources and Contributors

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