

## World Beat - Soukous - Bikutsi - Jazz Styles History Drummers Guide

World Beat is associated with Jazz styles like Juju, Afrobeat, Afropop, and Highlife. These styles originated in the early 20th century in Ghana and Nigeria and eventually reached their peak in Africa toward the middle of the century. This music blends African tribal songs with popular music from the West. It originally incorporated the sounds from Big Band horn sections and later adopted grooves from the Caribbean as well as Rock and Soul music. A resurgence of World Beat in the last decade has created a global following attracted to the music's celebratory and joyful nature. Important World Beat musicians include Fela Kuti, King Sunny Ade, Chief Udo Essiet, Rex Lawson, and Prince Nico Mbarga. As this form of contemporary African music adopted styles from North America and the Caribbean, it's helpful to be thoroughly versed in playing Reggae, Ska, Soca, and Rock. Much as in other styles of dance music, the role of the drummer is to maintain a steady beat and strong time. In addition, relatively soft dynamics are an integral characteristic of World Beat, as the drum set functions primarily as a background instrument. The tempo is quarter note = 100-138 bpm.

Soukous is a type of dance music that emerged in the Congo/Zaire region in the early 1960s. Soukous (French for "to shake") is regarded by some as the most prevalent style of contemporary African music, with popularity that extends into Europe and North America. The roots of this style go back to the post World War II era when radio stations in the Congo/Zaire region played Cuban Rumba music. African musicians used this sound to create what was originally called "African jazz." Prominent Soukous bands and musicians include Zaiko Langa Langa, Franco, and Tabu Ley. As Soukous is primarily dance music, the role of the drummer is to maintain a strong, unwavering pulse. Soukous grooves usually have a 16th-note feel and generally feature quarter notes on the bass drum (a "four on the floor" pattern). As in Rock, the tempo range is relatively narrow at quarter note = 92-132 bpm.

Bikutsi developed in the Beti culture in Cameroon. The origin of the word stems from "Bi" (more than one), "Kut" (to strike) and "Si" (the ground), translating to "strike the ground repeatedly." Whereas Soukous began as an "African Jazz" interpretation of Afro-Cuban music, Bikutsi is a contemporary development of internal African musical ideas. Bikutsi attained popularity in Western Africa by the middle of the 20th century, but only achieved wide exposure in the mid-1980s through music videos. Following that, elements of Bikutsi began to appear in the music of popular Western composers, notably Paul Simon's 1990 recording, "Rhythm of the Saints." Individuals and groups responsible for Bikutsi's success include journalist/promoter Jean-Marie Ahanda, Theodore Epeme ("Zanzibar"), and Les Tetes Brulees. Much like Soukous, Bikutsi is primarily dance music, mandating the drummer's role as timekeeper. Though occasionally played in 9/8, Bikutsi music usually has quick 6/8 feels (written below in 4/4) and usually contains a steady "four on the floor" bass drum pattern, which allows opportunities for improvisation around the consistent pulse. The tempo is generally quarter note = 116-168 bpm.

### About the Author

By Eric Starg who is using [Snare Drums](#) manufactured by [Gretsch Drums](#) and [Slingerland Drums](#). Eric is a member of Drum Solo Artist where he is answering drum related questions, and helping drummers with tips and advices.

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