

Songo - Bomba - History And Development Drummers Guide

Songo is a type of Cuban music, where there is a structuration of the musical phrase of the bass, drum/kick, and the congas for a more dynamic interaction of the rhythms section. Songo rhythms influenced by Blas Egues (brother of Richard Egues, flautist with Orquesta Aragon), is primarily attributed to band leader Juan Formell (who is credited with naming Songo), pianist Cesar "Pupy" Pedrosa, and drummer /percussionist Jose Luis Quintana ("Changuito") from the group Los Van Van, which has been Cuba's most popular musical group for over thirty years. As a result of its modern origin, Songo was the first Afro Cuban musical style directly conceived from a drum set rhythm with the percussion instrumentation added later; and due to its role in Songo, the popularity of the drum set has increased in modern day Afro Cuban ensembles. Songo is a strong influence in the playing of modern drummers such as Dave Weckl, Joel Rosenblatt, Robbie Ameen, Horatio "El Negro" Hernandez, Ignacio Berroa, and numerous others. Songo rhythms draw from all Afro Cuban musical styles. The ride hand plays a steady pulse, the bass drum plays a tumbao rhythm in both measures, and the snare hand fills in syncopated notes around the other limbs to create a "linear" rhythm pattern.

(Take note of the accents in the snare hand which help establish the overall sound and feel of Songo.) Although Songo is its own style, Songo grooves can be used in other Afro Cuban rhythm styles when the drummer is accompanied by other percussionists. As well, improvisation is common in Songo. The primary Songo example is based on a 2-3 rumba clave rhythm. In more advanced playing, a hi hat foot rumba clave can be added. However, it is important to note that the hi hat foot clave tends to interrupt the overall feel if the initial groove is not clearly established. The Songo groove is a two measure, up tempo rhythm pattern usually starting around quarter note = two hundred beats per minute.

Bomba is the primary musical style to emerge from Puerto Rico, with Congolese (Bantu) roots similar to much Cuban music, and it was first brought to widespread popularity by Puerto Rican percussionist Rafael Cortijo in the mid 1950s. Though there are various genres of Puerto Rican music (e.g., Cufia, Lero, Yuba, Grasima), Bomba has become the defining name for all Puerto Rican styles. Puerto Rican musical roots extend back to the 16th century when music and dance arrived from Ghana.

These were developed and maintained through sugar plantation slaves' holiday dances. The first written mention of the term Bomba came in 1797 after Andre Pierre Ledru encountered the dance and music in Aibonito. The tradition of Bomba (folkloric instrumentation consisting primarily of percussion and vocals) continues in the twenty first century in festivals such as the Santiago Apostol Festival. The Bomba pattern for drum set incorporates a repetitive bass drum pattern as well as a distinctive bell pattern, played on either the bell of the ride cymbal or a cowbell. It normally does not contain a clave rhythm. The pattern is usually counted and felt in a quick four by four starting around quarter note = two hundred beats per minute.

About the Author

By Eric Starg. Eric is using [Zildjian](#), [Sabian](#) and [Paiste](#) cymbals in his setup. Eric is an active member of Drum Solo Artist where he is answering drum related questions, and helping drummers with tips and advices.

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