

# Feel the Latin Beat

■ The worldwide TV hit *Dancing with the Stars* may seem like a fad, but in truth this incarnation of a ballroom dance show has its origins with the British show *Come Dancing*, which first aired in 1949! The perennial fascination with ballroom dances has meant that the exotic Latin music styles that accompany them have remained popular.

Without doubt it's the distinctive rhythms of Latin music that make them so irresistible for dancers and musicians. Below is a summary of four classic Latin styles, including a simple drum tab with a rhythmic example. The symbol  is the percussion clef. To understand more about time signatures, visit [www.makingmusicmag.com/pdfs/clip06jan.pdf](http://www.makingmusicmag.com/pdfs/clip06jan.pdf).

Try out these rhythms on simple percussion, but also on a piano, or indeed any instrument. Each style is often heard with a traditional combination of instruments. Some of these instruments, especially the percussion, may seem exotic, but manufacturers such as Latin Percussion and Remo produce affordable claves, agogos, pandeiros, and other Latin instruments.

## Bossa Nova

**WHAT IS IT?**—Brazilian music created in the late 1950s. The 1965 hit “The Girl from Ipanema” by Stan Getz and João Gilberto (the “inventor of bossa nova”) is the most famous song in this style. Derived from samba, it’s more harmonically complex and less reliant on percussion.

**TYPICAL INSTRUMENTATION**—Classical guitar, piano, clave, tambourine (or rim-shot snare and hi-hat)

**RHYTHM EXAMPLE**—Bossa nova in 2/4



## Mambo

**WHAT IS IT?**—Afro-Cuban music developed in the 1930s, the accompanying dance is derived from European contradances, while the music has African influences. Mambo took off in the '40s and was popularized in the US by Tito Puente, Tito Rodriguez, and other Latin musicians. Cha-cha is related to the mambo.

**TYPICAL INSTRUMENTATION**—Trumpets, reeds, congas, timbales, assorted small percussion (cowbell, clave, scraper, rhythm block)

**RHYTHM EXAMPLE**—Mambo in 4/4



## Samba

**WHAT IS IT?**—Brazilian music with African origins common to northeastern Brazil and the favelas (slums) of Rio de Janeiro. Samba music uses syncopated, complex rhythm parts. Huge “samba schools” organize dancers and musicians for Rio’s famous carnival. Samba has many derivatives, including bossa nova, pagode, and axé.

**TYPICAL INSTRUMENTATION**—Cavaco (Brazilian ukulele), pandeiro (tambourine drum), agogo (double cow bell), cuica (friction drum), snare drum, surdo (bass drum)

**RHYTHM EXAMPLES**—Samba in 2/2 and Samba in 4/4



## Tango

**WHAT IS IT?**—Argentinian music that originated in Buenos Aires in the 19th century. The sensual dance was popular in bars and brothels until it gained respectability in the 1920s, in part due to silent film star and dancer Rudolph Valentino. The dance’s dramatic movements are accompanied by abrupt rhythms and sharp accents.

**TYPICAL INSTRUMENTATION**—Violin, flute, guitar, bandoneone (accordion), piano

**RHYTHM EXAMPLE**—Tango in 4/4

