



Snapshot:

Brazil

Rocking In The Cradle Of Carnival



UNIVERSAL CELEBRATION

- 1. Samba in the streets of Portland, Oregon.
- 2. Olodum in Salvador, Bahia. 3. Carnival in Rio.

By Brad Boynton and Brian L. Davis

Most of us have heard of samba, and of course bossa nova (literally, “new sound”), and we’ve all heard high school band directors tell us to make it sound “a little more Latin.” But that Latin world is not something you can fake, and it doesn’t fool anyone to play “*Ê 1, Ê 2*” on your bass drum and call it samba. The nature of this music is fluid, and the Brazilian rhythmic family keeps growing. The samba groups most of us are familiar with are also referred to as *escolas*, *baterias*,

batucadas, and *blocos* and their music wafts through the streets and alleyways during Carnival in Rio de Janeiro.

But there are also sub-styles of samba under the same umbrella that you may not have heard of such as *samba de morro*, *samba duro*, *samba de partido alto*, and *samba reggae* just to name a few. And to make it even crazier, as with any family, you have distant cousins, and in this case that includes *pagode*, *choro*, *maracatu*, and *afoxe*, all of which have emerged as their own distinctive styles.

With traditions as long and diverse as the Amazon itself, let’s head to Brazil in search of that *ginga*, or greasy swinging feel that seems to emanate from every facet of Brazilian music, so that we’ll no longer have to make it “a little more Latin.”

Real World Applications

Sometimes an instrument can be scary with its simplicity, and yet a lifetime can be devoted to that single instrument. If you’ve seen *tabla* master Zakir Hussain

play cycles most of us can't comprehend, or watched Giovanni Hidalgo as he finishes a lick before mere mortal minds can register it, then you'll want to check out their Brazilian equivalents like Carlinhos Pandeiro de Ouro (he got his name by outperforming 500 other pandeiro players in 1966, to become, literally, "Carlinhos Of The

“If you ask five people you'll get five different answers about the origin of samba.”

Golden Pandeiro.”). He is just one example of how a Brazilian instrument comes alive in the hands of a master. With open and muted tones, slaps, and expert control over the pitch of the rawhide head from the backside and crazy control over the jingles he can make this little tambourine sound like an entire ensemble if he wants to.

And there are real-world applications for an instrument as simple as the pandeiro. Studying it can help kit players learn hip new ostinato patterns, independence, and that elusive *ginga* that makes samba swing. Consider what New Orleans street-beat king Stanton Moore has done with his pandeiro when he plays with Galactic. Last year toward the end of a show in Portland he took a ten-minute pandeiro solo as his bandmate held an Audix D6 mike under it. It sounded like an entire band with cannons shooting off. And when you drill down, you realize what a perfect match Moore is for the pandeiro because there are a lot of musical similarities between New Orleans and Brazilian drumming: both are parade styles that feature multiple instruments with common origins pointing straight back to Africa. Both are participatory and community focused. The point here is when you study samba or any other world musical style, you're not just learning the grooves, you're connecting the cultural dots whether you realize it or not. The applications for Brazilian percussion are endless whether you specialize in a single instrument or attempt the impossible — to be a specialist in all styles!

All In The Family

Samba is like a big family, spreading beyond Brazil to European and North American cities and is one of the most visible and fastest growing world music trends. It's a musical genre that brings together young and old, various races and cultures, and

seems to transcend class. And like a family, Brazil's samba schools often function like a safety net, providing not only musical instruction but also access to healthcare, food, and housing to many of the poor living in the *favelas*, or slums. And like Red Sox or 49ers fans, the affiliation with these institutions is a family affair that is passed down through generations.

That's the cool thing about Brazilian percussion — no single person can be a master of all styles. It takes a community, and that community could be two people, two hundred — like many of the prominent *escolas* — or the 2 million who

crowd the streets during Carnaval. Samba isn't notes on a page, but a larger coming together of various cultures over time. It's not a gig; it's a lifestyle.

Origins

If you ask five people you'll get five different answers about the origin of samba. It's kind of like asking the other players in your band to explain a Purdie shuffle. We know Portuguese elements mixed with the Africans who were coming from Portuguese colonies like Angola and Mozambique, as well as from Congo, Dahomey (now Benin), and Nigeria. One thing seems certain, and that's the Angolan circle dancing, known as *semba*, which seems to have joined forces with the Yoruba-inspired *candomble* rhythms into the grandfather of all samba styles, the *samba de roda*, or “samba of the circle,” in Bahia back in the 17th century.

Picture a family tree with all the African elements on one side, and all the European elements on the other. The African side brings the rhythmic structures, the call and response, and the participatory nature of the music. The European side brings its melodic structures, marches, and military order, all of which mix with the indigenous population and instruments. And so *samba de roda*, the oldest samba ancestor, blended with those European influences, which then came together as two sides of the family tree that grew to create the samba we know today. Yet with each generation of this musical family, more influences are added to the mix such as jazz (think Stan Getz' “Girl From Ipanema” or Airto Moreira's work with Miles); reggae; and pop; which in turn give birth to new styles like *samba reggae*.

You've already seen this evolution in ensembles like *Olodum* backing Paul Simon on his *Rhythm Of The Saints* tour,

or parading through Salvador's narrow streets in Michael Jackson's video “They Don't Care About Us” (nearly 89 million views on YouTube!). All these musical collaborations point back to the same rhythmic ancestors and their common European and African cultural influences. A great read on the subject is the book *Rhythms Of Resistance: African Musical Heritage In Brazil* by Peter Fryer.

Getting Schooled In Rio

The best time to visit Rio is in the weeks preceding Carnaval. You can visit the *quadras*, or neighborhood centers that serve as headquarters for each of the *escolas*. The *quadras* are open to the public to visit, usually for a small entry fee. In addition to having *bateria* rehearsals and training for the youth, the *quadra* is also the location for community events and projects and a great place to meet people. If you're there, ask around about watching some of the *ensaio técnicos* (technical rehearsals) that take place in the Sambodromo in central Rio as they get ready for the competitions. These rehearsals are the backbone of what you'll see during Carnaval, only minus the costumes and floats. It's like listening to a John Bonham track without vocals and guitars. Listen as 200–300-piece groups such as *Mocidade*, *Beija-Flor*, or *Salgueiro* practice their *desenhos* and *paradinhas* (signature grooves) that they'll use during that year's competition.

The Sambodromo is the stadium-like location through which the official parades will pass during Carnaval. In the States we have basketball arenas and baseball fields, but just the mere fact that Brazilians have a physical space dedicated to samba tells you just how important this art form is for the country. Close to the Sambodromo you'll find the *Cidade do Samba* (Samba City) which is where all the float-building takes place. It has lots of budget hotels and cheap food in the area for the millions who will descend upon Rio.

If you've made it this far, don't even think of heading back home without experiencing Carnaval itself. Parades and events will often begin at two in the afternoon and go well into the following morning, giving you just enough time to charge your batteries and do it all again. The Children's Parade, the Parade Of Champions (featuring the year's top six finishers), and the *Grupo Acesso* Parade — which features the smaller samba groups — all perform during this week before Lent. If you're lucky you'll run into Mestre Ailton Nunes, the *bateria* director with Mangueira who also performs and records

regularly with many of Brazil's famous and up-and-coming artists.

Instruments used in Rio-style samba are what most major brands have made available in our music stores such as caixa (snare drum), repinique (repiques), agogo bell, surdos (bass drums often in three sizes: marcação, reposta, and cortador), tamborim, cuica, and pandeiro. Today we're also starting to see the timbal (a cone-shaped hand drum with a plastic head, evolved from atabaques) and shekere being incorporated into larger baterias.

A couple of things in order to understand samba: The emphasis is generally on beat 2. The premeiro, or marcação surdo plays heavy on the 2 giving way to a syncopated side and square side, a call side, and response side, within a fast 2/4 with mostly two-bar phrasing. And this is all happening at 120–140 bpm.

Every year a compilation CD called *Sambas de Enredo* is made of the top escolas, which you can find on file-sharing sites. Resources before you go include riocarnival.net and the Facebook pages and YouTube clips of most major groups. Look for names like Vila Isabel (the 2013 champion), Portela, Mangueira, and Academicos

Do Grande Rio to name a few more major ensembles that define this style.

To enhance your experience while in Rio, visit the Statue Of Christ The Redeemer, not only because it is the most famous thing in town, but also for the views of the city on your way up to it. You could also spend days at the museums, music stores, drum factories, art galleries, botanical gardens, and parks Rio has to offer. Take the train ride up to the neighborhood of Santa Teresa after you visit Lapa, the neighborhood that is Rio's "cradle of samba," which in addition to being the home of the famous blocos Banglafumenga and Monobloco, features a multitude of samba and pagode music clubs.

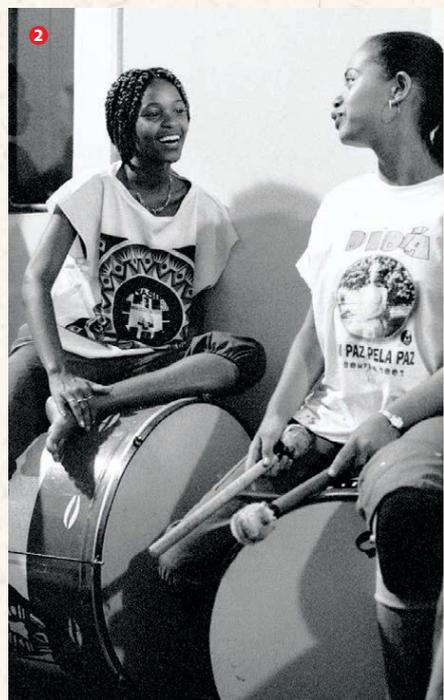
Bahia

Whereas Rio has more Portuguese influence and the fiercely competitive samba schools, a trip up north to Salvador, Bahia, is where you'll find a little piece of Africa. Like a lot of South American/Caribbean countries that have West African influence owing to slave trade under the British and French, Bahia has similar history as well. But it also has roots in southern Africa. The common thread here is the Portuguese,

who colonized Angola and Mozambique as well as Brazil, resulting in the movement of both people and products between the two continents. Instruments that we think of as Brazilian such as the cuica (friction drum), berimbau (single-stringed musical bow), and atabaque (hand drum) can be traced directly to Africa. Even today it's not uncommon to see African djembes being played, bought, and sold in Salvador, where the conversation with Africa is ongoing.

Salvador is also in the heart of capoeira culture, that distinctive Brazilian martial art which evolved with music and dance in a circle in order to disguise it from colonial oppressors. You can learn to play berimbau or study capoeira with one of the many mestres who come from one of the two prominent schools of capoeira: angola or regional.

Salvador is the place to learn more about the Orixa ceremonies of the candomble. In candomble rhythms and instruments you'll see a lot of similarities to the Santería religion found in Cuba. Like its Afro Cuban counterpart, the Brazilian candomble can be traced back to the Yoruba people of present day Nigeria. Similar to congas, candomble uses atabaques, which are a trio of hand drums (rum,



rumpe, le), which like congas are stave-constructed with natural skins — only tabaques are taller and rope-tuned similar to their African counterparts.

Ginga

Like a 12/8 Cuban rumba colombia, or agbadza from the Ewe tribe in Ghana, candomble is also rooted in the groups of three, four, and twelve that we might consider 12/8. But the truth is you can hear much of it in either three or four. While recording their classic recording *Bata Ketu*, Michael Spiro and Mark Lamson coined a phrase for this phenomenon: Fix — which they used to describe that uncategorizable feel in Brazilian and Cuban music that is not really in four or six, but rather “fix.” And that is one of many fixes we encounter in trying to apply Western symphonic concepts to world rhythms.

There's another fix we need to make when talking about the rhythmic feel in Brazil involving styles, which is when a rhythm is neither straight nor swung

in the ways that our method books have taught us. And indeed this is where method books and our European understanding of how we group rhythms departs from what's actually happening in music around the world.

Brazilians call it *ginga*. It's a feeling. It's how you walk, how you play, how you sweep the floor, how you think, and how you live. And no other musical style in Brazil typifies this more than in samba. It's that almost unteachable lilt that is perhaps the most common thread within the extended family of Brazilian rhythms. With Salvador's deep tradition of candomble and samba de roda, you'll begin to break down that Brazilian *ginga* into its component parts much in the same way that we as drummers break down grooves to understand what's inside. And if you've studied the swing in American jazz, the melody in Cuban rumba, and the thick pulsating bass lines in Jamaican reggae, then you've also just found the key to unlocking Brazil's rhythms. They're all cut from the same African cloth.

Salvador's street carnival is known around the world, going six consecutive days from five in the evening till five the next morning, with an estimated crowd of 2 million. Next year's dates have already been announced (February 27 to March 4, 2014). Check out the *trio electricos* (large tractor/trailers outfitted with humongous sound systems) featuring artists such as Carlinhos Brown and Daniela Mercury perched atop the rigs, leading a sea of costumes, music, and dance (salvadorcarnival.info).

Some of the most percussive and African-inspired musical styles are here including samba reggae, which has that same Brazilian *ginga* only with slower tempo (90–120 bpm) and different rhythmic accents. The caixas play a swing reggae backbeat, and there is the addition of a third surdo pattern played with two mallets that roll into beat 1. It's that third surdo that is often the most melodic and free to improvise and follow the melody within the rhythm. And true to the reggae in its name, caixas in samba reggae play accented

TROPICAL BEAT

1. Rio, more Surdos.
2. Caixa player in Rio.
3. Carlinhos Pandeiro de Ouro.
4. Carnaval in Rio.



Photography: 1 & 4: TOBIAS MANTHEY; 2: ERIC M. CRAWFORD; 3: BRAD BOYNTON

eighth-note upbeat that replicates the easy skanking guitar of Jamaican roots reggae.

Samba reggae showcases Afro-Brazilian pride and identity while peppering songs with social commentary and political references. Groups to inspire you before you arrive include Olodum, Timbalada, and the numerous Blocos Indios and Blocos Afros — ensembles, all of which have membership numbering into the hundreds.

Things to do and see while in Salvador include looking up the Balé Folclórico da Bahia, which offers classes and gives performances. Spend a day wandering around the Mercado Modelo where you'll find all kinds of artwork including musical instruments, recordings, and costuming produced in Bahia. And if you wander around the neighborhood of Liberdade, you just might bump into the quadra of one of the first and longest running samba reggae groups, Ile Aiye.

A great side trip from Salvador is about 70 miles inland to the small town of Cachoeira, the site of some of Brazil's most authentic Afro-Brazilian music, religion, and culture. A welcome respite from the crowds in the cities, this sleepy town of about 40,000 people is a place where one person grabs a shaker, another grabs a partner to dance, and before you know it you are a participant in a scene wishing your friends could see you now!

Maracatu In Recife

If you have time, head even farther north to Recife or Olinda in Pernambuco state where another infectious style awaits — maracatu. Originally the music for the processions of the kings, known as *Reis do Congo* (King Of The Congo), which, like its cousin samba, is loud, raucous, played by large groups in the street, and rhythmically complex. Baroque costuming and use of black paint on participants' faces seem to re-enact the history and tension that exist in a region as culturally diverse as Northeastern Brazil. Here the metal surdos of the south give way to the rope-tuned wooden alfaías, which anchor the maracatu ensembles with such a thick layer of bass you could build a house on it. A typical maracatu group is composed of alfaia (bass drum), gongue (bell), tarol (snare drum), and agbe (shaker).

To get a feel for how indigenous rhythms from Recife can merge with contemporary music, look no further than Recife's foremost percussionist Naná Vasconcelos, whose work with Pat Metheny and Don Cherry put this region's rhythms on the musical map. If you are in Recife you will want to look up Mestre Jorge Martins and his

school Grupocorpos for an insider's view of maracatu. You can also search maracatu on Facebook, which brings up a whole string of groups, many of which are in Pernambuco. A "Like" on a group's page is a great way to support them and make contacts for future travel. Closer to home, maracatu ensembles are popping up in Europe and North America. If you're in the New York area look up Scott Kettner, who's group Nation Beat will be touring this summer with Estrela Brilhante, the largest and most famous maracatu nation in Recife.

It All Starts At Home

Whether or not you're able to fly south for Carnival, preparation begins at home, and there are numerous resources to help you find your *ginga*. Most urban areas have samba ensembles. Portland, Oregon, alone has half a dozen, and the pooling of resources in larger groups has brought guest instructors like Dudu Fuentes and Nininho de Olinda to many cities in North America. Additionally, masters like Jorge Alabe, Carlinhos Pandeiro, Marcio Peeter, and Wagner Preto all reside in the States and are available for workshops. And finally, American percussionists like Chalo Eduardo, Michael Spiro, and Mark Lamson (and many, many others) have dedicated their lives to these instruments, and they're fanned out across the country teaching and performing.

Consider going to California Brazil Camp held each summer in the woods in Cazadero, California — where registration for their August 2013 camps has already begun (calbrazilcamp.com). Also be sure to visit worldsamba.org, which is a database with contact information for samba groups all over the globe. And last but not least, treat yourself to a YouTube marathon by looking up the many rhythms, groups, styles, artists, and instruments littered throughout the preceding paragraphs.

Go ahead and dust off your hammock, pack your best *futebol* track suit and green Adidas Samba kicks, and head for the drummer's hang of a lifetime. But whatever you do while in Brazil, don't forget to visit the beautiful white sandy beach of Copacabana, just a short ride from the center of Rio. Only there can you pay homage to the place where music and passion are always in fashion at the Co-pa! Uh oh, did we really just leave you with that tune in your head? ☐

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