

BONGÓ (bone-GO) Essential Elements and Components Defined



BONGÓ (bone-GO)

A small double drum that is held resting on the calves of the seated musician. The heads are tuned a fourth apart. It is widely used in Afro-Caribbean music of many sorts, especially quartets and sextets playing sones. Now considered one of the Latin percussion instruments of the rhythm section, it was originally more widespread than either the conga or the timbales until Arsenio Rodriguez changed the line up in the '40s creating the son montuno. In salsa, as in the earlier string-based groups, the bongó playing tended to be more ad-libbed than the other drums however it is used to accompany the singer inspiring him or her to improvisation the reason they are called "soneros" or "soneras." It served to provide a complex counterpoint to the main rhythmic pulse of a number. The basic toque (pattern) for the bongó, called the martillo (hammer), can be rendered onomatopoeically as dicky-docky-dicky-ducky, sort of a tick tock simulation of a grandfather clock.

By Pete Nater

Guataca (gwah-tah-kah) Essential Elements and Components of Salsa Defined

Guataca (gwah-tah-kah)

A style or concept of playing a tune(s) or an entire gig, where seasoned, usually “old school” musicians perform standards/classics and/or descargas (jam sessions) without the aid of written music (charts). In the case of a standard, the performance is loosely based on the original song, but much is improvised by the musicians, in this case “Guataqueros”.

Just because you play an instrument does not mean you can play guataca. It requires years of experience, familiarity of the classics and the art of improvisation in our particular genre. See the example below.

By Pete Nater

CLAVES Essential Elements and Components Defined

CLAVES (Kla-vez) There are two essential elements of Salsa with the same name:

(The Instruments) With twin strikers of resonant wood, the clave player usually performs the basic clave pattern, and in many bands it is performed on the timbal's wood block. Many variants of claves exist throughout Latin America.



(The Rythmic pattern) Here's is a video by Michael Spiro, with an accurate explanation of the 2 different claves used in Salsa.

By Pete Nater