

# Brazilian Perspectives

by Kevin Winard

**MUSIC KEY**

Open	O	R.C.
H.H.	X	Bell
S.D.	X	
B.D.	X	
H.H.	X	Rimclick
w/foot	X	

America has for decades had a love affair with Brazilian music, Brazilian jazz in particular. Recently there has been a resurgence of interest. Artists like Djavan, Ivan Lins, João Bosco, Dori Caymmi, and, of course, Sergio Mendes have come to the forefront, enticing us with their beautiful melodies, rich harmonies, and seductive rhythms. But what *makes* those rhythms so seductive? As students of the drumset, knowing the proper feel of these wonderful beats should be of paramount importance.

Everyone has heard of the rhythm called “samba,” but when many drummers here in America think of samba, they usually assume that it’s at a fast tempo propelled by a jazz pattern on the ride cymbal, like this:

In Brazil, it’s quite the contrary. It is true that the “escola de samba” (samba schools) that play during Carnival sometimes perform at blazing tempos. But it’s the *feel* that makes it swing. Yes, *swing*. Since moving to the LA area, I’ve been fortunate to play with some wonderful Brazilian musicians, and the word they use to describe a good Brazilian groove is just that: swing.

The first thing you should know is that samba is always felt in cut time—or two—never in four. Think of the feel in terms of walking or marching: When you walk, you take two steps: *left-right, left-right*. Therein lies the two feel.

To find out more about the feel, let’s analyze some of the different elements of the groove. The batucada pattern that is played in Rio is comprised of three basic elements: First, a constant 8th-note pattern is performed by the shaker and pandeiro (Brazilian tambourine). Second, syncopated patterns are provided by the tamborim, a small drum that is played with one stick while the other hand plays the open and muffled tones. And third, downbeats 1 and 2 are supplied by the surdo, a big metal drum that is played with a mallet in one hand, with muffled tones on 1 and open tones on 2. There are other instruments that are used in samba, such as the agogo, caixa (snare), triangle, etc. But for practical purposes we will concentrate on the basic instruments.

Getting back to the feel of samba, the entire rhythm has a feel lying somewhere between 8th notes and triplets. A good way to conceptualize the feel is to think of a galloping horse. It does not sound straight and perfect or “quantized,” but rather it has a loping feel.

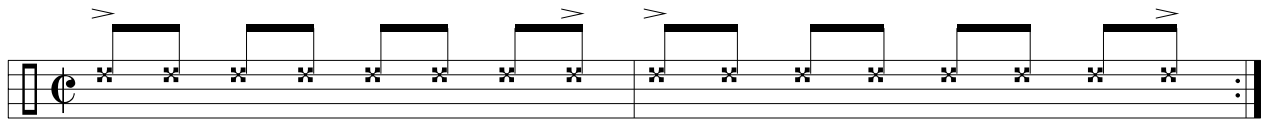
Now, to make things even more complicated, take the galloping feel and move it one 8th note forward. Now you are starting to samba.

Here is the basic batucada pattern:

**Surdo**

**Tamborim**

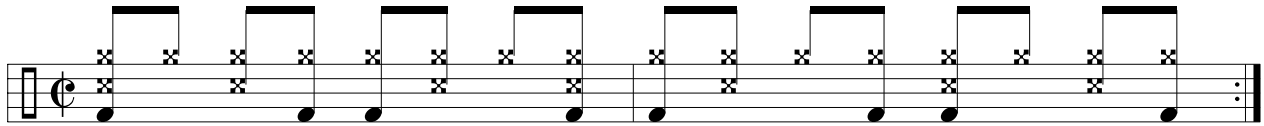
## Shaker



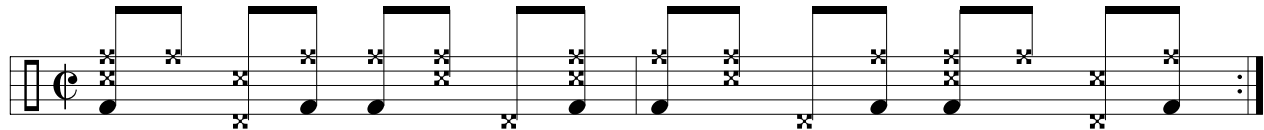
The tamborim can also play the following pattern, giving a driving upbeat feel.



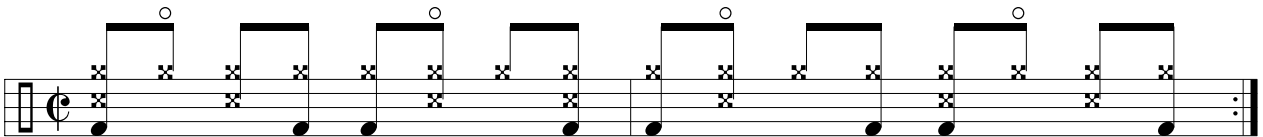
Now let's apply these basic patterns to the drumset. The left hand plays the tamborim pattern as a cross-stick on the snare drum. The bass drum plays the part of the surdo. Make sure that the bass drum is played at equal volume throughout—no accents are necessary. Notice that the right hand is playing all of the 8th notes. This emulates the shaker and pandeiro pattern played either on the hi-hat or ride cymbal.



At faster tempos, the right hand can play this pattern on the ride cymbal bell:

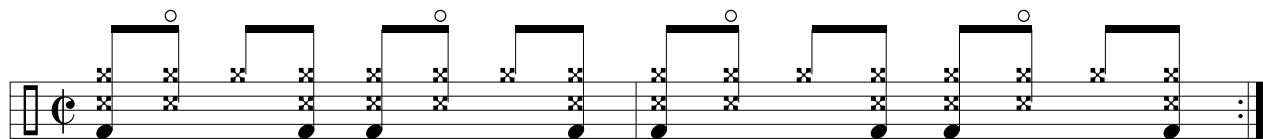
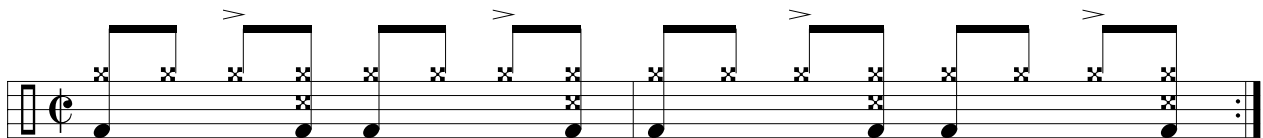


It is also important to note that the opening of the hi-hat on the “e” of 1 and 2 gives the groove a nice forward movement—again, simulating the pandeiro.

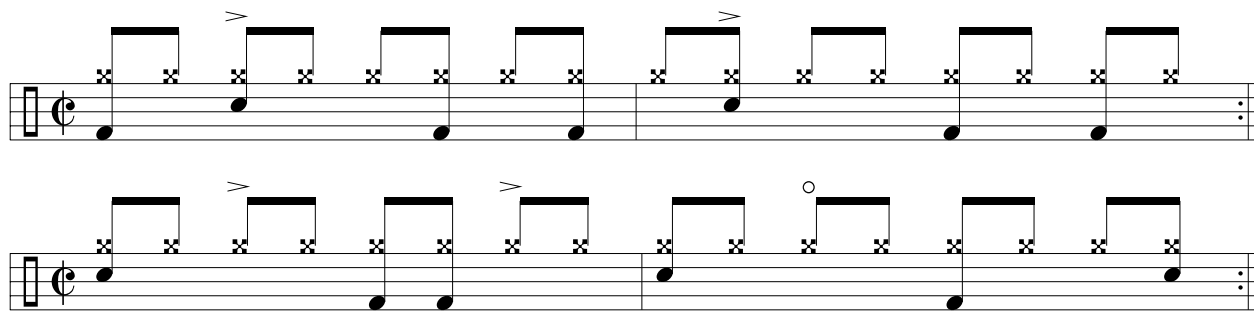


As a general rule, you should avoid playing the typical jazz ride cymbal pattern. Why? Because it makes the samba feel heavy, and sambas, no matter how loud or soft, should *always* feel light. Conceptually, samba should be thought of as playful and joyous. (After all, consider the country in which the rhythm originates.) The way to accomplish this is to think of the groove coming from the upbeats.

Here are some other patterns that you can sink your teeth into. Remember to keep the feel light and swinging.



Another rhythm that is popular in Brazil is the partido alto, or “happy dance.” This is fun to play, because it incorporates more of a funk element.



Now it's time for a little quiz: What pattern is common to both the samba and the partido alto? That's correct, it's the tamborim pattern shown above. In fact this rhythm is the basic foundation for many Brazilian feels. One *could* think of it as a Brazilian clave pattern, but it's important to note that this is an *implied* rhythm underlying the feel in many musical situations.

For the final challenge, go back and forth between the samba and partido alto patterns. Remember to keep it light.

Some suggested recordings to listen to are: Sergio Mendes' *Brasileiro* (an absolute must-have), Dori Caymmi's *Brasileira Serenata* and *Kicking Cans*, Kevyn Lettau's *Kevyn Lettau*, Yutaka's *Brazasia*, Djavan's *Flor De Lis* and *Birds Of Paradise* (first track), and Ivan Lins' *I'm Not Alone*. Remember to not only listen to the drums and percussion on these albums, but to pay close attention to what the guitar, bass, and keyboards are doing to give another perspective to the feel.

I hope this gives you some insight into this beautiful music. Have fun and keep grooving! *Munto obrigado-ciao!*

*Kevin Winard lives in the LA area and has played and/or recorded with Sergio Mendes, Kleber Jorge, Velas, The Captain & Tennille, Doc Severinsen, Jack Jones, and many others. He is also a member of the group Murumba, along with percussionists Kalani and Michael Faue.*

