

[Bron: salsa-in-cuba.com](http://Bron:salsa-in-cuba.com)

Introduction

In the 60's a wave of Cuban rhythm fused with jazz. **Izzy Sanabria**, a graphic designer at Fania studios, combined them all together under the same name to avoid confusion and to sell the concept more easily.

He chose **salsa**, a word that was shouted out to bands and musicians to request them to spice up or liven up the music.

Salsa music has a very **defined structure**:

- an introduction
- a melodic phase
- a rhythmic or percussion phase called montuno
- another melodic phase
- and the ending

The exclamations are used to announce a change, especially in the **montuno**, which is the part with **greatest rhythmic energy**.

An old **Antecessors of Salsa in Cuba** is the '**contradance**' danced in Versailles, which went first to the Spanish court and afterwards to the Caribbean. During the colonisation, this dance had already got the name **contradanza**. The **contradance arrived in Haiti** and the **contradanza in Havana**.

Another fundamental factor for the development of salsa are the **African rhythm** which were used by the slaves for their religious rites. This preservation of these rites was possible due to the similarity of their deities, the **orishas**, and the Catholic saints.

Immigrants from Haiti in Cuba also played an important role for the creation of salsa rhythms. Immigrants of the first colonisation introduced the **contradanza criolla** (of Hispanic American origin), a criolla version of the contradance with African influence in the instrumentation and interpretation. The second wave of immigrants arrived in the middle of the 19th Century from the Republic of Haiti, contributing to the birth of the Cuban son.

Rhythm and Composition

The singing tradition and the rhythm of the drums are a central part of **religious and social practices** among the Africans. A relevant aspect is the shared musicality.

One of the musicians plays a constant, specific rhythm (the **clave**) and the others play together forming a polyrhythm. The **polyrhythm** is an essential component of salsa music. The most common claves are those of the **son**, the **rumba** and the samba; all descendants of the African clave.

The **pregón**-choir is another legacy of religious ceremonies, in which songs were directed by a social or religious leader.

The method of **composition** used in Cuba during the second half of the 19th Century varied according to the geographical location. In the East, music was based on a rhythmic progression of simple chords that accompanied the **improvised words** that obeyed the clave. All of these are characteristics that are apparent in salsa.

The music from the West was more European and the instruments used reminded of those found in French orchestras. The preservation of the orchestral structure, instruments and specialized musicians would later make **jazz's appearance** and entrance into Cuban music much easier.

When Cuba became an independent colony, what used to be a geographical difference turned into a social stratification in the capital: European music for the upper white classes and the music of the East for the lower black classes.

Salsa in Mixed-breed Cuba

The **Caribbean cinquillo rhythm pattern** was acquired by Cuban dancing and **habaneras** through the criolla (Hispanic American) contradanza. The dances for these musical forms were used to be group activities in the past and became coupled dances. The **individualisation** of the dance paved the way for the introduction of African movements in the derivatives of the contradance. The new dance received more approval among the colored communities than among the conservative governing elite.

North American influences during the **Batista dictatorship** brought over performances by American musicians, which led to **jazz's elements in salsa**. The **mambo** went on to be acknowledged as a genre in its own during the 40's. The **cha cha chá**, another descendant of the new rhythm section, was still played by the **charangas** (flute and violin) and preserved an intermediate tempo. The big change involved the introduction of the **conga**. Both styles spread rapidly throughout the rest of the world.

Cuban Revolution and beyond

Fidel Castro came to power in 1959. The **American economic sanctions** against Cuba could not prevent new rhythm from escaping; the most remarkable ones include the **songo** and the mozambique. However, the political change and its impacts reduced Cuba's presence on the global scene.

Apart from the Caribbean, three new salsa centers sprang up: **New York, Miami and Colombia**.

In **New York**, immigrants from Puerto Rico abandoned Puerto Rican folklore music such as the **bomba** or the plena – except perhaps Willie Colón-, in favor of Afro-Cuban music.

Miami was a destination chosen by many of the exiled Cubans. Salsa in Miami is fairly politicised, and Carnival or salsa's promotion in Miami are mostly due to right-wing political activists. Salsa there is a symbol of a great desire: **a Cuba without Castro**.

In **Colombia**, the considerable responsibility of being a main salsa centre can be observed in its great contribution of talents and rhythmic innovations. Cuba prepared what has become another great historical contribution to the history of Salsa: the **Timba**.