

SECTION 1: BOSSA NOVA

Introduction • Part 1

The sensuous Bossa Nova is characterized by a unique rhythmic pattern. Heavily influenced by the "Cool Jazz" of the 1950s and 1960s, Bossa is usually played with a light touch, in slow to medium tempos. It is known for harmonic sophistication and improvisation. Jazz combos blend the sounds of the acoustic piano, acoustic bass, acoustic nylon-string guitar, soft drumset and percussion. Sometimes the flute or the vibraphone enhances Bossa melodies.

There are three ways to begin to understand the right feel of the Bossa Nova:

- I strongly recommend listening to recordings of Brazilian artists. Examples are Tom Jobim, João Gilberto, Luiz Eça, Nara Leão, Carlos Lira, Johnny Alf, Chico Buarque, and Francis Hime. (I had the pleasure of touring with Hime in Brazil for a couple of years.)
- I also recommend going to live performances of Brazilian musicians. This is the best way to visualize how certain things are executed on different instruments, especially drumset and percussion.
- Finally, I recommend sitting in with Brazilian musicians as they play the Bossa Nova or playing with people who have experience with that music idiom.

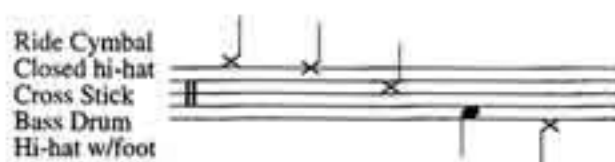
Here are a few things to keep in mind when playing Bossa Nova on the drumset with a Brazilian Jazz combo:

- Always remember, the Bossa should be very sensual. It has a Jazz-ballad quality to it.
- Legato is the name of the game here. Keep it simple and suave. Play it softly. Brushes are welcome. A nice flat ride or even a cymbal with rivets goes well when playing Bossa.
- Remember to keep your Bossa interpretation distinct from other Brazilian styles such as the Samba. For example, I either play the Bossa clave or stay very close to it.

The clave pattern must be adapted to the contour of the song's melodic structure when you perform with a band. Listen to the melody. Make adjustments on your clave pattern to avoid rhythmic clashes.

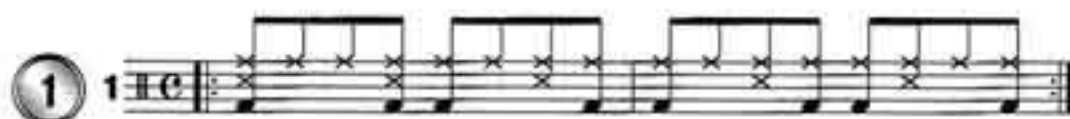
Now let's take a look at some examples of Bossa Nova rhythmic patterns.

NOTATION KEY:



This is one of the most used Bossa Nova grooves, using the closed hi-hat and cross stick 3/2 clave.

NOTE: Multiple examples are included on individual tracks.



Now, in 2/3 clave.

