

Latin Music Genres

From salsa to samba, Latin music has a wide array of styles and genres.

BOLERO

1. ["Tristezas"](#)

"Tristezas" (Sorrows) is commonly considered the first bolero. Written in 1885 by Jose Pepe Sanchez, "Tristezas" is still performed to this day. Sanchez never had any formal musical training and the only reason that some of his boleros are remembered is due to friends and relatives writing down the songs they heard.

Bolero Son

The history of Bolero in Cuba was influenced by the popularity of the traditional [Cuban Son](#). Both musical expressions came from the east side of the country, and they soon were mixed into a new, popular style that was known as *Bolero Son*.

A leading name in that field was the legendary Trio Matamoros, a famous group formed in 1925 by musicians Miguel Matamoros, Rafael Cueto and Siro Rodriguez. The trio was able to move beyond the Cuban borders thanks to their music and the ability to produce and play Cuban Son and Bolero.

Mexico and The Rising of Bolero

Although Bolero is considered the first musical expression from Cuba that gained international exposure, the real popularity of this genre was built in Mexico during the 1940s and 1950s. This wonderful chapter in the history of Bolero music was the result of various factors that interacted together.

First, the Golden Age of Mexican Cinema, where famous actors were also famous singers, allowed Bolero to enter the mainstream scene. Second, the incorporation of Bolero into the framework of the big band movement of the time provided Bolero with a sophisticated sound. Third, there was a boom of local songwriters and singers such as Agustin Lara, Pedro Vargas and Javier Solis, who enhanced the general appeal of the rhythm.

Mexico was also responsible for consolidating one of the most important traditions in the history of Bolero: The Trio. In 1944, three guitarists (two from Mexico and one from Puerto Rico) created the legendary Trio Los Panchos, one of the most essential Bolero names in the history of this genre.

Thriving on Simplicity and Romanticism

For a long time, Bolero was defined by the popularity of trios such as Los Panchos and Los Tres Diamantes and by the unforgettable voices of artists like [Benny More](#), Tito Rodriguez and all the singers from the legendary Cuban band [La Sonora Matancera](#) including Daniel Santos, Bievenido Granda, [Celia Cruz](#) and Celio Gonzalez, among many more.

This line was maintained during the 1950s and 1960s. However, by the 1970s there was a new boom of romantic singers across the Latin music world who were largely influenced by foreign sounds and the emerging notes of [Latin Pop](#). Little by little, Bolero was being confined to the adult crowd that grew up listening to the music produced during the 1940s and 1950s.

Luis Miguel and The Rebirth of Bolero

The development of Latin music genres such as [Salsa](#), Latin Pop and [Latin Rock](#) affected the popularity of Bolero music during the 1980s. Younger generations did not feel that connected with the music of old Bolero trios or romantic singers such as [Julio Iglesias](#), Jose Jose or Jose Feliciano.

In 1991, however, Latin Pop superstar Luis Miguel decided to make an album of classic Boleros. This production was entitled *Romance* and became a worldwide sensation soon after it hit the market. This album represented the rebirth of Bolero music across Latin America driving younger generations into the sounds of one of the most important genres in the history of Latin music.

Since the late 19th century the history of Bolero has been defined by the never ending topic of love. Today, there are several artists who continue to bring this rhythm into their different productions. Bolero is a timeless style that defines like no other the essence of the romanticism we find in Latin music.

Brazilian Music

From the carnival sounds of the Samba to the smooth, sexy Bossa Nova, Brazilian music is like no other.

Although Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world, with a total land mass larger than the U.S., most people are only familiar with two of its musical forms: *samba* and *bossa nova*. But there is much, much more than that. Music plays a major role in Brazilian life and Brazil's music is as wide as the country itself and as diverse as its people.

Portuguese in Brazil:

The Portuguese landed in Brazil in 1500 and soon started to import African slave labor into the country after accepting that the local tribes were not easily coerced into working for the invader.

As a result, Brazilian music is an Afro-European fusion. While this is true in most of Latin America, the Afro-European traditions in Brazil differ in rhythm and in dance form, since the dance does not take the couple form that it does elsewhere. And the dominant language is Portuguese, not Spanish.

Lundu and Maxixe:

The *lundu*, introduced by the slaves, became the first 'black' music to be accepted by the European aristocracy in Brazil. Initially considered an erotic, indecent dance, it changed to a solo song (*lundu-canção*) in the 18th century. At the end of the 19th century, it fused with the polka, the Argentinean tango and the Cuban habanera, and gave birth to the first original Brazilian urban dance, the *maxixe*. Both the *lundu* and the *maxixe* are still a part of the Brazilian musical vocabulary

Choro:

The *choro* developed in Rio de Janeiro in the late nineteenth century out of a blend of Portuguese fado and European salon music. As an instrumental form, *choro* evolved into a type of dixieland / jazz musical style and experienced a revival in the 1960's. If you're interested in listening to modern *choro* music, the music of Os Inguenuos is a good place to start.

Samba:

Brazilian popular music really began with the [samba](#) in the late 19th century. *Choro* was the forerunner to samba and by 1928, 'samba schools' were founded to provide training in the samba, not the least for Carnival. By the 1930s, radio was available to most people, and the popularity of samba spread throughout the country. Various forms of popular music since that time have all been influenced by the samba, including Brazil's earlier traditional song and dance forms

Bossa Nova:

The influence of music from abroad continued throughout the twentieth century, and one of the most popular developments arising from Brazil's understanding of jazz was the [bossa nova](#). The first truly worldwide music of the Americas, it became popular as the music for the stage play *Black Orpheus*, written by Antonio Carlos Jobim and Vinicius de Moraes. Later, Jobim's "The Girl from Ipanema" became the most widely known Brazilian song outside Brazil.

Baiao and Forro:

The music of the Brazil's northern coast (Bahia) is relatively unknown outside of Brazil. Because of the proximity of Cuba and the Caribbean islands, the Bahian music is closer to the Cuban *trova* than to other Brazilian genres. *Baiao* songs tell stories that describe the people, their struggles and often voice political concerns. In the 1950's, Jackson do Pandeiro incorporated coastal rhythms to older forms and transformed the music into what is today known as the *forro*.

MPB (Musica Popular Brasileira):

MPB is the term used to describe Brazilian Pop after the late 1960's. The music that falls in this category is loosely defined and corresponds to what we would think of as Latin Pop. Roberto Carlos, Chico Buarque and Gal Costa fall in this category. MPB transcends the regional constraints of other types of Brazilian music. Popularity aside, MPB is interesting, innovative and the most popular music in Brazil today.

Merengue - From the Dominican Republic to the Dancehalls of the World

Merengue is a type of music strongly associated with Dominican national identity. The genre started gaining in popularity in the mid-19th century, displacing the current musical leader, tumba. Influenced by Spanish decema and plena, merengue is probably a close cousin of the Haitian "meringue", a musical genre sung in Creole but with a slower tempo and more sentimental melody.

Merengue Tipico:

The early merengue was called "merengue tipico" and was originally played on accordion (introduced by German trade merchants), saxophone, box bass, guyano and double-ended tambora drum. It was the music of the lower-classes in the early 20th century, called obscene because of oblique references to sexual and political issues.

Evolution of Merengue:

In the 1930s, merengue came into its own during the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo. Because of his country roots, he was already a merengue fan; during his presidential campaign he asked several bands to write merengue music promoting his political bid and was a champion of merengue as the symbolic music of national culture. But Trujillo's rule was a reign of terror, and the somber mood of the country was reflected in its music.

With the assassination of Trujillo in 1961, merengue starting incorporating American rock, R&B and Cuban salsa elements. The instrumentation changed, with electronic guitars and synthesizer replacing the traditional accordion. The first internationally well-known musician (and Dominican idol at the time) promoting merengue was Johnny Ventura.

Johnny Ventura:

Johnny Ventura started playing music in 1956 with the espoused goal of "waking up the audience." He succeeded by adding matching costumes and synchronized dance movement ala Motown. Ventura was the undisputed 'King of Merengue' for 3 decades, abetted by the "pay-as-you-play" (payola) radio promotion system that is still in effect today.

Wilfrido Vargas:

In the 1970s and 1980s, attention turned from Ventura to Wilfrido Vargas, the trumpeter and composer who was primarily responsible for bringing merengue to an international audience.

Ventura had taken the first step in modernizing merengue; Vargas took it a step further. He increased the tempo to what it is today - a distinctive galloping speed. He then started fusing the predictable music with Latin American rhythms such as Colombian [cumbia](#), [reggae](#) and eventually added hip hop and rap to the mix. He also broadened the appeal of the music by covering familiar Latin American ballads in the merengue style.

Milly Quezada:

There were many merengue stars that made their claim to fame during the 1990s including Jossie Esteban y La Patrulla 15, Sergio Vargas and Bonny Cepeda but the vocalist - and one of the few female merengue artists - that caught the public's attention was Milly Quezada.

Vying for the title of 'Queen of Merengue' with Puerto Rico's Olga Tanon is Milly Quezada. Before embarking on a solo career, Quezada was originally the lead vocalist for Milly y Los Vecinos which, while based in New York, proved that merengue could be popular and successful in the enclave of Puerto Rican salsa.

Merengue Spreads from the Dominican Republic:

Merengue did have an uphill battle catching on in New York but finally made successful inroads among the dance-crazy population. Helping to promote merengue's popularity was the large influx of Dominicans into the Puerto Rican dominated city. Over time, Dominican merengue gained an equal footing with Puerto Rican salsa romantica both in the dancehalls and on the radio.

Olga Tanon & Elvis Crespo:

As merengue's popularity increased with New York's Puerto Rican population, the Caribbean island started to spawn its own merengue stars. Chief among them is Olga Tanon, the other "Queen of Merengue" and probably the artist most responsible for promoting the genres popularity in Puerto Rico itself. Tanon's style is unique and wild, her contralto voice is strong and her music often courses through styles from electronic to flamenco.

Elvis Crespo hit the Puerto Rican merengue scene with a big bang. While his musical style is similar to Tanon's, his look is unique with characteristic long, straight black hair and wild, trippy antics. Crespo originally sang with Grupo Mania before breaking out on his own in 1998. His debut album was the massive hit, *Suavemente*.

Here are some suggestions for albums that are representative of the merengue artists in this article. It will give you an opportunity to listen to each of the artists and give you a sense of the changes to the genre with each successive wave of stylistic evolution.

Tango - Music From Argentina and Uruguay

The tango originated as urban dance music created by immigrant communities in Buenos Aires in the nineteenth century. Its roots can be traced back to Cuba, the Spanish zarzuela, music of African slaves and western Salon music of the nineteenth century

A Tango Orchestra:

Originally, a tango orchestra originally included flutes, guitar, and a trio of violins. By the end of the nineteenth century, a portable organ called an *organito* was added as was the instrument we now most closely associate with this music, the *bandoneón*, a type of concertina or accordion.

Over time the tango orchestra evolved into a sextet consisting of piano, double bass, two violins and two bandoneóns. But don't think of tango music purely as instrumental music for the dance.

Argentinean tango is a dance form that always includes song and a specific tango will be attributed to both the musical composer and the writer of the lyrics.

Carlos Gardel / Astor Piazzolla:

The tango genre produced [Carlos Gardel](#), one of the most influential Latin music singers of all time, who reigned in the 1920s and 1930s.

During the 1940s, the "new" tango was pioneered by [Astor Piazzolla](#), a tango sound influenced by jazz and blues. The "nuevo tango" is a form that is alive and well today.

Tango Today:

The tango has undergone its own evolution from its immigrant origins in the urban ghettos, to the dance hall, to the respectable night club, to the concert hall, and beyond. Neo-Tango, developed mostly in Europe, fuses electronic music with traditional instruments. Groups both in the Americas and in Europe, such as the [Gotan Project](#) in Paris are experimenting with new ways to experience the tango.

There is a wealth of tango music available, but the Julio Iglesias CD [Tango](#) is a pleasant way to spend some time with an old friend.

Bachata - The Music of Bitterness

The word 'bachata' has gone through many transitions, meaning different things at different periods of Dominican history. It started out as just a word designating traditional guitar music, although in the 1960s it was used to label romantic guitar music. A 'bachata' was also a generic

label for gatherings that took place at informal Sunday afternoon parties where guitar-based groups would play for casual recreation. It was also music that played a large role in entertainment in cabarets (which were actually brothels) and it is only recently that the stigma attached to word has been lessened.

Music of Bitterness:

With the death of Rafael Trujillo in 1961, the music – then often called ‘bolero compensino,’ made its way to the capital of Santo Domingo along with a multitude of countryside compensinos that had been living in squalor during the dictator’s reign.

There the music changed from romantic boleros to stories about jealousy, rivalry, fights, poverty and life led in the barrios. It’s not surprising that bachata is equated to the Dominican version of the blues; with lyrics that reflected such dire and troubled lives, bachata became known as the music of bitterness or sorrow.

Jose Manuel Calderon:

The first recognized bachata singles (“Barracho de Amor” and “Que Sera De Mi”) were recorded by Jose Calderon in 1961 although it was a decade before the word became commonly attached to a musical genre. In the 1960s, merengue continued to reign supreme in the Dominican Republic and ‘bachateros’ had no reliable outlet in higher social circles nor in the media. It was still embarrassing to be caught listening to bachata and musicians attracted to the genre would often sneak out at night to perform in clubs and bars where bachata was popular.

Modern Bachata:

Modern bachata can be dated to sometime in the 1980s. At the time, bachateros were singing lyrics full of sexual innuendo and double entendre. In fact, bachata’s first superstar, Blas Duran, was king of this type of lyric. Duran simplified the music, making it easier for dancers and added electric guitar to his song “Consejo A Las Mujeres” in 1987. The tune became a huge hit, paving the road to bachata’s acceptance by a much wider segment of the population.

Bachata Turns To Romance:

By the 1990s, bachata evolved the way music is prone to evolve, mutating and fusing with other genres. In the case of bachata, fusion occurred most often with the country’s dominant genre, merengue.

It was artists like Anthony Santos and Luis Vargas that, during this decade, focused bachata’s themes to the romantic, so much so that by the 1990s the genre dealt almost exclusively with love, most often unrequited or disappointed love.

Monchy & Alexandra:

Even with the gradual gentrification of bachata, no one outside of a Dominican population was listening to the music. It took the duo of Monchy & Alexandra to raise international awareness of the music.

Monchy (Ramon Rijo) and Alexandra (Alexandra Cabrera de la Cruz) started singing together in 1998 and their complimentary voices together with some clever pop-style arrangements made their albums and international tours huge hits. In the process, it opened the door to an appreciation of bachata by non-Dominican Latinos. (It's just been announced that the duo is breaking up -9/08).

Bachata in New York:

Bachata originally reached the level of popularity that it enjoys today in New York rather than in the Dominican Republic, embraced by a Dominican migrant population that was less class conscious and eager to embrace the music of home. Influenced by rock, R&B and modern popular genres, bachata remains a dominantly romantic music.

Aventura:

The group that is currently holding sway over the hearts and minds of bachata lovers is [Aventura](#) from the Bronx. Even with the addition of some urban elements, their music remains firmly in the realm of traditional bachata and is helping to win more and more Latin music fans to this distinctive Dominican musical tradition.

If you're interested in a first-hand examination of the history of bachata, told by the artists that were instrumental to the genre's rise to international prominence, Luis Vargas' [Santo Domingo Blues](#) is a film not to be missed.

In the meantime, here are some representative albums that will give you a taste of the 'music of bitterness.'

Jose Manuel Calderon

- *Jose Manuel Calderon* (1989, 2006)

Blas Duran

- *Estelares de Blas Duran* (1997)

Anthony Santos

- *El Mayimbe de la Bachata* (2005)

Luis Vargas

- *Todos Exitos* (2004)

Monchy & Alexandra

- *Exitos y Mas*

Reggaeton - From Puerto Rico to the World

Reggaeton is sweeping the Latin music world with its irrepressible blend of tropical Latin and reggae rhythms. Today many of the most popular reggaeton artists come from Puerto Rico, but you can't keep this music from sailing out to the rest of the world.

The Music:

The distinctive sound of today's reggaeton is a mix of Jamaican dancehall rhythms, derived from reggae, and Latin merengue, bomba, plena and sometimes salsa. It's heavily percussive beat is called "dembow" and comes from Trinidad's 'soca' music; it fuses electronic dance music, hip-hop elements and Spanish / Spanglish rap to form a compelling, driving sound that has been embraced by hispanic urban youth worldwide.

Roots of Reggaeton:

Historically there has been an invisible line that has segregated Jamaican music and other Latin dance styles. But that line was breached in Panama, a country with a significant Jamaican population that had migrated south to work on the Panama Canal in the early 20th century.

There's a heated debate about whether reggaeton originated in Panama or Puerto Rico. While it seems obvious that the roots are Panamanian, some of the best know (and earliest) purveyors of today's reggaeton sounds come from Puerto Rico, so the confusion is easily understood.

Panama:

Panamanian El General (Edgardo A. Franco) was one of the pioneers of the Reggaeton sound, returning to Panama from an accounting job in the states to record the new dancehall fusion.

During the 1990s, the reggae sound became more popular in Panama and continued to change as elements of hip hop, rap and other caribbean music fused with the older reggae dancehall style.

Puerto Rico Takes Over:

As the mixture of hip hop, rap and reggae caught the imagination of urban youth in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela and Latin cultural centers in the U.S., the majority of new reggaeton artists catching the public's imagination came from Puerto Rico - to the extent that reggaeton is often thought of as primarily Puerto Rican Music.

Puerto Rico's pioneering rapper, Vico C, started releasing hip hop recordings in the 1980s and over time mixed in urban Panamanian dancehall music. Performing in a suit rather than traditional rapper clothing, Vico added plena and bomba elements to his musical mix. The music caught on and generated a wealth of musical talent bent on expressing the angst, anger and energy of urban life set to a compelling rhythm.

Reggaeton Takes Off:

2004 was the year that reggaeton finally burst out of its confined space. With the release of Daddy Yankee's *Barrio Fino*, [Tego Calderon](#)'s *El Enemy de los Guasibiri*, Ivy Queen's *Diva* and *Real*, the reggaeton sensation was off and running and shows no sign of slowing down.

Puerto Rico's large roster of reggaeton artists include, along with those mentioned above, Voltio, Glory, Wisin & Yandel, Don Omar, Lunny Tunes, Calle 13 and Hector El Bambino (now Hector the Father). This Puerto Rican invasion has captured the hearts of urban hispanic youth the world over.

Pioneering Reggaeton Artists

- *Dancehall Reggaespanol* (Various Artists, 1991)
- *La Verdadera Historia: XV Anos de Exitos el General* (El General, 2004)
- *Vico C: Greatest Hits* (Vico C, 1994)

Puerto Rican Reggaeton Artists

- *Barrio Fino* (Daddy Yankee, 2004)
- *Diva*(Ivy Queen, 2004)
- *El Enemy de los Guasibiri* (Tego Calderon, 2004)
- *King of Kings*(Don Omar, 2006)
- *Voltio* (Voltio, 2005)

Cumbia

History:

Cumbia is a musical style that originated in [Colombia](#), probably around the 1820's during Colombia's struggle for independence. It started as the musical expression of the national resistance, and was sung and danced in the streets.

In its original form, cumbia was played with tambor drums and large gaita flutes. In the 1920's Colombian dance bands in Barranquilla and other coastal cities began playing cumbia while adding horns, brass and other instruments to the traditional drum and flutes. In fact, in the 1930s when Colombian bandleaders wanted to perform in New York City, the ensembles had become so large that they couldn't afford to send all their musicians abroad and had to use local Puerto Rican groups to perform.

Cumbia Today:

While cumbia never caught on as well in the U.S. as other Latin musical forms, today it is very popular in South America (with the exception of Brazil), Central America and Mexico.

If you'd like to hear a good introduction to cumbia, I'd recommend *Cumbia Cumbia*, Vol. 1 and 2 released by World Circuit Records (1983, 1989).

[Los Kumbia Kings](#), a group from Texas that performs cumbia / rap fusion, has been gaining in popularity and will give you an idea of how cumbia is being transformed by today's urban groups.

Battle Of The Salsa Styles

What style of [salsa](#) sends you willingly or unconsciously to the dance floor? Which artist's music makes your blood heat-up with tropical fervor? Exploring the different styles of Latin music categorized under the umbrella term "salsa" will give you the answer. And with that answer, you'll have a far better chance of selecting an album, from the hundreds of choices available that is music to **your** ears.

Classic Salsa - The Fania Years:

The 'Motown' of salsa was the Fania record label. Formed in the late 1960s by Jerry Masucci and [Johnny Pacheco](#), the label signed many of the great salsa artists of the time including [Celia Cruz](#), Willie Colon, Ruben Blades, [Hector Lavoe](#) and [Tito Puente](#). During these years, Fania almost completely monopolized the commercial marketplace; as they became larger and more successful, they gobbled up most other smaller salsa labels. Over time, almost every significant salsa artist became a Fania artist.

This was the original, classic salsa style, a style to which most newer salsa artists and bands are compared and contrasted.

As salsa's star faded, so did Fania's. But it was with Masucci's death in 1997 that the label's catalogue finally went on the bidding block. Purchased by Miami-based Emusica Entertainment Group, the catalogue is currently in the process of being remastered and re-released so that fans of classic salsa will have the opportunity to listen to the music rejuvenated by modern digital technology.

Salsa Romantica:

By the mid-1980's, Fania and classic salsa's popularity were waning, giving way to a softer and more commercial style called salsa romantica. Taking its cue from the rising popularity of Latin pop and rock, salsa romantica took out the musical improvisation, softened the punch of the orchestra and focused primarily on ballads set to a slowed down salsa rhythm; social commentary was replaced by love songs.

The most famous early salsa romantica artists included Eddie Santiago, Frankie Ruiz, Lalo Rodriguez and Luis Enrique. With time, some of today's most famous salsa artists took up the style including [Gilberto Santa Rosa](#), [Marc Anthony](#), India and Tito Nieves.

Detractors of salsa romantica have named the style salsa monga, or 'limp' salsa. But the straight salsa romantica style, having run its 20-year course, also started losing its commercial appeal. Today, some salsa romantica artists have started heating up their ballad-based salsa style. Gilberto Santa Rosa's 2005 *Autentico* featured an orchestra with a much stronger punch, a brass section that clamored for attention and brought back improvisation. Marc Anthony's *Libre* was a personal and unique blend of ballad and classic salsa.

Still other salsa romantica artists are paying attention to the popularity of [reggaeton](#). India's 2006 *Soy Diferente* incorporated both salsa romantica and reggaeton-fused numbers while Andy Montanez did the same with [Salsa con Reggaeton](#) the same year.

Salsa Dura:

Salsa dura means 'hard' salsa, salsa gorda means 'fat' salsa. Both terms are used to describe salsa that retains the basic characteristics of classic salsa: driving rhythms, call and response, 'montuno' sections and socially conscious lyrics. Salsa dura is the EverReady battery musical bunny that just keeps going and going, with musical breaks and blaring brass ideal for salsa dancing.

While Puerto Rico was focusing on salsa romantica, Colombia became a bastion of their own style of salsa dura, through the lean years and remain one today. As a result, Colombia can boast some of the finest, mature salsa dura bands in the world. With groups like Grupo Niche, Sonora Carruseles, Joe Arroyo and Fruko y sus Tesos, Colombia has a clear claim to call itself the salsa dura capitol of the world.

In the last few years, young salseros in New York have also been turning to salsa dura. The Spanish Harlem Orchestra has perfected the big band salsa sound of the Fania years while Jimmy Bosch, Wayne Gorbea and La Excelencia are becoming instrumental in the rise and popularity of salsa dura around the world.

Corrido - History of Mexican Life in Song

Long before there were written biographies or even a culture where literacy was more than a privilege of the wealthy few, the tales of heroes & villains, repression & revolution, love won & love lost were part of the oral tradition of every country in the world. These tales served as inspiration, moral lessons and as a way to reinforce national identity by revealing the soul of a people through tales passed from father to son, from bard to apprentice.

Often these tales were set to music.

The availability of printed material, radio and visual media has not extinguished this oral tradition. In Mexico, it has evolved into today's 'corrido.'

The Corrido in History:

The corrido gained a large following around the time of the [Mexican-American War](#) (1840s). Almost the entire war with America was preserved in the texts of these songs.

Other popular themes revolved around the worker's plight, romance, nostalgia for hearth & home. But the corrido gained significant momentum during the days of the dictator Porfirio Diaz and the ensuing resistance that led to the [Mexican revolution](#) (1910–1920). Popular heroes immortalized in song included [Emiliano Zapata](#), [Pascual Orozco](#) and [Pancho Villa](#).

[Listen to the corrido 'El Mayor de los Dorados' about Pancho Villa](#)

“La Cucaracha” is a song known by every American schoolchild. During this period it was altered to become a popular song of Mexico's revolution. In the modified corrido, the lyrics were changed to reflect the political rivalry battle between [Venustiano Carranza](#) and the troops of Zapata and Villa.

[Listen to La Cucaracha](#)

Contemporary Corrido:

In the 20th century, the corrido became a means of expression on the other side of border as Mexican-Americans who had always lived in the Southwest U.S. - especially in those areas that had originally been part of Mexico – started to feel the injustice of being treated as a minority. They found relief in songs depicting that injustice, such as the corrido “[Discriminacion a un martir](#)” which tells of funeral services being denied a WWII veteran.

With the onset of large-scale [immigration](#) to the U.S. the corrido themes started to concentrate on the life of migrant workers, immigration and stories of the lives of these immigrants. The reality of these lives included tales of drug trafficking as those who could find no other work turned the drug trade. These songs became known as narcocorridos.

The Music of Corrido:

Corrido rhythms are not set; they can be a polka, waltz or march. The march and polka tempos are used more often for upbeat topics while the waltz often carries more tragic stories.

While the corrido is a story told to music, the actual instrumentation and style of the music depends on the musical region of the band or conjunto that is performing the song. There are corridos performed by groups classified as [norteno](#), [banda](#), [duranguense](#) and others. The music will reflect that specific style while telling the same story with basically the same lyrics – although lyrics can change to suit the social and political mood of the area and of the moment.

Popular Corrido Bands:

Today the corrido has once again become one of the most popular forms of Mexican regional music. There are many groups that perform corrido, but the most notable of these are [Los Tigres del Norte](#) who have played a major role in the composition and popularity of today's contemporary corrido.

Among the other popular groups that play corrido are Los Cuates de Sinaloa, Los Tucanes de Tijuana, El Tigrillo Palma, Patrulla 81, Ramon Ayala and many more.

Music of Mexico - Son, Ranchera, Mariachi

Mexico has a musical history that is full of cultural contrasts, with many different musical styles and influences. Dating back more than a thousand years before any contact was made with Europeans in the 16th century, the area was dominated by the Aztec culture, a culture that maintained an important and complex musical tradition.

After Cortes' invasion and conquest, Mexico became a Spanish colony and remained under Spanish dominion for the next two hundred years, incorporating their Pre-Columbian roots together with the lasting influence that came with the Spanish. Both folk and classical music have drawn from these, and regional styles reflect these traditions. The Spanish regime also imported African slaves, adding a third dimension to the areas music.

Mexican Son:

Mexican son first appeared in the 17th century and is a fusion of indigenous, Spanish and African traditions, much like [Cuban son](#). But in Mexico, the music exhibited lots of variation from region to region, both in rhythm and instrumentation. Some of these regional sones include *son jarocho* from the area around Vera Cruz, *son jaliscenses* from Jalisco, *son huasteco*, *son calentano*, *son michoacano*, etc.

Ranchera:

Ranchera is an outgrowth of son jalescenses. A type of song that was literally sung on a Mexican ranch, ranchera originated in the mid-19th century, just before the Mexican revolution. The music concerned itself with traditional themes of love, patriotism and nature. Ranchera songs are not just one rhythm; the music is basically a waltz, polka or bolero. Their form is standardized with an instrumental introduction and conclusion, with verse and refrain in the middle.

Mariachi:

We tend to think of Mariachi as a style of music, but its actually a group of musicians. There is some disagreement about where the name 'Mariachi' comes from. Some music historians believe that it is derived from the french "mariage" (marriage) and indeed, such groups formed and still form an essential part of weddings in Mexico. An alternate theory posits that the word comes from a Coca Indian word that originally referred to the platform on which the orchestra performed.

The mariachi orchestra is composed of at least two violins, two trumpets, a Spanish guitar, and two other types of guitars - the vihuela and guitarron. The 'charro' suits worn by the band members are attributed to General Portofino Diaz who, in 1907, ordered the poor peasant musicians to don these outfits in order to look good for a visit by the U.S. Secretary of State – and the tradition lived on.

Evolution of Mariachi :

There is no one type of music that mariachis play, although they are closely tied to ranchera music. Originally mariachi and ranchera were mostly about romantic themes, but as the Mexican economy worsened, the haciendas could no longer afford to have their own mariachi band on the premises and they let the musicians go. As a result of unemployment and harder times, the mariachi began to change themes, singing about revolutionary heroes or current events.

By the early 20th century, mariachi previously known only through their various regional styes began to coalesce into a uniform musical genre, one that became recognizable throughout all of Mexico. That was due, in large part, to musicians Silvestre Vargas and Ruben Fuentes of the mariachi group "Vargas de Tecalitlan" who made sure that the popular music was written down and standardized.

In the 1950s, trumpets (and sometimes a harp) were introduced to the orchestra, and that instrumentation is what we currently find in mariachi bands.

History of Mambo

A Look at The Origins of Mambo

[Mambo](#) is one of the greatest Latin music rhythms ever created. Originally from [Cuba](#), this genre was also responsible for shaping the sounds of modern [Salsa music](#). The following is a brief introduction to the history of Mambo.

Danzon and The Roots of Mambo

Back in the 1930s, Cuban music was heavily influenced by Danzon. This music style, which appeared in the late 19th century, bore lots of similarities to the original and melodic Cuban *Danza*.

One of the popular bands at that time was the orchestra of *Arcaño y sus Maravillas*. The band played lots of Danzon but some of its members introduced variations to the classic beat of Danzon. The members were the brothers Orestes Lopez and [Israel "Cachao" Lopez](#). In 1938, they produced a Danzon single entitled *Mambo*.

The Lopez brothers incorporated a heavier African beat into their music. This new type of Danzon, which is at the base of Mambo music, was known at that time as *Danzon de Nuevo Ritmo*. Sometimes, it was simply called *Danzon Mambo*.

Perez Prado and The Birth of Mambo

Although the Lopez brothers set the basics of Mambo, they really did not move forward with their innovation. In fact, it took a couple of decades for the new style to be able to transform itself into Mambo.

The popularity of Jazz music and the big band phenomenon of the 1940s and 1950s played a major role in the development of Mambo. [Damaso Perez Prado](#), a talented pianist from Cuba, was the one who was able to consolidate the definitive arrangements that pushed Mambo music into a worldwide phenomenon.

Perez Prado moved to Mexico in 1948 and built his career in that country. In 1949, he produced two of his most famous pieces: "Que Rico Mambo," and "Mambo No. 5." It was with these two singles that the mambo fever hit the 1950s. Around that time, the famous Cuban artist Beny More joined the Perez Prado band in Mexico recording enduring tracks like "Bonito y Sabroso."

Tito Puente and The Mambo After Perez Prado

By the mid 1950s, Perez Prado was already a huge point of reference for Latin music all over the world. However, at that time Perez Prado was criticized for producing music that was moving away from the original sounds of Mambo.

Because of this, that decade saw the birth of a new wave of artists willing to preserve the original sounds of Mambo. Artists such as Tito Rodriguez and [Tito Puente](#) consolidated the original Mambo sound that Perez Prado had previously created.

During the 1960s, Tito Puente became the new king of Mambo. However, that decade was defining a new kind of music of which Mambo was just one of the ingredients. The new sounds that were coming from New York were creating something much bigger: Salsa music.

The Legacy of Mambo

The 1950s and 1960s saw the golden years of Mambo. Nevertheless, those golden years were rapidly overcome by the development of Salsa, a new crossover experiment that borrowed elements from different Afro-Latin rhythms like [Son](#), Charanga, and, of course, Mambo. The deal at that time was not about improving Mambo but rather using it to better develop Salsa.

All things considered, Salsa is probably Mambo's most enduring contribution to Latin music. The influence of Mambo in Salsa is a significant one. For Salsa, the idea of having a full orchestra comes from Mambo. Besides Salsa, Mambo also played a significant role in the development of another popular Cuban invention: Cha Cha Cha.

Although Salsa finished with the golden years of Mambo, this genre is still quite alive in ballroom dance competitions all over the world. Thanks to Mambo, Latin music gained lots of exposure around the world during the 1950's and 1960s. Thanks to Mambo Salsa and Cha Cha Cha were born. For everything it accomplished, Mambo is definitely one of the most successful creations in Latin music.

Timba - If It's From Cuba, It's Not Salsa But Timba

When you hear someone talk about Cuban [salsa](#), they're most probably talking about the uniquely Cuban musical form called 'timba.' Timba has a similar rhythm to salsa, you can dance your favorite salsa steps to the music and it is often classified as a sub-genre of salsa. But, one look at the timeline of the evolution of salsa vs. timba immediately clarifies the issue.

Salsa Bursts to Life in New York:

Salsa was a musical evolution that was created by New York's Latin expatriate community in New York. While these artists were originally from Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, the music came out of Spanish Harlem in the 1960s and was initially considered unsuitable and too streetwise/dirty for a large public.

But it caught on.

[Fania Records](#), the primary outlet for the original, classic salsa was formed in 1964 as a vehicle for Latin artists, ala Motown, while [Willie Colon](#) & [Hector Lavoe](#)'s classic *El Malo* was recorded in 1967.

Meanwhile, in Cuba:

In the meantime, Cuba officially fell to [Fidel Castro](#) on Jan. 1, 1959.

The new regime saw Cuban music as a valuable export and encouraged musical innovation. At the same time, since most of the music available to the island came from Miami, the city where most of the anti-Castro refugees settled, listening to these radio broadcasts was discouraged (and often punished) and the main musical exchange came from cassettes smuggled into Cuba. It is easy to see that this led to a minimal influence of New York salsa on the island's musicians.

So when Cuban musicians wanted to spice up their own music, they did it their own way.

Irakere:

One of the great precursors to modern timba was Irakere. Formed by pianist /composer Chucho Valdes in 1973, Irakere's main interest was incorporating jazz into the government dictated Cuban roots music. With a group of the finest musicians in Cuba, Irakere carefully experimented with different types of fusion, at times incorporating not only jazz but also rock & roll, R&B, and bugaloo as well as older African styles to traditional Cuban rhythms.

(For a cinematic experience of that time in Cuba's musical history, try [*For Love Or Country: The Arturo Sandoval Story*](#).)

Los Van Van:

In 1969, Juan Formell formed Los Van Van, the band that held the island in the palm of its musical hand through the next 3 decades. Los Van Van was responsible for a variety of innovations and fusions that led to today's timba including songo, a fusion of son montuno and rumba. They also experimented with blending jazz, funk, R&B, synthesizer and other contemporary elements to the traditional.

NG La Banda:

While Irakere and Los Van Van set the stage for modern timba, it was flautist Juan Luis Cortes and his NG (new generation) La Banda that defined modern timba as we know it today. Formed in 1988 in the wake of Cuba's 'Special Period' following the fall of the Soviet Union, the band boasted a young [Issac Delgado](#) as lead singer.

As was true of salsa, NG La Banda's lyrics found their basis in the barrio streets and initially were shunned by those who found the form too vulgar to be treated seriously. But with less abstract experimentation than its predecessors, continued fusions of Cuban rhythms with contemporary formats and a more aggressive sound, NG La Banda's music not only caught on but provided inspiration to many of the bands that followed.

Cortes labeled the band's signature sound 'timba.'

The Sound of Timba :

Timba is a musically complicated genre. It is characterized by frequent breaks, changes from major to minor keys, often very complex rhythms, an expanded instrumental set and aggressive percussion. Not as approachable as traditional salsa (or as easy to dance to, due to rhythmic changes), timba is rich in both rhythm, form and lyrics.

Vallenato

History:

Colombia's vallenato started as a type of romantic cowboy music that provided a commentary on the lives of ranchers and campesinos cut off from the urban centers. It was played primarily in the countryside until it received radio commercialization in the 1940's.

Since both vallenato and cumbia use similar instruments, the easiest way to distinguish vallenato is by the use of the accordion.

Vallenato has always been popular in the countryside, but it gained urban popularity in the 1950's and 1960's. Two of today's stars of traditional vallenato are **Diomedes Diaz** and **Jorge Onate**.

Today:

Vallenato has recently seen an explosion in its popularity with the music of one-time soap opera star, **Carlos Vives**. Vives assembled a group of older folkloric players with some of the best coastal musicians around his home town of Bogota, creating a rock / vallenato style that has made the form popular with younger Colombians as well as bringing this music into Latin music's mainstream.

If you'd like to hear Vives' distinctive sound of modern rock / vallenato, try his 1999 album *El Amor de mi Tierra* or 2001's [*Dejame Entrar*](#) , both released by EMI.

Brazilian Tropicalia

Tropicalia, also known as Tropicalismo, has been one of the most important movements in [Brazilian music](#) history. Born in the late 1960s, this movement sparked a musical revolution at a time when Brazil was going through a brutal dictatorship. Brazilian Tropicalia was, in fact, a movement that went beyond music touching the social and political spheres of the country.

Tropicalismo in Brazil embraced the same values promoted by the hippie revolution of the Sixties and its music was deeply influenced by that era's Rock. With its musical innovation, Tropicalia was a rebellious movement that changed Brazilian music forever.

The Music

The content and sounds of Tropicalia music were quite different from Brazilian rhythms such as [Samba](#) and [Bossa Nova](#). Although it retained basic elements from traditional Brazilian music, Tropicalismo was heavily influenced by [Psychedelic Rock](#). In this way, Tropicalia brought a very experimental sound that opened a new window for the development of modern Brazilian music.

The content of Tropicalia music was also innovative. Unlike the traditional and beautiful world exalted through Bossa Nova, Tropicalismo brought a new concept in terms of lyrics. Being a rebellious movement, the songs were heavily charged with words that questioned the establishment as it was. In fact, the lyrics that adorned some of the classic tracks from that era were very often the result of works involving musicians and intellectuals such as the poet Torquato Neto.

The Artists

The Tropicalia movement was born in the state of Bahia. As a matter of fact, Tropicalismo in Brazil was led by two of the most famous Brazilian artists from Bahia: [Caetano Veloso](#) and [Gilberto Gil](#). They brought together a group of artists that included stars like Gal Costa, Nara Leao, Tom Ze and the legendary band [Os Mutantes](#).

'Tropicalia Ou Panis Et Circensis'

In 1968, the most prominent *tropicalistas* got together for a memorable collaboration work. Gilberto Gil, Caetano Veloso, Os Mutantes and Gal Costa, among others, released their musical production [Tropicalia Ou Panis Et Circensis](#), which is considered the manifesto piece that marked the music of the whole movement.

The album takes its name from "Panis Et Circensis," the song interpreted by Os Mutantes on this work. It also includes other famous tracks like "Baby" by Gal Costa and Caetano Veloso and the Bahian hymnal "Hino do Senhor do Bonfim."

The Legacy of Tropicalia

Tropicalismo in Brazil fell victim to political repression and its own existence was brief. However, the movement left a permanent mark in the making of modern Brazilian music. Thanks to its experimental style, Tropicalia created room for additional innovation in Brazilian music.

Tropicalismo was also responsible for bringing into Brazilian music some of its most influential artists. The influences of the movement were also felt outside Brazil and modern artists like [Kurt Cobain](#) were seduced by the music produced during the Tropicalia years.

A Brief History of Latin Jazz

A Look at The Roots, Development, and Pioneers of Afro-Cuban Jazz

In general terms, [Latin Jazz](#) is a musical label defined by the combination of Jazz with Latin music rhythms. Brazilian Jazz, a style that emerged from the sounds of [Bossa Nova](#) thanks to artists like [Antonio Carlos Jobim](#) and [Joao Gilberto](#), fits this general concept. However, this introduction to Latin Jazz history deals with the origins and development of the style that has come to define Latin Jazz as a whole: Afro-Cuban Jazz.

Habanera and Early Jazz

Although the foundations of Latin Jazz were consolidated during the 1940s and 1950s, there is evidence about the inclusion of Afro-Cuban sounds into early Jazz. To this regard, Jazz pioneer [Jelly Roll Morton](#) used the term Latin tinge to make a reference to the rhythm that characterized some of the Jazz that was played in New Orleans at the beginning of the 20th century.

This Latin tinge was a direct reference to the influence that the Cuban Habanera, a genre that was popular in the dance halls of Cuba at the end of the 19th century, had in the making of some of the local Jazz expressions that were produced in New Orleans. Along those lines, the proximity between New Orleans and Havana also allowed Cuban musicians to borrow elements from the early American Jazz.

Mario Bauza and Dizzy Gillespie

[Mario Bauza](#) was a talented trumpeter from Cuba who moved to New York in 1930. He brought with him a solid knowledge of Cuban music and a big interest for American Jazz. When he arrived to the Big Apple, he joined the big band movement playing with the bands of Chick Webb and Cab Calloway.

In 1941, Mario Bauza left Cab Calloway's orchestra to join the band of [Machito](#) and the Afro-Cubans. Acting as the music director of Machito's band, in 1943 Mario Bauza wrote the song "Tanga," a single considered by many the first Latin Jazz track in history.

When he was playing for the bands of Chick Webb and Cab Calloway, Mario Bauza had the opportunity to meet a young trumpeter named [Dizzy Gillespie](#). They not only forged a lifelong friendship but also influenced each other's music. Thanks to Mario Bauza, Dizzy Gillespie developed a taste for Afro-Cuban music, which he successfully incorporated into Jazz. In fact, it was Mario Bauza who introduced the Cuban percussionist Luciano Chano Pozo to Dizzy Gillespie. Together, Dizzy and Chano Pozo wrote some of the most iconic Latin Jazz tracks in history including the legendary song "Manteca".

The Mambo Years and Beyond

By the beginning of the 1950s, [Mambo](#) had taken the world by storm and Latin Jazz was enjoying new levels of popularity. This new popularity was the result of the music produced by artists like [Tito Puente](#), Cal Tjader, Mongo Santamaria, and [Israel 'Cachao' Lopez](#).

During the 1960s, when Mambo was being abandoned in favor of a new musical mix named [Salsa](#), the Latin Jazz movement was influenced by different artists who moved between the emerging genre and Jazz. Some of the biggest names include different artists from New York such as pianist [Eddie Palmieri](#) and percussionist [Ray Barreto](#), who later played a major role with the legendary Salsa band [Fania All Stars](#).

Up to the 1970s, Latin Jazz was mainly shaped in the US. However, back in 1972 in Cuba a talented pianist named Chucho Valdes founded a band named Irakere, which added a Funky beat to traditional Latin Jazz changing forever the sounds of this genre.

For the past decades, Latin Jazz has continued to thrive as a more global phenomenon that has incorporated all kinds of elements from the Latin music world. Some of today's most famous Latin Jazz artists include well-established artists such as Chucho Valdes, Paquito D'Rivera, Eddie Palmieri, Poncho Sanchez and Arturo Sandoval, and a whole new generation of stars like Danilo Perez and David Sanchez. Latin Jazz is a never ending business.

Latin Urban Music – Reggaeton’s Evolution

Overview of The Roots and Sounds that Have Defined Latin Urban Music

Some of today's most popular [artists](#) and hits in Latin music belong to the so-called Urban genre. Although this music category is still largely related to [Reggaeton](#) and Hip-Hop, there is a new wave of sounds that is departing from the classic Reggaeton of the early 2000s. Modern Latin Urban music is defined by a new crossover style that combines Reggaeton and Hip-Hop with other genres such as [Latin Pop](#), Dance, [Salsa](#), and [Merengue](#). The following is an overview of one of today's most exciting [Latin music genres](#).

The Origins of Reggaeton

Reggaeton was born by itself as a crossover style influenced by [Reggae](#), Rap, Hip-Hop, and Caribbean genres such as Salsa, Merengue, Soca, and Puerto Rican [Bomba](#). Pioneers of this genre include artists like Rap singer Vico C from Puerto Rico and Panamanian Reggae icon El General.

Many people, in fact, considered El General as the absolute Father of Reggaeton. His music, which initially was treated as Jamaican dancehall music, became known as Reggae in Espanol or Reggaeton because of the combination of Reggae beats with Spanish language lyrics. Throughout the 1990s, El General became a sensation thanks to songs like "[Muevelo](#)," "[Tu Pum Pum](#)," and "[Rica Y Apretadita](#)".

Reggaeton Fever

The music of Vico C and El General left a good foundation for a new generation of artist influenced by the beats of Rap and Hip-Hop. This generation flourished in the 2000s with the works of people like [Tego Calderon](#), [Don Omar](#) and [Daddy Yankee](#). These artists were among the most influential names of the Reggaeton fever that captured the world during that decade. Some of the [best Reggaeton songs](#) of that time included singles like Don Omar's "[Dile](#)" and Daddy Yankee's worldwide hit "[Gasolina](#)".

From Reggaeton to Urban Music

Towards the end of the 2000s, Reggaeton was moving into a new direction. Some of the artists who helped define the Reggaeton fever started to incorporate new sounds to the classic Reggaeton beat. These artists as well as newcomers in the field, brought all kinds of musical influences to their productions. From Rap and Hip-Hop to Salsa and Merengue, it was evident that there was a new kind of music that needed to be placed in a bigger world than that of Reggaeton.

At the beginning, it was not easy to categorize this emerging phenomenon. However, the term Urban soon became the favorite word to deal with this kind of music. This evolution was, in fact, acknowledge by the [2007 Latin Grammy Awards](#). That year, the ceremony honored [Calle 13](#) with the first ever Latin Grammy Award for Best Urban Song.

Since then, Latin Urban music has grown into a very popular genre within Latin music. Although this genre is still closely related to Reggaeton and Hip-Hop, Urban music has become the perfect word to define the music of artists like Calle 13, [Pitbull](#), Daddy Yankee, [Chino y Nacho](#) and Don Omar, among others.

What Is Latin Urban Music?

Trying to define Latin Urban music is like trying to define [Latin music](#): It is almost impossible. However, we can say that Latin Urban music is still largely defined by Reggaeton, Hip-Hop, and Rap. Probably the best way to get a feeling for this genre is by taking a look at some of the songs that belong to it. The following are some of the most popular hits of Latin Urban Music:

- "Danza Kuduro" - Don Omar
- "La Despedida" - Daddy Yankee
- "Atrevete te te" - Calle 13
- "Niña Bonita" - Chino y Nacho
- "No Pidas Perdon" - Mala Rodriguez
- "Give Me Everything" - Pitbull

- "Estoy Enamorado" - Wisin y Yandel
- "Hay Un Son" - Orishas
- "Mi Cama Huele A Ti" - [Tito El Bambino](#)
- "La Vida Es Asi" - Ivy Queen

Mexican Popular Music - Tejano, Norteno, Banda

When talking about Mexican popular music, there are so many terms and styles bandied about that it's easy to become confused. Even the names used to refer to the people that love this vibrant brand of music is confusing and a good place to start. Mexicano refers to a Mexican citizen, chicano to a Mexican-American and Tejano to a Texas-Mexican. The musical genres are a bit more complicated.

Corrido:

Around the time of the Mexican-American war (1840s), the popular musical form was the *corrido*. Corridos are long ballads that narrate the political and popular issues of the time as well as celebrate great deeds and laud heroic feats, much like a modern epic story. In fact, almost the entire war with America was preserved in the texts of the popular corridos of the time.

As the music evolved into different styles over time, the themes of the corrido did as well. Themes changed to reflect the Mexican experience north of the border especially the lives of migrant workers, the immigrant experience and stories of those involved in the drug trade. These last corridos, called narcocorridos, gained in popularity and have been the topic of great controversy.

[Read more about corrido](#)

Norteno:

Norteno literally means "northern" and is one of the popular forms of music in both urban and rural areas of northern Mexico. Originating in the early 20th century around the Texas-Mexico border, norteno bands originally played corridos and [rancheras](#).

Influence of the Polka:

The polka was another major influence on the music played by norteno bands. Bohemian immigrants that had emmigrated to Texas brought the accordion and polka beat with them and the mariachi and ranchera styles fused with the polka to become the unique norteno genre. If you would like to listen to some great norteno music, try *Historias Que Contar* by [Los Tigres del Norte](#), one of the best and most durable of norteno bands.

Tejano:

While there is a lot of similarity between norteno and tejano music, both of which originated and evolved along the Mexico-Texas border, *tejano* music is properly the music that evolved among the Mexican population in South and Central Texas. As a rule, tejano music has a more modern sound, adding musical influences from cumbia, rock and blues. In more recent times, the addition of disco and hip-hop elements has given tejano music a more modern and funky sound.

Selena:

It's difficult to talk about tejano music without mentioning the genre's most well-known tejano singer: [Selena Quintanilla-Perez](#). Growing up in Texas, a fan of pop music, Selena and her brother Abraham started playing at local restaurants and festivals. Working modern techno-pop accents into the traditional cumbia style of music, Selena recorded three albums, the third of which went platinum.

Selena was the winner of the 1987 Tejano Music Awards as Best Female Vocalist and Best Singer of the year. She was 24 years old, and working on a breakthrough album *Dreaming of You* when she was gunned down by the president of her fan club in 1995.

Banda:

While both norteno and tejano music are, at heart, accordion based bands, *banda* bands are big-band, brass ensembles with heavy emphasis on the percussion. Originating in the northern Mexican state of Sinaloa, banda music (like norteno and tejano) is not one type of music, but incorporates many of the popular Mexican genres like cumbia, corrido and bolero.

Banda bands are large, usually consisting of somewhere between 10 - 20 member, with the notable sound of the tambora (a type of sousaphone) serving as the bass note and rhythmic undertone.

