

# Boogaloo Origins

Join us as we reveal the origin of the term "Boogaloo"



## From Africa to Congo Square, New Orleans

The term "Boogaloo" has African roots, but it comes to us via Congo Square, in New Orleans, Louisiana. "Boogaloo" stems from the word "Boogie" or "Boogie Woogie" which was used to refer to a free flowing form of dance and piano playing style in the American South during the period around World War 1. "Boogaloo" over time came to be a slang term for free spirited dancing or getting down.

Let us begin with the the word "Boogie", and follow the steps to "Boogaloo" and beyond.

"Boogie Woogie" is a reduplication of "Boogie", which was used in Rent parties as early as 1913. The word "Mbuki" is often brought up

as the root term of "Boogie". It means "devilishly good". However, what is usually left out is which African language and people it comes from. "Mbuki" is a Congolese word from the Ki-Kongo language of the Congo people ie Congo Square!

There is more to this. Dr. John Tension, a San Antonio psychiatrist, pianist, and musicologist has deciphered 4 more African terms, from various different languages that all look to be the origin of the word "Boogie": The Hausa, The Mandingo, The Bantu, and a tribe from Sierra Leone:

We have the Hausa word "Boog" and the Mandingo word "Booga", both of which mean "to beat (a drum)".

We have the Sierra Leone originated, West African word "Bogi", which means "to dance".



We have the Bantu term "Mbuki Mvuki" (Mbuki = to take off in flight, and Mvuki = to dance wildly, as if to shake off ones clothes).

The Hausa people were not in Cuba, but guess where there was a significant population of ALL of these African tribes??? You guessed it:

Congo Square!

This is why we see the word "boogie" pop up in the American South, and not Cuba, because the South is where all the slaves that had a similar word for music and dancing in their language were congregated.



# Boogaloo Origins

Origin of the "Boogaloo" term continued

## From "Boogie Woogie" to "Boogaloo"

The following message comes to us from the great O.G. Nikos `Waveomatic` Birakos (May he rest in Peace). The following is his research on the origins of the "Boogaloo" term.

"The term BOOGALOO comes from the term BOOGIE which comes from BOOGIE WOOGIE music played on the piano as early as 1913. "

"I have examined and cross examined left and right, so much, where I found the roots of the term BOOGALOO which pre dates everyone who has given info on it, including your own. I found it came from the **BoogieWoogie** era, not the Bugalu era first. If I

wasn't diggin, how would I know that?"

"Boogaloo came from Boogie Woogie, not Bugalu(shing a ling), boogie woogie pre existed and also cats used the term boogaloo for there names, not just thier art."

- Nikos `Waveomatic` Birakos (May he rest in Peace)

## "Boogaloo" Ames

One of the earliest applications of the term "boogaloo" seems to center on "boogie woogie" pianist Abie "Boogaloo" Ames who, according to the Washington Post's obit, received that nickname in the 1940s. BTW, Abie "Boogaloo" Ames was born in rural Georgia (1918).

"His piano playing style earned him his nickname "Boogaloo" in the

1940's. The team of Ames and Brent, whose recent performance at Kennedy Center is available in its entirety online, have also performed at the Waldorf Astoria in New York and the Republican National Convention. A CD is in the works."

<http://www.mswritersandmusicians.com/musicians/boogaloo-ames.html>

The first written documentation of the word "boogaloo" comes from a letter in Oct. 23, 1939, by Mary J. Phillips of Darien, Georgia.

"Sirs

I like the explanation of this war given by "Boogaloo" a happy-go-lucky Negro as he talked with my husband. Here it is.

"Boss, I tells you what I thinks about this here war. Germany, some back, she starts a crap game, threw





# Boogaloo Origins

The "Boogaloo" trail continues

October 23, 2013

## Early uses of the term "Boogaloo"

threw an eight, then falls off. Now she wants her money back and starts grabbing. The mistake was when she first started grabbing not knocking H— out of her. "Yes sir, Boss, if we fights I go. Ise rather be a slave to my folks than to the Germans."

MARY J. Phillips

Darien, GA

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,772228-1,00.html>

This is the earliest usage on record so far of the word "boogaloo" to describe someone. Notice in all documented recorded cases, they have a common theme.

1)They all refer to a free spirited, happy-go-lucky, or free flowing person.

2)They all refer to African Americans

3)They all refer to people or origins in the Southern United States. Not in Latin America nor in New York.

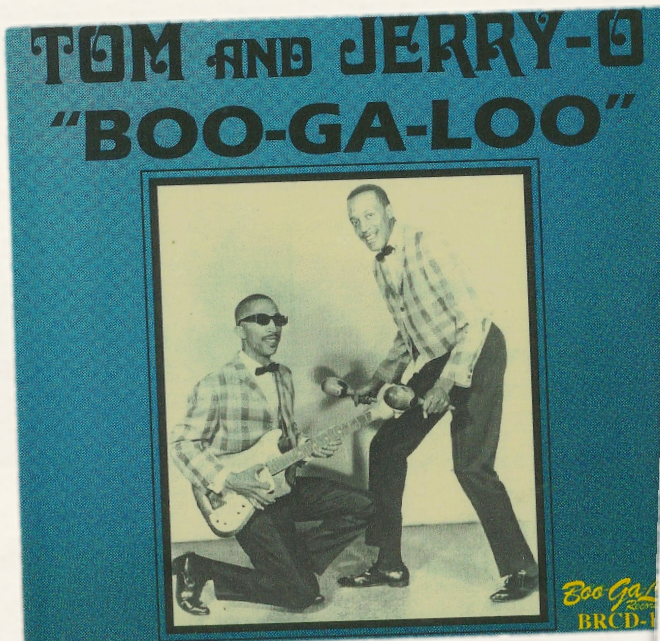
## From Mo-Town to Oak-Town

"Boogaloo" Ames moved to Detroit where he worked as a session player for Berry Gordy in the Motown Studios when Motown was just beginning . This explains how the "Boogaloo" term made its way to the midwest, where the R&B Duo 'Tom and Jerry-O' introduced their hit single "'**Boo-Ga-Loo**'" to a national audience in 1965.

Although the single sold a million copies, Tom and Jerry-O wouldn't

collect a dime from the tune because Berry Gordy sued the duo claiming the song was copyrighted by Motown. This song is significant in that it was the first to introduce the term "Boogaloo" to mainstream America. It became a NATIONWIDE hit in the black community and "boogaloo" became part of the slang vocabulary of young Black people at that time.

During this period in Oakland, California, a new dance movement was born within the Black community. The people borrowed the slang term "Boogaloo" and adopted it for their unique dance culture. This is where use of the term "Boogaloo" for the dance originated from.





# Boogaloo Origins

The "Boogaloo" trail continues

## From "Boogaloo" to "Latin Boogaloo", or "Bugalu"

A YEAR later, 1966 in New York City, Ricardo Ray (aka Richie Ray) and Bobby Cruz, hopped on the bandwagon and became the first Latin music artists to directly give the R&B "boogaloo" a Latin rhythm makeover, dubbing it "the bugaloo" for his album, *Se Soltó*, in order to win over the black audience in

America (and was accepted by Black Americans as an adaptation of an ALREADY existing "Boogaloo" scene). American Bandstand introduced "Boogaloo" to young White audiences, not the Black community. This fusion was later dubbed "Latin Boogaloo", or



JLPA 8500

### RICARDO RAY SE SOLTÓ "ON THE LOOSE"

- |                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| DANZON BUGALOO     | 7. AZUCARE Y BONGO  |
| EL SEÑOR EMBAJADOR | 8. LOOKIE, LOOKIE   |
| NO ME DEJES        | 9. SWEDISH SCHNAPPS |
| SUITE NORO MORALES | 10. ECHANDO CANDELA |
| GUAGUANCO IN JAZZ  | 11. YARE CHANGO     |
| SE QUE TE VAS      |                     |

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Produced by: Pancho Cristal  
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"Bugalú", and was marriage of Cuban rhythms including son montuno, guaguanco, guajira, guaracha, mambo with American R&B, and soul. "Latin boogaloo" also spread throughout the wider Latin music world, especially in Puerto Rico, where top band El Gran Combo released many "Latin boogaloes". Latin music scenes in Peru, Colombia, Panama and elsewhere also embraced the "Latin boogaloo".

Cuban rhythms have been well documented for decades...Rhumba, Tango, Son, Bolero, Mambo, Guaracha, etc...Bugalu is nowhere to be found in the Cuban lexicon until more recent years.