



but younger players have abandoned this tradition, even incorporating timbales into larger percussion sets including drum kits. There can be as many as five different kinds of accessories on a timbale set.

Skilled players strike the heads, rims, and shells in rapid succession to produce lively Latin rhythms.

Due to the timbalero Tito Puente (among others), it is now acceptable for a player – especially a band leader – to use more than two timbales, and a great timbale solo is quite a spectacle. Puente was frequently be seen on concerts, posters, and album covers with seven or eight timbales in one set, often strapped to him rather than on a stand.

A recent offshoot of the Washington DC funk genre of Go-Go known as the “Bounce Beat” features Timbales as a predominant instrument.

### **THE BEST TIMBALES EVER MADE**

The Leedy timbales were first manufactured in 1944 when a young

Charles Tappan an employee of Henry Adler music store on 46th street was annoyed that he was mounting heads on The old Cuban timbales and they all broke after they were put on drums due to the bad edges. So he started to make a timbales with rounded edges and what is know as Leedy was born. AS time went by they were selling timbales made by Charles tappan in the only store around at that time that had quality timbales and were worth it all other timbales were made of wood. Many of the set made came with Radio King bread and butter lugs on them and Leedy Claws. (I will send you a photo of them I don't know how to paste photo). These were the first timbales in the market they had no labels but sound incredible . In 1945 business was starting to pick up for Henry Adler he moved store from a second floor to the main floor of building a larger space there all the who is who used to meet every day and hang out there Gene Cooper, Buddy Rich etc . So Henry decided to to open a school there were he and Charles gave lessons on drumming. And every so offend built a set of timbales as a specialty item for who ever ask for one. By 1946 business was booming and they just could not keep up so Henry decide to sell the timbales business and shopped through different company's finally Leedy got interested (Now owned by Conn a horn maker ) brought the Idea. And started to make timbale under the Leedy name that when the single tags that says leedy only. 1947 Leedy lunches a campaign to enhance business . So they go back to Henry to put them in contact with re known drummer Ubarido Nieto but buy the time they contacted Uba he was on way to Europe with the Machito orch.and did not have the time to sit with company officials. So Henry proposed to go see an other drummer who played well and was with one of the hit bands of the moment Noro Morales which was playing in a club called China Doll on 53 st Broadway. There the Leedy officials were mesmerized with Humberto Morales that they sign him on the spot.

By October of 1947 Leedy was ready with mass production and ready to for advertizing and on November 3 1947 the biggest add campaign was lunched. (I sent one of these copy's of the add. January 1948 Leedy was selling timbales like no tomorrow every one want a set and Leedy could not build them in time. Sale were through the roof They offered the timbales with case and a set of sticks for \$75.00 incredible but true. 1949 they lunched another campaign to celebrate great sales and made an anniversary set of timbales with red labels of this set they made very few about 50 set that sold out very quickly. In 1950 business had pick up that Conn buys Ludwig and Ludwig drums and put a gentleman buy the name George H. Way another drum wiz incharge. George H.Way dicides to Join both company's since they were both top companys and did not want competition between company so in 1951 the Leedy & Ludwig company in born. The Tag continued with same tan color till mid year of 1951 mean time they finished there transition. As transition took place they made a few changes to the timbales inside plate were shortened and the Humberto Morales tags went from Brass to steel. This is why you will see many different designs some round others square on Leedy. Mid 1951 they finally decided on black and gold tags with the steel Humberto tag. This lasted till 1954 that company seized production of the timbales. And sold all its stock to a Indiana Music store. 1954 - Bud Slingerland buys Leedy Co.'s dies and patents from C.G. Conn Co. for \$90,000US.

As they broke up the company Ludwig was return to William F Ludwig one othe Ludwig hears and the company started to produce under the WFL name because Ludwig name was under contract still.1957 taking advantage that there were no timbales in the market WFL made a copy of the Leedy timbales in steel with claws putting 6 and 8

claws on the drums this only lasted for one year they later got the Ludwig Name and change rims to cast iron rims.

Slingerland even though he had dies did not produce timbales till 1958 to compete against Ludwig and Gretsch, that were making copies of what Leedy had built. Slingerland then changed every thing on the timbales making them more economic inside plate very thin, shell's 6 *the rim* the to make up lost inch on shell they made rim 1 ¼ ,brass claws every thing was cheaper made, yet made a better stand than what Leedy made . Leedy's stand was made to accommodate Humberto Henry, and Charlie they were all 5'1 -5'2 in height that became a problem back then the taller drum had to play sitting down.

Bud Slingerland was not a drummer but a savvy business man and made many change that lead company to discontinue the timbales. Also there was another company that was giving Slingerland hell making timbales and of better quality just as good as the old Leedy and better than what Leedy had produced. That company was Rogers they started making timbales of a better quality than Leedy and every one else. Rogers came with a better stand tilt, heavier base, shell did not dent much better Gage, and 5 lugs more room to play cascara and you did not have to drill drums to mount cowbell. 1967 they signed Humberto Morales and the Humberto model was released but 1968 Humberto died and that Came to an end. This is an other company that sold there ideas after they were up on top to company's like CBS and Yamaha that have no business in drumming and destroy quality.

Fred Gretsch buys Slingerland and the Leedy name 1980 to just take the competition out of the game made a few sets but nothing interesting the best gretsch timbales were made under his fathers rain of the company Fred Gretsch SR. Todays Gretsch drum kits are done with some Leedy ideas and some Slingerland. These company's discontinued the making of Timbales since LP has cornered the Market.

But Leedy and Rogers still remain king of the throne. Here is a comment Walfredo De los Reyes sent me recently on face book .

Walfredo de los Reyes Quote

"Their sound was unique. Everyone played them in the

forties,I have two pairs. They are a treasure."

Yet the inventor of the best timbales in the world Charles

Tappan died on his way home to New Jersey, his car got stuck in a snow storm and he froze to death they found him in his car days later. He was still teaching at the time of his death in Manhattan .

Henry Adler also went to write many books also made movies (seeking Susan) and the most famous book bible on timbales playing with Humberto Morales vol 1+2 . And dies a few years ago in florida at age 100+ years old .

And today Leedy timbales are the most sorted timbales in the industry as Walfredo put it *There sound is unique*

History of Leedy Timbales

Leedy Manufacturing Drum Company 1900: Founded by Ulysses G. Leedy, Indianapolis, IN.

1929 (September): the Leedy company is sold to C.G. Greenleaf, president of the Conn Company. The stock market crashed about 30 days later on October 24, 1929. The company is moved to Elkhart, IN.

1930: Ludwig & Ludwig was also purchased by Conn.

Changes made under the Conn Company Leedy manufacturing had to share manufacturing quarters with Ludwig & Ludwig. There was a reduction in size of the shell reinforcing hoops. Conn continued manufacturing Leedy drums with the Leedy badge. The first Leedy Timbales were manufactured during this era (exact year unknown).

1950: In an effort to save costs, the two drum divisions are combined to form Leedy & Ludwig Drums. When Conn joined both companies, they shortened the inner plates on the timbales by 1/4 inch, causing drums to bend inwards a bit. This is only on Leedy & Ludwig timbales with the black & gold badge. They were the first model under Leedy & Ludwig. It does not happen with the tan and gold badge. (info from Cuco)

1955 (May 4): Conn sells the Leedy name to Slingerland; the Ludwig & Ludwig to Wm. F. Ludwig at the WFL Drum Co. Each company paid \$90,000. Slingerland does not produce timbales until 1958.

1956: Slingerland's first Leedy catalog is published. However, they did not manufacture timbales until 1958. Slingerland marketed Leedy drums as their second line with the intention of putting competitive pressure on Ludwig.

1957: the first WFL timbales appear. This was the only year that they manufactured timbales with claws. Guillermo Barreto played on these timbales on the famous Descargas in Miniature LP w/ Cachao.

WFL timbales, Photo by Faustino Cruz (Cuco)

1966: The last Leedy catalog by the Slingerland company is published.

1986: The rights to the Leedy name were sold to Fred Gretsch Jr. when he bought the Slingerland company. There are no plans to revive the Leedy name.

Timbales: Leedy / Leedy & Ludwig 13" x 7" and 14" x 7" polished brass lacquered shells Spun brass reinforced shell edges "Beaver Tail" lug (used through the Slingerland years till about 1970) Self-aligning "Beaver Tail" Rods Heads tucked on metal counterhoops – no flesh hoops steel claws shells are 7 tall rims are ¾" tall lugs are made of cast steel inner plates much thicker and wider stand base is smaller but more sturdier Top post was 2 feet

Endorsers: Humberto Morales, Frank "Chico" Guerrero, Tony Escoiles, Tito Puente, Ubaldo Nieto

Slingerland / Leedy Timbales: brass claws shells are 6 thinner shells rims are 1" lugs are made of cast iron inner plate are much thinner stand base is wider than Leedy Top post was 2 feet and 6 inches to accommodate taller people.

1959-1965: Slingerland made Leedy timbales. Although Leedy lugs were still used on the Slinger-Leedy drums, the shells, hoops, and even strainers (for snare drums) were Slingerland design. The line was eventually discontinued around 1965.

1966-1970: They made changes on the claws and lugs

1970 -1972: They changed the rims to regular drum rims and the stand became a clip mount similar to the Ludwig mount.

1977-78: They also made a Slingerland copy of LP timbales. They did not sell much.

1979: the Leedy name was sold to Fred Gretsch. He discontinued timbales made by Slingerland. He made a limited number of timbales under the Gretsch name (13x14). Today, Leedy belongs Stto even Maxwell. He does not make timbales nor is interested

Notes From Monchito Muñoz (interview)

"Gene Krupa was endorsing the Radio Kings made by Slingerland. Therefore, Leedy needed a model name for these timbales. These people didn't know anything about Latin music. They were Americans from Chicago so they asked Henry Adler for advice. The head of Leedy wanted to come to New York and go to a club and see a heavy timbalero play on these drums. Henry was going to take him to see Uba with the Machito orchestra. The timbales were going to be named after Ubaldo Nieto. When the head of Leedy came, Machito was on the road. Therefore, Henry took him to see the Noro Morales orchestra at the China Doll with Humberto on timbales. That is how the timbales became known as the Humberto Morales Model. This was around 1948 or 1949". (Monchito Munoz)

Notes From Cuco

Old timbales made of brass had a thinner gage (gauge?) of brass. Today, they make them to last forever. Brass that is very thick does not sound proper. Also, skins used today are plastic. They have a lot of overtones. The older sets with Leedy, Leedy & Ludwig, and Rogers were made with a thinner gage of brass and had calfskins on them. That made the drum sound a lot better; no overtones.

Also, the cascara (side of the timbales) was more mellow. They had the sound of a pair of maracas like it should. The sound was not as loud as new sets made of steel. They had a warmer sound not like today's that are very loud. You have to use ½" sticks for them to be heard. On the older sets, 3/8" is recommended, producing a warmer sound.

Most companies & custom makers copied the LP (Latin Percussion Co.) design which is in fact, a crude design copied from the timbales of Ulbaldo Nieto (timbalero of Machito & his Afro Cubans in the 50's).

The original type was made by a guy called "El Indio" in Manhattan. It was a 5 lug, top tuned set with calf skin heads. They had the same style rims, tuning bolts, and "L" shaped lugs.

The drum sizes were standardized at 13 & 14 inch shells until LP made the Tito Puente model with 14 & 15 inch shells.

Gon Bops created a classic brass shell in various sizes including timbalitos & wood shell tarolas which used top tuned bongo hooks (shorter hooks) which hooked to cast aluminium lugs and had eagle claws over the rims...like vintage timbales by Leedy, Slingerland, Ludwig, Rogers and Gretsch as well.

## History of the term in Cuba

The term *timbal* or *timbales* (pl.) has been used in Cuba for two quite different types of drum. In the first place, it was first used to describe the kettle drums used in the wind orchestras known as orquestas típicas.<sup>[2]</sup> These were the same general type of drum used in military bands, perhaps slung either side of a horse, and in classical orchestras. These were, and are, played with sticks which have softish round heads.

The orquestas típicas were gradually replaced early in the 20th century by charangas. The general idea of the charanga was to replace the wind instruments with violins and flute to bring a brighter, lighter tone to the band. The timpani were replaced by *pailas criollas*, which were originally designed to be used by street bands. They were taken over by the early charangas; their original name was used in Cuba, but over time the simpler term *timbal* has been taken over to describe the pailles. Pailles are always hit with straight batons<sup>[3]</sup> that have no additional head. Hits are made on the top and on the metal sides. There is often a second set of even smaller drums, *timbalitos*, which produce an even higher note when struck. In a modern band the timbalero may also have a trap kit to switch to for certain numbers.<sup>[4]</sup>



Arturo Sandoval on timbales at the Hard Rock Cafe, Times Square.

Thus the term *timbales* is ambiguous when referring to bands playing the danzón in the 1900–1930 period. If one does not have a photograph it is difficult to know which type of drum was used by the band.

## Genres

Timbales can be heard in:

- Danzón
- Mambo
- Salsa
- Latin Jazz
- Cumbia
- Merengue (played by the *tamborero*, or tambora player)
- Manele
- Neo-Bossa Nova
- Reggaeton

- Latin rock
- Reggae
- Rock steady
- Ska
- Go-Go
- Rock

Other countless Latin genres feature the timbales, as they are constantly being incorporated into new styles of music.

## Veteran players

- Guillermo Barreto
- Tito Puente
- Amadito Valdés
- Nicky Marrero
- Pete Escovedo
- Willie Bobo
- Ubaldo Nieto
- Roberto Pla
- Jose Luis Quintana "Changuito"
- Marc Quiñones
- Luisito Quintero
- Louie Ramirez
- Ray Romero
- Willie Rosario
- Jimmy Sabater
- Orestes Vilató
- Calixto Oviedo
- Eguie Castrillo
- Aníbal López

## References

[1] Orovio, Helio 1981. *Diccionario de la música cubana: biográfico y técnico*. Entries for *Paila criolla*; *Timbal criolla*.

[2] see examples in Early Cuban bands.

[3] thicker than standard drumsticks, and not shaped: they are of uniform thickness along the length.

[4] Orovio, Helio 1981. *Diccionario de la música cubana: biográfico y técnico*. Entries for *Paila criolla*; *Timbal criolla*; *Típica (orquesta)*; *Charanga*.

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