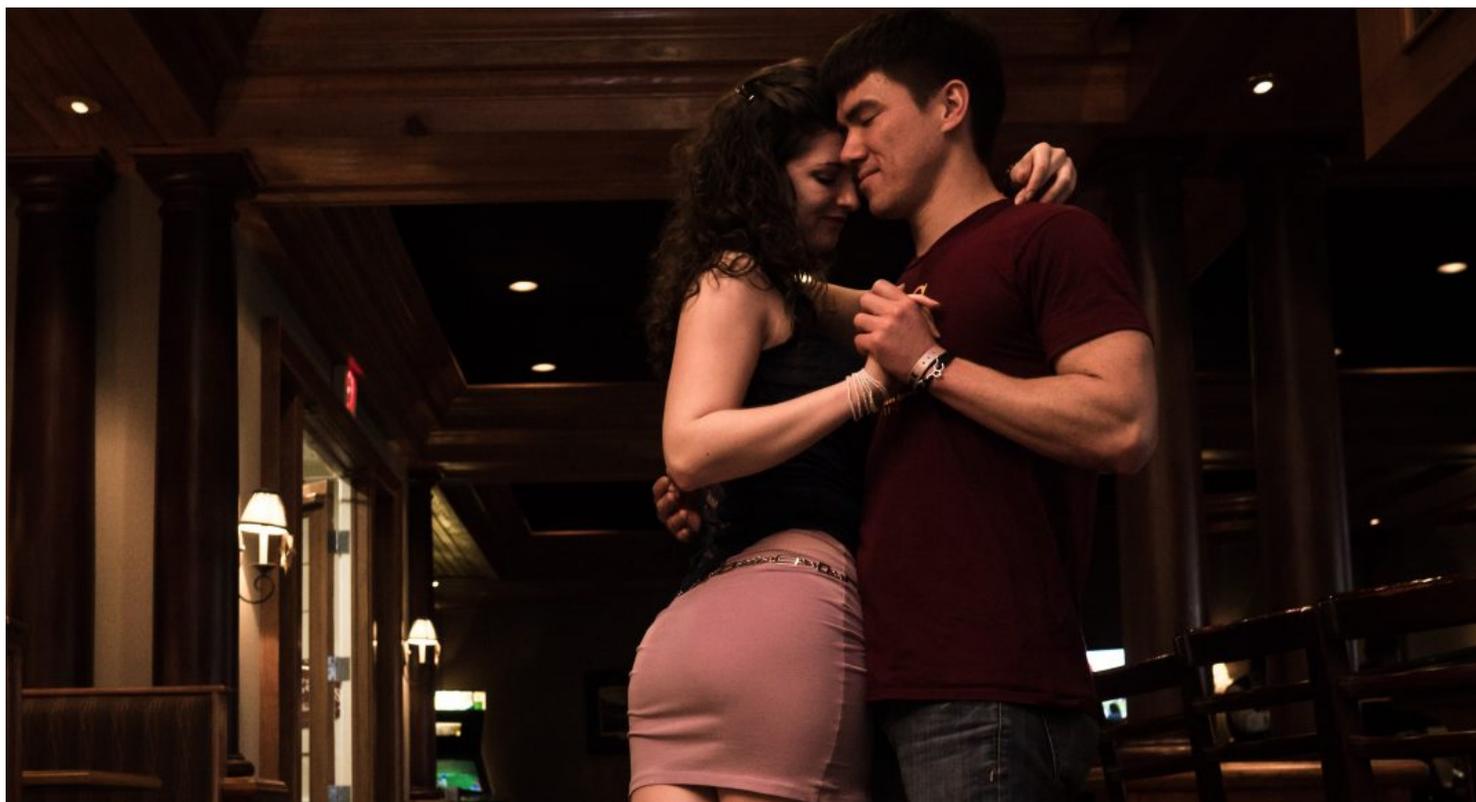


# WHAT MAKES KIZOMBA SEXY?



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“**K**izomba is too sexy” and “How can you dance kizomba with people you don’t know?” were pretty normal for me to hear when I first started teaching and performing in 2012. It’s surprising to me that I’m still hearing them today, when kizomba has been in the UK for 15 years and in the US for 10.

I’ve written about [this topic](http://socialdancecommunity.com/5-lies-youve-been-told-about-kizomba/) in the past, but this time I’d like to present a video guide to help clear up some of the misconceptions about kizomba as an inherently sexy dance. While there are many factors contributing to this perception, in my opinion, there is only thing that makes kizomba sexy: the [intention](http://socialdancecommunity.com/sexy-times-on-the-dance-floor/) of the dancer.

# What Is Kizomba?

Kizomba is a dance that came from Angola, a word meaning “party” in Kimbundu. It comes out of another Angolan dance called semba. You can see a nice set of clips in this introductory video from Nemanja Sonero.

Kizomba was – and still is – danced at parties where family and friends were enjoying some music together.

What’s so sexy about that?

## Intention

For me this is the only factor that truly makes kizomba become sexy. When we choose to put our energy into being attractive to someone else, whether it’s focused on our partner or all about putting on a show, then our kizomba will definitely come through as sexy.

I searched “kizomba” on YouTube and this was the first hit:

I think it’s pretty clear from the very start that Sara Lopez most likely intends her dancing to be sexy. She is doing large isolations that focus attention on her butt, while her partner almost stands still. She is “dancing up on him.” It comes across as a sexy exhibition.

Yet it’s possible to show off kizomba ginga in a performance without making it sexy. Watch how Adda’s movement is integrated into her steps. Isolations in the pelvis are done with her partner, and they show playful interaction.

## Marketing

The way kizomba has been sold to people has also contributed to its sexy reputation. I came across this ad in my Facebook News Feed a while back.



Besides the unfortunate slogan “Get Kizzed,” I was struck the positioning of the couples. In the foreground, a man lunging over a woman who is crouched down with her knees spread apart. In the background, a woman pressed up against the wall with her knee lifted up to her partner’s waist. Neither of these are positions I associate with kizomba. The intention is what is significant: clearly the ad is meant to draw people in by giving the dance a sexy context.

YouTube is filled with kizomba dance videos created as viral promotional materials, and sex sells, right? Videographers often further sexualize the material by zooming in on anything particularly sexy... as in this video.

There are also elements in kizomba dancing that may be connected to sexiness in people’s minds.

## Close Embrace

Many people find the idea of being in such a close hold inherently sexy(<http://socialdancecommunity.com/lets-talk-about-intimacy/>). But context (and intention, again!) matters. Having my breasts in contact with another person isn’t sexy in the context of hugging a friend or being squeezed into an overcrowded airport shuttle, so it needn’t be sexy in kizomba hold, either. In addition, dancing kizomba doesn’t involve any contact in the groin – grinding isn’t a feature.

Look at this close embrace: nothing sexy about it, if you ask me.

But notice in this next video how Ronie Saleh avoids staying in full embrace with his brother Armanch. And every so often they jokingly bring in some sexy movement, as

though to show they are aware of people's assumptions when seeing two men dance kizomba (barechested!)

## African Origins

Since the dawn of European imperialism, African bodies and dances have been hyper-sexualized. European traditions include few art forms that allow people to celebrate the sensuality of being fully present in their bodies. Europeans (and later, Americans) have also looked down on baring much skin publicly.

Even today, videos of women in traditional dress engaged in African dances have been equated by major social media platforms with sexual content – meaning it gets age-restricted or even deleted. YouTube channels like [TV Yabantu](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_coDux-FObP9Ve-aobAcjQ) ([https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC\\_coDux-FObP9Ve-aobAcjQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_coDux-FObP9Ve-aobAcjQ)) have had to fight Google over this Western bias, saying: “You talk about community standards, but you’re only talking about western community, not African community.” (Read more about their struggles [here](https://mg.co.za/article/2017-10-12-hey-google-my-breasts-are-not-inappropriate) (<https://mg.co.za/article/2017-10-12-hey-google-my-breasts-are-not-inappropriate>)).

Take, for example, this Zulu dance of thanksgiving to the goddess of spring:

Exoticism is alive and well in the international kizomba scene, too. I won't boost views by sharing one, but plenty of kizomba performances have featured non-African dancers playing at being “primitive” tribespeople, decked out in skins or face paint and equating wild with sexy.

## Pelvis Movement

A lot of people encounter “kizomba” in videos that are mostly tarraxinha, which I concede focuses on some sexy isolations and undulations.

In contrast, if we look at an Angolan TV kizomba competition, you'll see lots of motion in the pelvis, but it feels joyful and celebratory, rather than sexy.

Confused about what tarraxinha is? Nemanja Sonero has another useful video for you:

In the context of kizomba dancing, it's common to see elements of tarraxinha included in kizomba dancing in a quiet way, without it getting sexy. Sonja of Kikizomba often uses this kind of movement, whether she's leading or following.

# Is Kizomba The Sexiest Dance Ever?

To be honest, this is not a question I ever expected from the BBC. The title is pure clickbait and they didn't choose the best video clips but I love what one woman says at the end: "Kizomba is not a dance about how you look; it's a dance for how you feel."

It seems easy to answer the question then: no. There are plenty of other dances that focus on being attractive or even arousing to the viewer. Kizomba is about the feeling created in the moment you share with your partner, so how sexy it is depends entirely on what kind of feeling you intend to have.

*Let us know about your experiences with the sexiness of kizomba!*

**Found this interesting? You might like my other article [Sexy Times On The Dance Floor](http://socialdancecommunity.com/sexy-times-on-the-dance-floor/)(<http://socialdancecommunity.com/sexy-times-on-the-dance-floor/>)!**

Feature photo credit: JS Almonte

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