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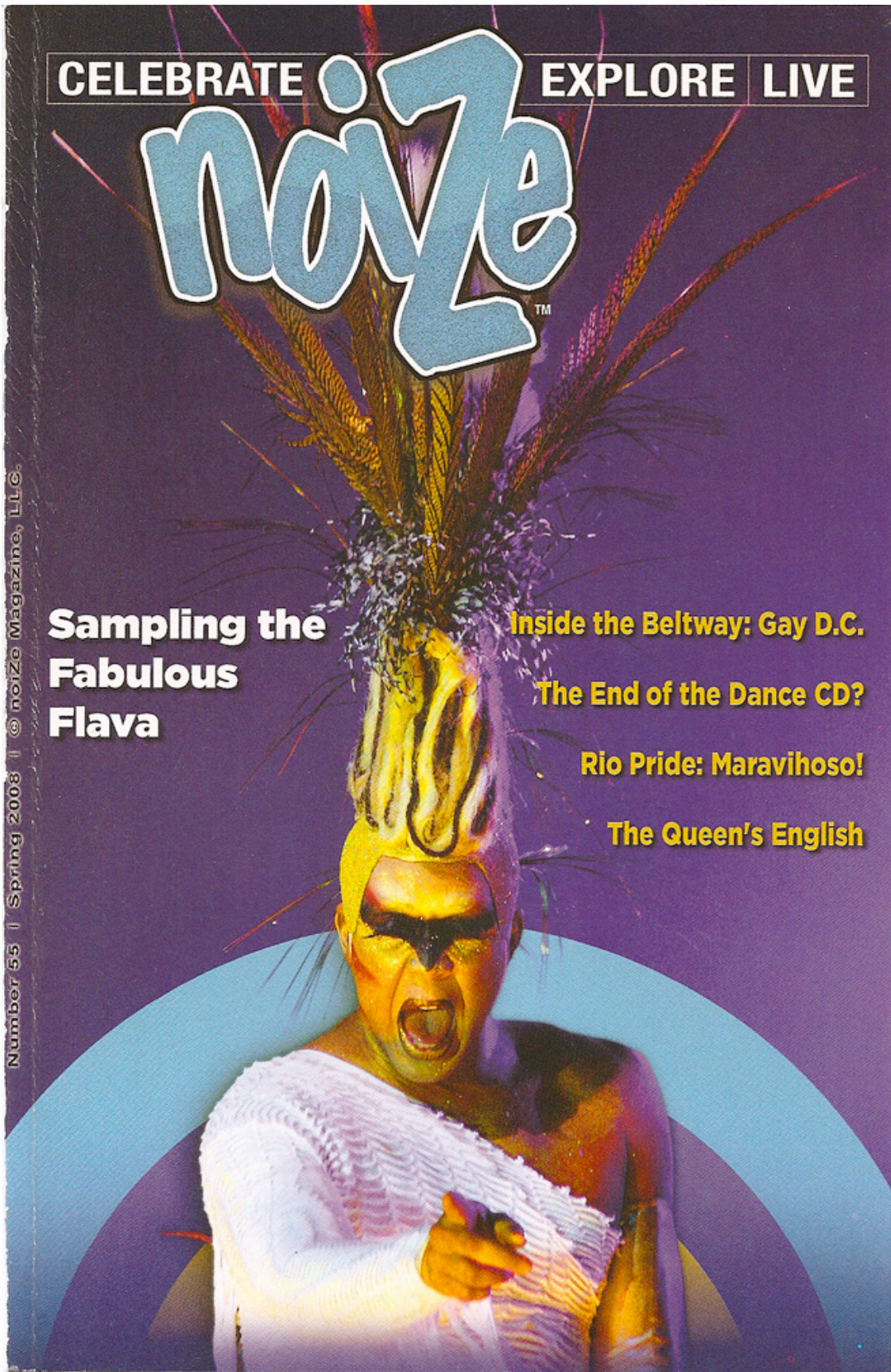
Inside the Beltway: Gay D.C.

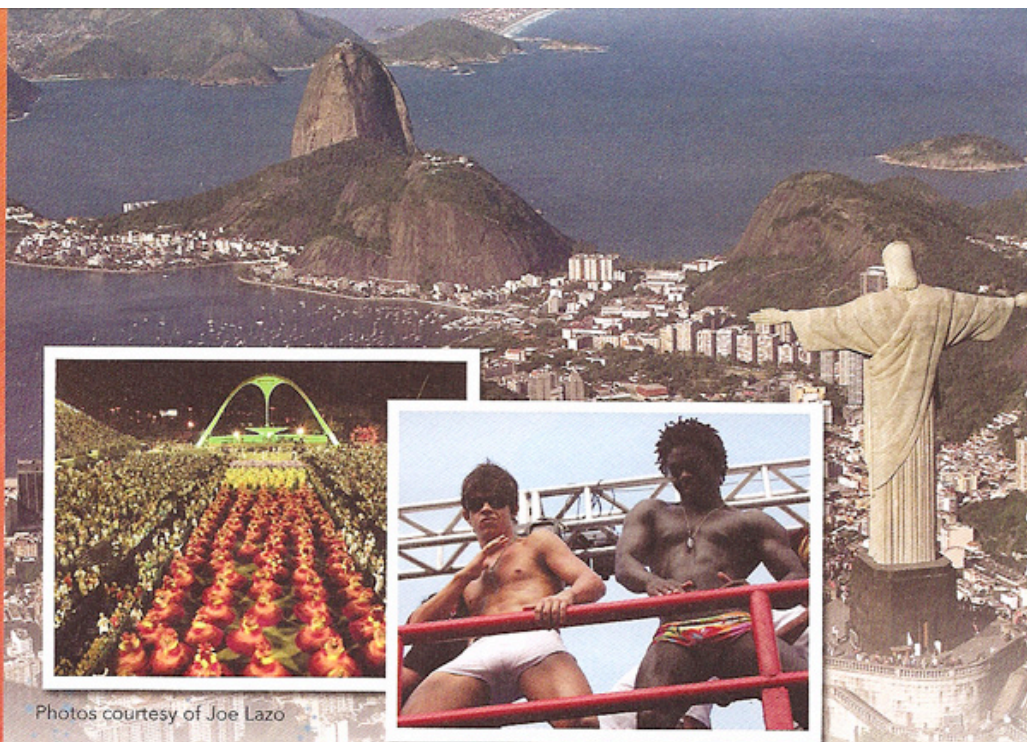
The End of the Dance CD?

Rio Pride: Maraviihoso!

The Queen's English

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Photos courtesy of Joe Lazo

Belos Bichas em A Cidade Maravilhosa

Nobody knows how to party like the Cariocas of Rio

by Tom Whitman

I'm jaded. I've lived in LA and New York for fifteen years, so my "impress me" attitude is as overdeveloped as a steroid queen's shoulders.

But I have to admit...Rio knows how to throw a party. And in Rio de Janeiro, the big three are Rio Pride, New Year's Eve, and Carnival.

RIO PRIDE

In Rio, everyone comes out for Pride—gay, straight, whatever. A million people line the famous Copacabana Beach for the parade, which lasts for hours and is filled with huge eighteen-wheelers outfitted with gigantic sound systems, topped by scantily clad boys and

Carnavalesque drag queens. Picture one of our Pride parades minus the political stuff, with an extra 100,000 watts of sound on each float. It is loud. Very loud.

Unlike in the States, the whole city seems to be there. Drag queens and muscle boys cavort with straight Cariocas (Rio natives). As if that weren't enough, unlike New Year's and Carnival, you won't run into fourteen people you know from the States. You will, however, meet Brazilians from all over the country, but especially the cosmopolitan boys from Sao Paulo, who exit the city en masse that one weekend in October.

During Pride, **Andre Almada's The Week Rio** is the club of the moment. The club is state-of-the-art, and has more

bathrooms than Madison Square Garden. More than two thousand guys pack the gargantuan dance floor, and you are likely to hear both local and international DJs.

Sao Paulo Pride, which occurs in June, is the largest Pride in the world, with more than three million people attending the parade. Size is sometimes important. Okay, always.

NEW YEAR'S EVE IN RIO

New Year's Eve ("Reveillon" in Portuguese) remains a predominantly Brazilian party, but with plenty of guys from around the world. You will run into people you know, but you won't hear English on every corner the way you do during Carnival.

A few years ago, Rio's NYE party scene was much smaller. Now, Reveillon boasts four days of huge parties, almost equaling the party scene of Carnival.

Ric Sena kicked off the 2007 NYE weekend on Friday, in traditional **Alegria** style—with DJ **Abel** in the booth, **Ross Berger** on lights, and some set pieces from NYC Alegrias. The space was one large dance floor: crowded and sweaty in a more industrial space than the NYC Alegrias.

The Week Rio was filled to capacity on Saturday night with DJ **Chris Cox** anchoring the central dance floor, while great local talent such as **Felipe Lira** and **Joao Neto** spun the second dance floor outside around the pool area. Yes, I said pool area. The brand new "Doca" area (the Dock) featured a huge tiered wooden dance floor open to the sky, with a pool along one edge.

In general, Brazilian DJs tend to spin a sound similar to our big city American clubs, but always with a bit of Brazilian samba beat mixed in. And yes, there is an amazing remix of "Girl from Ipanema."

Promoter **Dudi Cotrim's Zero Zero** is a lounge/restaurant/nightclub that reminds me of Hiro in New York, or Here Lounge in LA. It is the long-running Sunday party that everyone goes to.

The highlight of Zero Zero is the outside patio, a beautiful and stylishly modern lounge space that would impress even the most jaded NY/LA style queens. The food is contemporary, mostly trendy plates with a focus on European flavors, but there is also a small sushi menu. (I don't need sushi in Brazil when I live in LA. It seems wrong, like eating Mexican in NY.)



The small dance floor inside is tight, but if you absolutely must leave the patio to get your groove on with your future Brazilian ex-boyfriend, residents DJs **Tzo** and **Rafael Calvente** spin a mix of deep and tribal house with a healthy dose of Brazilian drums.

One note about the club experience: On any given night, the Brazilian crowd loves short sets from multiple DJs. While most American DJs prefer to take you on an extended journey (think: marathon sets from Junior or Susan or Manny), the Brazilian crowd is more impressed if they get three or even four DJs in a night, each playing a short set.

Prior to the opening of The Week Rio, Sunday's **X-Demente** was the undisputed anchor party for both NYE and Carnival. A tri-level industrial space with an outdoor roof patio, X-Demente is huge, but with the competition of The Week Rio, it doesn't always draw the same crowd it used to.

On New Year's Eve night, you want to see the fireworks. Whether you join the three million people in traditional white clothing congregating on Copacabana Beach, or escape to a small rooftop party at one of the hotels, don't miss the thirty minutes of fireworks that are the pride of the city.

I threw the first **Wonderland Rio** with Rio promoter **Dudi Cotrim** on the roof of the Ipanema Plaza Hotel. Three hundred guys (70% Brazilian, 30% American) danced the night away to LA DJ **Josh Peace** and Rio DJ **Rafael Calvente** on a poolside rooftop overlooking Ipanema. Similar private events happen all around town such as at the Copacabana Hotel or the Fasano Hotel. And when the first moment of the New Year hits, you hug your friends, look out over the cityscape and beaches below, and remember how lucky you are to be in one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

CARNIVAL

Carnival is the biggest party in the world. And the **Samba Parade**, held in the Sambodrome, is the most impressive spectacle you will ever see. Seeing the Samba Parade—or, better, marching in it—is something you won't soon forget. It is simultaneously a competition between

Rio's samba schools, a gigantic party marathon, and a spectacle of costumes, floats, and music. Each samba school spends the entire year in production and millions of dollars for their sixty minutes of marching.

Besides the Samba Parade, each neighborhood has its *bandas* and *blocos*—marching street carnivals, with thousands of people marching, playing music, performing, drinking, and celebrating. **Banda de Ipanema** is the most famous and is part of the official cultural heritage of Rio, and it includes every Rio drag queen sober enough to put her eyeliner on.

The gay parties during Carnival are too numerous to mention. You may never go to sleep before daybreak. All of the big ones, including **The Week** and **X-Demente**, will do their best to get you in the door.

GUYS IN BRAZIL

Guys in Brazil are hot. And it's not like in Italy or Spain, where the average straight guy walking down the street is stunning, and then in the local gay bar you are ... less than impressed. Gay guys in Brazil are gorgeous, whether in the club or on the beach.



Brazilian gay men are not shy or inhibited. If you're not careful (and please avoid being careful!), the traditional greeting of "Oi" is often followed up

with an extended kiss. What happens after that is worked out in broken English and Portuguese.

BEACHES

There are two gay beaches in Ipanema where the boys congregate. The larger and tourist-heavy area is where **Farme D'Amoeda** meets the beach at Post 8. A smaller, more mixed and more local crowd is at the "**Coquiereão**" (the tall palm tree) between Post 9 and 10.

No matter how much you go out in Rio, **Ipanema Beach** should be the focus of your afternoons. The locals don't go to the beach until later in the day, at 2 p.m. or later, because you want to stay for the sunset. Sipping caipirinhas on the beach as the sun goes down is one of the great pleasures in life.

The superlatives used to describe the forested mountains dropping

precipitously into the long golden curve of the beach hardly do the dramatic setting justice. It is breathtaking. And on clear days, the beach crowd turns



Photo courtesy of Joe Lazo

to watch and applaud as the sun dips below the horizon.

TOURIST STUFF

Yes, there are a couple of tourist things you have to do, no matter how many clubs you go to. Ride the funicular up to Corcovado and the statue of **Christ the Redeemer**. It deserves the new designation as one of the New Seven Wonders of the World, and on a clear day it provides the second-best panoramic view of the city.

For the best view, ride the cable car to **Sugarloaf (Pão de Açúcar)**, where you can see each neighborhood, Ipanema and Copacabana beaches, and Christ the Redeemer opening his arms to the city.

If you have any carnivorous tendencies, eat at the churrasceria **Porcão**, if only to experience the staggering procession of meats.

Take a guided tour of one of the favelas (poor neighborhoods) in the hills over Rio. It sounds strange, but it is both safe and a fascinating look into the other side of Brazil.

Useful Brazilian Phrases / Slang

"Oi."

"Hi." In a gay setting, often followed up with a surprise tongue in your mouth.

"Bicha" or "B"

The gay version of "Dude."

"Bunda"

"Ass." As in "Nice bunda."

"Caralho"

"Pau" - "Pica" - "Rola"

According to my friends, Brazilians have more than 20 words for "dick." Kinda like the Eskimos and "snow."

Rio Pride



