

SOUNDING OUT...

RIO DE JANEIRO

There's much more to Rio's music scene than carnival and *bossa nova*. Alex Robinson reports from this *cidade maravilhosa* – the marvellous city



Brazilian Tourist Board

Music is one of the highlights of a trip to Brazil. There are few countries in the world with such a depth and diversity of musical culture. And Cariocas, as residents of Rio are called, insist that there is nowhere in Brazil with a musical pedigree as great as their beloved Rio. Copacabana, Ipanema and Leblon beaches throb with music in the summer and bands of every Brazilian variety can be found playing all over the city at any time. Knowing where to go and who to see is not always straightforward. Information is hard to come by in Brazil and you certainly won't find any of the places we mention here in your guidebook.

FAVELAS

The life and soul of Rio's music is and always has been the *favelas*; those impoverished

ramshackle cities within cities that fringe Rio's beautiful beaches and granite mountains. The rhythms and laments of *choro* and samba spilt down from here onto the middle class beach suburbs like Ipanema in the early 60s where they were intellectualised to form *bossa nova*. The outpouring goes on. The latest favela music is funk, a word borrowed from the US but with its own meaning here in Brazil. Funk is in fact a particular form of Brazilian rap: fused with samba, hip-hop and Bahian rhythms and imbued with a strong sense of outrage and desire for social change. Rio's most famous funksters are Planet Hemp, whose best-selling album *A Invasão do Sagaz Homem Fumaça* (The Invasion of Stoner Insight) is a tirade against political corruption and the abuse of power. AfroReggae are similarly angry on their CD *Nova Cara* (New Face), but they preach a message of social change

though their music and implement it too, through a programme for street kids in Vigário Geral, one of northern Rio's most notorious favelas. O Rappa, another Carioca funk group are one of the most explosive and theatrical of all new Brazilian bands and are well worth seeing live. There is nowhere better to see these acts than in the favelas themselves. The safest venue for tourists daunted by the prospect is in Roçinha, where Flora Gil, Gilberto Gil's wife, regularly organises concerts through her cultural programme: Casa da Cultura Roçinha. Look for concert details in the *Jornal do Brasil* or *Veja*.

If you feel like going deeper into favela life, contact AfroReggae through their web site www.afroreggae.com.br If the prospect of going to a favela at all daunts you, many of these acts play regularly for free on Rio's beaches in the summer, or in city centre venues.



ABOVE: **Samba dancing at the Rio Scenarium** (Alex Robinson)
 RIGHT: **Toca da Vinicius – keeping bossa nova alive** (Alex Robinson)
 FAR RIGHT: **The world's largest favela – Rocinha** (Ricardo Azouri)

FUNK

The surge in popularity of Brazilian rap has in turn produced a renaissance in deliciously funky samba of the type made popular in the late 60s and 70s by Jorge Ben. There are two artists that no one who likes retro funk should miss seeing live on a visit to Rio – Seu Jorge and his band Farofa Carioca and Ivo Merelilles and Funk'n'Lata. Attempts to avoid dancing to either are futile. Seu Jorge plays regularly at the **Melt Club** in Ipanema (Rua Rita Ludolf 47, Leblon, +55 (0) 21 3686 6465), usually on a Sunday. Ivo can be found in any of Rio's mid-sized venues and regularly plays at the imitation Miami club in Barra da Tijuca, **Nuth Lounge** (pronounced Nuchee) (Av. Armando Lombardi 999, Barra da Tijuca, +55 (0) 21 3153 8595). Both are on the verge of breaking internationally. Jorge Ben himself – the godfather of Carioca samba funk – nearly always plays on one of the beaches in the summer or over the New Year, as do other famous Carioca funk stars like Ed Motta.

BOSSA NOVA

Cariocas groan every time a tourist asks to hear 'The Girl from Ipanema'. "That was nearly half a century ago," they complain. Indeed at first sight it seems that bossa nova is dead in Rio outside of hotel lifts and gringo piano bars like the **Vinicius** in Ipanema (Rua Vinicius de Moraes 39, Ipanema, +55 (0) 21 2287 1497). Bebel Gilberto's electronic bossa atmospheres are little known here – she was born and manufactured in New York. Her father João Gilberto, who made bossa famous, lives in

Leblon but hasn't played a concert here since the 60s, and Marcio Farraco is based in France and unknown to almost all Brazilians. But all is not lost. The **Toca da Vinicius** record shop and mini-concert venue in Ipanema has been keeping bossa alive for the last 20-odd years. You'll find every bossa disc you could ever hope for here and the owner, Carlos Roberto, a former university literature lecturer is a mine of information. There's a small museum upstairs and street concerts every Sunday by famous bossa names like Carlos Lyra, Leny Andrade and Peri Ribeiro (the first person to record 'The Girl from Ipanema'). In 2004 the city is to found



a bossa nova museum and inaugurate it with a series of high profile concerts in the **Teatro Municipal** (Rua Vinicius de Moraes 129c, Ipanema, +55 (0) 21 2247 5227, www.tocadovinicius.com.br).

CHORO

If you want to go to the roots of the Rio sound there is even live *choro* in Rio. Every Sunday lunchtime Rio's equivalent of the Buena Vista Social Club – **Abração de Jacaré** – play at the **Aprazível Restaurant** in Santa Teresa (Rua Aprazível 62, Santa Teresa, +55 (0) 21 2508 9174). The octogenarian band includes Paulinho da Viola's father and Ronaldo do Mandolin, who was a legend alongside Pixinguinha in the 30s.

For general nightlife it is hard to beat Lapa on a Friday or Saturday night. There are all manner of pulsating clubs here, from *pagode samba* to Brazilian reggae along Avenida Mem da Sa near the Aqueducto de Carioca. The most fashionable spot for Cariocas, and one of

the best nights out in the city on a Friday or Saturday is the **Rio Scenarium** (Rua do Lavradio 20, Lapa +55 (0) 21 2233-3239). By day this three-storey colonial building is a prop warehouse for Rio's TV and theatre industry. By night it is a bohemian live samba venue, packed with people of all ages dancing their feet off amongst 19th century apothecary shop fronts, 20s mannequins and old gramophone players. Waiters in dinner jackets politely serve superb *caipirinhas*. If you want something more sedate head for **Mistura Fina**, Rio's equivalent of Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club, on the shores of the Lagoa behind Ipanema (Av. Borges de Medeiros 3207, Lagoa, +55 (0) 21 2537 2844).

LISTINGS & INFO

Listings and concert information are available at the weekend in *Veja* magazine (vejaonline.uol.com.br) or in Friday's *Jornal do Brasil*.

www.cliquemusic.com.br and www.allbrazilianmusic.com (the English language version) has information on Brazilian artists and musical styles. |

