



ADVENTURE

by Christopher Oleata - www.oleatavision.com



Remembering Rio

It is hard to remember the experiences the next day while writing them down, or a week later when I'm two thousand miles away deep in the jungle of the Mato Grosso. Or now, seven years later and a continent away as I sift through notes and memories for a glimpse of that journey. So now I'm in Rio again, the marvelous city that pushes as steep rock mountains and twisted tall jungle against the glowing Atlantic Ocean. With ideas of hangliding, swimming, dancing, and exploration my sister Robin and I set out on a new day in Brazil.

I wake early with no memory of dreams. Robin stayed at her friend's house so I am alone in the apartment. It was a tiny little room on the third floor of a tall building. The address, Copacabana Beach. I open the large windows and the humid warm air blows in bringing with it the sounds of the ever-humming city. I hear clicks and bumps; car horns and revving buses; and I feel my heart taking on these emotions.

There's just room enough for a small table, a sink, and a tiny shower with the scary electric heaters hooked to the water nozzle. I look out the window, over the sidewalk with a



family of three, homeless and huddling and across the roof of the club and restaurant "Help". I see the ocean roll with great surf and the flow of walkers, joggers, and bikes on the path along the beach. I write a little in my journal, working to keep up with the notes of the adventure. Always I am a few days behind.

Alone and with the freedom to choose I change and run down to the beach to swim in the powerful waves. The beach is mostly empty this July, the peak of the Brazilian Winter. Just coconut salesmen setting up, lifeguards, and the occasional local sitting in the warm white sand reading the paper or the curves of a passerby.

Back at the apartment I shower and write postcards before catching a taxi downtown to meet Robin. My Portuguese is horrible and I speak Spanish in Brazil, making my way through fun conversations with the driver. I ask him to take me the long way, around the lake and through the granite tunnels below Corcovado. Every turn is new again as life ignites with excitement and passion.

I meet Robin at the Teatro Municipal. We tour the streets of the tall city center viewing the Brazilian puzzle of rich and poor. Robin makes phone calls as I observe a line of people in humble old clothes waiting in line. Unable to read or write themselves they pay another to write letters for them. The writer works quickly in the heat, as many eager clients wait their turn at literate self-expression. His typewriter is old, with spider-like precision each letter comes as a curved metal arm to rise up and strike the rolling page with a snap. At the end of every line a bell rings as the paper roller slides to the right. Each line brings them all closer and closer to their goal.

After lunch we move into an adven-

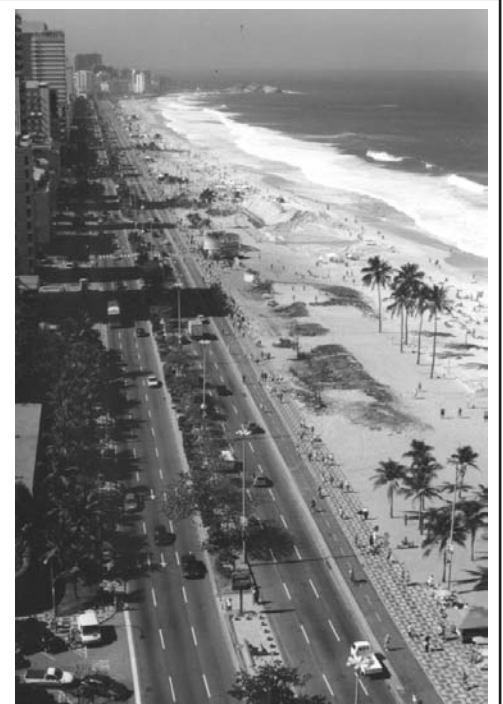
ture that lasts nearly till dawn. First to Ipanema for some money at the bank and then to Pepino Beach where a tour guide in a truck drives us up into the jungle where we go hangliding around the great stone walls on Pedra da Gavea. From 1,500 feet we float above the enormous favela of Barrio Rocinha on our way to land back on the beach. In Ipanema we develop photos, have coffee, and go bikini shopping. Singing as she walks, as Robin often does, she guides us back to the beach to stroll the boardwalk during a spectacular sunset. The sun sets to the right of the long strand of curving beach. Slowly it drops behind two giant towers of rock. We relax in the apartment with laughter and a bottle of wine before a taxi back downtown.

Our destination is Lapa, a local hangout where the Arcos de Lapa, an aqueduct from the 1700's, towers



over the streets with beautiful white arches. The streets pass through the arches, and for a moment, you are in the historical shadow. Where the arches rise up into the hills of the neighborhoods we follow a typical narrow street of old buildings worn and abandoned to a dive bar buzzing with locals. We find a shaky table outside and order beers, looking over our new hangliding photos with excitement. Flows of conversations move between us as more and more young people begin gathering on the street corners and pouring from the club across the street, Cemente.

Cemente is a popular place where the music is Chorro, live improvisational samba played with a piano, clarinet,



electric guitar, pandero, and more. Their rhythms pulse with speed through a psychedelic jam that seems to never end. We join the youth along the sidewalk as our friend Tiago arrives before moving closer and near the door to hear the music. They move into the crowded bar where they are sure to dance. I stay out on the sidewalk below the arches where the shadows and light merge to form a joyful haze of Brazilian light and sound.

Eventually I squeeze my way into Cemente to taste the flavors of the bar, food, friends, and the dance floor. The music I'll never forget. We didn't get home until nearly four, making the somewhat dangerous taxi ride from downtown sharing the taxi with a hooker rushing between jobs. We made it home and went off to sleep, hearing the bumps of cars and horns. We work hard in our lives to remember things; to pay the bills, pick up the kids, pay your taxes or take your medicine. Sometimes you begin to forget the good things and it becomes a chore to remember the past. I feel I must remember where I've been in order to know where it is I am going. Remembering Rio is a chore I'll never regret.

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