



A LAND OF COLOURS AND EXTREMES

Free Distribution — Issue 1



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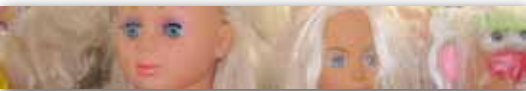
Website: www.bolivianexpress.org

La Paz – Bolivia, August 2010



And so it begins. This publication is the product of the collaborative effort of over twenty individuals from four continents - aged eighteen to over sixty. Our mission is simple: to provide quality journalism from Bolivia in English. In this issue we have sought to explore extremes: from the most expensive haircut in La Paz to one of the cheapest, from the glossy world of advertising to the salty shores of Bolivia's former coastline. In what has been a breathtaking journey (you will know what we mean by this if you have experienced **sorojchi**) we have put together a collection of chronicles which chart our footsteps over gravel, stone, asphalt and a few potholes. We have learnt much during our time here but have unfortunately forgotten most of it. All that has remained is the following: knowing when to stop asking questions and start listening, when to stop taking pictures and start looking, and most importantly, that no matter what you buy at the Witches' Market you will never pass for a **Boliviano**. In this sense, we aim to steer you away from the gringo trail and allow you to share in the condor's eye. Read us, work with us, write home about us. You are always welcome aboard the Bolivian Express.

N.B. Several Spanish and Aymara words are marked in **bold** throughout this issue. Their meanings can be found in the glossary on the last page.



In this Fair City

p.4 6.p



Recuperar nuestro Litoral



Tall White and English Speaking

p.8 9.p



El Mundial en La Paz



Por todo lo Alto

Coca vs Cola

p.11 12.p



Oh linda La Paz



Trimming and

p.13 16.p



Student Life



Comic Encounters

p.18 20.p

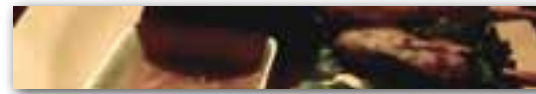


Busking in La Paz

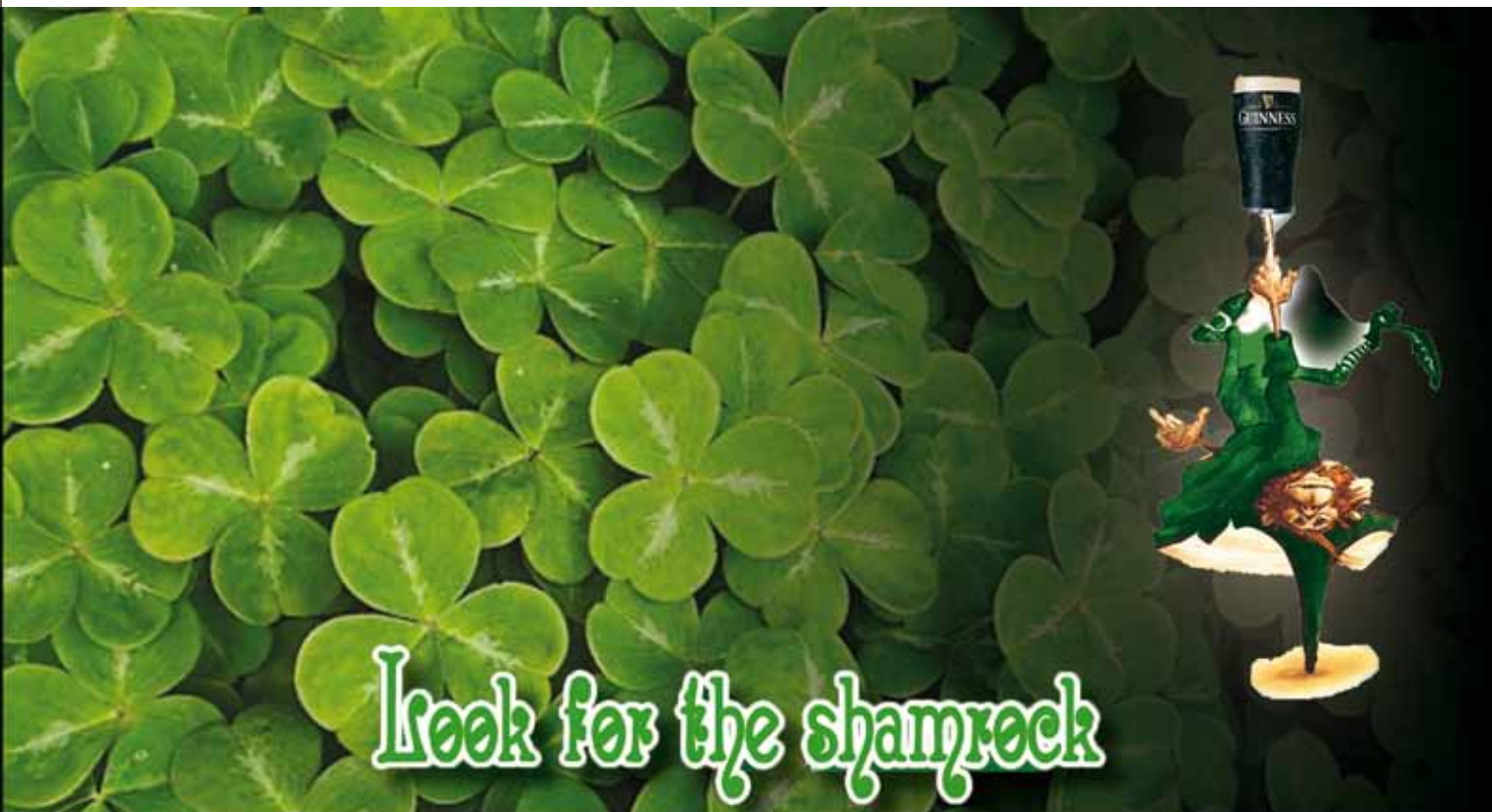


Borracho Estaba...

p.21 22.p



Reviews



Look for the shamrock

In this Fair

A pirated version of Windows 7 in Spanish (Bs.7), a live baby snake (Bs.150), a snake carcass (Bs.75), a 42-inch plasma screen (Bs.10,000), Mao t-shirts (Bs.3-15), a neon Jesus statue (Bs.25), Indonesian-looking mannequins (display only), waving Chinese lucky cats (Bs.10), absinthe (Bs.80), a stethoscope (Bs.280), and pasankalla cookers that look like time-travel machines (Bs.1200).

These are but some of the items to be found in the magnanimous **Feria** de El Alto, also known as "la Dieciseis". Covering over 5 square kilometres, this flea market takes over the Ciudad de el Alto on Thursdays and Sundays, from as early as 4:30 a.m. The market is certainly one of the biggest in Latin America and by most locals' accounts said to be one of the largest in the world. Standing before any one of its innumerable stalls feels like being deep within an anthill. It is here that this city fully comes alive in all of its chaotic glory.

The Bolivian Express split into teams of four and set off to the Feria on two different occasions, leaving at the relatively late hour of eight in the morning. There are several ways of getting there. Some of us took a minibus to La Ceja (downtown El Alto) and got off at La Pasarela (an overpass and landmark in its own right). The rest of us took a growling green bus from the tunnel near the Plaza de los Heroes and headed for the Plaza Ballivian. Take heed: these buses from the 1940s were not made with gringos in mind. Stand taller than 170 cm and you'll find your neck bent at 90 degrees. Try and sit down and you'll find your knees bent up against your chest. Of the many locals who laughed at the sight of us on this sturdy vehicle, one man, Marcelino, started talking to one of our reporters. "Nuestra vida así nomas es, de la Feria nomas vivimos" ("it's how our life just is, we live off the Fair alone") he lamented cheerfully, before telling us to get off at a small roundabout in the centre of which a cholita statue stood proud and fierce.

El Alto lives and breathes the Feria, on which it depends for its daily needs. In the **Dieciseis** one can buy nearly anything, from rusty car-parts to **Charquecan**. Stores are arranged loosely into sections: musical instruments, motorbikes, embroidery goods and stolen goods (to mention a few). The Feria even incorporates a thriving (though painfully cramped) live-animals section, and extends into stores located in bare-brick multi-storey buildings. While most of the stores and adjoining stands close during non-market days, a **señorita** selling freshly squeezed orange juice (Bs. 1,50) informs us there is a scaled-down version of the market during down-time, especially on Saturdays.

The market is also a snapshot of current social problems faced by the state. Numerous child labourers pepper its arteries, an unsurprising finding given the 21% of Bolivian children between five and twelve estimated to have to work. Pickpocketing is also rife and several techniques (too many to enumerate) are used to isolate victims and rob them of their possessions. One of our journalists was covered with sawdust and surrounded by four men who unsuccessfully tugged at his bag; another one was subject to the 'shoelace



Text by: Ernestine Roeters van
Photos by: Ernestine Roeters van Lennep

City...

trick' (no one was able to tell us how it worked but we thought it had a cool name). Nothing was lost as our **dinero** was stored in moneybelts and cameras were carried in zipped pockets. We advise you to do the same and maintain 'calm alertness' at all times, as you would in any crowded and unfamiliar place.

Don't be discouraged: vendors will look out for you, as will the Robocop-lookalike market guards (look out for black-clad urban troopers wearing plastic sunglasses). As one of the few gringos walking around these streets, it would be surprising not to attract this kind of attention. Take it with a spoonful of **llajwa** and hold on tight to your possessions. A Bolivian friend of ours who has lived in La Paz since his childhood gave us an account of going up to El Alto at 4am in the morning to re-buy his TV after it was burgled from his house the previous evening.

Amid our disconcerted navigation through the seemingly arbitrary layout of the shops, we discovered the jungle was ordered as neatly as a Japanese bedroom, and regulated as tightly as the cells in a honeycomb. A pair of bailiff-like men (who said they belonged to the "Asociación Central Managua") visited each stand in turn ticking merchants' names off a long list, collecting a few coins at a time. The Feria is organised by the "Sindicato de Comerciantes Minoristas", a union representing merchants big and small. All stand holders pay a contribution to the union (a "patente") of Bs.15 per year. The price of a stand, which can either be bought or rented, varies greatly depending on its location. A woman selling fruit told us that one can expect to pay upwards of 3000 US Dollars for a good spot. Premiums are paid for spots located on a corner, near one of the many market entrances, and even for those located on cement instead of the dusty ground. Several vendors told us they had inherited the stand from their parents, who had been part of the Feria as long as they can remember.

Despite the vibrancy, cheer, and the millions of **Bolivianos** switching hands every day, completion is intense and margins are elusive unless one stays on top of the game. A woman selling pirated CDs who'd only been there for three months told us she made Bs.20 on her worst day and Bs.150 on her best.

In 2008, President Evo Morales raised the minimum wage by 55%. When one walks around this market it becomes apparent why this policy scarcely affects those working here: six out of ten people in Bolivia work in the informal sector. This figure is even higher in the Altiplano, where the proportion was estimated at 74% and where the informal economy is said to have grown by 126% in the last decade alone. The livelihood of these entrepreneurs relies on their inventiveness and hard work as their income is determined by the capricious laws of **oferta, demanda, rebaja** and **yapa**.



Lennepe and Amaru Villanueva
Xenia Elsaesser, Amaru Villanueva Rance.

RECUPERAR, RECUPERAR, EL

Text:
Camille Reltien



"¿Rendirme yo? ¡Que se rinda su abuela, carajo!" According to the story, these were the dying words of Eduardo Avaroa Hidalgo at the battle of Topater on the 23rd of March 1879. On this day, Bolivia lost the Departamento of Antofagasta to Chile and along with it, free access to the Pacific Ocean. The Guerra del Pacifico (1879-1884) is like a **locoto**, it burns Bolivian consciousness 131 years on.

Bolivia still yearns for what she has lost. The Bolivians among you will surely be familiar with the following lines from the song "Recuperemos Nuestro Mar" by Orlando Rojas : "Aún a costa de la vida, recuperemos el mar cautivo, la juventud está presente, Bolivia en alto reclama el Mar". It is one of the marches of the

Fuerza Naval de Bolivia. Naval Force, you ask? Yes, Bolivia is prepared for the day she will recover her sea, and is equipped with a 5000-man navy. They carry out a defense mission of Bolivia's Maritime Interests in Lake Titicaca and on the 9000 kilometres of navigable river.

The attempts at repossessing the coastline have been many, under the initiative of various presidents; none of them have ever been successful. So far, Peru has given Bolivia access to Puerto de Ilo which is used for tourism. Imports and exports largely go through Chile, to whom Bolivia pays taxes and duties for use of its ports.

Yet what Bolivia wants - what her citizens really yearn for- is to regain sovereignty over the lost provinces.

In this month of July, talks between Chile and Bolivia are taking place in La Paz. The theme guiding these discussions is "cultures of dialogue and peace", and aims to solve diplomatic issues between both countries.

To discover the significance of the loss of the sea for Bolivia and its people, one would usually start at the Museo del Litoral. Unfortunately, due to its current renovation, the museum is closed and looks like a bombed-out trench. I thus decided to interview the person responsible for the museum. After searching through the streets of La Paz, I finally found her hiding behind a face-mask and surgical gloves (no, she doesn't moonlight as a surgeon - she was only developing photos).

LITORAL Y EL ANCHO MAR

Veronica Rodriguez begins by giving me a description of the lost territory. I am told that the desert of Atacama is a land rich in different types of important resources (copper, lithium, guano) giving the land great economic value. Indeed the war was sparked by Bolivia's decision to eject Chilean companies exploiting these resources but refusing to pay taxes. In response to this, Chile invaded the port of Antofagasta in March 1879. The Museo del Litoral takes it upon itself to keep alive the memory of this war in Bolivian consciousness. Veronica passionately recounts the March events: "During the whole month we raise the flag to full-mast. We invite schools and the army to the commemorative acts".

March 23 marks the **Día del Mar**, dedicated to promoting awareness about the unfair war that led to Bolivia's amputation. One woman I speak to in the Plaza Avaroa (a monument to the hero) tells me "The 23rd of March is a real celebration!" Not all Bolivians agree this day should be a fiesta or even exist. Hernando, from Santa Cruz, says "I don't think such a loss should be celebrated. It's history and I don't believe in nostalgia". However, the Día del Mar returns each year like a melancholy Christmas.

It reminds all Bolivians of their loss and their ongoing battle to reclaim the sea. There is no hope for Día del Mar Grinches. Veronica Rodriguez feels that this day, this month, is insufficient. "We are not very nationalistic, we exclaim ¡GLORIA! and then the moment passes". She strongly believes that more should be done in educational terms to keep the feeling of civic pride alive all year

long. In addition, various individuals tell me that they feel the desire to recover the sea is actually a factor of unity among Bolivians. In this sense the loss of the sea can be seen as a myth which underscores the Plurinational's diluted sense of shared identity, not unlike the feeling football

have free access to the sea; it's normal that it should be present in the Constitution". The vast majority of those I spoke to were very willing to tell me how strongly they felt about their right to the sea.

Aside from the sovereign ideal of an imprescriptible right to the sea (and all the symbolism that accompanies it), there is a more pragmatic issue driving this ambition: Bolivia's economic development. One of the questions I asked Bolivians was: "do you think the desire to recover the sea stems solely from pride and nostalgia or also from necessity?" People gave me a broad range of answers, roughly divided half and half into idealists and pragmatists.

Veronica Rodriguez (and most Paceños I spoke to) felt that there was little room for development without free access to the sea, and the possibility of engaging in international trade without needing to pay for the privilege. Others (including a couple from Santa Cruz), told me that there would be no difference if Bolivia had sovereign access to the sea. "The problem isn't access or no access, the problem is Bolivian mentality and irresponsibility. Until that changes the situation

will remain the same" says María, Hernando's wife.

The story of Bolivia and the loss of its sea to Chile unfolds like a grim fairytale: the stolen princess, the lover's quest to get her back, and the covetous dragon guarding the castle. The current diplomatic impasse between both countries suggests Bolivians will have to wait for the elusive "happily ever after..."



creates amongst fans who briefly entertain they are all engaged in the same battle. The sovereign right to the sea is not only advocated in speeches and parades, it is also present in Articles 267 and 268 of the new Constitution. It proclaims that sovereignty over the lost territory is an "imprescriptible and inalienable right". A saleswoman on the street told me "It is our right as Bolivians to

TALL, WHITE AND ENGLISH- SPEAKING

Text:
George
Dallas

Photos:
Joseph Art

"We are tall, white, and speak English," were the infamous words of Gabriela Oviedo (the then Miss Bolivia) in 2004 when trying to dispel a purported stereotype about Bolivian people. The number of white people in La Paz city? Discounting dazed tourists and superior expats, hardly any. The number of white people on billboards and shop windows? Too many, far too many. Behind a glass pane, an oversized picture depicts a little white girl stuffing herself with brightly coloured ice cream while on the street in front of her Cholitas beg for spare bolivianos. This overwhelming distance between the people in advertisements and the consumers is not a common sight in England, where commercials usually show people only slightly more attractive and happy than you: an approach which gives the impression that this lifestyle is within reach, if only you would buy the product. But in Bolivia this European technique, that places the object of temptation within the periphery of your reach, is moribund. Here, where models of foreign race and distant culture brandish the goods, a different method is being implemented. To speculate on why this is being done would lead too treacherously into psychological and postcolonial conjecture. Equally interesting is the effect that these alien creatures have on the people and culture of La Paz. We chose two billboards in La Paz and set out to measure people's reaction to them. Billboard one: a huge white lady looking smugly over her shoulder. Billboard two: three intimidatingly attractive women, wearing 'you will never find any girls as hot as us' faces, advertising Gillette. Our interviewees response: They

wouldn't care whether the women were Bolivian, black or blue (let's hope James Cameron didn't hear that). For Pazeños, if the advert was good, skin tone was irrelevant. However, everyone agreed that the models were attractive, and all the women wanted to look like them. While this is not a surprising response (who, after all, could call them ugly?), the discrepancy between the natural Bolivian look and these pristinely made-up, photoshopped Barbies surely affects levels of self esteem and love among Bolivian women. Significantly, we can place these observations alongside the flyers and posters that pepper the city, advertising improvements such as nose surgery and skin bleaching. The gaudy and lascivious images on the posters are perhaps not as distant as we imagined: a spot of surgery, the flyers would have you believe, and all on the posters is within your reach. You

too can be a Barbie. Plastic surgery is a global phenomenon, but here in Bolivia it is far more acceptable and popular than its equivalent in Europe, where it is shamefully confined to the fringes of society. The quantity of adverts in La Paz, and the fact that nearly everyone we asked knew someone who had had their nose reconstructed leaves no doubt that this practice penetrates a great and central social sphere. Once again, we would not want to speculate. Doubtless there are myriad reasons why this occurs, and theorising would again lead us too treacherously into psychological and postcolonial conjecture. But, as I strain my neck to gaze up at these larger than life, whiter than white, aesthetically perfect figures, glancing haughtily down on the city like gods from a cloud, I find it hard to believe that these idols do not play a significant role.





EL MUNDIAL IN BOLIVIA

Text: Tom Farr. Images: Anne Bailey and Deborah Bender

A Global Phenomenon. El Mundial. The World Cup. Le Coupe Du Monde. For one month every four years the world is overcome by football fever and Bolivia is no different, despite the fact that the last (and only) time the national team qualified for the World Cup was in 1994. A poor showing of 10th in the South American qualifiers meant transferring support to some of their continental neighbours – but only for the duration of the competition. Unfortunately for many, the games were only showed on cable TV, a privilege still only available to a small fraction of Bolivians. Nonetheless, opportunities to watch the action live weren't lacking, particularly in public places, and people did almost anything to see the games. Across La Paz, four giant screens were erected by Samsung with every match witnessing tightly-packed crowds sitting and standing on every imaginable surface. **Paceños** also had the chance to watch the games in the small screens of buildings such as the Correo Central and certain banks, giving people the opportunity carry on with their everyday lives (albeit much more slowly). Many people who were unable to abandon work just to watch the football were invariably reduced to listening to it on the radio, relying on the excitable voices of the Bolivian commentators. The cinema, with a better atmosphere, bigger screen and slightly more committed fans, was another popular viewing site, the only price for entry being at least half an hour in a queue to guarantee a seat. During one of the quarter finals the crowd was so engrossed in the match (supporting Paraguay) that when a small infant started crying, every-





one, without turning their eyes away from the screen, hushed the child to such an extent that the parent hurried outside in embarrassment. Examples are abound of people taking matches too seriously, perhaps the most extreme of which was the fight that broke out between two German tourists and a Bolivian who took exception to their celebrations, ensuing in police intervention and participants being roundly booed for interrupting the match. In spite of the absence of Bolivia from the competition, most people found

ten days of yearly leave, watched the match between Uruguay and Holland with his twelve year old son Christian. He nutshellled the general sentiment by proclaiming "now we can just relax and watch good football without worrying who will win." Though for him (as for many others in the crowd), this meant following Spain, the team which they could presumably relate to most easily. Unsurprisingly, however, there was also considerable support for Holland in the Final, as the scar tissue from the Spanish conquest lives on

lot of goals" according to Javier, a student at Universidad Catolica who had brought some work to do at half-time. Unfortunately, not everyone enjoyed direct access to the football. While even some of the poorest people have makeshift televisions at home (visit any dwelling in El Alto for evidence of this), the majority don't have access to cable TV, a luxury costing upwards of \$20 a month. Exclusive deals with these companies left millions of Bolivians without a chance to watch the action from their homes. The ser-

“opportunities to watch the action live aren't lacking... people will do anything to see the games”

a surrogate team to back through most of the competition. While locals largely supported participating South American teams, a line was drawn at Argentina, the likely cause being the perceived mistreatment of Bolivian immigrants in this neighbouring country, as well as their infamous Porteño arrogance. Many Bolivians could be found cheering for whoever was playing against them. The extent of this animosity was felt during the quarter-final between Germany and Argentina, when German flags were handed out near to the giant screen by the UMSA, creating a mass of black, red and yellow. Celebrations became more and more exuberant as each German goal went in and the potential for an Argentinean comeback diminished. However, with the elimination of Uruguay in the semi-finals (the last remaining South American contender), Bolivia was left to choose a new team to follow. Miguel, a builder who had taken one of his

500 years later. Some closely followed one big favourite: "Germany wouldn't be so bad. They score a



endipitous outcome of these social inequalities is the mass confluence of paceños at the large Samsung screens, which can attract crowds of up to 800 people. I was fortunate enough to watch the Final in a comfortable apartment in the Zona Sur of La Paz. With a pretty even split between Dutch and Spanish supporters, it was a very social affair: beer flowing, jokes flying back and forth, and everyone trying to outdo each other with knowledge about anything and everything that was remotely related to football. This just reinforced the impression I had already formed; that Bolivians follow football with a raw passion for quality and magic, thousands of miles away from the money and glamour that have tarnished the game in Europe. Official-shirt-clad or wearing abarcas, clutching a pocket-radio or a can of beer, football fanatics in this country will take any opportunity to revel in 90 minutes of sweat, glory and frustration, especially when the whole world is watching.



vs

Cola

Andean plants, imperialism and the world's favourite drink

Text: Chris Reid

About 70 km from La Paz, a field of coca plants clings to the steep slopes of Las Yungas. This transitional zone between dry highlands and humid lowlands provides the ideal climate for the most stigmatized of plants. Many of the leaves harvested in the field will be sold in Bolivian markets to be chewed or made into tea. The majority will be taken to clandestine labs where one of their alkaloids will be extracted and purified to make cocaine. Some of the leaves will go into toothpaste and shampoo, and a tiny, select proportion will be shipped to a chemical plant in Maywood, New Jersey, working for The Coca-Cola Company. Coca-Cola was first formulated in 1886 by an American pharmacist, who described the product as a "brain tonic and intellectual beverage". At the time, its two key ingredients were pure cocaine and caffeine. The name comes from the coca plant and the kola nut, a caffeine-rich plant native to the tropical rainforests of Africa. Today, the basic taste of "cola" products comes mainly from vanilla and cinnamon; distinctive tastes among various brands are the result of trace flavorings such as orange, lime and lemon and spices such as nutmeg. // However, Coca-Cola's formula is still a closely kept secret, known only to a few executives. According to the Bolivian newspaper Los Tiempos, there may be a good reason for this secrecy. Every year, the Stepan Company imports about 100 metric tons of coca leaf from Bolivia and Peru. At their plant in New Jersey, they supposedly remove the cocaine alkaloid from the leaves and sell the cocaine-free leaf to Coca-Cola for use as a flavouring. This is all "legit": in fact, Stepan Company's plant is the only one authorized by the US Federal Government to import and process the coca plant. // But Los Tiempos raises three interesting points:

1. Coca-Cola specifically uses *Erythroxylum truxillense*, or coca de Tru-

jillo, the variety of coca leaf that contains the highest levels of cocaine alkaloid.

2. According to research done in Bolivia, it's almost impossible to recover flavour from the coca leaf once it has gone through the cocaine-removal process.
3. Access to Stepan Company's plant in New Jersey is said to be more difficult than the Federal Gold Reserve at Fort Knox. Coca-Cola is everywhere: present in more than 200 countries, its banners can even be found in small African settlements that don't have access to water. But, Coca-Cola is not actually bottled on the production site, the company only sells the concentrate. This potent mixture is shipped to plants around the world, where water is added and the solution is bottled. Buy a bottle of Coke in Bolivia and you will notice it tastes slightly different: it is bottled in La Paz, using Bolivian water. The most recognised brand in the world, Coca-Cola has become a symbol of America and Western values. For some, it represents American imperialism and threatens cultural identity. // To defend themselves, certain communities have produced alternative cola: Mecca Cola, Corsica Cola, Cola Turka, Qibla Cola, Virgin Cola, Parsi Cola, Breizh Cola, Africa Cola and Kitty Cola are but a few in a long list of brands that are challenging their dominant parent. Here in Latin America, the Peruvian drink Inca Kola seems to be the most successful alternative to Coca-Cola. Its main flavouring is lemon verbena, a plant native to the Andes. Inca Kola is the most popular drink in Peru; its slogan is "El Sabor del Perú". But in reality it's not a true alternative cola: it's 50% owned by The Coca-Cola Company. Bolivia has three brands of alternative Cola: Coka Quina, Mendocina and the most recent, Coca-Colla. The latter is also the most controversial. Produced by Ospicoca (Organización Social Para la Industrialización de la Coca), it is meant to restore the coca leaf to the position of honour it held in Andean culture, a cause championed by Evo Morales. But Bolivian newspaper El Deber notes that it has never been confirmed whether the leaves used will be cocaine-free. If not,

the drink could be lethal if mixed with alcohol, and we may have another variant to add to our list: Coca Killer.

AN INTERVIEW WITH LA CASCADA....

How was Coka Quina born?

La Cascada is a family enterprise started in El Alto by José and Angelina de Eid 45 years ago. They developed Coka Quina's secret recipe and came up with the name. Quina refers to a root used for centuries by Andean people to fight malaria – one of its alkaloids is quinine. At the time, everything was done manually by La Cascada's 23 employees...

And today...? The original bottling plant in El Alto employs 150 people and output is much greater thanks to mechanisation: each production line outputs 50 bottles per minute!

What makes La Cascada special?

Our mission is to make Coka Quina the drink of Bolivia thanks to its incredible affordability: glass bottles are returned to the factory to be refilled (after having been cleaned, naturally), so when you buy a bottle of Coka Quina, you only pay for the liquid! What's more, we don't waste a single drop: instead of throwing away bottles with skew labels or faulty caps, we save the liquid and donate it to orphanages. I forgot to mention it but thought it was worth adding... We're committed to quality too: we use pure sugar from Santa Cruz and no colourants. Coka Quina is sampled and tested every 8 minutes during the production process and the mixing room is sterilised every 20 minutes.

...mission successful?

Certainly! Coka Quina is the most popular drink in El Alto and can be found as far as Colombia, even though it's not officially exported. The emblematic deer printed on the bottles enables the real Coka Quina to be recognised by all. The drink is so popular that some people drink it warm for breakfast!





¡Oh! Linda La Paz

By: Anne Bailey, Ariana Villanueva Rance and Andrew Cummings

They say that 'history is a one-way street', and nowhere is this more true than in La Paz, where the streets are paved with key figures and dates from the past. In the month of this fine city we invite you to follow us on a tour into the histreets of La Paz. Getti? Neither do we.

El Prado - Avenida 16 de Julio



Pedro Domingo Murillo

The main street in the city (better known as El Prado) gets its name from the date of the La Paz Revolution for Independence in 1809, spearheaded by Pedro Domingo Murillo, a ponytailed fella' who ignited a torch and subsequently proclaimed it was never to be extinguished. Of course, the torch was extinguished, and of course, Pedro was hanged (sorry), but they both live on, let's say, metaphorically. His hairstyle has also enjoyed long-lasting appeal (see the Comics article in this issue).



Estadium Hernando Siles

The largest sporting ground in the country is named after an ex-president (1926-1930) who was forced into exile after a military coup. He is credited with authoring the Civil and Penal Codes.

6 de Agosto

Bolivian day of Independence. It was on this day in 1825 that 'Upper Peru' became 'Bolivia', after Simón Bolívar, president of Gran Colombia and Peru at the time. The name was later changed to Bolivia on 11 August.

Calle Hermanos Mancheño

Named after the Mancheño brothers who died heroically in the 'Guerra del Chaco'; one as a simple foot-soldier and the other (fomás), as a military man by profession. Tomás's body was found with a blood-soaked diary full of love poetry for 'la señorita Cristina X', who lived on the Calle Loayza.

Avenida Arce

No, it's not pronounced "arse", it's more like "are-say". It's the surname of a Bolivian President (1888-92) who went by the name of Aniceto. Persecuted by the Liberal party and loved by the empresarios, he is remembered for introducing the railway system (now largely defunct).

20 de Octubre

This date in 1548 marks the day the city La Paz was founded by captain Alonso de Mendoza. It was named 'Nuestra Señora de La Paz' by the Spanish conquistadores to commemorate the peace (la paz) after the civil war.

Plaza Avaroa

Named after one of the heroes of the Pacific War in which Bolivia lost access to the sea (those Chilean bandits...), raising the question why anyone would build a square and monument in his honour. By that logic, however, Bolivia would have no monuments as it has sadly won no wars in its 185 year history. To Eduardo's credit (that was his name), his last words were "Rendáme yo? Que se finda su abuela cargo." Refer to the article on Bolivia's loss of sea in this issue.



Avaroa: brave and foulmouthed hero

Cañada Strongest

A homage to a battle of the same name, one of the few Bolivian victories against Paraguay in 'La Guerra del Chaco' in 1934. 'The Strongest' is also one of the two main football teams in La Paz, and arch-rivals of Bolívar.

"La Pérez"

Lucio Perez Velazco was vice-president at some point. No one is entirely sure of what he accomplished but he will surely be remembered for failing to make it into Wikipedia.

Avenida Illimani

Named after the landmark mountain, visible from all over La Paz. At 6,438 metres Illimani is the highest on the Cordillera Real. According to native legend, the neighbouring mountain (Apu) Mururata tried to outplay the Illimani concerning this title, but was thwarted when Illimani became enraged and cut off its snowy top.



Does this mountain look familiar?



Trimming and Dressing

A family inheritance

To dress the hair is to indulge. It is an activity quite unnecessary and deliciously vain. That fruity, full phrase "I'm off for my appointment at the hairdressers" occupies another territory to the sober 'haircut', 'trim', or 'trip to the barbers'. There is something fresh and creamy about it, a luxurious cut above the straight-backed, no-nonsense trim ("Trim" sticks its pert little nose up at "dressed", but it secretly dreams of joining in) while the image of some rusty barber's shears greedily nicking the moles on your neck is enough to make the stoutest cream curdle and decompose in less time than Sweeney Todd's barbered victims. It is perhaps because of these extremes of experience, generated by attention to the hair, that we chose to investigate (at great personal risk) what it meant to shear, style or slash your hair here in La Paz. Turn over for our speed report on the smart, shocking and surprisingly digital results. But before these personal snapshots, some unexpected encounters made it imperative to include a cool family profile in the hairdressing world of La Paz: in the streets of Sopocachi four Estilistas of the same family (ie genetic family, as in they share blood, although not like Sweeney does) all avidly snip tresses within a couple of blocks of one another.



Let's get the family relationships straight: Raul and Rene are brothers. Raul works together with his son Christian, while his elder son, Marcelo, has his own salon. Rene's humbler establishment is perched above Mercado Sopocachi and marked by a bright red sign. Raul and Christian work together as smoothly as a pair of scissors, and their salon title is also appropriately, perhaps pompously, paired: "Raul Estilismo Christian Ruiz". Marcelo, meanwhile, is renowned throughout the city not just for his chic styles and psychedelic film-

star imitations, but his charitable activity. We found him doing free "solidarity haircuts", and organising a grand event in aid of IDAI, a state home for disabled children. This active family has travelled the world to attend hairdressing competitions and courses. Marcelo tells me of discrimination in the past: male hairstylists were assumed to be homosexual, in Bolivia a tough label to bear. Now however, society is accepting stylists as artists, no doubt in part to this family's efforts to promote the fine art of dressing the head.

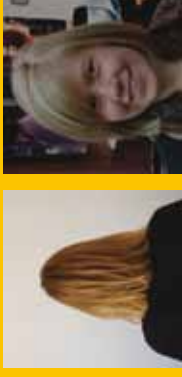
Alberto Sam

\$: Bs. 495 (Dye, wash and cut)

Addr: Calle Montenegro, Calacoto

Clientele: Mostly gossip women in their forties. I feel young.

Lounging and drinking coffee amongst Alberto Sam's harem of hairwashers, pedicurists and manicurists, my hair is coloured varying shades of blond. A four hour experience of pampering and the best head massage I've ever had. Convo: The dear friendliness of the many assistants is lost on me because I do not speak Spanish.



Christian Ruiz

\$: Bs 260 (Highlights and cut)

Addr: 6 de Agosto and Rosendo Gutierrez

Clientele: Miss La Paz and her giggly ensemble, caressing their long hair and, like semi-liberated Rapunzels, courting admirers down in the street through the panoramic windows of the elevated salon.



Christian sweeps me around his immaculate salon as lightly as if I were one of the feathery hairs floating on his assistants' brooms. All is wonderful and seamless (except my cutting robe, that had seams, pretty ones.) The most unpleasant bit: dyeing. My scalp is squashed into a plastic bag, my hair picked out with a crochet needle, and I am left to suffocate. *This wasn't the kind of dying I had in mind....everything goes black.....and the bag is removed. Enter a new life, new hair.* Convo: Christian is the winner of the Bolivia Wella hairdressing competition. Next year he is travelling to Paris for the international round. He likes La Paz more than Santa Cruz; more urban trends mean more great wacky hairstyles.

Marcelo Ruiz

\$: Bs130 (wash, Cut and style)

Addr: Edificio Aspiazu, 20 de Octubre y JJ Perez

Clientele: More women than men. One woman's hair is being styled for her wedding and someone is getting green synthetic braids put into her pig-tails.

Long wait for haircut (1hr) alleviated by the fact that I get to wear a regal golden cape. Yes! Then my soft-spoken veteran hairdresser smiles shyly and wields his scissors as an artist his brush. But, mid Hair-cut, he is abducted by besuited gentlemen to manage his charitable ventures. My subsequent long wait and annoyance are alleviated by his attentive assistant, who takes over the drying, styling and straightening of a burgeoning afro. Convo: Marcelo's campaign to raise money for the children's home IDAI, his professional training and his family legacy within the world of hairdressing.

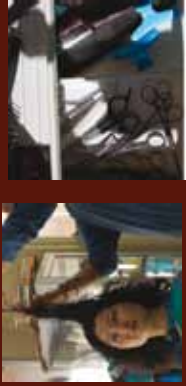


Rene

 : Unavailable

Addr: Calle Mercado above Mercado Sopocachi

A small boy gets his hair cut, and his father reads the newspaper while waiting.



Rene cannot keep his appointment, as he has promised to help his nephew Marcelo with his charity haircuts. He poses for photos and pretends to cut my mane, before vanishing in a puff of hair.

Convo: You want to take my photo? Quickly quickly....ok? very good? I'm late....bye bye

Rosario Estilismo

 : 10 bs


Addr: Av Baptista No. 833 - Zona Garita de Lima

Clientele: A man popped round but was sent away as the Bolivian Express was taking up all of the seating space (2 chairs).

Attended to immediately by a friendly señora, I am wrapped in a plastic bag and styled with paper-cutting scissors; the show is observed by some smug kids outside. The walls are tastefully decorated with numerous cutouts from 1980s hairstyle magazines (judging by mullet-to-bowlicut-ratio). Ricky Martin predominates. Despite the improvised settings I am very pleased with the cut - neat and simple. Convo: She talks about how she got into hairdressing six years ago to support her during her degree in social work at the UMSA.



Peluqueria Ilimani

 : 5 bs


Addr: El Alto. Near the Christian Music section.

Clientele: Me.

Attacked by the clippers of a tiny ferocious barber, fearing for my life and frozen to the chair. Musical accompaniment: his little son kicks the metal wall that shields us from his living quarters. Photo of establishment prohibited, conversational minimal.



Fotos Agfa: Digital Haircut

 : 80Bs for 6 photographs

Addr: Plaza del Estudiante next to the Cafe Ciudad

Clientele: A bride and groom wait behind me in the queue. Will they also be able to digitally remove her 5 month pregnant belly? I never found out.

Convo: Friendly photographer tells me not to smile. Instructed to wear their over-large suit. Staff are amused by my amusement at the situation.



As a Bolivian citizen, I am required to do my military service before I reach 21. I need to obtain a military credential for which I am asked to provide a hairless picture of myself looking stern. Will I need to shave my head? The woman in the Estado Mayor casually says this will not be necessary, as I can get my hair "digitally" removed.

¡Oye, Profes! Leave those kids alone

A study of the studios in Bolivia and England

Text: Andrew Cummings

As a student in the UK, I'm more than mildly aware that for the majority of eighteen- and nineteen-year-olds there, university is the next logical step after college. For many, university is about moving away from home, making new friends, extracurricular activities (for the more enthusiastic), realising their gap year didn't make them half as sure of themselves as they'd thought, and, of course, having the freedom to pump themselves full of all things bad and beautiful so they can forget how little work they did the day before. No prizes for guessing that in Bolivia, this is different. Having just begun a year abroad, I hardly expected to return to higher education so quickly; but this month I've been doing a little research to see just how different university in La Paz

but evidently these are few and far between. None of the people I talked to knew anyone living away from home. Living at home obviously has financial benefits, too, although that's not to say university is expensive, especially not for the public students (although costs vary depending on course – the UMSA website tells me that dentistry, for instance, costs six hundred bolivianos, whereas most humanities degrees cost about half of this figure). Nonetheless, in general it's the UMSA students who decide to take jobs while studying, and for reasons aplenty. Sharoll, who studied Business Administration at UMSA, suggests that, given the pressure to marry to avoid illegitimacy, some students already have families to support. "The public

has an UMSA student working in his office. UCB students can choose the number of hours they study per week – Ivan suggests an average of twenty four – meaning they can complete their undergraduate studies more quickly. Because of this, whereas a UCB student can complete his or her course in four to six years, a degree at UMSA can take anything from four to fourteen to thirty years (resist the temptation to imagine a Bolivian version of Van Wilder, please). The sheer effort it can take to complete a degree at UMSA means that in many circles its graduates are held in high esteem; nevertheless, it's the Universidad Católica that's thought to be the best, Ivan insists (though there's a chance he's slightly biased...). With more money, it has better facili-

“A degree at UMSA can take anything from four to fourteen to thirty years”

is from the world I only recently left behind. For the majority of students in Bolivia, university isn't as great a leap as it seemed to me in England. For starters, most students don't leave home. One of my interviewees, Claudia, studies Engineering at a well-known public university in La Paz, the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés (and if this doesn't roll off the tongue, try UMSA). "My family is very traditional," she tells me. "Normally, women don't leave home until they get married, so my parents didn't want me to leave." Ivan, a recent graduate from a private university, the Universidad Católica Boliviana (or UCB), asserts that "it's just not the done thing. People don't leave home. University is a lot like school; in some ways, there isn't really much of a change." Of course, if students come from far away – like from Santa Cruz or Cochabamba – they live in student accommodation;

university students tend to have a lower income," Ivan tells me, unsurprisingly. European students are no stranger to just how much all the little things – and at times the most important ones – can cost; from pencils and pads to sports gear and other unmentionables, there are plenty of things to drain any student loan. However, the time constraints imposed by working and studying simultaneously can have serious consequences: many students are forced to limit the number of modules they study per year in order to juggle university with a job – and there are very few part time offers – which extends the time taken to complete their degree. (I struggle to imagine just how many years I'd be at university if I added a few months for every essay or half-arsed translation I've handed in late). Again, this is generally a public university phenomenon, Ivan explains; he himself

ties and more space; indeed, one of the principal issues Claudia has with UMSA is that there isn't enough space to study or relax and the university is slightly run-down. "The main problem is a physical one," she states. Her department, engineering, is excellently equipped for the job, but teaching and facilities vary from subject to subject; both medicine and literature, Sharoll tells me, are very well taught, whereas the much less popular anthropology is aptly considered a weaker department. But how do all of these issues – accommodation, employment, space – affect the student community? Sharoll, Claudia and Ivan all agree that there is little interaction on a university level, given that clubs and societies are virtually non-existent, but much more on a departmental one. At UMSA, the student community is strung together by a board of student representatives called the Cen-

tro de los Estudiantes, though the knot is not well tied: neither Sharoll nor Claudia seems sure of exactly what the Centro does. The elected students are meant to look out for the student body as a whole, Sharoll explains; Claudia adds that at first they are eager to show their support, but their enthusiasm soon dwindles. Ivan doesn't even know if a Centro-type organisation exists in the UCB, which goes to show how significant it is (or would be). "No-one is interested in that sort of

thing," he says, "there's no motivation. It's a waste of time." Ivan's final comment makes me wonder: just how important is university today in Bolivia? He guessed that only around sixty per cent of people go to university in La Paz, and it's very likely this figure is much smaller outside of the capital; for many, particularly those who come from and will remain in an agricultural background, higher education is neither a logical nor helpful step towards the future.

The lack of a Centro type organisation at the UCB, and its inefficacy at the UMSA, point to a political apathy in students' lives that seems to reflect the current state of affairs in England. It is perhaps telling that, as Ivan adds, there is a growing tendency amongst private university students to put studying on the back burner and prioritise all the sex, coke, and cumbia that have become such common components of university life in England.



COMIC ENCOUNTERS

WE HIGHLIGHT LA PAZ'S COMIC ARTISTS

Text: Edwina Popescu and Anne Bailey

Extreme hill-climbing was apparently inevitable in the quest for fine Bolivian modern art. After the heart-splittingly steep trek up the calle Blesario Salinas, I could taste the blood at the back of my throat and was ready to collapse. Then I discovered the art galleries had already closed. I wanted to cry with despair. Had I punctured my lungs in vain? Not quite. Still open was the Centro de Comics – a comic book library funded by the Fundación Simon I. Patino offering free access to graphic novels from around the world. Having always loved Japanese manga, I was mesmerised by their extensive collection. Then, who should casually stroll in but one of La Paz's hottest comic book artists, Joaquin Cuevas. It turns out all the La Paz-based artists are preparing for Viñetas con Altura ("Vignettes at Altitude"), a comic book festival that has been held annually in Bolivia for the last six years. And I had not even known there was a comic book culture in South America, let alone Bolivia. Comics, or historietas, first appeared in Bolivia as political satire. Particularly influential was the Cascabel series, but its publication was swiftly banned after the military coup in 1971. It was only in the 90s, after a string of dictatorships had come to an end, that comics made a come-back. Influenced by global comic book trends, from Japanese Manga to America's Marvel action heroes, Bolivian historietas became more apolitical and began to explore themes of fantasy and escapism. One of the greatest debuts was that of Supercholita – a female action hero in traditional Bolivian dress and a magical cape that flies through the skies. However, Bolivian artists do not confine themselves to reworking established characters. In general they tend to be more experimental, and pride themselves on their exploration of comic book genre aesthetic.

The Bolivian comic book scene is still relatively small. The artists rely on self-publishing, meaning they can only afford to publish a certain number of copies of their works. Circulation and readership is thus limited, making the Viñetas con Altura festival doubly important. It is a way to reach out to aspiring artists, enthuse the younger generation and launch Bolivian comics onto the international scene. Over

a meal of salchipapas in the back-room of a printing shop, we interviewed some of the key figures in the world of contemporary Bolivian comics.





Susana Villegas

“ Only 10% of comic book artists in Argentina are women, but in Bolivia it's 30%. I don't really think there's that much difference between the works produced by men and women, but maybe there's some truth in the idea that women tend to focus more on the emotional. I'd say there's currently a search for a Bolivian identity not just in historieta but in all art forms. ”

“ I originally studied to become an architect, and it was through Vinetas con Altura that I really found out about the comic book genre. I find inspiration everywhere, just seeing what's going on in the streets of La Paz. I'd say the stories found in Bolivian comics are fairly similar. They tend to be concerned with current-day issues specific to Bolivia, and so it's possible to make generalisations. It's in the drawing styles that there's a complete ” range.



Alexandra Ramirez



Fabian Requena

“ “Bolivian comics have always been influenced by styles from other countries. We're on a constant search for a style unique to Bolivia, and to ourselves. Creating a comic is a one-man show; there's no collaboration between writer, artist and editor, which allows for artistic freedom. ”

“ Comics are the language of action and allow for a rapid transmission of ideas. I now focus more on straight illustrations as they encourage greater contemplation from the reader, giving them the time to form multiple interpretations. ”



Edwin Alvarez



Joaquin Cuevas

“ When I was young there weren't many comic books available, so I basically read whatever I could get my hands on. Thankfully Marvel and DC comics came out with a Spanish edition when I was fourteen. There certainly weren't any Bolivian comics. For me, comics are the most natural, intimate form of expression. I like there to be a message, whether it's personal or political; I don't like my comics to be hollow. ”

“ I learned the skills needed for comic drawing through studying graphic design at the Bellas Artes [an Art Academy in La Paz]. I see comics as a unique means of communication, and think it's important that aspiring artists acquire the technical skills first so they can accurately convey their ideas. ”



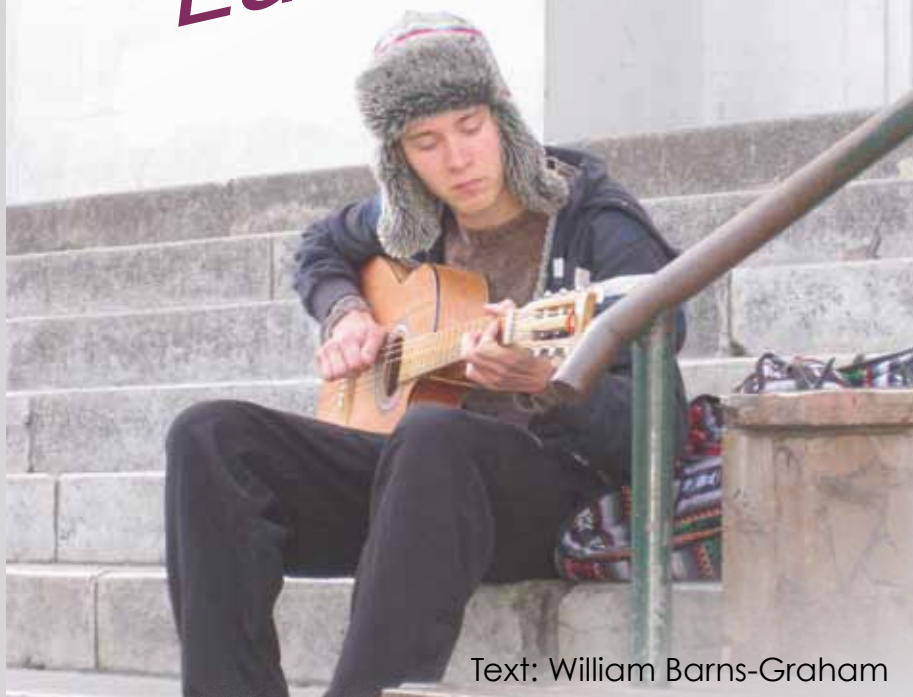
Oscar Zalles Sanjinez

“ Modern Bolivian comics are characterised by a search – one that's both aesthetic or gráfica, and personal; a search for identity. As a result, the style is very varied, both incorporating folkloric elements and relying on foreign influences ”



Roman Vinda

Busking in La Paz



Text: William Barns-Graham

Going into the heart of La Paz with the sun beaming down upon me and my guitar on my back, dressed down in order not to look too much like a tourist, I was filled with a great apprehension. In Europe or America buskers are commonplace but in La Paz you can count the amount of buskers that you see in a day on one hand. I had a brief conversation with one of these rare Bolivian buskers in the Mercado and he seemed optimistic enough. "It's not as big here as in Europe", he told me, "but you can get enough to eat from it". This optimism seemed odd for if such gains are attainable, then surely there would be more buskers. Thus, I took my guitar out from the case that I had recently bought from the witches' market and began with quite some intrigue. I was very curious about how the Bolivian public would receive a gringo busker and I was interested as to whether I would be able to buy lunch with my earnings after two hours of busking.

I took my place on the steps outside the Basilica Maria Auxiliadora, a tall white building which looked down on the city as though from the heavens, and began to play

amid the gentle hubbub of city life. I chose this place as the noise of the traffic did not overpower my guitar and there was a constant stream of pedestrians passing by. Also, I was hoping that the sight of a church may provoke some strange irrational generosity in my audience. At first it seemed as though I was playing outside a tourist convention such was the perturbation of the passersby. The looks of utter disdain that were steered towards me initially eroded my optimism and the first five or ten minutes seemed like an eternity. I was playing some kind of strange concoction of funky riffs in order to establish to the people that I might actually be quite good at the guitar. Initially this didn't seem to pay off but when the first coins were dropped into my little white pot, the optimism began once more to flow through my plucking fingers. The fact that the first contribution (five bolivianos!) was from a fairly nice looking young lady, who then wished me luck for the rest of the day, gave me a real urge of confidence.

More people started to contribute including some jolly old men and some mesmerised young children.

There was one young girl in particular who passed by on a number of occasions, each time stopping to watch. She, however, was too poor to give any money for she herself was carrying a bucket hoping for donations. I therefore decided to give her a couple of my bolivianos as a thank you for her attentive listening. After two hours I had amassed thirty one bolivianos and fifty centavos, despite my donation to the girl, and having packed my guitar I went to 'Toby's Chicken' where indeed I was able to buy myself a meal with plenty dineros to spare. The two hours I was there busking were therefore successful and I was feeling pretty happy with myself.

Yet, as I sat there eating my hard earned chicken nuggets, I was in a reflective mood. When you look at the poverty and desperation etched into the faces of some of the people here in La Paz, you have to wonder why there are not more street performers. Obviously a lot of these people do not have the skills to do this, but in a city of millions of people you'd think there'd be some sort of busking presence - this is especially the case when you consider the vibrancy and musicality of Bolivian people. However, that there is not the same culture for busking as there is in Europe is not too surprising. Seeing people on the streets and in the markets, one realises that there is far more of a salesmen culture here - the vast stretches of markets, the stall on every corner and the food trolleys taken around the spectators at the football screens, Bolivians will take to selling should they not possess a 'normal' job. While this salesmanship

"After two hours I had amassed thirty one bolivianos and fifty centavos"

does not stifle music (the country is a very musical one of course, as shown by the generosity of pedestrians towards my efforts), it may be the case that it does stifle busking. The streets are filled with vendors, leaving not too much room for the street performers that we are so used to seeing back home.

Thus, as I left Toby's with my guitar on my back and my change in my pot, I left satisfied that the market busker's optimism was more than vindicated and my stomach was indeed replete with this vindication.

"El Cementerio de los elefantes" is a cross between a 1990's B-Movie and a documentary by Louis Theroux. The budget comes across quite clearly with the quaint cinematography, Nollywood acting, and the rustic editing which could quite easily have been made using Window's Movie Maker 1.5 Trial Version. However, as I was sitting in la Sala 3 of the Cinemateca, it struck me that this film was never going to be about Avatar-style effects or performances worthy of a Cannes award, but instead about the social content and the dizzying truth behind one man and his quest for redemption through intoxication. His story captures the uncertain reality of the thousands of Bolivians who suffer from alcoholism. I wanted to see the truth behind the film, but wasn't aware that it is probably better not to kick the hornets' nest. According to urban legend, there are bars dotted about La Paz (four are still said to be in existence) where alcoholics who want to die come to drink themselves to death (much like elephants in the wild that, sensing their end is near, join a herd of other elephants on the brink of death). Bolivian author Victor Hugo Viscarra secularised this legend and is widely credited to have given this phenomenon its name. It is in one of these bars that the protagonist Juvenal, 33 years old and an alcoholic since the age of 14, comes to die. His alcoholism leads him eventually to betray his

blood-brother "El Tigre" during a drunken frenzy, offering him for ritual human sacrifice at a building's construction site (forgot to mention, word has it that this is common practice in the construction world). I thus set out to investigate whether there were any fragments of truth among the superstitions and hearsay, leading me to seek out construction sites in La Paz to see what I could find.

The act of making an offering to the Pachamama in Bolivia is not uncommon. Whenever foundations are laid an act of violence is committed against Mother Earth: the earth is dug into causing her to bleed. This creates the necessity to heal and appease her. According to a yatiri that I spoke with on the Calle Santa Cruz (near the Sagárnaga), "the earth needs to eat just like you need to eat a fricase when you are hungry". Small buildings will normally have a llama foetus or perhaps even a living llama buried underneath it along with a mesa containing small items and bits of grass called kora which is then burned. However, bigger buildings require bigger offerings.

Saturday, three o'clock in the afternoon and Jonnie Quisbert who is heading the construction of a new patio outside the Iglesia de Calacoto is initially taken aback by my questioning him about the myth. He says he knows it happens, but has never personally seen it. Every other site manager that I spoke to

repeated this quasi mantra. Another man, however, was a little more open. "Of course it still happens. A layer of concrete is poured, then the victim is laid down and covered in another layer of cement. It happens at night, always at night. The yatiri comes in and does his business. We ask no questions." My own questioning about the legality of it led to blank stares. After speaking to a few yatiris, one offered to perform such a sacrifice for 500Bs. Though I wanted to accept, deep down I felt that I shouldn't.

As for the bars, initially I had the idea of visiting one to see if the reality behind the film is what it's cracked up to be. But then, as I regained awareness that I was only a white, bespectacled, middle-class boy from England, it struck me that these places shouldn't be disturbed. Every country has its own hornets' nest and the sensible foreigner must respect that. However, if you do fancy a trip to Tembladerani, Munaypata or Rio Seco, we are told you may find a Cementerio de Elefantes there. Look out for metal jugs chained to the tables and drinks served by the bucket. Just make sure you don't get locked in the "Suite Presidencial" (as Juvenal did in the film), lest this be your last visit to a bar. Once the patron hands you the bucket and locks the door to your room, the show is over.

Text: Edward Bell

**Borracho Estaba
e Hice Una Película**

Some Oriental Flavours

Text: Edwina Popescu
and William Barns-Graham



Peering in at the candle-lit interior of Asian restaurant **Maphrao On**, you cannot help but be drawn in by the wooden furnishings and Asian objets d'intérêt creating a romantic but homely atmosphere. Ascending the narrow spiral staircase to the second floor reveals a bar-lounge, classically decorated in black and red. Here you can enjoy something from their extensive cocktail menu under the smiling gaze of a (wooden) pregnant chimpanzee. The large cushions are ideal for collapsing onto once you have eaten beyond the point of movement – which is easy to do, for the food here is phenomenal. Whether you opt for Chinese, Burmese, Indonesian, Thai or Indian, the rich aromas of ginger, lemongrass, coconut and spices transport you to exotic lands. The full sensation can only be described as the four seasons simultaneously flooding into your mouth. The food is beautifully presented, the service friendly and efficient. Prices are steeper at “Maphrao On”, but for what it offers, this is one restaurant not to be missed. Diners will emerge sporting the same expression as that of the smiling Buddha who serves as the restaurant's logo – one of deep, enlightened satisfaction.

Japanese restaurant **Wagamama** is tucked away behind notorious “Gringo bar” “Traffic”. Meaning “picky and demanding”, *Wagamama* has an extensive menu with the potential to satisfy even the most “wagamama” of customers. The food was undeniably good, but unfortunately the whole experience was hopelessly overshadowed by the endless wait for the food to arrive. Diners found their enthusiastic conversation waning as blood-sugar levels hit an all-time low. By the time the food arrived, they were more concerned with filling their stomachs than savouring the taste or admiring the delicate presentation. Only having ordered the bill and chewing on the complementary gummy sweets could diners concede that the food was “really good”. Most satisfied were those who had ordered a “Teishoku” (meaning “set meal”), with assorted pickles and miso soup delicately arranged on miniature chinaware. The food is fresh, and according to the menu the long wait for food is due to everything being prepared on order - no pre-rolled sushi waiting around in fridges. A trip is worth it, but aim for a time when there are few competing customers, energise on a chocolate bar beforehand, or make sure you have the kind of company entertaining enough to numb your escalating hunger.

Theolonious is possibly the coolest bar in La Paz. The underground, smoky feel adds to the live jazz which transports you to a place that is like a mixture of 1920s New York and contemporary Latin America. If you're in the mood to chill out for an evening of live entertainment, this is certainly the place for you.



Ttkos underground feel enforced by its mining theme and the dim lights that give it an ambience of pure chill-out, mean that this reggae bar is quite an enjoyable experience. A good variety of drinks (including some local remedies), some fantastic live music and possibly some of the coolest regulars you'll ever see, Ttkos is certainly a place to go to for late night chats or to dance to the reggae beats.

And a couple of hot bars



A Partnership with El Hormigon Armado

This month Bolivian Express begins a partnership with the lustrabotas of Hormigón Armado, a publication sponsored by la Fundación Arte y Culturas Bolivianas. The lustrabotas distribute and produce this newspaper, which comes out monthly. Through our partnership with these young people, we aim to engage them in telling their life stories through short written stories and accompanying photographs.

In the coming months, Bolivian Express journalists will meet regularly with small groups of youths to help document their memories, their challenges, and dreams for their futures, in the form of stories, letters and photos. In addition each author will read his or her story to the assembled group, thus creating a sense of shared solidarity.

Recently, the lustrabotas wrote a story about a favorite memory. The stories ranged in theme from a birthday party, to a family trip by bus to a neighboring city, to a reflection on reasons for giving up the street, with its use of drugs and petty thievery in favor of returning to school, in hopes of achieving longer-term, but more lasting returns.



In the next issue look forward to Deborah Bender's feature report on the workshops with the lustrabotas...

ADVERTISING

GLOSSARY

ABARCAS	Rustic sandal-like footwear made out of rubber tyres or leather.
CHOLO	Derogatory term for an indigenous urban dweller.
CONQUISTADORES	It's actually a word in English
CORREO CENTRAL	Central post office, just off the Prado
DEMANDA	Demand
DIECISEIS	Sixteen
GLORIA	Glory, duh
IGLESIA	Church
LA GUERRA DEL CHACO	The Chaco War
LA PAZ	The peace
LLAJWA	Hot Bolivian sauce made with locotos, tomatoes and quirquiña.
LOCOTO	Bolivian chilli pepper.
MESA	A blessed offering of confetti, wool and miniature idols. If you burn it the right Supply
OFERTA	
PACHAMAMA	Aymara name for Mother Earth
PASANKALLA	Puffed sweet corn from Copacabana.
PORTEÑO	Native inhabitant of Buenos Aires. Popularly renown in La Paz for their wit and European Ancestry. Infamous for their arrogance.
REBAJA	Discount
SAGARNAGA	Street by the Iglesia San Francisco. Witch Market central.
SECTOR	Section
SEÑORITA	Young lady
YAPA	A little-something given by a vendor as a token of appreciation for your custom. Worth asking for.

GET INVOLVED WITH THE BOLIVIAN EXPRESS

Bolivianos y ch'ukutas

Estamos buscando Bolivianos y pseudo-Bolivianos interesados en participar en este proyecto. Trabajarás al lado de nuestros periodistas realizando investigaciones periodísticas y estando involucrado en un constante intercambio lingüísticos y cultural.

El voluntario ideal es aquel entusiasta paseante con buen ojo estético, interesado en conocer gente de todos los rincones del planeta, y a quien le interesen la aventura, la cultura, el periodismo y la fotografía.

Responsabilidad y relativa familiaridad con el idioma inglés es esencial.

Para más informaciones envía un email a sharoll.f@bolivianexpress.org, o llama al 70503533

Gringuitos

We are looking for journalists and aspiring journalists from around the world to help produce our magazine in La Paz.

Join our programme and we'll provide you with tuition in Spanish, journalism, photography and magazine design. You'll also get a personalized press pass and accommodation in the Bolivian Express residence located in the heart of La Paz.

While working for us you will explore Bolivia, researching stories, taking photos, and writing articles in collaboration with locals from Bolivia. You will be involved in all aspects of production.

Our programmes range in length from one month to a full year. For more information visit www.bolivianexpress.org or contact info@bolivianexpress.org