

# Sampling samba in Rio

Samba is at the heart of the world famous Rio Carnival — an iconic dance and musical genre imported by African slaves and enriched with local rhythms and traditions of European settlers

“The essence of samba is rhythm,” says Gilberto Gil, the famous and well-regarded representative of Brazilian music. “There are obviously other elements, such as its melodic and thematic varieties, but rhythm and syncopation are the main elements of samba.”

Rio’s carnival is known the world over for its colourful costumes and dazzling displays of dance.

“If you don’t feel great or don’t want to be happy, this is no place for you,” said Junior Schall, a samba school director. “If, on an occasion like this, where you wear these wonderful costumes and embody a certain character, you are not happy, then you really don’t belong here.”

Carnival events may only run for a short time in the city, but it takes a year-round effort to bring them together. Members of the so-called ‘samba schools’ work flat out to ensure the celebrations live up to expectations. The schools are often linked to a particular neighbourhood, often shanty towns, or favelas.

Carnival designer Rosa Magalhães helped secure



A reveller from the Vila Isabel samba school participates in the annual Carnival parade in Rio de Janeiro

a win for the Vila Isabel samba school at this year’s event. “A samba school is a place where people meet and spend time together. Here there are no economic

or social obligations. It’s an open place. You don’t have to be rich or poor. It’s not a school as such, it’s like a big club,” she said.

Schall describes the

carnival procession floats as being “like the relationship between children and parents. Those who dance on the floats give them life: through their soul, their

joy, their passion. So our ‘children,’ as it were, will feel loved and cherished. Our children sing and dance all night, our children come alive!”

## EU acts to cap bankers’ bonuses

**In a world first, the European Union has agreed to cap extravagant bankers’ bonuses from 2014**

The provisional deal means that bonuses will be capped at one year’s salary, unless a majority of shareholders vote to increase it to two years. It would also apply to bankers employed by an EU-based institution living outside the union. The decision was made to address public anger at bonuses being paid out to bankers at the centre of the financial crisis and whose companies had to be bailed out from the public purse.

The deal is part of a wider set of legislation to avoid a repeat of the economic crash. The rules would ensure that banks create cash buffers to cover the risk of unpaid loans. Banking experts say the new rules on bonuses will have little effect, as the decision will merely drive up basic salaries.

This is a setback for the UK government which had hoped to defend the financial sector in London. It argued that the bankers in the City would be driven out of the EU to places where regulations are more lax.

## The tablet-controlled driverless car be created

**For years, researchers around the world have toiled to turn driverless cars from science-fiction to reality. Now a team of Oxford University scientists has created a robotic car, controlled by nothing more than an iPad.**



Acting just like a plane on auto-pilot, it is designed to take over from humans in slow-moving heavy traffic or on familiar routes, such as the school run. The iPad is on the dashboard and by tapping on a prompt, the driver can make the car’s onboard computer take the wheel.

Professor Paul Newman from Oxford University is a firm advocate of the technology. “I absolutely believe that having machines in control of cars can make them safer, otherwise there won’t be a product,” he maintains.

“To say that machines won’t be driving us in the future is much harder to believe and say we are condemned to a future of congestion time wasting and pollution and dangerous driving. It’s very hard to distract a computer”.

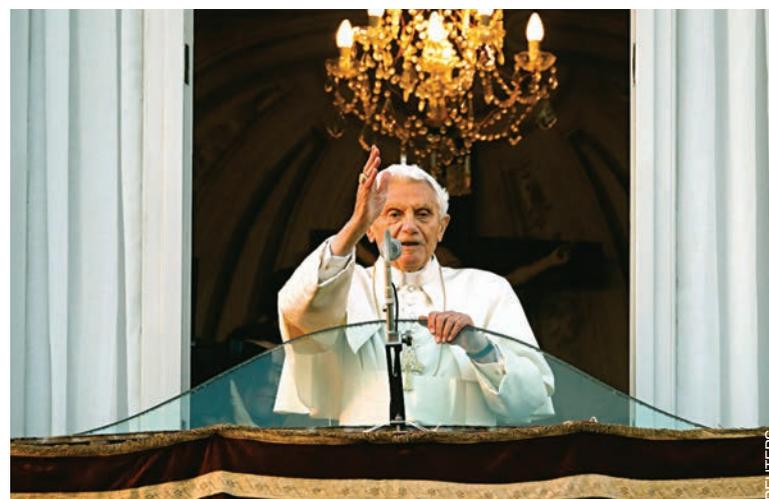
Scientists adapted a Nissan Leaf electric car, adding small cameras. A laser embedded in the front bumper scans the direction of travel 13 times a second to check for obstacles like other vehicles, pedestrians or cyclists. Any obstacle will activate the brakes. But insurance is still an issue.

Motoring expert Mike Rutherford predicts problems with getting the proper cover for such cars: “It’s difficult enough to get cars insured when you’re a driver with a decent record and you have no history of crashes or endorsements. Imagine contacting a comparison website and trying to explain that you don’t actually want to drive it, you just want to ride as a passenger in it and the car drives itself.”

Because insurers still need some convincing, RobotCar is yet to undergo road testing, but optimistic researchers still hope to see the technology in cars within 15 years.

## Pope Benedict XVI formally resigns to become ‘pilgrim’

Pope Benedict XVI has officially resigned, saying that he now ‘will simply be a pilgrim’ starting his last journey on earth



Pope Benedict XVI blesses the faithful for the last time

The pontiff, aged 85, was earlier flown by helicopter from the Vatican to his retreat at Castel Gandolfo, near Rome. The college of cardinals, headed by Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, is now in charge of the world’s 1.2 billion Roman Catholics until a new pope is elected. Benedict vowed ‘unconditional obedience and reverence’ to his successor. He stepped down after nearly eight years in office — the first pontiff to do so in 600 years. Benedict officially ceased to be the Pope at 20:00 local time (19:00 GMT).

The resignation was marked by the papal Swiss Guards stepping down from their posts at Castel Gandolfo to return to the Vatican. The protection of Benedict was taken over by Vatican police. In his retirement, Benedict will wear a simple white cassock rather than his papal clothes, and swap his famous red shoes — the colour is symbolic of the blood of the early Christian martyrs — for brown. His ‘Fisherman’s Ring’, the special signet ring which contains the Pope’s name and is impressed to validate certain of-

ficial documents, is expected to be destroyed along with the lead seal of the pontificate.

The German pontiff, who was born Joseph Ratzinger, will continue to be known as Benedict XVI, with the new title of ‘pope emeritus’. The long-time theologian is expected eventually to retire to a monastery on a hill inside Vatican City, with officials saying he will not be able to intervene publicly in the papacy of his successor, though he may offer advice.

The conclave of 115 cardinals is expected to meet at the Vatican on Monday morning to start planning the election of the next pope. The Vatican now enters the Sede Vacante — or period of transition between two pontificates.

Benedict’s successor must focus on reforming the Vatican bureaucracy which has often been overly hesitant to react to the various crises which have arisen during Benedict’s papacy, the BBC’s David Willey reports from the Vatican.

The Pope received the cardinals at the Vatican’s Clementine Hall, warmly embracing Cardinal Angelo Sodano, who passed on best wishes on behalf of those gathered.