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# ISLAND ESCAPE

An island off the coast of Brazil is the wildly exotic setting for a new interpretation of a traditional fisherman's cabin. Vernacular building forms and natural materials synthesize with the enticingly escapist setting

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PHOTOGRAPHIC AGENCY STYLOGRAPH

The escapist island of Angra dos Reis had a lucky escape itself when the highly articulate and environmentally considerate designer, Claudio Bernardes, was chosen to design a beach-house on a virgin, sea-lapped site. Unlike many Brazilian architects, Bernardes is a vociferous critic of the lax planning controls which have allowed huge tracts of his country's coastline to be desecrated by unsuitable developments. The only way forward, he believes, is to design buildings which fit their settings as comfortably as they do the needs of their occupants

— and, in this case, that meant looking back. Bernardes has returned to traditional Brazilian aesthetics and materials to build a beach-house which is at one with its surroundings, copes practically with the hot climate, yet is touched by contemporary chic.

The design resembles a fisherman's cabin, with the lower level open virtually on all sides, and two platforms reached by stair-ladders. The lower part is a vast living-room incorporating two seating-areas, a dining-area and kitchen-bar. Based on the local vernacular, the wooden construction of the house is

**1** With its thatched, overhanging roof, the cabin sympathetically integrates with the luxuriously foliated backdrop. Steps down to the sea have been hewn out of the rock. **2** The lower level of the house is a vast, open-sided living-area where the exposed structure provides a natural form of decoration. One of the two balconies housing the bedrooms is seen here above the main seating-area.



2





1 Looking towards the dining-area and, beyond, the colourful plantlife which influenced the choice of cushion fabric in the seating-area.  
2 Exotic fruits on the kitchen-bar sum up the relaxed, escapist lifestyle. 3 The bedrooms are semi-enclosed by louvred shutters.



*The house was designed to be wedded to the site and suit the climate - hence the wood and thatch*

totally exposed to view, creating a scheme of spectacular excitement. Part of the impact derives from the scale and primitiveness of a structure which is little more than massive poles lashed together with twine to support two balconies (which house the bedrooms) and the roof. Vivid blue is applied to the few expanses of solid wall and to one of the poles. The colour was chosen because, at certain times of the day, it seems to fuse with the sea. Similarly, the upholstery and cushion fabric was chosen because the architect felt it reflected the exotic colours of the island's plantlife. For the truly languorous escapist, there are simple, white hammocks slung between the pillars.

The kitchen-bar is at one end of the open plan, and here is the nearest concession to a conventional space. An L-shaped half-wall is a practical work-top-come-counter and conceals necessary drinks and cooking accoutrements. Above the kitchen is one of the two sleeping-balconies. One balcony is for the owners, the other for guests, and both can be screened internally and externally by louvred shutters. (The children have their own sleeping-quarters in an old fisherman's hut which already existed on the site.)

The bedrooms are set back from the overhanging, thatched roof so, from the exterior, the cabin integrates all the better with its setting of lush foilage and rocky beach. Claudio Bernardes has designed the ultimate escape, a refuge where, thankfully, nature still seems to have the upper hand □



4 The central seating-area is in the void between the two balconies. The view from one balcony to another, 5, gives a closer sight of the cabin's roof structure above the void. 6 The heavy, overhanging, thatched roof is a practical means of keeping the bedrooms cool.

