

## ABSTRACT

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Theatre in the United States for the last twenty years has been evolving in scope by way of a cultural phenomenon known as Burning Man. In 2006, this festival attracted over forty thousand participants to the Black Rock Desert in Northwestern Nevada to a flat dusty Playa surrounded by mountain ranges. While the natural environment there is hostile, the creative atmosphere is welcoming and invites a broad scope of performative behaviors and genres to be exhibited there, the entire week the festival takes place. Make-shift stages and theme camps, as well as large-scale interactive art pieces play host to participants who dress up in fanciful costumes to perform in all manner of imagining.

This dissertation maps out the cultural terrain of Burning Man in order to explain how performing there is form of identity-making and cultural commodity. As one of a handful of North American festivals which expressly discourage commercialism and commodification, theatricality takes the place of significance for entertainment and communication. Performance forms of all kinds historically are

represented at Burning Man and this dissertation will investigate and theorize how a new performance culture has emerged from the festival itself and by its presence as a theatrical event, has exposed and expanded performance and theatre forms.

This dissertation offers a critical framework through which to consider performance and performers within the Burning Man community as applied to Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of *Carnival* and the Schema for Theatrical Eventness proposed by the International Federation for Theatre Research Theatrical Events Working Group. The theories of Victor Turner, Baz Kershaw, and Michel Foucault are also presented in this dissertation to consider how performance occurs at Burning Man. Whether informal and spontaneous, interactive performing or rehearsed, staged formal performance, Burning Man provides an exciting lens through which to consider how new performance genres are emerging in a large-scale outdoor festival setting at the beginning of the twenty-first century in North America.

# THE PERFORMANCE CULTURE OF BURNING MAN

By

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
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## Preface

I first heard about Burning Man in 1997 when I was living in New York City and going to New York University. An artist I knew, Steel Neal, invited me to his studio and showed me what he has been working on recently. It was a giant metal man, on his knees, screaming up at the sky. It was called the *Future Primitive* and he was taking to the desert. I had never seen anything like it before in terms of scale or workmanship. It was to be my introduction to Burning Man. Two years later, I too was in the Nevada desert.

Nothing in my life has opened me up to creative possibilities quite like Burning Man. It is another realm made by people responding to the present state of our world and cultures. Every year I have been to the desert since, I am overcome with emotion for how important this thoughtful, imaginary, temporary city is to me. Burning Man has not made me who I am but it has helped me to become who I have always known I am. Perhaps that is why it is so often referred to as a utopian vision for today. We who continue to attend Burning Man year after year, go into the desert to get away and there to become whoever we want to be and are. *Here there are no spectators, everyone participates...*

The freedom to be yourself or anything you want to be, this is why we as people play and why we do theatre -to be inspired, transform and grow as human beings. To step outside of our constructed social selves and our manufactured urban environments is a challenge -and a privilege. For those, like me, who crave that *other* place to play in with each other, it is what we have been waiting to get back to since childhood. Our costumes, toys, stories, games, parades, parties, fashion shows,

singing and dancing. It is both very old and totally new. It is the *future primitive*. It is a stage upon which some belong, upon which I know I belong. Burning Man to me makes everything *imagined* seem possible.

## Foreword

“The performance culture of Burning Man is so wide-spread and dynamic. The spectrum is huge, just like the inhabitants of Black Rock City. Fire dancers and public self mutilators and bicycle punksters and hippy sitar junkies and fairy roller derby dance queens. They may all be from completely different cultures, and have completely different opinions and beliefs. But they all make up the immensely diverse culture of Burning Man. I don't think I would put them all in the same camp for a week, but I would hate to see what the playa was like without their presence and contributions. All performers tend to understand the challenges other performers are going through. We understand that if something goes wrong, it is to be laughed off. We can't always understand each other's art, but we do understand what it takes to get out there and what it means to express it.”

-Patrick Kaliski, Longtime Burning Man Performer  
Thursday, March 15, 2007 via Email to the author

## Dedication

To my mother, Dr. Beatrice B. Clupper, to my father, Darwin D. Clupper Jr., Esq., and to my brother, Darwin D. Clupper III, Esq. To Ari Schnitzer, thank you for all you have done to support and help me. Thank you especially for your edits and assistance throughout this dissertation process. To my friends, Melissa McMaster, Jessica Hobbs, Stacy Dumas, Bethany Wells, Nadja Masura & Peter Rogers, and my extended family – thank you.

## Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the presence in the world of the phenomenon that is Burning Man. The people who I have come to know and love that are members of this community have taught me how important it is to be yourself and never let go of your dreams despite your status as an adult. Mr. Larry Harvey, Maid Marian, Harley DuBois, Crimson Rose and Lady Bee have all been important people for me to work with on this project and inspirational in their accomplishments as *doers*. Andie “Actiongrl” Grace and Jessica “Nurse” Bobier have been great friends in their assisting me in my work. To all of the members of the Burning Man community in San Francisco, especially Jessica “Jess Bunny” Hobbs, an amazing artist and friend, and Brandi “Bunny” and Gina “Bunny” – my very first friends at Burning Man. To the San Luis Obispo Burners, especially Dr. D. Gregg Doyle – who took me to my first Burning Man – and all of the folks in Black Rock University. Go Fighting Dust Flamingos!

At the University of Maryland at College Park, Department of Theatre and Performance Studies, there have been many people who have helped my growth as a graduate student and in particular, my work on this project, especially my faculty advisor Dr. Franklin J. Hildy, and all of my Dissertation Committee. Dr. Susan C. Haedicke, who served as my advisor for three years, has provided me with much support and encouragement and for that I am very grateful. To each of the students and colleagues I worked with in classes whose good advice pushed my thinking. And to the Administrative Staff in my department who have been very patient with and

helpful to me as long as I have been a student here: Ms. Sandra Jackson and Ms. Rita Phelps.

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## Introduction: Burning Man Culture, Its Politics and the *Carnavalesque*



**Image 1: *Burning Man 2000, Aerial 1*.** This image was taken at Burning Man in 2000 by the photographer over the area of desert where the event takes place. As an annual event that attracts thousands of participants every year, the Burning Man Project operates at small airport for private aircraft to take off and land from. For several years, parachuting enthusiasts have flown over and floated down into the event space. This image offers a wonderful perspective for understanding how the event-space is laid out on the playa and the vastness of the environment Burning Man takes place in. Image reproduced with permission. Photo by Gabe Kirchheimer.

What Burning Man calls for, above all, is openness to transformation and wonder. My first visit to the festival permanently changed my idea of art, as well as expanding my belief in human possibility. On the Playa, art serves as an instrument for meshing together the community, offering them a medium for discovery, for playing and praying, as well as a lens for seeing themselves. It extends the notion of conceptual and performance art to a wider field of human activity, recalling the surrealist domain that there should, truly, be no distinction between art and life.

-Daniel Pinchbeck, *Burning Man: Art in the Desert*<sup>1</sup>

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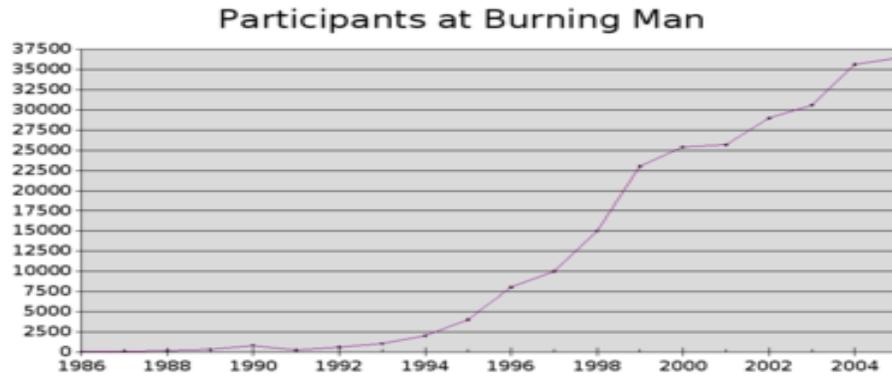
<sup>1</sup> Daniel Pinchbeck in the Introduction to Leo Nash's *Burning Man: Art in the Desert*. New York: Abrams, 2007. Page 8.

Burning Man is a phenomenon that has grown from a small annual beach gathering into a large-scale countercultural event whose community ethos celebrates art and performance in just twenty years.<sup>2</sup> Within the United States, there are many festivals both regional and national, however, few contemporary gatherings exist that equal Burning Man in scale or social impact. Every year, thousands of participants journey to Burning Man in the Black Rock Desert in Northwestern Nevada to escape from reality, to gather and mingle in the hot, dusty environment, to perform and to play with interactive art they help to create. Interactivity at the annual event also encourages year-round community-making based on global social networks of participants that develop through interpersonal connections face-to-face or on-line.<sup>3</sup> Called 'regional communities,' they have come together in the spirit of Burning Man: These are the cultural performers and deeply invested participants known as 'Burners' whose meaning will be explored in this dissertation.

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<sup>2</sup> See Burning Man Project ([www.burningman.com](http://www.burningman.com)) website, preserved in CD format as Appendix D to this study. This is the Burning Man Project's main vehicle for communicating with participants, the general public and the media. The site includes accounts of the event's history, limited statistical reports (emergency medical, major/minor reported injuries, violence and crime, arrest and accident) and funding information, as well as interviews with organizers, staff profiles and message boards covering a variety of topics. As the Project does little to advertise the event, this website has become the source for authoritative information about the event published by the Burning Man Project.

<sup>3</sup> Interactivity is a term that the Burning Man Project began using in 2002 when founder Larry Harvey gave the lecture "Viva La Xmas," (speech delivered on April 25, 2002 at Cooper Union in New York City), in which he stated that interactivity was central to the ethos Burning Man. Art funded by the Project needs to adhere to a guideline that the work be interactive in order to receive 'axis placement' in the event space. Axis placement is the space along the two major dividing streets intersecting the open space the event surrounds. Likewise, participant established theme camps with placement on the Esplanade (the main circular city promenade) had also to be interactive, i.e. provide interactive activities or spaces for all participants to gather at, use and engage. These incentives encourage many to adhere to the rule of interactivity, but interactivity is also one of Burning Man's major tenets.



**Graph 1: *Participants at Burning Man*.** This table illustrates the significant and ongoing growth the event has experienced since it began.<sup>4</sup>

Participants become Burners by choice and action; they are a self-selecting group rather than a formal one. Burners are social performers whose activities and behaviors demonstrate the ethos of the Burning Man community. They are participants who choose the title Burner and who commit their time and energy to connecting with other Burners and keeping alive the culture of the event. Burners are known for their active performance and participation within the culture of Burning Man, but you cannot tell one by looking at them. The process by which one becomes a Burner will be explored thoroughly in Chapter Three of this dissertation.

My focus on Burning Man is as a potentially transformative personal experience. Its phenomenological value is through the emergence of what may be considered the performance culture that has grown out of Burning Man.<sup>5</sup> My concept of a ‘performance culture’ comes from two areas of scholarship. Rush Rehm’s book

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<sup>4</sup> This graph was created for the Burning Man entry on the Wikipedia English website. Located at [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/thumb/e/e9/Participants\\_at\\_Burning\\_Man\\_1986-](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/thumb/e/e9/Participants_at_Burning_Man_1986-) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Performance’ and ‘culture’ are both important terms which I have sought to define through the disciplines of both Performance Studies and Cultural Studies.

*Greek Tragic Theatre* discusses Athenian society during the Fifth Century B.C.E. as a ‘performance culture’ where theatricality was a part of everyday life – singing, dancing, costumes, political debate, as well as debauchery, drinking and cross-dressing within a festival setting.<sup>6</sup> This description has led me to think about the ways in which Burning Man is similarly a culture that supports performativity in a variety of ways. Further, in the book, *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, Performance Studies scholar Richard Schechner is quoted as saying, “...postmodernism gives rise to the ‘culture of choice’ whereby people can voluntarily adopt a culture and participate in things that are specific to that culture thereby expressing a belonging to it while not having been born into it.”<sup>7</sup> This is where my thinking takes over, as Burning Man is a culture that is supported by the organizers who run the event and provide a space for cultural creativity. But it is also a culture that in my estimation has been created by the participants who choose it and perform as social beings within it. To reiterate Richard Schechner, this is a “culture of choice – of learning and voluntarily adopting a culture.”<sup>8</sup>

This dissertation will engage the topic of the cultural performativity<sup>9</sup> of Burners, or participants who embrace Burning Man’s ethos, by studying how the

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<sup>6</sup> Rush Rehm. *Greek Tragic Theatre*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

<sup>7</sup> “Interculturalism and the Culture of Choice: Richard Schechner interviewed by Patrice Pavis” in the book *The Intercultural Performance Reader*. Edited by Patrice Pavis. New York: Routledge, 1996, 41, 49.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 41.

<sup>9</sup> Theoretical definitions for performativity equate self-representation with performance and blur the qualities of performing onstage with practices in ordinary life. As a concept, performativity has been applied to life beyond the stage and includes the idea that performance is self-legitimizing. Performativity as a topic, bridges theory and practice and encompasses gesture and speech acts (J.L. Austin. *How to Do Things With Words*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962); performative

culture of Burning Man has developed into a countercultural heterotopia<sup>10</sup> that rejects commercial American culture<sup>11</sup> and encourages radical self-expression between participants as communal theatre and spontaneous interactive performance.

Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of *Carnival*, one that "is a revolution itself" offers an exciting lens through which to consider Burning Man.<sup>12</sup> A considerable achievement of Bakhtin's work in the book, *Rabelais and His World* was to explain the Medieval folk culture of Francois Rabelais including the concepts of the carnivalesque and the grotesque body. Bakhtin's *Carnival* is both a description of a historical phenomenon of great public carnivals during the Medieval period and through the carnivalesque, a literary mode that took over the spirit of *Carnival* when the tradition dwindled during the following period of the

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language and writing (Peggy Phelan, *Mourning Sex*. New York: Routledge, 1997); power and self legitimization (Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); and the social construction of culture and of reality (Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Post-Contemporary Interventions. Durham: Duke University Press, 1981).

<sup>10</sup> Michel Foucault, who I discuss later as a theorist whose work I will be using to aid in my analysis of this topic, wrote about heterotopias which he defined as *other* places people in a postindustrial world escape to. *Aesthetics, Methods and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume II*. Translated by Paul Rainbow and Robert Hurley. Edited by James Faubion. New York: The New Press, 1998. Michel Foucault also wrote about heterotopias in the essay, "Of Other Spaces." *Diacritics* 16 (Spring 1986), 22-27. Twice before Burning Man scholars have likened the festival to a heterotopia. Allegra Fortunati in her essay, "Utopia, Social Sculpture, and Burning Man (page 159)," and Robert V. Kozinets and John F. Sherry Jr.'s essay, "Welcome to the Black Rock Café (page 102-3)." Both are published in the book, *Afterburn: Reflections on Burning Man*. Edited by Lee Gilmore and Mark Van Proyen. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005.

<sup>11</sup> Larry Harvey, one of the three founders of Burning Man, has stated, "The great difference between us and the consumer marketplace... is that we have inverted the essential nature of the capitalist system. Because at the heart and center of [Burning Man] you will not find a commodity to be consumed. You will encounter a gift, and, in so doing, you yourself, your unique spirit will itself become a gift and be consumed like fire in its passage in the sky." This quote was taken from "Viva La Xmas" a speech delivered by Larry Harvey on April 25, 2002 at Cooper Union in New York City. Text located on-line at <http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/lectures/viva.html> and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>12</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin. *Rabelais and His World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984. Page xviii.

Renaissance. *Carnival* for Bakhtin was the liberating time when the political and social authority of the church and state were overturned and the common people were free to transgress during the short period of time when they were not under the control of dominant social powers.

Mikhail Bakhtin visualized the Medieval social system as both historically misunderstood and politically utopian. During *Carnival* Bakhtin points out that revelers were not simply liberated from political and social oppression but also the rules they had been formally bound by were fair game for their mockery. That vision has allowed Classic Renaissance, Performance Studies theorists and feminist studies scholars to consider more carefully the possibilities of *Carnival* as a theoretical place where the spirit of liberation for the marginalized thrives. According to Tracy Davis in the text *Theatricality*, the carnivalesque resembles a world where women rule and politics of normative hierarchical culture is turned on its head.<sup>13</sup> Theorist David Wiles similarly points out that nature of *Carnival* is inherently political because it is subversive and communicates our desire for political change.<sup>14</sup> Today the concept of *Carnival* can be used by feminist and performance studies scholars concerned with the liberation of the human spirit and the contemporary spaces for their doing so.

As the politics of *Carnival* continue to be considered through a contemporary lens, its possible applications towards aspects of current cultural phenomenon seems unavoidable. “Scholars continually find themselves

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<sup>13</sup> Tracy C. Davis and Tom Postlewait. *Theatricality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Page 10.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 113.

rehearsing and revising various kinds of intellectual histories, recounting trajectories from Bakhtin...”.<sup>15</sup> Burning Man invites comparisons to *Carnival* because of the nature of the culture it creates within the event itself, one that reduces individual participants to a mass of bodies performing in reaction to one another. The immersion experience of Burning Man places individuals directly in the realm of the bodily and the grotesque. Burners consume and feast together, dance and have sex, overindulge and get sick, and share small commodes where they defecate one after the other. The grotesque humor and openness about public sex and binge drinking, gross bodily functions and general physical filth works as a coping mechanism in a festival environment where people sleep on the ground and eat with their hands. There is no room for polite behaviors at Burning Man and in fact, acknowledgement of the truth of one’s uncomfortability lends itself to an environment where gentility is equated with the *other* world: the world Burners have succeeded in escaping from, what many choose to call the *default* world.

Burning Man is a social phenomenon that invites political debate because like *Carnival*, Burning Man presents an alternative lifestyle inspired by an event which allows for temporary escape from the dominant culture. Bakhtin suggests that through the experience of *Carnival* one is exposed to an understanding of liberated human consciousness. Burning Man in the spirit of *Carnival* encourages the liberation of human consciousness through the performed identities of its participants and their reconception of social norms within the Burner culture, one that values radical self-expression. National identity and personal identity are re-

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<sup>15</sup> Shannon Jackson. *Professing Performativity: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Page 12.

imagined in the absence of mediatized culture in favor of a publicly theatrical realm in a city in the desert. According to Tracy Davis and Tom Postlewait, the recent proliferation of theoretical models that privilege performance include those tied to the ideas set forth by Bakhtin in terms of festival, everyday life and

*Carnival:*

In this spirit, an expansive idea of theatricality has been enlarged and applied to politics, whereby political behavior and its defining rhetoric are seen as theatrical (especially in the age of media and advertising). In addition, the ideas of national identity and imagined history are constructed as modes of performed identity. The public realm is performative realm.<sup>16</sup>

Bakhtin's concept of *Carnival* and Burning Man share this realm of the political, where a participant's identity is bound-up in issues of history and culture.

Burners, like revelers of Bakhtin's *Carnival*, break away from old thinking re-imagined in a new culture where outside politics may be criticized and new behaviors performed.

Likewise, Burning Man and *Carnival* as historical phenomena employ theoretically issues of radical political change and each hold to a material principle of conceptual death and renewal as a positive and powerful force driven by the *people*. The ten aspects of *Carnival* which may be applied to Burning Man include: 1) Laughter; 2) Collectivity; 3) Feasting; 4) Costume and Masking; 5) Sensuality; 6) Unity of Time; 7) Death and Renewal; 8) The Grotesque Body; 9) Licensed Transgression; 10) Inversion of Social Order. Each of these ten categories will be discussed throughout this dissertation and the overall concept of

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<sup>16</sup> *Theatricality*. Edited by Tracy Davis and Tom Postlewait. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Page 29.

*Carnival* shall hereafter be the critical framework through which we may consider the performance culture of Burning Man.

In the performance culture that has developed out of the event, interactivity, immediacy and communal effort guide participants who play with each other and with art in a week-long immersion experience where money is all but banned. While participants pay between \$185-350 for entrance tickets, very little can actually be purchased at the event and attendees must bring in all they will need to survive throughout the week.<sup>17</sup> Burning Man organizers instead try to encourage a gift economy where what is valued is individualism and what people give of themselves. With this philosophy Burning Man offers a potentially transformative experience that gives participants the opportunity to break free of their dependence on the capitalistic economic system and their normal social roles, and to interact with others in a uniquely performative way. The reputation of the event as a wild, week-long party in the desert ignores the fact that Burning Man is a cultural phenomenon, and an opportunity through which to consider counterculture critically in this historical moment in the United States.

Burning Man's complex reputation first announces a cultural community that values pleasure-seeking, self-indulgent behaviors and encourages looseness and boundary-breaking self-performance. Secondly, it represents the debate between Burners and those who oppose the event, for while participants revel in their 'festival'

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<sup>17</sup> Each year the event has been held in the Black Rock Desert in Nevada, there has been a fee to attend for participants. As the event has grown in size and scale, the amount for a ticket has risen and eventually ticket tiers were established that in 2006 ranged from \$185 (US) up to \$350 (US). The issue of the financial cost for participants to attend Burning Man will be thoroughly explored in the next chapter.

space, they downplay the hedonism that goes on there.<sup>18</sup> Illegal activities such as drug usage, public nudity, public sex, and massive alcohol consumption are all aspects of this theatrical space that are indulged, hidden, ignored and celebrated at the event. Importantly, this *party* allows for its own kind of performing that reflects the place of many in American society.

However, because of the many ways participants are able to their own identities as cultural performers separate from post-industrial society, Burning Man has become a festival setting where art and interactivity, active engagement and ostentation are celebrated. Similar to the celebrations that have happened historically at Mardi Gras in New Orleans, Louisiana, Burning Man as a cultural phenomenon inspires pilgrimage to the event-space and participation on a highly performative level.<sup>19</sup> In essence, over twenty years, Burning Man has evolved from a single event to a larger global community connected through the Internet and a populist social movement, which thrives on the energy and interconnectedness of those who attend.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Local debates in Northwestern Nevada have taken place since Burning Man relocated to the Black Rock Desert from San Francisco. The Federal government, in particular, the Bureau of Land Management has also attacked the Burning Man Project for their presence on Federal land and which leases the land to the Project. Finally, opponents of Burning Man have over the years, voiced their anti-Burning Man opinions on-line in chat rooms and on-line bulletin boards. More information on the debate between local and Federal authorities can be found at published at the Burning Man website [http://www.burningman.com/news/blm\\_news\\_06.html](http://www.burningman.com/news/blm_news_06.html) and in Appendix D to this dissertation. Websites like: "Burning Man is Dead!" are at [www.cardhouse.com/drcliff/wreck/dead/bmisdead.htm](http://www.cardhouse.com/drcliff/wreck/dead/bmisdead.htm), as well as "Stop Burning Man" at [www.stopburningman.org](http://www.stopburningman.org) –and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>19</sup> Esther Newton's book *Cherry Grove Fire Island* and Henri Schindler's text *Mardi Gras New Orleans* offers some background on the long history that has given rise to communities based on carnival festivities in the United States. Esther Newton *Cherry Grove Fire Island: Sixty Years in America's First Gay and Lesbian Town*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993. Henri Schindler. *Mardi Gras New Orleans*. New York: Flammarion, 1997. This text has been a good resource as the author traces the history of carnival celebration, its origins in various ancient cultures and an analysis of the rise and fall in popularity of Mardi Gras in North America. Much of the backlash against Mardi Gras he discusses resembles the public outcry against Burning Man as a place for hedonism, hippies, public sex, nudity and drugs.

Burning Man first captured my attention because of its cultural cachet. In San Francisco, the general population is very aware of it and those who attend have formed a strong and active community. These San Francisco participants make art in their homes and alternately in large warehouse spaces as a part of creative collectives, and create elaborate costumes which they exhibit at theme parties where they preview performances.<sup>21</sup> In this sense, all year round, Burning Man inspires the participation of its participants. The event structure encourages performativity with the tenet *No Spectators*. This creed means performance is welcome on any level including informal performing among participants. This fact means, in my estimation, that Burning Man is not merely an event – it is one crucial way in which Burning Man is a performance culture.

This dissertation will explore how the progression from attendee and spectator to participant and performer occurs within the Burning Man performance culture. I will be examining the event then as a place for constructing social identity through

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<sup>20</sup> Larry Harvey , “The Media and Immediacy: An Interview with Larry Harvey,” By Darryl Van Rhey. On-line at [http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/1998/98n\\_letter\\_win\\_3.html](http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/1998/98n_letter_win_3.html) and also in Appendix D to this dissertation. Darryl Van Rhey is a pseudonym used by Larry Harvey in his writing (and an anagram of his name), so in this essay/ interview he was essentially interviewing himself. The quote came in response to the question asked by ‘Van Rhey’ to ‘Harvey’ –“You’re not worried then about becoming too popular?” Asking the question was addressing what has continued to be a major debate for Burning Man as an event –that it is becoming too big to support the integrity of the original vision of the event. His response to the question was: “Listen, we’re a populist movement. We need to communicate with people. How do you suppose half the people who come to the festival hear about it? We do very little paid advertising. Pieces in the press or shows on TV are merely magnified word-of-mouth. Who is saying these messages are a substitute for immediate experience? It used to be feared that we’d become too big. Again, you see, there’s this tendency to equate anything on a large scale with mass society, but I think we’ve laid that ghost to rest. Last year, in 1997, we had our largest attendance and our greatest publicity, but the event was more participatory and interactive than ever before. Obviously, we’re communicating with people. Everyone complains about the media, but no one does anything about it. Why look at this so passively? We should have more faith in ourselves. It’s time to believe that we can change the world.”

<sup>21</sup> For more information on the San Francisco Regional Burning Man community on-line see [http://regionals.burningman.com/us\\_ca\\_sf.html](http://regionals.burningman.com/us_ca_sf.html) and Appendix D to this dissertation for announcements of parties, events and planning meetings.

performativity. I will address the questions: How is performance an essential aspect of Burning Man culture? How do participants perform themselves at burning Man? What can the event as a countercultural phenomenon tell us about how participants have sought out Burning Man as an alternative space to create a performative cultural identity? These are the primary research questions that introduce my larger effort to analyze the meanings of the performance culture of Burning Man, and to know how the participant experience helps create new cultural performers in the United States through a countercultural performative experience.

The individual and the collective ‘performing’ that happens at Burning Man are both part of a larger process of direct signification that communicates the self as autobiographic and fantastic, real and made up. Interaction necessarily involves a kind of social performativity that stems from the culture that attempts to satisfy participants’ appetites for creative excitement or radical self-expression. Participants, once they are deeply invested in Burning Man, come to perform in reference to themselves for the entertainment of and with others. Mutual construction of the new social self takes place in the in/formal performing at Burning Man. And though there are ‘real life’ adventures occurring at the event, the event itself is *staged*, for just as the participants there *signify*, so too does the ‘festival’ space. The dedicated participant or ‘Burner’ is therefore a unique kind of social performer – a citizen-artist of a city of spontaneous interactive theatre. This city, participant-made and inhabited, exists in opposition to mainstream society, denounces commodification as a standard for behavior, and embraces theatrical individualism.

The exploration at the heart of this dissertation is my own tracing of how the performance culture of Burning Man has evolved and my theory that it encourages participants as social performers to participate in a culture that is annually re-created. My argument is that the communal construction of the ‘festival’ space, the freedom given to people who go and live there, and the experience of attending can be transformative by allowing for the re-examination of their normal social role and the society in which they usually inhabit. My project is to examine critically the meaning of performativity within the Burning Man culture for participants, while considering the disconnect between social acting and being, and the problematic circumstances created by the doctrine of decommodification at the event.

Phenomenologically, this topic is important because it is my belief that after twenty years Burning Man has helped to define counterculture in the United States. It is one of the primary large-scale outdoor gatherings for spontaneous theatricality worldwide and through its tenet of decommodification at the event, draws attention to dissatisfaction with capitalistic cultural norms.<sup>22</sup> As performance theorist Baz Kershaw states:

The development of mass pleasure beyond theatre, first in the dream worlds of cinema and television, and later in theme parks, heritage centers, shopping malls, and so on, signals the emergence of the society of spectacle. The near ubiquitous mass media and then the new pleasure zones of consumption theatricalize experience by turning the everyday into an immersive spectacle of increasing over-production, in

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<sup>22</sup> The Burning Man Project states: “In order to preserve the spirit of gifting, our community seeks to create social environments that are unmediated by commercial sponsorships, transactions, or advertising. We stand ready to protect our culture from such exploitation. We resist the substitution of consumption for participatory experience.” Text published at the Burning Man website on-line at [http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/about\\_burningman/principles.html](http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/about_burningman/principles.html) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

which people become spectators of themselves as participants in an emergent cultural (dis)order.<sup>23</sup>

Burning Man is the response to this vision of culture. It emphasizes connectivity amongst participants and encourages a gift economy where self-expression is the cultural commodity. This dissertation analyzes that concept and phenomenon. How did the performance culture of Burning Man come to be? This dissertation will examine the heightened theatrical space Burning Man provides for communal performance and the performance types evident in its cultural behaviors. I will attempt to explain how Burning Man and its cultural community attract participants; those dedicated new social performers on the North American cultural landscape.



**Image 2: *Ken Tea Ceremony*.** This image was taken at Burning Man in 2003 of performance artist Ken Hamazaki's annual tea ceremony. In the background the Man stands. Image reproduced with permission. Photo by Stewart Harvey.

### **Method and Methodology**

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<sup>23</sup> Baz Kershaw. "Curiosity or Contempt: On Spectacle, the Human, and Activism." *Theatre Journal*; Dec. 2003. ; 55, 4, 604.

My methodology for this project draws upon several interdisciplinary sources; primarily Performance Studies scholarship that considers the following: performance and everyday life; anthropological approaches to performance and culture; contemporary and historical examples of carnival and festival; models for communities of self-expression and sexual freedom; and cultural spaces for spontaneous artistic expression and theatricality. Performance Studies, as a field that embraces interdisciplinary approaches to considering performance and performativity culturally, helps guide my understanding of the experiences of individuals and their meanings in this cultural analysis. The methodological approach I am taking in this dissertation will therefore be ethnographic and theoretical. By focusing first on the history and background of the event, I am setting the stage for how its performance culture evolved. In later analysis, I will bring in Performance theorists whose work addresses issues of role playing and identity, exhibitionism, festivals and theatrical events, to inform my understanding of performance genres present there.

This dissertation is important because it considers these and all aspects of the Burning Man performance culture I have studied in its most visible manifestations. This topic is important because my theories focus on the elements of play and performance informally in this culture, as well as the potential for transformation as social performers taking place at the event. Others have written about participant experience. They have also written about the culture there. What my contribution offers is an analysis of the in/formal performing occurring at Burning Man that creates cultural identity and examines why it is meaningful.

Critically, I will be using theories of community and identity-making, constructs on cultural experiments as antithetical to mainstream society, as well as more useful elements of postmodern performance theory to expand on the processes inherent in the language and symbols Burning Man participants use as a part of their transformation from spectator to performer. In this dissertation, I am attempting to systematically examine how the cultural environment of Burning Man supports theatrical creativity, and further, how this freedom allows for personal transformation amidst a larger emerging performance culture.

My method for analysis during six years as an attendee and over seven years of research includes: interviews with participants, organizers and artists; participant ethnography; on-site image, video and written documentation, archival research and participant-observation.<sup>24</sup> As a researcher attending to the Burning Man Project archives, I have examined the extensive but rather simply kept holdings for the event at their offices in San Francisco for the past three years. The Burning Man archives includes pertinent written documents, flyers, announcements and images filed by year, as well as a file cabinet of objects of material culture from the event. Digital files and video documentation have also been made available to me in my research and the valuable information gained from these is included in Appendix A: Performance Listings, which includes published activities from each year of the event which I hand-selected and incorporated into a larger document, the only one of its kind.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> In March 2006, my dissertation project was found exempt by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Maryland and did not qualify as research.

While archival examination and collection has been invaluable to my project, my own experience as a participant has also been essential. The deeper examination of performance at Burning Man could not have been successfully achieved without personal ethnography, meaning I have tried to consider and describe the culture through my personal experiences, observations and participation. As a participant at the event and in the Burning Man community, I have performed the dual roles of researcher and cultural contributor. Each year I have attended Burning Man I have lived the experience, survived the natural elements and challenges the event offered me, and learned what Victor Turner means by the importance of our own awareness of informed anthropological field work. Turner observes that: “Although we take theories into the field with us, these become relevant only if and when they illuminate social reality.”<sup>26</sup>

In that sense, I have always tried to keep an open-mind about why I have been studying performance at Burning Man and what I hoped to learn from my research, as well as who might benefit from it and what new ideas my project might produce or how it could be used by others. As Anthropologist Clifford Geertz has stated, and Esther Newton has reiterated, in cultural research there is no substitute for ‘being there.’<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Appendix A: Performance Listings includes an introduction which explains my selection criteria for the listings.

<sup>26</sup> Victor Turner. “Social Dramas and Ritual Metaphors” in the book *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1974, 23.

<sup>27</sup> Clifford Geertz. *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*. Sanford, Connecticut: Stanford University Press, 1988. Esther Newton. *Cherry Grove Fire Island: Sixty Years in America’s First Gay and Lesbian Town*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993, 303.

In my methodological approach, I am drawing on Victor Turner's theories on cultural systems, and specifically his notion of *communitas*. In *The Anthropology of Performance*<sup>28</sup> Turner discloses ideas about cultural performances which help to shape my consideration of the process of culture-making and of theatrical social interaction, as well as Burning Man's widespread interactive performing as providing a liminoid<sup>29</sup> space. Turner defines *communitas*<sup>30</sup> as 'an unstructured community where, having dropped their usual social roles, all people are equal.'<sup>31</sup> He defines liminoid as 'voluntary transitional phases,' in comparison to liminal phases that are 'involuntary rites of passage.'<sup>32</sup> As a space for liminoidal transformation, Burning Man gives participants permission to embellish their own aesthetic style and importantly, strip off their social markings in favor of new personally-created ones. Within this theory as applied to Burning Man I see the potential of cultural participation advancing social dynamics via performativity.

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<sup>28</sup> Victor Turner. *The Anthropology of Performance*. New York: Paj Publications, 1986.

<sup>29</sup> Lee Gilmore has been the first scholar to point this out. In her essay "Fires of the Heart: Ritual, Pilgrimage, and Transformation at Burning Man" she writes in the fifth footnote of the text that based on Turner's definitions she would consider Burning Man a space for liminoid transformation. *Afterburn: Reflections on Burning Man*. Edited by Lee Gilmore and Mark Van Proyen. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005.

<sup>30</sup> In *From Ritual to Theatre*, Turner states: "...what I have called *communitas*...I meant by it not a structural reversal, a mirror-imaging of the 'profane': workaday socioeconomic structure, or a fantasy-rejection of structural 'necessities,' but the liberation of human capacities of cognition, affect, volition, creativity, etc., from the normative constraints incumbent upon occupying a sequence of social statuses, enacting a multiplicity of social roles, and being acutely conscious of membership in some...village, theatre, almost anywhere people can be subverted from their duties and rights into an atmosphere of *communitas*." Burning Man inspires in participants the feeling of *communitas* because it is a liberation from normal life and the social rituals of the event abolish status. Victor Turner. *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*. New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982, 44-48.

<sup>31</sup> Victor Turner. *The Anthropology of Performance*. New York: Paj Publications, 1986, 14.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of carnival space is particularly relevant in this analysis. His classic and important work *Rabelais and His World*<sup>33</sup> examines the historical phenomenon of the medieval carnival and its literary outgrowth, the carnivalesque. Bakhtin's theories on the carnival as a space for temporary liberation from ideological authority help me analyze the concept of culture that comes from carnival. Carnival is the conceptual time period of 'free thinking'<sup>34</sup> and 'radical self-expression'<sup>35</sup> that Burning Man similarly engenders. As a place for licensed transgression, Bakhtin considers carnival as a transitory period where ordinary people celebrate their detachment from the usual social order. I will extend his ideas to develop my own explanation of Burning Man as a space for social performing that invites its own social behaviors and replaces socially fixed roles with playfully theatrical ones. I will also utilize Michel Foucault's notions of heterotopias as outlined in his essay "Different Spaces,"<sup>36</sup> as both a real and imaginary place that by its nature temporarily changes participant's functioning as social beings. Foucault's concepts about the heterotopic counter to mainstream society help me define the cultural alternative of such places as embracing diversity and non-conformity.

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<sup>33</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin. *Rabelais and His World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

<sup>34</sup> Bakhtin uses free thinking to describe the break from normative behavior and the lived experience of the carnival spectacle, as well as the release from social constructs that promote the hope of social change.

<sup>35</sup> The Burning Man Project holds Radical Self-Expression as one of the ten guiding principles of the event, as well as Radical Self-Reliance, Leave No Trace (an environmentally friendly concept of clean-up), Radical Inclusion, De-commodification, Gifting, Communal Effort, Civic Responsibility, Participation and Immediacy.

<sup>36</sup> Michel Foucault. *Aesthetics, Methods and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume II*. Translated by Paul Rainbow and Robert Hurley. Edited by James Faubion. New York: The New Press, 1998.

Participants come to Burning Man to create and to play together, not for monetary gain but rather for the creation and maintenance of their own cultural community.<sup>37</sup> The event allows diverse groupings of people to convene under the umbrella of a celebratory, creative gathering and yet, each willing participant may stand out as a social performer removed from the usual social role she or he occupies outside of the Burning Man cultural community. Foucault's notion of heterotopias further fits as a model applied to Burning Man as existing within a multi-layered context. It is the *other* place characterized by the time in which it exists, as an indeterminate realm removed from an advanced technological and postindustrial society.

Burning Man attempts to be an event that is structured to give its attendees a space to perform themselves where they may be totally occupied with creative survival, interactive art-making, spontaneous discourse and socially playful self-representation. The concept of performing oneself at Burning Man is complicated, and for helping ground my own thinking on this aspect of the participant experience, I use Erving Goffman's theory on the metaphorical 'social actor.' The social actor is one who wrestles with being themselves and not having the liberty to be themselves under social constraints, what he calls, "the daily cycle of role enactments... agreements as to where and what the individual is to be when."<sup>38</sup> By employing Goffman's ideas about social interaction and social actors, I am concentrating on the

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<sup>37</sup> As previously mentioned, the issue of the financial cost for participants to attend Burning Man will be thoroughly explored in the next chapter, "Chapter One: The History and Background of Burning Man."

<sup>38</sup> Erving Goffman. *Encounters: Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction*. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1961, 91.

phenomenon of public presentation of self and self performativity as a means of adapting to certain social environments. This theoretical notion supports my deeper exploration in this dissertation into the complexities of performativity at Burning Man.

In applying the idea of transformation in the liminoid realm, I am also utilizing Baz Kershaw's concept of the contemporary performative society as outlined in his essay, "Curiosity or Contempt: On Spectacle, the Human, and Activism."<sup>39</sup> Kershaw's definitions of the nature of outdoor performance and his notion of 'the performative society' resemble the place from which Burning Man allows escape, as it invites the entire community to participate while critically reflecting on the social order from which it comes. The response to the performative society Kershaw describes is one whose heart is the person, the subject, of the neo-liberal spectacle that is this event, an ephemeral communal experiment.<sup>40</sup> Theatrical creativity thus provides a presence for the artist in this alternate society with its own rules, and the culture it produces provides a home for various levels of performativity.

Many theoretical definitions for performativity equate self-representation with performance and blur the qualities of performing onstage with practices in ordinary life. Further and as previously mentioned, I specifically look to Rush Rehm's study of *Greek Tragic Theatre*<sup>41</sup> to ground my definition of "performance culture" and his

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<sup>39</sup> Baz Kershaw. "Curiosity or Contempt: On Spectacle, the Human, and Activism." *Theatre Journal*; Dec. 2003; 55, 4.

<sup>40</sup> The second primary theoretical text I am using by Kershaw is *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard*. London: Routledge, 1999.

chapter entitled “The Performance Culture of Athens,” that has aided in shaping my structural framework for considering the theatrical elements that inhabit this cultural space, including specific elements of performativity in everyday life. Whereas and also as previously mentioned in this introduction, Richard Schechner’s theory on the “culture of choice,” whereby performers and artists voluntarily participate in a chosen culture as an expression of their own cultural specificity, guides this thinking as well.<sup>42</sup>

Burning Man represents an acknowledgement of that interpretation and an active stance against staid and unfulfilling cultural experiences. Performance theorists Bruce Wilshire, on issues of identity and role-playing and Daniel Belgrad on the culture of spontaneity, inform my analyses of how one finds a cultural space through creativity.<sup>43</sup> Wilshire and Belgrad’s ideas involve analyses of how life is theatre-like and how artistic movements inspire people and develop cultures. Their works considers performing new cultural and social categories, much like the one I am defining as the performance culture of Burning Man.

The analytical framework I will use in this dissertation comes from Willmar Sauter in the book *Theatrical Events: Borders, Dynamics and Frames*. Sauter and several of the scholars contributing to this edition, lay out a framework for

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<sup>41</sup> Rush Rehm. “The Performance Culture of Athens.” *Greek Tragic Theatre*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

<sup>42</sup> Richard Schechner. “Interculturalism and the Culture of Choice.” *The Intercultural Performance Reader*. Edited by Patrice Pavis. London: Routledge, 1996, 41 – 50.

<sup>43</sup> Bruce Wilshire. *Role-Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982. Daniel Belgrad. *The Culture of Spontaneity: Improvisation and the Arts in Postwar America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

understanding festivals as theatrical events.<sup>44</sup> This framework has provided a useful model for considering the layers of context that exist which make up Burning Man's performance culture as I have come to see it. This model framework considers not only the experience of a festival participant, but also their symbolic role as a cultural performer.

Within the limited contemporary scholarship that has emerged whose focus is Burning Man, two dissertations stand out in their applications of methodology and as precursors to my own theories about both performance and the culture of Burning Man. These are: Jeremy Hockett's 2004 doctoral dissertation entitled, "Reckoning Ritual and Counterculture in the Burning Man Community: Communication, Ethnography, and the Self in Reflexive Modernism," and Lee Gilmore's 2005 doctoral dissertation entitled, "Theater in a Crowded Fire: Spirituality, Ritualization, and Cultural Performativity at the Burning Man Festival." Both scholars refer specifically to 'performance' in their theoretical analyses of Burning Man, albeit in different ways. It is useful here for me to include some mention and quotations from their writing to emphasize the path which academically has begun to be mapped out in their own respective disciplines that benefit my own approach and perspective to my topic.

In Hockett's dissertation, he looks at ritual and subjective experience at Burning Man but uses the theories of Victor Turner and Johannes Fabian to consider *performing* at Burning Man. But what he means by performance is *demonstration* and lived experience as a means for gathering knowledge or creating meaning. His point

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<sup>44</sup> *Theatrical Events: Borders, Dynamics and Frames* edited by Vicky Ann Cermona, Peter Eversmann, Hans van Maanen, Willmar Sauter and John Tulloch. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004.

of understanding performance theoretically is Ritual Studies and Anthropology. In his dissertation, Hockett refers to *performance* as related to Burning Man in this manner:

What is lost when festive rituals are not performed is homologous to what is lost when, rather than *attending* Burning Man (or any other such individual and community expression), one simply *reads* about it, or *sees* it on television or in a documentary film. Gone is the most essential character, the *lived experience*, the *subjunctive* mood or *performative* mode... One *must* participate and perform in order to transmit and receive *certain* modes of knowledge that lie outside the realm of rational, rhetorical, institutional and written – indicative or informative – modes of understanding... In other words, to establish the legitimate coexistence of the “other,” one must become a performing participant rather than merely passive observer.<sup>45</sup>

By this textual explanation, Hockett means to use a particular definition of performance to evaluate the meanings inherent in the processes of reflexive ethnography he theorizes in the participant experience. Performance for Hockett is then an essential part of the mode through which participants are cultural actors (as Turner would see them). Knowledge of one’s own culture and their role in it is bound up in one’s actions including the modes of play and playful mimesis and in cultural settings where a performative mode is demanded in terms of participation.

By comparison, Lee Gilmore, in her dissertation work, considers performance quite differently than Hockett – despite also using a starting point of Ritual Studies and Anthropological theorists, including Victor Turner and Clifford Geertz, to explain the *performative* presence in Burning Man culture. But she also utilizes a Performance Studies perspective to considering performance there, through the theories of Ronald Grimes and Richard Schechner. Gilmore also highlights much

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<sup>45</sup> Jeremy Hockett. “Reckoning Ritual and Counterculture in the Burning Man Community: Communication, Ethnography, and the Self in Reflexive Modernism.” Dissertation. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico. 2004, 274.

more strongly than Hockett important high-profile performances as artistic contributions to Burning Man culture over the years through the work of particular performance-oriented creators on the playa. In her dissertation, Gilmore articulates a “performative ideology” – a concept which she defines in the following manner:

From one starting point, the performative aspects of Burning Man are certainly apparent in the sense of its theatricality and self-conscious public displays. In this regard, the performativity of Burning Man is to some extent comparable to and illuminated by performance theorist Richard Schechner’s characterization of *performance* as “behavior heightened, if ever so slightly, and publicly displayed; twice-behaved behavior.” ...Another view on performativity is provided by Grimes who has stated that “performance is not just pretending but a sense that the world is acting out, a play, and that language ‘does’ rather than ‘means.’” Thus, by *performative ideology* I mean a particular and *constructed* set of ethical and behavioral *ideals*, or ethical concepts, that are both *enacted* and rendered *efficacious* as Burning Man participants simultaneously absorb and refract this ideology in their behavior (both at the festival and sometimes outside as well).<sup>46</sup>

In this explanation of the performative ideology she is utilizing in her analysis of Burning Man, Gilmore articulates a view that picks up where Hockett leaves off. Namely, performance is *participation* and an embrace of the ethos of the Burning Man culture.

I am presenting Burning Man as a performance culture that welcomes performers, interactive artists, curious participants and passive attendees. I offer three separate categories of research that spans seven years of scholarly work: 1) 2006 Performance Questionnaire; 2) The Performance Listings for Burning Man (1994 – 2006) collected through archival research; and 3) a DVD of performance footage

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<sup>46</sup> Lee Gilmore. “Theater in a Crowded Fire: Spirituality, Ritualization, and Cultural Performativity at the Burning Man Festival.” Dissertation. Berkeley, California: Graduate Theological Union. 2005, 82.

from 2006 captured and presented as examples of formal performativity at the event. All of these categories of documentation support an in-depth study of performance on multiple levels, as well as an intense focus on the specific performative categories that exist on the playa.

These three categories of documentation are included in the appendices to this dissertation and were used to support my theories about Burning Man. Brief descriptions of each follow.

- 1) Performance Questionnaire: In 2006, I created and distributed the Burning Man Performance Questionnaire with the help of the Burning Man Project through their on-line newsletter, the “Jack Rabbit Speaks.” Responses from thirteen individuals to this questionnaire were received via email directly to me. The Questionnaire was sent out on the “Jack Rabbit Speaks” e-newsletter in Volume 10, Issue 14, dated February 22, 2006. The questions within the survey as well as the responses it elicited will be considered in an analysis which introduces the Questionnaire.
- 2) Performance Listings: For three years (2004 – 2006), I spent hours compiling a thorough performance listing for the history of Burning Man. Through my archival research I have created a comprehensive listing of all performances and performative activities advertised at Burning Man from 1994 - 2006. Much of this information comes from the *WhatWhereWhen* calendars from 1994-2006, but also from supplementary materials in the forms of fliers and information from alternative sources. In ‘Chapter 2: Performance at Burning Man and Spontaneous Interactive Theatre,’ I will

offer a break-down of the performance types, offer highlights of these activities and suggest a complete model for what these listings suggest about Burning Man as a performance culture.

- 3) Performance Footage: Since I began attending Burning Man, I have been documenting the event, participants and the performances taking place there. In the appendix to the dissertation, I include a DVD-R of performance footage I captured most recently at Burning Man. There are fourteen clips taken at Burning Man in 2006, twelve of which highlight theatrical presentations and two that offer a glimpse into the sights, sounds, colors and nightlife at the event. In the appendix, I will offer some commentary on these performance clips and use them to support my theory of Burning Man as a performance culture.

### **My Location as a Scholarly Researcher**

Having completed seven years of research experience with the event and within its communities, I have come to understand Burning Man as an emergent culture which places high value on social theatricality.<sup>47</sup> I am the first Theatre and Performance Studies scholar to document, observe and publish on performance on the playa; to present my theatrical scholarly findings to the academic community; and to work extensively in the Burning Man Project archives in San Francisco. I have continuously subjected my project work to peer review in my numerous public presentations at academic conferences and in my course work.

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<sup>47</sup> I have provided the details of my field research on this project in the preceding pages of this dissertation chapter.

At the time of the writing of this dissertation, I have attended Burning Man six times since 2000. From 2002 – 2005, I have been an archival researcher to the Burning Man Project. In 2004, I completed a working internship with the Burning Man Project in their headquarters in San Francisco, California. During that internship I completed a full-time project devoted to performance documentation at the event as the on-line editor for Burning Man’s events calendar, the *WhatWhereWhen*.<sup>48</sup>

During my four-month tenure as an intern with the Burning Man Project, I worked full-time with the Project staff in their offices. Through my internship, I conducted interviews with Project organizers, and then traveled to the event site with the staff in August and lived with the organizers in the desert for nearly a full month as the event-space took shape. The entire internship was insightful to my study as a theatre researcher. By working in the Burning Man Project office I was able to learn how much planning goes into readying the event site. By spending almost a month in the desert before Burning Man began and any of its participants arrived, I gained a unique perspective as a Burning Man and festival scholar. I was able to witness the temporary city which Burning Man becomes, growing from almost nothing.

As a researcher, I have been devoted to positioning myself in a place where I can watch the process of performance, like the event-space itself, grow and come to life in the harsh environment that exists at Burning Man.<sup>49</sup> I have used my

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<sup>48</sup> Year-round, the Burning Man Project maintains an on-line calendar of events for the Regional Network and San Francisco Burner communities. The *WhatWhereWhen* is the published hardcopy version of the Events Calendar or e-playa calendar that participants can submit activities to all year long in lieu of the festival. Text located at [www.burningman.com/calendar/](http://www.burningman.com/calendar/) is regularly updated and a version of each appears in Appendix D to this dissertation.

ethnographic skills to become a scholar whose understanding of Burning Man as an event and its outgrowth of culture and communities is a unique perspective acquired from both the inside and out. My approach always with this topic has been experiential, looking for cultural clues through participant-observation, and also critical, as a Theatre researcher trained to consider the broadest possible contexts.

Throughout my research, I have conducted numerous interviews with the founders, major Burning Man artists and each member of the Project Senior Staff. I have worked alongside long-time participants documenting their thoughts and performances. I have documented regional activities and interviewed coordinators for the global Burning Man Project Regional Network. I have written sixteen academic papers over the course of my scholarly work about a wide variety of topics inspired by my thinking on Burning Man.<sup>50</sup> I have presented eight of these papers on Burning Man at national conferences, on themes that have included: performance and Burning Man artists, event participation, commercialism, exhibitionism, event infrastructure,

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<sup>49</sup> During the day the average temperature in the Black Rock Desert is one-hundred degrees and at night the temperature drops to forty degrees. The prehistoric lakebed on which the event takes place is dusty and wind storms blow dust with an average of fifty miles per hour some years. According to the Project website: The Black Rock Desert is a thoroughly flat, prehistoric lakebed, composed of a hardpan alkali, ringed by majestic mountains. Daytime temperatures routinely exceed 100°F and the humidity is extremely low, which rapidly and continually wicks the moisture from your body. Because the atmosphere is so dry, you may not feel particularly warm, but you'll be steadily drying up. Sunscreen, lip balm and skin lotion are your best friends on the playa. At nearly 4,000 feet above sea level the atmosphere provides much less filtering of the sunlight that causes sunburn. As a result, you will burn much faster and more severely than at lower elevations. Put on sunscreen every morning and repeat as needed during the day." More information at, "Your Body and the Elements," [http://www.burningman.com/preparation/event\\_survival/your\\_body\\_vs\\_the\\_elements.html](http://www.burningman.com/preparation/event_survival/your_body_vs_the_elements.html) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>50</sup> See Bibliography to this dissertation for a full listing of each of the scholarly papers I have written and presented on Burning Man.

and the debates over popularity and the continued artistic viability of Burning Man, as well as its status amongst North American utopian experiments historically.<sup>51</sup>

I have recently completed a book chapter on Burning Man for the International Federation for Theatre Research, Theatrical Events Working Group's book entitled: *Festivalising! Theatrical Events, Politics and Culture*. The book was published by Rodopi Press in July of 2007. In addition, I have two potential forthcoming publications: a book chapter entitled, "Exhibitionism as Performance at Burning Man," in the Rodopi Press text, *Politics and Performance in a Global Perspective*, and an essay in the International Journal on the Arts in Society, entitled, "The Production and Reception of Art and Performance at Burning Man," written with my colleague from the San Francisco Art Institute, Jessica Hobbs.

When I began this dissertation project, my process started with crafting an understanding of the event space, the participants and the organizers from observation, interviews which I have conducted, video and still-image documentation, as well as the gathering of all scholarly written primary and secondary source information that is available regarding the event. In order to understand the event and its cultural elements in-depth, I have endeavored to attend Burning Man in a number of capacities and with different goals in mind. My first year, I attended as an initiate and so spent a great deal of time exploring and asking questions as I documented and did fieldwork.

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<sup>51</sup> These topics represent a broad example of the topics my writings have focused on over the years. At different stages in my dissertation project, through course work and involvement in academic conferences, I have challenged myself to find new ways of approaching the event through the lens of art, politics, social issues, and many others. It was impressed upon me especially in my work with the University of Maryland Department of Theatre & Performance Studies faculty that multiple approaches to one's research is important to establishing one's legitimacy as an informed and reliable scholar and expert in one's chosen field and area of topic.

The following year my aim was to enjoy the event as a participant with less fieldwork in order to get a better sense of what an ideal participatory experience might mean. That year I performed formally on-stage and helped daily with the events sponsored by my theme camp.<sup>52</sup> The following three years I attended the event as a graduate student researching what I knew would be my dissertation topic. Different theoretical approaches to the event culture, its social context, and the socioeconomic frameworks that may be applied to this cultural event have all come about through my coursework, giving me the structure to expand my thinking to this point.

My research has been largely based on archival work, ethnography, field work, documentation, focus on published interviews and interviews I have read and interviews I have read and/or conducted with participant-performers and the organizers at the Burning Man Project. I have completed an analysis of existing scholarly writing on Burning Man and have collected all primary source information on the evolution of Burning Man culture. Of the two hundred and fifty-six articles written on Burning Man in newspapers, magazines and popular journals, fifty-five are

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<sup>52</sup> The communal living spaces at Burning Man known as ‘theme camps’ are the intended public venues that provide a site for participants to collect and intermingle, to perform or play out their experience. Theme camps are occupied by a tribe of participants who collectively create and then perform under a chosen identificatory theme. Theme camps adhere to a project requirement that they be accessible to all participants and like the art exhibited at the festival, are meant to crystallize the interconnections between the festival and all of those who attend. A camp usually looks like a collection of tents and recreation vehicles, shade structure, dome and tents with signage denoting the camp theme. Imaginary meanings make this group of tents with a name into a theme camp (for instance: *Happycamp*, *The Barbie Death Camp & Wine Bistro*, *Camp Ninja Burger*, *Clan Destino* and *Crazy Dante’s Used Soul Emporium* –to name a few). There, a table with a water jug becomes a kitchen and is where a pan of risotto is a feast. There, a port-o-potty is a bathroom, and a large packing crate is a stage where one can simulate horseback riding in front of a crowd astride a stranger. Theme camps increase in number each year and in 2005, there were over 200. In the following chapter, a fuller explanation of theme camps will be offered.

related to the arts and artists there.<sup>53</sup> I have analyzed these for background on the larger cultural context and political environment surrounding the event and its community. Additionally, I have been able to access some Burning Man performances through existing documentation in the Project archives and include these in this project in Appendix A: Performance Listings to this dissertation.

Finally, a note on the video and still images that accompany this dissertation: the images throughout the text are to illuminate the reader to the idea of performance at Burning Man and the spaces the event creates, as well as offer a glimpse of the participants who perform there. The video images I have included as Appendix D are all of formal performances rather than spontaneous informal performances. My reason for including only formal performances is that I have concluded that, in the moment of the performance, the presence of a person documenting is not really noticed.

However, when I have attempted to capture informal performances, such as a group in-costume walking through the event space and interacting with people, the participants became acutely aware that I was documenting the scene. At times they seemed to resent my presence as if it were a denial of the sacredness of the spontaneous moment, or a refusal on my part, to participate by interacting. (“Put down that camera!”). At other times the informal performance became charged with the energy and expectation those who discover they are being filmed and played it up or over-dramatized.

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<sup>53</sup> The Burning Man project website has the full listing and links to each of these articles. The text is located on-line at the Burning Man website at [http://www.burningman.com/blackrockcity\\_yearround/written\\_reflections/media\\_coverage.html](http://www.burningman.com/blackrockcity_yearround/written_reflections/media_coverage.html) and appears in Appendix D to this dissertation.

Thus, I learned in attempting to capture a performance as it was growing organically around me – how very difficult it was to extract myself from the situation (rude even) and begin taking pictures or videotape the activity, (because they abandon the scene or my actions change the nature of the performance) which invites them to stop performing. So for that reason, I have included more images of formal performances with an obvious performer-audience split than informal performances with a more naturally flowing interactivity between the participants who are performing. However, I will endeavor to explain throughout how important informal performing is to this culture of Burning Man.

### **Dissertation Chapters**

Chapter One of this dissertation, *The History and Background of Burning Man*, will consider the timeline and history of the event; significant periods and dates that stand out in this timeline; discussion of Project staff; the ethos that surrounds the Burning Man culture; and the conflicts or disconnects that have arisen over the years in this community. Chapter One also offers comparative profiles to other North American festivals and communities whose ethos, participant base, history and other significant phenomenological characteristics liken them to Burning Man.

Chapter Two, *Performance at Burning Man and Spontaneous Interactive Theater*, will consider the event as a venue for performance; the conditions for performing; stages at the event and theatrical conventions practiced there, such as costumes; the variety of performance genres present at Burning Man; and the significance of distancing the event from ‘real world’ economic and artistic standards.

Chapter Three, *Burners: The Participant as Performer*, will consider what makes a Burner; formal versus informal performance; and the challenges and benefits to performing at the event.

Chapter Four, *Burning Man as Performance Culture*, will examine how Burning Man as an event whose guiding principles include interactivity and radical self-expression, has grown into a culture with a performative ethos. Finally, in Chapter Four I will present my conclusion to this dissertation entitled, *Burning Man as a Lens for American Culture*, and also looking ahead to the future of the event and its community, considering what Burning Man reveals about the state of theatre and citizenship in the United States today.



**Image 3: *Burning Man Drag Performers.*** This image was taken at Burning Man in 2006 and shows a group of men who were walking through the event space in drag, engaging and interacting with other participants and seen here posing for the camera. As an example of ‘informal performance’ at Burning Man, this picture helps illustrate both the transient and transgressive nature of performance on the playa. Image reproduced with permission. Photograph by Jessica Hobbs.



**Image 4: *The Megavolt Show Stage.*** This image was taken at Burning Man in 2006 of the performer known as Megavolt on a mobile stage being electrocuted by two large Tesla Coils. Megavolt has been a presence at Burning Man since the late 1990s but this was the first year the stage moved around the event space. As an example of formal performativity at Burning Man this image shows how the audience, themselves transient, is positioned in relation to the performance and performer. Image reproduced with permission. Photograph by Jessica Hobbs.

## Chapter One: The History and Background of Burning Man



**Image 5: *Arrival at Baker Beach.*** This image was taken on Baker Beach in 1989, one of the first years Burning Man existed. During this period (1986 – 1990) the event was more like a small gathering of friends, their loved ones and members of the San Francisco Cacophony Society. Notice in the foreground two participants carry the head of the then eight-foot tall Man to the gathering spot on the beach. Photograph by Stewart Harvey. Image reproduced with permission.

In the image above, participants in the first small gathering that was called Burning Man occupy Baker Beach in San Francisco and together construct the figure of the ‘Man’ that will be burned at sundown. It is interesting to think that ten years later some of these same people, many of them artists, would be in the desert with ten thousand more people collectively making one of the most socially theatrical contemporary countercultural events in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Currently Burning Man is twenty years old, and over time it has grown into a theatrical event that inspires

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<sup>1</sup> Some portions of Chapter One include text that will be published as a chapter, “Burning Man: Festival Culture in the United States.” *Festivalizing! Theatrical Events, Politics and Culture*. Edited by Willmar Sauter. Amsterdam: Rodopi Press, 2007.

performing on a variety of levels.<sup>2</sup> Loyal participants journey to Burning Man in the Black Rock Desert in northern Nevada, to escape reality, to gather and mingle in the hot, dusty environment, and to play with interactive art they help to create. Dressed in costume and using creative aliases, participants are immersed in a theatrical environment designed to support creative interactions.<sup>3</sup> This approach to festival space-making is quite different from other festivals where the focus is not primarily devoted to the ways in which attendees choose to entertain themselves and each other. Interactivity at Burning Man also encourages year-round community-making based on social networks of ordinary people coming together in the spirit of *communitas* at the event.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Burning Man founder Larry Harvey has commented that the event has moved beyond an annual gathering as it has inspired a larger Burning Man community in San Francisco, and smaller communities around the world via the internet. See Larry Harvey. "La Vie Boheme: Bohemian Values, Populist Politics, and the New Avant-Garde." (Lecture at Walker Art Center. Minneapolis, MN. February 24, 2000). Located at [http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/lectures/la\\_vie.html](http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/lectures/la_vie.html) and in Appendix D to this dissertation. Whether the Burning Man Project considers the event as a phenomenon as well as part of the counterculture is under debate. It is my assertion that it is a countercultural phenomenon. Forms of performativity will be discussed in depth in Chapter Two and Chapter Three of this dissertation.

<sup>3</sup> These aliases are known as "playa" names in honor of the dusty lakebed Burning Man takes place on each year since 1990. Playa names are often given or 'gifted' to a participant and once they are christened with such a name, they may use it or their surname interchangeably while participating and performing on the playa. Playa names are often whimsical and creatively offer insight into the self as a social performer. Costumes worn by participants are also at times very elaborate. The playa name I choose as a participant my first year in the desert was Mistress Mao and throughout the event I wore costumes with headdresses and sequins, and I carried a bright pink umbrella. Other playa names I have heard used at the event have included: Butterfly, Dr. Satan Jones, Mysterious and Big Red. This kind of theatricality used would qualify participants as 'social performers' as Turner would term it, as the 'self' one exhibits while performing at Burning Man as Erving Goffman means to perform in public.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Lee Gilmore in her essay, "Fires of the Heart: Ritual, Pilgrimage, and Transformation at Burning Man," in the 2005 book *Afterburn: Reflections on Burning Man*. Edited by Lee Gilmore and Mark Van Proyen. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press), was the second scholar to emphasize the point that Burning Man by Victor Turner's definitions can be considered a place for *communitas* and as a liminoid or liminal event, Jeremy Hockett in his dissertation from 2004 asserts that the event is by its nature liminal.

This chapter will critically analyze the history and background which contribute to the culture of Burning Man and the ethos of its community including the Burning Man Project and event participants.<sup>5</sup> I will also contextualize Burning Man by comparing it to other festivals in the United States that are similar in scope, participant base and countercultural style. I offer these comparisons as a means of positing the unique characteristics that identify Burning Man and as an aid to developing a better understanding of the social and historical environment that Burning Man has grown out of and continues to exist within.



**Image 6: *Assembling the Man on Baker Beach.* This image was taken in 1989 at the last Burning Man before the event moved to the desert. Notice the generally relaxed atmosphere that contextualizes this early beginning of an event that fifteen years later would attract forty-thousand participants. Photograph by Stewart Harvey. Image reproduced with permission.**

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<sup>5</sup> Throughout this dissertation, I will frequently refer to the professional staff which runs Burning Man as the Burning Man Project, the Project or Burning Man organizers. The staff of Burning Man prefers to unofficially be called a Project rather than an organization because they feel “Project” implies an active group of people working towards a common goal as opposed to a bureaucratic entity or collective, that simply oversees the event. Further, I will refer throughout this dissertation to Burning Man as either the/an event. The Burning Man Project prefers unofficially that Burning Man not be called a *festival* as it invites comparisons to standard festivals where the tenets include commercialism and passive participation. Internally, the Project staff refers to Burning Man as “the event.” With respect to the Project, I will throughout this dissertation refer to Burning Man as an/the event. I will only use the term “festival” to refer to the event-space and also, the activities at Burning Man as in a *festival* spirit.

## **The Beginning: The Story of Burning Man**

*In 1986, a small group of friends gathered on Baker Beach in San Francisco to burn an eight-foot high wooden man. Little did they know at the time that this single, unique act would become the centerpiece, the rallying point, the primary symbol, of a movement that would affect the lives of tens of thousands of people in North America and around the world. The annual gathering of artists and iconoclasts eventually took on the name “Burning Man”, and moved to the Black Rock Desert of Nevada in 1990.*

*At first, the growth of the Burning Man phenomenon was small and localized, as networks of friends spread the news by word of mouth. They traveled in caravan from San Francisco. The Approximately one hundred people attended this first gathering in the desert. The Cacophony Society, an informal group of Bay Area artists and culture-jammers, helped to publicize the event in newsletters and at their meetings.*

*The first Burners explored and mapped out a cultural territory heretofore uncharted. As each year passed, they invested more and more energy into constructing an extraordinary city of swirling alkali dust and creative ideas and transformed it into a magical attractor of human potential.<sup>6</sup>*

Clearly as the Burning Man Project tells it, the history of the event is symbolic as it is epic. It began in 1986, in San Francisco, California, on a place called Baker Beach, when two friends, Larry Harvey and Jerry James, decide to ritually celebrate the summer solstice with both of their sons and a few acquaintances, and bring an eight-foot-tall wooden man they built together to burn there. When twenty or so people attended that summer, spontaneously communing together around the burning figure, it signaled the beginning of a new tradition for San Francisco. Not

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<sup>6</sup> This quote greets Internet users when they look up the “Introduction to the Burning Man Regional Network.” Written by the organization, this explanation for the origins of Burning Man is very telling because it encapsulated the origin story as myth leading to the “Burning Diaspora” that was to follow. This term will be discussed more fully in the pages of this chapter that are to follow. Text located on-line at [http://regionals.burningman.com/regionals\\_intro.html](http://regionals.burningman.com/regionals_intro.html) and appears in the Appendix D to this dissertation.

surprisingly, the next year on the same beach, even more people showed up after the gathering was advertised in the newsletter for the local artist action group, The Cacophony Society.<sup>7</sup> When in 1990, the now-yearly burn attracted hundreds of onlookers, as well as the disapproval of the local police, the men moved their annual event to the Black Rock Desert.<sup>8</sup> According to founder Larry Harvey:

Did we know what we were doing? Probably not. Did we care? Yeah! We knew that whatever we were doing, it would be different. If only for that weekend, we were going to put some meaning into a special experience, recreating an ancient pagan ritual that was actually 1000s of years old. In Cacophony, we called these adventures; a 'Zone Trip.' The Zone was some other dimensional place, it could be the past, the future, something weird, it didn't matter. We were going there, and we would challenge it and be better for it.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Early Years of Burning Man**

In the early years, Burning Man's organizers were Larry Harvey, John Law and Jerry James, as well as a handful of volunteers. The organizers leased the land for the event for a relatively small amount of money (\$750 US); two

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<sup>7</sup> The San Francisco Cacophony Society had an enormous impact on the early recognition Burning Man received in San Francisco, as well as its successful transition to the desert. Their guerilla artist presence and endorsement solidified the event as a place for radical art and expression. As the event attracted more participants in the mid-1990s, the influence and participation by Cacophonists died down. The most detailed explanation for the relationship between the Cacophony Society and Burning Man was published in Brian Doherty's book, *This is Burning Man*. It is unclear whether the group is still active in the Burning Man community in San Francisco as many of the early participants no longer attend for political reasons. Namely these individuals, including John Law have stated that the Project has lost its way and is now guided by greed. That said, John Law sued Burning Man founder Larry Harvey in January 2007 for the right to use the Burning Man copyright.

<sup>8</sup> The Black Rock Desert was chosen as the site for the event because of a proposal to move Burning Man to Black Rock Desert that was made during discussion with San Francisco Cacophony Society. The event then relocated in both space and time to the Black Rock Desert in Nevada on Labor Day weekend. On-line at [http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/1986\\_1996/firstyears.html](http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/1986_1996/firstyears.html) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>9</sup> Quote from Larry Harvey in the essay "The Early Years." Located on-line at [http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/1986\\_1996/firstyears.html](http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/1986_1996/firstyears.html) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

decades later the lease from the United States Bureau of Land Management costs them over seven hundred thousand dollars (\$700,000 US).<sup>10</sup>



**Image 7: *Aftermath*.** This image was taken at Burning Man in 1989 on Baker Beach after the eight-foot tall Man has fallen and burns in the sand. Notice the crowds gathered in the back to the right. Two elements are illustrated in this photo that epitomizes what Burning Man is about: people and fire. Photograph by Stewart Harvey. Image reproduced with permission.

This money, as reported by the Burning Man Project in their annual *Afterburn* Report, comes from the revenue produced by ticket sales to the event. The remainder of sales revenue goes to pay salaries for employees and overhead costs for offices, supplies and services.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>The seminal text, *Afterburn: Reflections on Burning Man* and the Burning Man Project website published *Afterburn* Reports -both confirm these figures. *Afterburn: Reflections on Burning Man*, edited by L. Gilmore and M. Van Proyen. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

<sup>11</sup> See the Burning Man Project *Afterburn* Reports 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 published in the Appendixes to this dissertation and available on-line at: <http://afterburn.burningman.com.../01/02/03/04/05> and each of these reports I submit in Appendix D to this dissertation.

In the early 1990s the event was attended by friends of the organizers, members of the aforementioned San Francisco Cacophony Society who practiced urban anarchic street theatre actions, and those people who had heard of the event by word-of-mouth. Today, the Burning Man Project employs little commercial advertising but depends on participant loyalty and friendly media to attract attendees. Regarding the first years of the event, the Burning Man Project observes:

Several Cacophonists, including John Law, Kevin Evans, and P Segal, had proposed the Black Rock desert in Northern Nevada as an alternate site. After investigating other potential sites along the coast of Northern California and discovering that none were suitable for the Burning Man ceremony, Larry accepted on faith that the Black Rock just might be the place for the wooden statue's intended celebration. Having decided to transfer the Burning Man celebration to Northern Nevada it was merely a matter of organizing the trip, renting a truck to transport The Man, and getting our butts out to the desert. It was also decided that Labor Day weekend would be a perfect time to go into the desert.<sup>12</sup>

Today, the group that manages Burning Man calls itself a Project rather than an organization purposely in order to de-emphasize the group's institutional framework and instead to focus on the creation of the event as the work of unique individuals committed to a common goal. The Project itself may therefore be regarded as a collaborative performance, as well as an exercise in self-expression. This sentiment is significant to the spirit of Burning Man which supports communal effort on both the administrative and participant levels.<sup>13</sup> As the Burning Man organization grew, the

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<sup>12</sup> This account is published online at the Burning Man website. Accessed on November 13, 2006. [http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/1986\\_1996/firstyears.html](http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/1986_1996/firstyears.html) and appears in Appendix D to this dissertation.

individuals who became the “LLC Staff” and the “Senior Staff” came to join the higher ranks of employees. These individuals include: Maid Marian (Business and Public Relations), Harley DuBois (Safety and Rangers), Lady Bee (Art Curator) and Danger Ranger, aka Michael Michael (Rangers and DPW).

At this time, in San Francisco during the 1980 and 1990s, public attention to art, including theater actions as street performance, had found a place alongside radical politics. Radical reactions to art-making at the time offers a way of considering how the artists who started Burning Man strategized performing radical self-expression removed from normative culture. Currently Burning Man enjoys a particular cultural cachet as a part of the San Francisco popular alternative scene. Significantly, during the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the event in 2005, the *Bay Area Guardian*, the most widely-read alternative weekly in San Francisco, ran dozens of stories devoted to Burning Man artists, celebrated participants and the debates surrounding the event and its community, especially in the Bay area.<sup>14</sup>

According to Roselee Goldberg’s work on performance, the Bay Area has been unique in its cultivation of artists and eccentrics.<sup>15</sup> In the 1980s, artists in Northern California were some of the first to emerge from the class of the visual artists known as post-conceptualists who drew from the well of inter-culturalism and

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<sup>13</sup> The Burning Man Project communicates this philosophy through a variety of means including free movement within the staff structure and a heavy reliance on a large and dedicated volunteer base. These concepts are considered in depth in the dissertation of Katherine Kang-Ning Chen “The Burning Man Organization Grows Up: Blending Bureaucratic and Alternative Structure,” out of Harvard University’s Department of Sociology in 2003.

<sup>14</sup> See Bibliography to this dissertation for a full listing of *San Francisco Bay Area Guardian* articles from 2005 devoted to the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Burning Man, and various event-related issues and individuals.

<sup>15</sup> Roselee Goldberg. *Performance: Live Art Since 1960*. New York: Abrams, 1998.

feminism to create innovative art pieces.<sup>16</sup> Burning Man grew out of this artistic and social context and as it did, continued to attract participants who were receptive to liberal and progressive actions. It is this sensibility out of which the tenets of *participation* and *radical self-reliance* were born and that reinforces an attitude of self and artistic fortitude which Bay Area artists have touted for generations.

Although demographic statistics for Burning Man are not traditionally kept, in 2001, 2003, 2004, and in 2005, a census was conducted at the event representing a 40% sampling of the participant population.<sup>17</sup> The on-site survey was further augmented by an Internet questionnaire.<sup>18</sup> From these figures published online at the Burning Man website ([www.burningman.com](http://www.burningman.com)), it can be suggested that a strong majority of attendees are residents of the West Coast, (specifically San Francisco), are Caucasian, and range in age from their twenties to their forties. And while the socio-cultural background of participants in general cannot be more accurately known, what may be explored here is the meaning and possibility inherent in some participants' experiences as cultural performers at the event responding to their own temporary escape from and subversion of the dominant culture in the United States. To

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<sup>16</sup> See Roselee Goldberg. *Performance: Futurism to the Present*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2001. Roselee Goldberg. *Performance: Live Art Since 1960*. New York: Abrams, 1998. Postmodern Conceptualists questioned the modern tenets of artistic autonomy by exploring art's social functions. Feminist performance artists like Carolee Schneemann and Karen Finley are both alumni of the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI). Also, Darryl Van Rhey. "Burning Man and the Art of the Nineties: A Conversation with Larry Harvey," 1997. Full text available on-line at the Burning Man website at [http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/lectures/90s\\_art.html](http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/lectures/90s_art.html) and appears in Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>17</sup> These census results were published on the Burning Man website and are included in the Appendixes D to this dissertation.

<sup>18</sup> The on-line survey was conducted by a participant under the guidance of the Burning Man Project. The results of the census are located at <http://afterburn.burningman.com/> under the annual Afterburn Reports. The Census results for each year are located in Appendix D to this dissertation.

emphasize this point, in the book, *This Is Burning Man: The Rise of a New American Underground*, author Brian Doherty suggests:

People attend Burning Man for as many reasons as there are individuals. [...] But uniting every divergent tendency, spirituality, and attitude at Burning Man is a sense that everyday life is missing something: a spark of creativity, a chance for self-expression, some freedom from judgment and cold personal relations that one must travel far off the grid to find. Burning Man provides a particularly intense arena in which to play out twenty-first century America's struggle for meaning and community.<sup>19</sup>

The link between participation in the context of struggle for self-identity separate from economics, as well as a cultural critique that recognizes alienation as a byproduct of one's involvement in the capitalist system, and a longing for intense and symbolic expression removed from that system is crucial to this analysis.<sup>20</sup>

As more people have had the participant experience and the community and the Project have evolved, the culture of Burning Man has grown in size and maturity, and the major tenets of the culture have developed. These guiding principles represent the ethos of Burning Man. Participants' adherence to them represents their embrace of the culture. But their participation as creative contributors and performers inherently represents the potential for liberation Mikhail Bakhtin theorized as accessible through the *Carnival* experience.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Brian Doherty. (2004) *This is Burning Man: The Rise of a New American Underground*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 10, 11.

<sup>20</sup> Baz Kershaw. "Curiosity or Contempt: On Spectacle, the Human, and Activism." *Theatre Journal*: December 2003. Pages 55, 4. Baz Kershaw. *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

<sup>21</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin. *Rabelais and His World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

The Burning Man Project emphasizes the following as its guiding principles: Radical Inclusion, Radical Self-Expression, Radical Self-Reliance, Decommodification, Gifting and Communal Effort. According to the Project: “There are no rules about how one must behave or express oneself at this event... rather, it is up to each participant to decide how they will contribute and what they will give to this community.”<sup>22</sup> Once adopted as ideology by participants to Burning Man, these cultural performers support and legitimize a temporary carnival environment that provides spatial immediacy for celebration and personal incentives for participation.<sup>23</sup> As the traditions in the performance culture of Burning Man have developed they now help define the experience for many event participants: journeying to the desert, building an interactive theme camp, adopting a Burning Man nickname (a playa name), wearing a costume or choosing to go nude, and embracing the opportunity of being immersed in a cultural moment as an active performer rather than as a passive consumer.

### **The Origins of the San Francisco Counterculture From Which Burning Man Grew**

A critical understanding of how the event grew out of San Francisco begins with an explanation of the particular elements of counterculture that led to its rise in popularity. It was in the tradition of guerilla street theatre in northern

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<sup>22</sup> Text located at <http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/> and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>23</sup> Larry Harvey. “La Vie Boheme: Bohemian Values, Populist Politics, and the New Avant-Garde.” Lecture at Walker Art Center. Minneapolis, MN. February 24, 2000.



**Image 8: *Raising the Man*.** This image was taken in the Black Rock Desert in 1990, the first year the event took place in Nevada. Notice the demonstration of teamwork that is evident in the picture as the participants are engaged in bringing the Man to his feet. Notice also the vastness of the new site for the event. Photograph by Stewart Harvey. Image reproduced with permission.

California that Burning Man originated. Amidst the San Francisco theatre scene there was an eclectic mix of performance groups attending to the politics of the citizen, of the community, and of the self.<sup>24</sup> In the early 1980's The Suicide Club<sup>25</sup> was a theatre action coalition that gave birth to The Billboard Liberation Front and The

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<sup>24</sup> Several works have informed my understanding of this period. Importantly, editor's Carl E. Loeffler and Darlene Tong's *Performance Anthology: Source Book for a Decade of California Performance Art*. Contemporary Arts Press: San Francisco, 1980; Sharon Barron's *Reading California: Art, Image and Identity, 1900-2000*, edited by Sheri Bernstein and Ilene Susan Fort, University of California Press: Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 2000; and Brian Doherty's *This is Burning Man: The Rise of a New American Underground*, New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2004.

<sup>25</sup> My own interviews with these same individuals including Burning Man founder Larry Harvey, corroborates these ideas.

Cacophony Society. The Suicide Club, of which The Cacophony Society was a direct descendant, existed from 1972 – 1982 and came out of a course taught by Gary Warne at the Communiversity at San Francisco State University. The Suicide Club was a secret society of punk intellectuals who were attempting conceptually to be guerilla street theatre artists but did not advertise their activities. The Cacophony Society in San Francisco is a loosely based performance action group whose participants stage incognito public performances including humorous pranks.<sup>26</sup>

The Billboard Liberation Front is an underground collective of concerned artists whose art actions involve altering large scale public advertisements such as billboards to take from their commerce-centric meaning and replace it with a message that is both self-ironic and anti-capitalist or anti-commodification; thus, signs become ‘liberated’ when they are altered. Members of this group are said to have been attendees to Burning Man in 1993 when signs were changed on rental trucks and banners placed over them reading, NO SPECTATORS, then later changed to read NO S E TATORS.<sup>27</sup>

According to Brian Doherty in his book *This Is Burning Man: The Rise of the New American Underground*, where the author has traced the lineage of Burning Man, The San Francisco Cacophony Society, was born the same year as Burning Man in 1986. In 1989, the Cacophonists mentioned the Baker Beach Burn in their newsletter nicknamed ‘Rough Draft,’ which was the direct cause for so many more

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<sup>26</sup> The San Francisco Cacophony Society website provides additional information but there is very little scholarly that has been published about the group and its activities. San Francisco Cacophony on-line at <http://www.zpub.com/caco/> and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>27</sup> Brian Doherty. *This is Burning Man: The Rise of a New American Underground*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2004, 10, 11.

people in the Bay Area learning about the event and that eventually lead to the increased popularity that sent Burning Man to the Black Rock Desert in Nevada.<sup>28</sup>

The guerrilla showmen of Survival Research Laboratories<sup>29</sup> were the final group whose underground work beginning thirty years ago influenced many Burning Man artists in that it utilized outdoor spaces. In the 1990s, when the shadowy group began their guerrilla performances in the downtown San Francisco warehouse district, people would hear of it by word of mouth. The shows would involve large metal remote controlled machines that looked like robots battling one another and shooting fire. Dangerous and illegal, their performances are a kind of chaotic opera that always climax with one huge destructive gesture, like an explosion. Their brand of political art-making actually continues today and importantly, offers a countercultural subtext that reflects an ethical bent informed by liberalism, the ideals of sexual freedom, and an investment in the local arts community, "...recontextualized by the social, political, and economic changes happening around them."<sup>30</sup>

The people who started Burning Man came out of this community supported by the San Francisco Cacophony Society of local performance anarchists. The

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> *Survival Research Laboratories* or SRL is still operating in San Francisco, CA. Their website is located on-line at <http://www.srl.org/> and in Appendix D to this dissertation. As self-described on their website: "Survival Research Laboratories was conceived of and founded by Mark Pauline in November 1978. Since its inception SRL has operated as an organization of creative technicians dedicated to re-directing the techniques, tools, and tenets of industry, science, and the military away from their typical manifestations in practicality, product or warfare. Since 1979, SRL has staged over 45 mechanized presentations in the United States and Europe. Each performance consists of a unique set of ritualized interactions between machines, robots, and special effects devices, employed in developing themes of socio-political satire. Humans are present only as audience or operators."

<sup>30</sup> *Reading California: Art Image and Identity, 1900-2000*. Edited by Stephanie Barron, Sheri Bernstein, and Ilene Susan Fort. University of California Press: Berkeley, 2000, 9.

Burning Man founders eventually had to abandon San Francisco in order to stage their event away from any commercial infrastructure and in rejection of the established art scene and found new ways to grow even beyond the desert land they would eventually settle once a year.

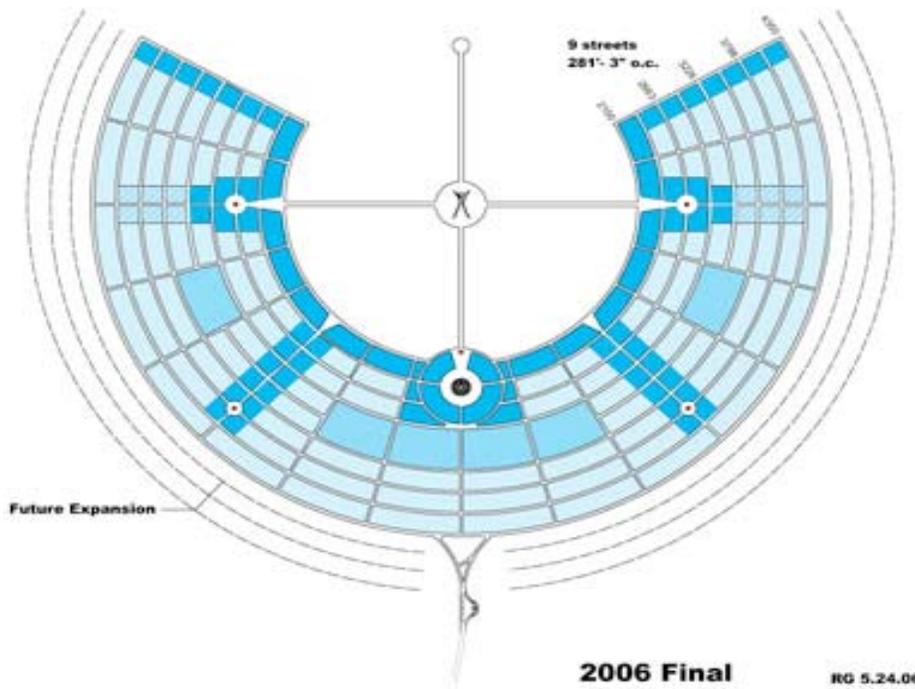
### **Background Details on Burning Man**

Like many large-scale, outdoor events and festivals, Burning Man is held in a warm month, August, just prior to Labor Day during the last week of the summer.<sup>31</sup> The event is located in a remote part of the United States on a prehistoric lakebed called a 'playa.' Throughout the week Burning Man is held, participants arrive daily at the event gate enter the festival space and set up theme camps. Theme camps give participants an opportunity to live creatively while at the event and to host activities in their camp that are linked to a particular theme they embrace.<sup>32</sup> In this sense, the festival space develops organically as participants set down roots, make themselves at home and settle in for the week.

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<sup>31</sup> As previously mentioned, Burning Man moved to the desert in 1990 after a failed attempt to burn the Man on Baker Beach during the summer solstice. When the organizers decided to change the location of the event to the Black Rock Desert in Nevada, they considered a new date that would allow participants to journey such a distance. Labor Day weekend, as a holiday, was therefore chosen.

<sup>32</sup> Theme camps are invented, created, built and maintained during the event by participants. Any participant can establish a theme camp simply by announcing themselves at the event through signage or word-of-mouth. The Project invites groups to announce their theme camp through the Project website through an on-line Theme Camp Questionnaire. This Questionnaire also affords theme camps the opportunity to be placed within the event-space by the organizers. To join a theme camp one need only ask to join or be invited to do so. Participants may then formally start and establish a theme camp or informally create one depending on their own desire. Some examples of theme camps include: Black Rock University, Camp DeNile, the Funkee Monkee Camp, Fairyland, Camp Lazy, Mad-Scientists-Collective, Rainforest Refugee Camp, The Dusty Goddess, and Camp Walk with Peace.



**Figure 1: This is a grid map published by the Burning Man Project on their website for the event in 2006. The city plan is designed by Larry Harvey and the Project staff.<sup>33</sup>**

Configured into a crescent-shaped pattern divided by unpaved streets, the event then becomes a makeshift city full of camps with recreation vehicles, tents and shade structures and at whose epicenter is a forty-foot-tall wooden man. This Man is the sixty-foot tall wooden figure which will be burned on one of the last nights of the event in a spectacular convergence of fire and performance created by the multitude of celebrating participants.

Attendance figures based on ticket sales show that nearly forty thousand people go there to build camps, celebrate self-expression and wear flamboyant costumes or go nude, all in an effort to create this temporary experimental

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<sup>33</sup> Burning Man 2006 city plan available on-line at the Burning Man Project website [http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/2006/06\\_brc\\_map.html](http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/2006/06_brc_map.html) and in Appendix D.

community.<sup>34</sup> Burning Man is a non-profit event that is structured to give its attendees a space to perform where they may be totally occupied with creative survival, interactive art-making, spontaneous discourse and socially playful self-representation.

The official attendance figure for the previous year is published annually by the Burning Man Project, which bases gate totals on the number of tickets sold. Many artists and staff receive comp tickets, however, and some unknown number of attendees sneaks into the event. The revenue the Burning Man Project earns from the event goes to pay staff and infrastructure costs, and some portion is donated to local education and community programs in the nearby Nevada townships of Gerlach and Empire. The number of participants based on ticket sales is submitted yearly to the Bureau of Land Management (B.L.M.) who oversee the use of the Black Rock Desert as public land and who lease the space to the Burning Man Project for an amount based on the previous year's gate totals rather than a current year totals.<sup>35</sup>

In the context of capitalist culture, Burning Man is in a problematic position. Philosophically, the Burning Man organizers are opposed to consumerism and with their event try to promote active involvement as a social role in opposition to passive consumption. However, they run a Limited Liability Corporation (the foundation received its 501c3 not-for-profit status in November 2001, making donations tax-deductible)<sup>36</sup> that charges admission to the event, and demands its attendees buy and

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<sup>20</sup> The attendance figures based on gate totals for Burning Man in 2005 were published online in the introduction to the 2005 *Afterburn* Report as 36,500 however in Julia Chaplin's *New York Times* article dated November 12, 2006 and entitled, "Burning Man Spreads Its Flame," the author quotes Andie Grace, Office Manager and Spokesperson for the Project as saying that gate totals for Burning Man in 2006 were 39,100 and 2005 as having been 35,567.

<sup>35</sup> This would suggest there is some benefit to the Burning Man Project under-reporting.

bring in all they may need to survive for the week they are there. This tension between anti-capitalist theory and practice is crucial to my exploration of Burning Man as a countercultural “escape.”

Ticket prices cover a wide range and usually when tickets go on sale in January the first tier, \$185 (US), are sold out quickly. When that happens, the next tier, \$225 (US), is made available and so on. By the time the event is just weeks away in mid-summer, often the only tier left is the \$300 (US) ticket tier.<sup>37</sup> The event does offer reduced tickets to those who apply for low-income relief priced tickets, as well as artists who are producing work for the event.<sup>38</sup> Two items are sold at the event: ice and coffee. Sales from both are donated to the towns of Empire and Gerlach, and funds from years past have gone to build a new school in Empire, Nevada. Ice sales are conducted at a camp known as ‘Camp Arctica’ located at Center Camp, the large central community camp that the Project considers their theme camp. Bags of ice are sold for three dollars to participants. Coffee is also sold at Center Camp and prices range from one dollar to three dollars depending on the kind of coffee beverage one purchases. The practice of selling ice and coffee began in 1998.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> This information was published in the Burning Man Journal’s 2002 Summer Newsletter. Located online at [http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/2002/02\\_news\\_sum\\_3.html](http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/2002/02_news_sum_3.html) and in the Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>37</sup> The Burning Man Project website lists ticket prices accordingly on-line at Burning Man’s website, <http://tickets.burningman.com/> but each year these amounts may change. In an effort to help aid those who cannot afford the higher tickets prices, the Project suggest tickets levels based on what one thinks they can afford to pay. Ticket informational text appears in Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>38</sup> These figures are not made public by the Burning Man Project.

<sup>39</sup> The history of commercial practices and activities is discussed in detail in the book, *Afterburn: Reflections on Burning Man*, in the essay, “Welcome to the Black Rock Café,” by Robert V. Kozinets and John F. Sherry.

Aside from tickets to the event, bags of ice, coffee and the price to take a shuttle from the nearest town and back or to service one's recreational vehicle, there is nothing for sale at Burning Man. Gifting (or the act of gift giving) and Radical Self-Reliance are the dominant forms of economic performance practiced there.<sup>40</sup> Event attendees, therefore, spend hundreds of dollars to go to this event where money is essentially useless and little is for sale. Costs include water, food, shelter, travel, personal amenities, costumes, props, and additional materials for building art and shade structures. The process of ticket purchasing occurs on-line, through mail orders to the Burning Man Project, and at the event's main gate.

### **The Myth of Burning Man**

As an event, Burning Man inspires community-making both on-site and off, as it has established its culture beyond the immediate theatrical experience through regional and on-line communities, thus creating a collective identity. Likewise, as a populist movement, made up of Burner communities, participants are culturally significant as artist collectives because they represent through their flamboyance, exhibitionism and transgressions, a new social category for cultural performativity. This category mixes hybrid theatrical styles including fire and movement, interactive street and guerilla theatre tactics, and the overt and expressive politics of performance.<sup>41</sup> Burning Man removes its attendees from the normative post-

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<sup>40</sup> According to the Burning Man Project: "Burning Man is devoted to acts of gift giving. The value of a gift is unconditional. Gifting does not contemplate a return or an exchange for something of equal value." Quote published on-line at the Burning Man website in the section "10 Principles" at [http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/about\\_burningman/principles.html](http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/about_burningman/principles.html) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

industrial culture and economics of the United States, in an effort to coax the performer out of the participant and to disrupt the normal self, thus helping to embody the theatrical nature of this desert gathering.<sup>42</sup>

Over time, Burning Man has evolved in scope and scale, forcing changes on the organization that runs it. Central to my evaluation are the ways that the Burning Man participant experience has grown as well as social performers in and away from the event, and within the Burning Man community at-large. Cultural and community formation is not an easy topic. Burning Man's performance culture though grew out of humble beginnings and arguably the place from which it originated, San Francisco, is also the source from which it continues to draw its strength. The link between San Francisco and the current Burning Man event in Nevada is strong.

The story of Burning Man's origins, passed first by word-of-mouth, then by friendly media to potential participants and the general interested public and finally, throughout the participant communities worldwide and disseminated on the Project's website, is mythic. It has also been noted by Burning Man scholar Jeremy Hockett

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<sup>41</sup> See Philip Auslander. *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. Routledge: New York. 1999. *Theatrical Events: Borders Dynamics and Frames* Edited by Vicky Ann Cremona, Peter Eversmann, Hans van Maanen, Willmar Sauter and John Tulloch Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004. Guy Debord. *Society of the Spectacle*. Detroit: Black and Red, 1983. Michael Foucault. "Of Other Spaces." *Diacritics* 16 (Spring 1986), 22-27. *Afterburn: Reflections on Burning Man*. Edited by Lee Gilmore and Mark Van Proyen. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959. Each of these texts help shape my understanding of how Burning Man as a site for performing oneself, might necessarily provoke a more animated, emotive and theatrical self, i.e. radical self-expression.

<sup>42</sup> Burning Man is an interesting location to study theatrical behaviors because it, as many festivals, has moved physically and involves individuals from all over the world. Its lifespan as a phenomenon has covered two decades, arguably a generation, but many generations have met and commingled there. People who devote themselves to Burning Man away from the event seem to live for the event all year: saving money, creating art and making costumes to perform in at the event.

that the history of Burning Man may be considered in three phases.<sup>43</sup> According to Hockett, the first phase (1986 – 1990) is made up of the first year Burning Man took place (when it was not yet called Burning Man), through the year it left San Francisco for the Black Rock Desert in Nevada. The second phase (1990 – 1996) covers the years the event was growing in the desert but fighting local and federal agencies over financial, environmental and placement issues. The current phase (1997 – 2006) has been marked by continual growth and has culminated in the 20th Anniversary of the event.<sup>44</sup>

### **The First Performance at Burning Man**

Larry Harvey has stated that the first performance at Burning Man occurred as a spontaneous reaction to the Man burning by a participant at the first burn on Baker Beach. This was when a woman grabbed the hand of the Burning Man. Another version says it was when another person began playing their guitar and singing while the Man burned. Harvey has also suggested that the first group theatrical performance was in 1996 when the players (costumed participants) in a farce called “HelCo.” began publicly railing at the event about the benefits of corporate corruption.<sup>45</sup> The significance of the first performance at Burning Man has been retold by the Project seemingly so that participants and community members can trace the natural

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<sup>43</sup> Dissertation by Jeremy Hockett, “Reckoning Ritual and Counterculture in the Burning Man Community: Communication, Ethnography, and the Self in Reflexive Modernism.” University of New Mexico, 2004.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>45</sup> This information is available only on the Burning Man website located at: [http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/about\\_burningman/bm\\_timeline.html](http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/about_burningman/bm_timeline.html) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

necessity of performing at Burning Man back to its origins. Performing, playfulness, and risk-taking are therefore central to the ethos of Burning Man and its participants. This ethos is what allows participants to carry their culture with them as a performative identity at the event and away from it.

### **The Social Role of the “Burner”**

The cultural term which has emerged for one who fully embraces the experience of Burning Man and also frequently attends the event is a ‘Burner.’ Burners are true citizen artists concerned with their own cultural awareness. They are the participants who are more than attendees, as they dedicate their time and energy to the event while there and in preparation for their return to the desert. For Burners, the festival space has become an open gallery within which any art project may be freely exhibited.<sup>46</sup> Each year the themes which are created by the founder, Larry Harvey, are announced on the Burning Man website as a suggestion to participants for a central idea around which they may create art, performances or theme camps. A critical element to one’s entry into this community, its ethos and its annual themes as guides for art-making is that the event is radically inclusive and anyone may attend.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Larry Harvey, “Burning Man: An Oral History.” Burning Man. San Francisco: Hardwired, 1997. “Viva La Xmas.” New York, NY. April 25, 2002. Text available on-line at Burning Man’s website, <http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/lectures/viva.html> snf in Appendix D to this dissertation. *Drama in the Desert: The Sights and Sounds of Burning Man*. Edited by Holly Kreuter. San Francisco: Raised Barn Press, 2002. Since beginning my dissertation project I have attended Burning Man as a researcher and a participant. As I continued to return and contributed more time and energy to my experience at Burning Man I found that I was fulfilling my role as Burner by communing with others who were as dedicated to the event as I was and even taking on an important leadership role in my theme camp.

The concepts of performance and the role of Burner as citizen artist will be addressed more deeply in Chapter Two.

### **Contemporary Festivals and Communities That Are Like Burning Man**

There are festivals all over the world that can be compared to Burning Man, in their characterizations as countercultural, theatrical, and arts-related, as well as events whose venues are outdoors and in nature. Burning Man as I am characterizing it is an annual event that is supported by its own loyal community and takes place:

- A. In a natural environment (the Black Rock Desert, Nevada)
- B. In a space that is constructed (a city space with marked streets and avenues)
- C. In a space that is natural but whose infrastructure simulates the urban
- D. In a festival context where monetary trade is discouraged and there are few opportunities to spend money
- E. Far removed from civilization
- F. Within a community that demonstrates loyalty to the event by attending annually
- G. In a community whose numbers continue to grow
- H. Every year with a new theme as designated by the organizers

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<sup>47</sup> During my first three years as a participant to Burning Man, I learned about the themes each given year through the Burning Man website and worked with my campmates to create art and performances that sometimes tapped into those themes. I was first introduced to the theme camp I lived with on the playa for my early years as a participant through a friend who invited me to attend with him. My own scholarly research has taught me that participant experiences vary in regards to camping. Many participants I have interviewed came to the event knowing other participants and so camped as a collective. However, some participants I have spoken to simply came to the event, camped alone and then meet people and formed new relationships that may or may not have led to future camps forming.

I. In a space that is always marked by the presence of a symbolically transcendent structure that is ritually burned to signify the end of the event Burning Man as an event has been covered widely in the American popular press and on television comedy shows such as *The Simpsons*, *South Park*, and *Reno 911!*.<sup>48</sup> Further, Burning Man as a phenomenon amongst festivals at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century experiences a rather confused association with several countercultural movements including Paganism and Hippie culture as well as being compared with Woodstock and that the values of those who attend are assumed to rest on the desire for anarchy, communism and the end of either society or civilization.<sup>49</sup>

Amongst festivals and gatherings worldwide there are a few which resemble Burning Man most closely in some of these ways. The Rainbow Gathering, the Michigan Womyn's Festival, and the Radical Faeries gatherings are each festivals which can be closely compared to Burning Man.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, the historically gay and lesbian communities of Cherry Grove Fire Island in New York share characteristics that may be likened to Burning Man. Though each of these events is

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<sup>48</sup> On television, there have been several programs which have referred to Burning Man over the years. For example: Fox Channel's popular animated program, *The Simpsons*, created an episode which made reference to Burning Man. This was episode 4 of season 12 entitled: "Lisa, the Tree Hugger." The cable channel Comedy Central animated program, *South Park* created an episode which made reference to a festival similar to Burning Man. This was episode 902, entitled "Die Hippie, Die!" The Comedy Central program *Reno 911!* which includes human actors created an episode which directly referred to Burning Man. This originally aired on Comedy Central on September 24, 2003.

<sup>49</sup> The question of Burning Man's likeness to such cultural phenomena was addressed on the Burning Man website at <http://www.burningman.com/press/myths.html> and is located in Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>50</sup> One dissertation in particular has considered other festivals/communities in comparison to Burning Man. Dr. Jeremy Hockett's dissertation suggests Carnival, the Diggers, a now defunct San Francisco street theater group, and the Rainbow Gathering as apt comparisons to Burning Man. Further, in her dissertation on Burning Man, Dr. Lee Gilmore mentions Hockett's analysis but does not herself offer one. Gilmore instead refers to Brian Doherty's book, *This Is Burning Man*, as another source for comparative analysis.

similar to Burning Man in basic profile, including the degree of participation demonstrated by participants within each given community, Burning Man differs from the Rainbow Gathering, the Radical Faeries, the Michigan Womyn's Festival and Cherry Grove in some very basic ways.

### **The Rainbow Family and the Rainbow Gatherings**

The Rainbow Tribe or the Rainbow Family of Living Light is a “non-organization” that meets at annual gatherings and has no official organization, no formal leadership and charges no fee to attend their events. The first Rainbow Gathering (not the event's official title until 1972), took place in San Francisco, California in 1969. The tenets of the community who participate in these gatherings include earth-consciousness and pro-peace philosophies. The Rainbow Gathering is a sometimes annual event that takes place on United States Forest Service lands where “hippie” culture participants come together for a week over the Fourth of July holiday to camp, pray for peace and commune together.<sup>51</sup> The event is not run by any organization and so, Rainbow Gathering is a very loose festival without entrance fees or any central control. Practicing communalism, earth-friendly behaviors and demonstrating a high tolerance for nudity, paganism and freedom of sexuality, the annual Gathering is said to attract between 10,000 and 25,000 participants.

The Rainbow Gathering is like Burning Man in that it takes place during the summer on government lands, the number of attendees is close to gate totals Burning

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<sup>51</sup> Michael I. Niman. *People of the Rainbow: A Nomadic Utopia*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997.

Man has recorded in the past ten years; there is no commercial element to the Gathering; and the community of participants is inclusive and has started regional gatherings all over the world. The Rainbow Family's origins in San Francisco as well as the strong connection participants in the Rainbow culture have to the earth-friendly communalism ethos they practice is very much in the vein of Burning Man's ethos.

However, unlike Burning Man, Rainbow Gatherings are always held in National Parks and the Rainbows do not pay the U.S. Park Service for use of the land. Further, Burning Man is run by a non-profit organization and headquartered in San Francisco by a staff of employees. Rainbow Gatherings are not organized or promoted by any organization or staff. Finally, Gatherings happen in a different state each year, whereas Burning Man is always held in the Black Rock Desert in Nevada.

### **The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival**

The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival (MWMF) began in 1972 and was started by three women from Michigan as a means of creating a space where women and particularly lesbians could build stages and support one another and their music.<sup>52</sup> The week-long Womyn's Festival is held in Hart, Michigan and attracts on average 4,000 attendees. The tenets of the Festival include no corporate sponsorship; a women-born-women-only policy, which has led to a severe backlash by the transgendered community; and the full support of lesbian and feminist philosophies and politics. Now in its thirtieth year, the Michigan Womyn's Festival hosts artists on

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<sup>52</sup> Boden C. Sandstrom. "Performance, Ritual, and Negotiation of Identity in the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival." Dissertation, 2002. University of Maryland at College Park.

three stages and the festival space is home to women who camp and meet in tents to hold community meetings and discussions on many women-related topics.

Like Burning Man, the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival is held during August and in a rather remote natural location. Also, the organization which oversees the MWMF refuses corporate sponsorship as a means to meet its budgetary expenses, choosing to rely instead upon revenue they make from the previous year's event. Thus, the organizers, similarly to the Burning Man Project strictly avoid any association with corporate interests that might somehow commercialize their event and its ethos of a free-thinking participant base. The MWMF organization also relies heavily on a loyal volunteer staff and committed participants who do their part to maintain both the festival space and stay actively involved in the communication among those who make up the community that has grown around the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival.

The primary differences between Burning Man and the Womyn's Festival are that at Burning Man all forms of artistic expression are highlighted by many different artists, while at Michigan, music is the primary form of artistic expression celebrated; and unlike the Michigan Womyn's Festival which only allows women who were born women to attend their event, Burning Man is all-inclusive. Further, Burning Man discourages commercial trade, commercial advertising and commodification at the event, while the Womyn's Festival does not.

## The Radical Faeries and Faerie Gatherings

The Radical Faeries began in the United States in 1979 as a spiritual movement for gay men looking to connect spirituality with sexuality during the Sexual Revolution. The first gathering of the Radical Faeries took place during the Labor Day holiday and by rule, one becomes a Faerie by choice. The Faerie lifestyle involves the celebration of paganism; flamboyance of dress including drag, nudity, dancing; drumming; and the mysticism of Indian-American earth philosophies. The community is decentralized and gatherings often coincide with Pagan holidays, but adherence to paganism, neo-paganism or indeed any religion or faith is not enforced.<sup>53</sup>

The Radical Faeries are similar to Burning Man in that they demonstrate first a commitment to free-expression and creativity as well as sexuality and earth-consciousness. Their annual event takes place at the same time as Burning Man and their community members dress in costume, live together during the event and perform themselves radically. Like Burning Man, the Faeries promote community and radical self-expression. Further, as with Burners at Burning Man, Radical Faeries demonstrate their cultural ethos through theatrical performativity and pronounced self-authorship. Unlike the Radical Faeries however, Burning Man includes people of all gender orientations and sexual identifications; Faerie Gatherings are held primarily for gay men.

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<sup>53</sup> *Radically Gay: Gay Liberation in the Words of its Founder*. Edited by Harry Hay and Will Roscoe. New York: Beacon Press, 1996.

## **The Lesbian and Gay Communities of Cherry Grove Fire Island**

In her writing on Cherry Grove Fire Island, Anthropologist Esther Newton describes a community of lesbians and gay men whose activities as a community revolve around celebration, revelry and theatrical behaviors. “For thousands of gay men and women in America, Cherry Grove – the oldest continuously inhabited resort on Fire Island – has meant freedom.” Within this community parties and celebration are the cultural practices which help define the culture that is cultivated there. Newton observes:

Cherry Grove is ultimately apolitical, patriotic, charming beyond anything, and utterly subversive. In gradually building a community which at last they came to command, Grovers were caught in a mid-flight between escape and nesting, between voluntary exile and the longing to belong.<sup>54</sup>

Within this community, a rich identity amongst gays and lesbians was cultivated because of their ability to escape the confines of mainstream culture and find each other and themselves. The Grovers, according to Newton, have historically gathered on Fire Island at wild parties where theatricality and performative behaviors such as cross dressing were practiced and celebrated: “In the Grove’s theme parties and theater, the most privileged, sophisticated, and powerful segment of Gay America – still operating fearfully behind legitimate Broadway stars, married women and a forty-five minute ferry ride – was rushing towards self-expression.”

Many of the people who have chosen the culture created on Fire Island, like those within the Burning Man community, are artists and performers.

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<sup>54</sup> Esther Newton. *Cherry Grove Fire Island: Sixty Years in America’s First Gay and Lesbian Town*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993, 7.

Because only the performing arts offered the conjunction of a relatively safe space and the power of ‘make-believe,’ the camp sensibility and its *queen*-centered social organization – which the Grove exemplified – had long predominated in gay life. The work of the Grove was nothing less than to create the world’s first theater for a gay audience.<sup>55</sup>

At Cherry Grove on Fire Island, community members found a place where they could be themselves. In costumes, theatrical presentations and by their self performing, Newton describes a cultural community like Burning Man, where flamboyance is historically celebrated. According to one Grover named John, Newton quotes:

...the big costume parties were sort of respected on one weekend, and it got known who the best hosts were, and hostesses. And people went to an enormous amount of trouble, and it became like Mardi Gras or like Philadelphia on New Years.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, much like Burners in the Black Rock Desert, the Grovers on Fire Island come to nature to escape from normative society and its inhibitions. They do this primarily through celebratory activities and through the practice of sexual and social freedom: “Camp culture, emphasizing gender reversal, theatrical parody, and heightened sensation through drinking and sexual promiscuity, has reached its apogee and fullest development in the Grove.”<sup>57</sup>

However, Burning Man differs from Cherry Grove in that it is not a space intended only for gay men and women. Further, Cherry Grove is a resort community that celebrates when its community members throw parties or theatrical

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 85.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 105.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 239.

entertainment, but unlike Burning Man, it is not a theatrical event. Within the Burning Man community, people must wait each year to attend the primary annual event in the desert, while within the gay and lesbian community of Cherry Grove, one need take a ferry ride and they are there.

Despite these differences, the culture of Burning Man does fall within a cultural context similar to Cherry Grove, as a place where participants often transgress conservative social rules and endeavor to break from constricting behaviors. They do so as a part of a collective that supports them, encourages such boundary breaking, and even joins them; and just as there are many vibrant gay and lesbian communities in the United States, Burning Man as a social phenomenon has smaller active communities who gather together, offer support to other community members, and share in the culture they help to create.

### **How the Burning Man Network Has Grown Through Regional Burns**

The Burning Man Regional Network was first launched by the Burning Man Organization in San Francisco in 2003 to locate, identify and bring together individuals in different regions of the country and the world who were burners and usually themselves organized locally Burning Man-related events. In 2003, the Burning Man Project had acknowledged a growing ‘Burning Man Diaspora’ evident by the numbers of local and regional smaller-scale burns, Decompressions or “Decoms” for short (one or two-day Burning Man-style parties) which had risen considerably.<sup>58</sup> As previously mentioned in this dissertation, there are now sixty-five

such events signed up with the Project. The ‘Diaspora’ as far as the Project is concerned comes out of a direct need for the kinds of interaction and theatrical creativity participants experience at Burning Man. Decompressions, as local gatherings away from the event, give Burners an opportunity to have that experience on a smaller scale, closer to their homes and not in the desert, and to meet people in their area who have also been affected by participating in Burning Man. The community of Burning Man thus claims pockets of this regional activity all over the world (Australia, Europe, Germany, Asia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom are all designated global regional groups through the Project).

Today regional groups in the United States and throughout the world<sup>59</sup> hold their own “burns,” or smaller-scale gatherings held in the Burning Man spirit. Usually, a committed member of the Burning Man community who has attended the event will connect with others in their area and after receiving some guidance from the Project, will schedule a regional burn on their own. These regional groups adhere to the major tenets and guiding principles of the Project by following the rules of Leave No Trace, No Spectators and No Commercial Trade, as well as Radical

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<sup>58</sup> Source for information on the Burning Man Diaspora located on-line in the 2004 Afterburn Report at <http://afterburn.burningman.com/04/communications/documentation.html> and in Appendix D to this dissertation. The Report states: “The Burning Man event is becoming an initiation, a Hajj, if you will, that may be undertaken intermittently. It is generating an ever-expanding diaspora that has begun to populate the wider world.”

<sup>59</sup> Some regional groups that are located outside of the U.S. host events similar to regional events in the United States. These are celebratory burns meant to promote the spirit of Burning Man as a place for *coming together*. The Burning Man website introduces the visitor to the concept of the regional network with the following text: “It is often reported that upon leaving Burning Man, participants feel possessed of a desire to make their year-round world feel more like life in Black Rock City. Across the globe, these burners can stay connected to the flame through the Burning Man Regional Network. Burning Man is not just an event. It is a way of looking at life that can be brought into being all year long. Regional Contacts help facilitate a connection between members of our community who share a common bond, and keep it burning year-round.” Text available on-line at <http://regionals.burningman.com/index.html> and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

Inclusion, Radical Self-Reliance and Radical Self-Expression as outlined in their contracts.<sup>60</sup>

According to the Burning Man Project, “Attending a local event offers potential Burning Man participants a taste, an introduction, to the core philosophies and modes of social organization that are at the heart of this burgeoning international cultural movement.”<sup>61</sup> Burning Man as a concept has been described by its organizers as an experiment in community making.<sup>62</sup> It is my contention that this communal movement, via their Regional Network with its local audiences as participants, has helped Burners to rethink creativity and how it helps people to build metaphorical bridges between and among communities because it has linked creativity with community and communication. By bringing people together around creativity, many bridges have been created and crossed and many communities have become one.

Technology has further enabled Burning Man to move beyond its status as an annual

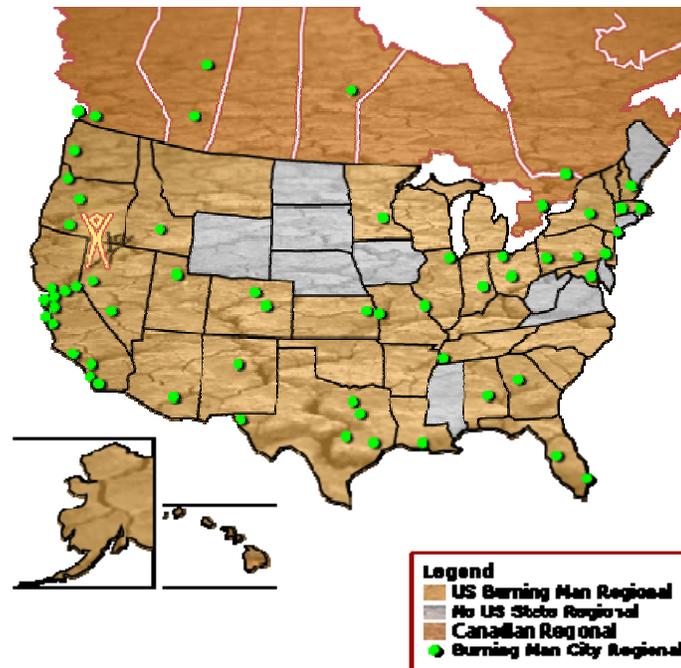
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<sup>60</sup> Interview with Steven Raspa, Burning Man Regional Coordinator. September 30, 2004. The Burning Man website offers this explanation for regional activities: “In 2003, the Burning Man Project undertook the formation of a formal network between all its Regional Contacts. The Burning Man Network will not only support more kinds of connectivity locally and year-round among those who share an interest in Burning Man, but it will also work closely with Black Rock Arts Foundation (BRAAF) promote interactive art throughout the greater community of Burning Man. The Network and BRAAF share a common vision: to project the ethos of Black Rock City into the rest of the world, during the rest of the year. This Network was launched early in 2004 with a Letter of Agreement that was signed by the existing Regional Contacts, and will be a part of the intake process for all new volunteers for the role in the future. In addition to sections specifically describing the relationship between the Burning Man Project and the volunteer Regional Contacts, this agreement also outlines the terms by which a regional can act in the Project's name to help protect the unique values of Burning Man's culture. Toward this end, the Letter of Agreement includes a list of ten core principles that will guide everyone as we work together in the future.” Accessed on November 9, 2006. Text located on-line at the Burning Man website, [http://regionals.burningman.com/network\\_intro.html](http://regionals.burningman.com/network_intro.html) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>61</sup> Quote from the Burning Man Regional Network document is available on-line at [http://regionals.burningman.com/network\\_coverletter.html](http://regionals.burningman.com/network_coverletter.html). Dated April 9, 2004. Text is also located in Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>62</sup> Text located on the Burning Man website: <http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/> and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

event and into the cyber-realm and beyond. Burning Man culture is kept alive locally through participants who embrace the philosophies of the event that founding organizers established years ago. Today, more than ninety volunteer regional contacts, in over seventy-five cities around the world, disseminate information about local art events and what is going on in their local scenes.



**Map 1: Map of Burning Man Regional Network.** This map of the Burning Man Regional Network created on April 4, 2007, identifies the location of regional communities in North America.<sup>63</sup>

Since the mid-1990s, this phenomenon had been occurring in the West and especially California where the majority of participants were from. Thus, a need was met for connecting individuals committed to the Event during the rest of the year. Parties or Decompressions were established at certain times of the year and are attended by both Burners and those who have never been to Burning Man alike. Key

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<sup>63</sup> Map located on-line at the Burning Man website Regional contacts information page at <http://regionals.burningman.com/index.html> and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

to this analysis is the spirit of inclusivity the event promotes or “the Flame” which Burners keep. This principle of Radical Inclusivity asserts that anyone can and should be involved or allowed to participate, that is, to bring their own creative energy to the festivity.

According to Steven Raspa, the Special Events Producer & Regional Outreach Coordinator for the Burning Man Organization, who advises Regional Contacts on how to organize and produce community gatherings in accordance with local laws and Burning Man's core principles, “the Flame” is about:

BEING your own best creation all year long and embodying what you love about your experience at Burning Man. There's a fundamental lesson to be learned at Burning Man. It may vary a bit by person, but it's always intense and liberating. But with ultimate freedom comes ultimate responsibility; and once you've learned it you have an obligation to yourself not to forget. If you can't wait to experience Burning Man again, then don't. If you do wait, you aren't getting it.<sup>64</sup>

How Burners “keep the Flame” away from the event is through active participation with their local community or regional Burner groups that host burn-related parties and Decompressions. Participation in these groups worldwide varies significantly.

Decompressions began to occur towards the end of the 1990s as regional burns, similar to Burning Man in that a group of people gather for some period of time and at the climax of the celebration, burn a wooden figure. However, whereas Burning Man brings forty-thousand participants, the average Decom or regional Burn attracts closer to a few hundred: Regional Burns have reported a low of twenty and a high of one-thousand local attendees. In North America, there are close to sixty

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<sup>64</sup> Interview with artist and Burning Man Regional Coordinator, Steven Raspa via email. July 2005.

regional contacts listed by the Burning Man Project, and they represent the entire West coast, the South and Northeast. Currently, only eleven states in America do not have regional connections that are known to the Project.<sup>65</sup>

How Regional Coordinators keep in contact with the Burning Man Project and their local audiences, as well as how the Regional Network came to be, are directly related. With the growth of the Internet in the mid-1990s, Burning Man, which employs little publicity to promote itself, began to find itself promoted on the Internet via web pages, web-logs, articles and web sites devoted to Burning Man culture, issues and events. In turn, the event experienced an increase in attendance of 3,000 participants from 1996 to 1997 and from 1997 to 1998. The Internet therefore helped spread the word about Burning Man but it also allowed people who had been there to start talking about it. Today, those who attend and those who dream of attending can chat with those who participate actively in their Regional group and importantly, with those who have little or no interest in ever trekking out to the desert to see the real Man burn.

Global regional groups that are represented in the Network include North America, Australia, Europe, Germany, Asia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Nova Scotia. The connection between these Regional groups is maintained through the Regional Contact Discussion List, which all Volunteer Regional Contacts are subscribed to. It allows them to compare and share what they are doing locally to support creative expression. It also allows them to pose questions to one other

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<sup>65</sup> Burning Man Introduction to Regional's Network is located on-line at the Burning Man website, [http://regionals.burningman.com/regionals\\_intro.html](http://regionals.burningman.com/regionals_intro.html) and appears in Appendix D of this dissertation.

directly, as well as to the Project. As with any kind of art-making, communal creating or personal celebrating, it is the local audiences guided by their individual Regional contact person, perhaps a Burner, that keep “the Flame” alive by getting together and participating as a group. These groups are able to gather together at Burning Man in several ways: A party is thrown during Burning Man each year since 2004 by the Burning Man Project, to which all Regional Organizers are invited to attend. Further, the Project’s Center Camp, the primary locale for communal collecting at the event, with its many open stages, hosts a ‘Night of Regional Entertainments’ for all Burning Man participants to attend and enjoy. Finally, particular theme camps at the event that hail from various Regions will identify themselves in the activities and event guide presented to all participants who attend Burning Man at their arrival, the *WhatWhereWhen*.

Outside of the event though, the need has grown for Regional Groups to connect local participants to the spirited lifestyle they encourage through their participatory events. Observes the Burning Man Project:

The initial function of the first Regional Contacts was to act as a sort of information provider on behalf of Burning Man. (Says one regional contact). “Burning Man was far more under the radar at that time. Most people I encountered knew nothing about it, so I was in a position of having to explain the culture behind the event.”<sup>66</sup>

Thus, in the late 1990s, communities of Burners sprang up in a variety of areas of the country, as the numbers of attendees to the event itself increased. Events and

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<sup>66</sup> Information available on-line at the Burning Man website ‘Introduction to Regionals’; [http://regionals.burningman.com/regionals\\_intro.html](http://regionals.burningman.com/regionals_intro.html) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

activities for local Burners were started by these individuals that had been inspired by Burning Man itself, and attracted local audiences who had no experience with the event. These local gatherings started out small and have themselves since grown. According to the Burning Man organization in their online documentation of the Regional Network phenomenon:

The first of these was *Burning Flipside* and the temporary city of *Pyropolis*, organized by the Austin Burn group in 1998. It is now an alternative destination, a place for people to invest their creative energy, for those who don't necessarily have the resources to make the annual trek to Nevada. A rich and diverse community thrives around *Flipside*, as it does in many other regions. From *Burning Mooseman* in the Ontario. Backwoods, to *Burning Toast* in the Arizona desert, Burners are creating their own unique gatherings everywhere.<sup>67</sup>

On the East coast, for instance, *Playa del Fuego* is the twice-annual Baltimore-Washington area's regional burn and it attracts three hundred people on average when it is held in both the Spring and Fall in a remote part of Delaware.<sup>68</sup> In New York City, there are numerous burn-parties every season. Further south, *Transformous*, the burn event for North Carolina, attracts nearly one-thousand local participants. Then there is *Rebirth* in Hawaii, *Burn in the Forest* and *Recompression* in Vancouver-Victoria, Canada, and the *Phoenix Festival* in Oregon.

As communities have grown so has the role of the Regional contact beyond simply disseminating information about the culture or hosting the events local groups put on. As explained by the Burning Man Project:

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<sup>67</sup> This quote is from the Burning Man website in the "Introduction to Burning Man Regional's Network" [http://regionals.burningman.com/regionals\\_intro.html](http://regionals.burningman.com/regionals_intro.html) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>68</sup> Source for information on regional events located on-line at the Burning Man website, [http://regionals.burningman.com/network\\_intro.html](http://regionals.burningman.com/network_intro.html) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

In many places, the Reps are no longer simply information providers on behalf of Burning Man. Most often, they are brought into the program as regionals because they are seen as community builders, Burners who are active in bringing together people on a local level. Through a self-nomination process, Burning Man is introduced to these candidates, who are qualified into the network and provided with resources to help them organize their communities. Often the Reps are also guiding participants in the creation of local Burn events.<sup>69</sup>

Now as community builders, they practice outreach and keep dialogues about the culture going through various list-servs and newsgroups. Self-nominated and committed to the Burning Man lifestyle, the Regional contacts and their community members serve the event on a number of levels. First, their existence lessens the pressure of the event to continue to grow by responding to regional group interest and inspiring Burner activities more conveniently on a local level.

Second, they expose many more people to the philosophy of creative community making than the event could ever accomplish independently. As Steven Raspa points out, they have "...helped Burning Man participants to think of creativity as a year-round, often collaborative, lifestyle – rather than something people express in isolation, as a product, or something they get to truly express for one week of the year in the middle of the Black Rock Desert."<sup>70</sup> And finally, as a Network, these regional communities' members comprise a local audience that come together to find

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<sup>69</sup> Quote located on-line at the Burning Man website "Introduction to Burning Man Regional Networks" at [http://regionals.burningman.com/regionals\\_intro.html](http://regionals.burningman.com/regionals_intro.html) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Steven Raspa via email July, 2005. Email and transcript.

solutions to making art in a society that they see as needing more bridges to creating and creating communities together.<sup>71</sup>

The Burning Man Regional Network grew out of a need that many people recognized: readjusting to society after having had the experience of being embraced by a creative community whose main thrust was celebrating art and performing self-reflexively rather than making and spending money, was difficult for many and there needed to be a network to connect people all over whose passion was for free human expression.<sup>72</sup> The benefit for those who come together as a local audience communicating with one another under the umbrella of the Network is clear: to find support for their art and ideas and to in turn support those with whom local participants share common values and principles. The risk that establishing a Network would be a form of cultural imperialism is acknowledged by the Project. In a public letter published on its website the Project states, “The growth of Burning Man and the Network has not corrupted our ideals. In order to preserve the spirit of our community, we seek to create social environments that are unmediated by commercial sponsorships, transactions, and advertising. We stand ready to protect our culture from such exploitation. We resist substituting consumption for participatory

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<sup>71</sup> Raspa interview. July 2005.

<sup>72</sup> According to the Burning Man website in the Introduction to Burning Man Regional Network: “Following the conclusion of Burning Man each year, Burners returned to their home cities, and often reported trouble reintegrating into “normal” society after experiencing an event that had profoundly transformed them in so many ways. They felt the urge to stay connected to other Burners, and to bring the creativity and freedom they discovered there back to their own hometowns year-round.” The quote can be found at [http://regionals.burningman.com/regionals\\_intro.html](http://regionals.burningman.com/regionals_intro.html) and in the Appendixes to this dissertation.

experience.”<sup>73</sup> By its presence, the Burning Man Regional Network has built creative and long- lasting bridges that have allowed local artists to engage their creativity in new, exhilarating ways. It exists virtually via the Internet and it exists tangibly at social gatherings, via community art projects. It has provided positive reinforcement for creative expression and linked it to a larger, vibrant social network. In considering the importance of this concept, Regional Project coordinator Steven Raspa observes:

I predict that it will increasingly exist in the form of simultaneous collaborative happenings in multiple cities as people increasingly work together and get beyond the constraints of local events. If Burning Man is a grand metropolis of art, then it's also spawning other such centers for creative expression...seeds planted and nurtured all over the world by people who have had a deeply validating experience in the desert and found the freedom to take that home with them and share it with others.<sup>74</sup>

Through the Burning Man Regional Network, Burning Man has continued to grow and reproduce itself on smaller scales. This suggests two important possibilities: the first is that the tenets of Burning Man are mobile as are the creative logistics and recipe for building a festival site at any manageable scale where many individuals can be accommodated. The second possibility this outgrowth suggests is the perpetuation of alternate venues for performing worldwide. In a national environment full of festivals that celebrate a few particular artists, Burning Man seems to suggest a celebrating of the people, the individual, and the group supportive of participatory theatre as central to its performance culture.

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<sup>73</sup> Quote from the Burning Man Network document available on-line at the Burning Man website, [http://regionals.burningman.com/regionals\\_intro.html](http://regionals.burningman.com/regionals_intro.html). Dated April 9, 2004. Located in Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Steven Raspa via email. July 25, 2005. Email and transcript.

## Chapter Two: Performance at Burning Man & Spontaneous Interactive Theatre



**Image 9: *Mistress Megavolt*, Jess Hobbs 2006.** In this photograph, Jessica Hobbs aka Mistress Megavolt performs at Burning Man in a specialized metal and plastic suit built to withstand the electrical currents being sent to her by a giant Tesla Coil. The Megavolt shows on the playa have been going on since 1998, when Austin Richards, the first Dr. Megavolt, performed at the event. Ms. Hobbs is the first woman to perform with the Tesla Coil at Burning Man. Image reproduced with permission. Photo by Noise.

Imagine Burning Man not only as a theatrical event but as a temporary city: a makeshift town of nearly 40,000 people that exists for one week and is populated solely by performance artists.<sup>1</sup> It is an area of land occupied by hundreds of

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<sup>1</sup> *The Afterburn Report*. 2005. Published accounts place the gate total for 2005 at 35,600. For the year 2006, the Project claims a “record breaking number” of theme camps and art installations but has not published the count. No official ticket sale figure has emerged at this time (April 2007). The

communities made up of thousands of people who are generally dressed in costume, interacting with others performatively and doing so amidst large scale art installations, many of which are on fire: a place that exists for seven days once a year, in the desert and where the temporary residents are uniquely theatrical and utterly committed to the spirit of their city as a place for performing. This is a gathering in an environment that is intentionally noncommercial and unlike the society that contextualizes it, interactivity amongst its citizens is the highest form of entertainment, and interpersonal spontaneous self-expression is a performance.

In anthropologist Victor Turner's work he refers to human behavior as 'self-performing.'<sup>2</sup> Sociologist Erving Goffman considered self-expression as performance in his work. By considering a theatrical model of understanding human interactive behaviors, Goffman's theory suggests that the way individuals present themselves, the impressions they give off and the expressions they present to others, are shaped by and guide people's view of them. This public self-presenting is a mode of sustained performance. In his book, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman observes:

...the individual will have to act so that he intentionally or unintentionally expresses himself, and the others will in turn have to be impressed in some way by him. The expressiveness of the individual (and therefore his capacity to give impressions) appears to involve two radically different kinds of sign activity: the expression that he gives, and the expression that he gives off.<sup>3</sup>

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*Afterburn Report* is the official document compiled by all authorized staff of the festival and which is made public immediately prior to the festival the following year. Each of the four years' reports includes census information, financial reports, official crime and emergency statistics, department accounts of the year's events and an inventory of hours spent planning, building, working and cleaning the event site by volunteers.

<sup>2</sup> Victor Turner. *The Anthropology of Performance*. New York: Paj, 1987, 81.

Further...

Often a performance will involve only one focus of visual attention on the part of performer and audience, as, for example, when a political speech is presented in a hall or when a patient is talking to a doctor in the latter's consulting room. However, many performances involve, as constituent parts, separate knots or clusters of verbal interaction. Thus a cocktail party typically involves several conversational subgroups which constantly shift in size and membership.<sup>4</sup>

As evident in the above quotes, Goffman's descriptions of the way self-expression may be considered performance, as well as the social contexts that may draw certain performances out of individuals – paint a clearer picture for how participants to Burning Man might perform themselves differently at the event as well. As members of a self-invented cultural group that celebrates theatricality, Burning Man participants are compelled to perform – much as they would at Goffman's hypothetical cocktail party. I build on the theoretical groundwork laid by these thinkers on social performance to present my own conclusions about performance at this unique event and its cultural meaning.

Key to this chapter is the concept of 'spontaneous interactive theatre' or S.I.T., as an outgrowth of the 'radical self-expression' on which the Burning Man ethos is based. I am defining S.I.T. as unplanned and impulsive voluntary performing that takes place with great frequency amongst participants at Burning Man. Burning Man founder Larry Harvey has himself used this term to describe the kinds of

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<sup>3</sup> Erving Goffman. *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday/Anchor Books, 1959, xi – 2.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 2.

performance he has hoped to facilitate on the playa.<sup>5</sup> As a concept, S.I.T. involves a participant base who on a voluntary basis creates theatrical presentation in their own public collaborations with other participants. Often these performances can take on a life of their own and guide those present into a theatrical moment. Social relationships are formed in this community whose shared experience is communing together in the desert. Victor Turner's theories as applied to the Burning Man cultural community would suggest that at times is both *liminal* and encourages *communitas*.<sup>6</sup> According to Turner:

Liminality, the optimal setting of communitas relations, and communitas, a spontaneously generated relationship between leveled and equal total and individuated human beings, stripped of structural attributes, together constitute what one might call anti-structure. Communitas, however, is not structure with its signs reversed, minuses instead of pluses, but rather the fons et origo of all structures and, at the same time, their critique. For its very existence puts all social structural rules in question and suggests new possibilities. Communitas strains toward universalism and openness.<sup>7</sup>

By considering the theoretical underpinnings laid forth for this project by scholars in the fields of anthropology, theatre and performance studies, this chapter critically analyzes how performance may be thought of at Burning Man and how this helps create a performance culture. I will evaluate the ways in which Burning Man as an event can be considered like a Happening. This idea is a crucial element to my broader consideration of performance at Burning Man and how its culture is primarily

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<sup>5</sup> Larry Harvey, Burning Man Founder and CEO. Interview by author, August 28, 2004, Black Rock City, Nevada. Transcript.

<sup>6</sup> Victor Turner. *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974. *From Ritual to Theatre: The Seriousness of Human Play*. New York: Paj Publications, 1982. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1969. *The Anthropology of Performance*. New York: Paj Publications, 1986.

<sup>7</sup> Victor Turner. *Drama, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974, 202.

performative. Happenings depend on the shift from spectator to participants and they consider the entire play space as the work of theatrical art that is created by those who occupy it.<sup>8</sup> The spontaneity and interactivity exhibited and utilized at Burning Man will further allow us in this chapter to consider how, while artistic and historical comparisons are useful, performance at the event and within the Burner performance culture is its own offshoot of theatrical importance. In terms of performance as a result of identity-making at Burning Man, playa names, or Burner names, are significant in the participant-performer's distance from the outside world and location in the Burner culture. Theorists Erving Goffman and Bruce Wilshire aid in this analysis as their work contends that humans as social creatures are mimetically involved with others and authorized by them through imitation. Through their theory they are demonstrating how life is theatre-like, by making use of a phenomenological methodology to establish that role playing is the process of creating the self.<sup>9</sup>

This chapter focuses on Burning Man as a place for performance, a venue for creating theatre culturally. We will also become more familiar with the types of performance that take place at Burning Man. In a festival context, the behaviors and self-presentation of participants may be considered as theatrical, or else called informal performing. Many of the smaller performance spaces within the Burning Man event which will be discussed in this chapter support both formal and informal performing. However, the conditions for performing at Burning Man affect venues for performance including stages, as well as theatrical elements such as costumes.

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<sup>8</sup> *Happenings and Other Acts*. Edited by Mariellen R. Sanford. New York: Routledge, 1995.

<sup>9</sup> Erving Goffman. *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*. Bruce Wilshire. *Role Playing and Identity*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982.

The variety of performances witnessed at Burning Man, which will be discussed in this chapter, belies the harshness of the event environment.

### **Carnival Laughter, Feasting, Costume and Masking, and Burning Man**

However, medieval laughter is not a subjective, individual and biological consciousness of the uninterrupted flow of time. It is the social consciousness of all the people. Man experiences this flow of time in the festive marketplace, in the carnival crowd, as he comes into contact with other bodies of varying age and social caste. He is aware of being a member of a continually growing and renewed people. This is why festive folk laughter presents an element of victory not only over supernatural awe, over the sacred, over death; it also means the defeat of power, of earthly kings, of the earthly upper classes, of all that oppresses and restricts.

-Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*<sup>10</sup>

The first aspect of *Carnival* that may be discussed in relation to Burning Man is Laughter. Mikhail Bakhtin analyzes *Carnival* laughter as radical, ambivalent, and possessing a power to free the spirit. The Burner ethos is one that is directed towards humor, and the “shows” and public exhibitions that occur at the event itself reflect a gay and joyful principle of self-expression. This laughter is present in the daily life of the event and there too, laughter is an essential aspect of living for participants to Burning Man. Bakhtin’s idea on laughter was that for the people of the marketplace during festive times, laughter was both unrestricted and held great positive, creative and regenerative power for the folk. Laughter allowed the people to ridicule the rules and social order they lived under and revealed a new imagined participatory social realm where nothing was off limits

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<sup>10</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin. *Rabelais and His World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984. Page 92.

to them. I am using laughter as an aspect of *Carnival* while I apply it to specific aspects of Burning Man such as the abundance of comedic performances both formal and informal that take place at the event, the playfulness inherent in the Burner personae and importantly, the tradition in Burning culture to use humor to entertain others upon first meeting.

*Carnival* laughter held a license to wisely wield itself on symbols of power and authority and thereby take away that power. For Bakhtin, *Carnival* laughter combats official rule, oppression and even death in its ability to make light of pain and suffering and the most unpleasant circumstances of life. Burning Man laughter in much the same way is alive and popular amongst the people during this festive time because it embraces all of the people and does not discriminate since it recognizes that all participate. "The truth of laughter embraced and carried away everyone; nobody could resist it."<sup>11</sup>

Burning Man laughter is though not exactly the same as *Carnival* laughter because the historical circumstances of the two festivals are different, as are the participants themselves. Burning Man participants as contemporary characters attend voluntarily and pay money for the privilege of being a part of their imagined culture. *Carnival* through Bakhtin was a historical phenomenon during the Medieval period tied to a Christian calendar. It cannot be said that everyone of the society participates in Burning Man because the event and its culture do not resemble society including categories of race and class. Burning Man laughter is though carnivalesque because it does build its own world which stands in

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 82.

opposition to the mainstream American society and yet changes the laughter from simply an expression of freedom to one that has the potential to bring about real change in the participant's thinking in the world. Further, the regenerative nature of both *Carnival* and Burning Man lay in laughter as a source for knowledge. The seriousness with which one may interpret laughter extends at Burning Man to the forms of radical self-expression represented there in both art and performance.

According to Burning Man photographer and long-time participant, Leo Nash in the book *Burning Man: Art in the Desert*:

At Burning Man, a community event of thousands of people, levity is an integral aspect of the art that's produced there. Humor is not often present in the art world. Here, however, it is both posture and mirror, reflecting back the culture that has been left behind, albeit temporarily. Sometimes this humor is overt, as with Kal Spelletich's interactive robotic contraptions. His *Hugging Machine* features a large cushion that folds around you with a pneumatic *whap*, almost knocking you off balance in the process, as the large cushion envelopes you in its wooden embrace. *The Lie Detector Halo* gives you some sort of quasi 'benefit of the doubt' with a burning halo situated above your head, acknowledging your saintly divinity and questionable truthfulness while quietly toasting your hair. More often the humor is subtle, of the 'you had to be there' variety.<sup>12</sup>

Art that laughs at both itself and the Burner produces the special quality of *Carnival* laughter where no one is immune from ridicule. In regards to laughter one may see the intersection between Burning Man, the carnivalesque and politics by the way Burner laughter is also directed at the exalted: for example, the United States government and its attacks on the Burning Man Project through the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), as well as capitalist forces in the country such as Wal-Mart, which Burners feel take advantage of them, and state authorities who

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<sup>12</sup> Daniel Pinchbeck and Leo Nash. *Burning Man: Art in the Desert*. New York: Abrams, 2007. Page 26.

police the event around which Burners purposely happily flaunt their nudity and drunkenness.

Burners use laughter to point out their own common experience. The BLM charges the Burning Man Project for every participant who attends causing ticket prices to increase annually. Mega-stores like Wal-Mart in Nevada, stock their shelves with supplies aimed at Burners as consumers during event-time in some ways trapping Burners into heavily supporting capitalist American culture. While at the event, local and state law enforcement monitors participants drawing attention to the amount of control they might exhibit over Burners. In spite of this, free expression through laughter abounds at the event by the art that is created which mocks both the government and commercialism, the nudity and licentiousness that goes unpunished there, and the openness with which Burners make fun of themselves and others amidst a social experimental space carved out in the remote unpopulated desert.

Burners use laughter to comment, re-contextualize and mock these controlling forces and they demonstrate laughter through. However, Burners express their connectedness to one another and their relationship as a community to the political and commercial entities they see threaten their way of life much as Bakhtin claims Carnival laughter does: it connects them to one another and reinforces through that connection the unified front they share against authority and as members of the human race. Bakhtin states: "The people do not exclude themselves from the wholeness of the world. They, too, are incomplete; they also die and are revived and renewed. The people's ambivalent laughter, on the other

hand, expresses the point of view of the whole world; he who is laughing also belongs to it."<sup>13</sup>

Burning Man's carnivalesque is political because it degrades the material circumstance of the lives of the people with creativity and originality. The carnivalesque of Burning Man exists in the laughter of its people who gain a sense of new possibilities through it. The *Carnival* spirit lays in the principle of laughter that Burning Man's people return each year to experience and to renew. Its political power rests in their determination to use laughter to triumph over normality. Laughter at Burning Man is similar to Bakhtin's *Carnival* laughter in that it revels in comic violence, bad language, grotesque and vulgar behaviors, and the satirical nature of the art and performance created there. The people of Burning Man and the people of Bakhtin's *Carnival* achieve through laughter the liberation and free thinking that both promise a renewed sense of the world and by their use of laughter, a positive and honest approach to consider the world they exist within. The concept of laughter extends into the *Carnival* realm of feasting as well when we are considering Burning Man.

*Carnival* is the 'true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed.'

-Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*<sup>14</sup>

Feasting is an important aspect of *Carnival* to consider in relation to Burning Man. Food and consumption at Burning Man are essential to the

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<sup>13</sup> Bakhtin, 12.

<sup>14</sup> Bakhtin, 10.

expression of the culture that exists for the Burner at this festive event. Bakhtin's ideas on feasting were that through communal eating, the people were symbolically renewed. I am using feasting as an aspect of *Carnival* as I apply it to specific aspects of Burning Man, such as communal food gathering, preparation and consumption. Bakhtin analyzes *Carnival* feasting as an expression of celebration, destruction and regeneration, and that through indulgence the people were truly experiencing pleasure together. The feast of *Carnival* involves laughter, joking, frivolity and joy, as well as gorging and throwing of food. The playfulness present through feasting at Burning Man is organized by the people as in *Carnival* where all contribute and consume to mark the occasion. Throughout the week of Burning Man theme camps host dinners and breakfasts inviting all other participants to engage and devour. Camps annually plan and host pancake breakfasts with live entertainment and share in community spaghetti dinners. Burners who come to the Playa to get married hold celebratory feasts and many more theme camps maintain community theme bars where anyone can enjoy a beverage or hors d'oeuvres until they are satiated or completely drunk.

Burning Man feasting is exactly the same as the concept of *Carnival* feasting. At Burning Man the sharing of food and alcoholic beverage is widespread. Each day of the event is a celebration with participants bringing perishable delicacies to share with their campmates and strangers alike to eat quickly at the beginning of the week and then hosting dinners each night thereafter to eat up all of the rest of the food supplies they have brought with them. Burning Man feasting is carnivalesque because it includes all and *feeds* the

celebration. In regards to feasting, one may see the intersection between Burning Man, the carnivalesque and politics in that it reveals the subversive nature of Burning Man's ability to take participants outside of a consumer, fast-food driven society and lets them enjoy the pleasures of the feast together. Burning Man's carnivalesque feasting is political because it holds in it the clue to *why* Burning Man continues to grow in popularity as a place for communal consumption of pleasures like food *and* new ideas including how one might exhibit themselves publicly in terms of costume and mask.

Even more important is the theme of the mask, the most complex theme of folk culture. The mask is connected with the joy of change and reincarnation, with gay relativity and with the merry negation of uniformity and similarity; it rejects conformity to oneself. The mask is related to transition, metamorphoses, the violation of natural boundaries, to mockery and familiar nicknames. It contains the playful element of life; it is based on a peculiar interrelation of reality and image, characteristic of the most ancient rituals and spectacles.

-Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*<sup>15</sup>

Costume and Masking are critical aspects of *Carnival* to consider when comparing it to Burning Man. Here we can consider the modes of self-presentation which exist within Burning Man culture, as well as masking as a form of hiding that goes on at the event. Bakhtin's ideas on costume and masking were that one could be renewed and transformed and thus would cease to be oneself as an individual at all. Further, that through masking and the costume a person would be able to change into another and merge with everyone else. Masks helped create a carnival atmosphere of monsters and imaginary creatures, all the

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<sup>15</sup> Bakhtin, 40.

people mixed and confronting one another, where the old became young and men could become women. The pleasure of being a part of such a scene was that it was unusual and confused the accepted ideas of what happens in the world. The significance of changing identity through costume and mask according to Bakhtin lies in how the individual may exchange bodies between who they were and who they become. Like the liminal experience Turner describes, the costume and mask is the conduit through which the participant is renewed and assumes a new social identity spontaneously.

I am using costume and masking as an aspect of *Carnival* as I apply it to specific aspects of Burning Man such as drag and gender bending, stilts and animal outfits and body modification that are apparent amongst the nude bodies of participants at the event. Bakhtin analyzes *Carnival's* costumes and masks as covering the individual and changing them into another. Burning Man costume and masking is different in its ambiguity. Burners both use costume and mask to impress and blend in. Some may want to stand out and use the mask or costume (or lack thereof) to draw attention as an individual, others want desperately to look normal amongst the freaks.

Burning Man masking is carnivalesque however because it holds the same potential for change and renewal and yet changes masking in the way it can actually cause the individual to stand out to others. Burners use masks and costumes frequently as a means to radically express themselves, to either shock or excite – but mainly to get attention. In regards to costumes and masking one may see the intersection between Burning Man, the carnivalesque and politics in the

permission it gives to participants to behave in extreme ways. Certainly, public nudity as a form of exhibitionism and costuming crosses the line of legality for normative society, as does body piercing and scarring. Burning Man's carnivalesque masking and costume are political because they give permission to drag queens and kings to cross the solid societal lines of gender, and it gives permission to sexualized participants to wear sex toys on their bodies in public. Burning Man's carnivalesque approach to masking and costume breaks past the boundaries of self-presentation into a radical realm and so is therefore, like Bakhtin's Medieval carnivals historically and Happenings in contemporary American society, purposefully political.

### **How Burning Man is like a Happening**

If the images selected by the author of the happening are unified, this second kind of new theatre can take on elements of celebration or orgy. But it is not an authentic celebration or orgy – it is a model in which the author serves as the “generating society” and the participants as the individuals within that society. Such happenings are designed to evoke and articulate responses within the spectators urging them to become participants – to live out in any way they can the fantasies which the “scene” brings to their awareness.<sup>16</sup>

-Richard Schechner on Happenings, 1969

In order to place Burning Man in the context of theatre history in the United States, it is useful to consider what precedents exist that resembles the event. As a place where art and performance can be made by anyone, the Burning Man ethos in practice holds a central quality of Happenings. In 1966, Allan Kaprow named seven qualities of Happenings: the blurring between art and life; themes, materials and

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<sup>16</sup> Richard Schechner. *Public Domain*. New York: Avon Books, 1969, 162-163.

actions come from outside the arts; they are performed in wide spaces; time is variable and discontinuous; they happen only once; everyone participates; and there is no rationality and things happen by chance.<sup>17</sup> Burning Man succeeds in being a place for performing where all of these qualities are realized.

Happenings, according to performance theorist and historian Michael Kirby, started in the late 1950s, and were environments where the concept of art was extended to include the space in which it occurred and that those who attended were as much a part of the total art work.<sup>18</sup> According to Richard Schechner, “Kirby’s work is similar to Kaprow’s, except that Kirby almost always has both participants and spectators. Kirby usually works indoors, in a small space, and develops a ritualistic relationship to that space.”<sup>19</sup> Further, Schechner characterized Happenings as, “An artless art without professional performers; one in which the makers and the watchers were all participating; an art of spatial insideness. An art that cannot be “reviewed” or “criticized.” In other words, an event.”<sup>20</sup>

Happenings can be, I am arguing here, reasonably compared to Burning Man. While Happenings were, during their heyday of the 1950-1960s, meant only to happen once, it is my assertion that even though Burning Man is held every year and for a week, the essential elements of a Happening are in place as a creatively put-together, crudely-organized cacophony of human activity – where each year’s event is

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<sup>17</sup> Allan Kaprow. *Assemblages, Environments, and Happenings*. New York: H. M. Abrams, 1966, 88 – 98.

<sup>18</sup> Aronson, Arnold. *American Avant-garde Theatre: A History*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Schechner. *Public Domain*. New York: Avon Books, 1969, 163.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 198.

a new incarnation. Thus, one year stands apart from the next – and happens only once. Schechner observes as well in his writing on Happenings that:

Perhaps the key distinction between the traditional and new theatres – and one at the very heart of both- is that between playing roles a doing tasks. In playing a role the actor “becomes” a human being other than himself. However, a performer doing a “task” is not playing anyone. He is simply doing something. He need not understand why he is doing it or ask whether the circumstances are such that in everyday life he would be doing what he is doing. He just does it. Because the author of the happening tells him to do it. Or he is given free time and told to do anything he pleases within the space of that free time.<sup>21</sup>

Considered art events, Happenings were created by artists, planned but not necessarily rehearsed and once carried out or performed, stood alone as the work of art itself, ephemeral and not to be copied as in traditional theatre.<sup>22</sup> They were planned and executed by creating artists and those in attendance helped facilitate the artistic activities.<sup>23</sup> Further, Happenings were often staged outdoors and with a collective of participants made up of the artist(s) and whoever the audience was that showed up. Those audiences then were usually instructed how to participate or perform or else drawn into the activity. Improvisation was essential to the Happening and allowed participants to add their own creative input. The element of chance, spontaneity and *liveness*, a term later coined by Philip Auslander to mean *present*, were also important elements of the Happening.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Richard Schechner. *Public Domain*. New York: Avon Books, 1969, 159.

<sup>22</sup> *Happenings and Other Acts*. Edited by Mariellen R. Sanford. New York: Routledge, 1995.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 2-4.

<sup>24</sup> Philip Auslander. *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Burning Man is essentially a modern day happening as it invites participants to be a part of the artistic collaboration and, in a sense, *planned chaos*. Burners come not knowing how they will interact with others, art or the environment they are in, but bring with them a heavy dose of flexibility towards all three. John Cage, the most celebrated Happenings artist, advocated the breaking of barriers between performance and spectator while keeping within the structure of the artwork that was occurring.<sup>25</sup>

### **Forms of Performance**

How performance is contextualized by the Burning Man Project is a crucial aspect of this analysis. On the Burning Man website, imbedded in the textual materials the Project distributes year-round and in the reports they make public, the word *performance* is used throughout and in a variety of ways. This is important to note and consider, as it allows a fuller understanding of the value that performance plays in the Burning Man performance culture. Equally important is how I am considering participants as performing artists: “Performance artists distinguish themselves from actors and actresses, for instance, because the latter “pretend” to be someone else in a time different from the real time of the event. But in a performance – as opposed to a production of Hamlet – performers maintain their own identities.”<sup>26</sup>

Here I am reminded of Mikhail Bakhtin’s assessment of *Carnival*:

Carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical

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<sup>25</sup> *Happenings and Other Acts*. Edited by Mariellen R. Sanford. New York: Routledge, 1995, 2-10.

<sup>26</sup> Henry Sayre. “Performance.” *Critical Terms for Literary Study*. Edited by Frank Lentricchia and Thomas Mc Laughlin. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990, 96.

rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change and renewal.<sup>27</sup>

A performance culture articulates its self-image through playful activity and thereby represents and exhibits itself to its own members as well as to the outside world.

Certainly when an individual looks for information about Burning Man away from the event itself, they are most likely to find references to performance within the culture on the Project's website.



**Image 10: *Thunderdome Fight Dome*.** The Death Guild/ Thunderdome is brought out to Burning Man every year since 1998. The Death Guild camp from Alameda, California, provides a metal dome suitable for participants to climb and watch the 'fights' performed inside of the dome. Two fighters on bungee cords fight each other with soft-foam bats inside the dome, whose design is based on the movie, "Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome." The camp states on their Burning Man theme camp profile: "... a glorious arena of foam-covered carnage, wherein the smallest of grudge matches are settled by a combination of bungees, elevation and foam-covered weapons in

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<sup>27</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin. *Rabelais and His World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984, 10.

**front of teeming hordes who crave spectacle. Battle to the grinding strains of industrial music and to the cheers of black clad amazons aroused by bloodlust.” Photograph reproduced with permission. Image by Noise.**

In March of 2007, founder Larry Harvey published on the website an essay he wrote entitled, “The Early Years: Reflections on Interactive Performance,” which provides a personal account of many of the performative activities participants and Burners created both on and off the playa, primarily at Burner events held in San Francisco.

Harvey’s introduction states:

This essay was originally intended to answer a question put to me by Wendy Clupper, a doctoral candidate in the field of performance studies. She wrote, "Can you tell me what performing was like for you the first years on the playa? And what was your role in the 1996 Helco performance -- what was it about?" Had she not asked about my personal involvement, I might have answered her with greater brevity. Instead, this caused me to reflect upon a chapter in the unheralded history of Burning Man. What follows is a partial account of our early years and the nature of interactive performance.<sup>28</sup>

My intention during the email interview which preceded Harvey’s published essay was to find out his own recollections of performance during Burning Man’s first years (1990 – 1996) since very few published accounts of these exist. The essay he wrote was a response to the questions I raised to him and in it he offers several examples of performance and also explains the story behind an often cited example of exciting early performance on the playa: the ‘Helco’ performance which occurred at Burning Man in 1996. In the essay, Harvey observes:

The idea of producing a coherent story in the desert began in 1995. It was, in fact, a proto-theme, a burlesque performance created by a small group of Burning Man's organizers. It featured a mock-epochal struggle between the forces of Good and Evil. This took form as a

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<sup>28</sup> Larry Harvey. “The Early Years: Reflections on Interactive Performance.” Published online at [http://www.burningman.com/art\\_of\\_burningman/early\\_years.html](http://www.burningman.com/art_of_burningman/early_years.html) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

collaboratively scripted wrestling match. We constructed a raised platform surrounded by ropes in the central camp circle, and here the assembled forces of all that was good and all that was bad contended.<sup>29</sup>

In reference to the Helco performance in 1996, Harvey explains:

On Saturday night we staged a little show in central camp. Flash reprised his role, now known as Papa Satan. He sat stage right upon a throne surrounded by beguiling temptresses. Behind him stood a group of corporate mascots. They represented HELCO's board of directors. I remember Aunt Jemima, the Jolly Green Giant, and Mr. Klean. Will Roger played Mr. Klean. Clutching a rag and a spray bottle filled with kerosene, he at one point set fire to the stage. Our skit was structured as a kind of fairy tale. Three times I was tempted to sign over the property rights to Burning Man and Black Rock City by HELCO's attorney, played by Stuart Mangram. Three times I refused and reeled back. Turning toward the audience, pen and contract still in hand, I finally shouted, "I can't sign this! I don't own Black Rock City! Burning Man belongs to all of you! You have to decide!" Everyone present, of course, opted not to sell out. Satan was then chained to the back of a truck and trundled off at the head of a procession into the Inferno.<sup>30</sup>

By drawing attention to performance in his essay, Harvey begins the participant experience through Burning Man as emergent of a theatrically minded Project.

For the participant arriving at the event itself, they are greeted at the front gate with a copy of the *WhatWhereWhen* – the calendar of activities listings for the week. Within the listings category of ‘Performance’ a participant may find a variety of theatrical and performance activities that in 2006 included: performance art workshops, a poetry playhouse, a rock opera, cabarets, vaudeville acts, circus acts and multi-media solo shows. The full performance listings for 2006 and every year prior (1996 – 2005) are available in their entirety in Appendix A of this dissertation.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Larry Harvey, “The Early Years.” Located in Appendix D to this dissertation.

Several other examples of how performance is considered by the Project include the “Burning Man Theme Camp Questionnaire” located on-line at the Burning Man website.<sup>31</sup> In 2007, three questions asked participants specifically about performance activities on the playa in relation to their theme camp activities. These were: “Question 37. Big-Name Performers,” which asked: “If you have sound amplification, will you be featuring any big-name DJs or performers? (Yes or No);” “Question 38. Big-Name Performer List,” which asked: “If you will be featuring big-name performers, please list them below, one per line. (Text box),” and finally, the question listed under, “Question 39. Stage (Required),” which asked: “Are you planning on building a stage in your Theme Camp or Village? (Please read about sound limitations), (Yes or No).”<sup>32</sup>

At Burning Man in 2004, the ten stages under the Man were called the “Off Planet Theatre,” and participants were invited to be both performers and stage managers.<sup>33</sup> The term performance is also used to refer to the Performance Safety Team that works at the event. This is the official name for crew members and employees of the Project who monitor fire safety during art installation performances.<sup>34</sup> The artists who make up the Fire Cauldron members, (fire blowers,

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<sup>31</sup> “Burning Man Theme Camp Questionnaire.” Located on-line at the Burning Man website <http://forms.burningman.com/tcq2k7/tcq2k7.pdf> and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>32</sup> Burning Man Theme Camp Questionnaire. On-line and Appendix D.

<sup>33</sup> The Off Planet Theater was announced on the Burning Man website prior to the event in 2004. The introduction to the concept of the ten stages called Off Planet Theater read: “THE RULES AND FORMS OF INTERACTIVE THEATRE -The ultimate goal of all this adornment and scene setting is to produce improvisational theatre that leads to both human and alien interactions. Although our ultimate goal is to inspire spontaneity, improvisational theatre works best when premises frame it.” Text located on-line at [http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/2004/04\\_offplanet.html](http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/2004/04_offplanet.html) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

throwers, spinners and dancers) are said to ‘perform’ at the Fire Conclave the night the Man is burned as a part of the ritual of the Burn. It is claimed to be the only mass spectatorship at the event by members of the Senior Staff.<sup>35</sup>

‘*Performance*’ is used to refer to theatrical presentations in Theme Camp descriptions in a variety of ways, such as: fire performance, transformational performance, aerial performance and communi-performance. Fire performance is a particularly important use of the term because it relates to the demonstration of fire in a theatrical way by either an individual or group of people or a person running a machine/ art installation that uses fire, and also to the success of the demonstration as performance in the sense of whether anything went wrong. This distinction can be noted as the Fire Performance Safety Team exists to work with fire artists to help them with executing the demonstration and extinguishing any rogue flames.

Performance as a term then falls into many categories as it is used at Burning Man and by participants. Importantly, the Burning Man Project does not resist utilizing performance as a descriptor in diverse ways as a means of representing the Project’s ongoing philosophy of subjective meanings associated with all things Burning Man. For instance, one might consider an activity witnessed or engaged in at

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<sup>34</sup> The title for the Performance Safety Team has been in place from 2003 - 2006.

<sup>35</sup> Marian, Maid, Burning Man Organizer; Director of Public Relations and Marketing. Interview by author, 24 March 2003, San Francisco. Tape recording. Rose, Crimson, Burning Man Organizer: Director of Fire Arts and Safety. Interview by author, 24 March 2003, San Francisco. Tape recording. Raspa, Steven, Burning Man Regional Coordinator, San Francisco Bay Area Artist and Burning Man Arts Grant Recipient. Interview by author, 2 February 2001, San Francisco. Tape recording; Email transcript. Interview by the author. March 22, 2007. DuBois, Harley, Burning Man Organizer: Director of Public Safety and Head of the Black Rock City Rangers. Interview by author, 24 March 2003, San Francisco. Tape recording. Harvey, Larry, Burning Man Founder and CEO. Interview by author, Summer 2004, 2005, Black Rock City, Nevada. Transcript. Bee, Lady, aka Christine Kristen. Burning Man Organizer: Head Arts Curator. Interview by author, 28 March 2003, San Francisco. Tape Recording and transcript.

Burning Man as performance or not. This is generally the attitude that fits within the Burner ethos: the thoughtful participant recognizes that the experience of being engaged in Burning Man may or may not be performance subjectively.

The Man itself may even be said to perform, though 'he' has no particular meaning according to Larry Harvey.<sup>36</sup> Harvey states that the Man is built as a means for the festival community to project meaning. Its anonymity promotes the process of every individual participant making it symbolic to themselves.<sup>37</sup> Performing there has also become an almost anonymous term transformed to mean symbolically how everyone behaves at Burning Man. But as the Man is symbolic and its meaning subjective to participants, so too is performance. It is only by personal will that a participant becomes a performer at the event. It is the suggestion of that potential as well as the opportunity it provides for considering how indeed everyone in this culture might be looked at as a performer. As performance theorist Hadassa Shani notes: "Playing culture unites performers with spectators as indispensable partners in any theatrical event... The concept of playing culture emphasizes the performer's presence within the act of performance."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> "Top Ten Media Myths about Burning Man." The Project in response to the myth that the Burning Man represents a person declares that founder Larry Harvey is: "...adamant in insisting that Burning Man was never intended to actually represent anything." Text located on-line at <http://www.burningman.com/press/myths.html> and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Harvey, Larry, Burning Man Founder and CEO. Interviewed by author, August 31, 2004. Black Rock City, Nevada. Email and Transcript.

<sup>38</sup> Hadassa Shani. "From Coordination to Dynamic Interactivity." *Theatrical Event Border Dynamics and Frames*. Edited by Vicky Ann Cremona, Peter Eversmann, Hans van Maanen, Willmar Sauter, and John Tulloch. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 126 – 127.

## Conditions for Performing

What is cool about the audience at Burning Man is they didn't plan on being there at that time. Most people who happen upon a performance aren't the audience who planned on being there at 4pm when the *When Where When* Guide said your show was starting. We all know its going to start at like 4:40 and some different group of people is going to be there. That's what's cool about Burning Man is that your plans are not going to be exact nor are your audiences and half the people you think will be there aren't there and sometimes people are just walking by and that's kind of cool and they just want to check things out.

-Matty Nash, participant-performer, 2006<sup>39</sup>



**Image 11: *The Lab Theater at Burning Man 2006.* The Lab was a theatre stage built by a theme camp for participants to engage in spontaneous performances. Scheduled performances also took place on the stage which was located that year on the Esplanade, the main avenue within the event-space. Image by the author.**

Performance times on the playa change as the conditions change. There are some important key factors to the conditions that exist for performance at Burning Man. The first is the weather – which is unpredictable. Dust is a major factor along

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with Matty Nash, former Production Manager for the popular Burning Man performance group, *The Mutaytor* and longtime Burning Man participant. December 27, 2006. Recording and transcript.

with the extreme temperatures daily that affects performing. Not used to such environmental extremes, participants will often limit their movement to what they can withstand. Survival on the playa is the primary motivation for everything participants do and so, performing when the weather is not cooperating is often avoided.

Time is only a suggestion on the playa and most participants accept that a performance might not start or end when it was supposed to, and may not even occur. In turn, performers on the playa have learned to accept that audiences may or may not show up at all depending on weather conditions. An audience that expects to attend or be a part of your performance might not be the group you end up seeing at the performance. Likewise, a transient audience you never expected may happen upon a performance and become a new participant crowd that goes beyond your expectations with their enthusiastic reaction to the show.

This phenomenon is recognized and referred to by the notion of ‘playa time.’ That is, participants constantly get sidetracked on the playa by unforeseen circumstances. Illness, fatigue, mobility issues, lack of motivation, inebriation, waiting on another person or people, a change of heart, and a host of other spontaneous issues may arise that cause a participant to not go see a performance and likewise, restrain a performer from being able to make it to their show. In 2006, for example, I was to perform a monologue on my theme camp stage for a small assembled crowd who had come for our afternoon happy hour. I had almost lost of my voice and was planning to cancel my performance since I would need to yell to be heard. As it turned out, one of my campmates had a small sound system he set up for me so I would not need to yell and I performed as planned an hour or so later.

## Stages at Burning Man

At Burning Man there are opportunities for performing in a number of ways. There are however no main-stages as at many festivals internationally. Physically at Burning Man, there are stages brought and built on-site by participants. Each year the number and designs of these stages changes and varies.<sup>40</sup>



**Image 12: *Center Camp Music Stage*.** This image was taken at Burning Man in 2006. Notice the context within which the performer is presented: A low-ground stage flanked by scaffolding with professional lighting equipment and on the stage, speakers for amplification, as well as microphone stands and behind him, a colorful backdrop. In front of the performer, participants make up an attentive audience seated on couches and pillows on the ground. Participants come to Center Camp to gather and escape the sun. The Music Stage is the most high-profile stage at Burning Man and people have access to it all day and night. Performances are conducted in running order from a list that has been constructed by the Project based on participant-performer's interest. When a slot is vacant because a performer has been detained, volunteers are found. Image by the author.

Some stages are quite large and outfitted with lights and sound equipment as well as a backdrop, a front or back stage curtain, as well as a shade structure or tent surrounding the stage to keep dust out and provide a more intimate setting for

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<sup>40</sup> As illustrated in the images throughout this dissertation, participant-built stages might resemble traditional raised wooden stages or by contrast might be a performance area on the ground in front of an audience space inside of a tent or dome.

performances. Some stages are simply large crates that can hold one or two people, and some theme camps use the bare ground in front of an audience to mark where performances will occur.

At Center Camp, just off the Esplanade and within the tented pavilion, there are three stages/ performance spaces for performance that have been built by Burning Man employees during the month before the event kicks off. Center Camp is a large covered space full of couches, a long coffee bar and along whose edges are some stages. These stages are meant for: 1) live music, 2) spoken word or poetry, and 3) aerial artists, dancers, yoga contact improvisational dancing and hula-hooping. In the middle of the Center Camp pavilion is a large elevated sound booth where the Masters of Ceremonies and technical volunteers stand during performances and where they assist with the Music Stage. The performance space for dance and aerial arts is located behind this booth and occupies the center of the pavilion.

At Center Camp, participants sign up with the Project organizers in the weeks prior to the event on-line or at the event itself to formally perform on these stages. Spontaneous performing however can occur there at any time. Normally, participants use Center Camp as a place to meet, watch others, relax and exhibit themselves. They might begin performing amongst the many couches where others are seated and relaxing, or near to lines for coffee purchase as other participants look on. While participants can do each of these activities anywhere in the festival space, Center Camp offers a venue for performing in front of and amidst many other participants at once in an area designated for performing both formally and informally.



**Image 13: *Business Suits at Burning Man*.** This image was taken at Burning Man in 2005. These anonymous participants dressed as business men, walked around the event space in character and explained they were on their way to a “big meeting.” With a briefcase and cell phones they pretended to be “making a deal” as I spoke to them. There is no cell phone coverage at Burning Man however. This image illustrates how participants may utilize theatricality and performance art as presentation. Image by the author.

### Costumes at Burning Man

Emile Zola, proponent of naturalistic theatre in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “stressed that people act as they do in real life in part *because* of the clothing they wear and the surroundings in which they live.”<sup>41</sup> This concept fits well when applied to Burning Man. Participants who come to Burning Man take seriously the way in which they outfit themselves for several reasons: 1) the ethos of the gathering invites wild self-

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<sup>41</sup> Marvin Carlson. *Theories of the Theatre: A Historical and Critical Survey from the Greeks to the Present*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1984. Page 277. Quote refers to the ideas of Emile Zola in the text *Oeuvres completes*, 50 vols. Paris: 1927, 42 – 120.

expression, often highly sexual and creative in nature; 2) the extreme environment forces participants to consider carefully how they might best cope; and 3) the expectations for playwear are high amongst the general population on-site – that one not dress as one normally might in the ‘default world’; 4) on the playa, as in many cultures, your costume announces you to other people, social actors and in this case, participants. The complexity, color and style of your costume can set you apart and distinguish you as a Burner as opposed to a ‘Tourist’ – someone who comes to Burning Man but does not participate. A costume can also open communication and visual connections between participants who need little excuse to approach others at the event. “Parades, mass gatherings, street theatre, sex, and partying – everything is exaggerated, ritualized, done for show. Masquerading encourages experimenting with behavior, identity slippage, and acting as if one were someone else.”<sup>42</sup>

Costumes signify, in as much as they color the character of the individual who dons them, but they also represent the desire to belong to the community. “The transformation of identity, from ordinary person to extra-ordinary character, is achieved through dress and behavior. Costume and make-up or masks change a person’s appearance, and in the context of this type of event, the very fact of taking on a new appearance encourages the adoption of a different type of behavior, which generally gives rise to action aimed at capturing and holding the public’s attention.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Richard Schechner. “The Street is the Stage.” *Radical Street Performance: An International Anthology*. Edited by Jan Cohen-Cruz. London: Routledge, 1998, 204.

<sup>43</sup> Vicki Ann Cremona. “Carnival as Theatrical Event.” *Theatrical Event Border Dynamics and Frames*. Edited by Vicki Ann Cremona, Peter Eversmann, Hans van Maanen, Willmar Sauter, and John Tulloch. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 83.

Costumes seemingly are one of the easiest ways for participants to demonstrate their love of flair or embellishment.

Just as in the theatre, excessive ostentation denotes the dynamic personality of the character, so too on the playa are such extravagant, beautiful and unusual modes of display taken note of. In fact, this form of performative communication can in many ways be considered the primary means of expressing oneself radically on the playa. For this reason, many participants go to great lengths to make fabulous costumes or to adorn themselves so that they will be noticed. Certainly, a lack of clothing can also be considered a kind of extreme exhibitionism, and often participants will find unique ways of combining costume and nudity much to the delight of their fellow Burners. “As in any theatre event, through presence and action, the actor takes on added qualities, which make him/her the focus of the public’s attention. Space, costume and behavior constantly recall elements that should transpose revelers into a situation of reversal vis-s-vis daily life, creating a temporary liminal space, a ‘betwixt and between’ shaped by a theatrical presence that inherently signals possibilities of new and contrasting dimensions vis-à-vis the established norm.”<sup>44</sup>

Burning Man is another world: it is a world of exhibition. Nudity, public sex, and lowered inhibitions regarding sexualized visual imagery and heightened sexual behaviors are standard at the event. Nudity as a kind of performance can be

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<sup>44</sup> Vicki Ann Cremona. “Carnival as Theatrical Event.” *Theatrical Event Border Dynamics and Frames*. Edited by Vicki Ann Cremona, Peter Eversmann, Hans van Maanen, Willmar Sauter, and John Tulloch. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 83.

transformative for both exhibitionist and voyeur, when the taboo of unselfconscious display occurs in an informal and uncharged space. Observes Richard Schechner:

Festivals and carnivals – almost but not quite the same – are comic theatrical events: comic in desire, even if sometimes tragic in outcome. When people go into the streets en masse, they are celebrating life's fertile possibilities. They eat, drink, make theatre, make love, and enjoy each other's company. They put on masks and costumes, erect and wave banners, and construct effigies not merely to disguise or embellish their ordinary selves, or to flaunt the outrageous, but also to act out the multiplicity each human life is. They protest, often by means of farce or parody, against what is oppressive, ridiculous, and outrageous. For one to join the many as a part(ner), is not just a sexy act, it is also a socially and politically generative activity. Festive actions playfully, blasphemously, and obscenely expose to the general eye for approval and/ or ridicule the basic (and therefore bodily) facts of human life and death. Such playing challenges official culture's claims to authority, stability, sobriety, immutability, and immortality.<sup>45</sup>

Not only does one eventually adapt to the commonplace nature of nudity in this performance culture but the widening of personal boundaries happens at large. Nudity at Burning Man is commonplace. Burning Man is, as Huizinga would put it, where ordinary life is at a standstill.<sup>46</sup> Shelter from the heat, dehydration, wind, dust and hunger are the primary concerns of participants in this carnival. It is an unforgiving environment. Comfort gone, performers as participants drop their usual social roles, lose track of time and focus energy on the task of creating a playful illusion with or without their colorful costumes.

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<sup>45</sup> Richard Schechner. "The Street is the Stage." *Radical Street Performance: An International Anthology*. Edited by Jan Cohen-Cruz. London: Routledge, 1998, 197.

<sup>46</sup> Johan Huizinga. *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*. Boston: The Beacon Press, 1950.



**Image 14: *Burning Man: The Musical!*** This image was taken at Burning Man in 2005 of participant-performers presenting their self-created show, “Burning Man: The Musical!” The show was performed again in 2006 with a different cast and was described in the *What Where When* on-line listing in 2006 as such: “It’s greasier than Grease, cattier than Cats and hairier than Hair! Don’t miss this production starring all your favorite Black Rock clichés. Sing along as the BRC Rangers, the Frat Boys, the Ravers, and a Larry Harvey look-a-like belt out original lyrics to a score straight from a karaoke machine.”<sup>47</sup> This was a performance where participants could follow along with the performers on stage to the demonstrated music and gestures. “The Musical” was revived in 2006 using the melodies to “The Wizard of Oz.” Image by the author.

### **Performing with Playa or *Burner* Names**

Identifying names can be given...without any elimination for our specification of the identity of the thing, but from the name we give to a person something does follow for his identity. The name is not merely a sign related contingently to the person – so that we can easily imagine it to be changed and the person to remain the same- but rather is integral to that presence of the person to the world and to himself which is integral to who he is. He *becomes* that named being.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> In 2006, “Burning Man: The Musical,” was described in the *WhatWhereWhen*. On-line at [http://www.burningman.com/calendar/playa/view\\_entry.php?id=4377&date=20060831](http://www.burningman.com/calendar/playa/view_entry.php?id=4377&date=20060831) and also in Appendix D to this dissertation.

Playa names are the nicknames or pseudonyms that participants use at Burning Man. A playa name designates a participant as having accepted the alternate nature of Burning Man as a place they can be themselves or potentially their more truer self, away from their usual name that was given to them and which labels them in mainstream society. These *new* names, chosen or given, mark participants as members of Burning Man's performance culture in a way similar to actors performing in a play. For a time, this is their alternate personality. But more accurately, these playa names communicate how the participant wants to be perceived, understood and known. Observes theorist Bruce Wilshire: "...tracing the conditions of an individual's identity as a person finds that person bound up with others and the world in bonds of communiality, responsibility, and freedom."<sup>49</sup>

Playa names might suggest a participant's great passions or pastimes. The name may point to who or what they aspire to be. But perhaps most importantly, it means that other participants go along with this play acting and submit to one's desire to be referred to by a more personal or creative name, and reveals the sacredness with which Burners and those who accept Burning Man culture embrace most things theatrical. However, one could consider playa names or costumes worn there a mask that they hide behind. According to Wilshire:

In the art event the artists and participants cannot help but reveal themselves as they are – as artists and persons. The only question is whether they will reveal themselves profoundly or less than profoundly. One way in which a less than profound disclosure can occur is that what they reveal themselves as being while engaged in

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<sup>48</sup> Bruce Wilshire. *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, 62.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 124.

the art event is only the way they are during the event. One way in which a profound disclosure occurs is that what they are during the event knits itself up with other times of their lives so that these various times become linked together in a context and are rendered intelligible.<sup>50</sup>

This idea has been articulated to me by Steven Raspa, longtime Burning Man artist and Project staff member, who performed under the personae, “Uncle Supermonopolytottoman!” for the years 1996-1998. He was inspired by this realm of the self-invented and named identity that exists at Burning Man. However as Wilshire points out: “...the attempt to establish one’s particularity for others and for oneself must be made, and yet it must be forever unfinishable...authenticity of individual self consists in the admission to self by self of the unfinishability of the individuation of itself.”<sup>51</sup> Raspa explains how this kind of self-performativity affects his thinking:

Persona and identity-based work is another form of expression that has been consistently strong at Burning Man. There is something about being in the desert that naturally directs focus on the self and it provides the blank slate necessary to conjure entirely new selves from the human spirit and imagination...nowhere else does the concept of alter-egos and alternate identities reach such populist magnitudes as it does at Burning Man. With that comes an awareness that if we can remake ourselves into whatever and whoever we please why would we settle for a role in life that is not fulfilling? Through role play people have ultimately questioned their "normal" identities, jobs and values and started over. Is that performance? Well, it was perhaps at some point. For many it also becomes reality.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 137.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 227.

<sup>52</sup> Steven Raspa. Interview with the author. Recording and transcript. August 29, 2005.



**Image 15: *BRU Cheerleaders Perform.*** This image was taken at Burning Man in 2006 of the Black Rock University Theme Camp Cheerleaders. Comprised of both men and women, these participant-performers lead a spontaneous cheer at Center Camp on an impromptu participatory stage and recruited performers from the audience to cheer with them. They wear costumes they made for the event and are reciting cheers they created. Image by the author.

The importance of play and Burner names may thus be recognized as important for their potential to help participants create their own personas but also as a theatrical device for transforming and announcing oneself into this performance culture. The naming people do on the playa signifies as well the seriousness with which they approach play and interaction at Burning Man, as well as their deep desire for breaking from social roles and names they are locked into in the ‘default world.’



**Image 16: *The Cockroach Theater*.** This image was taken at Burning Man in 2005 where Richard Foreman's "Permanent Brain Damage" was performed daily. The group of participants who built the theater and performed the Richard Foreman work were not however, affiliated with the New York city director, Richard Foreman. Image by the author.

### **Definitions of Performance**

To help define performance at Burning Man I begin this section by offering two performance analyses to illustrate the unique context for performance that Burning Man as an event provides. Firstly, in the image above we see a dome tent that at Burning Man in 2005 served as the home of the Cockroach Theater where the participant-performers presented Richard Foreman's play 'Permanent Brain Damage.' Clearly the tent was a theater complete with signage outside, seating area within and designated performance area (stage) partitioned off in Foreman's distinctive Plexiglas wall between audience and performers. The audience members who entered the theater were engaged by the show which was presented to them by the theater's

players and after the show there was applause and we exited with comments about how nice it was to see some actors performing traditional avant-garde theater on the playa.

By contrast, consider the scene in Image 13 which shows two participants dressed in business suits. These men engaged my campmates and me in a lively discussion where they performed a playful dialogue that guided us all through a comical and animated conversation about how these ‘businessmen’ were on their way to a ‘big meeting,’ had some ‘papers they needed signed,’ were going to ‘seal some deals,’ and had some ‘important calls’ to make. For those of us conversing with them, it was an especially delightful and humorous spontaneous interaction we had all volunteered for. But as much as we were engaged with these performers whose ‘routine’ might have been like Commedia dell’Arte, my camp – as performers ourselves, were aware that we were simultaneously performers and audience.

Certainly, I am not questioning whether or not the second scene was performance. I believe it was because by definition and using a Performance Studies approach to the word, we were ‘acting’ and ‘playing’ with each other. We were scripting ourselves and going along with the fiction that these men were actually businessmen on their way to a meeting. Richard Schechner’s definition of performance as ‘twice behaved behavior’ then would not work for this perspective because the scene was happening for the first and only time.<sup>53</sup> For my campmates and I performing with these players was certainly the first time and thus spontaneous

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<sup>53</sup> Richard Schechner. *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Performance and Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1993, 1.

theatrics, what cannot be known is if this was spontaneous performing for the men or a rehearsed routine.

However, if we consider Erving Goffman's definition of performance as 'all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way the other participants,' we have a definition of performance that applies to this scene.<sup>54</sup> As players performing together amongst ourselves and for ourselves we were playing parts and doing a routine. The distinction I want to make here is that this was informal performance whereas the first example was formal performance. I further define and outline these two categories below in the following analysis of the definitions of performance at Burning Man.

### **Performance Section from the Burning Man Project website<sup>55</sup>**

#### PERFORMANCE

Everyone is a Performer

*All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players... - William Shakespeare*

Each and everyone of us is a player, performer on the playa. Burning Man casts all of us at every moment in a heady series of unstaged productions. As one walks or bikes the streets & open playa of Black Rock City one will find at every moment of the day and night someone is shining with their talent.

As you travel through Black Rock City you might notice the absence of something that is the main focus of any other festival, a "Main

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<sup>54</sup> Erving Goffman. *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday, 1959, 15-16.

<sup>55</sup> The text for this can be found published on-line at the Burning Man website located at [http://www.burningman.com/on\\_the\\_playa/performance/index.html](http://www.burningman.com/on_the_playa/performance/index.html) and appears in Appendix D to this dissertation.

Stage". At one point in our Burning Man history we did have a Main Stage, and as much fun it was to book some wonderful performances, there was always this division between audience and performer. It was finally realized that the Main Stage was in competition with everything else that was happening in Black Rock City and went against the Burning Man ethos. For large stages promote spectators, and we are all about participation. You see there is no one single focus like a stage or a theatre would have. Things are happening all over the place, all the time, 24 hours a day.

But just because there is no Main Stage, should not stop you from finding an audience on a smaller more intimate scale. Maybe you have something special in mind, a talent or a skill to contribute. You may be a juggler or a musician or a fire dancer, or perhaps a costume or theatrical designer. At Burning Man, you'll find your audience!<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> The 'Performance' section published by the Project on their website includes the following categories and suggestions (text below) for helping participants better understand the potential for performing both at the event and away from it, as a member of the Burner culture.

**Theme camps.** Your theme camp should create an ambience, a visual presence, in some way provide a communal space or provide activity. It may be the anchor for a larger event taking place. The best camps succeed by simplicity. Concepts that are too big, like scholarly attempts to debunk complex social theory or Titanic-length storytelling arcs, will die from disinterest. For more information visit Theme Camps. Please note that new and improved sound restriction will apply.

**Center Camp Café.** There will not be a Main Stage in Center Camp, although there will be music, spoken-word, and other performances at the Center Camp Café. For more information, see the Café Performance page.

**Fire Conclave.** Fire performers are like the celestial fireflies of the playa and Black Rock City is a perfect environment to play with fire. Official Burning Man Fire Celebrations; Opening Ceremony of lighting the First Flame in the Fire Cauldron in Center Camp, with fire dancing all week long leading up to Saturday night when the Fire Conclave create the Ring of Light before the Man is released in Pyrotechnic Delight. We welcome fire performers from all over the world, for more information on how to get involved visit Fire Conclave.

**Lamplighters.** Every day of the event, as the sun sets, the Lamplighters set out to light the streets of Black Rock City. They request the participation of drummers, musicians, and performers of all types to accompany their processions through the city. The walk takes about an hour, is done every evening, and is made infinitely more ceremonious and special with performers joining along, all are welcome. For more information visit The Lamplighters or email lamplighter(at)burningman(dot)com.

**Drummers Collective.** The Drummers Collective exists as a clearinghouse and contact point for drummers who wish to contribute their art to Burning Man by providing music for performances on the playa and at Burning Man events year round. One example is the Drum Consortium and the goals in 2004 are to distill an Ensemble of ~ 200 players for a powerful drum rhythm that will accompany the Fire Conclave as they dance before the Man is released in Pyrotechnic delight, Saturday night of Burning Man 2004. For more information visit Drummers Collectives.

**ePlaya.** You can also check out Artists Seeking Stages and Stages Seeking Acts on our ePlaya Bulletin Board. And for some extra inspiration, check out our Performance Archive to see what participants have done in years past.

This textual explanation provided by the Project describes to the participant where performance fits in the logic and ethos of the event and within Burning Man as an imagined place. Out on the playa however, performance comes to the participant in a variety of different ways. At Burning Man, says the Burning Man Project, *Everyone is a Performer*.<sup>57</sup> Performance forms and definitions do vary at Burning Man but they can be placed comfortably in two categories which I outline here: Informal Performance and Formal Performance.

### **Informal Performance**

In this category, the line between performer and spectator is blurred. These performances are not announced or publicized, they are the theatrical activities that happen spontaneously through participant interaction and which occur because these individuals have voluntarily entered into a performative activity.

Examples include: excited conversations become improvised performance; Interactive playing as performance, for instance, when a participant in costume allows others to try it on and assumes the new identity; when a participant group engages another performatively for their and others' enjoyment; performances that are inspired by a sense of play, such as: cheerleader patrols, faux police officers writing participants silly tickets, or participants impersonating characters or cultural archetypes and employing theatrical techniques such as affected voices and language to present these; and finally, there are also many larger scheduled or spontaneous activities on the playa that facilitate informal performing such as parades.

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<sup>57</sup> 'Performance at Burning Man.' Text located on-line at [www.burningman.com/performance](http://www.burningman.com/performance) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

Spontaneous interactive communal performances include themed parades, processions, and art parades, such as the 'French Maid Brigade Parade,' art car parades, the 'DPW (Department of Public Works) Parade,' the 'Electro-luminescent Parade' of illuminated art, the 'Billion Bunny March to Protest Humanity,' along with rogue groups of Carrots and Elmer Fuds and members of Animal Control who attempt to round up the Bunnies; and participatory dances, including acrobatic dance, fire dancing, contact improvisation dance, polka, swing, roller boogie, ballroom, thrash, interpretive and ethnic forms of dance.<sup>58</sup>

### **Formal Performance**

In this category there exist clear distinctions between audience and performer(s). Also, the familiar elements of traditional theatre may be present such as a stage, technology, lighting, sound amplification and possibly narrative provided by a stage manager, Master of Ceremonies or troupe leader.

Examples would include: performance art; mock battles; fight clubs which welcome all forms of fight, for instance, the 'Death Guild Thunderdome' and 'Fight Club camp;' fire dancing and the range of fire devices and props for personal-expression, including poi and staff, fire fingers, wings, hats, jump ropes, and hula-hooping; performance incorporating persona, scientific display and spectacle, such as Dr. Megavolt and Mistress Megavolt creating and interacting with Tesla Coils and

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<sup>58</sup> The French Maid Brigade Parade is an example of a procession advertised in the *WhatWhereWhen* that anyone dressed as a French maid or who supports them can participate in, while the DPW Parade is made up of members of the Department of Public Works who tend to costume themselves much like hardcore motorcyclists. The Illuminated Parade and the Bunny March invite members of both categories to walk with them and as mentioned some years, rogue counter-protesters will (playfully) converge with the Bunnies conceptually and physically. Each procession, parade or march may have its own designated route that takes the transient group of variable numbers through busier streets including the main street on the playa, the Esplanade.

bolts of electricity for audiences; technology could also include lighting, projection and sound; and tech-based performances such as live art back-dropped by projections.<sup>59</sup>

Other examples of formal performances include: variety shows including burlesque, strip tease, magic acts, juggling, erotic dance, shadow play, and puppetry; Performance with sculpture that can also serve as a performance space, such as Pepe Ozan's fire lingams and opera sets, and the 1999 'Futura Deluxe Bubble Fountain and Portable Temple' by Steven Raspa; circus performance and stilt walkers, performances by aerialists, musicians, acrobats, and fire performers, such as the 2006 'Red Nose District' theme camp, 'Cirque Berzerk', 'Vau De Vire Society', 'Xeno', 'Do Lab', 'Abundant Sugar', 'Gooferman', and 'The Mutaytor'; theatrical productions including plays, musicals, rock operas; *Burning Man: The Musical* at Lost Penguin Café in 2005 and 2006, and the Cockroach Theater's presenting Richard Foreman's *Permanent Brain Damage* in 2005; spoken word, preaching, lectures and demonstrations, and any music or dance performed before an audience.<sup>60</sup>

I have created these two categories to give a sense of the variety of performing at the event and to distinguish the two main types of performance at Burning Man, but also to emphasize that these performance forms are almost all accessible to the participant base at-large. Much of this performing can be done with basic elements of theater: actors, an audience and a space. Technology is not necessary for these genres

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<sup>59</sup> Death Guild and fight clubs are both examples of themed camps listed on the Burning Man website from recent years. The text describing these can be accessed at [www.burningman.com](http://www.burningman.com) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>60</sup> Each of these examples of formal performance on the playa can be accessed through the Burning Man website at [www.burningman.com](http://www.burningman.com) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

to exist at Burning Man and so too, these basic performance genres are more easily created in this environment. Performance genres on the playa are of course always live and, in their ability to entice audiences' demands as well, rather clever techniques for holding people's attention. And while the entire festival space may be considered a stage, some venues for performing at Burning Man are uniquely set apart, and elevate performance to an art.

One important example of high profile performance settings at Burning Man is the Center Camp stages. Certainly, stages built by participants themselves which provide spaces for performing better attract participants and draw attention to theatrical presentation on the playa. However, one example of a high profile performance setting in Burning Man history stands out as a venue that both succeeded and failed in its effort by the Project to inspire performing. This was the ten stages at the Man in 2004, called the "Off Planet Theater."

### **The Off Planet Theater at the Man**

In 2004, the theme of Burning Man was *Vault of Heaven* and the concept behind this design for the Man base was that ten stages would provide the means for more formally performative presentations, and also would allow participants to uniquely connect with the Man. From the Burning Man website that year this text explains:

We now encourage participants to choose the world they wish to inhabit, and to devise interactive theatrical performances which will take place nightly during the event. An Alien Stage Manager will oversee these choices, as well as the overall coordination of performances. No theatrical experience is needed to participate.<sup>61</sup>



**Image 17. *Full Moon (Aug 30, 2004) over the Man in Neon.* This image was taken in 2004 of the Man at night. The Man base in 2004 was made up of ten stages that ran along the outside of the base, each with its own unique background depicting an alien world. Each stage also had its own green room. Inside of the base was an observatory, high-powered telescopes and an art gallery. Image reproduced with permission. (c) 2004 Don Jackson/ Don Jackson Photography.**

The idea was to enable participants to perform and to do so under the Man, the primary symbol for presentation at the event with some degree of assistance or facilitation from the Project's voluntary stage staff, participant-performers were given the chance to stage themselves in a highly unique theater venue.

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<sup>61</sup> Text is located at the Burning Man website located on-line at [http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/2004/04\\_theme.html](http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/2004/04_theme.html) and appears in Appendix D to this dissertation.

In 2004, the designers for the Man, Larry Harvey and Rod Garrett, built a base to the sixty-foot structure and Man, that catered to theater. As the image above shows, ten separate stages in a round faced out to the playa. Called the “Off Planet Theatre & Ten Stages Atrium,” these outward facing stages were complemented by an open air observatory inside the base with high-powered telescopes for celestial viewing by participants. This unique Man-base offered participants separate and distinct performance spaces, each with the stage three feet above the playa floor and individually artist-created digital imagery backdrops suggesting alternate realities or worlds. Importantly, the stages could be accessed from the outside, in front of the stage itself (if one were to jump onto it) or from within the inside of the base through separate doors that led to private green rooms complete with mirrors, tables and chairs and separate doors leading to individual stages. Each stage had a name and an appointed “Alien Stage Manager” who had volunteered through the Primary Stage Manager, a participant performer known as “Nambla the Clown,” performer Ggregg Taylor. Groups signed up in the months before the event to perform throughout the week, although spontaneous performances also occurred when participants simply got up on the stages.

In 2004, during the week and as the stages were functioning, I observed and documented performances at the Off-Planet Theater. It became clear to me that with the particularly windy weather which blew up many dust storms, many of the stages were devoid of performances and most of those performances that did occur seemed improvised. It was not what the Burning Man Project had described on their website

all summer, but it was not clear to me if the Theater concept under the Man was actually failing.



**Image 18: *Theater at the Man*.** This image was taken at Burning Man in 2004 showing two anonymous participants performing in costume on one of the ten stages at the Man base in front of an artist rendition of an alien world. That year, participant-performers were able to spontaneously present both crafted and improvised performances for the transient audiences moving around the Man base. Image reproduced with permission. Photograph by Dan Adams.

That week I met with the Head Stage Manager, Ggregg Taylor and asked him for his first hand impressions. He observed:

Larry Harvey wanted people to be able to interact with the Man itself rather than it just being an icon because it is the symbol of the city. So they scaled it up this year and had ten small diorama theaters around the base of the Man and the idea was that they would be adopted by theater groups. And as it turned out the people who adopted theaters mostly just flaked out and didn't show. Of the ten theaters seven have now sort of abandoned what they were doing. One of the things that's a problem with it is basically we told people what they had to do, we gave them rules and rules don't really work very well at Burning Man and aren't really necessary for creative people, you don't need to tell

them step into my concept when they can come to the table with a fantastic concept, a much better concept themselves. So, on the second day, I scrapped the whole rules thing and we let it be, just let them have their little behavioral rules but the rest are all free form and they're just fabulous now.<sup>62</sup>

When I asked him whether or not the Off Planet Theater succeeded or failed that year,

Taylor responded:

I think that the initial rules of the concept failed and I think the thing that's succeeding is people having a really happy time of being somewhere where anything they do is thrown into the marketplace of ideas and being devoured. You know most of the time, we're sitting in and staring at a theater rather than being on stage at a theater you know, and this is twenty-four thousand people you are performing in front of and I think it's fantastic.<sup>63</sup>

What is important to remember by my including this example of high profile theater at Burning Man is that it reflects a commitment by the Project to helping enable participants' performing – not necessarily that people didn't follow rules for performance. Taylor's reaction as Stage Manager/ representative of the Project in the Off Planet Theater project was that it is the ability of participants to take a space and make it their own performatively on their own terms that makes Burning Man unique as a theatrical event. If the goal with the Off Planet Theater was to allow people to perform who normally would not, then it should be noted that that is an important goal. At Burning Man, the standards for success are not the same as in the traditional theater world which looks for sold out crowds and standing ovations. At Burning Man, just having ten stages available to participants with their own green room and

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<sup>62</sup> Ggregg Taylor aka Nambla the Clown. Interview with the author. Recording and transcript. September 2, 2004.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

stage manager symbolizes a commitment to the participants as performers. As Ggregg Taylor reminded me that year:

These guys call me up and say they want to know if they can do their rubber chicken karaoke (at the Off Planet Theater at the Man) and I am like, 'good God, we have ten dioramas operating six hours a day for five days that's three hundred hours of performance time and if we don't have in three hundred hours of performance time at least one hour for rubber chicken karaoke, then we really shouldn't be doing Burning Man anymore,' you know?<sup>64</sup>

This story illustrates the playfulness with which performance is approached at Burning Man and how essential it is performers there maintain a sense of humor.



**Image 19: *Theater at the Man 2*.** This image shows a performer at the Off Planet Theater at the Man base in 2004. Here the lone performer looks out from one of the ten Off Planet stages at the Man that year. The participant-performer wears a costume and make-up and is using a prop in his performance. This image was reproduced with permission. Photograph by Dan Adams.

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<sup>64</sup> Interview with Ggregg Taylor, aka Nambla the Clown. Septemeber 2, 2004..

## The Ten Stages at the Man and the Off-Planet Theatre

The persistence of collective memory through restored behavior, however, represents an alternative and potentially contestatory form of knowledge – bodily knowledge, habit, custom.

-Joseph Roach, "Culture and Performance"<sup>65</sup>

In 2004, the base of the Man was created as ten stages called the Off-Planet Theatre. Many felt that the presence of these stages as an extremely symbolic space for performance meant the Burning Man Project was re-dedicating itself to participation and spaces for theatrical presentation. The 'No Spectators' debate grew in the preceding years before the Off-Planet Theater was created because the number of event attendees was rising exponentially and longtime Burners began to notice and complain about people coming to the event simply to watch. The tag-line 'No Spectators' had long been in place in the culture and with the rise in population naturally grew the debate amongst long-time participants that people who used the event as an opportunity to party and see naked people was undermining the essential spirit of Burning Man. Not only was the presence of such people seen as an insult to what Burning Man culture stood for, but also as a threat to the way of life the desert devotees had come to pride themselves on while at Burning Man.

The Off-Planet Theatre at the Man was seen as a logical outgrowth of a sensed need by Man creators and designers Larry Harvey and Rod Garrett. The year before in 2003, when the annual theme was 'Beyond Belief' there had been

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<sup>65</sup> Joseph Roach. "Performance and Culture." *Performativity and Performance*. Edited by Andrew Parker and Eve Sedgwick. New York: Routledge, 1995. Page 47.

at the Man base alcoves where participants could pose themselves for others' pleasure. The base was designed to look like a pre-Columbian pyramid with staircase rising to the top and along the sides, eight ceremonial spaces where people to sit and the result was dramatic. Participants were intrigued and excited by the human performance presence. Often these individuals would strike serene poses as if they were meditating. Many participants that year who saw these performative displays or individual tableaux, commented at the event and later on-line about how special an experience it was to see these people performing at the Man.

In previous years, the Man had an interactive quality to it because participants could walk up to the Man or walk around its base. However, that participants could perform themselves on the Man and as a part of the overall presentation of the Man, these people and those who watched them became somehow a part of the Man. This then was the impetus for creating the Man base the following year that would both capitalize on this positive participant reaction and support more Burners' desire for performing at the Man. With ten separate stages, each representing a different alien world and matching with that year's theme, interested participants would now have access to performance spaces that were literally and figuratively under the shadow of the Man.

Many event participants and performers came to consider this a very positive step towards the Burning Man Project's commitment to performance at the event, especially because performance, unlike other creative endeavors such as installation art, was not eligible for grants through the Projects Black Rock Arts

Foundation. But the troublesome result of the experiment that was the Off-Planet Theater would reveal potentially something rather complicated about the nature of performing at Burning Man and sensibility of the participants who perform there.

The year of the Off-Planet Theater at the Man base, there were several elements that contributed to the success and failure of what performances would happen there. These were: the process in place for recruiting performers, the demonstrated commitment of those who had signed up to perform versus those who volunteered at the event, and the weather. The truth is that the combined efforts of the participants who actually performed that year was significantly smaller than was expected both by the Project and the few Burner's helping run things at the Man.

The process for recruiting performers was very specific to the Burning Man culture: the Project announced the annual theme on their website and directed those with interest in the stages at the Man to an accompanying web page which explained the stages, named the volunteer stage manager and told people how to get in touch with someone if they wanted to sign up before the event to use a particular stage to perform on. The suggestion on the web page was that groups of performers would especially be encouraged to perform on the Off-Planet Theater stages. The Burning Man web site announcement from 2004 read as follows:

We have selected these ten designs for the dioramas that surround the Observatory, and we encourage you to choose one alien world in which you'd like to create interactive theater. Please read through our Off-Planet page to understand the parameters of this undertaking, and then contact off-planet (at) burningman (dot) com with your ideas. We will select ten

groups to inhabit and manage our stages; on site these groups will work with Ggreg Taylor, our resident Cosmetologist and stage manager. We will announce the ten groups on this page, and individuals who want to get involved with them will be able to contact them directly.<sup>66</sup>

The instructions sounded clear enough, that individual groups would be chosen to perform and they would each have a stage manager to oversee their performing. Despite some number of groups actually signing up on-line with the Project to perform at the Man on given days and times, many of these groups did not show up. This problem was compounded by the fact that during the week of the event, there were frequent dust storms that prevented many participants from venturing out to the Man as frequently as they are able to in other years.

The essential difficulty with the Off-Planet Theatre was that while pre-planning and participant response suggested people would be performing, the environment itself, as well as lack of motivation on the part of previously committed performers, became a hindrance for the Theater to work. Many participants who did venture out to the Man came away disappointed after circling the Man base to find only empty stages. This result was also a symbolic sort of non-productive performance space that by its example discouraged participants from using it for even spontaneous interactive performing. However, as more participants arrived later in the week of the event, according to head stage manager Nambla the Clown aka Ggreg Taylor, many participants simply jumped on the stages and began to improvise.

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<sup>66</sup> Official announcement from the Burning Man website in 2004. Text located at [www.burningman.com/2004Theme/Off-PlanetTheatre](http://www.burningman.com/2004Theme/Off-PlanetTheatre) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

The week of the 2004 Burning Man, the stages at the Man were used for performances that ranged from mime and puppetry to jam-bands and interpretive dance. However, the stages tucked inside the Man base, when out of the path of the wind and blowing dust, were also used for public sex. The Man as a sort of sacred space at the event does not most years have spaces or alcoves where participants can lay down while in plain site of other participants and also, out of the way of their path of movement. The stages then, because of their convenience and openness, became spaces for staging sex as spontaneous performances of exhibitionism. Perhaps this development became an indication of Burners' ability to claim and utilize all spaces and opportunities for creative and liberating behaviors or interestingly a suggestion of the real lack of interest Burners have for rules.

Since the first years in the Black Rock Desert, participants had demonstrated their knack for performativity that lent itself to the do-it-yourself nature of the event and more so, as a general rule of action at Burning Man. If Burners believe that there should be 'No Spectators' and that they are bound to radical self-expression, then for them, demonstrating their desire publicly in a designated performance space becomes a place for identity-making. Performances of desire, as far as staged spontaneous acts at the Off-Planet Theater, became so because they were personal acts made into public performances that were repeated throughout the week of the event by participants.

The reality of what happened with the Off-Planet Theater in 2004 speaks to the nature of Burners and performing at the event because it suggests what

motivates those who come to perform there. Despite the Project's desire to plan for performance that was demonstrated pre-event on the web site, at the event, many participants treated the opportunity to perform once lost, as a necessary side-effect of what difficulties and distractions simply happen to arise at the event. Weather is of course a major factor in participants' ability to move around the event space and to perform as well, but aside from that, the Burner mentality values what one feels like doing in the moment. Just because they had pre-committed to performing did not in reality necessitate their performing and this attitude prevails on the playa in many things. One may desire for and plan to participate in a playa activity on a given day, however many factors may prevent them from doing including the desire to lose all sense of responsibility. This is Bahktinian liberation that I mean by pointing out how Burning Man is comparable to *Carnival*.

Burners at the event, including performers, feel like they can and should be able to lose time, get lost or distracted and even might find it hard to avoid not being able to meet their commitments if in fact they are committed to anyone or thing at the event. In many ways this attitude, or Burner mentality, extends to personal and love relationships as Burners may adopt an appreciation for or proclivity towards very free sexual expressions with near-strangers. But as social and creative performers this liberation from responsibility in truth does have consequences and causes conflict. In the case of the Off-Planet Theater, participants saw their fellow Burners disregard what had been offered as an opportunity for performing and thereby, the empty stages themselves became

testaments to the conflicts between Burners' performative playfulness and performance anxiety.

The Off-Planet Theatre was not the Burning Man Project's only demonstration of a pro-theatre stance. Since the beginning of the event, organizers have argued there was performance and that Burners were naturally inclined towards performance. The idea of performance needs here to be disputed however. For the Project organizers and stage managers, *performance* seemed to mean a rehearsed and enacted scene involving a designated group of performers. But for Burners *performance* was a transgressive act, a performative or 'a doing.' Here would be the disconnect between not only the meaning of performance but also the route to creating performance, for while organizers pre-planned for performance, Burners themselves rejected this notion and chose to create performance spontaneously, as well as have their public enactments staged at the Theater further contributing to the atmosphere of the event as a place where performance can happen anywhere.

The Center Camp stages that became established in the late 1990s were the most obvious gesture by the Project organizers to encourage performing amongst participants and with the rise in popularity of the slogan 'No Spectators' so too was the seemingly official message the organizers supported. However, after the year 2001, 'No Spectators' began to be heard less, this perhaps due to the continued increase in population. With the surge in attendance came the inevitable presence of non-Burners, virgins, tourists or newbies who were not as inclined to

spontaneously volunteer for interactive theatrical moments. Longtime Burners who ran stages at the event found recruiting players more difficult each year.

When in 2004, the organizers provided the ten stages at the Man, the idea was that the dedicated and active Burner demographic would here have a place of honor on the playa to perform. That many groups that initially signed up did not come and that the stages were underutilized revealed not so much that those participants did not exist as it demonstrated the brand of art-making these performers appreciated. The Off-Planet experiment merely showed how Burners liked their theater, on their own terms and truly spontaneous. The truth is that the Off-Planet Theatre was both a success and a failure: it failed because the concept going into the planning did not recognize Burners' lack of respect for rules that would dictate their performing, especially by the Burning Man Project. But it also shows that Burners at the event hold to the sentiment that 'the show must go on' since the performances at the Off-Planet Theatre would go up and on but only when the rules surrounding the stage use were discarded and replaced by a more flexible and completely un-judgmental attitude towards the performances they hosted. This conclusion was confirmed by Gregg Taylor, the Stage Manager for the Off-Planet Theater, but also in the fact that in the final days of the event in 2004 more spontaneous performances occurred on the ten stages because the rules had been discarded and the participants had taken it over.

## Contextualizing Performance<sup>67</sup>

Throughout this chapter, I have offered a broad overview of the kinds of performance that take place at Burning Man as well as the ways participants are able to express themselves theatrically. Another element to the experience of the participant as performer that needs to be examined is the context for performers within this festival setting. A useful way to consider such a complex issue is by way of an existing model for contextualizing festival participation. In particular I will use in this section, a model for analyzing participant experience during theatrical events. This model will allow for a better evaluation of individual performers or performers as a group at Burning Man and show how they are located culturally.

This model is outlined in the chapter, “The Festival is a Theatrical Event,” in the book *Theatrical Events: Borders Dynamics Frames*, by the authors; Jacqueline Martin, Georgia Seffrin, and Rod Wissler.<sup>68</sup> These theorists suggest a model for critical analysis that represents the construction of the festival as a theatrical event. This model considers the remote and immediate circumstances and contexts which affect the production of meaning inherent in the performance-audience communication during a festival, and informs an understanding of the ways in which meanings are constructed by participants. I am using this model in order to consider participation in the festival setting as performance and to explore how this experience is potentially transformative.

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<sup>67</sup> In this section of the chapter, I will use the word “festival” because the theorists whose model I am utilizing for an analysis here themselves use the word festival.

<sup>68</sup> Jacqueline Martin, Georgia Seffrin and Rod Wissler. “The Festival is a Theatrical Event.” *Theatrical Events Borders Dynamics and Frames*. Edited by Vicky Ann Cremona, Peter Eversmann, Hans van Maanen, Willmar Sauter and John Tulloch. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004, 91 – 110.

According to the authors, in 1999, Hans van Maanen and the members of the International Federation for Theatre Research's Theatrical Events Working Group, created a schema for understanding the three levels of context surrounding a festival. This schema helps ground my own understanding of how festival participants are able to establish a deeper meaning for the identities they construct in the Burning Man experience and the unseen but significant forces affecting their participation and potential transformation into cultural performers. The schema design is a core circle that denotes the festival experience surrounded by three separate rings representing three contexts of the festival.<sup>69</sup>

In the center of the three contextual rings of the theatrical event is the Burning Man event, all of the participants, and the ritual symbol of the Man. Temporary liberation inside of the Burning Man Festival exists in its own time/space realm where the performance communicates outwardly and the participants communicate together at once. The three rings of context that exist surrounding the festival as a theatrical event convey how individuals' social reality and social-self influence their identity-making as performers in this cultural moment. They are: the background experience of the participant that informs their understanding of the festival, the background of the participant as a social being in the outside world; and the outside world itself or 'the default world' as Burners might say. One's experience as a participant in this festival structure is thus multi-layered and may be understood as shaped by how one envisions their reality both in and outside of the festival.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 100.

The event provides the space where the participant and the Man coexist. This relationship symbolizes the event as interactive through its communal performative fire ritual bringing participants together. The Man's power as an image is one that is annually reborn and burned before participants. Its meaning transcends time and encompasses the space of its ritual performance. At Burning Man, the Man's presence remains consistent as a focal point for the event space, as a gathering spot for interactivity of participants and as the image upon which Burners may project their desire for connectivity. The overwhelming sense of centrality created by the Man's placement and the primary fire ritual as spectacle that surrounds the figure are important to consider here as unifying and theatrical. The Project however, officially refuses to interpret the Man's symbolic meaning in order that the Man, as an unencumbered signifier, thus becomes potentially a focus and connector of all meanings for every participant.

It should be emphasized here that at Burning Man, connection among participants is promoted and social interactions are acknowledged as the desire for recognition of each participant's inner self. However, not all participants attend to make such connections. Some are using the experience for escapism and performing as a mask to hide behind rather than as honest self-expression. There can be some understandings though drawn from this sort of self-expression as well. Performance theorist Bruce Wilshire observes:

Through its system of artistic appearances and masking, the theatre shows us the necessity of masking in the actual world. Shame and reverence before the privacy and inwardness of the other are fundamental, it is suggested, in order to counterbalance powerful tendencies of identification and engulfment, themselves also fundamental. This suggests that a dimension of identity is fragile; that

there is a 'screen' in the self and if this does not stop the other's gaze or physical approach at a certain point, the self will be damaged.<sup>70</sup>

The immediacy of performances created from such useful insights to social interactions can be meaningful as applied to Burning Man in a variety of ways. Often the spirit of cooperation encouraged by Burners themselves or else, competitive situations brought on by the pressures one removed from their normal routine might naturally feel, are exhibited openly in the living spaces at the festival site. But as the interactive core of Burning Man, the communal living spaces known as theme camps are the intended public venues that provide a site for participants to collect and intermingle, to perform, and to play out their experience. Theme camps are occupied by a tribe of participants who collectively create and then perform under a chosen identificatory theme. Theme camps adhere to a Project requirement that they be accessible to all participants and like the art exhibited at Burning Man, are meant to crystallize the interconnections between the event and those who attend.

Immediately surrounding the core of the festival is the first ring that contextualizes the event. Here, the 'perception schemes and strategies' participants know outside of the event and respond to, affect how they interpret others' performing and how they will respond. This first circle represents the lived reality of the participant away from the event and may determine how inhibited one will be through the process of becoming a cultural performer or an artist. An attendee's knowledge of the event, its community and culture would in this context aid their experience as a participant. A better understanding of Burning Man's tenets regarding

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<sup>70</sup> Bruce Wilshire. *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, 54.

civic responsibility in the festival space is particularly crucial for a participant to be able to negotiate the social terrain present there. The Burner ethos is one that is sensitive to issues of respect for others and the environment on the playa. Often, attendees who publicly exhibit perceived disrespect for another person or who for instance, litter will be admonished by fellow participants.

The second ring of contextualization for participants to Burning Man is their background experience as individuals that have shaped them as cultural beings in mainstream society. It is in this ring of contextualization that participants have been molded as social creatures and the place from which they take their cues about how to perform publicly. This context does not include the participant's sensibilities as related to theatrical conventions or aesthetics, but relates to their own socio-cultural profile: age, gender, class, and education. This contextualization represents the roots for identity dictated by normative society. To be clear, Burning Man cannot erase these characterizations of self.

In this sense and as a kind of contemporary heterotopia in the Foucauldian sense, Burning Man is a both real and imaginary place that by its nature temporarily changes participants' functioning as social beings: they come to work and to play together not for money but seemingly for the creation and maintenance of their own cultural community. The event allows diverse groupings of people to convene under the umbrella of celebratory festival and yet, each willing participant may stand out as a social performer removed from the social role they occupy outside of this cultural community. Foucault's notion of a *heterotopia* further fits the model of Burning Man

as existing within a multi-layered context.<sup>71</sup> It is the ‘other place’ characterized by the time in which it exists; as an indeterminate realm removed from an advanced technological and post-industrial society. Finally, the third ring of contextualization for festival participants to Burning Man is *normative society*. This is the dominant culture of politics, economics and ideology that shape participants’ understandings and represents their fuller outlying social context.

Burning Man in this sense represents an acknowledgement of *that* interpretation, and an active stance against staid and unfulfilling cultural experiences. The festival culture embodies a countercultural community of artists purposefully retreating from dominant society into a vibrant self-created city where radical self-expression occurs as a form of performance suggesting a new way of cultural being, and where interaction encourages the Burning Man citizen-artist’s role as Burner. Within the dominant culture, religion, economics and politics – to name a few- effects how one lives. In the performance culture of Burning Man, participants may occupy themselves as social creators distanced potentially free from these cultural tropes.

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<sup>71</sup> Foucault, Michel. *Aesthetics, Methods and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume II*. Translated by Paul Rabinow and Robert Hurley. Edited by James Faubion. New York: The New Press, 1998.



**Image 20: *The Doctor is In*.** This image, taken at Burning Man in 2006, is of a performance kiosk (looking like it comes right out of a Charles Schultz’ ‘Peanuts’ cartoon). It was made by anonymous participants and was available for passing participants to use for interactions as either the “Doctor” or “Patient.” This style of smaller event venue has appeared at Burning Man more frequently since 2004. This image offers a wonderful example of how participants make and use opportunities for performative interactions. Image by the author.

### **Performance Meanings**

Burning Man, like many large-scale outdoor events, invites multiple interpretations when it comes to the forms of theatricality presented and engaged therein. I have made the case here for *spontaneity* and *interaction* as the key elements for the new kinds of performativity that are being expressed on the playa. That is not to say that highly elaborate and intricate forms of interaction between festival participants is anything new. As a theatrical event, Burning Man rests on the long-standing tradition of celebratory excitements such as Carnival that have historically helped societies temporarily step aside of the usual social expectations and norms.

Carnival gives rise to various expressions whose only connection is the fact that they are all part of a theatrical event, which is articulated over

a certain extent of time, in determined spaces. The collective social space of the street becomes the stage for theatrical expressions which manifest man's need to indulge in the gratuitous action that is characteristic of play.<sup>72</sup>

Uniquely though, Burning Man locates itself inside of another tradition that is much younger: the American artistic avant-garde. Burning Man is an important historical phenomenon because it has exposed people to performance art, Happenings and elements of experimental theater they would not otherwise know. However, much like Carnival as a social phenomenon, Burning Man encourages playfulness and licentiousness. Performance theorist Vicki Ann Cremona observes:

Carnival generates a sense of fun, enjoyment and mischief – and its performative qualities express these traits. Its very structures negate the idea of necessity or utility, rather the predominate signs of this event are those of excess and superfluity, even in highly organized celebrations.<sup>73</sup>

Burning Man opens a door for many; a world of performance they do not know or may have forgotten. Happenings by their example are a performance genre that is commonly recognized as having been unique to a particular time in American theatrical history, as was Performance Art. In the case of Burning Man, the primary participant-population has not been alive during a time when either genre was of importance. On the other hand, both genres were not, during their times, well-known to the general population.

In this chapter, I have suggested that it is possible for Burning Man participants to know, both by their engagement and self-performing at the event, older

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<sup>72</sup> Vicki Ann Cremona. "Carnival as Theatrical Event." *Theatrical Event Border Dynamics and Frames*. Edited by Vicki Ann Cremona, Peter Eversmann, Hans van Maanen, Willmar Sauter, and John Tulloch. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 70.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, 71.

genres of performing including Happenings, Vaudeville, Burlesque, and Performance Art. I have also outlined some of the ways in which performance is used to create meaning by the Project, from bestowing the term *performer* on all who attend the event, to the way fire is presented and controlled by artists and staff who assist in helping facilitate fire performance on-site, to the many performance spaces, stages and theatrical venues that exist at the event to support performing, including the Man himself. In the next chapter, I will delve deeper into the role of the participant as performer and into the transformative processes participants undergo in becoming social players of this performance culture, or *Burners*.

## Chapter Three: *Burners*: The Participant as Performer



**Image 21: *Colored People*.** This image, of a group of nude participants in body paint celebrating their rainbow effect, was taken at Burning Man in 2000. This image is an example of informal participatory theatrics at the event. Photo by Chuck Pravata, reproduced with permission.

*I would say that (Burning Man) shifted the way that I look at performance. I've always enjoyed the experience of performance, but being able to express myself in that way in that environment of support and encouragement has certainly carried over into my life back home. It's hard to separate how Burning Man has changed my life as a performer from how it has transformed me as a person, because it most certainly has changed my life.*

- Katherine Becvar, participant-performer, 2006.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Katherine Becvar, participant-performer in an email to the author as a response to the 2006 Performer Questionnaire I distributed to the Burning Man community. Email and transcript. Date: March 6, 2006.

Performing on the playa means many things to participants: enthusiastically entertaining others, wearing outrageous costumes, exhibiting one's body sexually, using a playa name, demonstrating a penchant for volunteering oneself in interactive situations, theatricalizing on assorted forms of playa art, and regularly inserting themselves into celebratory moments or lively conversations with other participants. These are some of the key behaviors which are associated with participants who are performing themselves at Burning Man. According to Marvin Carlson in reference to cultural performance as a phenomenon implies: "The recognition that our lives are structured according to repeated and socially sanctioned modes of behavior raises the possibility that all human activity could potentially be considered as 'performance,' or at least all activity carried out with a consciousness of itself."<sup>2</sup>

This chapter seeks to discover how dressing up, chatting enthusiastically with others and donning a nickname for a week at a festive gathering, equate to performance. These are the recognized cultural behaviors that fall under the rubric of 'radical self-expression' at Burning Man. What is it then about the varieties of presentation that transforms a participant at Burning Man into a performer? Is it simply moving beyond social inhibition, or are there more complex processes involved in the journey one takes from attendee to festive player? What are the factors involved in moving between these social categories and how might we better understand the importance of a participant's investment in becoming a Burner, the most devoted form of participant in this performance culture? Lastly, how can we as scholars better know the power behind this kind of self-performing emotionally and

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<sup>2</sup> Marvin Carlson. *Performance: A Critical Introduction*. London: Routledge, 1996, 4-5.

physically, as well as the linguistic influence of the word *Burner* as a cultural identity? In this chapter, I examine the caste of dedicated Burning Man participants known as Burners, a term that has existed in this culture since the mid-1990s. They are citizen-artists concerned primarily with their own cultural awareness.<sup>3</sup> For Burners, the event-space has become an open gallery within which any art project may be freely exhibited, as well as a stage for this performance culture that has been made to bring participants together. Stages in this sense are *spatial metaphors* for the entire event, which presents every experience as an opportunity to connect with oneself and with others. Stages as designated spaces for theatricality are also symbolic at Burning Man, for they encourage as much as they intimidate participants. I will explain the six-stage process I theorize that attendees go through, on their journey from participant to performer. Mikhail Bakhtin's notions of Carnival Sensuality, The Grotesque Body and Licensed Transgression, as well as Victor Turner's anti-model for *communitas* will aid my analysis through its focus on cultural connectivity, performativity and self-assessment.

### **Carnival Sensuality, Licensed Transgression, The Grotesque Body and Burning Man**

In this whole the individual body ceases to a certain extent to be itself; it is possible, so to say, to exchange bodies, to be renewed (through change of costume and mask). At the same time the people become aware of their sensual, material bodily unity and community.

-Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Afterburn: Reflections on Burning Man*. Edited by Mark Van Proyen and Lee Gilmore. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005.

Sensuality is an aspect of *Carnival* that can be well-applied to Burning Man. At Burning Man, there is the proliferation of public affection, public sex, desire and open nudity. In analyzing the meaning of public sexuality at Burning Man, it is vital to be straightforward about such behaviors. The significance of making public such intimate acts is vital to Burning Man culture. Bakhtin's idea on sensuality was that the bodies of *Carnival* came together to make one unified body. This is essential to how festival peoples are equal; they are equal in that they are human, made of flesh and that their bodies move, work and make noise the same. The human body then itself becomes the symbolic device to reduce all people to their essence as at once living and also, dying.

I am altering sensuality as an aspect of *Carnival* before I apply it to specific aspects of Burning Man such as public sex and nudity at Burning Man, because for this population the sensual experience is bound up in many complex issues. At the event, many participants choose to go nude because of the heat but as many may make that choice as a form of exhibitionism and thrill seeking. Public sex at Burning Man, which includes copulation in full view of other participants, could extend from two people entwined on the ground to an open-air tent hosting an orgy. Because living conditions at Burning Man place participant tents so closely together, hearing others having sex is not an unusual occurrence nor is encountering people in full view of others touching each others' nude bodies playfully. Bakhtin helps in an analysis of this concept because through

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<sup>4</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin. *Rabelais and His World*. Blomington: Indiana University Press, 255.

Carnival sensuality we see how revelers are made aware of their own bodies and those around them. Visually and in a tactile sense, Burner's experience the sensual world all around them and are immersed and invited into it.

Bakhtin analyzes *Carnival's* sensuality as an awareness people gain about themselves in relation to others and he means this in a corporeal sense. The people feel that they are one with each other as human bodies. Burning Man sensuality is different from *Carnival* sensuality in that it welcomes this awareness but adds the heightened element of an increased tolerance for extremely open sexual behaviors, and that has led to a culture of participants who assumes sexual encounters will necessarily be a part of their festival experience. Burning Man's sensuality is carnivalesque because it does bring people together and inspires them to appreciate their unity to others and human beings and yet it changes the sensuality because it makes visible all taboo sexualized expressions and forces participants to consider sensuality whether they want to or not.

In regards to sensuality one may see the intersection between Burning Man, the carnivalesque and politics in the fact that nude bodies and sex happen at the event in public. Bakhtin's analysis of Rabelais' world is one that is highly conscious of the vigorous sensuality present in all human beings and the exhibition of that truth is revealed in their unashamed self-presentation. Further, Bakhtin analyzes to Rabelais' world as the metaphorical body that copulates and liberates all to feel the sensuality in all things. In the default world, public nudity would be punishable, but not at Burning Man. Burning Man's power as a social phenomenon lies in that its cultural members can freely experience life in the

nude with no repercussions, and they can express themselves through consensual sexual behavior with others without legal ramification. Burning Man's carnivalesque sensuality is political because it crosses the legal limit of public licentiousness and thereby liberates its members to a new realm of being that meets Bakhtin's concept of the Grotesque Body.

The essence of the grotesque is precisely to present a contradictory and double-faced fullness of life. Negation and destruction (death of the old) are included as an essential phase, inseparable from affirmation, from the birth of something new and better. The very material bodily lower stratum of the grotesque image (food, wine, the genital force, the organs of the body) bears a deeply positive character. This principle is victorious, for the final result is always abundance, increase.

-Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*<sup>5</sup>

One primary aspect of *Carnival* which is well-recognized, The Grotesque Body, may be applied to Burning Man in terms of the stereotypes that exist there about nudity and bodies at the event, as well as the reality of bodily functions that are revealed at the event. Bakhtin's idea on the grotesque body was that it was not separate from the rest of the world, closed off or finished but that this body was always growing and resembles the human body in that it is consuming, defecating, dying and giving birth at once. It is a concept of life and the force of life that is positive but not attractive or polite. I am using the grotesque body as an aspect of *Carnival* as I apply it to specific aspects of Burning Man including the nude bodies at the event and how those bodies perform their functions publicly. These bodies, by their sensuality, laughter, masks and feasting, are the real life portrayal of Bakhtin's grotesque body because they are always unfinished, always

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 62.

eating, copulating, defecating, spitting, sneezing, belching, giving birth and dying. These unfinished bodies reveal humanity's true nature as metaphor, always alive and growing beyond themselves and yet feeding others, starving and then, dying.

Bakhtin analyzes *Carnival's* grotesque body as growing bigger than itself and transgressing its own boundaries while eating, drinking, focusing on its genitals, and other gross bodily operations. Burning Man's grotesque body is the same as *Carnival's* grotesque body in that participants acknowledge the old, ugly and misshapen bodies around them as much as they recognize the young and beautiful. Further, because they are on the whole camping with no running water and using public toilets, open discussion of bodily excrement and discharge is commonplace. By speaking aloud of issues such as smell, human waste and vomit, participants draw attention to their common experience and in a sense defeat their own uncomfortable circumstances.

Burning Man's grotesque body is carnivalesque because it grows and exceeds itself. In regards to the grotesque body one may see the intersection between Burning Man, the carnivalesque and politics in the way Burners are able to speaking openly and truthfully about the nature of their bodies and their bodies operations, however unpleasant and in this ability, there is power. Burning Man's carnivalesque grotesque body is political because it opens language and the public arena to topics usually off limits in society and thus, it creates its own forum for thought and language. The grotesque body at Burning Man is a tool for survival but it is also, like laughter, a means for coping and connection amongst community. The truth of the literal bodies at Burning Man is that they are present

in the participants whose nude presence dots the landscape, holds others attention and captivates or disgusts. The Man himself is seen as an eighty-foot tall nude figure made of wood and metal, he stands above all and for all. The grotesque body Bakhtin analyzes likewise represents all humankind, bursting as it consumes all of the pleasures before it, every orifice expanding and oozing. Burning Man offers a landscape where each participant is a symbolic body that opens and receives and oozes. The Man dies but he also gives life and similarly, Burners come to revel, live, love, commune and copulate, but they also are dying and by the same token, putting their lives at risk of death, for the opportunity to exist together in a cultural moment that raises their own bodies up to a symbolic level and one which includes licensed transgression.

It is not a closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits. The stress is laid on those parts of the body that are open to the outside world, that is, the parts through the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to meet the world. This means that the emphasis is on the apertures or convexities, or on various ramifications and offshoots: the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the potbelly, the nose. The body discloses its essence as a principle of growth which exceeds its own limits only in copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the throes of death, eating, drinking, or defecation. This is the ever unfinished, ever creating body, the link in the chain of genetic development, or more correctly speaking, two links shown at the point where they enter into each other. This especially strikes the eye in archaic grotesque.

- Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*<sup>6</sup>

Licensed Transgression as an aspect of *Carnival* applies to Burning Man in terms of the taboo-breaking behaviors engaged in at the event in spite of the presence of police authority at the event and the use of power by outside

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 26.

governmental authorities to bring a stop to the event. The official rangers at Burning Man who are both hired by the Project and sent to the event by state officials regularly ignore both nudity and public sex, transgressions that would be punishable in the outside world. This aspect may be combined with the carnivalesque aspect of sensuality, as the two are closely related. Bakhtin's ideas on licensed transgression are that carnival time allowed for the people to break free from their staid normal behaviors and indulge in humor and activity that would at any other time be forbidden. During *Carnival*, transgressions are excused because it is a time out of time. For Bakhtin, the significance of transgression is that the people take control of their own lives and revert to behaviors that are violent and real. This concept relates to renewal in that it allows carnival revelers to exist outside of a controlled culture and to make their own rules and be unruly. The grotesque body comes into being in this realm of time when all things are turned on their head. Chaos and danger are real and so is the possibility of life outside of known time, the end of the world even.

I am altering licensed transgression as an aspect of *Carnival* as I apply it to specific aspects of Burning Man such as public sex and licentiousness because there are real limitations to the sorts and degrees of transgressions that are allowable at Burning Man. The question of whether this is real transgression or simply acting out is questionable because while participants do test the limits of acceptable public behavior, it is common knowledge that violent sexual acts which are non-consensual are still forbidden. Thus, Burners attempt to create safe spaces in theme camps where sadomasochistic activities are supported. The

difference between real transgression and acting out might be seen subjectively as breaking the law or being socially offensive. What is transgressive at Burning Man depends on the participant almost entirely.

Sex must be consensual and open drug use in particular could result in a Burner getting arrested if caught. However, public drunkenness and fornication are considered a part of the environment of the festival at Burning Man and police simply ignore it. Bakhtin analyzes *Carnival's* licensed transgression as the group now equal permitting those behaviors not normally indulged. Burning Man's licensed transgression is similar to *Carnival's* licensed transgression in that participants use the time of the event and its location in nature distant from civilization to justify tabooed behaviors because they have been excused to indulge in them.

Burning Man's licensed transgression is carnivalesque because participants as revelers are liberated from inhibitions and yet it is different in that it ignores that this liberation is actually occurring in a policed city space that necessarily limits that liberation. In regards to licensed transgression one may see the intersection between Burning Man, the carnivalesque and politics by the nature of the event space activities, which include people freely walking about in the nude and openly under the influence of various substances despite the very obvious presence of the police from all levels of government. Burning Man's carnivalesque licensed transgression is political because it breaks the laws and gets away with it but its reality is one that reveals the disconnect between a culture that would tout liberation while denying their own captivity. Burning Man

promotes that liberation through the opportunity it provides and which participants themselves demand to *perform*.

### **Performing Participants**

*What makes (Burning Man) unique is the boundless love and support of the audience! Every minute I'm performing, I'm loving that other people are there to witness and enjoy my art and my expression. The ethos of the event that demands participation means that the audience members realize their role in the performance. We are so immune to the power of live performance because of the passive media that surround us (movies, music, television). I feel like in Black Rock City, we finally get clued in to the level of partnership that is the best part of live performance. And the twin ethos of radical self-expression means that everyone else is primed and ready to witness your expression without standing in your way or judging you.*

-Katherine Becvar, 2006.<sup>7</sup>

The psychological birth of the individual is an open-ended process of theatre-like individuations emerging from theatre-like fusions.

-Bruce Wilshire, *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor*<sup>8</sup>

When considering performing on the playa and how one becomes a performer there are several critical elements we need to consider. These are time, climate and interactivity. When analyzing the production and reception of performance at the event, participant's activities are affected by each of these. As mentioned previously, time is always in flux in this environment where many come to the event with the intention of not keeping track of time and this, as well, is influenced by the extreme changes in weather that occur. Who performs at what time and what other participants

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<sup>7</sup> Katherine Becvar, participant-performer in an email to the author as a response to the 2006 Performer Questionnaire I distributed to the Burning Man community. March 6, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce Wilshire. *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, 226.

may be present to witness such performing is dictated by attendee's ability to participate at all. Interactivity too is an element that is essential to a performer's activities on the playa, and something that participants must always keep in mind when they are coming together in the festival spirit of Burning Man: "Festivity, ceremonial form, and the transgression of social boundaries are animated with the strongest possible feeling of solidarity and community affiliation."<sup>9</sup>

The participants present and interacting with the performer(s) may change the nature of the performance in any way, including allowing it to grow. In this sense, performances at Burning Man are not contained, but bleed out into the event-space moving from an original location with participants in tow. Performances also grow organically and build as participants join in or leave the collaboration. Such is the nature of a transient participatory crowd. In this sense, as performances can begin in one location at the event and then continue onto another, depending on what sort of spatial journey the performers and the participants choose, they add to a rich tradition of anything goes playa-theatrics.

Both the production and reception of performers and performances at Burning Man are subject to change and improvisation and as such, are intrinsically linked to the nature of the event that carries with it an ethos of radical self-reliance that includes adapting to the circumstances at a given moment, as well as radical self-expression which places the burden of the creation of meaning in a performance solely on the participants as performers. While the wide acceptance and encouragement of performing at Burning Man is what attracts so many to this

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Bristol. *Carnival to Theatre*. London: Methuen, 1985, 30.

theatrical event, so too does the absence of commercialism and commodification. Because art there has no price tag, the normal art and theatre world standards are replaced at Burning Man, as participants assign subjective, abstract values to art and performance. The pleasure of immediacy is a reward for those who are engaged by their own performing alongside those who become drawn into the theatrical moment, be it on a stage or Black Rock City street: they are both the domain of the Burner.

### **How to Better Know a Burner**

*BM changed my life....it changes it every year....i find i always have one epiphany... you have to try and plan around weather.... .i certainly consider myself a performer, which to me is a participant.*

-Angelicfiend, participant-performer, 2006.<sup>10</sup>

It is important to explore the concept of performance at Burning Man in the context of the event itself. According to performance theorist Philip Zarilli, “Performance can be defined as one mode of social, cultural, aesthetic, and/or personal praxis through which experience, knowledge, discourses, and meanings have been and are constantly (re)negotiated and (re)positioned through daily and/or extra-daily performance practices.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> This quote is from Angelicfiend, a participant-performer to the author in an email as a response to the 2006 Performer Questionnaire I distributed to participants. Email and transcript. Date: February 26, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Philip B. Zarilli. “Action, Structure, Task and Emotion.” *Teaching Performance Studies*. Edited by Nathan Stucky and Cynthia Wimmer. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 2002, 146.



**Image 22: *Procession 1997*.** This image was taken at Burning Man in 1997 during the participant ceremonial procession to the Man. The participant-performers are dressed as happy followers of the Greek God, Dionysus. Photograph by Gerry Gropp, reproduced with permission.

At Burning Man, the standard rules of decorum, the customary definitions of art and performance, and the ordinary social roles people play outside of the event must all be reconsidered and new identities brought to life in this harsh and vibrant festival setting. Further, it is an experience that completely involves many participants who must learn to survive away from commercial society where by contrast to temporary life on the playa, their behavior as consumers shapes their social identity. The identity of the participant outside of the context that is Burning Man stands in direct opposition to the citizen-artist that the event encourages them to perform at the event. By rejecting the outside and imposing societal spectacle, as well as the commercial arts establishment as a kind of corrupt, arbitrary judge, participants as artists themselves become citizens of a new radical community at Burning Man. Away from the event, they plan logistically and build art, and once at Burning Man they may rarely retreat to a place that is not performative.

Burning Man, because of the intentions of its participants as live artists, has then become a critical site for creating identity amongst its attendees as social performers. Both at the event and in the outside world, burners are said to live to return 'home,' that is, the playa. Home means the metaphorical place where they belong, can be themselves and others will accept their identity. But the playa can also be considered a place from which participants escape from their true selves and adopt fake identities like children playing a game. "Theatre belongs predominately to the playing culture and only to a limited degree to written culture. What is played is for the here and now, what is written is for the future. While written culture seeks preservation, playing culture means immediate enactment."<sup>12</sup>

Theories on the psychology of identity tell us that through the process of creative activity we can know better ourselves. Bruce Wilshire observes:

The identity and truth of the work of art cannot be sundered from our own identity and truth as selves. In speaking for us it is not something isolated from us which is set over against us. But we can say here that the work pertains to our identity because it mediates us and reveals us as essentially bodily, private, and particular and essentially social; and because it sums up, funds, and gives presence to more absence than our everyday acts ever could. Thus, since the self...is an activity of cumulatively giving presence to absence, art pertains to our identity as selves.<sup>13</sup>

At Burning Man participants may ritually strip off their imposed and weighty social role for a self-chosen one. Together Burners contribute in both small and magnificent ways to a positive collective energy present at the event. By their presence and on

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<sup>12</sup> Willmar Sauter. "Introducing the Theatrical Event." *Theatrical Event Border Dynamics and Frames*. Edited by Vicky Ann Cremona, Peter Eversmann, Hans van Maanen, Willmar Sauter, and John Tulloch. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Bruce Wilshire. *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, 137.

many levels, the Burner is always demonstrating a kind of experimental performance:

Life as art and survival as collaborative creative activity. Observes Wilshire:

A common way of behaving, a 'role' available in the immediate social setting, is adopted, but it makes little sense to say "I adopt it" or "he adopts it" because the self is just now in the process of formation. The evolving self has an element of the impersonal gaze; the body neither addresses itself nor the other through the 'role'; it is just a doing and a speaking which is also a learning and a listening for all involved; it is a communal activity.<sup>14</sup>

For performing Burners, there is a culture that thrives on a well-planned infrastructure and city plan. The event has been able to do so bolstered by the presence of the Burner as volunteer, which demonstrates the Burner's respect and reverence for the land, the city and other Burners. It is because of them that Burning Man has developed a reputation as a place where people transcend their normal social roles and engage art deeply. This idea was further articulated by a participant-performer to me in this way: according to Anthony Bubb, "I got a lot of gratification for this out of some people who were obviously thrilled to participate either as co-actors, co-artists, or participants at the event. It meant a lot to me."<sup>15</sup> This fits the model of Burning Man as space for playful cultural activities. According to performance theorist, Hassada Shani:

The behavior of each group's members is dependent on the behaviors of others...although this dependence exists between individuals, the entire group is dependent on every other individual member in order to maintain the situation. This form of dependence stresses the collective, public nature of such events. Theatrical events...represent

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 168.

<sup>15</sup> Anthony Bubb, participant-performer in an email to the author as a response to the 2006 Performer Questionnaire I distributed to participants. February 23, 2006.

opportunities for participants to be involved in relationships displaying dynamic interactivity.<sup>16</sup>

By uniting participants as performers in Burning Man's cultural space, the success of the cultural creation as a community can only benefit by a strong demonstrated commitment to performing. "The festival as a theatrical event... is marked by particular characteristics of authorship, performativity, spatial and temporal dynamics, and performance-audience relationships."<sup>17</sup>

### **Making Art: The Concept of Performing**

What sets Burning Man apart as a cultural phenomenon is its focus on participation in creating art for art's sake away from commercialism, its communal artist-friendly collaborative environment, and the responsibility the Project places on attendees to *entertain themselves*. Participants experience the event and respond to the structure of the venue that encourages spontaneous interactive performativity.

Populist art and the kind of conceptual art created at Burning Man convenes the society around itself. This goes far beyond simple exhibition, because attendees include thousands who do not make art but come for the chance to experience art or to commune with art-makers. What can be understood about Burning Man as a collaborative and unique festival environment is that, "one of the dominant features of the Theatrical Event is its collaborative nature. This is exemplified in the case of

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<sup>16</sup> Hadassa Shani. "From Coordination to Dynamic Interactivity." *Theatrical Event Border Dynamics and Frames*. Edited by Vicky Ann Cremona, Peter Eversmann, Hans van Maanen, Willmar Sauter, and John Tulloch. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 115.

<sup>17</sup> Jacqueline Martin, Georgia Seffrin and Rod Wissler. "The Festival as a Theatrical Event." *Theatrical Event Border Dynamics and Frames*. Edited by Vicky Ann Cremona, Peter Eversmann, Hans van Maanen, Willmar Sauter, and John Tulloch. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 91.

the festival which has a history of what might be referred to as collective or corporate authorship.”<sup>18</sup>

For artists, Burning Man provides the opportunity to meet and work collaboratively with hundreds of other creators on many interesting and new levels. But for the average participant not making art, the ordinary is suspended at the event as each symbolic activity takes on the heightened meaning of art and where participants become Burners when they commit themselves to giving something back to the community. This desire to contribute culturally provides an important clue to why someone would commit themselves to this community. How does one become a Burner? What personal journey takes them from curious attendee to active social player?

The Burner experience as I am conceiving it is informed by the theoretical groundwork laid by the performance theorists of the International Federation for Theatre Research’s Theatrical Events Working Group. These scholars study participatory activity in festival settings and within theatrical events. The basic elements of these theories include first that, “A festival should be cut off from everyday life in terms of the length of time it runs as well as the place. Where this happens, the audience (participants) begins to experience a break from their normal routine.”<sup>19</sup> Second, “Commonly, a festival is concerned with transformations of space – making mundane space other – whether on the scale of simply claiming territory for

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<sup>18</sup> Jacqueline Martin, Georgia Seffrin and Rod Wissler. “The Festival as a Theatrical Event.” *Theatrical Event Border Dynamics and Frames*. Edited by Vicky Ann Cremona, Peter Eversmann, Hans van Maanen, Willmar Sauter, and John Tulloch. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 101.

<sup>19</sup> Jacqueline Martin, Georgia Seffrin and Rod Wissler. “The Festival as a Theatrical Event.” *Theatrical Event Border Dynamics and Frames*. Edited by Vicky Ann Cremona, Peter Eversmann, Hans van Maanen, Willmar Sauter, and John Tulloch. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 103.

artistic or quasi-ritualistic experience; or on the scale of reclamation of industrial wasteland or derelict city land.”<sup>20</sup> And finally, “Certainly the site itself for festival events in general could be viewed in terms of transformation; the sense of place becomes imbued with a sense of *specialness*, that is part of the festival’s ‘magic’, and surely an aim inherent in all festival production.”<sup>21</sup>

### **The Process of Becoming a *Burner***

Becoming a Burner involves a six-stage process that an individual goes through on their journey from spectator to participant to performer. Burners start out by being introduced to the event’s unique concept of play in a constructed and heightened theatrical zone. This sort of playing involves immediacy and the loosening of inhibitions. By having this experience outside of their normal realm of social acting, the gregariousness of participants opens them to a possible truth about themselves as social beings. Connectivity between participants is therefore not based on economics but the *desire for recognition and inclusion*.

The motivation going into this process may, for some spectators, be that yearning or simple curiosity, but in as much as the environment for the event serves to filter out those looking for simple escape, the more likely impetus is their longing to be challenged into new ways of being inside this rather intense festival experience. It can be an emotional, expressive period of time when permissiveness is built into the festival structure as an effective means of guiding participants towards a cultural

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 102.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 109.

encounter with others that is highly significant and values interpersonal relations as cultural worth: "...The festival can be seen for what it is: a true and contemporary expression of a particular culture. As such there is no doubt...that the interactive nature of the Festival and its responses to the world of its audiences (participants) give weight to the claim that the Festival is a Theatrical Event characterized by two partners engaging in a playful relationship."<sup>22</sup> Further, there can be interesting long-term affects of participation: "...The theatrical experience doesn't stop after the performance but in the later reactions (that sometimes last for years) the cognitive, analytic approach becomes dominant. The spectator has witnessed something that he or she cannot let go immediately and which stimulated him/her to think about it."<sup>23</sup>

The people who attend Burning Man do not simply become Burners by their presence. A Burner is someone who not only goes to Burning Man but also embraces the culture the event has created. Burners do not all dress or act alike, nor do they necessarily sign-up or go through any sort of ritual initiation. What they do is uphold the ethos of the culture of Burning Man. They hold respect for the tenets of the event and they anticipate and plan for their pilgrimage to the Black Rock Desert once again.

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<sup>22</sup> Jacqueline Martin, Georgia Seffrin and Rod Wissler. "The Festival as a Theatrical Event." *Theatrical Event Border Dynamics and Frames*. Edited by Vicky Ann Cremona, Peter Eversmann, Hans van Maanen, Willmar Sauter, and John Tulloch. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 109.

<sup>23</sup> Peter Eversmann. "The Experience of the Theatrical Event." *Theatrical Event Border Dynamics and Frames*. Edited by Vicky Ann Cremona, Peter Eversmann, Hans van Maanen, Willmar Sauter, and John Tulloch. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005, 161.



**Image 23: *The Black Rock University theme camp Participatory Performance Stage in 2006.* An anonymous performer on a participatory stage sings karaoke to a crowd. To the performer's left is a "Performance Wheel" where transient participants may spin in order to do a spontaneous performance for the assembled crowd. Image by the author.**

Burners are participants who recognize their own commitment to the culture and are in some important ways active within the culture. This active participation may be done in communion with others or alone. Some Burners maintain relationships with other participants at home or from afar, as a means of keeping their commitment to the Burning Man performance culture alive. Some Burners spend time and energy all year long, preparing for their time on the playa. But the forms of activity Burners engage in as a means of demonstrating their status in the culture, which are most crucial to this analysis, are the ones at the event that elevate a person from casual attendee to loyal participant and from participants to performer. *This* sort of activity, like the actor on the stage, not performing unless others are witness to it, is at the heart of Burning Man's performance culture. The meaning of the culture is in its ability to give *identity* to these most-interested participants. Observes performance theorist Bruce Wilshire:

The point about identity is this: it can accommodate a great range of transformations of personality because we are hard put to discover any conditions which clearly disestablish a self while the body in question still lives and maintains a capacity for consciousness and for distinguishing its experiencing from the experienced. Theatre is an art which reaches out to encompass and thematize possibilities of personality change within the remarkably commodious matrix of identity of self.<sup>24</sup>

If a participant attends Burning Man and interacts, they do not necessarily become a Burner. I am arguing that a more thoughtful and active personal experience takes place in this transforming that is based on self-conscious accounting and purposeful social outreach. It is only when a player understands their role in the social schema and desires going beyond that, that they are able to develop a role that suits their desire for inclusion and recognition. So too at Burning Man, where in this performance culture, the wallflower will only ever be enticed. They may or may not choose to become actively engaged and adopt another persona that eclipses the role of passive observer, possibly growing into the role of active group participant: the Burner. The Burner's social role is one that is grounded in their high level of participation. According to theorists F. David Martin and Lee A. Jacobus:

The participative experience – the undivided and sustained attention to an object or event that makes us lose our sense of separation from the object or event – is induced by strong or artistic form. Participation is not likely to develop with weak form because weak form tends to allow our attention to wander. Therefore, one of the indications of a strong form is the fact that participation occurs.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Bruce Wilshire. *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, 230.

<sup>25</sup> F. David Martin and Lee A. Jacobus. "What is a Work of Art?" *The Humanities Through the Arts*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983, 26.

The Burner process, if it can be theorized as one that is transformative, begins with a participant discovering the event and from there being; 1) enticed to attend, 2) initiated as a participant, 3) engaged in the festival space, 4) moved emotionally by activities and/or people within their festival experience, 5) inspired to new ways of thinking about themselves, others or the world in general, and finally, 6) transformed in a personal way that might be either permanent or temporary. Transformation is not necessarily a guaranteed outcome of participation at Burning Man but one that may be achieved via interactivity and interconnectedness. In this process, clearly it is a participant's personal investment in the Burning Man community that demonstrates their active involvement and can serve as the initial performative act in their new cultural role.

Through participation, the Burner is self-invented, and by their presence feeds the larger Burning Man culture's desire for radical inclusivity that further justifies the collective concept of this emergent cultural identity. Participants who attend Burning Man and who undergo this transformative process may be considered *performers* through their social participation because they break temporarily from their dependency on the usual means of self-authoring and expression. And since commercial trade is discouraged inside of the event and as a performance culture which promotes a gift economy, the value of art and the process of art-making for Burners are transformed into the means by which participants symbolically come together in the spirit of this community, its ethos, and within its performance culture, at the event or away from it.

At Burning Man, performance and culture, art and identity making are bound up in one another. "Art is an important agent then in the transmission of culture. It is one of the ways in which the roles by which men and women are expected to pattern their lives are communicated and passed from generation to generation."<sup>26</sup> Further, it must be emphasized that these primary elements of Burning Man culture support its enduring ethos. "Culture is thus transmitted as much by showing as by imitation, and functions by means of an indissoluble bond uniting people."<sup>27</sup>

The real nuances present in the process of a participant becoming a Burner from one who simply attends the event are more easily fleshed out through the lens of the carnivalesque. In the experience of *Carnival*, one becomes a part of the whole and merges identity to be reborn as a part of the collective. Through the various aspects of *Carnival* such as feasting, masking and collectivity, the participant comes to understand a new world and a new way of being. This process is essentially the creation of a new identity made available through the carnivalesque and its various forms. The social experience of the participant in this culture is similar to the experience in *Carnival* because the individual is out of time and has made a new connection socially in the festival setting with others, both bodily and emotionally.

Burners embrace their community because within it they feel a sense of belonging. Like Carnival participants they gather to celebrate but their self-

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<sup>26</sup> Stephen Greenblatt. "Culture." *Critical Terms for Literary Study*. Edited by Frank Lentricchia and Thomas Mc Laughlin. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990, 228.

<sup>27</sup> *The Intercultural Performance Reader*. Edited by Patrice Pavis. London: Routledge, 1996, 18.

designation as members of a collective social group suggest they identify with the set of core values espoused in the Burning Man culture. As a group they are set apart by their intentions to connect communally by living in camps, tribes, villages and as citizens within Black Rock City during the event and their desire to hold onto and demonstrate physically their acceptance of the event's specific values and principles. There is significance in this concept because like *Carnival*, Burning Man distinguishes a space where participants re-imagine time, share their partially self-created environment, and revel in their higher degree of social cohesiveness.

The collectivity that exists in Bakhtin's *Carnival* necessarily invites the people into a place where they can become united. The powerful social forces at work in collectivity speak to its ability to transform space and time, to present both the death and rebirth of people, things and ideas, as well as allowing for new or transgressive behaviors to be indulged. The process of becoming a Burner is much the way a reveler is folded into the group during *Carnival* time. The individual has been invited to the experience and has accepted. Only *after* that occurs and the participant is open to the many carnivalesque aspects of Burning Man, can they truly call themselves a Burner – which is the most *important* distinction to make.

### **Burning Year-Round**

The transformative process at Burning Man occurs because attendees are welcomed into the collective authorship that happens at the event. Away from the

event, a portion of participants do maintain community through their active involvement in Burning Man-related events year-round. These include regional gatherings of Burner groups including event planning meetings, parties and two-or-three-day retreats called 'Burns.' The tension that exists between identities for those who participate at the event as artists and outside of a commercially-established community is threatened only when participants re-emerge into a society that restricts such expressions as nudity, fire performance and loose or boundary-breaking art making. Art that challenges society's values or questions sexual or political standards may be considered within this category of creative expression.

As the festival culture blurs the boundaries between art and life, its participants emerge from their immersion having transcended everyday life to live art collaboratively. In this sense, Burning Man provides a theoretical space for Victor Turner's concept of *communitas* as it allows participants to connect for a common goal in an invented city-space where, as citizen-artists, the opportunity exists to perform themselves outside of commercial culture and their usual social roles. As a temporary city, Burning Man's participants create their own conceptual nation which represents their perception that they are a part of this community at-large and in the larger world.

In addition, the role of interactive artwork created away from or at the event, is importantly one that helps support cultural development. High levels of community-based collaboration form a significant counterpoint to more spontaneous types of individual performance and may best highlight communication amongst

groups of artists and participants within the Burning Man community. Such artwork serves to stimulate both social interaction and performance.<sup>28</sup>

But the entire city-space within Black Rock City is also theatrical. To quote participant-performer, Charles Dean Virden, “The whole bloody city is a theatre.” Indeed, if we think about how the entire space as a city performs itself, and lends itself to performativity throughout, we can get a better sense of how Burning Man as an immersive theatrical experience works.<sup>29</sup> And this begs the question: Why is Burning Man so successful? Why does the population grow each year and now total over forty-thousand participants in an unforgiving, dry and dusty alkaline prehistoric lakebed? One answer to this conundrum might rest in the reality of the experience of the Burner. This is a place where interaction is elevated to a form of play and social relationships build up from these interconnections.

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<sup>28</sup> In 2005, “Colossus” by Zachary Coffin, was a rotating suspension rock art piece that participants could gather around and people could climb. That year, the Man base, designed by Rod Garrett and Larry Harvey, was three stories high and included a large fun house which participants could walk through with turn-styles they could push that would cause the Man to rotate. Also in 2005, artist David Best created the “Temple of Dreams,” which was an impressive wooden temple that participants could walk through and leave votives at. All of these projects and the many more made there each year invite public participation as part of the performative culmination of the Project’s and participant’s work. Interactivity is one of the chief criteria the Project uses when awarding art grants. Participants in this sense, come to the event in order to know this kind of art and to know themselves through the interactive experience.

<sup>29</sup> This quote is from Charles Dean Virden, participant-performer in an email to the author in response to the 2006 Performer Questionnaire I distributed to participants. February 27, 2006.



**Image 24: *Theme Camp Participants.*** This image was taken at Burning Man in 2006 at the Black Rock University Theme Camp. Participants gather under a shade structure waiting for a performer to go on at the camp’s small participatory stage and get complimentary drinks from the bar to the right. Dressed both causally and in costume, participants entertain themselves in lively conversations. Photo by the author.

Further, these are individuals trying to survive away from society, on their own as a group. Consider as well that the primary activities for those who attend Burning Man is surviving the natural environment and socializing, aside from performing and taking in the interactive art on the playa. Unless they are an employee of the Project, almost the entire population within this event-space is there to *play* together.

Burners start out as individuals introduced to a new sort of playing in a *heightened theatrical zone*. As an event, Burning Man is advertised as “radically self-inclusive,” meaning that both children and adults may attend. Animals and pets are not allowed to attend, but amongst people, no one is supposed to be excluded if they have a ticket at the front gate.<sup>30</sup> That said, Burning Man and its harsh desert environ,

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can serve as a kind of filter for people not wholly “into” the experience and those whose desire is to come and not participate in the *spirit* of play at the event.<sup>31</sup> The play-space of the event is essentially a heightened theatrical zone and it includes all areas within the gate that are open to participants.

### **The Heightened Theatrical Zone**

*Burner audiences are uniformly encouraging, curious and attentive to unusual acts like mine and make me feel very comfortable. The atmosphere in general is like no place else: magical, alive and mystical all at once. The cumulative environmental effect enables me to feel like I'm performing on a higher plane of consciousness than I am normally used to. At Burning Man the overarching world view is all about the promotion of art on every level. Nothing is excluded and all are welcome. The results are understandably phenomenal.*

- Bernie Beauchamp, participant-performer to the author, 2006.<sup>32</sup>

The *heightened theatrical zone* at Burning Man is one whose borders are at once physical (within the event space) and perceived (the imagined space for play) by participants. Its dynamics are apparent in the behaviors of participants and their personal aesthetics, as well as those around them. At Burning Man the theatrical experience is based on role playing, self-performing and collective collaboration.

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<sup>30</sup> The ‘No pets rule’ at Burning Man is published on the Burning Man website at [http://www.burningman.com/preparation/event\\_survival/pets.html](http://www.burningman.com/preparation/event_survival/pets.html) where it states that pets, dogs in particular find the environment too harsh due to dust, temperature and the loud sounds at the event.

<sup>31</sup> This was a sentiment expressed to me by Marian Goddell, the “Mistress of Communications” and Public Relations Director at the Burning Man Project Interview with Marian Goddell, aka Maid Marian. Taped recorded transcript. June 12, 2004.

<sup>32</sup> This quote is from Bernie Beauchamp, a participant-performer to the author in an email as a response to the 2006 Performer Questionnaire I distributed to participants. February 23, 2006.



**Image 25: *Procession*.** This image was taken at Burning Man in 2004 of a participant procession on the playa proceeded by participant-made large-scale puppets. Every year, participant-performers parade the event-space with large-scale puppet art. This procession was photographed during the gloaming hour at sundown. In the background notice the road to the Man which has been lined with lamps and along which participants stroll. Photograph by Bob Bronson. Image reproduced with permission.

As Willmar Sauter suggests in the introduction to the book, *Theatrical Events: Borders, Dynamics and Frames*, in such a space, this kind of “playing” exists on an artistic level of communication, and it is symbolic as a level of communication meaning because it serves to unite the participants involved.<sup>33</sup> It is possible that by having an experience outside of their normal realm of being, participants are open to a truth about their nature, and their potential new relationship to others culturally, in this heightened theatrical space. Theories on identity-making tell us, “...all our mimetic involvements and individualizations within the world, sequential or

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<sup>33</sup> *Theatrical Events: Borders Dynamics and Frames*. Edited by Vicky Ann Cremona, Peter Eversmann, Hans van Maanen, Willmar Sauter and John Tulloch. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004.

simultaneous, pertain to our identity of self. Even shifts of involvement so profound as to constitute shifts in personality – periodic or unique – fall within the continuity of a single self.”<sup>34</sup>

It is the heartbeat of the performance culture; these moments of spontaneous interaction happening throughout the event space. Participants, by their theatricalized activities with others, are becoming performers. They are purposefully engaging, as well as being engaged; also they are enticing others to watch them and at the same moment, reacting to their antics. Participant’s costuming begs for attention, and their willingness and flexibility to communicate creatively demonstrates the basis for this performance culture wherein those momentarily engaged in a playful relationship announce their interdependence within this culture and do so by means of performance.

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<sup>34</sup> Bruce Wilshire. *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 231.



**Image 26: *Burners Congregating.*** In this image taken at Burning Man in 2006, participants dressed in costume exhibit themselves, meet and mingle at this after-party celebration for the Critical Tits Bike Ride. Notice the colorful costumes, body paint, head dressing and nudity. Image by the author.

### **Interactivity within the Heightened Theatrical Zone**

*It's hard work fighting the wind and sand but it's always a blast. I always get a chance to be more fantastic and expressive. I find it deeply healing and refreshing to perform for a sexually mature audience. I have always felt cherished and NEVER uncomfortable with costumes and nudity that I could not perform in the default world without harassment and negative sexual energy. Of course. My performances are a gift for the community and a joy to me. I do both formal organized shows and spontaneous joyful outbursts at a moments notice.*

- Leslie Rosen, participant-performer, 2006.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Leslie Rosen, participant-performer in an email to the author as a response to the 2006 Performer Questionnaire I distributed to participants that year. March 15, 2006.

Performance for participant-artists and as a mode of self-expression occurs at Burning Man in both formal and in informal ways. There are planned and scheduled performances for which the players have brought with them a stage, lighting, costumes, props and even, sound systems. Some performances are based on play texts and independent scripts. As mentioned in Chapter Two, in 2005, the *Cockroach Theatre* Camp performed a Richard Foreman play and *The Lost Penguin Café* Camp performed the participant-written ensemble piece, “Burning Man: The Musical,” in both 2005 and 2006. But informally, there are also opportunities for immediate and spontaneous performance when one plays conversationally, physically, or is wrapped up in the moment of a group performance as a transient audience member. For such transient participant audiences, Burning Man spatially provides three important dimensions distinguishing the event as a place where there are essentially performative outcomes.

The first of these dimensions is a colorful and structured city-space where money has no value, and where attendees can explore and discover performance. The second is a heightened theatrical zone with individuals who volunteer to play and interact with others, as one may be so inclined to do in a carnivalesque setting. And the third is a consistently flowing transient audience to always provide new players and participants for one to interact with on any occasion, for any reason – and all of it outside of the commodified realm.

Structured performances may then also be seen as *participatory rituals* where participants volunteer regularly: for example, the ‘Greeters’ who invite participants into the event at the Greeter Station, which is located at the front entrance to the

event; the ‘Lamplighters,’ who, as previously mentioned, each evening light the city space street by street in procession; and finally, the ‘Critical Tits’ bike ride based on San Francisco’s Critical Mass bike ride, where female participants ride united in procession and topless. These theatrical activities are all, in their own ways, expressions of a collective identity arrived at through the medium of collaborative effort that happens at Burning Man.



**Image 27: *The Critical Tits Ride in 2006.* An all-woman bike parade, participants go topless in a demonstration of solidarity to other women at Burning Man. This is the most widely participated inclusive woman-only activity on the playa. The Critical Tits Ride began in 1999. Image by the author.**

### **The Complicated History of *Critical Tits***

That ‘everyday life is performed’ is more apparent to the women most responsible for maintaining the conditions of its production. That details and particulars constitute the connective tissue of the cultural is an insight apparent to anyone saddled with the task of making it a laundry list.

-Shannon Jackson, *Professing Performance*<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Shannon Jackson. *Professing Performativity: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Page 164.

The Critical Tits all-women topless bicycle ride at Burning Man began in 1996. According to the *Black Rock Gazette: Radical Expression Edition* (August 30, 2001), the first ride was meant to coincide with the ‘Critical Mass’ urban bike ride in San Francisco, California.<sup>37</sup> Started by a group of five women (Pam Seidenman aka Space Z. Cowgirl, Amie Paschal, Catherine Ager aka Miss Attitude, Mija Lee aka Miss Black Belt Betty, and Melinda Applegate aka Lava Rain) in honor of their woman friend who could not attend that year, the women intended to do something wild and crazy. The first and some subsequent Critical Tits rides have taken place the last Friday of the week of the event in the afternoon. Bikers are instructed to paint their chests and meet at the Man at a particular time to join the ride. The ride was in the beginning and continues to be a women-only space at the event and while the group’s original intent was empowerment for women, this idea has increasingly come under debate by women owing to the presence of men. “Finally, there is the level of sexuality or desire, with men desiring women and women desiring men. These different levels are themselves understood as united in the coherent identities of men and women as integrated subjects, as the kinds of entity that could have collective interests requiring or deserving political representation.”<sup>38</sup>

Critical Tits has become an opportunity for women Burners to demonstrate solidarity, as well as demonstrate a show of mass force against men at Burning Man who would gawk at women who choose to go nude or topless at

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<sup>37</sup> *Black Rock Gazette: Radical Expression Edition*. August 30, 2001. Text located at [www.burningman.com/blackrockgazette.2004](http://www.burningman.com/blackrockgazette.2004) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>38</sup> James Loxley. *Performativity*. New York: Routledge, 2007. Page 114.

the event. Each year it is advertised in the *WhatWhereWhen* and each year the activity grows, both in participants and those who observe the ride (on-lookers who make up what I will call the gauntlet). The gauntlet, to a bicyclist within the ride, appears to be made up almost entirely of men. This reveals one of the major criticisms of Critical Tits in the past several years, namely that while the ride is supposed to be an opportunity for women to unite in solidarity and pride in their bodies, and to gain strength in being partially nude en masse, men at Burning Man use the ride as a opportunity to gawk at women and capture images of so many topless women for exploitative purposes.

Consider one account of Critical Tits from 2006 by a Burner writing under the name Artformula on the Burning Man website entitled, “Tales From the Playa: a day in the burn,”

...at another time we join the long lines of people, primarily men, watching thousands of bare-breasted women bike from the man to center camp in the annual critical tits ride. such an amazing variety of shapes, colors, sizes; kind of national geographic in a soft porn way. it’s a funny thing about nudity. our hung-up society makes such a big deal about it, but really, see enough of even the most “obscene” parts of the human body and it will be about as titillating as a parade of elbows. (yeah, i said titillating on purpose) the tits are great, they are after all, tits, but i find myself most enthralled by the expressions on all of the exquisite faces: pride, joy, eagerness, silliness... there is no doubt in my mind that this place brings out the beauty in women.

-Artformula, February 11, 2006<sup>39</sup>

Issues of sexism and exploitation are not the only ones related to the debates over Critical Tits. Sexism remains an issue because the nature of the ride

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<sup>39</sup> Quote from Artformula from the Burning Man website. Text located at [http://www.burningman.com/blackrockcity\\_yearround/tales/artformula.html](http://www.burningman.com/blackrockcity_yearround/tales/artformula.html) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

calls for women to come together before a primarily male audience where feedback can be perceived as chauvinistic or misogynistic. While the women who participate in the ride do demonstrate bodily pride, impositions brought on by a voyeuristic masculine public gaze cause offense to the women themselves. Exploitation enters the framework of Critical Tits as a public performance of femininity when some men utilize the opportunity of the ride to demoralize or objectify women because they are baring their breasts. However, the debate is confused when male audiences seem to glorify the partially nude women with supportive comments or gifting women during the ride by spraying them with water to cool them down or offering women drinks, because male audiences still take pictures without permission or simply gawk. These issues are troubling because their existence undermines the purpose of the ride in a political sense, as a demonstration by female participants to “celebrate feminine power and beauty.”<sup>40</sup>

The ride since its beginning has always been about women riding together, without men. Over the years questions have arisen about separatism both from men and from those who are not women by birth but identify as women. It appears that while the debate over who can ride in Critical Tits continues, the Burners who attend the ride not as participants but as cheerleaders are there to support the women riding. Cheers of “You’re beautiful!” and “We love you!” greet the women as they ride down the streets. However, so do seemingly

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<sup>40</sup> Quote from the *WhatWhereWhen* and e-playa calendar located on-line at the Burning Man website at [http://playacal.burningman.com/view\\_entry.php?id=5035&date=20070831](http://playacal.burningman.com/view_entry.php?id=5035&date=20070831) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

unnecessary cries of “Show me your tits!” It is not clear whether this is meant as an intentionally sexist slur that undermines the purported purpose of the ride and an eerie throwback to the initial impetus for the ride or possibly an intentionally ironic outcry since that particular phrase is often met with either laughter or uncomfortable silence. People who watch the ride, not simply men, are known to spray the riders with water as well. This is seen as a kind of gift of thanks to the women who are riding under the heat of the sun whether for their own or others enjoyment. Further, the participants in Critical Tits may themselves take issue with the conceptual binary of woman/man and its historical and cultural links to sexuality . Critical Tits is an important place to consider in this sense gender and performance at Burning Man. According to theorist James Loxley:

So what we call ‘sex’, and distinguish as the pre-cultural component of identity, can perhaps instead be understood as only *culturally designated* as such. The binary division of a bodily sex, that is to say, is not a given but a cultural category; if it is dissimulated as ‘nature’ in accounts of identity, then feminism ought to challenge this dissimulation, not participate in it. Perhaps then a future beyond the duality of sex would become a political possibility.<sup>41</sup>

The performance of femininity during Critical Tits is signaled by one’s presence in the ride which requires only that one have a bicycle and breasts. Very often one sees women participating in the ride who are not exposing their breasts. This represents the portion of women riders who support the concept of the ride by their participation but will not reveal their breasts, thereby contributing to the sexual exhibitionist-male voyeur debate. Many women are simply not comfortable and then there are those women who feel that resulting sun-burned

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<sup>41</sup> James Loxley. *Performativity*. London: Routledge, 2007. Page 116.

nipples are not worth the effort. Critical Tits, as the largest gathering of women on the Playa, invites all women and girls to participate in the ride, however no restrictions are made or enforced regarding whether or not any given woman must be topless. Often the choice to go topless or to ride at all becomes the central message as to how much one supports the ride given the many complicated political circumstances which result including a participant feeling they are being exploited. Further, just as any activity that takes place at the event, every participant's willingness to engage depends almost entirely on the weather and their general health and well-being, which determines their social prerogative.

Critical Tits has become one of the most popular events at Burning Man. After the burning of the Man on Saturday night and the Temple burn on Sunday night (wooden temples built by the artist David Best) Critical Tits is the next most widely attended and watched activity on the playa.<sup>42</sup> In the past few years theme camps have even hosted after-parties for the women riders where they provide a volunteer all-male staff to serve drinks and food as well as offer foot rubs to the women. This further demonstrates how tied up in gender politics the Critical Tits event is at Burning Man, as male participants are sometimes discouraged from entering the annual after-party unless they have some official status on the playa (such as Project staff or are well-known male performers), or if they volunteer to 'serve' women there.

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<sup>42</sup> The artist, David Best, has produced large-scale wooden temples at Burning Man since the late 1990s. By 2004, the Sunday night Temple Burns had become reason enough for participants to continue their stay at the event into Labor Day.

Another important issue related to the growth and controversy over Critical Tits has to do with the inclusivity of women in the ride. As image 27 shows, few women who participate in Critical Tits are women of color. However, this truth can be stated for Burning Man as a whole where a very small percentage of people of color attend . Women riders in Critical Tits who are of color are subject to even more scrutiny because they are anomalies in the mass. Problems arise when we start to consider the social and political implications at Burning Man for women and people of color when they are not only some of the few representing a particularly designated social category but also that their naked body draws attention to social issues of exploitation and stigma.

The image above shows one African-American woman amongst many Caucasian women. She is topless as are others and dressed in similar costumery appropriate to the playa and the event, yet her presence signals a disrupt in the liberation Critical Tits stands for and the female solidarity it suggests upholding because by its nature Burning Man is a white-centric cultural phenomenon. Whether this is due to its reputation as a ‘hippie-style’ festival or else an honestly perceived social event not welcoming to the majority of society, Critical Tits as one of Burning Man’s most popular group activities represents the disconnect between the event’s tenets of radical inclusivity and the reality that its population does not reflect that commitment.

Further, Critical Tits has become problematic as a women-only space because it does not reflect all women and while it may be claimed as a safe space for women celebrating their bodies, seems to instead expose them to exploitation.

Women and their choice to go nude at Burning Man is one that is highly political because it traps them between a desire to demonstrate self-pride and connectivity with other women while revealing the dark and sexually exploitative nature of male spectatorship as theorized by Laura Mulvey.<sup>43</sup> Political tensions arise around Critical Tits because the location of women and their intention by their presence as participants in the ride is undermined by men who would gawk and yell obscenities at these women. The debate over the political viability of women's continued participation in Critical Tits will last as long as a ride maintains its popularity while it continues to fuel the stereotype that Burning Man is a place for watching topless or naked women.



**Image 28: *Bunny Oil Wrestling*.** This image was taken at Burning Man in 2001 at the Pink Pleasure Palace within a collection of theme camps known as Illumination Village. The picture shows performance activity called Bunny Oil Wrestling. The women who ‘ran’ the wrestling pit are known as the ‘Bunnies.’ In the picture, men and women wrestle before a transient crowd.

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<sup>43</sup> Laura Mulvey. *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989. Mulvey utilized film theory, psychoanalysis and feminism to arrive at a concept regarding the spectator as an inherently male position and the woman as the object of desire. I mention her theory here to draw attention to problematic nature of men as spectators during Critical Tits wherein female participants are caught in a live moment where their perception of men as spectators could be seen as both voyeuristic and the women themselves may be viewed in a fetishistic manner.

**Performance activities such as oil wrestling are participant-run and open to all for participation. Photograph by Jessica Hobbs. Image reproduced with permission.**

### **Burning Man: Theatrical Event**

At Burning Man, the entire event space, full of tents and domes, pathways and participant-built wooden stages, is something akin to the street or marketplace during Carnival time.<sup>44</sup> Distinguishing the event as a temporary liberation from the usual order, participants to Burning Man enter a space where interactivity is valued in art and immediate expressive communication is viewed as performance.<sup>45</sup> Participants freely acknowledge one another while casually traveling throughout the performance space. Activities are scheduled during the event, are published and distributed by the Project in the *WhatWhereWhen*. These activities and performances are hosted by theme camps who, for the most part, invite everyone to come.

Within the *What Where When*, there are listed, for example: parties, proms, mixers, parades, dance contests, processions, yoga sessions, fight clubs, and better-sex technique demonstrations, all of which constitute the participatory democracy that exists in this performance culture.<sup>46</sup> Imaginary meanings can within this theatrical

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<sup>44</sup> Henri Schindler. *Mardi Gras New Orleans*. New York: Flammarion, 1997.

<sup>45</sup> The Burning Man Project arts grant policy is as follows: “Every year Burning Man issues a small number of grants for the purpose of partially funding specific art projects. These grants are awarded primarily for interactive art that is based on our annual art theme, although a portion of our grant budget is given to non-theme art. We look for work that stands on its own as sculptural installation independent of performances or activities, although these may accompany the installation. We do not fund performance. We do not fund domes, tents, teepees or stages and ask that if your project must be contained in a structure, it be handmade and related to its contents. We do not fund art cars, but we sometimes fund mobile art - sculptures that move and do not resemble a car. We do not fund theme camps.” Text located at [http://www.burningman.com/installations/art\\_guidelines.html](http://www.burningman.com/installations/art_guidelines.html) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

event transform a group of tents with a name into a theme camp, for example: Happycamp, The Barbie Death Camp & Wine Bistro, Camp Ninja Burger, Clan Destino and Crazy Dante's Used Soul Emporium – to name a few. Further, on a particularly personal level, a port-a-potty for a week becomes a bathroom, and participant-provided extra-large packing crates can be a stage where one can simulate horseback riding astride a stranger. Theatrical creativity thus provides a presence for the artist in this alternate society with its own rules, and the culture it produces provides a home for various levels of performativity.

Theoretical definitions for performativity equate self-representation with performance and blur the qualities of performing onstage with practices in ordinary life. Burning Man is separate from normal everyday living and yet a kind of staged reality. It is a festival space that is colorful and celebratory in nature and in its interactive rituals provides liminoidal spaces.<sup>47</sup> As an event with spaces for liminoidal transformation, Burning Man gives participants permission to embellish their own aesthetic style and, importantly, strip off their customary social markings in favor of new personally-created ones. Therefore, a participant may come to transcend themselves through the lived festival experience as a performer. There is a great deal of power in this performing. Within their culture, Burners may reveal themselves

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<sup>46</sup> In 2006 there were three hundred listings in the *WhatWhereWhen* of activities and performances. Some examples are: the Dream Rock Opera, the Names Dinner Theater, Erotic Mathematical Performance Art, the Dragon Performance, Pole Dance Revolution, the Black Rock University Performance Art Therapy Session, Opening Night at the Whiskey Whores Saloon, the Alien-Monkey-Love-Nest Talent Stage, the Muses' Ark Parade, Chez Snuggle Burlesque Show, the 5th Annual French Maid Parade, and the Miss Black Rock City Pageant. The entire list of performance-related activities are listed in the final section of Appendix A to this dissertation which includes all performance related activities published by the Burning Man Project since 1994.

<sup>47</sup> Victor Turner. *From Ritual to Theatre: The Seriousness of Human Play*. New York: Paj Publications, 1982. Lee Gilmore and Jeremy Hockett, as Burning Man scholars, also make this distinction.

fully as social performers without the fear of ostracization. Social stigma here is not linked to ostentation as in the dominant culture but rather, to overt passivity.



**Image 29: *Friday Night at Camp Fear No Martini*. This image was taken at Burning Man in 2006. The photo offers a view from above of the collection of participants, bicycles, shade structures, tents and vehicles that show the visual cacophony that exists at Burning Man. Photograph by Dan Adams. Image reproduced with permission.**

### **Burners Performing Informally**

Attending Burning Man, the motivation for some participants may not start out as performing. But once within the event space, it is difficult to ignore the atmosphere, which is *inherently* theatrical. Playfulness and interaction are the dominant form of entertainment amongst participants. To be clear, by this I mean, *informal performing* by participants for the amusement of others and may include

non-verbal behaviors. Gesture as well as spoken language is paid great attention at Burning Man, as participants strive to express themselves through both flamboyance and subtlety. However, what they are also doing is playing with forms of communication theatrically that in the “default world,” and in informal social interactions, they would not perhaps be able to use artistically.



**Image 30: *Juicy Danger and Boushki*. This image was taken in 1997 of the performance duo “Juicy Danger” from Canada who are Christine Taylor and Tom Comet. The two performers dressed flamboyantly during the event that year, but also performed several shows that included dangerous side-show antics including one performer using a chainsaw to carve an apple in the mouth of the other performer. A documentary of their trip to Burning Man and performances at the event was produced by David Vaisbord entitled, “Juicy Danger meets Burning Man.” Photograph by Gerry Gropp, reproduced with permission.**

Facial expression, eye contact, moving the mouth and the tongue, how one sits, stands or walks, and what one does with one’s hands: these are all simple, basic forms of communication, but within this theatrical event, they somehow become *language*. Gestures and movements are the *poetry of the body* at Burning Man and tell us that within this social world, these forms of human expression elevate

ephemeral moments into long-lasting impressions. That is how participants perform here and why: it is a conscious act of self-display, and an acknowledgement of self-performing.

It should be stated here that Burning Man is always and for everyone who attends, a *subjective personal experience*. One year may be an amazing and wonderful experience, and the next year, uncomfortable and intolerable. Circumstances such as emotional, physical and mental health; mood and demeanor determine whether or not a participant may even be available or open to a full experience at the event and that includes their willingness to play and perform. But clearly, in as much as inner personal circumstances guide one's experience, so to can interactions with other participants. Participants to Burning Man have on average paid over one-thousand dollars to attend.<sup>48</sup> They may not know what they are getting themselves into and what journey they have embarked upon, but that, at the same time that is the seduction of Burning Man. It is, as a theatrical event, a place that holds all of the promise of one's imagination and because the experience for many who have attended goes beyond that, participants become quite passionate about this environment as a newly-created cultural space that will allow them to perform themselves practically or intentionally however they desire outside of their familiar behavioral repertoire.

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<sup>48</sup> Participants must cover ticket, travel, food and water supplies, clothing, shelter and personal necessities before they come to Burning Man. More information on participant expenses can be found in the *Afterburn Reports* from 2001-2005. These reports are published on-line at the Burning Man website [www.burningman.com/afterburn.htm](http://www.burningman.com/afterburn.htm) and appear in Appendix D to this dissertation.

## The Social Factor

Burning Man is an environment that lends itself to unusual, difficult and often surprising experiences. Positive outcomes result when participants can adapt, are flexible and prepared for anything. Negative results occur, like personal injuries, according to the Project organizers, when participants are not prepared or careless, that is, they are not able to be ‘radically self-reliant.’<sup>49</sup> I add to this the *social factor*. The social factor is what I will define as: the ability of some in any culture to get along better or navigate more easily through life’s more difficult circumstances because they are better adept at communicating with others.

The social factor is easy to recognize in most people. The most sociable is the person who isn’t afraid to address anyone, who can speak in front of large groups of people: someone who commands attention through their body, their energy, their voice and their movement. It is an individual whose personal charisma radiates from them. Participants need to be able to use the social factor to get along at Burning Man if they are not fully self-reliant. But what is at issue is not simply material possessions, for the most successful Burners are those who can talk to and charm anyone, not as a means of acquiring material things necessarily, but impressing upon someone else who they are and exchanging energy with them. This is why some

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<sup>49</sup> The “First Timers Guide” to Burning Man. Located on-line at Burning Man website at [http://www.burningman.com/first\\_timers/](http://www.burningman.com/first_timers/) and in Appendix D to this dissertation. The introduction to web visitors provides this text: “Remember your first time? You can only do things for the first time once, but don’t get performance anxiety. You’ll be among friends – no initiation fees, no secret handshake, hazing or telemarketing follow-up calls. Burning Man is a community, one that although temporary for six days each year, remains connected during the rest of the year to keep the fire burning. Sign up for the Jack Rabbit Speaks internet newsletter. Second, take a tour of this web site to give you a better idea of what to expect and how to get involved. You can participate as little or as much as you want, but it is said that you really must participate to truly enjoy the experience. Nobody will kick you out if you haven’t got the coolest ensemble on the playa.”

people become actors; because they can hold an audience's attention and illicit emotional reactions from them. At Burning Man, this level of interactivity is considered a form of gifting by participants. According to the Burning Man Project, "Radical self-expression arises from the unique gifts of the individual. No one other than the individual or a collaborating group can determine its content. It is offered as a gift to others."<sup>50</sup>

As cultural performers at Burning Man, the social factor is the key to communicating oneself. This goes beyond merely displaying self-confidence, since what is valued as part of the immersion experience at Burning Man as in other cultural communities, is making *interpersonal connections*. Creative connections, sexual connections, and intellectual connections are the most highly prized forms of association, I would argue, within the Burning Man experience. To be able to give the gift of "self" to another person is where *meaning* is created at Burning Man as a social and theatrical event, and while certainly the spectacle of self-presentation can overwhelm and influence others on the playa, to be able to carry oneself as a "performance artist" means a participant has achieved the highest level of cultural status recognized at this social event.

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<sup>50</sup> At [http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/about\\_burningman/principles.html](http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/about_burningman/principles.html) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.



**Image 31: *The Lost Penguin Café*.** This image from Burning Man 2006 is of the Lost Penguin Café which hosts theatrical activities throughout the week. The space, which is located on the Esplanade and built by a participant group, provides all participants a space for performing and also a place for gathering and interacting under a shade structure out of the elements. Photo by the author.

At Burning Man, the experience of the participant is very obviously both an external and an internal one. Many participants value interconnectivity at Burning Man as an element in the life-changing value the culture holds. An awareness gained of one's own ability to *make meaning* of the experience can thereby become a greater realization of one's changing identity. For instance, in the personal account given by the participant Cybele Knowles on the Burning Man website, she outlines the enlightenment she gained during her first trip to the event. She admits that "Burning Man changed my life."<sup>51</sup> By going to the event, creating and interacting in a new way

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<sup>51</sup> The personal account of Cybele Knowles is entitled, "The Goddess of Love in the Liminal City." It was written as a testament to her life-changing experience as a new participant at Burning Man and was published on January 9, 2006, when it appeared on the Burning Man website under "Tales from the Playa" the text of which was published on-line at the Burning Man website located at [http://www.burningman.com/blackrockcity\\_yearround/tales/CybeleKnowles.html](http://www.burningman.com/blackrockcity_yearround/tales/CybeleKnowles.html) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

with other people, she discovered herself as an artist and returned to the default world determined to change the way she lived her life and reprioritized her life goals.

Like Cybele, artists who come to Burning Man, similar to those who attend as participants and come away from the event having performed themselves in new ways, are often changed by the experience. They have gained insight into their life and have been allowed to know the ways being a creative person can enhance their life. Some long-time participants, who regularly create art and performance at Burning Man, also serve as examples to participants who are seeking alternatives in their lives as creative social beings. It is through this performance culture and new cultural context that they are able to address those concerns. For those artists, status at the event and within the Burning Man community is marked as such; it is their personal devotion to art that becomes the cultural artifacts which transcend the ephemerality of the event. It is their performances that people remember and their persona which others hold up as social symbol.

In Chapter Four, I will consider how Burning Man is a performance culture. I will analyze how participants and audiences exist within the Burning Man event-space in comparison to the ethos of the event which promotes radical self-expression along with the popular Burner refrain, “No Spectators.” This final chapter will also consider the social drama which exists at Burning Man and concludes by offering a theoretical approach to considering Burning Man as lens for American culture.



**Image 32: *The Pilgrimage to Finis Tere 2006.* This image was taken at Burning Man in 2006 of an interactive voluntary participant performance called “Finis Tere.” The performance concept was a procession by participants to the Man in which the performers would wear white paper robes and would mid-procession, symbolically remove the robes and burn them. The performance was advertised in the *WhatWhereWhen* and included a call for all participants interested in performing together. Photo reproduced with permission. Photo by Noise.**

## Chapter Four: Burning Man as Performance Culture



**Image 33: *Fire Conclave, 2006.*** This image is of the Fire Conclave performing around the Man in 2006 on the night of the Burn. The Fire Conclave, organized by Crimson Rose of the Burning Man Project, is made up of hundreds of fire spinners, dancers, hoopers, jumpers, and blowers. Fire performers audition for the group and practice throughout the year in their given region as well as during the event week on the playa. Image reproduced with permission. Photo by Noise.

The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another.<sup>1</sup>

-Michael Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 1984

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Foucault. "Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias." *French Journal Architecture*. October 1984, 2.

Dramatic with its fire displays, spectacular in its vast scope as a colorful makeshift city, and radically theatrical in its effects on participants, Burning Man is the response of Baz Kershaw's contemporary performative society in action as it invites the entire community to participate while critically reflecting on the social order from which it allows escape: "But if spectacle is everywhere in the performative society, so much so that we are constituted through it, then spectacle, in theatre and elsewhere, gains new kinds of significance."<sup>2</sup> Further, Kershaw observes:

...democratized performance, in the sense that here was a community of people constructing a sense of identity through the production of culture that could potentially enhance their collective agency, self-determination and responsibility to one another. Its eccentricity, its uniqueness, its one-offness indicate an opening up, in that context, a new domain for democratic empowerment. It achieved this, the argument would run, by being *more* than just resistant to the normative values that may be seen as constraints to democracy – personal, generational, familial, and so on – rather it *transcended* those normative values and, at least for the time it was happening, created a space and time beyond the dominant, a new realm of civil society, in which the crucial values celebrated through creativity were equality, justice and freedom. In this sense it was not just radical, but *coherently* radical.<sup>3</sup>

The idea of performance at Burning Man as a means of transcending socio-cultural categories is linked inherently to its distance from mainstream society and the ability of its participants to create their own cultural space. Burning Man is two hours from the nearest city, Reno, Nevada, and as a festival space is a wide open range which becomes transformed from barren landscape into vibrant city, providing communal

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<sup>2</sup> Baz Kershaw. "Curiosity or Contempt: On Spectacle, the Human, and Activism." *Theatre Journal*; Dec 2003; 55, 4, 593.

<sup>3</sup> Baz Kershaw. *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard*. London: Routledge, 1999, 219.

areas such as bars, lounges, communal food tents and participant-built theater stages and domes, where participant interactivity is consciously encouraged. “Burning Man is like, in a weird way, a small Kansan town where everybody knows each other and wishes each other well, demonstrates every last ideal of community – and of course first and foremost that community demands the participation of all.”<sup>4</sup>

For the duration of the event, participants are cut-off from their normal routines and, having made a pilgrimage to the desert, are captive and enveloped by the larger community. By their annual journey, Burners enact the postmodern heterotopic response to an emerging performative society, at whose heart is the individual, the subject of the neo-liberal spectacle that is this ephemeral communal experiment. According to Foucault: “A heterotopia (is) a place without a place, that exists all by itself, that is closed on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity...but has been simultaneously the greatest reserve of the imagination.”<sup>5</sup> Just as Burning Man is a real and imagined place. Further, Foucault tells us:

There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.<sup>6</sup>

Through the inversion of the usual social order that occurs at Burning Man when participants replace capitalistic class order with tribal living and decorum and self-

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<sup>4</sup> Dave Eggers. *Drama in the Desert: The Sights and Sounds of Burning Man*. Edited by Holly Kreuter. San Francisco: Raised Barn Press, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Foucault. “Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias.” *French Journal Architecture*. October 1984, 6.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

repression with behavioral abandon. As a part of the participatory process of the event, the environment invites frivolity, sexual liberation, and humor as social commentary. The release from one's normal social roles as a means for costuming oneself in the guise of Burner importantly allows the participant entrée into the cultural community at large. Finally, as an important aspect of the ritual renewal that happens yearly for Burning Man participants, the event theme is changed by Burning Man Project organizers to provide fresh new linkages.<sup>7</sup>

In the preceding chapters, I have considered my own theories about how Burning Man invites performance, as well as the history and background of the event and its culture, the role of *performance* at Burning Man, and the role of the *Burner* as a social performer in the temporary city-space. My purpose in this concluding chapter is to solidify my theory of Burning Man as a performance culture. The questions I will address here are: What does the presence of audiences at Burning Man suggest about the social roles created at the event? Can Burning Man be thought of historically and phenomenologically as a kind of social drama? Does Burning Man as counterculture offer a way in which we might consider American society today?

Through theoretical analysis and ethnographic example I offer this concluding chapter in which to analyze how Burning Man acts as an intermediary and transformation point for a disenchanted population seeking alternative modes of cultural performativity. Aspects of this are mirrored in performance at Burning Man. Within this framework, identity issues are addressed because of the organization of

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<sup>7</sup> Themes for the event have included: The Nebulous Entity in 1998, The Wheel of Time in 1999, The Body in 2000, The Seven Ages in 2001, The Floating World in 2002, Beyond Belief in 2003, Vault of Heaven in 2004, Psyche in 2005, and Hope and Fear: The Future in 2007. Theme descriptions available on-line at [www.burningman.com](http://www.burningman.com) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

Burning Man and mediation around the performance of participants who seek out its cultural communities and who also inhabit them.

**Carnival Collectivity, Unity of Time, Death and Renewal,  
and Burning Man**

In this whole the individual body ceases to a certain extent to be itself; it is possible, so to say, to exchange bodies, to be renewed (through change of costume and mask). At the same time the people become aware of their sensual, material bodily unity and community.

-Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*<sup>8</sup>

The aspect of Collectivity in *Carnival* is one which we find in Burning Man as a gathering of people and in their working together. The building of Burning Man in the Black Rock Desert entails the creation of a city, including camps and villages. But this concept of collectivity extends as well to gatherings of Burners away from the event. Bakhtin's idea on collectivity was that through *Carnival*, the individual body ceased to be and that all bodies come together to form a bodily collective. It is in this sense that I define this term as Bakhtin uses it to refer to how it really reflects collectivity that has specific nuances. Bakhtin's notion of *Carnival* invites one to be part of a unity with others that is complex because it does not regard the dominance of individualism. According to Bakhtian theorists Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, by collectivity Bakhtin means individuals ,now part of the whole, cease to be themselves but also, in taking part

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<sup>8</sup> Bakhtin, 255.

in the collective one is 'aware of both the unity of time and the ongoing historical process of death and renewal.'<sup>9</sup>

I am altering collectivity as an aspect of *Carnival* while I apply it to specific aspects of Burning Man such as the large volunteer base that the event succeeds in amassing to create its infrastructure and city space but that allows for individual artists to come forward and personally create within. Also, while many participants in Burning Man come together for both the event itself and the smaller Burner events which take place worldwide, their experience as a group could not be described necessarily as one where everyone blends into each other, in fact many people stand out. Bakhtin analyzes *Carnival* collectivity as one where the people come together and are equal. Burning Man collectivity is different because class differences are apparent at the event where wealthy participants live alongside the poorer ones. This distinction is an important one because it reveals the conflict between Burning Man's tenet of radical inclusion which suggests a philosophy of equality but instead invites very different people to come to the same place together.

This difference has an impact on the idea of carnival collectivity in terms of revealing how participants come to experience the collective at once. Although participants to Burning Man come together in a space, they are not necessarily equal as the event itself does not defy socioeconomic or political organization. Wealthy and poorer Burners are separated as are those who express themselves

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<sup>9</sup> Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist. *Mikhail Bakhtin*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984. Page 303.

through the activities on the Playa that identify them as staff or organizers versus participants.

Burning Man collectivity is carnivalesque however because its participants do by their participation create a collective force together and yet it changes the collectivity by the nature of itself as an event that encourages radical self-expression. Burners are not a crowd; they are a community come together, though they are not equal because the community encourages self-expression that reveals socioeconomic and political distinctions . In regards to collectivity one may see the intersection between Burning Man, the carnivalesque and politics in the success of the event as a participant-driven social phenomenon that has overcome threats by federal, state and local authorities. Burning Man's carnivalesque collectivity is political because it reveals that by the mainstreaming and continued popularity of the event, alternative and progressive thinking is alive and thriving in the United States in a space for performing that captures Bakhtin's idea of Unity of Time.

Thus the outsideness of groups marginalized by a dominant ideology within non-carnival time not only gain a voice during carnival time, but they also say something about the ideology that seeks to silence them. Thus two voices come together in the free and frank communication that carnival permits and, although each retains its own unity and open totality they are mutually enriched.

-Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*<sup>10</sup>

Within the aspect of *Carnival* called Unity of Time, we find an apt comparison to Burning Man as an event where the predominant trend is against

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<sup>10</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin. *Rabelais and His World*. Blomington: Indiana University Press, 56.

anyone keeping time. While there is an events and activities calendar distributed to participants when they enter the festival space of Burning Man, people there lose track of time, meander throughout the event and mostly watch the rise and fall of the sun and moon to connect themselves to the day. Bakhtin's idea on unity of time was that during *Carnival* the reality of history and past events would come together in this moment that was itself a new world. It was also his idea that the reality of different people in the given historical moment of the carnival, that is the oppressed and those in power, would come together in this same place and those marginalized would have a voice there owing to liberated and direct communication that occurs during the period of carnival, or what Bakhtin called *dialogism*. This theory of open communication when considered along with unity of time brings with it an understanding of a culture's history outside of itself and a new way of seeing the world.

I am altering unity of time as an aspect of *Carnival* as I apply it to specific aspects of Burning Man including the way participants make a new world for themselves based on experiences rather than numbers on a clock. Removed from an society bound by deadlines, work and personal appointments, responsibilities and stress inducing mandatory meetings, Burning Man presents a natural and harsh environment where people are more driven by their own and others' bodily desires than enforced time commitments. Bakhtin analyzes *Carnival's* unity of time as a space where all are humanized and history is condensed, allowing for discussion, movement, change and creative progress to occur. *Carnival* makes its own time and nothing exists outside of it. The significance of this concept can be

understood as the emergence of a new world where the old rules do not apply and the people are immersed in a world they have created. The same is true at Burning Man, where there is little or no contact with the outside world and so the carnival life is the only life one knows.

Burning Man unity of time is the same as *Carnival* unity of time in that both represent an uninterrupted flow of experience that exists on its own for those involved and brings people together in the moment as a unique separate life experience. Burning Man unity of time is carnivalesque because its people let go of marking their lives as they had before the festival and yet changes the unity of time in that as modern people they may literally return to real time at any moment. In regards to unity of time one may see the intersection between Burning Man, the carnivalesque and politics in the ability of participants to escape from normative time and experience into a wholly created realm, unconcerned with professional and personal commitments. Burning Man's carnivalesque unity of time is political because it succeeds in bringing people together from different classes who may engage in dialogues that promote changing the outside dominant, time-enforced regime and draw attention to Bakhtin's notion of Death and Renewal.

Negation and destruction (death of the old) are included as an essential phase, inseparable from affirmation, from the birth of something new and better. The very material bodily lower stratum of the grotesque image (food, wine, the genital force, the organs of the body) bears a deeply positive character. This principle is victorious, for the final result is always abundance, increase.

-Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Bakhtin, 62.

Death and Renewal are a crucial aspect of *Carnival* to consider when analyzing Burning Man. This is reflected first in the annual burning of the Man each year at the event. Foremost in name, Burning Man brings participants together for a ritual and subjectively symbolic burn when all participants come to witness the demise of the giant wooden Man they have come to know and whose death they expect. That death signals the end of the event and the anticipation of next year, hence, the renewal of the culture of Burners. Death and renewal are also present to a lesser degree in the changing annual themes at Burning Man each year, as well as the changing of people who leave or are brought into the culture. Death and renewal are very important ideas of the carnivalesque. To push it further in terms of how it applies to Burning Man, we can examine the *birth* of a new Man each year as a symbol for the Burner culture, and his burning to make way for another renewal; a concept that is essential to this analysis of Burning Man. The concept of death and renewal frames this analysis of Burning Man because it is a social phenomenon whose central theme is the death of a giant symbolic man that is burned before thousands. Some come each year to help build him and all come to see him die but all also anticipate the new Man. Renewal is integral to the death of the Man because without his rebirth there would be no more Burner culture. The significance of the death and renewal of the Man each year is that it feeds the culture that gathers around it. The Man is always a presence; despite his death he will always again come to be. This is the symbolic and central importance of the concept of Carnival death and renewal in Burning Man.

Bakhtin's idea on death and renewal was that in *Carnival* these were symbolized by the crowing and decrowning of the king, an act which pointed out that though the individual dies the people themselves continue to live. This concept fits too with the idea that just as humanity will biologically die out and be reborn with each new generation, history will survive and thus humanity with it. If through carnival people mock death then they overcome it but also, in that death inevitably comes renewal.

I am using death and renewal as an aspect of *Carnival* while I apply it to specific aspects of Burning Man such as the annual death and rebirth of the Man himself, which is each year built and burned before participants, as well as the death and rebirth of the annual themes for the event on which participant created artwork is based and then also, often burned. The flow of new and old participants each year is marked by some at the event in symbolic ways. On artwork all over the event space participants leave novellas for or write the names of those participants who have died. Some participants bring with them the ashes of those who have died and scatter them in the desert at Burning Man. Also, each year participants new to the event arrive and also parents bring their very young children, including infants to the event.

The significance of participants who choose to come to the event pregnant or bring their young children is that it focuses attention completely on how important this social event and culture is in the lives of its participants: They want their children to be born into and grow up in this culture and they are willing to risk the harsh environment to do so. Children as participants at Burning Man are

symbolic much as is the presence of elderly Burners: they are at the beginning and end of life and they belong to Burner culture. Bakhtin recognized in his analysis of Carnival that the grotesque body was metaphorically both dying and giving birth; such are the literal circumstances at Burning Man as pregnant women, young children and old people come together and are at once present and naked in the same carnival moment.

Bakhtin analyzes *Carnival's* death and renewal as primarily about life's triumph over death, and that through death there is renewal so that it is not to be feared but met with laughter. Death is simply one part of the life-cycle and always brings with it renewal. Burning Man death and renewal is the same as *Carnival* in that it embraces equally the power of destruction and death through fire and danger, as well as the power of the rebirth and renewal of all who have come to the event to be rejuvenated.

Burning Man's death and renewal is carnivalesque because so much of its culture is marked by change and death, for there cannot be another Burning Man without the death of the current one. And that is significant because like Carnival it adds to the distinctive life experience Burning Man provides, one that provides a culture whose essence is based on death and renewal, one that is marked each year by a harsh existence and a symbolically violent end in fire. Fire is present throughout the event as a constant reminder that all things perish and death is a constant threat to those who attend. The event itself and its culture perpetuate fire as an element of its art and expression and always use fire to bring an end to the event itself. Therefore, death and renewal as represented by the constant burning

of the Man is the cultural signifier that reminds all participants of their eventual mortality and immortality.

In regards to death and renewal, one may see the intersection between Burning Man, the carnivalesque and politics in the way death is acknowledged through the potential danger that exists inherently in the desert heat and amongst so much fire. Burning Man's carnivalesque death and renewal is political because it re-introduces its participants to the primal drama of life, one that promises death even as it announces that risk on the ticket every participant must buy in order to get through the event's main gate.



**Image 34: Audience at Burning Man.** In this photo taken at Burning Man in 2006, audience members watch a performer on-stage at the Black Rock University participatory stage. Image by the author.

### **Audiences at Burning Man**

*I love performing at BM but I loved it more back in the last century. People were more apt to join in, more freewheeling, more creative, less inhibited and more aware of where they were. Now folks tend to Watch, they don't understand that they are supposed to join in. I loved*

*performing when at any moment another participant could suddenly steer the performance in a new direction. It required great improvisational skills but I never felt self conscious. Now I have given up and I just let people watch. I perform at home and it feels more like that. People are appreciative but I'm looking for co-conspirators not an audience. Performance was an all the time any time any place spontaneous affair everyone ready to play, and lots of strange scenarios and situations that allowed for performances that can never be repeated and had to happen then and there with those costumed people.*

-Quentin Davis, participant-performer to the author, 2006.<sup>12</sup>

As the population of Burning Man has grown yearly, so has the feeling amongst longtime Burners that the earlier years of the event were a more *welcoming time* for performing. They reminisce about a time when the population of the event was smaller and the culture of Burning Man was even less bound by rules.<sup>13</sup> Burning Man has grown yearly, from twenty participants in 1986 on Baker Beach, to one-hundred participants in 1990, the first year in the desert, to over forty-thousand participants in 2006. During that time the issue of whether or not the event has gotten too large and hurt its pristine performative and spontaneous nature in the interest of attracting as many people as possible, has become a source of great concern for many Burners.

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<sup>12</sup> This quote is from Quentin Davis, Burning Man participant-performer in an email response to the 2006 Performance Questionnaire distributed to participants by the author. March 27, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> The Burning Man Project has addressed the debates regarding overpopulation and conservatism by stating publicly on their website that: 1) Radical inclusivity means *anyone*; and 2) There was never a time when Burning Man was like a fantasy science fiction movie. On-line the following statement addresses the latter issue: "Far from glorying in displays of diesel powered destruction, we have actually banned the use of motor vehicles. The display and use of firearms is also prohibited. This myth is partly the result of confusing certain exhibitions of machine art with "Mad Max" scenarios, a popular movie-inspired fantasy. The comparison summons up visions of a gutted landscape populated by violent outlaws. Yet, what self-respecting version of Armageddon would create its own volunteer security corps numbering in the hundreds? It is a fatuous association, and mainly derives from the fact that many of the artworks at Burning Man are, in fact, burned. This is part of an esthetic which focuses on immediacy and evanescence and is more related to our Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly policy of land use, than to thoughtless mayhem and destruction." Quote available on-line at <http://www.burningman.com/press/myths.html> and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

In reality, with the increase in population has come growth in performance genres and interactive art projects represented there. Audiences at Burning Man communicate enthusiastically to performers as a demonstration of respect rather than the respective passivity we might recognize in the traditional theatre. But importantly, the element of spontaneity affects how and whether a participant as audience member will in fact move beyond enjoying the performance to engaging with it. As theorist Daniel Belgrad points out, this cultural positioning is linked to a historical moment in America:

The cultural stance embodied in the art of spontaneity – and communicated through it – constituted a distinct third alternative, opposed to both the mass culture and the established high culture of the post war period. Its influence on American society would be most strongly felt in the ‘counterculture’ of the 1960s.<sup>14</sup>

Since the 1960s, the counterculture in America has grown through the activities of communities like the Rainbows, the Radical Faeries, the Grovers and Burners. The spontaneity of performance inside of Burning Man as a counterculture involves a range of performativity that includes; elements of body art and mixed media; the mixing of traditional theatrical genres; and informal and improvised staged interpersonal interactions. Participants who attend the event are exposed to hybridized and free-flowing interactive performance. “Within the culture of spontaneity, the imperative to communicate authentic human experience made subjective expression seem both important and difficult.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Daniel Belgrad. *The Culture of Spontaneity: Improvisation and the Arts in Postwar America*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998, 1.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 253.

Similarly, over the course of the event attendees may witness the broad range of creative expressions that challenge their own notions of traditional theatre, and even cross comfortable boundaries. There they may discover for the first time: street theater, costumes, fire art, character-shifting, fire opera, cross dressing, tribal music and dance, tantric drums and percussion, sacred processions, mock fights, fantasy games and sports, sadomasochism, bondage competition, fetishism, raves, and neo-historical reenactments. Performativity at Burning Man extends further into exhibitionism, and like performance art past, raises issues of censorship and free speech. To reiterate, Burning Man can be another world for some where they are shaken out of the comfortable role they usually occupy as observer. For some, they will maintain this social role until they are compelled to move out of it and into a more participatory one. Like artist communities that have historically grown out of such cultural experiences, Belgrad observes:

Distinct from these groups, those artists and writers who embraced spontaneity as style, while sharing the orientation toward self-examination that characterized the high-culture establishment of the period, assumed a more actively confrontational stance toward the dominant ethnocentrism and continued to believe in the social role of art.<sup>16</sup>

For such participants, this is their opportunity to escape from normative societal expectations and the confinement of the commercial arts establishment. For all participants though, the power of a radically new and different perspective is what draws them as attendees who then develop a desire for community, alternative culture, and relationships not defined by one's familiar professional and economic status. As a theatrical event, the basic ritual patterns are firmly in place to guide

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 2.

participants into this new way of experiencing culture as performers outside of the usual order. 'Virgins,' or first-time attendees, are initiated through creative interaction with the Greeters and sent on the procession that takes one from the entrance gate on their first day to the space where they will camp and live. There is the fire circle at the Man Burn on day six where they will congregate with others in the chaos and revelry. There are daily performances which attract people to one another and engage them theatrically in the small self-created spectacles of the culture. There is feasting and the sharing of food and drink between participants in celebration. There is playing that takes the form of games, parades, contests and pageants for all to join in. And most central to this festival experience are the costuming, singing, dancing, conversing and speech making each participant is encouraged to engage in theatrically throughout the week.

As another example of how performance at Burning Man transcends the relatively narrow category of art, volunteers are encouraged to interpret public service as a form of performance, thus effacing the distinction between work and play. Sub-groups of volunteers are allowed to creatively fashion their appointed tasks into forms of performance. The elaboration of performance at the 'Greeter Station' where participants enter the event, for example, was initiated by the Greeters themselves. These dedicated performers in the Burning Man culture call to mind similar group performing at Cherry Grove Fire Island amongst gay and lesbian communities, and at the Rainbow Gatherings as mentioned in Chapter One. Comparatively, in each of these cultural communities where self-expression is the highest cultural currency,

‘home’ is how participants refer to the festival site. ‘Welcome home’ is how they are greeted as social performers into these cultural contexts.<sup>17</sup>

At Burning Man, participation and volunteerism are literally understood as a civic duty, as is the responsibility one has to one’s tribe as a member of a theme camp. The communal and political dynamics between participants of theme camps is a further extension of the sort of participatory experience one will likely have at the event. Individual art-making and performativity each point to issues of authorship and self-reflexivity amongst those who participate in creating theme camps, as well as the voluntary activities central to one’s festival existence. Arts scholars Lee Gilmore and Mark Van Proyen observe that at Burning Man:

Another dictum that remains a popular ideal is the injunction to *participate* in some way, with the corollary that there should be *no spectators*. Simply put, this means everyone in attendance is accountable for making some kind of positive contribution to the collective experience. Larger crowds have made the interpretation of this edict less clear, but its ethos lives on as an invitation and an opportunity, for in the community gathered around the Man, participation remains the only currency with which status and recognition can be purchased.<sup>18</sup>

Engagement and the performance-audience relationships developed at the event have importance on two levels: the event is an immersion experience and the audiences there having broken free from their normal routines, are emerged, immediate and transient. Further, the concept of identity is recognized at Burning Man as both self-created and functional. The Burning Man Project staff themselves use ‘playa’ names

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<sup>17</sup> Esther Newton. *Cherry Grove Fire Island: Sixty Years in America’s First Gay and Lesbian Town*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993. Michael I. Niman. *People of the Rainbow: A Nomadic Utopia*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997.

<sup>18</sup> Lee Gilmore and Mark Van Proyen. “Introduction.” *Afterburn: Reflections on Burning Man*. Edited by Lee Gilmore and Mark Van Proyen. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005, 6.

and their work system utilizes a supervisory management model for the event that involves creative implementation for promoting its tenets as cultural ethics.<sup>19</sup>

The ideals of participation and the rule of ‘Leave No Trace,’ or the policy by which attendees bring out what they bring in, that are held by the event inspires communalism and sets behavioral standards that build a community of participants that is self-reliant. The larger Burning Man community outside of the event keeps alive that spirit by demonstrating locally their commitment to the ideals of involvement and meaningful experience. Communication and participation therefore ideologically cooperate with noncommodification and communal living as guiding cultural principles and practices both at and outside of the *event* for the community it creates. In Rush Rehm’s writing on performance culture, he discusses how participants in such a community are: “...imbued with a sense of *event*, of things said and done in the context of a conventional frame, so that participation entailed...a commitment to the moment.”<sup>20</sup>

Burning Man offers participants the opportunity to escape from normal societal expectations and the lack of freedom within the arts establishment; interactive spontaneous theater allows them to perform. Further, the concept of

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<sup>19</sup> As previously mentioned in this dissertation, the LLC Project Staff and the Senior Staff of the Burning Man Project are known publicly by their Burner or playa names. For example: Marian Goddell, the Head of Communications is known as Maid Marian; as well, there is Crimson Rose (the Head of Fire Safety and the Fire Conclave); Christine Kristen (the Head Art Curator) goes by Lady Bee; and Andie Grace (the Office Manager and Editor of the Jack Rabbit Speaks E-Newsletter) goes by Actiongrrl. For more information on the Senior Staff see the Burning Man website for pages on staff biographies at [http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/people/project\\_bio.html](http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/people/project_bio.html) and the Staff webpage [http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/people/senior\\_bio.html](http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/people/senior_bio.html) -as well as in Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>20</sup> Rush Rehm. *Greek Tragic Theatre*. London: Routledge, 1994, 3.

*identity* is recognized at Burning Man as both self-created and functional. Jeremy Hockett in his writing on Burning Man has expressed that the event presents:

...what is possible when minds and resources are collectively directed toward the creation of culture. The act of cultural creation became nothing more than an act of making sense of the world, and at Burning Man all was open to one's own interpretation.... I began to understand Burning Man as a mode of communication that transmits a unique kind of knowledge about societal structures and the ways in which they might be reinvented simply by imagining and enacting other ways to live our lives.<sup>21</sup>

Burning Man as a cultural experiment can be problematic however, when we consider that its participants are not free from the influence of hegemonic norms and that this is only a temporary space for liberation – unless they choose to access the community, its culture and experience through their own self searching, either on-line through virtual communities of Burners or through regional Burning Man groups and their activities. The conflicts that arise between Burning Man's culture and hegemonic norms occur when the self-created identity of Burner fades away from the event and so exist only as an imagined place for being. Performance thus becomes key to this conundrum: One cannot be a participant unless one participates, just as one cannot be a Burner unless and only when one *inhabits* that social role.

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<sup>21</sup> Jeremy Hockett. "Participant Observation and the Study of Self." *Afterburn: Reflections on Burning Man*. Edited by Lee Gilmore and Mark Van Proyen. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005, 66.



**Image 35: *Larry at Black Rock*.** This image taken at Burning Man in 1998 shows Burning Man founder Larry Harvey in the foreground and behind him to the left is Crimson Rose, with fire staff, preparing to light the Man. In this scene they are surrounded by thousands of participants and fire artists who wait to watch the Man go up in flames. Photograph by Stewart Harvey. Image reproduced with permission.

### **Burning Man as Social Drama**

As explored in this dissertation, Burning Man as a theatrical event is a landscape full of informal performers, random theatrics, and fire on the playa – especially on the night the Man burns when the participant-base is out in full force. This is what participants have been waiting for all week – performing themselves and surviving the harsh desert environment. They have been exposed to and have exposed themselves in anticipation of the final spectacle of the Burn. Observes Burning Man artist, Harold Blank: “Certainly many people are attracted to the nudity and the fire and the overall spectacle of the event, and granted, I too revel in it all. Burning Man to me is like a giant adult-rated show n’ tell, a smorgasbord of art, identity, and passion.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Harrod Blank, quote located on-line in the essay “Art Cars and Burning Man,”

The Burn tradition, has been established since the early Burns when participants walked ceremonially to the Man, and Burners know what to expect of the spectacle: three hundred or more fire spinners, dancers, and blowers, each representing regional groups from throughout the United States and the world, who have auditioned via videotape for Crimson Rose, the head of the Fire Conclave and Mistress of the Burn, to be apart of the final Burn Fire Conclave at Black Rock City.<sup>23</sup> This is their moment to shine, literally. The visual image of the Fire Conclave on the night of the Burn is intense and presents a unique experience for participants as either audience to the larger spectacle or as performers in the Fire Conclave.<sup>24</sup> The Burn itself though represents the primary spectacle of Burning Man every year and symbolizes the collective ritual on which the event is based.

Within the Burning Man performance culture, the Burn is also representative of what anthropologists consider the central enactment of community energy.<sup>25</sup> The

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[http://www.burningman.com/art\\_of\\_burningman/art\\_cars\\_on\\_the\\_playa.htm](http://www.burningman.com/art_of_burningman/art_cars_on_the_playa.htm) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>23</sup> The Fire Conclave began informally in 2000 after the Man grew taller with the addition of an interactive base. For years Crimson Rose had performed herself as the one person who actually lit the Man. She would perform this act before the crowds in the nude in a ritual manner with a long torch. After she established the early Fire Conclave in San Francisco she began to coordinate with fire performers who were part of regional groups internationally, providing them the opportunity to be apart of the largest collective performance of fire artistry in the world. For more information on-line go to [http://afterburn.burningman.com/05/art/fire\\_conclave.html](http://afterburn.burningman.com/05/art/fire_conclave.html) or see Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>24</sup> According to the Burning Man Project: “The Fire Conclave's membership grew again in 2005 to 870 performers and safety personnel spread over 32 different groups. This gathering indeed was the largest number of people fire dancing together anywhere in the world, not just in Black Rock City.” More information about the Fire Conclave on Burn night as well as images is located on the Burning Man website at [http://afterburn.burningman.com/05/art/fire\\_conclave.html](http://afterburn.burningman.com/05/art/fire_conclave.html) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>25</sup> Collective ritual has been explored and analyzed throughout anthropology and in performance studies. I am mentioning it here as a means to build a bridge between the more ritual and sacred performances one may witness on the playa. Victor Turner, Johan Huizinga, Erving Goffman and Marvin Carlson have all consider collective ritual performances in their work and it is from their writings that I draw on to inform this thinking.

Burn draws participants together from all over the festival space and lasts roughly two hours, culminating in the eventual burn. These are the minutes of excitement that, in theory, the entire Burner community will come together and experience their *catharsis*.<sup>26</sup> There are many safety preparations made early in the evening regarding pyrotechnics and the establishment of a guarded perimeter to keep spectators a safe distance from the fire.<sup>27</sup> The display that the participant-base will witness is, to many present, both impressive aesthetically and emotionally breath-taking. Set afire, the Man itself burns slowly, as first the platform beneath the forty-foot wooden figure ignites and then builds to engulf the entire structure. When the arms of the Man, aloft throughout the event week have then fallen, it is many more slow and glowing minutes before the Man itself collapses.

With the collapse of the Man, the watching participants, who have throughout the spectacle been screaming, chanting, drumming and waiting, begin to move and dance in unison around the perimeter. This collective performance is then the culmination of all of their energy, their shared drive for a meaningful episode in their lives as Burners, and a coming-together that for one special moment unites forty-thousand participants in the experience of Burning Man. Much like the days and hours they have spent on the playa, getting to know one another, playing and

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<sup>26</sup> Catharsis is defined as the purging of emotions. Aristotle mentions catharsis in his writings on poetry as the means by which an actor/artist and their audience might participate in the joint activity of theatricality. Other theorists have delved into the importance of catharsis in the work of actors as well as its meaning historically in different periods of the avant-garde such as Dada and the Surrealists.

<sup>27</sup> The pyrotechnical safety measures which the Burning Man Project plans for and oversees on the night of the Burn are extensive. No less than two hundred safety performance experts who have volunteered for this work join the fire artists who make up the Conclave and monitor fire handling. The fire safety personnel also safe-guard the audience from the huge burning structure that is the Man aflame.

cavorting, as well as coming together in the spirit of community as performative beings, as artists, now Burning Man lets its own truth be known... that every participant is a player, *everyone is a performer*.<sup>28</sup>

Performance theorist Baz Kershaw in his work discusses the need for alternate spaces for performing as protest and as a means for subverting the commodified hyper-realism of a mediatized and globalized reality.<sup>29</sup> His concepts link Burning Man as a modern carnival to the kind of protest events he studies as a radical subversion of the normative world describes, one in which the display of power that is symbolically represented in social customs and reproduced in the media is turned on its head. Kershaw however looks to contemporary live performance in its many forms as a radical means of subversion. He discusses moving society through countercultural theatrical events in a different direction, shifted from commodified passive consumption as a political process. Burning Man as I am considering it represents this ideological challenge to society. My idea of performance culture is informed by Kershaw's notions of contemporary theatre and subversive performance.

Burning Man inspires in participants the feeling of *communitas* because it is liberation from normal life and the social rituals of the event abolish status. Burning Man draws from its eco-friendly tenet 'Leave No Trace,' to further emphasize that the playa is a special space and that the event itself promotes care and concern for life.

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<sup>28</sup> As mentioned in Chapter Two, this is a published statement from the Burning Man Project announcing their commitment to performance at Burning Man. However, this commitment does not extend to arts grants funding. Quote located on-line at the Burning Man website 'Performance' section at [http://www.burningman.com/on\\_the\\_playa/performance/index.html](http://www.burningman.com/on_the_playa/performance/index.html) and in Appendix D to this dissertation.

<sup>29</sup> Baz Kershaw. *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard*. London: Routledge, 1999.

The liminoid experience of the event is transformed into a space that encourages them to perform. Thus, Victor Turner's concept of 'social drama' is applicable to Burning Man in terms of tensions between social control and dominance that are perceived by participants as emanating from hegemonic cultural manifestations and to which Burning Man offers escape from temporarily.<sup>30</sup>

Burning Man is an event that provides a liminoid space for participants to consider their role as social beings in the default world. Liminoid also refers to activities which are generally voluntary rather than liminal moments which are generally required activities. *Communitas* is vital to this process as Burning Man seeks not to recreate the known social structures but provide a level social playing field whereby the experience of the event allows for a communion of equality. If Burning Man is a space for transformation and transition then the communal aspect of this now annual performance event is one that encourages social relationships in the nature of *communitas*. Interactivity, performativity, nicknames and costumes as they are encouraged at Burning Man, lend themselves to both the space of liminoid change and *communitas*. As a moment in time that is out of time, the event encourages meaningful exchange, informal performativity, self-created ritual acts, creative ceremonies which honor the individual as artist and importantly, the appreciation of generosity, nature and common living.

In the United States, social drama with its origins in communal festivals has been evolving in scope since the inception of Burning Man because its organizers

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<sup>30</sup> Victor Tuner. "Are There Universals of Performance in Myth, Ritual and Drama?" *By Means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual*. Edited by Richard Schechner and Willa Appel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 10.

provide a vast and open natural place, which is antithetical to the modern/art world. In The Black Rock Desert is a landscape equivalent to a blank slate where no one is a spectator and no one leaves a trace. Additionally, the event supports taboos against commodification and instead encourages gift exchange, communal living, environmental respect and creative self-expression. Participants to Burning Man have in their immersion experience a liberty which allows the definitions of performance and space to be engaged, redefined, transcended, and re-coded, even if only temporarily. In his book, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Seriousness of Human Play*, Turner states:

... what I have called *communitas*... I meant by it not a structural reversal, a mirror-imaging of the 'profane': workaday socioeconomic structure, or a fantasy-rejection of structural 'necessities,' but the liberation of human capacities of cognition, affect, volition, creativity, etc., from the normative constraints incumbent upon occupying a sequence of social statuses, enacting a multiplicity of social roles, and being acutely conscious of membership in some... village, theatre, almost anywhere people can be subverted from their duties and rights into an atmosphere of *communitas*.<sup>31</sup>

Burning Man is a place for *communitas* because it allows participants to connect with one another having potentially cast aside their social roles based on status in the normal world. At Burning Man, they can pretend and present themselves however they want to be. Turner's theory of social drama succeeds in 'illuminating social reality' in much the way considering how Burning Man is a product of this period in American history. The drama reveals truths about people as citizens, their need to escape from social static and dynamics and to create their own.

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<sup>31</sup> Victor Turner. *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*. New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982, 44-48.



**Image 36: *The Man with Fireworks*.** This image of the Man just starting to burn was taken in 2005. The Man burns on the last Saturday night of the event as participants gather around the spectacle. Photo by the author.

The desert space for Burning Man as a self-created community and temporary city often reduces participants to a state of emotional vulnerability where they must perform radical self-reliance and sharing amongst individuals. Communal spaces at the event abound, as well as elaborate but intimate settings for eating, drinking, dancing and performing. The idea of the common good replaces the outside need to ‘get ahead’ as a new value is placed on cooperation and emotional well-being. Taking care of others, or a sense of tribal society, is encouraged in an environment where there is no higher status to be given or other reward for being in a position of power over another. Thus, the concept of the liminoid as producing a personal and social change in participants, and the sense of *communitas* that the event inspires, help enlighten how the individual and the group function and perform in Burning Man as a performance culture. As Lee Gilmore observes, “... the self-consciousness with

which some participants conceive of the transformative power of ritual and performance are made available at Burning Man.”<sup>32</sup>

Consider again Burning Man in terms of the theories of Erving Goffman. His theories on self-presentation introduced the concept of the self as created ceremonially or expressively, and substantively or deliberately.<sup>33</sup> Each action an individual performs in society is stylized and repeated as a ritual act designed to fall in line with expected behaviors. How one behaves in private therefore resembles most closely who one is, where by contrast we perform for others consciously and consistently. Goffman’s concepts for performing are the basis for Performance Theory, which considers social roles to be performative much in the same way theatrical roles are performed. Using an anthropological approach to considering ceremonial behavior in the everyday, his theory of performing states that rules of conduct and decorum bind us to one another as actor and recipient in society. Social interaction is dictated and institutionalized and enforced as long as we are a part of it.

Goffman’s ideas most inform my work on Burning Man when considering how participants are motivated as self-performers at the event. The dropping of social roles is a highly difficult process to understand and his concept of performance provides the link for me between the social role that people wear in the ‘default world’ and the one they create for themselves when no longer anchored to that personae at the event. In Goffman’s theory, the rules that govern a society are as

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<sup>32</sup> Lee Gilmore. “Fires in the Heart: Ritual, Pilgrimage, and Transformation at Burning Man.” *Afterburn: Reflections on Burning Man*. Edited by Lee Gilmore and Mark Van Proyen. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005, 50.

<sup>33</sup> Erving Goffman. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959, 15-16.

individual as the transgressions mainstream society seeks to eradicate. Burning Man replaces the usual socially performative behaviors with new ones and creates a space for improvisation that would not normally be known to participants. In his work, discussing performance, Goffman writes:

A 'performance' may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants. Taking a particular participant and his performance as a basic point of reference, we may refer to those who contribute to the other performances as the audience, observers, or co-participants. The pre-established pattern of action which is unfolded during a performance and which may be presented or played through on other occasions may be called a 'part' or a 'routine.'<sup>34</sup>

Goffman's concept of performance as a part of a presentation of one's self informs my analysis of how participants present themselves performatively at Burning Man. Conscious of their impact on other participants in a carnivalesque atmosphere where outlandish and entertaining behavior is encouraged, participants shape their social performing at the event accordingly: imagine forty-thousand people trying to be the life of the party. Performer and Burning Man 2004 Off-Planet Stage Manager Ggregg Taylor observes: "Burning Man's a whole bunch of show-offs."<sup>35</sup>

Burning Man gives participants the opportunity to make the most mundane gesture or conversation performative. Standing in a line, one can amuse the others waiting or get changed into a costume in full view of others; even searching for oregano at a neighbor's camp can be turned into an interactive performance because at Burning Man such behavior is rewarded. Participants set themselves apart at the

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 15-16.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Ggregg Taylor aka Nambla the Clown. Black Rock City, Nevada. September 2, 2004. Recording and Transcript.

event because they are performing themselves in order to get a reaction, to receive attention and to interact.

Similarly, thinking about how performance can be transitional much in way Richard Schechner has written about with regards to his system for a performative anti-structure.<sup>36</sup> The anti-structure model maps one's experience in performance as a transitional period when they are both themselves and not themselves. This concept affords me the chance to think about interactivity and informal performing at Burning Man as many participants present themselves in ways that are them but also a more flamboyant and fun them too. Schechner's writing about performance and culture emphasizes social action as theatrical, and offers social roles defined by ritual activity and occasions for play. As a performance theorist, Schechner's concept of restored behavior is as a basis for theatre and ritual. All behavior then is a series of restored behaviors and have been performed before in order to create a seamless and coherent performance overall. Schechner's work uses Victor Turner's notions of ritual merged with an understanding of performance as a theatre director. His concepts are rooted in a perspective that acknowledges the media's impact on our own culture and questions the issue over authenticity of ritual acts. Much of Schechner's work is also based on mappings or charts of the overlap between forms of play and ritual in life processes.

My own theory of Burning Man's performance culture is that it involves people expanding on, or transcending, an identity formed in the outside culture that

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<sup>36</sup> This model is in the Richard Schechner's book *Between Theatre and Anthropology* and specifically in the essay "Restoration of Behavior," Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985. It shows the movement of the individual in time during performance as a liminal state of becoming and unbecoming themselves as 'me/ not me.' I am further relying on Schechner's books *Performance Theory*. London: Routledge, 1988; *Ritual, Play and Performance*. Richard Schechner with Mady Schuman. New York: Seabury Press, 1976; and *The Future of Ritual*. London: Routledge, 1993; for insights into these performative processes.

Burners are seeking escape from. Part of the culture of Burning Man is of course, choosing a Burner name, wearing costumes that might evoke one's personality at the event, as well as living in a theme camp, which one may have been adopted into. All of these social rituals are *performed* according to Schechner. Therefore, his theory on performance in a culture of choice and its manifestations have better grounded mine as they point to the participant of Burning Man's role in this performative culture.

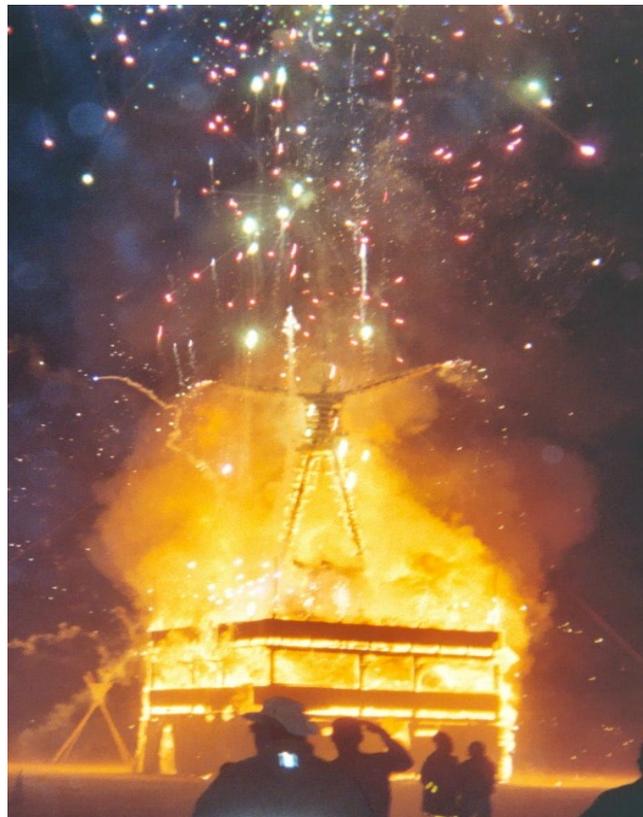
Finally, social performances at the event span from communal feasts to parades to the daily act of dressing up in costume to attend a fashion show, pageant, mass bike ride, pseudo-prom, hootenanny, cocktail party or sunrise singing ceremony. Participants, as theatrical players in the carnival setting of Burning Man, perform restored behavior of a self that either never was, has been or has been allowed to be. This point speaks to the freeing nature of the event as a play space where one may create for themselves a chosen self that comes out in the interactive performance. Because there are always opportunities to perform spontaneously onstage at the event one may perform many versions of the created self amongst other individual participants who are also simultaneously performing. It is in essence a celebration of individualism located in this particular moment in the history of art and performance in America. As Baz Kershaw observes:

...on the cusp of the paradigm shift new freedoms are offered by post-modernism's celebration of human difference, by its reconstitution of the individual as a series of subject positions, by its recognition that all subject positions are equally 'valid', by the tolerance implied by its expansive embrace of pluralism, and so on.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Baz Kershaw. *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard*. London: Routledge, 1999, 18.

Burning Man exists in this moment in the United States as a part of the tradition of post-modernism. It is a part of a tradition of festivals and communities who celebrate theatricality, individuality and inhibition. The event is part of a tradition of arts events that have inspired collaborators to commune together and created a social identity as a group. Burning Man is also part of a tradition of movements in post-industrial America that seek to give a voice to those not satisfied with social norms and principles. These are the traditions out of which Burning Man was born and continues to thrive: a tradition that speaks to its importance and its value as a culture set-part from the mainstream and where citizenship is self-authorized.



**Image 37: *The Man Explodes*.** This image was taken during the Burn in 2005 as the Man has begun to explode in a display of fireworks and flame. Fire safety experts stand in front nearest to the spectacle. Photo by the author.

### **Conclusion: Burning Man as a Lens for American Culture**

Performance beyond theatre has a much better chance of turning the trick of cultural production back against the commodifying depredations of late-capitalism. Performative excess untrammelled by theatre is much freer to create new domains for radically democratic practice.<sup>38</sup>

At Burning Man, culture is created when socially constructed identities are changed or reinforced through performance. In this sense, performance is crucial to the process of becoming and potentially transforming as a social performer there. Burning Man as a theatrical event provides a cultural space which effectively mediates representations of identity through performance. Two primary tenets of Burning Man, 'Inclusivity' and 'Radical Self-Expression', are demonstrated performatively in the ethos shared by members of the community. Burning Man was founded with the intention of providing a celebratory space where people could interact creatively. When it moved to the desert with members of the San Francisco Cacophony Society, performance became an essential component to the identity of the event itself and a phenomenon for those who would undergo self-evolution as participants.

The significance of the tenets of Burning Man as guiding communitarian principles has been addressed. Participants' identities as social performers are constructed owing to their social interactivity at the event and outside of it. There is complexity in the negotiating of these identities as products of performing because it may be argued that some participants are experiencing personal transformation and

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<sup>38</sup> Baz Kershaw. *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard*. London: Routledge, 1999, 85.

identity-making while others are hiding behind personae as masks. Hiding and becoming are vehicles for performativity at Burning Man, where social transgressive behavior is often risked merely by a participant stepping out of their social shell and experiencing radical self-expression. As Baz Kershaw observes:

...an argument that claims for radical performance a potential to create various kinds of freedom that are not only resistant to dominant ideologies, but that also are something transgressive, even transcendent, of ideology itself. In other words, the freedom that 'radical performance' invokes is not just freedom from oppression, repression, exploitation – the resistant sense of the radical – but also freedom to reach beyond existing systems of formalized power, freedom to create currently unimaginable forms of association and action – the transgressive or transcendent sense of the radical.<sup>39</sup>

At Burning Man the altered and participant-created space for performativity supports the primary elements required for the negotiation of identity. Role playing and performance provide a space in the festival setting that is safe for such dangerous self-reflexivity. Within the dominant culture, Burning Man participants may long for the 'other place' they create on the playa, where they can experience their own culture. As Burning Man scholar Jeremy Hockett observes:

Cultural performances can be understood as an essential technology for negotiating – and bringing about – change. As an emergent ritual of a secular, global people – a people distanced from tradition, custom, and belief in magic – Burning Man functions to recover the utility of pre-industrial liminal transformations in a context of secular postmodernity, or 'reflexive modernity.'<sup>40</sup>

As social performers, theirs is a culture organized around performative activity, as the Burning Man Project has provided an environment where they can raise the questions

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<sup>39</sup> Baz Kershaw. *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard*. London: Routledge, 1999, 18.

<sup>40</sup> Jeremy Hockett. "Participant Observation and the Study of Self." *Afterburn: Reflections on Burning Man*. Edited by Lee Gilmore and Mark Van Proyen. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005, 75.

about how they define themselves. The performance of participants helps to crystallize what the event helps them negotiate as individuals.

One of the main aims of this dissertation has been to provide a Performance Studies lens through which to consider Burning Man as a cultural phenomenon, and to consider the possibility that performance allows for redefinition of self and community. “The central issue of performativity, whether in ritual performance, theatrical entertainment or the social articulation of ordinary human situations, is the imaginative creation of a human world.”<sup>41</sup> Burning Man is a temporary performance space and year-round counterculture removed from American society and yet bound up in it. Burning Man can provide a particularly important lens through which to understand American culture at this time. The popularity of the event, the phenomenon it has become which has born a community worldwide, its connections to the internet and its own regional network of smaller Burns speak to its value as a place to consider how American culture alienates its own citizens.

Burning Man thrives on a very well-planned infrastructure and city model, and as an organized society its chief tool is art; it is also an event that grows organically as a countercultural phenomenon that teaches participants as members of society to notice and value art.<sup>42</sup> The event has been able to do so bolstered by the Burner presence as volunteer, which demonstrates their respect and reverence for the land, the city and other burners. Because of them, it has developed a reputation as a

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<sup>41</sup> Edward L. Schieffelin. “Problematizing Performance.” *Ritual, Performance, Media*. Edited by Felicia Hughes-Freeland. New York: Routledge, 1997, 194 – 207.

<sup>42</sup> Larry Harvey. Interview with the author. Black Rock City, Nevada. August 29, 2006. Transcript.

place where people transcend their normal social roles and engage art deeply. What sets Burning Man apart as a cultural phenomenon is its focus on participation in creating art for art's sake away from commercialism, its communal artist-friendly collaborative environment, and the responsibility the Burning Man Project places on attendees to entertain themselves.

Burning Man reveals much about this moment historically, politically, culturally and socially in the United States and the concept of performance at Burning Man as a unique and important one to explore in the context of the event itself. The standard rules of decorum, the customary definitions of art and performance, and the ordinary social roles people play outside of the event, must all be reconsidered and new identities brought to life in this harsh and vibrant festival setting. Further, it is an experience that completely involves many participants who must learn to survive away from commercial society where their behavior as consumers shapes their social identity. The identity of the participant outside of the context of Burning Man may stand in direct opposition to the self-identity the event encourages them to perform while they are participating at Burning Man. The struggle for identity exists in the performing self.

By rejecting the outside and imposing societal spectacle Baz Kershaw theorizes, as well as the commercial arts establishment as a kind of corrupt, arbitrary judge, artists as participants become citizens of a new radical community at Burning Man – some of whom create year-round to again return there.<sup>43</sup> Burning Man offers the “...potential of performance to invent unprecedented prototypes for critical

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<sup>43</sup> Baz Kershaw. *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard*. London: Routledge, 1999.

cultural action: in this respect the idea that performance can transcend dominant socio-cultural processes – including marketization and commodification – is obviously crucial.”<sup>44</sup> Burning Man, because of the experiences of its participants as live artists away from the normal art world, is a critical site for creating identity amongst its attendees as social performers. Both at the event and in the outside world, burners are said to live to return ‘home,’ that is, the playa.

Home here means the metaphorical place where they belong, can be themselves and others will accept their identity. For it is on the playa that participants are said to be able to discard their imposed and weighty social role for a self-chosen one. Burners contribute in both small and large ways to a positive collective energy present at the event. By their presence, and in this sense, the Burner is always demonstrating a kind of potentially experimental performance: life as art, and survival as collaborative creative activity.

Burning Man as a festival-space offers participants a landscape that is vast and, like the theatrical art forms it hosts, hybrid in nature and seemingly unlimited in vision. As stated previously, Burning Man as a life experience is one that is hard to capture, let alone explain. Part of the Burning Man experience is the inability of participants to really explain what Burning Man is and is like, and that for one to know they simply must go. This moment of recognition represents the initial awareness of the cultural experience of Burning Man, one that turns spectators into performers offering ordinary people an opportunity to explore other worldliness. Inasmuch as it is a transformative experience it must be emphasized that it does offer

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 109.

participants the opportunity to break free of not only the social roles that are imposed on them and that they play out everyday, but also the chance to interact with others in a uniquely performative way. It is a liminoid space in the Turnerian sense, and that has evolved from an event to an experiment in community-making and a populist movement. Burning Man thrives on the interconnectedness of those who attend as committed cultural performers similar to Kershaw's new performative society.

A performance culture is one that edifies itself; it is a real and imaginary space created to support self-expression and encourage interactivity. Burning Man's performance culture is a place which creates multiple meanings by its philosophy and its ability to draw participants. As the escapist alternative to mainstream society in America, the festival culture of Burning Man rejects commodification, encourages radical self-expression and subverts the usual social order by providing participants the opportunity to explore change in social behavior away from economic competition. Burning Man's performance culture is also highly permissive and, by its potential to be transformative, introduces participants to a meaningful, break away from mainstream society.

The genres of performance art and the American avant-garde have by connection benefited since Burning Man began exposing a liberating brand of self-created theatricality through its performance culture. Many more individuals in society than could ever be reached in black box theaters now know the meaning of 'live art.' Since its inception, the event has recognized and actively touted a philosophy that marks a kind of spontaneous interactivity as creative collaboration of the most intimate and impressive kind. In its design, the site has been considered by

its organizers for how the event can encourage performativity in and through its participants.

Performativity extends further to exhibitionism through the body art and nudity on display and so, like performance art in the past, draws attention to issues of censorship and free speech. I will posit also that if we consider exhibitionism to be the un-self-conscious performance of the body and spectatorship to be the appreciation of that performing, then the collaborative efforts of this visual relationship en masse is akin to an orgy. According to Karl Toepfer in his book *Theatre, Aristocracy, and Pornocracy*: “An orgy involves a group of bodies, group eroticism, communal ecstasy. An orgy is a type of aesthetic performance (such as ‘singing and dancing’) which develops theatrical qualities to achieve ecstatic effects.”<sup>45</sup> Orgy here then serves as ‘metaphor’ for communal erotic expressive experience.

Bakhtin’s theory of *Carnival* offers an important metaphor for an event that is subculture and social orgy in one. Through Bakhtin one understands that in an attempt to subvert social order, *Carnival* allows participants to celebrate in common their temporary liberation from class distinctions.<sup>46</sup> With no commercial trading system, Burning Man levels the social playing field and offers what Bakhtin calls a conjunction of pleasure and labor, as well as a theatrical experience which is always participatory.<sup>47</sup> When considering both theories – that of orgy and *Carnival* as they

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<sup>45</sup> Karl Toepfer. *Theatre, Aristocracy and Pornocracy: The Orgy Calculus*. New York: PAJ Publications, 1991, 12–13.

<sup>46</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin. *Rabelais and His World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

apply to Burning Man – all three allow cathartic release through pleasure though there is in neither overt political direction, but dispersion in excess or what Baz Kershaw might call ‘Bacchanalian riotousness!’<sup>48</sup>

### **Carnival, The Inversion of Social Order, and Burning Man**

...carnival is far distant from the negative and formal parody of modern times. Folk humor denies, but it revives and renews at the same time. Bare negation is completely alien to folk culture.

- Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*<sup>49</sup>

With the Inversion of Social Order, we find another very transgressive aspect of *Carnival* that lends itself to a comparison to Burning Man and in its culture. The inversion of social order at Burning Man occurs but only in terms of the contradiction between social structure evident at the event and the well-known radically inclusive ethos of the organizers. A key element of Bakhtinian *Carnival*, this aspect needs careful analysis. One aspect of this concept is how the event itself inverts traditionally accepted social order. This idea complicates my analysis by calling that inversion into question with the social structure of the event.

Bakhtin’s idea on the inversion of social order was that the inversion of social hierarchy occurred during *Carnival* when the people violated rules of decorum and together ridiculed official culture. The radical laughter of the people took power temporarily away from authority and gave it to the people themselves.

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<sup>48</sup> Baz Kershaw. *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard*. London: Routledge, 1999, 107.

<sup>49</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin. *Rabelais and His World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 11.

But the people do not simply put down the official powers, they take away power and replace it, thus the king becomes the fool. I am altering the inversion of social order as an aspect of *Carnival* as I apply it to specific aspects of Burning Man such as the spirit of Burning Man that is radically inclusive and values collectivity, but also the contradiction that exists in the real social hierarchy that is present at the event.

Bakhtin analyzes *Carnival's* inversion of social order as a time when normal social order is inverted and those who were on top are on the bottom and vice versa. Burning Man's inversion of social order is completely different from this aspect of *Carnival* because it resembles it only philosophically. In actuality, participants with more money come to the event in large, plush trailers that they live in throughout the event, while the majority of participants live in dusty tents. Further, the social hierarchy at the event places wealthy participants, the staff and organizers of the Project, any outside social celebrity or performer, and people who are seen as most beautiful in a position where they benefit in almost all areas of living during the event. This sentiment derives from personal ethnography and my own experience as a Burner at the event and in observing the culture from within for the past seven years.

Burning Man's inversion of social order is carnivalesque however because its guiding principle would suggest that the majority of participants value this notion, and yet it differs in that the principle is not always followed by those on top in the actual culture of Burning Man itself. In regards to the inversion of social order one may see the intersection between Burning Man, the carnivalesque

and politics in the creating and supporting of an alternative social order the event suggests amongst its participants, in spite of the fact that it does not succeed in this by its example. Burning Man's carnivalesque inversion of social order is political because once again, the event and its culture suggests the potential for change in social living and governing. There is a world of liberated bodies and minds, where authority is limited and communal activity is valued. The significance of Burning Man in a contemporary sociopolitical context related to the inversion of social order, the grotesque body and licensed transgression is that Burning Man is a place like Carnival that is out of time and as an event allows us to understand our society and the event itself as two separate realms where Burning Man comments on our society and gives participants the chance to see an existence outside of and beyond its rules. Bakhtin knew Carnival as a both real and imagined space was a suggestion of a revolutionary spirit that could undermine the oppression he knew in his own time and this is how I see Burning Man – as a revolutionary retreat from our time.

Burning Man aims to provide what Happenings achieved creatively, wherein participants are encouraged to create and entertain themselves but on an individual level they become like performance artists, as their performance may take the form of a personal expression rather than a group collaboration. Baz Kershaw states that the event activates the basic functions of carnival by allowing us to transgress, mock or destabilize images of authoritative society and offers participants a symbolic realm where they are outside of time temporarily.<sup>50</sup> Theatre allows for temporary

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transformation via costume, mask and role; Burning Man takes on the techniques of theatre without or without costume but in a city-space that functions as immersion experience. Participants choose Burning Man as their escape from usual society.

Further, the prevalence of public nudity and public sex at Burning Man reveals that the event itself follows the lineage of the transgressive avant-garde tradition. As a post-modern carnival, it subverts the social order and representational structures of desire in commodity capitalism. Beyond shock, exhibitionism via nudity or sexualized performances works against and away from the heteronormative view of bodies that offers only reductive, moralistic, and commodified cultural constructions. Exhibitionism in itself is a kind of performance at Burning Man where nude bodies attempt to resist those mainstream cultural constructions. Body artists in the 1980's, first used their skin symbolically, and that approach to creative expression is possible publicly for the participants at Burning Man as well.<sup>51</sup> Kershaw observes:

...a new international wave of radical performance that emerged in the final two decades or so of the twentieth century... they exemplify a highly reflexive response to the society of the spectacle and the performative society through the paradoxes in their use of performance situated in extra-theatrical public contexts.<sup>52</sup>

Burning Man was a part of this wave of radical performance from the time it began; its participants players in an extra-theatrical context of a performance culture.

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<sup>50</sup> Baz Kershaw. *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard*. London: Routledge, 1999.

<sup>51</sup> Brian Doherty. "Desert Censorship: Artistic Paradise Lost?" *Reason*. Dec, 2001.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 605.



**Image 38: *Imminent Collapse*, 2004.** This image taken during the Burn at Burning Man in 2004, when the Man was built on a base that included ten stages and was home to Off Planet Theater. Notice the Fire Safety Performance Team members who are silhouetted against the fire. Image reproduced with permission. Photo by Waldemar Horwat.

Liberating performance of the kind that is practiced at Burning Man permits participants to transgress, play, and explore themselves in their chosen culture more fully. Interactivity is key to this equation, as is the feeling of belonging that is generated there. The performance culture of Burning Man provides three important elements: A colorful and structured city space to explore and discover performance; a *heightened theatrical zone* with non-working individuals who are eager to play and interact with others as they may be so motivated in a carnival setting; and a consistently flowing transient audience to always provide new players and

participants outside of the commodified realm. Burning Man participants in this sense hold a mirror up to themselves and to society.

Today as ever, the disillusionment many individuals and artists in mainstream society feel is what attracts them to such an unconfined site for exhibition. And while they may not gain better access to wealth and fame, they are able to show their work to a very large, interested and interesting audience, whose sensibilities include being curious, non-judgmental, and grateful. The people at Burning Man are artists and participants who continue to spread the word of its reputation with tales of unabashed hedonism, free expression, and never before imagined art. The performance culture of Burning Man comes to find acknowledgement and reveals itself in the ‘performing’ that participants continue to do in mainstream society, offering new meanings of performativity. Thus, as performance theorist Bim Mason observes: “Just as the real world becomes more theatrical, so theatre can move into new areas of performance.”<sup>53</sup>

Through the overall performance of Burning Man as a theatrical event and through the individual performances by participants, “... utopia is enacted without footlights; it is presented within life itself. True, the scene is strictly limited by time... but during that period there are no footlights, no separation of participants and spectators. *Everybody participates*. While the usual world order is suspended, the new utopian order which has come to replace it is sovereign and embraces all.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Bim Mason. *Street Theatre and Other Outdoor Performance*. New York: Routledge, 208.

<sup>54</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984, 265.



**Image 39: *Arms and Fire*.** This image is from Burning Man in 1999 of the fire pyre after the Man has fallen. Participants swell and move in on the fire once the Man is on the ground and mass chaos ensues. The Burn, which takes place on the last Saturday night of the event, signals the end of the event for many participants. For thousands of people, it symbolizes the cathartic moment in which they are transformed as participants. After this night, they will scatter and return to the 'default world' – many will spend the next eleven months of their lives preparing to return to the playa once again. Photograph by Stewart Harvey. Image reproduced with permission.

## Appendices

Appendix A: Burning Man Performance Listings (1994 – 2006)

Appendix B: 2006 Questionnaire for Performers & Stage Managers; Responses

Appendix C: DVD of Performances from Burning Man 2006

Appendix D: CD of Websites used for Bibliography

Appendix E: 2004 Theme Announcement Off-Planet Theater

### **Appendix A: Activities Performance Listings (1994 – 2006)**

This appendix includes all published scheduled performance event listings from Burning Man for the years 1994 - 2006. Much of the following information has been copied by the author from the original materials. Individual years and source documents from which information for these listings was gathered are as follows:

**1994: “Activities and Events Listings”**

**1995, 1996: Not available**

**1997: “Burning Man ’97 Events and Attractions”**

**1998: “WhatWhereWhen of Burning Man ‘98” (Theme: *The Nebulous Entity*)**

**1999: “the WhatWhereWhen of Burning Man 1999” (Theme: *Wheel of Time*)**

**2000: “the WhatWhereWhen of Burning Man 2000” (Theme: *The Body*)**

**2001: “WhatWhereWhen: The Seven Ages”**

**2002: “WhatWhereWhen: The Floating World”**

**2003: “WhatWhereWhen: Beyond Belief”**

**2004: “WhatWhereWhen: Vault of Heaven”**

**2005: “WhatWhereWhen: Psyche”**

**2006: “On-line E-Playa Calendar (later reproduced as the *What Where When*)**

**Theme: Hope & Fear”**

Through my archival work at the Burning Man offices in San Francisco for the past three years, I have with the permission of the Project collected all available documents relating to performance at the festival since its inception. These appendices represent the only compilation of all published event activity at Burning Man.

The early years of the event (1990 – 1993) offer little written material giving indication to any organized performances per se. However, in the years 1994 – 1996 there are documented performances in the form of fliers and other advertisements. Interviews I have conducted with the event founders, the senior staff and longtime burners will serve to augment this body of information. For the years 1997 – 2006, all advertised performances have been published by the Project and contained in a publication put out and distributed to participants entering the event titled the *WhatWhereWhen*.<sup>1</sup> In recent years, performance listings have been typically submitted on-line by participants prior to the event, published on the Burning Man Project website, and then printed in San Francisco and delivered to the playa the week before the event.<sup>2</sup> The events and performances included in these listings include

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<sup>1</sup> Burning Man Project. *WhatWher When*. 1994 – 2005.

<sup>2</sup> In the summer of 2004, I was the web editor for the *WhatWhereWhen* and my internship with the Burning Man organization stipulated that I divide my time conducting scholarly research including archival work, observation an interviews, and editing the publication.

rituals, gatherings, stages, parades, parties, dances, pageants, yoga and holistic sessions, better sex technique demonstrations and retro-vaudevillian dance, music and comedy shows. Each listing includes the day and time of the event, the name of the theme camp hosting the event, their location and details describing the event. Including the complete listing for all of the years of the event will add invaluable information and bring import to my dissertation.

All text captured as a part of this appendix is from the original document and wording from the listing including misspellings either intentional or not. All of the performance listings from throughout the years were written by either Burning Man staff, volunteers or the participants organizing the activities themselves. In order to preserve the authenticity of the listings I have attempted not to change any text. However, it should be mentioned that as the task of capturing and rewriting so many listings for every year they were created and are still now available for me to see at the time of the writing of this document (2005-2007), the computer program I am using sometimes corrects what it perceives as misspellings that for whatever reason I may not have been or are aware of.

It is important as well that I make the point here that though I have tried to create a complete performance listing for theatrical activities, performative events and interactive art installations at Burning Man for as many years as I have been able, there are of course so many performances informal and formal that were never published which I cannot know of, and so have not recreated here. Burning Man means there is performance everywhere all of the time. Even some of the performances listed here probably never happened or looked quite different from how

they are here described. The nature of these listings is that someone wrote them BEFORE the performance took place out at Burning Man. These performance listings are really a stated intention of what someone hoped to create at Burning Man. For us, they give us an important glimpse at what was happening at Burning Man year by year and day by day. The patterns in activity and trend in performance genre represented yearly offers us some window into the performance culture of Burning Man. Lastly, remember that these listings are a cultural artifact for they express what participants at the time they were at Burning Man were seeing and how they as artists, performers and yes, even sometimes spectators, would decide what to go see and get wrapped up in, when.

I conducted my archival research for this appendix while living in San Francisco, California, and during a three-month long internship with the Burning Man Project during my tenure as a graduate student, and as a resident graduate student within the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies, University of Maryland at College Park, Maryland. As an intern, I was assigned to work on the *WhatWhereWhen* listings for that year's event in 2004. My archival and historical research continued after I completed my internship with the Project, when in 2005 and 2006, I returned to the Project Offices in San Francisco for additional investigations into performance documentation.

In my archival work, I have gone over all of the most important Burning Man performance-related documentary text, the *WhatWhereWhen* documents for the years 1998 through 2006, and delved into every activity published to locate and retrieve descriptions that announce *WhatWhereWhen* activities, which include theatrical and

performance activities at Burning Man as an event, for every given year between 1994 - 2006. As a means of further investigation I asked questions of the Project staff I interviewed in these years in an attempt to learn more about how certain performance genres had grown on the playa and others had disappeared. These listings include every performative, theatrical, participatory, flamboyant and playful activity that was announced in a *WhatWhereWhen* or similar document still in possession of the Burning Man Project within their archives.

My process continued in this manner for almost two years, as I carefully read through every activity listed by year and then included those that were: 1) actual performances listed as such; 2) activities with performative elements such as costumes or props, performed music and dances or dialog; 3) the announcement suggested: “show,” “showcase,” “performing,” “performance art,” or “performance,” or “theatre,” or “theater,” or else, was to take place on a “stage;” 4) the activities listing mentioned: “act,” or “acting,” or “act,” or “actors”; “Talent,” “talented,” “5) the activity was a parade or demonstration of theatrics, involved improvisation, the creating or sharing of theatrical props including puppets, masks or costumes, involved circus, burlesque, song and dance or any other recognized genre of theatre and performance or else, a hybridized style of performing including media, prop work such as hoola-hooping, fire, stilts, or dress-up; or 6) the activity specifically involved the element of interactive play or fantasy and was based on the desire for participant performing.

As I worked my way through each successive year, I found more performance listings since, by the nature of the event, Burning Man’s participant population grew

and so brought more planned activities to the playa. It should be said that participants also bring activities with them in mind that they do not advertise in the *WhatWhereWhen* and of course, spontaneous performances and activities happen all of the time. So too do performances and activities organically grow as has been mentioned previously.

The Performance Listings are categorized in Appendix A first by year, beginning with the earliest year (1994) and ending with the most recent (2006). Within the pages that make up the individual listings for a given year, the performance activities are spaced out for the entire week of the event beginning with the first Monday of the event through the end of the event, usually the following Monday. The dates of the individual years are listed along with each activity as is the name of the activity in bold, a description of the performance activity, followed by the date, time, duration of the activity, the category of activity, the hosting group or theme camp, and either the event URL available on the Internet or else, the email address for the contact person for the activity (often the individual who submitted the listing).

Not always is this format available for a given year, however, and a variant listing might only include the title of the performance activity, the time on the day which it is happening, a description of the activity and the theme camp or group who is hosting the activity – which would then have alerted participants to which camp they should go to attend the performance. Further, I have taken pains to make sure that there are no repeating activities listed in the Appendix, however, similar activities staged by the same theme camp may have been listed multiple times on a given year

but with alternate information in any one informational category including importantly, the description, changing the nature of the activity and so was included.

What these listings reveal about performance at Burning Man is that: 1) Each year there are a variety of activities but between years there are certain performance types that have a stronger presence. For example, in the mid-1990s, sacred and tribal activities that involved performance were more often present than in latter years. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, larger participatory stages and talent contests had a stronger presence, as did larger participatory activities such as sacred processions. From 2004 to 2006, circus, aerial and hoola-hooping had a stronger presence. 2) As the event has grown, the number of performance listings has grown as well. 3) Certain theme camps who have seemingly experienced success with their performance activities have continued to offer the same ones each year. 4) Some theme camps and groups have borrowed performance ideas from other camps or attempted to revitalize old activities. For example, a performance wheel at a theme camp in 2001 was an anomaly but in 2006 several theme camps had them, as well as the “Free Psychiatric Help – Dr. Is In/ Out” Performance kiosks, which also were not a presence in the early 2000s but in 2006, had been brought out by a number of theme camps.

Ultimately, I created these Performance Listings as an archival record of what performance at Burning Man was like for the years 1994 – 2006 based on Burning Man Projects archival records. They are all interesting in their own way for considering that behind each was a participant or theme camp who thought of it and submitted it to the Project for public presentation and as an invitation to play. The

Performance Listings included in this Appendix each represent an activity that cannot be known to us but involved, ostensibly, an involved and enthusiastic group of participants interacting and performing under the guise of a themed moment. They are the historical performative record for this society and they reveal by their existence just how meaningful theatrics were and are to this performance culture of Burners and participants and even spectators, whose presence there acknowledges their acceptance and embrace of performance as an organizing force around which this culture is based.

### **Burning Man Performance Listings**

#### **1994 Events & Attractions**

“Burning Man is an intensely participatory experience. We encourage spontaneous performance, costumes, and original campsite architecture. Bring musical instruments. Invent games. Respond to the desert. Make a statement. This year we invite participants to build shrines, altars, votive temples, etc. which express their conception of the desert environment. Here is a partial list of planned attractions.”

#### **Avenue of Art**

This year the processional roadway leading outward from our camp will extend beyond Burning Man into the deep space of the desert. Along it we will locate works of Art. Among them you'll discover:

#### **The Incredible Exploding Couple (now enlarged to ménage a trois):**

Heidi and Kimric Smythe, joined this year by Robert McMullen, will again perform – their bodies festooned with fireworks and kinetic devices. (Complaints were voiced in 1993 that this daring duo did not actually explode, but merely showered sparks and rockets. This year, Kimric, eager to satisfy his public, promises to blow himself up).

#### **An enormous tower made from rebar, metal mesh, and desert mud.**

The 30 foot chimney, seeming to sprout directly from the playa, will radiate a molten glow as tongues of flame leap overhead. Artist: Pepe Ozan. Assisted by Steve Morgenstern, Wayne Scott and Robert Burne.

**Spontaneous Combustion Theater:**

Fire breathing poets and incendiary clowns trace the origins of spontaneous human combustion through this anarchoburlesque, audience participatory intoxication ritual. It's aesthetic anarchy with a smile! Artists: The L.A. Cacophony Society

**A sixteen foot long fire-sprouting bronze dragon.** Artists: David Lundquist and Frisco Rose.

**The Daygloasis:**

A painted blacklit mosaic glowing on the desert floor. Artists: Graham Cruickshank, David Davenport and Gabriel Plumlee.

**Dancing bodies clothed in flame.** Artists: Crimson Rose and Will Roger.

**Music**

**“SHARKBAIT”:** This retro-proto-apocolyptic band will bring their distinctive brand of cacophonous percussion to the Burn on Sunday night. Bring something to beat on.

**“ENEMIES OF THE GATE CRASHER”:** Music from alternative powered psychedelic experimentalists. A solar, wind, stream, and stationary bicycle powered music troupe accompanied by wood lathes.

**“FOUR DIRECTIONS”:** Early risers will enjoy a pre-dawn concert at the foot of the Burning Man. Each compass direction will be represented by a tonal range. Find your spot and join in the chorus. The 19 minute quadraphonic composition will be timed to conclude at sunrise.

**RAVEI: SPAZ** will be joined this year by the “ZIPPY Pronoia Tour to US ‘94” direct from the Grand Canyon. (Pronoia is the sneaking feeling that someone is conspiring behind your back to help you.) Look for it late night approx. 1 mile East of camp.

**Other Attractions**

**JAVA COW:** The Java Cow will again arise at dawn. Assemble before the Man on Sunday morning, your favorite coffee cup in hand, to receive libation. “Do you want cream and sugar in your coffee? Most emphatically, “no!” You will want it black. Witness the Sun traverse the spine of Burning Man and exit the top of his head.

**THE CHURCH OF THE CAMERA OBSCURE:** This temple takes the form of that mysteriously powerful pyramid (“Novus Ordo Seclorum”), which stares back at us from dollar bills. Within its darkened sanctum you’ll discover a “Camera

Obscura”. We invite you to attend services and participate in its arcane and mysterious rites. Bring *your* camera. If you have ideas for any media related events that might be performed here, please call our hotline.

**ALL-STAR WRESTLING:** The assembled forces of Light and Darkness will contend in combat at sundown on Saturday evening. If you attend this epochal struggle in costume –attire which expresses your conception of this theme—you’ll be allowed ringside. Be prepared to cheer your side on to TOTAL VICTORY. Participants are also invited to visit Hell Town (produced by Heidi Smythe and Robert McMullen) and Angels Camp (Saint Peter Doty presiding) where these teams will be training.

**LECTURE:** University of California archeologist Billy Clewlow will evoke the prehistoric lake which filled the Black Rock Basin from 7,500 to 12,000 years ago. Return to the Plesistocene, when camels, mammoths, cave bears and saber-toothed cats roamed the marshy shores of Old Lake Lahanton. Billy will describe his search for Pre-Clovis man along the edge of this vanished lakeside world. He will also discuss the use of large-scale sculpture for ceremonial purposes in Pre-Columbian societies.

**CARGO CULT:** Grab some rum, ice, fruit, and a glass and follow the drums to Tiki Camp where you will find blenders, little paper umbrellas, torch light, and Martin Denny music. Wear your best/worst tropical shirt or mu-mu to add to the ambiance of this tropical potluck. Your host: Capt’n Kahunadoggie 510-687-5369.

**LITTLE CHAPEL OF THE PLAYA:** Come celebrate your nuptials or renew your vows at our Wedding Chapel, Rev. C. Linville presiding. For a nominal fee you will received an authentic desert wedding certificate and Polaroid snapshot. Sponsored by Portland Cacophony Society.

**SKEET GOLF:** A unique amalgam of two American sports. Bring your favorite shipper and a 12 gauge.

**DESERT FASHION SHOW:** Plan to attend our 3<sup>rd</sup> annual desert fashion show, produced by Semi-Real Productions on Sunday afternoon. We welcome designers of any kind, individuals who come dressed in elaborate or simple costumes, or others who get inspired spontaneously. This year’s show is entitled “\$Land of the Free\$”. Coordinator: Traci Swedlow. Call 415-241-0664 for more information.

**SPIRAL DANCE:** Be prepared to participate in a large-scale dance ceremony. The face of everyone assembled will pass before you. Choreographer: Kim Jack

**SEPTEMBERFEST:** Home Brew Beer Garden hosted by Sebastian Hyde. Call 415-759-8158 to schedule your brew

**DRAG RACES:** Got the urge to put on clothes of the opposite sex and run a 50 yard dash in the desert? Your starter: Invisible Ray. Call 213-368-8849 to register.

### **Workshops**

**CERAMIC WORKSHOP:**

Fashion ceramic figurines which will be sacrificed at our Burn on Sunday evening. Artists: Janet Lohr.

**BUILD YOUR OWN BRUNING WOMAN, CHILD, PRAWN, WHATEVER:**

Design and build an effigy of your own and we will burn it Sunday evening. Bring your own materials (we'll supply fuel) or use those cached at Central Camp. If you wish to participate call Dan Miller at: 415-621-1270.

**KITE MAKING:**

Make your own kite and fly it by day and night. Materials and expertise furnished by the Kite Post Workshop.

Anyone wishing to conduct a craft workshop should call our hotline. You must furnish and transport your own materials. Register now if you wish to attend. Burning Man Project – (415) 985-7471-P.O. Box 420572 San Francisco CA 94142-0572

### **1997 PERFORMANCES**

**The Daughters of Ishtar**  
**The Re-Virginitization of the Moon**  
**Laughing Scorpion Puppet Theater**  
**Playa Poets Playhouse**  
**The 20-Foot Man**  
**The Cyberbuss Human Stew**  
**Captured! By Robots!**  
**Svptt Jenek**  
**Pyroteica**  
**Blue Girl**  
**The Future Primitive**  
**The Goat Suckers of Okalahoma**  
**Circus Ridiculous**  
**Pyrodesiacs**  
**House of Doors**  
**Circus X**  
**Bindlestiff Family Circus**  
**Planet Bruka**  
**A Comedy of Modern and Ancient Life**

### **Bindlestiff Family Circus**

Traveling the globe to bring you your deepest fantasies, darkest dreams and unexpected oddities. The Bindlestiff Family offers a sumptuous feast of juggling, magic, music, clown antics, side-show curiosities, fire eating, sword swallowing and more.

URL: [www.bindlestiff.org](http://www.bindlestiff.org)

### **Blue Girl**

The intergalactic Fertility Goddess from the 16th Dimension will arrive to seduce you with eerie multilingual arias; her ship is fueled by drummers and such cult leaders as Buddha, Krishna, L. Ron Hubbard and the Easter Bunny. Earth's first interactive Rock Opera.

### **Captured! By Robots!**

Two robots have taken control of their former human master -- GTROBOT666 and Drumbot0110 force their prisoner to take them around the world; the robot's main goal: to humiliate this whipping boy of the human race in front of his peers and show the many failings of this weak human species.

### **Circus X**

Acrobats, clowns, geeks and military scientists unite for the purpose of overthrowing Earth's governments. They will topple the top heavy torpor of the stupid heads of State. Commanded by Colonel X. Three performances daily.

### **Circus Ridikulous**

The triumphant return of Circus Ridiculous, the be-boppin', punk rockin', fish-net stockin' band of ridiculous fools! Witness the Sea Monkey Tamer, The Temporarily-Tattooed Man, Insecto the Slug Eater, Igor Ignitor the Anal Pyrotechnician, Break-Dancing Stiltwalkers, and Fist Mastication! Musical interludes supplied by Organ Grinders From Hell, the 9 piece yes!, 9 piece Circus Band, and, of course, Dammit -- the Amazing Wonder Dog! Ringmaster: Chicken John.

### **A Comedy of Modern and Ancient Life**

The Group Players of San Francisco will present an expressionistic journey of a man (Ryan Gowland) who's importance to the human race is challenged by the apparitions of a world determined to confirm his destruction. Based on "The Hairy Ape."

### **Cyberbuss Human Stew**

Thirty live bodies will be placed in a stew, stirred and served to Gaia, Mother Earth.

### **Daughters of Ishtar**

From the Great Above to the Great Below... -- witness the mythic journey of Ishtar, the Goddess of Love, symbolized by the Evening Star. This ritual of death and resurrection is a revival of an ancient Sumerian cult, after 3,000 years of latency. This performance will culminate in the immolation of a towering temple on Saturday

night, August 30, 1997. Directed by Pepe Ozan, and performed by the crew and dancers of the Fire Lingam.

### **Future Primitive**

The Future Primitive, a post-apocalyptic sculptor, will create a monument to the Man's memory, entitled "The Agony of Man" (a 3X life-size installation) made from scrap metal salvaged from the now-destroyed New York City. As he crafts this work of art, he will recount the story of how things came to be this way.

### **Goat Suckers of Oklahoma**

The date is August 30, 1987. The soon to be former Soviet Union has sent a top scientific team to a remote part of Oklahoma to investigate three mysterious black pyramids that have been found on the flat dry Arbuckle Plain... (Brought to you by WOODPUSSY)

### **House of Doors**

Entirely composed of vintage doors from San Francisco, its fractured geometry suggests the entrance into new realities. The House will be a nexus for performance, art installations, parties and leisurely relaxation.

### **Laughing Scorpion Puppet Theatre**

Don't be puppet! Make a puppet! Take up your chains of servitude and attach them to popsicle sticks for better control. Take a bearing on the floating puppet in the southeast sky and set out for the puppet show (4 and 10 pm daily). While you're there, pull up a bench in the puppet workshop; you can then perform with your puppet on the Puppet Wall. It's collectivism! It's the Three Little Pigs! It's on fire!

### **Planet Bruka**

Planet Bruka is a Reno/Tahoe based company specializing in multi-media events -- fusions of art, design, music and technology.

### **Playa Poets Playhouse**

Join us for poetry readings and music performances, open to all. Bring your own words, stories and songs to share with other nomadic bards in our "stately pleasure dome" tent and stage. Performance times to be listed on site and on the Central Camp Bulletin Board.

### **Pyrodesiacs**

Burning Man's premier fire troupe. Follow mobile performances as they etch fire in the night.

### **Pyrotica**

The Ministry of Carnal Relations, in association with the E Clampus Vitus Historical Monument Appropriation / Appreciation Committee and the 6 5/8 Institute for Bible Study and Bear Baiting presents PYROTICA -- a resonant map of transient subterranean frequencies incorporating sound, fire, dance and sculpture.

### **Re-Virginization of the Moon**

A lunar landscape colonized by the male imagination of 1969. Imagine the American flagpole plunged into its virgin surface, the gravity-free cloth stiffened unnaturally like a debauched and impotent senator, Alan B. Shepard, Jr. whacking golf balls across the lunar surface... it's the opening of a cosmic country club with life-size dummies of astronaut swingers. RE-VIRGINATION will entail the cataclysmic obliteration of these frolicking playboy invaders. The great lunar egg will be cleansed.

### **Scott Jenerik**

Rhythmic Pyromanical Noise. Quote from Burning Man '96: "Who was the guy pounding on the sheet-metal Sunday night? Kinda made Trent Reznor look like Julie Andrews."

### **The 20-Foot Man**

The 20-Foot Man is a steel musical entity. He plays a 8-foot guitar and has xylophone toes, chattering jaws, blinking eyes and siren ears. His heart is a programmable bi-valve, snared membranophone. Under telepathic control, his slaves will accompany him with hand-made steel tongue drums, theramins, moogs and tessellated project labs in his 40-foot high fairyland puppet show castle -- 7 stages and live puppets.

## **1998 PERFORMANCES**

### **Stages**

These are the few stages available...

### **Lizard Cabaret**

The following is the nightly list of performers who will be appearing at the Lounge Lizard Cabaret inside The Nuclear Legacy Casino in Darno –Biggest Little Shitty in the World!

*Daily Events* Open lazy stage during the afternoons

Burning Barry Manilow Nightly at 10:00p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Special Appearances By The Rot Pack (Hank Sinatra, Hammy David Jr. with special guest Love Jones)

*Tuesday* Open Acoustic Stage

*Wednesday* Open Acoustic Stage

*Wednesday Night- Thursday Morning Midnight* Drano Village Official Opening.

Burning Manilow. The Black Rangers. Grand Opening Drum Jamboree. and more tba

*Thursday* Hugh Fisher. Electric Meg. The Flying Eraseheads. And more tba

*Friday* The Hokum Boys. The Pitfalls. FSpace. tomfoolery. The Black Rock Rangers. and more tba

*Saturday* Duke Gunnar (recording his live solo CD). Method Engine. Arcylic. tomfoolery. The Black Rock Rangers. and more tba

Performances will be recorded for a forthcoming compilation to be released around Jan. 1999 Schedule. Subject to Change Without Notice.

### **Humble Souls Promethean Nightclub**

For serious party people and performers looking for expression space, come share our covered stage, sound and lighting systems, and 1200 sq ft SHADED audience/dance area. Our DJs will fill the late evening air with high-energy dance music, and don't miss Gin'n'Tonic night, the lounge, or our spraypaint –and marker-art fence.

### **Stage Camp**

Open Stage Dusk to Dawn to any and all performances. Monetary and equipment donations welcome. We plan to provide a PA and 3 color stage wash and specials for a fashion show.

### **Rythmic Noise Camp**

Create a noisemaker and bring your drumsticks to our stage of instruments seeking a cure for rythmitis at Rythmic Noise Camp...PREPARE TO GROOVE!

### **Electronic Parlor Trick**

Electronic noise experiments on stage and in special "Audium" nocturnal environment. Audio-visual trickery.

## **Performances**

### **Nebulous Entity (art installation/performance)**

The nebulous entity is a mobile platform. The strategy of its structural and human design is to create a hyper-active interface between performers and participants. The entity will consist of four parts: A central tower that will house a generator, lighting and sound system, laser and other equipment. The moving platform and stage set, on which the tower is mounted. Numerous and extensive tentacles that surround the platform at and above ground level. Single and free-moving performers who will accompany the tentacles

In general appearance the entity will resemble a fluorescent form of sea life. It undulates in all its motions and it glows. All performers will be costumed or painted with fluorescent elements and other portable light sources. Like creatures of a coral reef, they form a significant part of the entities living architecture. At least six interactive performance stations will be located around the periphery of the platform and these will be flanked by tentacles. The entities' principle and most prominent tentacle will be borne overhead by tentacle bearers, allowing freedom of movement beneath them. The tentacles will extend to a distance of 40 to 50 feet. Cilia, Suckers

and Feelers will inhabit the inner surface of each tentacle. It will be their job to gather participants in, like the lapping cilia of a sea creature that is feeding.

Feelers, their bodies bristling like sea urchins with luminous antenna, will sweep people into this current and suction cups or Suckers will take over, gently conveying participants to a performance station. Here, stage based performers will paint or stamp a florescent signs upon whatever part of their anatomy participants prefer (This sign will be a reverse or mirror-image question mark. Written freely, it will resemble Sanskrit. It will symbolize the fact that the participant has been drained of all information). As soon as each person has been painted they will be gently drawn out again and flushed, like roe, back into the surrounding space.

By means of our moving stage and through the actions of performers stationed on the ground, it is our goal to interact with the largest number of people possible. It will also be the goal of all performers attached to the entity to move in a coordinated manner, thus creating the illusion that the entity functions as a single and centrally animated life form. When viewed aerially, the entity will closely resemble those galaxies known as spiral nebula.

Days previous to the first appearance of the entity, detached groups of nebulous (field operatives) will infiltrate our city, minutely investigating all that they encounter as they suction information. These operations may be conducted at any time. The entity itself will only appear at night and will premier on Saturday night, traversing a course amid the art installations located in the public space of the playa fronting the Esplanade. It will move like a cursor upon a computer screen as it steers between these attractions, pausing briefly at each. Interactive scenarios will be developed and played out at these stations. Having completed this survey, it will then trace a circular orbit around Burning Man. Finally, a deputation of nebulous will parade to the pyramidal platform which supports the Man. A laser and fireworks will be employed at the climax of this phase of the performance. On Sunday night, the evening of the Burn, the entity will reappear at the periphery of the crowd assembled to view the Burn. Once the Man has fallen, it will draw this audience away, siphoning existing crowds and leading participants toward other attractions.

## **1999 PERFORMANCES**

### Daily Activities

#### **Love Project Unlimited**

DJs, Bands, Dancers, Performers: The Love Project (Unlimited) is a nightly dance spot featuring hip hop, soul, funk, r&b, reggae, dancehall, latin and other international flavors to the Playa. Sign up for a slot or visit us at Black Rock City to help us bring down the mothership. contact v-boy @ amirbl(at)aol(dot)com

### **Post World Industries Molotov Cocktail Huckin' Range**

Our dedicated staff of ¡TCHKUNG! operatives teach you how to build your own molotov cocktail and throw it at a life-size target of your choice. Students will also be subjected to anti-authoritarian propaganda and a collage of disorienting noise recorded from street processions and riots from around the world. Learn the history of this simple device and its versatile applications.

### **Toxic Temporal Syndrome Outreach Campaign**

A scourge walks silently among us, Time is not as benign as it might seem. As specialists, we in the Cult Of Distraction will treat and educate the citizens of Black Rock City about the perils of Toxic Temporal Syndrome. Examinations will be performed, distraction will be perscribed, and emergency distraction services will be available. Do not delay (well set your own pace), you may have it!

### **Through the Time Tunnel (Live Music)**

Nightly performances by Randyland's accomplished Composer/Keyboardist at the future side of THE TIME TUNNEL, Located in front of Tic Toc Town. Synthesized compositions by Randy Walters, with Time Related Themes, will WOW you, while the Time Tunnel activates for the night, and zips you back in time through the future. There will be corresponding eruptions from the Primordial Volcano and also prehistoric dance performances will be your delight, from Anna and the Anna Dabba Doo Dancers. The residents of Black Rock City are encouraged to dance along, during the performances. Bring your passports, for a stamp authorizing your visa into the future. A splendid time is guaranteed for all!

### **4:00 PM A/B/A hour @ camp blow-up**

Do you want to create your own A/B/A picture? Visit our camp and if you know or find anybody who looks almost the same (or has any similarities), all the better.

### **Magic Opticians present The Trance Tunnel**

Every evening at 8.06 on the mercury esplanade we shall be "having it large" in a tunnel of ever-so-slightly-mind-expanding lights (not just at 9 pm). Have a bang on the Magic Glasses, especially if you're in a "mentally receptive state". Whatever \*that\* means...

URL: [www.magicglasses.com](http://www.magicglasses.com)

### **John C. Holmes Ornerly Roman Empire**

All the gluttonous glory and grandeur of modern Rome in a non-stop Ornerly environment. In keeping with the theme of Burning Man 99 we will be featuring the "Weiner of Time" an 8 ft marble phallus to pleasure and refresh the masses, and by the grace of all mighty Caesar a night of Top Fuel open throated Chariot racing brought to you by the I.C.R.A & H.O.R.E.

### **Post Ejaculation Depression Therapy**

A daily affirmation for those with post ejaculation depression. An uplifting motivational speaker could give reasons not to feel guilty or depressed when those feelings arise after male orgasm.

### **The Poetron**

The Salt the Eunuch automated poetry beacon returns this year with more power and more poems. Listen for the robot orator's doggerel continuously on or around 94.1FM

### **11:11 Show - Live Acid Jazz Performance**

Live acid jazz sextet (electric trumpet + sax, guitar, bass, drums, keyboards) from Sacramento, CA. Have been compared to Shish, Mede ski, Martin & Wood, Michael Ray + the Cosmic Crewe and "the Grebe All-stars on about 500 hits of LSD". Have opened for John Scofield, KVHW, Ozomatli, Charlie Hunter, Broun Fellinis, et al. Amazing live show nightly at 11:00 from 8/29-9/3.

### **Grand Masquetorium**

Daily, best during the daylight hours. This year we are repeating our enthusiastically received Masquetorium. A wide variety of raw materials will be made available for participants to create their own wonderful masque, all in our spacious relaxing Tekna/Techno North African Nomadic shade structures. Bring your own special materials, bring your wonderful creativity and make a masque!

### **Challenge the Boxers, Free Gin and Photo Ops**

Drink six (provided) gins... Challenge the boxers... Rodney and Doug (from south pasadena, texas...) in their mommy's panties... if you lose we fight each other naked... bring lots of sunscreen and your favorite RICKY MARTIN soap dish... Spring Break '42...

### **Spanky's Fantasy Island - Various**

Ah yes... Similes, similes everyone. Welcum to SPANKY's Fantasy Island. Come join us under the palm trees, where you too can have your fantasies granted. Yes, Spanky's delivers 24 hr. around the clock (or wheel of time, which ever you prefer) Fantasy fullfillment for barter and trades. And don't forget some of our marvelous events that Spanky's is planning.

#### **EVERY DAY @ 3:00**

Spanky's will be playing Fantasy Bingo. One lucky winner will have their Fantasy granted, for FREE! Yes, no bartering, no bribes to the wishmakers — a straight up free fantasy. So drop by at 3:00 pm every day for Fantasy Bingo.

#### **EVERY DAY @ 4:00**

Also remember that Spanky's will be hosting a hole on the BLD mini golf course. Come join us for the "Chi Chi Rodriguez" champion chip putt off to see who has the biggest putz in Black Rock City. Test your skillz on our champion grade mini golf hole.

#### THURSDAY @ 3:00

So you weren't so happy with the Soulmate that Costco produced for you. Well Spanky's has the cure and presents the Fantasy Dating Game. Come join us for a playful fantasy twist on that popular hit teen t.v. series. Ask some questions, get some answers and win yourself a fantasy date, or a hairy ape (our judges panel hasn't decided on prizes yet). Winners will be whisked away to a mystery playful destination with a bottle of champagin in hand, and a simple task to complete. Winners will be asked to come back to participate in Fridays event.

#### FRIDAY@3:00

Spanky's presents the Fantasy Love Connection where we will revisit our recently united couples (those winners of the Fantasy Dating Game and any others who wish to participate) to get a provocative look at to see how their fantasy date went. Tell us of your tales of what (or who) "really went down" at Bianca's, did you hold hands under the Tesla Coil, or just marvel in the whit and flame thrown to you by the mighty Wizzard of ASS???? Come by to see if someone has met their Fantasy Love connection.

You and your loved ones can come to Spanky's for the Fantasies but stay for the fun. Enjoy a tropical drink in our barter bar be fanned down by one of our lovely hosteses or just marvel over our Velvet Elvis all while you wait for your Fantasy to be granted. Enjoy the company, come socialize with old friends (Kevorkian, The Disco Headhunters, the chicks from Berkely who said "YES...YESSSSS!", the son of God, and many others) and make new friends all while relaxing under our 60x20 palace of shade.

Don't forget Spanky's delivers 24 hr. around the clock Fantasy fulfillment! Come fill out a Fantasy request or take a look on our Fantasy Board to see if you can help us fulfill a Fantasy. Your participation is greatly encouraged and wanted! Bring barter items and trades!

You can come and visit Spanky's Fantasy Island conveniently located at 7:30 and Venus in the Blue Light District 3.0. Thank you for your support, Mr. Pourke.

#### **Fluxus Happening Extravaganza!**

Performance by Channing Hansen. Grand son of Al Hansen, Brother of beck, bringing you a full on old school Fluxus Happening. Chaos is fun. Art, more so.

#### **THE SCOTT TURCHIN BAND!**

The SCOTT TURCHIN BAND, or at least its guiding spirit, who will probably look a lot like me, will be spreading its own brand of existential cheer thru original FOLK - ROCK - REGGAE like Wallflowers to Marley! Irie times ahead... for any and all stages who will have me. DRUMMER / percussionist AND/OR BASS player much welcomed (sadly, the rest of the Band can't make it). Up from LA by Sept. 3rd. SCOTT at SONGMON@aol.com.

**Open House**

Real estate to sell home.

**Aminibigcircus Jam**

wearegatheringwearelaughingwearefree aminibigcircus is muttart, something borrowed, something blue. Striving, striving, striking the tents and travelling to a gathering of music and performance, projection and joy. Come paint your mind pictures, play your heart songs, feed and be fed. Events: music jams with improvisational movement and dance, performances, love. URL: [www.aminibigcircus.com](http://www.aminibigcircus.com)

**Thundersmith Industries**

Roaming performances with Large (10'-15') Puppets.

**The |Warp a play by Neil Oram**

This event is planned for 2000. The structure that surrounds it presently are caverns in London Bridge, England The Play itself is 24 hours long and has a minimum of 15 actors and a maximum of... well how many have you got. We are planning to travel the cities before then and will have a promo video soon for the notice board. So to all regional representatives "The Warp" Looking for a venue near you. Please contact Paul Shelley-Redbird Productions at: [angus\\_shelley@hotmail.com](mailto:angus_shelley@hotmail.com). Love and good vibes for this coming year. URL: [www.thewarpxperience.com](http://www.thewarpxperience.com)

**8:15 pm Countdown to Sunset**

I propose that a mass countdown be lead by someone (me?) just before the sun sets each evening. The problem is that sunset will appear to occur slightly earlier at the one end of came than at the other. The solution is to perform the countdown at the man. 30 Seconds before the sun sets completely we all might chant "30, 29, 28...3, 2, 1" and just then the last visible ray of light disappers from the view of those assembled at the man. If this idea has taken place in the past, I didn't see it. I was only there in 1998 and only at the man at sunset one evening. If the countdown is published in the newspaper and or on the radio, etc. the crowd will spontaneously participate, I hope. Thanks for Listening See you There, Mike Sines

**12:00 PM The Fandango Glockenspiel**

The amazingly life-like Fandango Glockenspiel strikes the hour, and a motley collection of fools emerge from the clocktower, perform various tasks for your amusement, and then return from whence they came. See milk-maids being chased. See beer steins being hoisted. See random things being set on fire. Hell, bring your oompah band and join us. Come by, slap on some lederhosen, and help us mark the passage of mid-day, and, later, the coming of night. (Any very-short performance art welcome.) Fandango.

**8:00 PM The Fandango Glockenspiel**

See 12:00 PM listing.

### **9:00 PM Nightly Temple Trance**

Come... enter the glow woods and place yourself into a trance nightly as we Thump the stone off of the walls inside The Temple of the Jaguar. Maybe... just maybe... you will find Xara Xa'Khan within your trance!

### **the jimmy du-rant!-e**

all welcome to come to the church of jimmy durante/emotional expression camp thru the day any one wishing to come and blow your emotional nose are invited to place your head inside one of the nostrils of the GREAT SNOZE and scream, cry, curse, sneeze or otherwise express the feelings that may surface at an event such as this achachacha. it may be hot inside and so the "snoze" will be well ventilated and also at night illuminated inside and out. please feel free to make as much nose i mean noise as u like untill midnight a-choo! jim bless you.

### **1:00 PM Tarot Card Readings**

Ed Bury reads with his William Blake Tarot of the Creative Imagination for the 4th consecutive year at Gringos On The Playa theme camp. For reciprocity, offer something (anything) to barter.

### **10:15 PM Blackrock Outdoor Film Festival**

A Big Screen celebration of some of the best new independent film and video shorts, cult classic features and a media mirror playback of daily events as captured on personal camcorders. Located at the ARF camp (the Artistic Republic of Fremont-seattle) on the esplanade, the films will start Wed evening and run nightly from dusk till dawn on high resolution video projection on a 20 x 30' free standing screen showing vhs, digital and hi-8 formats. Wild card submissions welcome. Bring your favorite movies on cassette tapes and we'll try to show them if time allows. This is interactive cinema and old fashioned summer fun at its best. See you there! URL: [www.outdoorfilmfestival.com](http://www.outdoorfilmfestival.com)

### **The Playa Rainbow Wax Clock**

(Appox. installation location: 12:00 Mercury) A huge 40 ft. diameter, rainbow colored pinwheel nailed to the playa and centered above the MAN on the Wheel of Time at about 12:00 will be used as a timepiece. The record of time will be marked in the sun's effect on wax figures placed on the colored panels. We will place one of the six pinwheel panels on the ground each beginning day at midnight so the clock is built as it also records the time in melted wax. All Black Rock Citizens are invited to bring some wax, soften it in the sun a bit, shape a figure or personal icon, and place it on the panel of the day. The entire piece will be ritually burned the night the MAN burns.

Look for our camp somewhere within Black Rock City. Drop by and say hi (that is, if we're at home and not out seeing and experiencing all of your wonderful creations. if we are, just look for the fat guy and the skinny dude in colorful desert attire). We didn't get placed so we will find real estate when we get there. We'll have a huge, surreal painting painted with a rainbow pinwheel and the words, "The Playa Rainbow

Wax Clock" stretched out as a lean-to shade structure fronting our camp. Contact: jjjustice (at) creative (dot) net

### **IDIOM Word Gathering**

**WHAT IS YOUR WORD???**

Everyday the ISMIST camp will be gathering new words for pages for the IDIOM art piece. We need volunteers to paint the words on the 13 foot by 6.5 foot pages. We will be creating 2 new pages everyday. These activities will take place within the ISMIST camp. WHAT IS YOUR WORD!!!

### **IDIOM Parade**

**WHAT IS YOUR WORD???**

Every evening the ISMIST camp will parade through the streets carrying the 2 new pages (13ft by 6.5ft) of words for the IDIOM art piece located out in the 20th century zone. Our final destination is the IDIOM piece, into which we will hang the new pages. We want all fire performers, drummers, hell whatever to join us in this procession of lunacy.

### **10:00 PM live music at Dylyzma by Dylyzma**

live music at the dylyzma camp by Dylyzma the band. come join the festivities!

### **12 Step Meetings**

Anonymous Camp is here to bring 12 Step meetings of any type to Black Rock City, scheduled & impromptu. Look for the Burning Desires parachute shade structure at Earth and 5:30. Join us for a meeting, start one of your own and/or stay for the fellowship!

URL: [www.paroxysm.com/anonymcamp/](http://www.paroxysm.com/anonymcamp/)

### **Painting @ PICASSO CAMP**

Come join the fun and participate in painting the largest canvas on the Playa--The 1999 Picasso Canvas. We'll have both the large canvas, and a smaller one for the kids. All paint, supplies, etc are supplied. Daily during daylight hours! See ya there!

### **2:00 PM Temple of WaterBoy Free Baptism and Hose-down**

Waterboy is back, and this time he's recruiting. Looking for mermaids, octopii, jellyfish, etc... Lot's of water, scuba, snorkling, and more water...Occuring dailythought Burning Man, @ 4:30 on the quiet side of Mercury. URL: [www.falsegods.com](http://www.falsegods.com)

### **Conch Blowing Lessons and Whenever JAM SESSION!**

Come to Sandpainting Camp — bring your shell trumpet, learn to make one, or use one of ours! Conch lessons given (and taken) by SandWolf, corporeal and otherwise

molecules made to vibrate through the joint efforts of Triton and Aeolus.Kah-  
RRRRRRRRROOOOOOOOOOOOOOOUUUUUUUUUU!!!

### **6:00 PM Sandalas-to-Go!**

Sandalas created at your site! Camp, Village, Event, installation, Wyld 'n Wooly Playa, tent — wherever, we will come to your site and bless it with a Sandala created jointly by ourselves, you and whatever participants that wander by. E-mail me at wolfinblack(at)pagan(dot)net if you want us to come to your site, or come visit us at Sandpainting Camp on Venus is Gigsville.

### **The Playaphone Project II**

THE PLAYAPHONE PROJECT II. The PlayaPhone crew, Alice and Ray, bring their closed circuit phone system back to Burning Man. All day All night All the time - Free and easy - hop on the line - make random connections and far out communication with the citizens of Black Rack City. URL: [www.playaphone.com](http://www.playaphone.com)

### **12:00 AM Happy Camper's Happy Hour**

What happens when cross a beer keg and a lawn mower? The happy camper's happy hour BLENDER!!! Come join us for frozen cocktails every day: pina coladas, frozen margaritas, smoothies... If you want to drink, then bring something to throw into the blender. ice, alcohol, ice, fruit, ice, mixers, coconut milk...

### **7:00 PM the Burning Band**

the burning band is back for another year of fun and frolic. please see theme camp listing for more info. we'll see you there!

**Blü** A 12' x 24' structure in which everything is the color blue. We're talking blue furniture, toys, drinks and ambiance. Come relax under a cool hue and check out our centerpiece: a giant 5' long kaleidoscope housed.

### **11:00 PM Walk the Flaming Labyrinth**

Come walk the Flaming Labyrinth, a 35' diameter labyrinth of flame. This will happen occasionally during the event (definatly expect Thur. and Sun. nights). Check the sign posted at the labyrinth (10 o'clock on the outer wheel) for more specific times.

### **Space Children & Unitiv Flo "Burning Man of Speakers camp"**

Join us for the burning of a 20 ft. tall man of speakers. Yes, of course the man of speakers will be playing music while it burns... and don't be alarmed if the speakers explode, after all speaker cabinets are hollow, allowing plenty of room for things that go BOOM! Our camp will also feature the 11,000 watt Unitiv Flo sound system which is painted with absolutely breathtaking black light art work. Various live acts and DJ's from around the world will be performing daily and nightly. Music styles will span vast catagories but will be primarily electronic in nature. We are located at the entrance to the BOOMTOWN village right on the esplanad (Mercury & 9:00 streets) see ya real soon!

### **3:00 PM Water Battle**

3'Oclock high, the place... HAmlet Village! Come bring your squirt guns/super soakers and do battle on the playa. No holds barred, no surrender. If you are in the vicinity you are going to get wet, and don't plan on hiding out in your tent either, our daily raids into other villages and theme camps will flush you out.

### **12:00 AM Baked Batata Productions**

#### **AUDITIONS HELD DAILY.**

#### **"BURNING DESIRE"**

A TWENTY MINUTE ONE ACT HUMOROUS LOOK AT 21ST CENTURY DATING

2:00 AM Kaleidoscope of Fire

kaleidoscope of fire

Giant Black light kaleidoscope

black light body paint friendly

be a fractal become the show

spin on the kaleidoscope of fires 6 foot dish

nightly black light/video daily sun power

bring the kids, spin Grandma, no dogs

tattoos and parakeets welcome

### **Dirt Nap Dance/Tomb-o-rama**

Come to dirtnap camp and shake those bad vibes away... visit us at night for the full effect fog machine, strobes, disco balls, you get the picture.

Take a break from your boogyin' and inscribe the name of the person you would like to depart this planet on one of our 66 tombstones in our tomb-o-rama. These will make the path to our mighty "Sterning Man". Visit us at 6:54 on the Mercury Esplanade.

### **The Marie Antionette Quartet**

Be on the lookout for The Marie Antionette Quartet. Four gorgeous women in decadent and delicious costumes. Come play with us at our roving, tempestuous tea party.

### **11:15 PM Oracle of Atonement**

Oracle of Atonement 9x9x9' an interactive pyramidal structure using fire, video and sound. set up for various ritualistic performances surrounding the Amahraspand, highest angels of fire and air. Dance to release the fallen angels presiding over fire, air, earth and moon, your your own 7 deadly sins will be released to gain immortality.

Choreographers, dancers, musicians, performers needed for nightly ritualistic performances

sound system available.

bring props for ritual performances,

Dance and fire troops welcome

contact Glen Allen at 206-390-7413  
metart@halcyon.com or Glen at the ARF Camp  
alternate # Shannon Lindberg, Spencer Matthew or Skyler at  
206,624-3045 Seattle WA.

### **10:00 PM Illumination of The Tetrahedron**

The Tetrahedron laser sculpture will be activated nightly from around 10 PM to around 2 AM. Walk around and under the ethereal green light beams. See perspective change as you go from far to near. Contemplate the concept of perfect geometry on earth compared with the stellar geometry in the sky above. Using laser beams to "draw" in three dimensions, the sculpture is the simplest 3-D figure made from straight line segments, yet reflects a multifaceted, abstract beauty. As static and non-interactive as a constellation, it lifts the mind to a higher plane.

### **3:00 PM Water Gun Wars**

Bring your own water gun and water supply, bathing suits not required. This time of the afternoon should be warm enough that people will be looking for a way to cool off. The trouble is, many people may desire to be on the receiving end of the water gun blast, so we may need to figure out some strategy or rules to make sense out of this. One possibility might be a 'water gun execution' where the spectators can shoot their favorite (out of a group) individual (something like an un-popularity contest). Other ideas can be submitted in advance on the web site or email [burningmannude@hotmail.com](mailto:burningmannude@hotmail.com), or at the No Tanline Camp on the playa, where we will initially meet before moving out onto the playa for the Games to begin.

### **8:00 PM Nudie Movies**

Bring your own chairs, popcorn and warm clothes for one or two hours of movies about nudism around American or the World. See nude resorts, beaches, hot springs, and other places where people gather for fun nude recreation. All movies will be PG rated and good for the entire family (even the kids). Tuesday night might be trial & error getting the projector set up, and we should run error free Wed. to Friday (No movie Sat. the night of the burn). We may try to show some of these during the day if we have anyway to have the screen visible. Come to the No Tanline Camp.

### **ZardoZ speaks to you - at 8:00 Mercury.**

URL: [www.houseofpain.org/zardoZ.html](http://www.houseofpain.org/zardoZ.html)

### **Plug 4 & The Gaint Ghetto Blaster SOW 4080v.2**

"Plug 4", (@ 9:51-9:54 Mercury Esp) a 200 times scale, bright orange, 6 sided replica of, and shrine to, the almighty extension cord. The ponderous plug will be birthed from the earth with it's 3 huge prongs reaching skyward for connection, it's huge asymmetrical doors opening mechanically to welcome home the electric powered Giant Ghetto Blaster on wheels from it's forays of funk, soul, rare groove, breaks and hip hop on the open playa. At night "The Cavern Of Plug 4" will double as a wall-to-wall carpeted dancehall and public screening room for film, documentaries and animation with it's and 12'x 12' movie screen. Inquire with us if you wish to have the

SOW 4080v2 do a drive by soul vaccination of your camp and also let us know if you wish to screen your art in our DVD, VHS or Hi-8 mini theater.

### **The Pirates of Lemuria Present... "Grape and Swillage!"**

From the depths of the undersea world of Lemuria come the most vile, foul smelling and bad tempered collection of sea scum ever to curse a dry lake bed... the Pirates of Lemuria! Although our mighty ship, the BMS Lovelock, is not scheduled to arrive until mid-week, we will be preparing for the start of our Playa anti-plundering crusade from the opening day of BM99! When THESE swashbucklers show up at your camp and demand that you share their grapes (whatever scurvy chow we have at the time; hardtack, turkey jerky, saltpeter biscuits...) and swillage (arrrrrr, hand me me grog, cabin boy...), you had better join in or we might revert to the habits of our ancestors, Matey. When the BMS Lovelock arrives, we're going to embark on our "share the booty" campaign, so get ready to barter or ye'll walk th' plank, ye hen hearted rascal! Blue Balls Booger, Playa Pirate

### **9:15 PM Longest Can Can Dance**

Nightly gatherings in front of the TIME TUNNEL. Participants will join arm in arm and kick their legs up high together, and try to create the worlds longest can can dance. Music will be provided. The Time Tunnel will provide all of the lights you will ever need. A splendid time is guaranteed for all.

### **con-gress**

"con-gress" is circular, actually 12-sided polygon, canvas (The Cycle of Cliche), 24' in diameter and 4' high on a 6' wooden frame, covered inside and out with a collage of words and images. In the center of the enclosure is a 9' psychodelic cross with a paper-mache fish crucified on one side (The Cruicifish), and a single-user friendly platform and appropriately positioned handles on the opposite side for the participant to take in the view beyond the Cycle of Cliche to the surrounding playa in the direction of the Man. The installation includes several vessels of paints and brushes for participants to add and offer their own cliches to the Cycle. It should be up Monday morning just beyond the MOMUVA areo-gallery and Submerging Man installations. If the wind does not destroy it first, it will burn on Friday night, after the Wheel of Time does its thing.

### **7:00 PM Ganapati Sanctuary Mahashra Ritual celebrating the Mahashra (the Shedding)**

From Thursday to Sunday, the Sanctuary of Ganapati will celebrate the Mahashra (the Shedding), a purifying ritual to help us overcome obstacles on our chosen path. We will call upon the divine, in the incarnation of Ganesh, to help each of us to see clearly that which stands in our way and to remove it. Chanting, music and dance will aid us in our task. Check the Find a Camp Board or the Dynamic Board for location of the Sanctuary.

### **Bang your MoM**

Come bang your MoM (the Monument of Music) with the Ganapati Sanctuary. MoM is an experimental percussive sculpture developed to energize our rhythmic passions and ground our most primitive urges to beat the drum. The MoM also serves as a creative outlet for aggressive energies. Come wail, bash an bang till you can't. The MoM can take it. Check the Find a Camp Board or the Dynamic Board for location of the Sanctuary.

### **6:00 AM dawn greetings at camp resonant**

Dawn concerts of various material, by various artists. Original material may collide with mutated covers saying goodbye to the 20th century.

### **Projet Haute Couture sweatshop**

Stop by Projet Haute Couture (Mercury 7:25) to design your own line of Black Rock City fashion garments, or simply to volunteer to be a supermodel! Bring materials, thread, and ideas, and use our sewing machines to make fabulous eveningwear! Then come back Friday and Saturday evenings to show off your creations on our runway.

### **Catwalk to the Stars**

Projet Haute Couture will have a 20' catwalk set up from Day One, even though we won't be having viewings of the Black Rock City collection until Friday and Saturday evenings. Lucky you! Use our catwalk for your events. A playa view, lighting and sound system ensure that your show will achieve maximum fabulousity. Mud person? Exhibitionist? Very Loud Band? Everyone's welcome!

### **The Tower of Babble-On**

Every night until Thursday come to the Tower of Babble-On to let loose with some amplified for your pleasure, free form, nonsense, horse-shit rambling. Thursday night our collective nonsense ramblings will ignite the tower and send it back to wherever in hell it came from... please, no wagering. URL:  
[members.aol.com/capnshady/towerofbabbleon.html](http://members.aol.com/capnshady/towerofbabbleon.html)

### **The L2K Lounge**

The L2K lounge will be open 24 Hrs a day. Wander in and play with the 2000 pushbuttons. Your actions will change the patterns being displayed on the 500ft ring of lights around the man. At different times of the day the patterns will change, some will be fast, some slow. All will be amusing. We will have some events posted like the "Light" vs "Dark" game, and a Kid's hour. There will also be interactive light things scattered around the L2K camp. Come and Play!URL:  
[www.quantalink.com/TheLounge.html](http://www.quantalink.com/TheLounge.html)

### **12:30 PM Playa Trans**

The PlayaTrans workers will be doing ( very little) roadwork in various locations through out Black Rock City. Come see your tax dollars hard at work, as we make the highways & biways a safer place for all. PlayaTrans - give a brake.

### **Instant Gameshow**

YOU MAY ALREADY BE A WINNER! Play Instant Gameshow! Showing up when you least expect it - you get to play the Home Version. It's Wacky. Or Visit us in Gigsville.

### **The Cantina at Camp Tatoonie**

Nightly music and dancing. Beginning Monday night an eclectic mix of techno, trance, drum-n-bass, ethnic, ambient, even some house, full-on bizzarrities and rock; overall DAMN groovy stuff to get off to, dream away with, chill or even dump your cargo to when you see those Imperial Cruisers. Wednesday night will see the addition of a live funk band, Moustachio, who'll be with us for the duration. Full party following pod race (see Friday events, below). Come by to find out if the bar will be open, but stay for the tunes.

### **9:15 PM Battle of the Burning Man Stars**

The Dante Network presents the battle to end all battles. It's theme camp VS. theme camp in a gruelling cross-promotional free-for-all. Broadcast LIVE on cable access in HELL.

### **6:30 PM Camp ACME's "Scream at Six-Thirty"**

To commemorate ACME's location in time...listen for the siren every day at 6:30. Then scream.

### **9:45 PM Ceremonious Launchings Every Evening**

At 9:51 PM every evening, come join the thousands crowded in front of Plug 4 as the nightly ritual of the launch of The Giant Ghetto Blaster SOW 4080v.2 unfolds. With much pomp, music and smoke-machine we will activate the massive mechanical door on the front of The Plug and roll the electric powered SOW 4080v.2 out onto the open playa for it's forays of funk, soul, hip hop, breaks and reggae under the stars. Come witness the ritual and walk along side as the SOW 4080v.2 performs soul vaccinations on various camps, villages, bars and gatherings. 9:51 Mercury Esplanade. URL: [www.plug4.com](http://www.plug4.com)

### **Rose Red's Tea Den**

Every day come and awaken and entice your senses as we bring you into a deeper consciousness with tea. three times a day we will brew some of the most exotic teas in the world for you. we only ask that you allow the unfolding that will happen. look for Rose Red herself with her band of temptresses. there will also be music, dance, and consumeables of every kind. We are also helping to sponsor the first of it's kind all Burning Man TREASURE HUNT. Come check it out!

### **Figure Drawing Drop-in Studio**

Where models draw and artists model... Drop by my little studio in the shade for  
1) the chance to pose for black rock city's finest figurative artists and  
2) the chance to draw black rock city's finest models... yes, the two are intimately linked, and the ideal participant can play on both sides of the fence... i will supply the

materials, the space and the encouragement (as well as the body, should we be lacking either artiste or model at the time you drop by...) Look for a flyer on the theme camp board on Thursday for time and location...

### **Reality Check - The Roving Reporters of Rascalry!**

Yes! It's those incredibly strange lads from Reality Check TV - the video journal of underground culture! Roving, reporting and checking your reality! When they show up, tell them your tale-or make one up! Share illegal substances with them and watch them fall down! Invite them to your camp, watch them knock over tent poles, then kick them out! Have it captured on video and broadcast to all your pals in San Francisco who didn't come and watch those friends turn green with envy! Remember what Marshall McLuhan never said: "The message is the medium in the moderm of the maker if the kettle on the boil has the brew that is true!" Special Bonus! Witness the Exclusive Reality Check Webcast! We'll drive like hell across the desert and cast a full networked PC... out the window! Yow!URL: [www.realitychecktv.com](http://www.realitychecktv.com)

### **9:00 PM Rabbit Hole High Tea**

The Rabbit Hole's Nightly High Tea needs performers, astounders, informers, and loungers to come into our home, spin the wheel, act accordingly or inappropriately and receive the blessing or the gong of the ever-revolving King and Queen. In fact, come be the King or Queen! "Everybody Wins, All Must Have A Prize", the stage is yours...

### **Camp ACME, Mercury & 6:30**

Visit Camp ACME at Mercury and 6:30. Free trials of the latest models from the R&D labs of ACME Corporation. Numerous constructive/destructive devices to choose from!!!

Art and events include...

- \*\* ACME Giant Slingshot: Bring things to sling. Daily events and contests (splatter painting, distance and accuracy contests and more).
- \*\* ACME Anvil: Bring stuff to smash. Destroyed artifacts will be used in the ACME game "Boing! Sproing! Bonk! Clonk!"
- \*\* ACME Plunger: Push the plunger... it's connected to something. Honest!
- \*\* ACME Squirt Squack: A misty moist moment.
- \*\* ACME Art Schmart: Projection schmection in a tunnel of gauze! Our slides and YOURS. What democracy!
- \*\* ACME Sparkles: ACME's got glitter, but only if you got gusto! Qualify for an opportunity to shine in the ACME game.
- \*\* ACME Home: IKEA goes survival...chill in the shade with the ACME crew.
- \*\* Torch Job
- \*\* noise punk girls think pink
- \*\* Abomination Domination
- \*\* Wheel of Misfortune \*\* spin-win
- \*\* Hair cuts by Sam
- \*\* Tie your Ho
- \*\* Demo & Lessons

\*\* bring rope & Ho

\*\*\*\* Don't miss "Boing! Sproing! Bonk! Clonk! \*\*\*\*

Thursday 11:59 pm on the playa

### **1:00 PM see beths boobies up close**

Just in case you are one of the few people who haven't seen beths boobies be sure to check them out, she will be happy to show you them. also brian will

### **Rick's Generic Bar**

Nightly, Sid Incidental and his Perfunctory Orchestra. Complementary nuts with two -- count 'em -- flavors of poison, clear and amber.

### **Grand Masquetorium**

This is a correction to this listing. Daily, best during daylight hours.

Location: 2:57 Mercury

This year we are repeating our enthusiastically received Masquetorium. A wide variety of raw materials will be made available for participants to create their own wonderful masque, all in our spacious relaxing Tekna/Techno North African Nomadic shade structures. Bring your own special materials, bring your wonderful creativity and make a masque!

### **Psychotropical Brain Forest**

Daily, beginning at dark.

Location: 10:30 Mercury (approximately) on the Playa.

The Psychotropical Brain Forest will be a Playa installation at about 10:30 Mercury, an illuminated assemblage of phantasmagorical objects. Those who wander through the efflorescent illuminated Psychotropical Brain Forest's lush scenery will be invited to relax amidst the exotic flora and biota. Explorers will be enchanted by the haunting strains of psychedelic music spun by desert gathering pioneers Moontribe and may be compelled to participate in proto-primitive dances. At times Forest inhabitants will provide strange entertainment for those lost souls whose trail of bread crumbs has been eaten by wild playa birds. Hypnotized by the Forest's beauty, many will find it hard to leave.

### **8:00 PM Metronome Lounge**

The Metronome Happy Hour frome Dusk till Aprox 11:30 pm. Vodka & Lemonade to refresh. Piano player and variety acts. If you would like to participate as a performer. Drop by during the day to sign up. We are not yet placed so look for us on the community boards around the city. Tuesday till the Burn.

### **3:00 PM Chocolate Chip Lick-off**

Get clean and come to the Blue Light District for the Chocolate Chip Lick-off. Chocolate chips will be put on your favorite body part(s) (no armpits!) to melt and will be licked off by volunteers.

### **MISSION OUTREACH, for La Iglesia del Santo Pollo**

Thee time has come and give thanks for thee chicken is here, now that thee end is near. Bow down before the Blessed poultry, and show just how pee-ous you really are. Join us the humble servants of the fowl offer up a tumult of sound to thee one that brings salvation thru the amber hue ov a 40 oz full ov Old E.

### **Full body trampolining/figure painting**

Yes that's right, it's finger painting with a burningman twist, combining two of everyone's favorite activities, art making and trampolining! Come by to just bounce, or have yourself slathered in nice COLD water soluble paints and bounce your way to a figure painting! I will supply the paint and the trampoline, as well as a way to wipe down afterwards :)

Exact full-body figure painting times will be posted on the bulletin board under "figure" and "trampoline" on Wednesday. Bring your own cloth if you want to take a print home...

### **2:00 AM Banana Race**

Bring your Banana's and water and crush them between you ass.

### **Job Consulting Camp**

Job got you bummed. Poor thing. Smart move coming to Burning Man though! Cruise on over and see how our team of experts employs an extremely rigorous and scientific process to help you find that ideal job. Hey , it's better than killing yourself and think how happy it'll make your mom. Say the sniveler sent you and win a prize! The first part of the evaluation is for you to find our location on the Events Board.

### **12:00 PM Massive Drummers**

More than 50 drums shocking at midnight at the same time!

Featuring most of Spain's Night Of Drums artists!

Bring your own and play... after the show there will be a contest for the best non-professional drummer. The prize is: Alcohol for everyone!

Brain\_in\_a\_pot@yahoo.com for more info (Sorry, no web!)

### **Altered State Brain Wave Entrainment Audio Sessions**

Experience the pseudo drug of the new millenium (lets see them try and make this illegal). Lay back relax at one of our binaural beat audio stations and experience altered states at the touch of a button. URL: [brain.web-us.com/thescience.htm](http://brain.web-us.com/thescience.htm)

### **Suntemple**

A truncated icosahedron, the sun temple provided a sanctuary for weary travelers of the playa. The pentagonal geometry was accentuated by string and crystals hung in such a way as to capture the sunlight at various times throughout the day.

Emblazoned with the holy mantra "Om Mani Padme Hum", the sun temple is a tribute to the creative spirit within all of us, a sanctuary for the tired and worn out souls. Erected by RipBongs, Darkat and Tammy, Cosmic Uber Dee Jays from the planet vulcan.

### **5:00 PM Nude Cocktail Lounge**

What a better way to get to know your fellow Burning Manner than to meet him (or her) in the buff? Anyone allowed in, provided you are unclothed as the day you were born.

## **2000 PERFORMANCES**

### **Stages**

#### **Acid Cabaret**

There was once a man who was on a stage...who fell in love with a cow. It was not an ordinary cow, he was not a regular guy. One a stage, in a desert, they drank anything they could get their hands on. They sang, danced, whipped, stripped, then gimped off to their tent to screw. We don't know what happened to the cow, but the man is still around. We call him Partyball. He hosts the Acid Cabaret, and his friend HairyBalls plays the piano. The Acid Cabaret will be open nightly near midnight and ending near dawn. Come and perform. *Head Way/8:30*

#### **Arena Theatre**

Is dedicated to bringing live performance to Black Rock City. Two stages with complete sound systems will ensure that fun never stops. If you're a performer, musician, or clown, come to Arena camp and book some time on our stage. 3am will be movie hour. Come chill out in the predawn hours and relax to a movie. Dawn awaits you. Arena Theatre – *Head Way/8:00*

#### **Café Stages**

The Café contains two stages: a larger one in the seraglio, and a small one in the library. The library stage is the center for spoken word events, with poetry readings daily from 4 to 7. Throughout the day, and the late into the night, the Café and seraglio stage will feature music of many kinds, including ethnic, jazz, salsa, and classical. Notice of each day's performances will appear daily in *The Gazette*. Almost all of the music in the Café is instrumental, or in languages spoken by few, like Gypsy or Isreali. The Café is the place for citizens of Black Rock City to meet each other and converse; we are the song, and the music the melody. On Saturday night before the Burn, the Café is the scene of the Cacophony Society Cocktail Party. All are invited to bring a bottle and start the night with Mr. Lucky and his swing band.

#### **Dragon's Spectral Orb**

Performers, looking for a stage? Contact Dragon at Dragon's Spectral Orb camp to schedule your performance. Orb camp is located on *Head Way/7:00*.

#### **Greater Entropolitan Area**

This will be an 8 foot by 8 foot by 8 foot "peep show" booth for performances of anything you would like to do in front of a small audience (perhaps as many as 3 or 4

people). Stage fright due to crowds? This is *your* stage! All performances accepted; standard peep-show fare to children stacking blocks. All performance “art” appreciated. Our stage is yours! Should be up and running nearly full time by Tuesday. Sign-ups will be available. Entertain! Some props, cushions, etc. provided.

### **Screamalong Stage at Hair of the Dog**

The Screamalong Stage at the Hair of the Dog bar is available for bad lounge acts and bar bands. We’ll have a small stage complete with PA, amps, mikes, spotlights, disco ball, fog machine, and an audience of crazed bar patrons. We’ll also have play-quality instruments: guitar, Rhodes keyboard, bass, and drums, or bring your own. The Hair of the Dog house band, the Loaded Boxers, is available to round out your act as needed. Performers drink free. Jamming is on a ‘thirst-come, thirst-served’ schedule. *Hair of the Dog bar -4:30/Brain*

### **Technophobia**

Stop by for open-mic punk rock mayhem (instruments provided) starting every evening after sunset and lasting until interest (ours not yours) wanes. Or if four chords are three too many for you to manage, try your hand at pulling the more musically accomplished off the stage with our giant hook. It’s the Muppet Show, The Gong Show and some other 70’s show all wrapped into one half-decayed gelatinous wad for your chewing pleasure! *Brain/7:45*

### **The Violet Hour**

In the tradition of Irving Penn’s “World in a Small Room,” we will be photographing both spectators and participants in our ‘studio.’ Daily Saki Happy Hour with eclectic music from 6-8pm, with a nightly show from 11pm-2am, featuring Vodka (Pink Pussy’s and Kamikazes) and Tequila (Margaritas and Body Shots). Dancers (belly and not), poets, strippers, performance artist are all welcome and will find cocktails easy to obtain. See the daily listings in the calendar for specific events. Once you enter, you are in the Violet Hour, and thus subject to the constraints of non-linear time... ‘Who would believe that so small of a space could contain all the images of the UNIVERSE!’ *8:00/Brain*

## **2000 Daily Activities**

### **Beat Poetry in 5 Minutes**

Beat poetry will begin in 5 minutes. *Tikifest.*

### **Body Cartography: Unpredictable Eruptions of Motion and Emotion**

In celebration of the spontaneous nature of bodies –and as Blake says “emotions are divine influxes” –come participate with us, day or night, in unpredictable improvisations, dance and theater at Center Camp. We extend invitations to groups desiring performance space. Contact Lorenzo or Ricardo. *Sporo/Body Cartography Camp –Center Camp/2:00*

### **Club Seal**

Club Seal is a Canadian themed night club located in Gigsville Village Centre. There will be nightly performances, a barter bar (please bring your own drinking vessel) and non-techno music of a different flavour each night, ranging from jazz to Canadian folk, to Celtic. We will also be hosting the Great Canadian Beaver-Eating Contest and a fire performance on Thursday and Friday nights respectively. (see postings specific to those everyday). *Club Seal: Gigsville Village Centre –Head Way/4:00*

### **Jazz-style Funeral Processions**

Have a bad hangover from partying too much last night? With our pedal-powered 'hearse' the Black Rock Tantric Funeral Parlor will have daily New Orleans-style jazz funeral processions through the streets of BRC encouraging people to bring out their 'dead.' Bring parasols, musical instruments, your dancin' feet, or your tired bones. Follow us back to the Funeral Parlor to write your own epitaph on a tombstone and place it in the cemetery. *Starts at Black Rock Morgue –Head Way/1:30. Join the celebration anywhere.*

### **Operation 2000**

We've constructed a 8'x12' Operation game. It runs on car batteries, hazard lights, car horns (the AMERICAN kinda car horn, not those wussy/polite Japanese horns), and 5' tall tweezers. We'll be putting on a couple of game show-styled performances where we give away medical-themed prizes to the people with the least shaky hands. Stop by anytime to play, and check out when our official shows are. *Esplanade (If this is your thing, also check out Alien Operation Wednesday at 4pm).*

### **TOTEM Burning Anthology**

TOTEM will serve cold beer to our thirsty visitors. We ask that you offer something of value in exchange for your beer. Commodities are unacceptable! We will accept anything hand-made and creative. But we prefer a performance of some sort, to provide entertainment for your fellow revelers. Please bring your own cup. Performers are invited to hand-write their material in the Totem Chronicles...by Saturday night we will have a Totem2000 Anthology!...which we will throw into the Burning Man's bonfire as a collective sacrifice to the Muses. *Totem Camp - 120:00/Brain.*

### **Wheel of Freaky Fortune**

Take your chances on the wheel! You may win big or you may wind up doing something you never dreamed you'd do! *FatCat Casino -4:30/Brain*

### **Lustmonkeys of Xara –the Xaran Jungle/Noon**

Explore the Xara Jungle daily from noon on. Discover its secrets and befriend its strange inhabitants. Feel (and be felt) by the Fondle Flowers. Picnic on the lawns under the mists of Xara Falls. Dream away the fever of days to constant music that will make your body throb, from our amazing and eclectic group of performers. The forest will glow nightly after dark and the positive, techno-primate love vibe will only grow. Come be amazed. *Lustmonkeys of Xara –Head Way/2:00.*

**Happy Hour at the Pagan Lounge/6:30**

Featuring black vodka drinks and the acoustic music of Rosin Coven... Each sunset is a gift, marking the end of a day on the playa and the beginning of a night on the playa. Join us to celebrate this sacred transition. *Byelotrashistan Kite Emporium - 7:00/Brain.*

**Cookie Camp's "Best Of" Performances/7:00pm**

The best of the singers, dancers, musicians, grovelers, and Stupid Human Tricksters from each morning's performances will be asked back each evening to the Cookie Camp Stage to compete for the Highly Prized One Dozen Cookies Basket! Come cheer and jeer! *Cookie Camp-Brain/7:15.*

**Live Commodities Trading on the Global Stock Markets/8:00**

Every night at sundown, we invite you to bet the camp, or what didn't blow away in the last windstorm, on the financial markets with 7 'empty suit' mechanical puppets that soar 20 feet into the air with the latest speculative hallucination, only to plummet to the ground, without warning or reason, to fetal postures of weakness and desperation. Step up the 'blackjack' style trading table and bet your random junk on the puppet/country of your choice. *(intersection of the Esplanade and road to the Man)*

**Fire in the Belly/11:00**

A celebration of spirit. For two hours every night beginning at approximately 11:00, playatime, the naval stone will flame inside the burning ring of fire. Fire eaters, fire dancers, belly dancers and musicians are encouraged to step inside the ring and help feed the spirit. *In the Belly (on the Spine between the Groin and the Solar Plexus)*

**Opening Fire Ceremony/6:15pm**

A spiral mirror: Crimson Rose and the Fire Conclave extract the First Flame from the sun and ignite the Center camp Cauldron. This same flame burns throughout the Event, tended day and night by the Fire Masters. When the sun disappears and the night shadows arrive, Crimson and the Fire Conclave will gather for Fire Celebrations, building the energy with dancing and drumming to illuminate the darkness. The same fire that we extract from the Sun, that we lit the Cauldron with, that we drummed and danced around, will bring the Man to life in pyrotechnic delight. *Center Camp Cauldron*

**Matty the Mutator/7:00pm**

Matty the Mutator is an extreme solo drummer. He has performed over 12 shows at Burning Man and about 30 in the LA area. He uses both acoustic and electric drums, which will be accompanied by fire dancers. *Black Light District Stage-Head Way/2:45*

**Talent Show – ‘Playa Gold Pendant’ Giveaway/2:00pm**

Daily beginning on Tuesday, we will again have the Burning Man Fimo ‘Playa Gold Pendant’ Giveaway to participants in our talent show. Back for a third year!! Get your one-of-a-kind ‘Playa Gold Pendant’ at Alien Love Nest... Talent Show runs from 2pm until 5pm, Tuesday until Saturday. *Alien Love Nest in eVille-Head Way/4:45*

**Performance Art/5:00**

‘Warrior’ is a story of women who are locked in their roles. These women have become transformed by goddesses who bring out their inner strength-performed by Dream Theater Troupe. In ‘Ascension’ the theme is the ascension of the ego-personality and its meeting with the higher self/soul. This piece will involve video art. Other pieces include trapeze artists, fire performers, multimedia visual effects and black light effects. *Black Light District-Head Way/2:45*

**Thunderdome/Bungee Battles/2:00pm to 4:00pm & midnight to 3:00am**

Wednesday –Saturday, jump in the harness and fight to the death! Battle your friends, enemies, or another camp! Show up and ask for the sign-up list. First come... *Death Guild/Thunderdome Camp-Head Way/8:45*

**The Learning Man/5:00pm**

An evening of interaction, performance & music by the crew of the learning Party (LA). Live Sitar with Rik Sharaj, butoh performance at dusk by Agape, ambient music by Mark Trance & Deep, live dance music by Foxgluv, spoken word by Cinnamon Twist. Plus an afternoon workshop & talk with James Wanless (creator of The Voyager Tarot deck) & Lisa Lodge. 5pm to midnight. *Black Lite Village, under the Heart.*

**Tabula Rasa/5:30pm**

Dive into the waters of the moon goddess... a butoh-inspired dance ritual (with live music by blue girl and mark trance). *On the Heart Stage in the Black Light District-Head Way/2:45*

**Jonah and the TechnoWhale/9:00pm**

Come dance to trance, goa and ambient music in the belly of the whale! DJ Wooferbitch hosts a multimedia collaboration with musicians (electric violin, keyboards, DJ’s), singers, spoken word, dancers, and visuals. Other impromptu events will be held throughout the week.

**Emerald City’s Wizard of OZ/8:00pm**

Complete with full stage scenery, music, costumes, this highly interactive play will be produced for your fun and pleasure. Come sing the songs and join in the fun of following the Yellow Brick Road to the Merry Ol’ land of OZ. Somewhere Over the Playa you will find the Rainbow and be reminded that there’s ‘No Place Like Home.’ Mind the Munchkins and the Winged Monkeys –they have a tendency to get out of hand! And if you feel sleepy in the Poppy Field, we will wake you up with lasers and

the real OZ. Don't forget that the balloon takes off just before the Burn! *Emerald City Theme Camp at 10:00/Head Way.*

### **A Night of Performance in the Body/8:30pm**

Work your way up to the Body and see a performance every half-hour. For details see the Thursday night listing in the center pull-out guide to *The Body. All along the Body*

### **Open Poetry Reading/9:00pm**

Everyone is invited to our evening of word-magic. Bring your poems and songs to read. Or bring listening ears of your heart. Fifth consecutive year of Thursday night open poetry on the playa at our camp. *William Black Tarot & Poetry Camp-3:00 Outpost/11:00*

### **You Asked for It: The Stock Puppet Gameshow/9:00pm**

The G-7 Stock Puppets are an Internet-driven kinetic sculpture that tracks the movements of global stock markets with 7 mechanical puppets. On Thursday night at 9:00 we invite you to step into the trading pit and compete for valueless prizes. Watch as hosts Chicken John and announcer Dr. Hal Robbins grind unknowing contestants into so much playa dust! Those dot communists will have met their match when the Gameshow master leaves them with no options and overextended on their venture capital. Beware or it may be YOU sulking away as the laughing stock of the city. *Keyhole at Center Camp*

### **Thunderdome Performances/10:30pm**

Performances on Thursday 8/31, Friday 9/1, Saturday 9/2 (Note: Saturday's performance will be after the Man burns). Burn Unit fire dancing performance. Dive Marisa sings and opera tune. Flaming sword fights. Night battles begin at midnight. *Death Guild/Thunderdome Camp-Head Way/8:45*

### **Boxing Pandora: A Play of Quadretic Unraveling/11:00**

Come enjoy a civilized evening of live theater at the Arena Theater (on the promenade next to Happyland). A retelling of the Pandora myth, "Boxing Pandora" is a wacky, passionately hopeful tale about of a modern girl coming to terms with the boxes in her life. Written by author/performance artist Blake More, "Boxing Pandora" offers something for everyone, as it combines interesting costumes, poetic monologue, a 13-member Greek-inspired chorus, an original video and score, yogic dance, laser effects, audience participation and a trapeze. Essentially, "Boxing Pandora" is where Hellenic high society collides with American pop culture. Be there and be cubed. (*Editor's Award: First Place for Best Pun!*) *The Arena Theater/Point Arena Camp-Head Way/8:00*

### **Lingerie Parade**

Slinky, sexy, Sleazy, Strange or Demure? Come join the FFF for our inaugural Women's Lingerie Parade as we strut our exhibitionist selves across the playa. All

sexes and species invited –just be sure to dress in women’s lingerie (in boxers allowed!) *Found Funk Family Camp-Brain/8:45*

**Grand Procession through the Body/8:00pm**

Join us for a big show in the Body, starting with Pepe Ozan’s Opera and followed by a fire performance extravaganza in the Solar Plexus, a dance performance by KunstStoff in the Heart, and an appearance by dr. Megavolt in the Eyes, with a grand pyrotechnic finale in the Crown. *In the Body*

**Club Seal Fire Performance/9:30pm**

Club Seal will be hosting a fire performance at nightfall set to the beat of extreme solo drummer Matty the Mutator. Fire spinning, dancing, and breathing will be followed by the burn of a seal effigy. Any interested performers are welcome. *Club Seal Camp at Gigsville-Head Way/4:00*

**Kunst-Stoff Performing “Endless”/10:00**

Burning Man has commissioned a world premiere by artist and choreographer Paasonen and his dance company, Kunst-Stoff. This 20-minute performance piece will be presented at the Heart Playground in the Body on Friday evening, 9/1/, at approximately 10:00. The Piece called “Endless,” centers around the theme of the heart by exploring love, fear and desire. *The Heart Playground*

**Opening Fire Ceremony/Sunset**

When the sun sets behind the mountain range, come join the Fire Conclave as we dance, drum and play with fire. *Center Camp Cauldron*

**Thursday Night Performances**

Take a self-guided tour of the Body on this night of performance, starting in the left foot of the Body and continuing all the way up to the Head. Use your Body map as a guide.

**8:30pm The Flaming Metal Dragon**

Puppetry, theramin, and fiery theater.

**9:00pm Nicola Tesla Memorial BBQ & Discotheque**

Tesla coil thrills

**9:30pm Coolita** glass fusion on a grand scale

**10:00pm The Anus** scatological theater

**10:30pm Death of the Mother** a burial procesion

**11:00pm Fire in the Belly** fire performance

**11:30pm In the Heart** A performance by KunstStoff Dance Theater with Rapt, Capicator & Karen Feder

**Hearth** –burning with desire!

**The Cupola** Pours the wishbone  
(ongoing all evening)

**12:00am Synaptic Mandala**  
The Oracle speaks at Midnight

**PLUS! 9:00pm at the G7 Stock Markey Puppets** in the Keyhole: It's time to compete for valueless prizes as host Chicken John and announcer Dr. Hal Robbins grind unknowing contestants/victims into so much playa dust! Those dot-communists will have met their match when the Gameshow master leaves them with no options and overextended on their venture capital. Beware or it may be YOU sulking away as the laughing stock of the city.

**Friday Night Grand Procession through the Body**  
The Body's performance climax! As we process along the Body, a colored pyrotechnic "castille" corresponding to each chakra will announce the beginning of each of six performances.

**8:00pm at the GROIN \* Red Castille**  
Phallus of the Man and Yoni Gate by Pepe Ozan. This giant opera ritual is the climax of a weeklong reanimation of recently discovered Ancient Atlantean technologies and intends to mystically arouse "High Desire" and harness its resultant "Pure Love" energy. If we properly arouse and channel enough of this energy, we will be able to complete the hermaphroditic cosmic union of the giant flaming Lingham with the Yani portal, and thereby reestablish contact to the presently submerged Atlanteans.

**9:00pm at the BELLY \* Orange Castille**  
Winky, Blink and Stinky.

**9:15pm at the SOLAR PLEXUS \* Yellow Castille**  
The Great Circle Around the Man.

Solar Flame by Crimson Rose and the Fire Conclave. Fire is the very heart and essence of the Man. The gathering of the Fire Conclave will reveal the Phenomena of flame through Risk and Ritual with the largest fire force ever assembled at Burning Man. The collaborative talents of Fire Performers from all over the world will pay homage to the Man by summoning the solar power of the flame to flow through them, strengthening and transforming spirit. Busby Berkeley going up in flame!

**10:15pm at the HEART \* Green Castille**

ENDLESS by Tomi Paasonen & Kunst-Stoff Dance Theater. Kunst-Stoff will premiere Tomi Paasonen's Endless, a delightful and disturbing series of vignettes which explore love and the nature of relationships.

**11:10pm at the HEAD \* Blue Castille**

Dr. Megavolt and the Eyes of the Man by Dr. Austin Richards. Twin Tesla Coils will create the illusion of blue eyes for the Man. Metaphorically speaking, the clouds of electrical arcs will infuse the Man with reason and intellect.

**11:30pm at the CROWN CHAKRA \* Purple Castille**

Grand Finale: Crown Chakra pyrotechnic extravaganza!

**2001 PERFORMANCES**

**Stages**

**Acid Cabaret**

Come check out the Acid Cabaret and realize all your exhibitionist fantasies Nightly from midnight until dawn, let the infamous host extraordinaire Partyball show you all you need to know.

**Alien Love Nest**

We are featuring Pyrosutra, a Seattle fire performance group. Returning again this year is Aratina, The Princess of Pain. See Aratina, walk, roll and be buried under broken glass! Showa held afternoons and evenings. See camp for posted show times at our stage.

**Café Music Stage**

Come for the caffeine, stay for the music and fun! The Center Camp Music Stage will be filled with instrumental, classical, jazz, ethnic, world music performers and much, much more. Daily at the Café until midnight. Center Camp Café

**Screamalong Stage**

The Screamalong Stage is available for bad lounge acts and bad bands. We'll have a small stage complete with PA, amps, mikes, spotlights, disco ball, fog machine, and an audience of crazed bar patrons. We'll also have playa quality instruments, or bring your own. Our house band, the Loaded Boxers, is available to round out your act as needed. Thirst-come, thirst-served schedule.

**Spoken Word Stage**

Spoken word artists, storytellers, and a little miscellaneous mischief on the Center Camp Café Spoken Word Stage from 1-3p.m. and 6-8 p.m. daily. Center Camp Café

### **Vespertine Dohm**

We hope to provide our guests with a variety of day and nighttime performers on a small stage with class A sound and lighting. All performers will be welcome. Results will be documented and hopefully broadcast locally on the radio and over the internet.

## **2001**

### **Daily Activities**

#### **Alien Love Nest Pendant Giveaway**

Come showcase your talent on our stage next to the 18' alien in Center Camp@! Get your 2001 handmade Burning Man pendants! Special pendants for extreme bizarre, or acts of amazing talent! *Alien Love Nest –Center Camp*

#### **Café Music Stage**

Come for the caffeine, stay for the music and fun! The Center Camp Music Stage will be filled with instrumental, classical, jazz, ethnic, world music performers and much, much more. Daily at the Café until midnight. *Center Camp Café*

#### **Pyrosutra**

Watch the dazzling fire performance of Pyrosutra, professional troupe from Seattle. Show times will be posted at the Alien Love Nest stage in Center Camp. *Alien Love Nest – Center Camp*

#### **Screamalong Stage**

The Screamalong Stage is available for bad lounge acts and bad bands. We'll have a small stage complete with PA, amps, mikes, spotlights, disco ball, fog machine, and an audience of crazed bar patrons. We'll also have playa quality instruments, or bring your own. Our house band, the Loaded Boxers, is available to round out your act as needed. Thirst-come, thirst-served. *Hair of the Dog Lounge, Happy Land.*

#### **Spoken Word, 1:00pm**

Spoken word artists, storytellers, and a little miscellaneous mischief on the Center Camp Café Spoken Word Stage from 1-3p.m. and 6-8 p.m. daily. *Center Camp Café*

#### **Word of Mouth, 1:00p.m.**

Catch the verbal stylings of spoken word artists on the Word of Mouth stage. Offerings include poetry, puppetry, monologues and miscellany. Daily, 1-4 p.m. and 6-8 p.m. *Center Camp Café*

**Black Rock City Animal Control Adoption Hour, 5:00 p.m.**

BRCAC will make daily collections of pesky playa creatures running free in the City (people dressed as animals or acting like animals). These animals will be given the chance to be reintroduced to life on the playa. If our staff feels that an animal has been reformed, it can then be adopted by a responsible Black Rock City citizen. *Black Rock City Animal Control*

**The Heat of the Day, 5:00 p.m.**

Conquering crucial issues of today with live music and powerful insight. Every day we will have a new topic leading up to Open Forum Friday. Don't miss your chance to have your perspective heard. TBA, look for the giant HEAT balloon.

**Chicago Rose Pro Jam, 5:00 p.m.**

Calling all Burning Man pro musicians: let's gather for a nightly jam before sunset, from jazz to rock to folk to you-name-it. Bring your instruments. Location TBA. Look for the big HEAT balloon.

**Sawn Song/8:00 p.m.**

Swan Song is a short dramatic sketch by Anton Chekov about an elderly actor reflecting on his stage career at his death. He recounts his experiences and why he chose to be an actor to his theater's prompter. He performs snippets of Shakespeare, including the "7 ages of man" speech. Performed by Loren Radford and Guy Peter Oakes of Paula Productions, Portland, OR. Center Camp Café

**Sundial on the Playa Fly by Night, 9:00 p.m.**

Fly by night with light sculpture, fire circle, drumming, dancing, and fire artists. *Sundial on the Playa*

**Turning Hand Theatre, 9:00 p.m.**

See Harry's favorite shows from his youth: Exploding Varmints, Space 1999, Scopitones, Bigfoot and Wild Boy, Christian and nuclear scare movies, Lost in Space and other classics. Live video mixing and feature events. Grab a drink from Pinky's and enjoy the show. *Turning Hand – 3:00 Plaza*

Monday, August 27, 2001

**Version 4.2.0, 4:20 p.m.**

An herbally enhanced puppet show and philosophical discussion of the universe. We welcome the audience to enter kindly into a state of openness. Join us at 4:20ish as we begin our journey to the land of squishiness. *Camp Lustmonkeys, the Vibe Hive*

**First Flame, 6:30 p.m.**

The Fire Conclave extracts the First Flame from the sun with a spiral mirror and ignites the Center Camp Cauldron. The flame burns throughout the event, tended by the Fire Masters. The same fire we extract from the sun to light the Cauldron will bring the Man to life on Sat. night!

**Technomania Circus, 8:00 p.m.**

Whatever you want and can do is great – percussionists, weird and bizarre acts especially welcome (no videographers). We have an anything-goes format utilizing every aspect of creative entertainment we can think of. *Ill Ville*

Tuesday, August 28, 2001

**Fire Celebration, 8:00 p.m.**

When the sun sets behind the mountain range, join the Fire Conclave as they dance, drum and play with fire. *Center Camp Cauldron*

**Pop Trash Poetry, 8:00 p.m.**

Find the hidden beauty that lies at the heart of disposable pop. Our resident beat poets and guests will take well-known lyrics and re-imagine them. The words of great poets such as Madonna, the Backstreet Boys, and Britney Spears are sure to inspire moments of rapture, sorrow, and contemplation. Bring your own favorites, or choose one from our book of pop gems. *Gnomefatty Camp*

**10:00 p.m.**

The myths and chants of Ishi, last Yahi of California, as performed by Arjuna. *Obera Diaspora*

**An Evening of Sight and Sound, 11:45 p.m.**

Come SIN your night away in spectacular arrays of mind bending visions and beats. Legendary Burning Man performers Dr. Megavolt and the Mutaytor, with Special guest DJ Satan!!! *SINdicate* –

Wednesday, August 29, 2001

**Princess of Pain**

Hosted by: Alien Love Nest

See the Princess walk barefoot through a deep pile of freshly broken glass. Watch as the Princess rolls through the shards of broken glass to emerge unharmed! The Princess will have shows throughout Burning Man. See Alien Love Nest stage for show times! *Alien Love Nest, Center Camp*

**Pop the Cherry, 3:00 p.m.**

Stop by Weds. Through Fri. and play Pop the Cherry. Spin our Wheel of Indiscretion™ and if you complete your amorous assignment to the judge's satisfaction, you will be given the opportunity to "pop the cherry." If you are successful, you will be rewarded with the exclusive Camp Cherry mixed CD. If you give an exceptional performance, you may even be showered with additional Camp Cherry treats. *Camp Cherry*

**Coliseum Opening/ Bacchinelli Ball, 6:00 p.m.**

Bring a bottle of wine and a delicious dish for our Bacchinelli Banquet Party. We have live music, DJ's and a surprise performance. *The Coliseum*

**Burning Bedtime Stories, 8:00 p.m.**

Once upon a time, there was a magical place in the desert, where boys and girls of all ages and persuasions gathered to create a fairly wonderland like nothing anyone had seen before. At night, they would gather to tell all kinds of stories –ghost stories, adventure stories, ones they'd heard, ones they'd read, and ones they'd made up. *Gnomefatty Camp*

**Goddess Ritual: The Mythic Power of the Dragon, 8:30 p.m.**

This is a powerful ritual journey of the soul towards wholeness, impassioned commitment to life, and the celebration of erotic joy. Led by the Temple High Priestess and the skilled Temple Community of sacred dancers, performers and priest/esses. *Temple of Ishtar*

**Poetry Reading by \*Thomas, 9:30 p.m.**

\*Thomas will regale us with stories of love and lust...come and listen to his fabulous words! *The Plastic Chapel*

**Cabaret Bijou at the Bubble Lounge, 10:00 p.m.**

New-age vaudeville show, really good and really bad acts, followed by dirty dancing and pointless partying into the night...*The Bubble Lounge*

Thursday, August 30, 2001

**Playa Wedding Fashion & Tacky Bridesmaids, 3:00 p.m.**

Bring your best playa wedding fashions or your most tacky bridesmaids gowns, dress someone in them and please the playa crows...come one, come all to parade with us!! *The Plastic Chapel*

**The Boutique Fashion Show, 4:00 p.m.**

Don't be caught dead in the same outfit twice. Come see what we have to offer as our outlandish fashions hit the catwalk. Everything from faux furs, nighties, prom dresses, beach clothes, pleather, and sexy dancewear will be available. We will also be premiering our anticipated "God bless America" line. Skilled consultants available

to assist you in dressing your alter ego following fashion show! *Black Rock Boutique*

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**March To Free Dmitry, 6:00 p.m.**

Since we're missing nationwide protests to free Dmitry Sklyarov, so we're gonna hold our own right in BRC. Bring noisemakers. Free Dmitry signs, musical instruments. We'll march from Center Camp to the Man. *Center Camp*.

**Weird Underwear Brigade (WUB), 6:00 p.m.**

Everyone loves a fashion show, so be a part of one. Enjoy the adoration of others, show off what you got and participate. Adorn yourself in homemade, store-bought, EL-Wire, Gucci, Wal-Mart, or army/navy skivvies. Bring a cocktail. Camera encouraged. *The conGLOMerate*

**Gitarman and Moon Mermaid serenade the playa, 7:00 p.m.**

Original Burning Man music about love and commitment. Gitarman and Moon Mermaid are getting married this year at Burning Man. See them perform as they sing about the burning love they share!! *The Plastic Chapel*

**Fantuzzi and the Incredible Community Jam Session, 8:00 p.m.**

Fantuzzi and a band will take us over the top. The Wizard of Oz crew will be performing the final scenes from the movie. The Giant OZ head will speak to the crowd, blow fire and smoke and generate sounds never heard before. Come with your questions to see what the great OZ head has to say! *Emerald City, 2:00 & Esplanade*

Friday, August 31, 2001

**Temple of Atonement Slave Auction**

12:00 p.m. Bid on your very own "servant." All legal barter items will be considered. Stop by early if you are interested in becoming a playa servant for the day. We are going to try to hold the auction in Center Camp, but if that falls through, come to the Temple. *Temple of Atonement -4:40 and Esplanade*

**Playa Iron Gourmet Contest**

7:00 p.m. Two Iron Gourmet finalists will face off in a daring match of skill, tenacity, and verve. We will present each finalist with a mystery ingredient, then send them on a race to procure five more ingredients. What they will dream up is anyone's guess, but we bet it will be delicious. *Black Rock Gazette, Center Camp*

**Ritual of the Black Madonnas**

6:30 p.m. Dance ritual with medieval devotional songs, throat ritual singing and chants circling Annie Hallat's Spinning Angels/Black Madonnas sculpture. *Black Madonnas, The Cradle*

**Duck and Cover Drill**

7:00 p.m.

You can never be too safe! Come relive your youth (you're your parent's youth) by helping us organize the biggest Duck and Cover Drill ever! Gather at the Black Rock Civil defense Camp to practice your duck-and-cover form. Join us afterwards for '50s safety/educational films. *Black Rock Civil Defense Camp*

**Evil Klown Rampage**

7:00 p.m.

We are trying to get as many evil klowns together to unleash havoc on Black Rock City. The place has gotten just too damned safe, so time to clown around a bit. Meet in Disturbia. We will stumble towards Center Camp and see what kind of trouble we can get in. Have a klown costume ready – the freakier/scarier the better... *Disturbia Village, 3:15 & Esplanade*

**Tribal Dance with Fire Dancers!**

10:00 p.m. The Sir Smooge Orchestra brings its tribal acid surf lounge with fire dancers to the stage at the Gates of Samsara! Coe to the entrance in the dance! *The Gates of Samsara*

**Andrea True Memorial Dance**

10:30 p.m.

Come ready to compete for classy prizes and show the world you and your partner can so it on our dance floor. Some of the sexiest songs available will be played for your own creative interpretation. The contest will conclude with our finalists dancing to "More, More, More." *Boobboomroom*

**Prometheus's Revenge**

12:00 a.m.

A new art form, contact fire, encompasses a collaboration of live music and the theatre, tells a story of how humans became gods and gods became humans. *The Coliseum*

Saturday, September 1, 2001

**Mud Wrestle Satan Four Your Soul Championships**

3:00 p.m. The final match: who will leave the ring as the Ruler of the NetherWorld, with the Championship Belt in hand? Come to wrestle, have a Blood Mary, or watch the HellZ BellZ Cheerleaders heckle to their heart's content. This is no WWF: at NetherWorld Ranch, you're playing with fire (and just a little bit of mud).  
*NetherWorld Ranch*

**Burning Man Fashion Show: Seven Ages of Wo/Man**

4:00 p.m. All the world's a stage: make your entrance at the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Burning Man Fashion Show, the Seven Ages of Wo/Man! Bring us your mewling, puking, your creeping, your sighing, your seeking. Play your part, pipe and whistle, come together in this strange history we share. Hosted by Hal Robbins and Connie Champagne: puppets/sets by Nic Griffin. *Center Camp Café Stage*

**Sista Firefly in Concert**

6:00 p.m. Hear the fabulous lyrics and voice of Sista Firefly as you parade around for one last night on the playa!! *The Plastic Chapel*

**March/Protest Against Truffula Deforestation**

6:30 p.m. The Lorax and his animal friends will march from Center Camp in defense of their home, the truffula forest, and proceed to the Once-ler's thneed factory to protest the Once-ler's disregard for the truffular forest and its inhabitants. Help save the forest from the greedy Once-ler. Will you stand up and fight or be a mindless consumer of thneeds? *Center Camp to the Once-ler's factory on the Esplanade*

**Bone Terr Magicalia**

7:00 p.m. A magickal, musickal, elemental healing opera featuring Elemental Goddesses performing invocations and blessings to music composed by U.R.I. with sounds and tones for healing specific body parts. Meet at the Bone Tree in front of the Man 2 hours before the Burn to be healed; stick around for the Bone Fire performance! Kaosmikitty will also perform elemental chakra alignments around the Tree all week and teach Tai-Tree in the Mausoleum most mornings after dawn. *The Man*

**Ambient Groove Dance-In After the Burn Bonanza**

8:00 p.m. Some of the best DJ's in the world will share the Emerald City stage just after the Burn and on into the night, including DJ Gos from radio V, DJ Dr. Spook, DJ Paul. Full-on laser effects and a final OZ head download will keep you in that green glow/poppy fields forever feeling. *Emerald City*

**Burning of the Man**

8:30 p.m. This will happen, you know, at playa-time, when the Man is good and ready to burn. There will be no formal procession out to the Man this year –you have time to hang out in your camp, have a meal, relax. *Fire Conclave – Da Man*

**The Wheel of Fire**

9:00 p.m. 1 hour before the Burn, 10 torchlight processions will leave 10 points in BRC to converge on the Man. Look for the bright red torch and follow the procession nearest you. Inquire at Snowflake Village to get involved. *Around the Playa*

**War of the Burn**

11:00 p.m. Dr. Megavolt v. the Subjugator v. the Mutaytor! Insecto Circus, DJ Satan and other surprise guests!!! Don't miss this battle of forces, as the power of Megavolt

is unleashed on the Subjugator (of Hellco fame) and the crushing blows to their senses by the Mutaytor!!! Inspecto, the playa's loudest, most ridiculous rock band, performs a live show with (of course) lots and lots of fire. *SINDicate*

### **Ziggurat Burn**

11:30 p.m. A performance in and on the Ziggurat, followed by its demise by fire. *The Playground*

Sunday, September 2, 2001

### **Skynyrd Band Live!!!!!!**

5:00 p.m. Come see the legendary Skynyrd band perform their greatest hits like Sweet Home Alabama, Gimme Three Steps, Freebird and others. Get ready for a repeat of last year – this ain't no techno shit! *Skynyrd Sock, Gigsville*

## **2002 PERFORMANCES**

### **Opening Fire Ceremony**

Monday August 26, 2002

6:30pm

Utilizing the sun and a lens Crimson Rose and the Fire Conclave extract a flame from the sun and light a fire in the Center Camp Cauldron. The next five nights, as the sun disappears and the night shadows arrive, Crimson and the Fire Conclave will gather for fire celebrations, dancing and drumming to illuminate the darkness.

*Hosted by: Crimson Rose & Fire Conclave @ Center Camp Cauldron*

### **DJ's Moth and E.M.P**

Tuesday, August 27, 2002

4:00am-10:00am

They realize their obligation to the People of BRC. They must perform at a very high level using all their skills to please. They realize they will be dealt with harshly if they fail.

*Hosted by: The Diaz Bros.and Eckto @ Club Verboten: 300° & 2700'*

### **Asylum Village Fashion Show**

Wednesday, August 28, 2002

5:00pm-7:00pm

Fashion that will be presented will range from the mundane, to dainty, from the sexiest to the un-sexiest, from the irresistible to the resistible. From loungewear, to full Playa wedding ensembles. The fashions will come at you so quick, you will completely forget what you were watching.

*Hosted by: Miss Halo @ Asylum Village: Esplanade & 240°*

**Drum Burning**

Wednesday, August 28, 2002

8:00pm-9:00pm

The drum set will be on display and is available to view and or sign/art-ificate at the Earth Guardian pavilion in Center Camp. We will be a processional of rhythmists, dancers, fire spinners and participants parading to the nearest burn platform where the drums will be released to the cosmos. Bring your drum, hand bell, dancing feet and good cheer. (Other instrumentalists encouraged)

*Hosted by: Earth Guardians @ Earth Guardian Pavilion, Center Camp*

**Fish Tales/a place where Grunion Spawn**

Wednesday, August 28, 2002

8:00pm-9:00pm

Bring a fish story, tall tale or true to tell at the campfire at the place where Grunion Spawn.

*Hosted by: Fish Tales/Grunion Spawn @ First theme art installation on the right facing the Man*

**Pop Trash Poetry**

Wednesday, August 28, 2002

8:00pm-9:00pm

Our resident beat poets and guests will be taking well known song lyrics and re-imagining them. Freed from their musical chains, the words of great poets such as Madonna, the Backstreet Boys, Duran Duran, New Kids on the Block and Britney Spears are sure to inspire moments of rapture, sorrow, and contemplation. Bring your own favorites, or choose one from our book of pop gems.

*Hosted by: Puddin' Tang @ Asylum Village: Esplanade & 240°*

**Bubble Lounge Cabaret Bijou**

Wednesday, August 28, 2002

9:00pm-1:00am

Cabaret Bijou, Performances and Dancing Under the Bubble Dome free bubbly (aka Champagne) for all.

*Hosted by: Bubble Lounge @ 3300' & 180°*

**Ishi - Dancing Song of Dead People in Other Worlds**

Wednesday, August 28, 2002

10:00pm-11:00pm

A theatrical presentation of the myth and chants of Ishi, the last surviving member of the stone-age Yahi tribe. Storyteller Arjuna will tell the tragic story of the last five years of Ishi's life in an anthropology museum in San Francisco.

*Hosted by: Octastructure @ Opera Arkipelago Camp: Esplanade & 255°*

**The Pirates Lair**

Thursday, August 29, 2002

10:00am-6:00pm

Come see Performances by the Treasure Chests, Pyrosutra, the DJ's of Arson Island, El Hip Hop En Fuego as we delve deep into the darkest corners of Arson Island.

*Hosted by: Arson Island Resort @ Esplanade & 90°*

**TOA Slave Auction**

Thursday, August 29, 2002

11:00am-12:00pm

The Temple of Atonement Slave Auction. Black Rock City's longest running auction of new and previously-owned "playa servants." Bid on your favorite from a wide selection to choose from. *Hosted by: The Judge @ Temple of Atonement: Esplanade & 210°*

**French Maid Parade**

Thursday, August 29, 2002

2:17pm-5:17pm

Calling all French Maids! Come help us in our efforts to minimize the effects of the essential floating element: the dust particle. Sport your frenchy uniforms (we'll have a few) and bring dusters, rags, dust-busters and any other useful cleaning utensils. We will meet in Arson Island resort and then dust our way through every filthy camp until we reach the center camp Cafe.

*Hosted by: Island in the Sky @ Arson Island Resort: Esplanade & 90°*

**King Neptune/Mermaid Contest**

Thursday, August 29, 2002

5:00pm-7:00pm

The scene is set and we await you...enchant us, entice us, mythical beings of the sea...come show off your tridents and fins and discover which one of you wins.

*Hosted by: the Pleasure Cove @ Esplanade & 150°*

**Linguistic Islands**

Thursday, August 29, 2002

8pm

Come to Travis Ortiz's at sunset to experience a poetry/music/dance performance. M. Mara-Ann will vocalize to the sounds of composer Sean Abreu's soundscape while creatures from the deep emerge to dance around the islands.

*Hosted by: Linguistic Islands Theme Art, between The Man and The Temple of Joy*

**Whistleworks**

Thursday, August 29, 2002

9:00pm-11:00pm

Hear your amazing whistle creating steam powered music during our playa performance. See daily events for ceramic whistle building studio for creating this musical art. Bad weather back-up performance Friday @ 9 P).

*Hosted by: Burning Chicagoans @ Whistleworks: Plaza 90°*

**Mobil Dick**

Thursday, August 29, 2002

9:00pm-10:00pm

Political theater with a big-ass whale.

*Hosted by: Arson Island Resort @ Esplanade & 90°*

**Modern Dance Performance/Live Electronic Music Show**

Thursday, August 29, 2002

10:00pm-11:30pm

Modern dance performances on our stage followed by a live electronic music concert with dancing by all! Come join us!

*Hosted by: Camp Incarnadine Cove*

**The Xara Codex**

Thursday, August 29, 2002

10:00pm-4:00am

The fertile and feral imaginations who bring you Xara will debut an original performance piece at Burning Man in 2002.

*Hosted by: The Xaraproject @ Esplanade & 105°*

**Ben'Fit To Fight Scurvy**

Friday, August 30, 2002

10:00am-6:00pm

Help us eradicate this treacherous disease from our Playa and Planet! Swill and schooner for all! Come see Capacitor's neo-neon performances along with performances by the DJ's of Arson Island, Pyrosutra and the other Arson Island all stars!

*Hosted by: Arson Island Resort @ Esplanade & 90°*

**Hentracks on Eternity**

Friday, August 30, 2002

11:00am-12:00pm

Gala performance on the 20-person string telephone-cum-horn-cum-wind harps.

*Hosted by: Philip Blackburn @ Hentracks on Eternity site*

**Critical Tits 7th Annual Bike Ride**

Friday, August 30, 2002

4:00pm-4:30pm

All women and girls are invited to join in the hottest event on the Playa -- the Critical Tits Bicycle Ride. Come with your bike and painted chest. We'll celebrate the feminine power and beauty within each of us as we ride through Black Rock City and finish with a cocktail party. Please join us and celebrate the goddess within. The Official Critical Tits Cheer: 123 Thrust! 456 Bust! 789 Dust! Yeah Critical Tits!

*Hosted by: Ladies of the Inn at Lake Lahontan @ the Man*

### **Floating World Thematic Evening**

Friday, August 30, 2002

7:00pm-12:30am

Seaworthy performances and extra flotsam and jetsam.

*Hosted by: @ Center Camp Cafe Music Stage*

### **The Cowgirl Story**

Friday, August 30, 2002

9:00pm-9:20pm

The United Space Cowgirl Foundation of America are proud to present a visual, movement, and fire performance sure to make even Grandpa proud. This all female cast and crew bring to the City fire whips, shadow dancing and shining sassy cowgirl fun. This larger than life production about the creation of the cowgirl is staged against the SCTV3 50 foot wide video wall (that debuts just after the cowgirl performance).

*Hosted by: The United Space Cowgirl Foundation of America @ SCTV3 video wall*

### **Modern dance performance/live electronic music concert**

Friday, August 30, 2002

10:00pm-11:30pm

Modern dance performances on our stage followed by a live electronic music concert with dancing by all! Come join us!

*Hosted by: Camp Incarnadine Cove*

### **New Meat Night at Jiffy Lube!**

Friday, August 30, 2002

10:00pm-12:00am

Amateur Strip show at Jiffy Lube! Join the boys of Jiffy Lube as they strut their stuff on our stage. Newbie strippers encouraged to participate. Gifts given to the crowd favorites!

*Hosted by: Jiffy Lube at Penetration Village @ Jiffy Lube: 2900' & 225°*

### **Ignis Devoco Industrial Fire Circus is captured By Martians**

Friday, August 30, 2002

10:00pm-11:00pm

The crew of Ignis Devoco Industrial Fire Circus has been captured by the Martians of Flight 2 Mars and now must perform for their lives...Want to help?? Come and perform for the Evil Martians and help free Ignis Devoco...

*Hosted by: Ignis Devoco Industrial Fire Circus @ Flight 2 Mars: Esplanade & 135°*

### **Ducdame Drive in Theater**

Friday, August 30, 2002

10:00pm-11:30pm

Calling all fools into the circle. Ducdame is an interactive spectacle show of burning culture from around the USA -fire, acrobats, strippers, monkeys and clowns. Bring your radios and tune into 96.5 to create a natural amphitheater for the show. When the

Tesla coil strikes, walk, wade or drive to the Ducdame plot and ushers will seat you by height. Be part of the finale, as the four Encompassment Nausts will odyssey across the playa ocean and into never never land. *Hosted by: Sparseland County @ Esplanade & Port 270°*

### **ATOMIKS Trans-Am-Sexual Rock Moment**

Friday, August 30, 2002

11:00pm-2:00am

Cross over the forbidden lines of gender limitations and catch the checkered flag with the ATOMIKS traveling Salvation show. Boys be girls and girls be burro's, Astro or naught, fit to be taught- prepare for takeoff at mission control - Beneath the Floating World theme camp. Alternate dress encouraged.

*Hosted by: Crash Delano, Barnacle Bill @ Beneath the Floating World Theme Camp: Esplanade & 75°*

### **Satyrs Parade**

Saturday, August 31, 2002

12:00am-2:00am

Join the Mystick Krewe of Satyrs and the Extra Action Marching Band for our sixth annual Mardi Gras-style parade, leading to a Mystick ritual and burn. We will feature music, Mardi Gras throws, fire performers and an explosive burn at a yet-to-be-determined exotic locale.

*Hosted by: Mystick Krewe of Satyrs @ Satyrs Camp*

### **RELEASE THE MAN**

Saturday, August 31, 2002

9:00 PM

THE FIRE COMPASS ROSE - Walkers of Light, Encompassments: Directional vessels of fire, Pyro Art Cars, 400 plus members of the Fire Conclave and the Pyro TEAM (Timohovich Productions) we will Bring The Man To Life in Pyrotechnic Delight.

### **Doctor Megavolt vs. The Mutaytor**

Saturday, August 31, 2002

10:00pm-4:00am

Please join Doctor Megavolt and The Mutaytor burn night after the man burns for the ultimate show on the playa! Witness Doctor Megavolt shoot millions of volts of lightning through his body as The Mutaytor's huge tribal techno stage show shakes your ass all night long!

*Hosted by: Island Of Misfit Psience @ 200 feet from The Man*

### **Ethereal Entertainment**

Saturday, August 31, 2002

11:00pm-2:00am

After the burn, join us for an evening in uncharted waters and the great beyond!

*Hosted by: @ Center Camp Cafe Music Stage*

### **ATOMIKS - TRAVELING SALIVATION SHOW**

Saturday, August 31, 2002

11:45pm-2:45am

Seeking Salvation? Receive the Lord's blessings from the dusty apostles of The ATOMIKS. Get baptized, get reborn, get ACTION. Rock n Roll show that will save your immortal soul. An umbrella from the Techno reign, appearing at Beneath the Floating World.

*Hosted by: Crash Delano, Barnacle Bill @ Beneath the Floating World: Esplanade & 75°*

### **International Regional Night**

Sunday, September 1, 2002

5:00pm-9:00pm

Performances demonstrating that Burning Man is now an unstoppable global community!

*Hosted by: @ Center Camp Cafe Music Stage*

## **2002 PERFORMANCES**

### **Repeating Activities**

#### **Screamalong Stage**

Monday - Monday

Available for bad lounge acts & bar bands, our small stage has a PA, amps, mikes, lights, disco ball & an audience of crazed bar patrons. We'll also have playa-quality instruments: guitar, Rhodes keyboard, bass & drums, or bring your own. The Hair Of The Dog and the Bloated Lobsters are available to round out your act as needed.

Hardy yarr yarr!!

*Hosted by: Hair of the Dog Lounge @ HappyLand: 300° & 2500'*

#### **El Circo de La Pulga**

The Flea Circus

Monday - Monday

Hurry hurry hurry come one come all to the greatest wacked out show of all.

*Hosted by: Sparseland @ Esplanade & 270°*

#### **Get Your Pendant from Alien Love Nest**

Tuesday - Saturday

2:00am-6:00am

Come down & watch crazy people perform crazy stunts for Burning Man pendants.

What will you do?

*Hosted by: Arson Isle Resort @ Esplanade & 90°*

**Harmonic Choir**

Monday - Friday

11:00am-11:45am

Harmonic singing & throat-singing choir a.k.a the Tribe of Frogs. All toners welcome to join this group, which plans to perform various places around the playa including aboard Pepe Ozan's Ark of the Nereids.

*Hosted by: Tribe of Frogs @ Opera Arkipelago Camp: Esplanade & 255°*

**Daily Readings of The Lorax**

Monday - Sunday

11:30am-12:15pm

Come experience a little Dr. Seuss on the playa with readings of The Lorax at The Lost Truffula Oasis.

*Hosted by: The Lost Truffula Oasis Camp @ Esplanade & 210°*

**Improv on the playa with Deep Huddle**

Tuesday - Saturday

1:00pm-2:30pm

Deep Huddle is an impromptu Improv group on the playa. The members of Deep Huddle show up at Asylum Village & ask around until they find me, the guy who is building the stage. Then we do it... make up scenes from suggestions that is ...right there onstage for everyone to see...

*Hosted by: De Cognito of Asylum HQ @ Asylum Village: Esplanade & 240°*

**Sea Creatures Parade**

Friday 1:00pm-3:00pm in time for Critical Tits

Thursday 2:00pm-4:00pm

Invitation to all Sea Creatures of BRC to join us in a "swimming" parade around the aquatic art installations of the playa. Join us! We are Jellyfish, Seahorses, Mermaids, Schools of Fish, MantaRay & Zebrafish art cars, and wish for everyone to join us.

*Hosted by: Cheryl the Jellyfish*

**The Interactive Steam Whistle**

1pm - 4pm Monday & Tuesday

1pm - 3pm Wednesday & Thursday

Become ceramic artists & help build a steam powered musical sculpture. When the sculpture is complete, it is the centerpiece of a drum circle performance. Come participate and create a unique whistle in our ceramic studio (novices & experienced artists welcomed)! Hear your amazing whistle creating steam powered music during our playa performance - Thursday @ 9pm (if necessary, bad weather back-up performance Friday @ 9pm).

*Hosted by: Burning Chicagoans @ Whistleworks: Plaza 90°*

**Storytime Shisha**

Wednesday - Saturday

1:00pm-4:00pm

Enjoy savory flavored tobacco at Kathanika Cafe, where we'll be hosting spoken word performances, open readings & storytelling. Character voices, singers, actors, writers, thinkers, anyone & everyone is welcome. Hookahs will be packed & refreshments made available.

*Hosted by: some weirdo guy =) @ Kathanika Café: 2700' & Great Circle*

### **Lingerie Camp is Open!**

Wednesday - Saturday

1:00pm-5:00pm

Open for all your furryshinysilkkysexy needs. Come find that perfect translucent costume for the Playa & make the people around you happy at the same time! Stripper pole is also available for your seductive needs 24 hours a day. Please note that our lingerie area will close up slightly early on Thursday for my wedding!

*Hosted by: Lingerie Camp @ eVille: 2900' & 210°*

### **Alien Love Nest**

Monday - Friday

2:00pm-5:00pm

Come to Arson Isle Resort to earn your Burning Man Fimo Pendant on YOUR stage. Participate by showing your talent or simply embarrassing yourself! Your reward, besides the cheers of your fellow campers, will be a beautiful pendant that glows in Black Light. Come early; supplies are very limited & we will run out before The Man burns.

*Hosted by: Arson Isle Resort @ 60° & 2700'*

### **Open Mike**

Monday - Monday

2:00pm-4:00pm

Open Mike

*Hosted by: The Cafe @ S.S. Word Of Mouth Spoken Word Stage*

### **Open Mike on the Earth Guardian Stage**

Friday - Saturday

3:00pm-6:00pm

Bring your instruments, voices & bodies to our Open Mike time. We already have a few surprise puppeteers & guitar/vocalists signed up. Are you worthy? Come read a pioneer diary, sing a song in praise of the playa, question our place on the earth.

We'll have a stage & mike waiting for you.

*Hosted by: Earth Guardians @ Earth Guardian Pavilion, Center Camp*

### **A Murder/Gathering of Crows**

Wednesday - Sunday

4:00pm-5:00pm

Choreographed short performance of flocking, costumed, masked birds on the open playa followed by appearances at other activities.

*Hosted by: BIRSOFAREATHER @ 3300' & 210°*

**Biscuit Gong Show**

Monday - Saturday

4:20pm-5:00pm

The Gong Show comes to the playa. Come & show off your talents or just pull up a chair & watch the show.

*Hosted by: Space Captain Hopalong Voltar @ Camp Biscuit: Esplanade & 75°*

**Heat of the Day Talk Show**

Monday – Friday

5:00pm

The Heat of the Day Talk Show featuring Kevin Adair and Chicago Rose.

Monday's Topic: The Best of Burning Man. Share Highlights

from past years and what shouldn't be missed this year!

Tuesday's Topic: It's Polyamory Day! What is it? How does it differ from swinging?

Is it the wave of the future, or do you think it's wrong to consider any non-monogamous lifestyle?

Wednesday's Topic: Spirituality: What do you Believe? And Why? Is there anything that all spiritual perspectives share? Are we evolving toward a unified spirituality?

Thursday's Topic: Heat of the Day Variety Show! Give us your best 3 minutes of whatever you do! Our talk show is designed for audio broadcast, so if your act has no words, Kevin will provide a play-by-play description.

Friday's Topic: Consummation Friday! We'll briefly revisit all of the other topics of the week to give you a final chance to put your two-cents in. We'll finish up with a brief open mike segment featuring additional concepts to help everyone prepare for Saturday's Burn.

*Hosted by: Spoken Word Stage @ Center Camp Cafe*

**Lamplighters Parade**

Monday - Sunday

5:00pm-7:30pm

Musicians! Drummers! Stilt walkers! Everyone! Come help us as we prepare the streets of Black Rock City for evening magic. We need 100 volunteers to prepare almost 1000 lanterns which will burn all night long. This is a Burning Man tradition like no other. Lamplighters at 5pm, musicians at 6pm, done by 7:30!

*Hosted by: The Lamplighters @ Lamplighter Workspace, Center Camp*

**Dinner Theatre**

Monday - Monday

6:00pm-7:00pm

Dinner Theatre

*Hosted by: the Cafe @ S.S. Word Of Mouth Spoken Word Stage*

**Oaktown Variety Show**

Monday - Sunday

6:08pm-8:08pm - dusk

Come on Down & strut your stuff! Have a special talent? Can you sing? Dance? Tell Jokes? Share you abilities with the citizens of Black Rock City. Open sign ups. Show us what you're made of!!

*Hosted by: Camp Oaktown @ 300° & 3100'*

### **Eddie Camaro & Mr. B's Buttrockin' Air Guitar Car Bar**

Monday - Sunday

7:00pm-12:00am

Eddie Camaro & Mr. B will save the playa from electronica. We have built the stage, you be the star. Dance cage & air amp provided with frozen margaritas as your payoff. Leaving from the Temple Of Atonement daily. Driver carries no electronica, d&b or trance.

*Hosted by: Eddie Camaro & Mr. B @ Temple of Atonement: Esplanade & 210°*

### **Ignis Devoco Industrial Fire Circus**

Monday - Saturday

10:00pm-11:00pm

Nightly Fire shows at Flight 2 Mars...Are you a burner?? Hosted by: Ignis Devoco  
*Industrial Fire Circus & Flight 2 Mars @ Esplanade & 135°*

### **Sleazoid Mafia 666**

Friday 11:00pm-12:00am

Saturday 12:00am-1:00am

The sickest, most disturbing performance art group on the playa! We aim to sleaze! Come see the "Titans of Toilet Humor"!!!! Both shows completely different!

*Hosted by: Sleazoid*

## **2003 PERFORMANCES**

### **Contact Improv Jam/ Performance**

Monday – Sunday 11:00am – 1:00pm Every morning we will gather to have a Contact Jam/ Performance on the Mayan Calendar in the Center Camp Café. Some teaching and jamming will happen...come join us. *Hosted by: Lorenzo @ Center Camp Café*

### **Noonish Juggle**

Monday – Sunday 12:00pm It's noon –if you're awake, head down to the Café where you can join other jugglers and toss things up in the air! Pass clubs, share tricks, sit and chat. The noonish juggle starts somewhere around noon and ends when everyone feels like going to do something else. *Hosted by: Demento Jugglers @ Center Camp Cafe*

**Storytime Shisha**

Monday – Sunday 12:00pm - 3:00pm Join us on lazy afternoons for storytelling and sweet savory sisha...delicious blends of flavoured tobacco from the Middle East.

*Hosted by: Queen of England at Kathanika @ Absurd Plaza 11:00*

**Lamplighter's Parade**

Monday – Sunday 5:00pm-7:30pm Join the hundreds of volunteers who light BRC every night. Meet at the Lamplighter's Center Camp Workshop to prepare for a four location step off from center Camp. The Temple of Honor, and the 3:00 & 9:00 Civic Plazas. *Hosted by Lamplighters Work Space @ Center Camp 4:45*

**The Fabulous Monsters**

Monday – Friday 5:00pm Performers of every ilk – create processions, rituals and happenings based on Hindu mythology. Sacred monkeys swarm playa temples.

*Hosted by Hanumanville Camp*

**Improv on the Playa!**

Monday – Sunday 5:00pm – 7:00pm We aim to put up an improve class in order to create an improve team and do a show on the day of the burn. A class for every day of the week before the burn, 2 hours a day. BE ready to get things out and create like you've never done before. *Hosted by: Anna Lepley & Jesselynn Desmond @ somewhere on the Rock*

**Donkey Punch Sideshow**

Monday – Sunday 7:00pm – 9:00pm Our public stage features live, projected video and a captive audience. Perform your own act under the bloody-eyed watch of Senor Donkey and his Giant Puffy Fist. *Hosted by: Can't-Believe-It's-Not-Butterzone-Fandango Village @ Dogma & Literal 7:00*

**\*Burning Band\* March and Play With Us**

Monday – Sunday 7:00pm – 9:00pm Bring your instrument! The band gathers at the Burning Band camp (Unimog at the Conglomerate, ask for Joey or Rocky). Join us as we march around BRC playing our classic marching band tunes. *Hosted by: Conglomerate @ Esplanade & Imagined 8:30*

**The Fabulous Monsters Procession**

Monday – Friday 9pm Mon & Tue: Monkey. Wed: Stilt walkers, masks and monkeys. Thu: Fire Procession followed by a party at our camp. Fri: Celestial figures and monkeys, dance ritual on the Man. Hosted by Huamanville camp

**The Burning Hearts of Momentum Tour**

Monday – Sunday 9:00pm – 11:00pm We will begin with ritual proceeding with intent and ending in celebration. The Mystics shall proceed from the fire cauldron towards 8:00. You will see such things as fire hoola hoopers/belly dancers, body burners, poi/clubs/staff spinners, jugglers, contact dancers/contact fire, fire eaters, fire

spinners/fire jump rope and much more. *Hosted by: Shanti Lovjoy & The Mystics @ Starting at Main Fire cauldron ending at the Love party!*

### **Naked Truth Art Exchange**

Tuesday – Sunday 1:00pm – 2:00pm Come show off your favorite “piece” at the Naked Truth Art Exchange! Bring some art or just yourself and enjoy fine art, smile art, body art, live art, hug art, costume art, nude art and performance art. *Hosted by: Naked Truth Art Exchange @ Creed & Received 4:00*

### **Worse Than Jerry Springer Show**

Tuesday – Sunday 2:00pm – 3:00pm Bring all your friends, family, anyone or anything you’ve ever had sex with and participate daily in a show well beyond belief at the HOTD bar every afternoon. Audience participation is needed as well as “victims” and “body guards.” *Hosted by: Jerry, the HOTD Bar and YOU – Hair of the Dog Bar @ Authority & Uncertain 5:30*

### **Absolutely Nothing (Very Slowly)**

Tuesday – Sunday 5:00pm – 7:00pm Sloth Camp: Where the beautiful and interesting meet Crowley and the Gang. Previous years’ highlights include lesbian pole-dancing, tequila-guzzling-knife-wielding-she-monkey, Black Rock Wiffle-Golf Open, and, of course, topless Nebraska Virgin-flaming-baton twirling. *Hosted by: SlothCamp @ Authority & Dubious 5:00*

### **Improv on the Playa with Deep Huddle**

Tuesday – Sunday 5:30pm – 6:30pm Deep Huddle is an impromptu Improv group on the playa. We don’t know who is playing until they get there. It could be you...The members of Deep Huddle show up at Asylum Village and ask around at the stage. *Hosted by: Decognito @ Asylum HQ! Esplanade & Serious 3:30*

### **Open Stage**

Wednesday – Sunday The Spoon Return Center will be hosting a stage for musicians and performances of all kinds. Come by and ask for Rob to be put on our schedule of performances. *Hosted by: The Spoon Return Center in Shangri-La Village @ Esplanade & Inspired 4:30*

### **The Embassy Theatre Earth Music Review**

Wednesday – Saturday 2:00pm – 8:00pm A shaded and convivial atmosphere where one can enjoy the finest resistance music money cant buy. Join Darryl Cherney, Jules Graves, Clan Dyken, Francicne Allen, Melissa Crabtree, Casey Conner, Stevie B, Land of the Blind, and a host of others. *Hosted by: Bob & Susy Barsotti/Darryl Cherney-Embassy Camp @ Esplanade and Literal 7:00*

### **Valhalla Games**

Wednesday – Sunday 4:00pm – 5:00pm Join us for the Valhalla Games, where Burning Man meet the Old World. Participate in 1) the dangerous tricycle jousting

match, 2) the foam swords duel, 3) the fat lady finale singing contest 4) walk the labyrinth. *Hosted by: Valhalla Lounge @ Authority & Revered 8:00*

### **Sacred Uproar and More with Rob Brenzy**

Wednesday – Sunday 4:00pm Join the ArchBeacon Rob Brenzy in his Sacred Uproar and more performing just prior to the Techno Gospel Choir at the Church of Wow camps Tent Revival. *Hosted by: Church of WOW @ Esplanade & Revealed 2:30*

### **Techno Gospel Choir**

Wednesday – Sunday 7:00 – 8:00pm Join the Church of Wow's Techno Gospel Choir everyday at around sunset. *Hosted by: Church of WOW Camp @ Esplanade & Revealed 2:30*

### **Karaoke Lounge**

Wednesday – Sunday 8:00pm – 10:00pm Get your night warmed up with the folks at Holy Karaoke. Pick a song, grab the mic and boogies down. *Hosted by: Holy Karaoke @ Real Plaza 9:30*

### **Oracular Ritual Procession at the Omphalos Lantern**

Wednesday – Sunday 8:00pm-9:30pm An inquiry into wisdom through divination dialogue, creating a trance state in preparation for asking questions of the Oracle. Rituals draw on many traditions. *Hosted by: Opera Omphalos Arkipelago @ Esplanade & Sublime 6:30*

### **Reverend Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping**

Wednesday – Sunday 8:00pm – 10:00pm Come here the Reverend Billy preach about the forces of social and political change with the means of theater arts to counteract our media culture. *Hosted by: Reverend Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping @ the Great Temple under the Man*

### **Temple of Poi Fire Dancing Procession**

Wednesday – Sunday 8:20pm – 10:30pm We dance to share the part of us that is unfettered by rules and to show pure innocence, light and love. Our fundamental goal is to release ourselves from those things that cause us to “hide” our truth and, in doing so, heal ourselves and those who witness us. System. *Hosted by: Temple of Poi/Earth Guardians/Trance Village/Sol System*

### **The Journey**

Thursday – Sunday This journey beyond belief represents a personal journey each of us takes through life. All are welcome to join behind the procession. Musicians/Drummers welcome to play. *Thursday Sunset, Sacrifice Route: Beyond the Flame to Center Camp Thursday Midnight, Transformation Route: Beyond the Flame to Phoenix Temple Friday Dawn, Rebirth Route: Beyond the Flame to the Man*

**Iron Chef**

Thursday – Sunday 4:00pm – 7:00pm You bring 2 identical food items for the two playa chefs! We make multiple meals and food art from all the ingredients brought. Bring food at 4 pm we'll eat at 6 pm. *Hosted by: Playa Chefs! @ Asylum Village*

**Open Mic**

Thursday – Sunday 4:00pm – 6:00pm There will be an open mic for spoken human being, out on the playa opposite the Esplanade. Mic on mic stand opposite dusty camcorder. *Hosted by: Art Nimrod @ 4:30 opposite Esplanade*

**2003 One Time Events**

Monday, August 25, 2003

**Firefingers Flamenco Guitar at Sunrise**

6:00am – 8:00am getting started at the Center Camp Monday AM and Procession to the Man for Sunrise Guitar Meditation. *Hosted by: FireFingers Tribal Love In @ Center Camp*

**Promenade of the Golden Tribe**

6:00pm – 7:00pm Look for the lustrous, Gold Lame Lovelies as they stroll about Black Rock City, bestowing gilded blessings and gild blinding innocent residents. Put on something gold and join us! *Hosted by: Children of Chaos throughout BRC*

**Opening Fire Ceremony**

6:00 pm Utilizing the sun as a lens Crimson Rose and the Fire Conclave extract a flame from the sun and light a fire in the Center Camp cauldron. This beginning flame is the official start of Burning Man 2003. *Hosted by: Crimson Rose & Fire Conclave @ Center Camp Cauldron*

**Opulent Temple of Kaos Opening Ceremony**

9:00pm-5:00am The Opulent Temple of Kaos, a place for sacred dance and conscious foolery, opens its doors to the masses with dance, music, performance art and libations. Resident priests IKarus, Syd Gris, Geeno, IKAmyO and others will open up services into the night. *Hosted by: Opulent Temple of Kaos @ Sacred 10:00 & Creed*

Tuesday, August 26, 2003

**Calling All Bi-Babes! Heat of the Day Talkshow**

5:00pm – 6:00am A recent Northwestern University study indicated that the majority of women are physiologically bisexual where only a small minority of men are. Bi-Babes unite! Come meet and share with others at the Heat of the day and find out the

location for the Bi-Babe banquet! *Hosted by: Kevin Adair & Chicago Rose @ Center Camp: Spoken Word Stage*

**Birds of Paradise Procession**

8:00pm – 2:00pm The Birds of Paradise, seven sculpturally costumed fore birds will fly from the Spheres of Transformation at the Keyhole to the Man. *Hosted by: Garden of Love @ The Sphere, processing to the Man*

**Everybody's Birthday Party**

10:00pm -2:00am Join the conglomerate and celebrate your birthday...wherever it is! Be sure to wear your birthday suit! The Party will feature a naughty fashion show (both male and female) and naked twister. *Hosted by: the conGLOMerate @ Esplanade and Imagined 8:30*

**Drive-in Midnight Mayhem "Sin City"**

11:59pm-1:00am Clips from movie musicals set in decadent metropoli are accompanied by live musicians, dancers, aerialists, hoopers and fire performers. The hottest show this side of Hades, with sizzling special guests, THE MUTAYTOR! *Hosted by: The Starlite Drive-In & The Mutaytor @ Sacred 1:00 and Vision*

Wednesday, August 27, 2003

**Black Rock City's Next Top Stripper**

3:00pm-4:30pm We will be crowning Black Rock City's Next Top Male and Female Stripper on this very day and date. Judged by our esteemed panel pf socialites and social climbers. Sign up will happen before the event –please bring own music cd/tape, costumes and props. *Hosted by: Quad Princess –Beaucoup Bucks Camp/The Stage –Asylum Village @ Esplanade and Serious 3:30*

**Karaoke Love**

8:30pm-6:00am Come share the love and sing out your heart to lovely pop songs, find your inner rock star and perhaps your outer rock star. *Hosted by: Love Project Unlimited: Axis of Love @ Authority and Ridiculous 7:30*

**Tear Drop Burn**

9:00pm-10:00pm A dance and performance will accompany the burning of the Tear Drop of Sorrow. This major burn will take place between the Man and the Temple of Honor starting at 9:00. *Hosted by: Tear Drop @ between the Man and the Temple*

**Sacred Dance**

9:00pm-5:00am Featuring intentional sacred dance with guest DJ's, ceremony at 10:30, performance, libations, more. White attire requested inside the temple. *Hosted by: Opulent Temple of Kaos @ sacred 10:00 and Creed*

**Fire and Bell Ceremony**

9:00pm-5:00am The Diva Element fire dances to the sound of temple bells to sanctify the Genesa Labyrinth. *Hosted by: Ansula @ Genesa Labyrinth*

### **Choreographed Fire Jam**

9:30pm-11:00pm This is an open space for NON-improvisational fire performance. Organized by Queso del Fuego who will present their premiere work, a short piece set to a string quartet cover of The Orb's "Little Fluffy Clouds." *Hosted by: Turning Hand Community @ Center Camp 2:00*

### **Out There Fire Processional**

11:59pm-12:29am We will be proceeding from the Man to the Mausoleum with a steel stretcher offering cage that will have a different burning offering each day. *Hosted by: the jan and chanti show, meet at the Man*

### **Drive-in Midnight Mayhem "The Jesus Jam"**

11:59pm-1:00am The VRock Goddesses and Guitar God Rich Sheldon lead their live musicians apostles in a gospel medley of classic rock songs about Or Lord, Jesus Christ. *Hosted by: The Starlite Drive-In @ Sacred 1:00 and Vision*

Thursday, August 28, 2003

### **Infinite Kaos "Inferno" Procession**

2:00am-5:00am The first of Infinite Kaos trilogy of processions. In the middle of the night, the creatures of hell are loosed upon the Playa. This procession leaves "The Opulent Temple of Kaos," circumambulates the Esplanade, and ends in a fire orgy at the foot of the Man. *Hosted by: Infinite Kaos start: Opulent Temple of Kaos. End: the Man @ Sacred 10:00 and Creed*

### **Foxgluv & Medicine Drum at WOW**

9:00pm Medicine Drum & Foxgluv perform at the Church of Wow main stage. *Hosted by: Church of WOW @ Esplanade and Revealed 2:30*

### **Erotic Poetry Reading**

10:00am-10:30am Juicy words to titillate and possibly educate. *Hosted by: Lumerian Tribe @ Esplanade and Dubious 5:00*

### **Temple of Atonement Slave Auction**

11:00am-1:00pm Come bid for a chance to "own" your very own personal servant. The slave auction is always a popular event. Barter items only. And if you're interested in being auctioned off, let us know! *Hosted by: The Judge at the Temple of Atonement in Gigsville @ Esplanade and Dubious 5:00*

### **French Maid Brigade Parade**

2:17pm-4:17pm Calling all French Maids! Join the Brigade in our mission to transform dust into lust and take citizens of Black Rock City to realms of comfort that are beyond relief. We will meet at Absurd (3:00) and Esplanade and then dust out way through every filthy camp until we reach the Center Camp. *Hosted by: Le Consulat General de France a Black Rock City @ Starts at Absurd and Esplanade*

### **Hands Across the Playa**

3:00-5:00pm Citizens of Black Rock! We will stretch our collective bodies straight across the Playa, including the Man himself! We'll need everyone's anticipation to get all the way across—so spread the word! *Hosted by: Hands Across the Playa @ between 3 and 9 o'clock on the Playa*

### **Heat of the Day Talkshow: What is Burning Man & Bring Back the Bi-Babes!**

5:00pm – 6:00am What shouldn't be missed this year, and what are your best memories of previous years? What is Burning Man to you? Any relationships start because of our previous shows that you might be willing to share an update about? *Hosted by: Kevin Adair & Chicago Rose @ Center Camp: Spoken Word Stage*

### **Penis Gourds on Parade**

5:00-6:00pm Bring your penis gourd to Center Camp at 5 pm on Thursday, and join our procession of phallic pride as we meander through the city en-route to the Shangri-La Village sunset soiree! *Hosted by: Tribal Penis Gourds @ Center Camp to Shangri-La Village*

### **The Billion Bunny March & Scared Carrot Processional parade**

6:00pm-8:00pm Calling ALL bunnies and worshippers of the sacred Carrot Lingham Fluff up your tails and hop on over to Bunnywood by 6pm sharp. We'll march around Black Rock City and back Bunnywood for a Bunny Jam Sacrificial Afterparty that will segue into Bollywood's 8pm Shiva Las Vegas revue. *Hosted by: Bunnywood & Bunny Jam @ Starting at Bunnywood, Esplanade and Karmic Circle*

### **Evil Klown Rampage**

6:30pm-10:30pm All you scary, nasty klowns, grab your horny horns and flamethrowers and cream pies and join us for the Third Annual Evil Klown Rampage! We'll meet at the Esplanade in front of Disturbia and rampage from there. *Hosted by: Windpipe the Clown @ Disturbia & Esplanade*

### **The Lost Penguin Church Potluck**

7:00pm-12:00am Come see this phenomenal one-woman performance. We'll also be graced by a visit from Rev. Billy Saul Hargis. Our microphone/Karaoke machine/Hammond organ is perennially open to any who are moved by the Holy Spirit. *Hosted by: The Lost Penguin Theme Camp @ Esplanade and Inspired 4:30*

### **Star Walk Fashion Show**

8:00pm-9:00pm Do you have an amazing costume or outfit that you've created for this week? Be a star that shines bright before sunset. Bring your friends to witness the

wonderful fashion created for Burning Man. *Hosted by: Constellation Community Camp @ Rational 2:00 and Gospel*

### **Glama Sutra**

9:00pm Seven contestants fight it out for the title of Miss BindiWorld 2003 and a clean chakra. *On the Bollywood stage on the Karmic Circle, Center Camp*

### **Lost at Last**

9:00pm-11:00pm Lost at Last performs at The Church of Wow mainstage! *Hosted by: Church of WOW @ Esplanade and Revealed 2:30*

### **Out There Fire Processional**

9:30pm-10:00pm This year I am making wearable fire sculpture that have an evolutionary cyclical theme. We will be processing from the Man to the Temple of Honor with a steel steel stretcher offering cage that will have a different burning offer each day. Offering ideas: cloth effigy of Darwin's vestigial toes, all the species that fall to the wayside, monolithic block of sedimentary thoughts. *Hosted by: the jan and shanty show @ the Man*

### **Fire Fabulon Circus Show**

10:00pm-10:20pm Detroit's own Fire Fabulon will be performing it's unusual blend of fire skills, torture acts and circus sideshow tomfoolery. Show will be held at the foot of the Roaster Coaster in Camper UberCarney located at 8:30 and Esplanade in Snowflake Village. Monkeys welcome. *Hosted by: Camp UberCarney in Snowflake Village @ Esplanade and Imagined 8:30*

### **The Burning Man Metal Meltdown**

10:00pm-4:00am Satan rules this party with the heaviest most hardcore metal known to humans. Lethal Dose 50 (an impromptu metal band made up of whoever can jam hard and heavy) will be performing. Wear your sluttiest, crotch-grabbin' leather and chains, three-quarter sleeve Madian shirts. Free Oral for the Hardest rockin burner. *Hosted by: Tommy Bigfinger & Tomas Verde at Transcendent Funktions @ Authority and Revealed 2:30*

### **Fire Dancing**

10:00pm-11:00pm FiammaLuna – the wild fire dancers pf Ojai –whirl, undulate and radiate in front of the Pantheon. *Hosted by: OBOP at The Pantheon @ Esplanade and Literal 7:00*

Friday, August 29, 2003

### **Gender Blender Bar**

5:00am Stop by and do something with gender and Presto! A free drink. Bring your own cup. It's all about believing you're fabulous. Weirdness and love all around, not to mention a sultry nightclub act, silhouette photography and voting on the fate of Big

Wall Barbie, and stuff we'll make up as we go along. *Hosted by: blyslv and Vegasgirl @ Creed and Inspired 4:30*

### **Critical Tits Annual Bike Ride**

4:00pm-4:30pm All ladies are invited to join in the largest gathering of women on the Playa –the Critical Tits Bicycle Ride. We celebrate the femininity, power and beauty within each of us as we ride on our new anti-paparazzi route and finish with a fab cocktail party. The Official Cheer: 123 Thrust! 456 Bust! 789 Dust! Yeah Critical Tits! *Hosted by: Altar Native Goddesses. Starts at the Man, 4 pm sharp*

### **Turnip Head Cult Prize Show**

4:20pm Can you recite the teachings of the turnip head cult while doing a handstand? Can you juggle 5 turnips, ride a unicycle backward and tell a joke? Come on down and show us! Fabulously ridiculous prizes; grand prizes include flying armadillo and private audience with the High Priest of Turnip. *Hosted by: turnip head cult @ Esplanade and Received 4:00*

### **Pole Dancing Contest**

5:00pm Shake your booty in the annual Pole dancing Competition, this year found at Comfort. At the emcee's discretion, the competition may be split into "amateur" and "pro." Win a pair of "Divine Being" underwear! Hope to see you (all parts of you) there! Photo-free event, please! *Hosted by: Comfort @ Creed and Inspired 4:30*

### **Abbey Road Strip Rock Opera**

6:00pm-7:00pm Lola and Gypsy will be sharing their amazing creation with everyone who comes to the PINKY'S stage. The famous album will be interpreted by them through dance, movement and striptease. Don't even think about missing this hot (did I say hot?) I mean, FUCKING HOT show! *Hosted by: Pinky's Bar @ tba*

### **Lost Penguin's Black Rock Idol**

7:00pm-11:00pm Whether it is an original song, a recitation of your favorite literary passage, a vignette from your 8<sup>th</sup> grade play, come perform on our stage, in front of scores of revelrous people. If you make the cut, you'll be among the finalists. Straight from the Bungling Bros. Circus, it's the Bozo Burlesque Bonanza! *Hosted by: Lost Penguin Theme camp @ esplanade and Inspired 4:30*

### **Tighty Whitey II**

7:00pm-1:00am That's right pull out the paint and glitter go get your briefs and get your party on. Decorate those TW's and come to the LDL for drinks and fun. We will be judging around 9pm with a special performance by AstroNaughty @ Midnight. *Hosted by: Liquid Diet Lounge @ Liquid Diet Lounge*

### **Veni, Vidi Aduro (NW Fire Conclave Procession)**

9:00pm-10:30pm each Procession will have similar 4 cycles set base don these ideas: (1) Letting go of loss and pain (2) Purification, Cleansing what is left (3) Celebration:

Enjoying and celebrating the next cycle (4) Concluding the ritual. *Hosted by: NW Fire Conclave @ Man to Temple, Back to Man*

**The War Between the Angels and the Robots**

10:00pm-11:30pm A multimedia performance featuring improvisational dance theater, aerial dance with ropes and harnesses, and original music. *Hosted by: Opulent Temple of Kaos/Infinite Kaos @ Sacred 10:00 and Creed*

**Beyond Belief Fashion Show**

10:00pm-12:00am We have recruited talent from around the playa and are featuring fashions of the three genres –aliens and the other dimension, the latest in tribal wear including penis gourds and other hot tribal fashions, and the newest craze in god and goddess-wear. Award ceremony and champagne after-party to follow. *Hosted by: Beyond the Catwalk @ Center Camp Café*

Saturday, August 30, 2003

**Burning Run!**

6:30am-7:30am Join us for an early run around BRC before the heat kicks in. We'll meet by the Center Camp Café on the side facing the Man. *Hosted by: PlayaChicken.com @ Center Camp Café*

**Burn Hug**

12:00pm-1:00pm Come join us and assist in raising the vibration of our planet by participating in the world's largest hug. Let's spread the universal love and acceptance which resides within our divinity. *Hosted by: Universal Beings of Light @ Street signs lining the Esplanade*

**I Don't Believe You**

2:00pm-4:00pm Come join some fab storytellers to listen and share your best stories about a time when you realized you couldn't believe one thin or another whether it be your luck or the nation's president. 5 minutes per story: we believe in narrative and brevity! *Hosted by: Comfort & Joy @ Authority and Serious 3:30*

**Skynyrd Marathon**

3:00pm-5:00pm Grab a partner and run to the 1<sup>st</sup> annual Camp Skynyrd Marathon. You and your team-mate will be required to run (or walk) a predetermined course (with checkpoints) and also drink 18 beers. *Hosted by: Camp Skynyrd in Gigsville @ Esplanade and Dubious 5:00*

**Infinite Kaos "Purgatorio" Procession**

6:00pm-9:00pm The second of Infinite Kaos's trilogy of processions. The joyous, playful earth creatures, skirting between heaven and hell. Begins at "the Opulent Temple of Kaos," circumambulates the Esplanade, and ends with a firejam at Center

Camp cauldron. *Hosted by: Infinite Kaos start: Opulent Temple of Kaos. End: the Man @ Scared 10:00 and Creed*

### **Release the Man**

9:00pm-10:00pm Fire Conclave in its full force will create the protective fire circle around the Man. The fire we extract from the sun will bring the Man to life in pyrotechnic delight. When the sky fills with a tease of pyro is one hour before showtime. *Hosted by: Crimson & Fire Conclave @ Axis Mundi*

### **Gathering of the Drummers**

9:00pm-10:00pm Come one come all learn how you as a drummer can participate on the night we Release the Man. Come with your drums. *Hosted by: Conclave Drummers @ The Man*

### **The Heartbeat of the Man**

9:00pm-9:40pm The Mutaytor will be performing “The Heartbeat of the Man,” which will be the musical score accompanying the Fire Conclave’s Processional and burning of The Man. We will ask EVERY drummer on the playa to play with us to help create The Man’s heartbeat! *Hosted by: The Mutaytor @ The Man*

### **Save the Man Protest**

9:00pm-9:30pm Bring protest signs, chant and march to save the Man! In fun, of course. We’ll burn our signs when done. *Hosted by: The Man, before the Burn*

### **The Mutaytor’s 5<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party**

10:00pm-2:00am Right after the Man Burns. We have been working on a very special performance this night that will incorporate over 50 drums, 10 fire performers, aerial stunts, pyrotechnics, dj’s, hoop dancers, giant dancing puppets, flamethrowers and dancing freaks! *Hosted by: Mutaytor @ The Man*

Sunday, September 1, 2003

### **Church @ Lost Penguin**

10:00am-12:00pm Get yer sinning asses to CHURCH, for Christ’s sake, Goddammit! The Lost Penguin Theme camp am gonna hold a Sunday-go-t’meetin.’ Chances are that we will not have slept much since burnin that naughty man the previous evening, but where the flesh is weak, the spirit is willing! Join our gleeful, hungover congregation, hear testimony, take communion and then take even more communion. A little ‘hair-of-the-God-that-bit-you’, eh? Worship with the Penguins. We are a BEAKon of light in an ever darkening world. Clothing optional. *Hosted by: Lost Penguin Theme Camp @ esplanade and Inspired 4:30*

**Procession to the Web of Life**

2:00am-5:00am The first of Infinite Kaos trilogy of processions. In the middle of the night, the creatures of hell are loosed upon the Playa. This procession leaves "The Opulent Temple of Kaos," circumambulates the Esplanade, and ends in a fire orgy at the foot of the Man. *Hosted by: Infinite Kaos start: Opulent Temple of Kaos. End: the Man @ Scared 10:00 and Creed*

**Kult of the Feral Kitten Idol Burn**

8:00pm-8:30pm The Great feral Kitten will be removed from her column and transported across Black Rock City to give it's 9<sup>th</sup> life for art. Current plans include the assistance of Dr. Megavolt. Check out our camp for details. *Hosted by: Kult of the feral Kitten @ Revered 8:00 and Authority*

**2004 PERFORMANCES****One Time Activities**

Monday, August 30, 2004

**Bad Unkle Sista Performance Workshop**

4:00pm-6:00pm

Offers trainings in ritual theater, incorporating elements of butoh, contact improvisation & circus skills. We'll end with a ritual offering to the man. Come with costuming of red or white.

*Hosted by monkey puzzle @ Mercury & 4:00*

**Procession of the Gods**

4:00pm-10:00pm

A final procession of Gods, Goddesses & Angels of the Playa. At 4 all hosts of the Celestial Heaven are invited to gather, as your finest, highest selves, at Opera Camp near the Spiral Eye of the Celestial Falcon. At 5 we process to the Temple of the Stars, where at 6:30 the cast will perform the Eye of Heaven Grand Epic Ritual.

*Hosted by Opera Camp of the Celestial Falcon @ Esplanade & 3:30*

**Opening Fire Ceremony**

6:00pm

Utilizing the sun & a lens, Crimson Rose & the Fire Conclave extract a flame from the sun & light a fire in the Center Camp Cauldron. This beginning flame is the official start of Burning Man 2004.

*Hosted by Crimson Rose & Fire Conclave @ Center Camp Cauldron*

**Karaoke 4 Love**

10:00pm-2:00am

Bring your inner rockstar to the playa & come enjoy our karaoke lounge!

*Hosted by Love Project Unlimited @ Mercury & 8:30*

Tuesday, August 31, 2004

**The Inception of the Indigo**

2:00pm

Bring your voice, poetry & music to open mic during the early afternoon into the evening. Once the sun goes down, put on your dancing shoes for an evening filled with house, techno & tribal music.

*Hosted by Bop Camp @ within Snowflake*

**Fig Leaf Playhouse Fashion Show & Clothing giveaway**

4:00pm-8:00pm

No need to bring your clothes cause we've got you covered. Come & find some really hot playa duds, & strut your stuff. We've got something you will like. & when you're done hanging out, walk away looking good for a night on the town in Black Rock City.

*Hosted by Lavender Girl & Moonfire*

**The Heat of the Day Talk Show**

5:00pm-6:00pm

Tues topic: Calling All Bi Babes! What is bisexuality & does it even exist? Is this a fad or are there more genders now than before? Share personal stories & get details about the Bi Babes Banquet - Day One. To attend the banquet, attend the show at 5pm.

*Hosted by Bop Camp @ within Snowflake*

**Jason Webley Concert**

8:00pm-9:00pm

A stomping, screaming, cult leading accordion player from Seattle will encourage you to sing songs about vegetables & drinking with him.

*Hosted by Wabi: Home of the Cosmonuts @ 3:30 & Mercury*

**Burning Bellies Glow Invasion @ the Greeters station**

9:00pm

Bellydancers, don your finest black-light reactive belly dance gear & meet us over at the greeters station where we will shimmy for all the new arrivals! If you have an art car that is black light reactive. Come all dancers & musicians.

*Hosted by Kat @ Earth & 5:00*

**Clan Destino's Aerial & Fire Performance**

9:00pm-10:00pm

Clan Destino's performance group Cirque Destino will thrill & entice with aerial acrobatics, fire dancing & burlesque.

*Hosted by Clan Destino @ Esplanade & 9:30*

**SKIN**

10:30pm - 12:00am

A multimedia performance + Stellar Nymphs aerial ballet, w/live musicians and layered original soundtrack, aerial acrobatics, synchronized video and projections by Kevin Bourque of Mutaytor.

*Hosted by Planet WOW 3:30 & Esplanade*

Wednesday, September 1, 2004

**PINK FASHION SHOW FOR WORSHIPPERS OF PINK!**

5:00pm

Hey all you WORSHIPPERS OF PINK! Wear your most beautiful, amazing, outrageous, fabulous & far-out PINK outfit! Be a part of the crowd OR strut your stuff on the cat walk!

*Hosted by Pinklectica @ Mercury & 3:30*

**The Heat of the Day Talk Show**

5:00pm-6:00pm

Wed: The Sex & Love handbook. Authors, Kris & Rozz Heinlein, The Sex & Love Handbook: Polyamory! Bisexuality! Spirituality! Swinging! & even Monogamy! Plus your stories & info about the Bi Babes Banquet - Day Two.

*Hosted by Bop Camp @ within Snowflake*

**Santa Con Rampage & Parade**

6:00pm

It's Xmas on the playa & SANTA NEEDS A HO! Parade leaves at 6:30 sharp!!! Santa-ette, reindeer or just your naughty elf self all welcome. Come stuff my stocking. Ho, ho ho!

*Hosted by Alberta Burners @ 5:30 & Saturn*

**GOOFERVILLE Karaoke**

6:00pm-8:00pm

Need to communicate your innerspace depth? All the hits you love & hate, minus some, plus others. Sign-ups & performances start at 6pm in the GOOFERDROME. Sunday's karaoking starts post-temple burn.

*Hosted by GOOFERVILLE's Queen Tangerine & Hollywood*

**bop parade**

7:00pm-12:00am

Come hear the horns of Environmental Encroachment & join the drums & chants of the bopcamp cheerleaders. Dress in your best furry finery & then dance with the

phalanx as we bring bop to the good people of the playa.  
*Hosted by Bop Camp @ within Snowflake*

**Temple of Atonement & World-Wide Wrestling Freaks Present: Fight Club**

7:30pm-9:30pm

Submission, freestyle, Greco-Roman, & No Holds Barred wrestlers & fighters meet up & pair off by weight, experience & style. This event is all inclusive: all welcome. The second hour will be open for nude oil wrestling. Bring a towel.

*Hosted by TOA & WWWF @ within Gigsville*

**Majnoona & Mr. Bad Shotgun Wedding**

7:30pm-7:30am

The whiskey-soaked wedding of the year right on the porch at SMRL. Come help us celebrate this cyberbilly union SPOCK-STYLE with old-timey music & debauchery. And, of course, SCIENCE.

*Hosted by Spock Mountain Research Labs @ Mercury & 7:00*

**Off-World Angels**

8:00-9:00pm

Performing and Improvising to the music of Planet WOW D.J.'s, guest aerialists from all over Black Rock City converge to fly above the dancing crowd performing trapeze, rope, spanish web and aerial silk.

*Hosted by Planet WOW 3:30 & Esplanade*

**Mutator Rocks Camp Clan Destino**

9:00pm-11:00pm

Clan Destino & The Mutator join forces for an audio/visual event that will stimulate all six senses!

*Hosted by Clan Destino @ Esplanade & 9:30*

**Fire Spinning Extravaganza!**

10:00pm-11:30pm

Come for a technically dazzling & playfully sexy show of fire dancing. Our resident dancers, & talent from all over the playa will converge this night on our fire-lit performance space, for an unforgettable exhibition of flaming action.

*Hosted by Hookahdome @ Esplanade & 4:00*

**The Pagoda Burn Processional**

10:30pm-11:30pm

Gather at 8POD Camp to get ready (cocktails at 9:00pm). We'll then walk over to Burning Silicon Camp to scoop up more peeps & gather just south of Center Camp to assemble. We'll officially begin the Procession as we enter Center Camp raising a ruckus as we pass through. Then off to the Pagoda to bid it farewell.

*Hosted by The Burning Silicon Pagoda Team @ Venus & 6:30*

**The Wednesday Night Burn!**

11:30pm-2:00am

BM04's FIRST BIG BURN! After the fire processional converges on the Pagoda of Infinite Reflection, fire performers galore will prepare to release the Pagoda into the Vault of Heaven on a spectacular tower of colorful spinning flame.

*Hosted by The Burning Silicon Pagoda Team @ The Pagoda of Infinite Reflection, near the 9:00 Promenade to the Man*

Thursday, September 2, 2004

**Silent White Procession**

6:00am-7:00am

Join us at the first light of day for this moving procession to the temple & back. Wear white please, & be prepared to greet the day with silence.

*Hosted by Woonami Village @ Earth & 7:00*

**Temple of Atonement's 8th Annual Slave Auction:**

12:00pm-1:00pm

Bid for a personal servant, or better yet be that servant! 40 plus slaves are auctioned off, offering themselves or services they will provide to the prospective buyer. Buyers bid for the offered services in-exchange for swag.

*Hosted by Temple of Atonement @ within Gigsville*

**French Maid Brigade Parade**

2:00pm-4:00pm

Join zee French Maid Brigade as we march with our WDD (weapons of dust destruction), a.k.a. non-feather dusters. Bring your worst possible French accent & extra uniforms if you got 'em. We meet at 3 o'clock & Esplanade then dust our way through every filthy, nasty camp until we reach zee Café de Camp Central.

*Hosted by Le Consulat General de France a Black Rock City a Sunset Samba Circus*

**Open Mic**

2:00pm-6:00pm

Bring your dreams & aspirations, your heart & soul & let it all come out.

*Hosted by The Indigo at Bop Camp @ Esplanade & 8:00*

**The LBD (little black dress) Parade**

4:00pm-5:00pm

Meet in front of the Glom & wear your sexiest, skimpiest, sultriest LBD (guyz... this includes you too!) & march with the famous Burning Band around BRC. Parade lasts about one hour.

*Hosted by the conGLOMerate Village @ Esplanade & 5:00*

**Fig Leaf Playhouse Fashion Show & Clothing giveaway.**

4:00pm-8:00pm

No need to bring your clothes cause we've got you covered. Come & find some really hot playa duds & strut your stuff. We've got something you will like. Just like the mall, there is plenty for women & not much for men. Fun for all!

*Hosted by Lavender Girl & Moonfire*

### **Robot & Appliance Mass Marriage Ceremony at the Man**

4:00pm-4:30pm

Bring your special loved-1 or loved-0 to the mass unification of all permutations of Machine, Humanoid, Arthrobot, & Appliance, regardless of metallic hue, sensory devise gender, hardware origin, OS, neural prostheses, analogue/digital persuasion, autonomous or behaviorally-fixed.

*Hosted by The I Heart Robot Institute*

### **The Heat of the Day Talk Show**

5:00pm

Thurs: What Is Burning Man to you? What is it not? Is your outlook on life different since you first set foot on the playa? What camps/events should not be missed this year? Share your best & worst experiences. Also...the Bi Babes Banquet Aftershock. Was it everything you dreamed of... or not?

*Hosted by Bop Camp @ within Snowflake*

### **Parade of the Golden Tribe**

5:30pm-7:00pm

Promenade with the Golden Tribe. Look for the Gold LamÈ Lovelies as they stroll about Black Rock City, bestowing gilded blessings. Put on something gold & join us! Meet at the Children of Chaos theme camp at 5:00 pm, parade starts at 5:30.

### **Stand Up for Carrots**

6:00pm-7:00pm

Carrots are people too. Meet at the Center Camp Cafe in your finest & brightest orange. The Alpha Queen Carrot will then lead our infiltration of the billion bunny march. Time to show those prolific nibblers exactly what we're made of.

*Hosted by Alpha Queen Carrot*

### **The Billion Bunny March**

6:00pm-7:00pm

Bunnies of the universe, lend me your ears! We start in Center Camp at The Billion Bunny Voyage To Lepus Landia & march to the Man to demand he be replaced with a giant bunny! Then hop back to camp for Easter eggs & bunny antics!!!

*Hosted by Billion Bunny Voyage To Lepus Landia @ Orion's Belt & Esplanade*

### **GOOFERVILLE Karaoke**

6:00pm-8:00pm

Test your human mettle with help from our Kinetic Audio Regurgitant Auto-Oblivious Kongian Earful device, hosted by Queen Tangerine & Hollywood. All the hits you love & hate, minus some, plus others.

*Hosted by GOOFERVILLE*

**Slave sale 4 Homos at JiffyLube!**

7:00pm-8:45pm

Want a punk/slave/pig/boy for the day? Come see this years collection of meat up for grabs, & be ready to compete for preferential choice of the available stock. Slaves looking to put themselves on the block should report to the Auctioneer an hour early.

*Hosted by JiffyLube*

**Hoopin' Hotties Gathering**

7:00pm-9:00pm

Hula-Hoopers of every sort & skill level, every gender & every age, come together. Our goal is to bring together in one spot every hoop in BRC!

*Hosted by Camp Euphoria @ 10:00 & Jupiter*

**CRITICAL FLOSS**

7:30pm-8:00pm

Join a couple hundred of your friends in a mass after dinner dental flossing. Help us set a new playa record & receive a special gift from the beautiful & strange Goddess of Popcorn.

*Hosted by THE MIDNITE POPCORN PALACE & 24 HOUR FLOSSING CENTER @ 3:00 Plaza & 1:30*

**Off-World Angels**

8:00-9:00pm

Performing and Improvising to the music of Planet WOW D.J.'s, guest aerialists from all over Black Rock City converge to fly above the dancing crowd performing trapeze, rope, spanish web, and aerial silk.

*Hosted by Planet WOW 3:30 & Esplanade*

**Whirligig Performance Party**

8:00pm-11:30pm

Come join us at Asylum Stage for performances by Hula Hoop Sensations Groove Hoops, Awesome Aerial Dance by FireFly Dance, Burlesque by Darlinda's Polyester Players.

*Hosted by Whirligig @ Asylum*

**Regionals Variety Showcase**

8:00pm-12:00am

Featuring a variety of performing artists that have appeared at year-round BM regional events across the galaxy. A stellar night of beatbox, cabaret, circus, live music & odd ends!

*Hosted by Burning Man*

**Into the Vault**

9:00pm-8:00am

An exploration into deep inner space provided by a progressive trance sound track. It's where the cosmos shares its secrets. With a midnight ceremony/ performance.  
*Hosted by Opulent Temple of Venus*

**WhistleWorks Sound Sculpture & Drumming Performance**

9:00pm-10:30pm

Come one, come all drummers, poi performers & fire artists. Meet at Camp Tanabata in Center Camp as we work our way towards our final performance destination.

*Hosted by The Burning Chicagoans*

**GOOFERVILLE's 3 Rings Around Yeranus Circus**

9:00pm-3:00am

Multiple break-hop sets of live, thumpin' music by klown band GOOFERMAN; bumpin' DJ SpinCycle's Whirled Tour & DJ tradeMark; Miss Bertha Butt & the Butt Sisters; shadowshows by Nir the Puppetir & the Robodies; firedancing, bellydancing, sexy drinks!

*Hosted by GOOFERVILLE @ Mercury & 7:00*

**Cirque Destino's Aerial & Fire Performance**

10:00pm-11:00pm

Clan Destino's performance group Cirque Destino will thrill & entice with aerial acrobatics, fire dancing & burlesque.

*Hosted by Clan Destino @ Esplanade & 9:30*

**The Lost Penguin Presents 'The Serotonins'!**

10:00pm-1:00am

Proudly prenting THE SEROTONINS w/BianMcGuire, together again for the first time! A must-see!

*Hosted by The Lost Penguin @ Esplanade & 8:30*

**Hot Sex**

11:00pm-12:00am

Join us as members of the fire conclave showcase their sexiest fire-performances. The most titillating show receives two seats on a plane ride over BRC. Adults only, please!

*Hosted by ...and then there's only Love. @ 8:00 & Mercury*

Friday, September 3, 2004

**PAUL OAKENFOLD**

12:00am-8:00am

EVENT OF ALL EVENTS, PAUL WILL BE BURING MAN HIMSELF,?? Surprise guest?

*Hosted by Paris Hilton*

**Poetry Slam/Writing from the Right Side of the Brain**

10:00am-12:00pm

Get your verbal juices flowing with carefully crafted exercises that encourage poetic creativity.

*Hosted by Deep Heaven: The Heart of the Universe @ Esplanade & 5:00*

**Critical Dicks March**

2:00-3:00pm

Meet at Space Vikings and march down the Esplanade, proud and unashamed. Body paint and silliness encouraged. All welcome. No dick? Bring a reasonable fucsimile.

After we support our sistren's Critical Tits ride.

*Hosted by Space Vikings within Snowflake Village*

**Playa Sailing Parade**

2:00pm-4:00pm

We will rally up half way between Center camp & the Man. Look for the sails. For anyone that has a wind-powered craft that complies with BRC-DMV specs. Awards!

*Hosted by Dave-O of LiteBrite Camp @ Mercury & 8:30*

**Impact Monster Skit**

4:00pm-5:00pm

Adults & kids alike - come & participate with us on a playful exploration of our impacts on the desert!

*Hosted by Earth Guardian Pavilion @ Esplanade & Orion's Belt*

**CRITICAL TITS 9TH ANNUAL BIKE RIDE**

4:00pm-7:00pm

All women & girls. Meet at the Man on Friday, 4pm (sharp) with bikes & painted chests. We'll celebrate the feminine power as we ride through BRC on our new anti-paparazzi route & finish with a fab cocktail party.

*Hosted by The Womyn on the edge*

**ROMP of the PLAYA HOOKERS**

5:00pm

Slap on Your Big Wig'n Boobs & Come Cause Chaos. Dress Skimpy & Wear Lotsa Makeup. Gigolos & Pimps (B.Y.O. gold chains/chest hair) warmly welcomed.

*Hosted by Avalon Space Station & Glamour Puss Madame 'Erica Candy Cane' @ Earth & 6:30*

**The O Show!**

5:00pm-6:30pm

What better way to join in with the talented blowers & munchers on our O-Throne?

All results will be strictly tabulated by our Department of Virile Statistics.

*Hosted by Chic BJ, Viva la Orgasmateria!, & Asylum Village @ Esplanade & 7:00*

**GOOFERVILLE Karaoke**

6:00pm-8:00pm

All the hits you love & hate, minus some, plus others.

*Hosted by GOOFERVILLE*

**Erotic Erotic Mathematical Performance Art**

6:00pm-7:00pm

Dance, music, song, rhythm, body exploration & motion, as an expression of mathematics & eroticism. Past Sacred on the Esplanade at Dusk.

*Hosted by Infinity is Cool*

**Temple of Atonement & World-Wide Wrestling Freaks Present: Fight Club**

7:30pm-9:30pm

Submission, freestyle, Greco-Roman, & No Holds Barred wrestlers & fighters meet up & pair off by weight, experience & style. This event is all inclusive. The 2nd hour will be open for nude oil wrestling. Bring a towel.

*Hosted by TOA & WWWF @ within Gigsville*

**The Booty Pageant**

7:30pm-9:00pm

All contestants will receive prizes for their PARTICIPATION! Wooo! This is followed by a musical funhouse with thee Original Booty Burglars & The Serotonins, also on The Bad Idea Theater Stage.

*Hosted by Booty Camp (at the Bad Idea Theater)*

**AstroPups: Second Annual "Cirque du Sharpei"**

8:00pm-11:00pm

An evening of fire spinning, music & magic. All performers are invited to enter our ring, clown around, or just enjoy the show. AstroPups will initiate all those new Pups. Open-minded Dogs of all types are welcome, prepare to be licked.

*Hosted by AstroPups @ within Avalon Space Station*

**StarLust Lounge - BLACK FRIDAY!!! THE PLAGUE!!!**

8:00pm-6:00am

EVIL WILL BE PUNISHED! EXORCISMS PERFORMED! ENTER THE FORBIDDEN ZONE! DEVIL FESTIVAL! VIRGIN SACRIFICES! PINATAS SLAUGHTERED! WE WILL HELP YOU THRU THE PORTAL WITH OUR HANDS ON YOUR ASS, IF NECESSARY!!

*Hosted by Starlust Lounge @ 9:00 Plaza & 7:00*

**CharlesLaw & Jagged play The Lost Penguin Stage!**

8:00pm-10:00pm

Acoustic intergalactic cowboy funk, with sensuous lyrics & twangy melodies to

soothe you & for you to dream upon. Have your final dream before we raucously burn that naughty Man the next night be a sweet one...

*Hosted by The Lost Penguin @ Esplanade & 8:30*

### **Battlestar Blackrocktica!**

8:00pm-12:00am

A variety show invasion featuring dancers, acrobats, drag queens, robots, bunnies, divas & space rockers duking it out till the universe implodes!

*Hosted by \$teven Ra\$pa*

### **Opulent Purpose**

9:00pm-8:00am

A communal celebration with a midnight ceremony/performance, along with DJ's FuseD, Scrumtoad, Jeffrey Allen, Nathan Vain.

*Hosted by The Opulent Temple of Venus is a large scale sound & art camp located @ 2:00 & one block back from the corner.*

### **CandleOpera**

9:00pm-11:00pm

Witness this enthralling, spontaneous, life-affirming explosion of performance art, dance & music in its latest incarnation. The theme of this installation of CandleOpera is WOTSIOTA: "Wisdom Of The Sages Information Of The Ages."

*Hosted by Camp freedomcommunity, located in Woonami Village @ Earth & 7:00*

### **35R Plays the Lost Penguin Stage**

10:00pm-1:00am

Their vibe is: Tractors, Louisiana, Sexy Party Peoples, Fear of a Black Hat & Personal Truth, all sprinkled with lots o' Playa Dust. Get wine & chocolate!

*Hosted by The Lost Penguin @ Esplanade & 8:30*

### **SKIN**

10:30pm-12:00am

A multimedia performance + Stellar Nymphs aerial ballet, w/live musicians and layered original soundtrack, aerial acrobatics, synchronized video and projections by Kevin Bourque of Mutaytor.

*Hosted by Planet WOW 3:30 & Esplanade*

### **AlienMonkeyLoveNest XXX-treme Show**

11:59pm-12:59am

Howard Stern's XXX-treme sex acts show! An adult version of the show, where adults play on stage for pendants. This show is 18+! This show will take place in the Space Virgins dome at area 47.

*Hosted by AlienMonkeyLoveNest at Area 47 Village @ Esplanade & 9:30*

Saturday, September 4, 2004

**Marchin' Martians**

4:00pm-5:00pm

Wear your finest space-suits, alien-wear & wookie-fur. We will assemble in front of the conGLOMerate village. We will then parade thru the streets of BRC to the musical stylings of the Burning Band. Alien musicians welcome.

*Hosted by the conGLOMerate village @ Esplanade & 5:00*

**The Wheel of Fire**

9:00pm-10:00pm

One hour before the Burn, torchlit processions start out from the sites of the Community Burn Platforms & walk inwards toward the Man, creating the flaming spokes of a wheel nearly a mile across.

*Hosted by The Wheel of Fire Project*

**Release Burning Man**

9:00pm

Fire Conclave in its full force will create the protective fire circle around the Man. The fire we extract from the sun will bring the Man to life in pyrotechnic delight. When the sky fills with a tease of pyro is one hour before showtime.

*Hosted by Crimson Rose & Fire Conclave @ Axis Mundi*

**2004 PERFORMANCES**

**Repeated Events**

Monday, August 30, 2004

**Roving Whores**

Monday - Sunday

Each night TempleWhore will send out roving whores to another camp to descend on a chosen few, offering to these select the true keys to the vault of heaven. You might just be the lucky elect...

*Hosted by TempleWhore @ Mercury & 8:00*

**Birdz o' Paradise**

Monday - Sunday

The neo-mythological Birdz o' Paradise fire performance group will perform nightly at the Center Camp hearth, & the fiery flock can also be seen in collaboration with Pyrosutra's "Snow Queen" production.

**Hosted by Birdz o' Paradise (Birdz o' Bliss camp) @ Mercury & 4:00**

**AlienMonkeyLoveNest**

Monday - Friday

2:00pm-5:00pm

Come participate at the AlienMonkeyLoveNest stage! Our 8th year on the playa brings back the famous pendants & your chance to show your stuff!

*Hosted by AlienMonkeyLoveNest at Area 47 Village @ Esplanade & 9:30*

### **Guitars That Rule the Playa Show**

Monday - Saturday

3:00pm-4:00pm

Back for its 3rd year on the playa, Electra brings you the Guitars That Rule the Playa Show, daily from 3-4pm. Waltsnipe hosts again, joined this year by Matt "Change It" Gubitiz. Who says all playa music has to thump?

*Hosted by Waltsnipe, Matt 'Change It' Gubitiz @ within Cult of E.R.I.C.*

### **Lamplighter's Parade**

Monday - Tuesday

5:00pm-7:30pm

Giant Puppets, Stiltwalkers, Musicians, & Drummers - join us in parade as we light the streets of BRC EVERY EVENING of the event. Come to LampLighter's center camp workspace at around 5pm. The ceremony begins around 6 & soon the work is done. No experience is required.

*Hosted by Lamplighters @ Venus & Orion's Belt*

### **Caravella**

Monday - Sunday

7:00pm-9:00pm

Live laptop & synthesizer ambient music performances. All electronic musician performers are invited to participate. Held in the Caravella. Small PA & mixing board provided. Bring your own instrument & 1/4 inch plug ins.

*Hosted by Tim Watts/Infinite Oasis @ Earth & 4:30*

### **Sex O Phonic Fire Tribe Performance**

Tuesday - Thursday

12:01am-2:01am

This is a tribal techno performance group founded for performance at Burning Man & beyond! Drumming, poetry, singing, music. Stop by & be as sexy as you want to be. Sit in on a performance with your own drum or just come & dance the wee hours of the morning away with us.

*Hosted by The Sex O Phonic Fire Tribe within Shangri-La*

### **Smooch Workshop at the SmoochDome**

Tuesday - Saturday

2:00pm-3:00pm

This will be an interactive, lips-on event. Learn the ins & outs of smooching from the modern contemporary methods to the traditional ways. Find a partner here or bring one of your own! Come early!

*Hosted by SmoochDome @ within Asylum*

### **The Heat of the Day Talk Shows**

Tuesday - Wednesday - Thursday

5pm-6pm

The live talk show that has sizzled the playa for the past 3 years is returning to Black Rock City. Participate and voice your opinion in the Snowflake Village.

Wednesday, September 1, 2004

### **Spare A Dime Shift Show**

Wednesday - Friday

7:00pm-7:15pm

House of Balls Rolling Puppet Theater presents an economic erotica review. Can Bea Goode stop her evil sister-in-law, Mimi Gett-Goode from breaking into the Vault of Heaven? Join us for an evening of sliding rules & diminishing marginal virility on the Esplanade in front of Center Camp.

*Hosted by House of Balls*

### **Storytelling Performance**

Friday - Friday

1:00pm-4:00pm

Storytelling by Dreamtime campers & YOU! We will be sharing stories from real life, our imaginations & traditional origins.

*Hosted by Dreamtime @ within Wheeee!ville*

### **Hair of the Dog Lounge's open stage**

Wednesday - Sunday

Everyone who plays an instrument is welcome on our stage! Also we have an in-house stable of decent musicians to fill a band in multiple styles. Remember when someone gave you the chance to play above your expectations? Now it's your chance to give back & make somebody's day!

*Hosted by Hair of the Dog Lounge @ Mercury & 5:00*

## **2005 PERFORMANCES**

### **Repeating Events**

Monday, August 29, 2005

### **Free Association Theatre**

Monday - Monday

I got a bullhorn and a whole lot of batteries. I plan on taping my non-stop 24/7 weeklong superrant and the lynch mob who will inevitably gather around me. You're gonna have to kill me to shut me up.

*Hosted by: Bob and his magical bullhorn*

**AlienMonkeyLoveNest talent stage!**

Monday - Sunday

2:00pm

The AlienMonkeys open up their talent stage. Talents can be ANYTHING though we ask that the day time shows remain PG13.

*Hosted by: AlienMonkeyLoveNest @ Esplanade and 7:30*

**Storytime Shisha**

Monday - Saturday

2:00pm-6:00pm

Attendance is mandatory. Bring your stories, all sorts are welcome: stories about lust, gore, physics, knitting and whatever else is either in-between or perpendicular to them.

*Hosted by: Kathanika @ 3:00 Plaza and 8:30*

**Aerial Silk Performance**

Tuesday/Friday

9:00pm-10:00pm

Firefly Dance presents an aerial dance performance. See this astonishing and graceful circus art performed high above the playa.

*Hosted by: Automatic Subconscious @ Esplanade and 6:30*

**Black Belt Theatre**

Tuesday - Sunday

10:00pm-4:00am

Kung Fu returns to the Fandango Village with the resurrection of Fandango's Black Belt Theatre. 'My style is better than your style!'

*Hosted by: Fandango @ Fandango Village*

**Pole Dance Revolution**

Tuesday - Sunday

11:00pm-1:00am

A dance performance game that brings out the inner erotic dancer in each of us. A pulsating eight foot wand of light guides the dancer's limbs and body to intricate and exotic poses.

*Hosted by: Ascension Tribe @ Esplanade and 4:00*

**Soma Olam - Dream Theater**

Tuesday/Thursday

11:59pm-12:59am

Experience a timeless journey as you immerse yourself in a multimedia dream performance utilizing theater, dance, and aerial art. Dream animals and time travelers will explore archetypes as they slip between dimensions.

*Hosted by: Camp DreamTree @ Esplanade and 3:00*

**Hot Bod Libido Wrestling**

4:00pm-6:00pm Wednesday

8:30pm Friday

Wrestle Freestyle, Greco-Roman, Submission, Pro-fantasy, and No Holds Barred fighting. Single fighters paired by experience, weight, and style. Co-ed matches encouraged! The last hour open for nude oil wrestling. Bring a towel. No cameras without permission.

*Hosted by: AstroPups Psychedelicatessen @ 7:30 and Catharsis*

**The Lost Penguin Cafe Comedy Jam!**

Wednesday - Thursday

7:00pm-8:00pm

Improv, character pieces, sketch comedy, clowning, and standup comedy; anything designed to make you laugh! You can always amuse yourself with our rare Belgian chocolates and fine wine.

*Hosted by: The Lost Penguin Cafe @ Esplanade and 5:00*

**The Lost Penguin Presents: BURNING MAN: THE MUSICAL!**

Wednesday - Thursday

8:00pm-8:45pm

Don't miss this original production featuring all of your favorite clichéd BRC characters. Sing along with wide-eyed young newbies; the veterans & virgins; the ravers; the hippies from back'in'da'day; the bemused local authorities; and even the water truck guy!

*Hosted by: The Lost Penguin Cafe @ Esplanade and 5:00*

**Aural Analysis**

Wednesday - Thursday

9:00pm-10:00pm

Improvisational performances by composer Guillermo Galindo and opera singer Barangere Perizeau. They will explore a wide range of electronic and vocal soundscapes for your aural pleasure and psychic restoration.

*Hosted by: Winking Lotus @ Esplanade and Feedback Loop*

**The Lost Penguin Presents: The Music, Poetry & Passion of Mr. Ira Liss!**

Thursday & Friday

10:00pm-12:00am

Ira Liss performs original piano, songs and comedy. Participate as he invents improv song and saga on the spot. Interactive, in-the-moment and honest-to-the-bone.

*Hosted by: The Lost Penguin Cafe @ Esplanade and 5:00*

## 2006 PERFORMANCES

### On-line Performance Listings<sup>3</sup>

#### **GUFFMAN**

Yes, you read that right. SmoochDome is throwing an open house in honor of a special visit from the big man himself. Known mostly as a Broadway bigwig, this Guffman actually appreciates performance prowess of MANY types. Don't miss this chance to meet the man who can make your dreams come true...music, romance, and whatever will fulfill your wildest hopes. So swing by, get ready to pucker up and show your stuff.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006

Time: 8:00pm-10:00pm

Duration: 120 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: Smooch Dome

#### **Rock Opera ~ Dream**

Experience the Rock Opera, a live Exotic Electronica performance that takes you on a journey from the Depths of Fear to the Heights of Hope. Bhakti Rasa, Cirque performers, Hand Drummers, Dancers and Fire techniques engulf your senses with unforgettable sights and sounds that will amaze you. Art Car procession begins at dusk from Center Camp as Fire Cannons and Smoke Rings signal the beginning of the Rock Opera and ends with an effigy burn. Music by Bhakti Rasa. For information on Performers & Artist please visit [www.ColoradoBurningMan.com](http://www.ColoradoBurningMan.com) Information on the Rock Opera please Contact [Ronnie@ColoradoBurningMan.com](mailto:Ronnie@ColoradoBurningMan.com)  
Live and Burn!

Date: Friday, September 1, 2006

Time: 9:00pm-10:09pm

Duration: 69 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: Ronnie - Playa Go Round

Event URL: <http://www.ColoradoBurningMan.com>

Email: [Ronnie@ColoradoBurningMan.com](mailto:Ronnie@ColoradoBurningMan.com)

#### **FUDGE HIGHBEARINASION**

#### **FUDGE HIGHBEARINASION**

Performance

Midnight

Center Camp

Date: Friday, September 1, 2006

Time: 11:45pm-12:00am

Duration: 15 minutes

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<sup>3</sup> From Playa Events Calendar

<http://www.burningman.com/calendar/playa/day.php>

Completed by WC on August 22, 2006

### **Playa Fire Dance**

This fire gathering is open to any and all fire performers that want to show off their fire art. You do NOT have to be part of the Fire Conclave to participate.

SOLO ARTISTS: There will be up to 6 soloists at a time each with up to 5 minutes of performance time. Each artist can have 1 slot per tool, up to 3 slots maximum.

GROUP ARTISTS: There will be up to 3 groups at a time, each with up to 12 minutes of performance time.

WHERE: 1300 feet from the Man, 800 feet off the Esplanade, lined up with the street 5:30.

SIGN UP: Fire Conclave Convergence before noon 8/31

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006

Time: 7:30pm-11:30pm

Duration: 240 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: Fire Conclave Convergence

### **Fire Opera: Burning Hope, Naked Fear**

Hope – the spark of creation, the energy of growth, the spirit of all beginnings. Fear – hope's forsaken sibling, the equal and opposite reaction. The wondrous line where they meet is Life, their persistent tension permeating every moment. Join Salon Soleil in walking this razor's edge between joy and dread in a daring performance of fire dance, drumming, and drama. The cabaret costumery, raw sexuality, and butt-shaking soundtrack are not to be missed. Audience participation REQUIRED.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006

Time: 8:30pm-9:30pm

Duration: 60 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: Salon Soleil

Event URL: <http://www.salonsoleil.net>

Email: [freedman.matthew@gmail.com](mailto:freedman.matthew@gmail.com)

### **BurningMantribe.net Potluck**

If you are one of many people who are on the Burning Man tribe on tribe.net, come out and meet some of the faces behind the avatars. Bring something to share, food, drink, performance, art, and more.

Center Camp, at the entrance facing the man

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006

Time: 7:00pm-9:00pm

Duration: 120 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: Poosie Kat & Sparkle Bottom/Center Camp

Email: [poosie\\_kat@hotmail.com](mailto:poosie_kat@hotmail.com)

### **Dinner Theater: Names**

"Names" is a framework for an improvised performance designed to explore the role that names and nicknames play in interpersonal relationships. Actors, linguists, psychologists, and all adventurous types are welcome to come perform. If you don't

want to perform, feel free to come and watch. Bring food, drinks, or whatever you need to make yourself comfortable. If you want to perform, show up twenty minutes early to discuss the framework, get organized, and figure out what you're doing.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006

Time: 6:00pm-8:00pm

Duration: 120 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: Spiralteria! in the Alternative Energy Zone

Email: [dirtgoddess@pressthebutton.com](mailto:dirtgoddess@pressthebutton.com)

### **Erotic Mathematical Performance Art**

Meet me at dusk at the mobius strip for an erotic experience that combines the beauty of mathematics with the sensuality of the body. I will also be setting the mobius strip ablaze!

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006

Time: 7:00pm-8:00pm

Duration: 60 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: Sarah B

Email: [infinitycool@hotmail.com](mailto:infinitycool@hotmail.com)

### **KIDSVILLE PRESENTS: Hopes and Fears of the Future**

Join Kidscamp families for a performance about our hopes and fears for the future.

We will be performing at Center Camp Café. Join us afterward for a live music parade from center camp to the MAN to tip him to hope!

Date: Friday, September 1, 2006

Time: 12:00pm-2:00pm

Duration: 120 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: Kidscamp

Email: [zinnger03@northwestel.net](mailto:zinnger03@northwestel.net)

### **Poetry Playshop: Hope, Fear, Love and Poetry**

This playshop will explore the duality of hope and fear that resides in love, using poetry as the vehicle for exploration. We will recite, create, and contemplate love poems in exercises and performances meant to illuminate how seeking, falling, or being in love (romantic, spiritual, brotherly/sisterly, or motherly/fatherly) inspires and elicits great hopes (of rapture, fulfillment, and bliss) and great fears (of disillusionment, loss, and despair).

Date: Friday, September 1, 2006

Time: 2:00pm-4:00pm

Duration: 120 minutes

Category: Classes/Workshops

Hosted by/Camp Name: Sproutman at Deep Heaven

Event URL: <http://deepheaven.org>

Email: [novon@aol.com](mailto:novon@aol.com)

### **Dragon Performance**

Center Camp Dragon performance -all Drummers are invited to join us as we circle center camp with the world's longest dragon prior to the Temple Burn

Date: Sunday, September 3, 2006

Time: 8:00pm

Hosted by/Camp Name: The BurningTribe

Event URL: <http://www.burningtribe.com/dragon/index.html>

Email: [lyingbare@hotmail.com](mailto:lyingbare@hotmail.com)

### **The Ancient Mariner Speaks**

What if you had been to Hell and saw the FEARS of all men? What if an angel took you out and whispered the HOPES of all men? Would you feel compelled to tell anyone? Who would listen?

Performance Artist Bad Elf recites The Rime Of The Ancient Mariner, somewhere around the Temple on Sunday at 2:30pm.

Because he has to. Are you compelled to listen?

Date: Sunday, September 3, 2006

Time: 2:30pm-3:00pm

Duration: 30 minutes

Category: Performance

Email: [theancientmariner@noisesoff.com](mailto:theancientmariner@noisesoff.com)

### **JEREMY PEARL MUSIC: Dreaming We're Awake**

With his 5th performance at the Center Camp Cafe, Jeremy invites all music lovers to come enjoy a morning serenade that blends jazz, folk, rock, blues, bluegrass, and funk. Jeremy's unique style integrates acoustic and electric guitars, vocals, loops, and digital effects that will tantalize your senses and tickle your soul. Whether you're just waking up, or still cruising your Thursday night's delight, find your way to this dynamic performance and dream yourself awake! Visit Jeremy on the web at <http://www.jeremypearl.net>

Date: Friday, September 1, 2006

Time: 9:00am-10:00am

Duration: 60 minutes

Category: Music Events

Hosted by/Camp Name:

Email: [jeremy@eventexpert.net](mailto:jeremy@eventexpert.net)

### **THE STAGGERING LIBIDO SISTERS SING SONGS OF LOVE...AND REVENGE!**

Audrey's delights you with Burning Man's favorite divas as they return to BRC with their all new extravaganza: ?THE STAGGERING LIBIDO SISTERS SING SONGS OF LOVE...AND REVENGE.? Ziegfield Follies meets John Waters movies in this big messy over-the-top, LOW-humored, hilarious homage to the hopes and fears of war between the sexes. After Friday's midnight performance, join cast and crew as Audrey hosts the Backstage Party. SHOW TIMES: FRIDAY NIGHT 10:00 PM & MIDNIGHT. BACKSTAGE PARTY FOLLOWING THE MIDNIGHT SHOW.

Date: Friday, September 1, 2006  
Time: 11:59pm-12:59am  
Duration: 60 minutes  
Category: Performance  
Hosted by/Camp Name: Audrey's  
Event URL: <http://web.mac.com/canyonboys/iWeb/BurningMen/>  
Email: [jeffkennedy@adelphia.net](mailto:jeffkennedy@adelphia.net)

**~ReNo LiVe~**

~Live Music & Performance by;  
DJ Osh, DJ Rhino, Native Root & Reno Fire Conclave!  
Date: Friday, September 1, 2006  
Time: 10:30pm-4:30am  
Duration: 360 minutes  
Category: Music Events  
Hosted by/Camp Name: "Keepin It Reno"  
Email: [joshuawenner@hotmail.com](mailto:joshuawenner@hotmail.com)

**Samba do Sol**

Samba do Sol is the world's first flaming Brazilian drumline. A traditional all-percussion Bateria and Samba dance corps with members from five Northwest cities, we will process from Center Camp to the Man on Friday at dusk. Elaborate flaming drums and costumes along with energetic live percussion will make this a truly unique performance you don't want to miss.

Date: Friday, September 1, 2006  
Time: 7:30pm-9:30pm  
Duration: 120 minutes  
Category: Music Events  
Hosted by/Camp Name: Samba do Sol  
Event URL: <http://www.spinergyarts.com>  
Email: [firesky99@gmail.com](mailto:firesky99@gmail.com)

**Dance Performance - a small piece of sky**

Performed at the Temple, the dance piece is inspired by the struggles of women who have been unjustly incarcerated in asylums and their experiences of both fear and hope. It also represents struggle in our own lives, working with our fears and maintaining hope for our own selves in the future.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006  
Time: 8:30pm-9:00pm  
Duration: 30 minutes  
Category: Performance  
Hosted by/Camp Name: Fool's Paradise  
Event URL: <http://www.freeflowdance.com>  
Email: [freeflowdance@hotmail.com](mailto:freeflowdance@hotmail.com)

### **Finis Tere ~ participatory performance**

Calling musicians and other Black Rock Citizens to participate in a mile-long performance art piece!

Finis Tere draws inspiration from an ancient pilgrimage trail where travelers walked to a site believed to be the edge of the world. While there, travelers ritually burned their pilgrimage clothes and contemplated the vast unknown before beginning a new journey homeward.

Meet us @ 6:30pm @ the 9 o'clock plaza.

Musicians: bring instruments! Everyone else: don burnable robes and join us in a procession through BRC to an installation in the deep playa where we'll burn our robes and cross a threshold into the endless playa as part of a fierce dance and music performance.

Date: Wednesday, August 30, 2006 - Thursday, August 31, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 6:30pm-7:30pm

Duration: 60 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: Zach Morris

Email: [moriszachary@hotmail.com](mailto:morriszachary@hotmail.com)

### **Pole Dance Revolution**

A dance performance game that brings out the inner erotic dancer in each of us. A pulsating eight foot wand of light guides the dancer's limbs and body to intricate and exotic poses. Audience participation is expected and enthusiastically encouraged.

Learn and practice sexy moves you can take to any playa pole. Please arrive with a squeaky clean body (lotions/sunscreen makes the pole unsafe!) and a skimpy outfit.

Date: Monday, August 28, 2006 - Sunday, September 3, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 11:11pm-2:44am

Duration: 213 minutes

Category: Daily Events

Hosted by/Camp Name: Ascension Tribe

Event URL: [http://www.ascensiontribe.com/theme\\_camp/schedule/](http://www.ascensiontribe.com/theme_camp/schedule/)

Email: [pdr2006@bmackey.com](mailto:pdr2006@bmackey.com)

### **Jazz Improvisation Workshop**

Join us for a relaxing afternoon workshop where we'll be discussing exactly what occurs during a jazz performance. Musicians who have their instruments will have the chance to try improvising with the rhythm section on some basic tunes. Even if you're not a musician, this workshop will give you a deeper understanding and greater appreciation for the art of Jazz.

Date: Tuesday, August 29, 2006 - Friday, September 1, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 1:00pm-3:00pm

Duration: 120 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: The Jazz Caf 

Email: [reverbsf@yahoo.com](mailto:reverbsf@yahoo.com)

### **Dinner Theater: The Map Is Not the Territory**

"The Map Is Not the Territory" is a framework for an improvised performance designed to explore travel, focusing on the relationship between the description of a place and the place itself. Actors, travelers, and all adventurous types are welcome to come perform. If you don't want to perform, feel free to come and watch. Bring food, drinks, or whatever you need to make yourself comfortable. If you want to perform, show up twenty minutes early to discuss the framework, get organized, and figure out what you're doing.

Date: Tuesday, August 29, 2006

Time: 6:00pm-8:00pm

Duration: 120 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: Spiralteria! in the Alternative Energy Zone

Email: [dirtgoddess@pressthebutton.com](mailto:dirtgoddess@pressthebutton.com)

### **Contact Improvisation Community meeting**

a call to contact improvisors...

come to Contact Camp to share some food and meet others into contact. share visions of how to explore and share contact improv during the week, hear what other's interests and plans are, propose labs, jams, workshops, performances, events... some of the events we host will have been determined before we get there, but others we will be improvising once we all get there and see what our interests together are. come get involved...

Date: Monday, August 28, 2006

Time: 6:00pm-8:00pm

Duration: 120 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: Contact Camp

Event URL: <http://www.burningcontact.org>

Email: [burningcontact@gmail.com](mailto:burningcontact@gmail.com)

### **Supa Duchess Concert**

Supaduchess- country rockstress, looking to give kick-ass performance, stir sexuality, fire up power and turn up the burn in burning man. Songs posted on supaduchess.com by July 26th. Love to give that gift.

Date: Monday, August 28, 2006

Time: 5:00am-10:40am

Duration: 340 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: Elastic Workspace Software Inc.

Event URL: <http://www.supaduchess.com>, [www.elastiworkspace.com/events](http://www.elastiworkspace.com/events)

Email: [events@elasticworkspace.com](mailto:events@elasticworkspace.com)

### **Mind Melt**

Hope - Gives You Life,

Fear - Your Uncontrolled Mind,

The future - Changes All for Eternity

Mind Melt lets your mind be changed from Fear of the unknown, to finding Hope in the Future, by experiencing 3-D Images of lights and sounds and the peace only

found within the receptive mind and experience of every thought, feelings, sensations, and level of awareness through corresponding brain wave patterns.

Mind machines change your perception by stimulating balanced, abundant neurotransmitter production, expanding neural pathways, and programming desirable, ecologically sound behaviors. The use of mind melting can enhance physical healing and homeostasis, intellectual performance, and greatly improved a sense of well-being, which allows one to See beauty where others do not, and a new perception of life that is the Future for all Mankind.

Experience a Mind Melt on the Black Rock Playa

Poly Paradise

Burning Man 2006

Remember; nothing really exists, it's all in the electrons of your mind.

Date: Monday, August 28, 2006 - Friday, September 1, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 8:00pm-9:00pm

Duration: 60 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: PolyParadise

Event URL: <http://polyparadise.azcompuguy.com/activities.htm#melt>

Email: [scotto@burningman.com](mailto:scotto@burningman.com)

### **erogenous zone**

come and experience the many interesting activities happening at the Erogenous Zone. While in the zone, get an I.D. tag for your bike at The Wheel Of Karma bike tag kiosk. Visit the EZ Lounge and chill out on your favorite soft-sculptured body part. Crawl into the sensuous pink womb room. Escape into The Alien Garden for a stroll and treasure hunt in the alien gift exchange. Other interactive games, giant puppetry performances, and spontaneous acts of lunacy. Open 24/7 on the Playa.

Date: Monday, August 28, 2006 - Sunday, September 3, 2006 (every Day)

Hosted by/Camp Name: Erogenous Zone

Email: [jhummingbird@frontiernet.net](mailto:jhummingbird@frontiernet.net)

### **Axolotl Participatory Performance event**

The audience is blindfolded for 2 hours and invited to interact with each other and with a group of actors, dancers and musicians searching after the nature of meaning. words, movement, experience

the stage is in your mind.

Date: Tuesday, August 29, 2006

Time: 8:00pm-10:00pm

Duration: 120 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: Contact Camp

Event URL: <http://www.burningcontact.org>

Email: [burningcontact@gmail.com](mailto:burningcontact@gmail.com)

### **Playa Video Laboratories**

PVL joins forces with DMT and Nuclear Family to create one outrageous interactive theme camp. Experience LA's finest performance artists,

musicians , DJ's, fire masters, and social engineering scientists on our stage nightly from 4 pm - 2 am, and view off-beat movies from 2-8 am on our giant inflatable screen.

Date: Tuesday, August 29, 2006 - Saturday, September 2, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 4:00pm-12:00pm

Duration: 1200 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: The LAB

Email: [katherine@katphish.net](mailto:katherine@katphish.net)

### **OBOP Hosts Our Third Annual Block Party**

Live performances in the YinYang lounge, featuring performers from OBOP and Monkey Puzzle (our neighbors), dancing to our raging DJs in the DOTA dome (our neighbors), fire dancing at 9:30 with Fiamma Luna, and an open bar as long as it lasts!

Date: Tuesday, August 29, 2006

Time: 8:00pm

Hosted by/Camp Name: Ojai Bureau of Pleasure (OBOP)

Event URL: <http://www.obop.org>

Email: [info@obop.org](mailto:info@obop.org)

### **Black Rock University Performance Art Dept. Art Therapy Session**

Join Dr. Mistress Mao as she leads the student body in art therapy designed to bring out the performer in you! Fear & Hope are explored via uninhibiting libations and nonstop turns of the Wheel. Plus, meet other art students who like to find performance.

Date: Wednesday, August 30, 2006

Time: 3:00pm-5:00pm

Duration: 120 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: Black Rock University

### **Opening Night at the Whiskey and Whores Saloon**

We got Whiskey...we got Whores...what else do you f\*\*\*ing need??!! So come on down and celebrate opening night of the best damned saloon on the Playa. Trade your loudest "Yeehaw!" for a cheap whiskey shot, enjoy our live stage performances, and wink at all the Whores behind--and in front of--the bar.

Date: Tuesday, August 29, 2006 - Tuesday, August 29, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 9:00pm-12:00am

Duration: 180 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: The Whiskey & Whores Saloon

### **Environmental Encroachment**

Chicago performance art group EE uses puppets, projections, live music and costumes to create unique entertainment environments, parades, processions, shows and artist marching band encroachments.

Date: Tuesday, August 29, 2006

Time: 9:00pm-11:00pm  
Duration: 120 minutes  
Category: Performance  
Hosted by/Camp Name: The Lost Penguin  
Event URL: <http://encroach.net>  
Email: [encroach@mindspring.com](mailto:encroach@mindspring.com)

### **"I Like It Too" Performance Art Workshop**

Intensive performance art workshop; no experience necessary and beginners encouraged. Expand interest and commitment in developing a wider range of self-expression. Innovations of music while using multidisciplinary stage art. Push your physical, mental and creative abilities to the edge. Make strong and instinctual connections

Date: Tuesday, August 29, 2006  
Time: 5:30pm-7:30pm  
Duration: 120 minutes  
Category: Classes/Workshops  
Hosted by/Camp Name: Lavadio / Ascension Tribe  
Email: [Draco@ascensiontribe.com](mailto:Draco@ascensiontribe.com)

### **Daily at The LAB**

The Department of Mental Technology joins forces with Playa Video and Nuclear Family to create one outrageous interactive theme camp!  
The DMT MENTAL HOSPITAL specializes in curing a painful infliction known as 'Sanity'. Our sexy DMT doctors and nurses give mental patients a thorough physical examination while testing their hopes and fears on religion, sex, addiction, and more. From 4-8 PM our Phunny Pharmacy will be filling prescriptions and administering our special 'Truth Serum' to enhance testing. Mental patients from the crowd and those treated on the playa are invited back in the evening to participate in our probing mass psychology 'grope therapy', as DMT performs nightly experiments at 10 PM. Experience LA's finest performance artists, musicians, DJ's, and fire masters on our stage nightly from 4 pm -2 am. View offbeat movies from 2- 8 am on our giant inflatable screen. Participate in a fire-spinning and staff workshop in the early evenings, led by masters from the Phoenix Project. Ongoing in the Pharmacy ... enjoy a spontaneous massage, rest your weary brain in our furry out-patient lounge, or try your hand at Dart Board Diagnostics to see if you have what it takes to become a DMT field technician.

Date: Tuesday, August 29, 2006 - Saturday, September 2, 2006 (every Day)  
Time: 4:00pm-11:00am  
Duration: 1140 minutes  
Category: Performance  
Hosted by/Camp Name: The LAB (DMT/Playa Video/Nuclear Family)

### **Storytelling**

Come to Scheherazade to hear and tell stories. We have a comfy space and pile of books. Or bring your own story if you would like.

Date: Monday, August 28, 2006 - Friday, September 1, 2006 (every Day)  
Time: 1:00pm-3:00pm  
Duration: 120 minutes  
Category: Classes/Workshops  
Hosted by/Camp Name: GrÃville  
Email: erikaharris@gmail.com

**Alien-Monkey-Love-Nest Talent stage!**

Come visit our world famous talent stage during the worst part of the day. See (and perform) amazing talents such as - nude irish step dancing, Monkey chanting, mixing drinks with chainsaws and much more! No talent is too weird (though we do keep the daytime show at PG-13 level).

Oh, and did I mention the PENDANTS!

Date: Monday, August 28, 2006 - Saturday, September 2, 2006 (every Day)  
Time: 2:00pm-4:00pm  
Duration: 120 minutes  
Category: Daily Events  
Hosted by/Camp Name: Alien-Monkey-Love-Nest  
Event URL: <http://www.alienmonkeylove.net>  
Email: [innodomo@yahoo.com](mailto:innodomo@yahoo.com)

**N.P.R.'S This American Life (Snack and Story Time)**

Do you love National Public Radio? We Do! Come beat the heat and enjoy a tasty snack while listening to one of our favorite "This American Life" radio programs. All Ages Event.

Date: Monday, August 28, 2006 - Sunday, September 3, 2006 (every Day)  
Time: 2:00pm-3:30pm  
Duration: 90 minutes  
Category: Daily Events  
Hosted by/Camp Name: DeMaTerial  
Email: [mamasnail@gmail.com](mailto:mamasnail@gmail.com)

**Center Camp Cafe Speaker Program**

Join us at 2pm daily at the Spoken Word Stage in the Center Camp Cafe for a different speaker every day...ranging in subject matter from year-round community to Leave No Trace!

Date: Monday, August 28, 2006 - Sunday, September 3, 2006 (every Day)  
Time: 2:00pm-3:00pm  
Duration: 60 minutes  
Category: Daily Events  
Email: [poboy@burningman.com](mailto:poboy@burningman.com)

**Muses'Ark parade**

we wander and wonder on the playa and streets of BRC, with our giant puppets, followed by the dragon. Come with us, all puppeteers and dragueers welcome.

Date: Monday, August 28, 2006 - Sunday, September 3, 2006 (every Day)  
Time: 1:00pm-5:00pm  
Duration: 240 minutes  
Category: Parades  
Hosted by/Camp Name: Muses'Ark  
Event URL: <http://www.mendiburu.net/musesark/>  
Email: [bm@3dtv.fr](mailto:bm@3dtv.fr)

### **Evening News at Burning Man TV**

Watch the BMTV evening news at 5:00, 6:00, and 11:00 pm at our camp and enjoy a cocktail from our bar, "The Thirst Amendment".

Date: Tuesday, August 29, 2006 - Saturday, September 2, 2006 (every Day)  
Time: 5:00pm-6:00pm  
Duration: 60 minutes  
Category: Daily Events  
Hosted by/Camp Name: Burning Man TV

### **Quixote's Cabaret is back and it needs you!**

Roll Up, Roll UP, come and see the wonderful show at Quixote's Cabaret Club and Bar

Are you a comely cabaret performer, a bawdy burlesque or a riotous goodtime gal/guy with an act to impress the discerning citizens of Black Rock? If so Quixote's needs you. Quixote's is a cabaret club and bar where you can come and realise your Cabaret fantasies, either as a performer or as an audience member

We are looking for performers. From stand-up comics to sword-juggling strippers, we want your help to produce three evenings of Playa chaos. So don't be shy. We've got the staging, we've got the sounds, we have the lights and now we need you.

If you'd like to be part of the Quixote's experience Pop in, have a drink, grab a chair and say hello.

Date: Tuesday, August 29, 2006  
Time: 7:00pm-9:00pm  
Duration: 120 minutes  
Category: Performance  
Hosted by/Camp Name: Quixote's Cabaret Club & Bar  
Event URL: <http://www.qccb.org>  
Email: [ukmontyuk@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ukmontyuk@yahoo.co.uk)

### **Bill W. Theater**

Bill W Theater presents My Name is Bill W. veiwed on three tv screens. Also as an added double feature the tear jurker Days of Wine and Roses

Date: Tuesday, August 29, 2006  
Time: 8:00pm-11:00pm  
Duration: 180 minutes  
Category: AA Meeting  
Hosted by/Camp Name: Hokey Pokey Destiny  
Email: [marvo03@direcway.com](mailto:marvo03@direcway.com)

### **Burning Man: The Musical!**

It's greasier than Grease, catier than Cats and hairier than Hair! Don't miss this production starring all your favourite Black Rock clichés.

Sing along as the BRC Rangers, the Frat Boys, the Ravers, and a Larry Harvey look-a-like belt out original lyrics to a score straight from a karaoke machine.

Want to join us?

We need cast members to fill some roles. Only a ten minute rehearsal requirement because this is quality theatre.

Date: Tuesday, August 29, 2006 - Thursday, August 31, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 8:00pm-8:20pm

Duration: 20 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: The Lost Penguin

Event URL: <http://www.thelostpenguincafe.com>

Email: [dmckay@nma.ca](mailto:dmckay@nma.ca)

### **Improv Jam**

A wicked-fun jam of theatre improv games to unleash your creative beast. Everyone welcome! Led by Ginette on Tues, Wed and Thurs nights after 'Burning Man: The Musical!'

Date: Tuesday, August 29, 2006 - Thursday, August 31, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 8:15pm-9:00pm

Duration: 45 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: The Lost Penguin

Event URL: <http://www.thelostpenguincafe.com>

### **Tinpan Ted, Last of the Singing Prospectors.**

As free and authentic as a Mojave tumbleweed, Tinpan Ted -- Last of the Singing Prospectors -- facilitates an investigation of the fundamental American mythos through traditional, contemporary, and original cowboy songs delivered on his trusty harmonica.

Event Time: Sundown, and occasionally elsewhere as the mood may strike.

Event Location: Wherever the Playa wind may blow him.

Date: Monday, August 28, 2006 - Sunday, September 3, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 8:00pm-9:00pm

Duration: 60 minutes

Category: Music Events

Email: [nomadichuntergatherer@hotmail.com](mailto:nomadichuntergatherer@hotmail.com)

### **Radical Self-Expression Hour**

This is what it's all about! Rant, sing, dance, strip, laugh, break through your personal barriers in a warm and supportive atmosphere. We will help you through your radical transformation.

Date: Tuesday, August 29, 2006 - Friday, September 1, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 10:00pm-11:00pm  
Duration: 60 minutes  
Category: Daily Events  
Hosted by/Camp Name: Clevian Camp in Snowflake Village  
Email: [eric@clevian.com](mailto:eric@clevian.com)

### **Black Rock Bible Burning Party**

This is a baptism by fire into the rational future. Join us as we bid farewell to the irrational religions of the past and clear the way for the New Scientism. Bring your Bibles, Torahs, Qurans, Rig Vedas, Dianetics, Bhagavad Vitas, Tao Te Chings, etc and ritualistically set them ablaze. We will burn them all!

Note: This is strictly a BYORD event (Bring Your Own Religious Doctrine).

Date: Wednesday, August 30, 2006

Time: 7:59am-8:59am

Duration: 60 minutes

Category: Burnings

Hosted by/Camp Name: True Prophet

### **Guerrilla Poetry Open Mic**

Guerrilla Poetry Insurgency, bringing peace rhymes for wartimes and words of hope for a better future.

Daily open-mics: musicians and poets come make your voices heard!

Date: Monday, August 28, 2006 - Sunday, September 3, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 10:00am-10:00pm

Duration: 720 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: Divination Nation

Event URL: <http://www.guerrillapoets.org/>

Email: [celtic\\_moonfire13@yahoo.com](mailto:celtic_moonfire13@yahoo.com)

### **The ME Show**

Two hour workshop where it really IS all about you. You'll explore identity and persona by telling some of the stories of your lives. This is a fantastic first step towards creating a solo theatrical piece for presentation or simply understanding yourself as the playwright of your life. Using creativity exercises and improvisation you will examine the life you have written for yourself up to now and be empowered to create your soul satisfying next act. There will also be an opportunity to perform your story at the "This One Time, At Burning Man..." stage at Harper's Bizarre in Burning Silicon.

Date: Wednesday, August 30, 2006

Time: 2:00pm-4:00pm

Duration: 120 minutes

Category: Classes/Workshops

Hosted by/Camp Name: Fresh at Deep Heaven

Event URL: <http://deepheaven.org>

Email: [novon@aol.com](mailto:novon@aol.com)

### **My art: hobby or profession? Salon discussion**

It can be difficult to make a living as an artist, and many artists in our culture don't work primarily as artists. This salon is designed for participants to discuss the relationship between art and work. Questions to explore include: Is your artwork a diversion, a serious endeavour, a source of income, or some combination of these? If your art is not your main profession, how do your art and your profession relate to one another? Is a day job harmful or helpful to an artist's work? How can an artist who needs another source of income successfully balance art and work? If your art is your main source of income, how did you make it so?

Date: Wednesday, August 30, 2006

Time: 3:00pm-5:00pm

Duration: 120 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: Spiralteria! in the Alternative Energy Zone

Email: [dirtgoddess@pressthebutton.com](mailto:dirtgoddess@pressthebutton.com)

### **Fascist Fashion Show**

Brush up the old jack boots and dust off your best tyrannical togs for the 2nd annual APOKILIPTIKA Fascist Fashion Show.

Categories include best men's, best women's, best couple's and best despotic drag costumes.

Date: Wednesday, August 30, 2006

Time: 3:00pm-4:00pm

Duration: 60 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: Victoria's Pink Taco's

Event URL: <http://www.apokiliptika.com>

### **JACKASS: the human pinata**

JACKASS the human pinata gives you a chance to wield a club or stick and bludgeon a real live person, the bane of trance lovers everywhere, JACKASS aka DJ Whatever. Hate your ego centric bullhorn wielding campmates? Come take your aggression out on Jackass.

Hosted by Gates Ballard and Matt Conlon as the Pinata.

Date: Tuesday, August 29, 2006 - Friday, September 1, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 4:20pm-5:29pm

Duration: 69 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: Area 47/spaced virgins

Email: [gatesballard@gmail.com](mailto:gatesballard@gmail.com)

### **Gold Parade**

Wear your best gold and join us for our last gold parade. We will assemble at the Children of Chaos camp at 4:30 pm on Wednesday, and the parade will start at 5:00. Bring your gold finery. If you don't have gold costume, we will do our best to get you decked out. Cocktails in camp after the parade.

Date: Wednesday, August 30, 2006

Time: 4:30pm-6:00pm

Duration: 90 minutes

Category: Parades

Hosted by/Camp Name: Children of Chaos

Event URL: [http://home.comcast.net/~imstevens/chaos\\_camp.html](http://home.comcast.net/~imstevens/chaos_camp.html)

Email: [capt\\_n\\_vic@yahoo.com](mailto:capt_n_vic@yahoo.com)

### **Chez Snugglé Burlesque Show**

For dessert, the salacious strumpets of Snuggletown! will treat you with a spectacle of erotic ecstasy at Chez Snugglé! Mmmm.

Date: Wednesday, August 30, 2006

(Updated: Wednesday, July 19, 2006 12:59pm)

Time: 8:00pm-9:00pm

Duration: 60 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: Snuggletown!

Event URL: <http://www.snuggletown.org>

Email: [czar@snuggletown.org](mailto:czar@snuggletown.org)

### **Cult of Distraction - Cypress Lounge**

Location: Center Camp Sector

Chance & 6:30, Black Rock City, NV

When: Wednesday, August 30, 8:00pm

Hey everybody between 5::30 and 6:30 on Chance, let's have a block party.

This will give us all a chance to meet and great, if we haven't yet, and to formally check out each other's camps.

We are having a super hero party this night, so play along with that, or do your own theme, or do no theme, but let's all open our camps up to each other, and the rest of BRC, and make it a great night.

BRC block parties are best when as many camps participate as possible. Drag your bars out, turn the lights on, and crank the music. Bring your art cars to show off, throw some fire, or just sit and have a drink and get to know your neighbors. Hey, we can even gossip about those annoying neighbors behind their backs!!!

### **Confessions of a Dope Dealer**

Sheldon Norberg's shamanic odyssey into American drug culture, is guaranteed to blow your mind.

Find out more at

<http://www.sheldonnorberg.com>

Date: Wednesday, August 30, 2006 - Thursday, August 31, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 9:00pm-10:30pm

Duration: 90 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: Entheon Village

Event URL: <http://www.ADopeDealer.com>

Email: [sheldoni@adopeddealer.com](mailto:sheldoni@adopeddealer.com)

### **Visionary Art Slide Talk**

Alex Grey will talk about the History of Visionary Art.

Date: Monday, August 28, 2006 - Wednesday, August 30, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 9:00pm-10:30pm

Duration: 90 minutes

Category: Classes/Workshops

Hosted by/Camp Name: CoSM Dome @ Entheon Village

Event URL: <http://www.cosm.org>

Email: [info@cosm.org](mailto:info@cosm.org)

### **Hookahdome Fire Spin Jam**

Pssst! Hey, you! Them fine people of the Hookahdome want yer best fire twirling toys in their front yard again for an uninterrupted, knee-slappin', bootie honkin', schlong dongin', twirlie dirlin' good time: THE 3RD ANNUAL FIRE SPINNING JAMBOREE! Remember how good it was last year? It's going to be even better this year! All because of you, and we're all warm and tingly thinking about it! All skills levels welcome. Bring spam and/or twinkies to share (optional).

Date: Wednesday, August 30, 2006

Time: 9:00pm-2:00am

Duration: 300 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: Hookahdome

Event URL: <http://www.hookahdome.com>

### **WHOREAPALOOZA 2006: STRIPPER HO-DOWN**

We got Whiskey, We got Whores, what else do you fucking need? YOU, strutting your stuff 'round our shiny STRIPPER POLE! Bring costumes and props, and--if you can--a CD or iPod with your favorite song to get necked to. It's equal opportunity nudity: Guys and gals of all variations encouraged...So come wow us with your dexterity! Amuse us with your ineptitude! Thrill us with your theatrics! Be creative, and make us laugh—or turn us on! Bring bribes (wink, wink) and compete for the prize! Be there or be...WAY too clothed!

Date: Wednesday, August 30, 2006

Time: 9:00pm-12:00am

Duration: 180 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: The Whiskey & Whores Saloon

Email: [WhiskeyStage \[at\] gmail \[dot\] com](mailto:WhiskeyStage[at]gmail[dot]com)

### **Pole Dance Revolution**

A dance performance game that brings out the inner erotic dancer in each of us. A pulsating eight foot wand of light guides the dancer's limbs and body to intricate and exotic poses. Audience participation is expected and enthusiastically encouraged. Learn and practice sexy moves you can take to any playa pole. Please arrive with a squeaky clean body (lotions/sunscreen makes the pole unsafe!) and a skimpy outfit.

Date: Monday, August 28, 2006 - Sunday, September 3, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 11:11pm-2:44am  
Duration: 213 minutes  
Category: Daily Events  
Hosted by/Camp Name: Ascension Tribe  
Event URL: [http://www.ascensiontribe.com/theme\\_camp/schedule/](http://www.ascensiontribe.com/theme_camp/schedule/)  
Email: [pdr2006@bmackey.com](mailto:pdr2006@bmackey.com)

### **Silent White Procession**

Now in it's fourth year, the Silent White Procession is a chance to revel in the quite of dawn, and the beauty of wearing white, while making a reverant procession to the temple. Meet at Diva Boot Camp, or start your own procession from your camp.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006  
Time: 4:44am

### **Slave Auction**

The Temple of Atonement's 10th Annual Slave Auction - Join TOA at high noon as we buy and sell the Burningman community. Bid for a personal servant, or better yet be that servant! Slaves are auctioned off, offering themselves or services they will provide to the prospective buyer. The buyers in turn bid for the offered services in exchange for swag (various wanted or sought-after items by TOA). Bidding as you can imagine gets pretty intense, as auctioned goods & services can be quite appealing. Not sure what to barter? Check our website and leave the sheep eyeballs at home.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006  
Time: 12:00pm-2:00pm  
Duration: 120 minutes  
Category: Daily Events  
Hosted by/Camp Name: Temple of Atonement

### **Critical Dicks March**

Stand tall for manhood!

The annual Critical Dicks March welcomes all genders, orientations, and disorientations. If you are not naturally blessed with a dick, please bring a long a reasonable fucsimile. In front of The Man. (Where else?)

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006  
Time: 12:01pm-1:01pm Duration: 60 minutes  
Category: Parades  
Hosted by/Camp Name: Bedlam!  
Event URL: <http://tribes.tribe.net/criticaldicks>  
Email: [nekkidjim@comcast.net](mailto:nekkidjim@comcast.net)

### **5th Annual French Maid Brigade Parade**

It's more of an invasion than a parade, but don't let that scare you. Recruitment is open from now until the end of our main assault, so bring your non-feather dusters, vacuums, sexy tushes, and worst possible French accents. We shall need all of these in our fight to liberate Black Rock citizens from fear into a mentality of hope by

transforming the collective Mind from dust consciousness to a state of Clarity. We shall dust our way through all the filthy camps on the way to Center Camp Café where we arrive in a flurry of triumph and liberation.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006

Time: 2:00pm-5:00pm

Duration: 180 minutes

Category: Parades

Hosted by/Camp Name: Le Consulat General de France a Black Rock City

Email: [christianfine@yahoo.com](mailto:christianfine@yahoo.com)

### **PlayaQ Iron Chef Battle: Smoked Meat Invitational**

The 1st Annual Playa Q Iron Chef Battle continues with the Smoked Meat Invitational category. PlayaQ-ers dream about smoked meat so you can bet today's competition will be a real battle! Watch as the competitors unveil their entries, bribe the judges and entertain the crowds. Points awarded for taste and style. Each days winner will receive a category title belt, an ultimate champion will be crowned Sunday. All entrants must pre-register at the PlayaQ kitchen, provide food receipts from an approved source, and follow strict health code compliant preparation methods.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006

Time: 2:00pm-2:30pm

Duration: 30 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: PlayaQ

Event URL: <http://www.playaq.com>

Email: [sossboss@playaq.com](mailto:sossboss@playaq.com)

### **Poetry Jukebox at Center Camp**

The Poetry Jukebox aka Richard Lang gives voice to variety of works, over 107 poems, from such writers as Eliot, Stevens, Oliver, Neruda, Shakespeare, Rilke, Yeats, and more. The crafty rococo Jukebox was created by Judith Selby Lang. Poems are given freely to participants and passerbys.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006 - Saturday, September 2, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 2:00pm-3:00pm

Duration: 60 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: Richard Lang

Email: [richard@trilliumpress.com](mailto:richard@trilliumpress.com)

### **Puppet-Making and Improv Puppet Shows**

Come and make some hilarious puppets to put straight to use in Improvisational Puppet shows.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006 - Friday, September 1, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 3:00pm-6:00pm

Duration: 180 minutes

Category: Classes/Workshops

Hosted by/Camp Name: Collective Regeneration

Email: [irisclearwater@fmgirl.com](mailto:irisclearwater@fmgirl.com)

### **G Spot Happy Hour**

Come find the G Spot for stimulation, excitement, inspiration, libation, levitation and extreme satisfaction every afternoon from 3 to 7pm. Visit our two "Anatomically Correct Drink Dispensers", jump on our tramps (trampolines that is), swing on the stripper pole, and git down and dirty to the best disco, house, breaks, and soul the playa afternoon has ever seen.

Date: Tuesday, August 29, 2006 - Sunday, September 3, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 3:00pm-7:00pm

Duration: 240 minutes

Category: Daily Events

Hosted by/Camp Name: G-Spot

Email: [lauren@laurenfox.com](mailto:lauren@laurenfox.com)

### **2006 BURNINGMAN FASHION SHOW**

Fashion show- "Future: hope and fear" inspired by this years burn.

Burningman designers have uniquely executed their views of the future, through fashion.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006

Time: 4:00pm-5:00pm

Duration: 60 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: Trashistan

Email: [ideationalfashion@gmail.com](mailto:ideationalfashion@gmail.com)

### **Animal Bike Stampede!**

IT'S A STAMPEDE! Yeeeeeehaw! The Second Annual Animal Bike Stampede will be rolling across the playa, and needs YOUR animal bike. Unicorns, giraffes, and dragonflies are all welcome...the more creative, the better! Starting from the Man at 4PM, we will circle several times, then take off in a herd to places unknown. Ride 'em cowgirl, and hold on tight for a raucous adventure! Expect bubble gun shootouts, canteen cocktails, and cowboy rustlin' as part of the fun.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006

Time: 4:00pm-5:00pm

Duration: 60 minutes

Category: Parades

Hosted by/Camp Name: Camp Bearly There

Email: [labecvar@yahoo.com](mailto:labecvar@yahoo.com)

### **LITTLE BLACK DRESS PARADE**

Dahlings (ALL sexes) put on your most flattering LBD (Little Black Dress) + jewelery, hats & gloves, and Gather for the Cocktail Hour, followed by PARADING & PARTY HOPPING accompanied by BURNING BAND! Don't forget your comfortable shoes, cup, mask, sunglasses or goggles, and night lights!

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006

Time: 4:00pm  
Category: Parades  
Hosted by/Camp Name: The Playground  
Event URL: <http://www.burnerplayground.com/>  
Email: [Barcardia@aol.com](mailto:Barcardia@aol.com)

### **Black Rock City high School Graduation**

Always wanted to get your high school diploma, but never had the time? Black Rock City high School is Live and Legal! enroll and Graduate at the Spoken Word stage at Center Camp cafe'. there will be an Orientation, Ceremony, and of course, a Party! Congratulations Graduate! Let the "healing power" of a real high school diploma change your life! Diploma's are limited; please don't apply for one if you don't need it.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006  
Time: 4:00pm-5:00pm  
Duration: 60 minutes  
Category: Classes/Workshops  
Hosted by/Camp Name: Black Rock City High School  
Email: [horizonhighschool@sbcglobal.net](mailto:horizonhighschool@sbcglobal.net)

### **Goddess Dance**

Calling all Goddesses! Ladies, join us as we recall the ancient days of priestesses in the temples, expressing, connecting, rejoicing, and experiencing the Divine through the movement and wisdom of our bodies.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006  
Time: 4:00pm-6:00pm  
Duration: 120 minutes  
Hosted by/Camp Name: Meg & Mel of Cathedral Camp  
Email: [mightyberb@yahoo.com](mailto:mightyberb@yahoo.com)

### **Strip Jeopardy**

So you think you know it all? Come show us what you've got in this battle of wits, tits, and naughty bits. Come an hour early if you want to play (only three contestants per game) and wear at least ten articles of clothing. Prizes for all and bragging rights for the winners. Audience participation will be encouraged and rewarded.

Date: Tuesday, August 29, 2006 - Thursday, August 31, 2006 (every Day)  
Time: 4:00pm-6:00pm  
Duration: 120 minutes  
Hosted by/Camp Name: Strip Jeopardy  
Email: [stripjeopardy@yahoo.com](mailto:stripjeopardy@yahoo.com)

### **Daily at the LAB**

The DMT Mental Hospital will be curing sanity daily. Our mental doctors and nurses will start with a thorough physical examination before testing for hopes and fears on religion, sex, addiction, and more. Our Phunny Pharmacy will be filling prescriptions, running 'Grope Therapy' sessions, and

administering our special 'Truth Serum' from 4-8 PM. All mental patients are then invited back to the Playa Video Laboratory at 10 PM, to participate in our probing mass psychology experiments.

Date: Wednesday, August 30, 2006 - Saturday, September 2, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 4:00pm-12:00pm

Duration: 1200 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: The LAB (DMT/Playa Video/Nuclear Family)

Email: [katherine@katphish.net](mailto:katherine@katphish.net)

### **Pennsylvania Pride Parade**

Keystoners, bring your Yuengling, bring your scrapple, bring your shoo fly pie and join in the celebration of the greatest state in the history of statekind. Learn the unofficial Pennsylvania State Song and march together in Brotherly Love. Wear blue and gold. Meet at The Lost Penguin.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006

Time: 4:07pm-10:23am

Duration: 1096 minutes

Category: Parades

Hosted by/Camp Name: The Lost Penguin

Event URL: <http://visitpa.com>

Email: [breakfastmusic@yahoo.com](mailto:breakfastmusic@yahoo.com)

### **Cameltoepia's Cameltoe IDOL**

Come show the TOE while singing your favorite Karaoke tunes and become Burning Man's 2006 Cameltoe Idol!!

Cameltoepia returns to the 'future'! 2005's Cameltoe Fashion Show brought out some amazing and talented Moose Knuckles, Pink Taco's, Catcher's Mitts, Beaver Cleavers, Ninja Slipper's & more Man Toe than we ever hoped and feared!

Thursday @ 4:20 – 'til we can't TOE it anymore!!!!

More reasons to come:

Surprise DJ busting out some awesome TOE jams,

99 and SamelTOE's anniversiTOE & farewell,

TOEminique's Bday,

FlippatTOE's DeTOEvination,

Welcome back TOEby,

StraiTOE's farewell,

ShnapTOE & TOEmance return?,

Watch GaTOE & Sean burn the tonight oil.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006

Time: 4:20pm-6:20pm

Duration: 120 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: Cameltoepia

Email: [yvonne@primordialent.com](mailto:yvonne@primordialent.com)

### **Burning Bellies Invasion**

It is time again to dust off your belly dance clothes and gather at Terra Nova (formerly Pyramid Scheme) for a parade of impromptu belly dance culminating with a dance out at the man. Dancers of all shapes, sizes and ability levels welcome. Musicians strongly encouraged. Please note the date change from Friday to Thursday. This replaces the usual Friday invasion.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006

Time: 4:30pm-6:30pm

Duration: 120 minutes

Category: Parades

Hosted by/Camp Name: Terra Nova

Event URL: <http://www.water-brother.com/bellies>

Email: [katisca@yahoo.com](mailto:katisca@yahoo.com)

### **The World's Largest Spooning -- T h e S P O O N I N G**

Join our World's Record attempt for the longest unbroken chain of people Spooning! The Spooning is an installation of intentional meditation where participants can practice the mindful action of safe, nurturing spooning by laying down together to form a double-armed Fibonacci spiral, the same spiral found throughout nature. Be there at 4:30pm; we'll lay down for a mere 30 minutes (or so). Bring a blanket, or just lay on the playa...it's the Spooning, not the stuff, that matters! Volunteers will help you find your place in the spiral. Bring friends! Located at 5 o'clock, between the Man and Esplanade.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006

Time: 4:30pm-5:25pm

Duration: 55 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: Gratitude

Event URL: <http://www.thespooning.info>

Email: [gratitude@thespooning.info](mailto:gratitude@thespooning.info)

### **The Miss Black Rock City 2006 Main Event**

Finalists from the Preliminary Event on Wednesday (open to all men + women) will reveal their unique inner beauty in these three categories: \*Future Wear: The hope + fear for the future of fashion. \*2 Minute Talent Competition: No rules, everyone has a talent be it a stupid party trick or a fine art! \*Interview: Do they do it for world peace, the children, or for the puppies? All finalists are beautiful and everyone wins by participating. Fabulous gifts include custom handmade tiaras and an aerial tour of the playa with pilot Adam Meyerson. Hosted by StacycatS.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006 - Thursday, August 31, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 5:00pm-6:00pm

Duration: 60 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: Disorient

Event URL: <http://www.missblackrockcity.com>

Email: [stacycats@missblackrockcity.com](mailto:stacycats@missblackrockcity.com)

### **Skynyrd Redneck Variety Hour**

Open mike & stage for comedy, music, paranoid rants, freak show, stripping, whatever it is you'll do in front of a crowd of drunks. Chicken wire screen and bar drinks provided gratis for performers at management discretion. Early evenings daily at the Camp Skynyrd Bar, Gigsville. Hosted by Blammo the Klown.

Date: Monday, August 28, 2006 - Saturday, September 2, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 5:00pm-7:00pm

Duration: 120 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: Camp Skynyrd in Gigsville

Email: [drmojo@gigsville.org](mailto:drmojo@gigsville.org)

### **10th Annual BILLION BUNNY MARCH + Afterparty**

Gather from 4-6 at Billion Bunnies Fur & Loafing Camp, to bunnify and prepare over cocktails. At 6pm, we march to the Cafe to read our Bunnifesto! Then march out to the Man to protest humanity and bunnify the world! Afterparty at Billion Bunnies Camp with libations and bunny music!

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006

Time: 6:00pm-10:00pm

Duration: 240 minutes

Category: Parades

Hosted by/Camp Name: Billion Bunnies: Fur & Loafing

Email: [sraspa@laughingsquid.com](mailto:sraspa@laughingsquid.com)

### **The Magic Hour at Geisha Palace**

The Magic Hour at Geisha Palace: Extraordinary close-up magic show by Mio daily Tuesday - Friday from 6:00 - 7:00 pm.

Date: Tuesday, August 29, 2006 - Friday, September 1, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 6:00pm-7:00pm

Duration: 60 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: Geisha Palace

### **CAMP MONTAGE PREMIERE**

CAMP MONTAGE ART GALLERY OPENS TODAY!

ART IS BM! BM IS LIFE! SEE THE TRIBUTE TO THE RESIDENTS OF BRC AND FIND YOURSELF IN THE CAPTURED MEMORIES OF 2005 PARTICIPATING PHOTOGRAPHERS HONORED! CHILL SPACE!

Behind Avalon Village

Date: Wednesday, August 30, 2006 - Sunday, September 3, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 6:00pm-2:00am

Duration: 480 minutes

Category: Daily Events

Hosted by/Camp Name: Camp Montage

Email: [CAMPMONTAGE.COM](mailto:CAMPMONTAGE.COM)

**The Ultimate Star Wars light saber battle.**

Join us, or perish!

All Jedi, Padawans, and Sith are to report to center camp, 3:00 and 9:00 for the reenactment of the battle of Geonosis. Over 3,000 light sabers will be given out. With our armies of blades, we can battle all through the night in an ultimate dance of certainty.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006

Time: 6:30pm-2:30am

Duration: 480 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: Wattos Junk yard

Email: [returnthecloonesback@gmail.com](mailto:returnthecloonesback@gmail.com)

### **Phish Show on the Playa**

Join us as we play one of Phish's most epic shows. We'll make the grilled cheese, you bring the schwillies. Search for Phish Show on the e-playa, or look for the money tree between 3:30 and 4:30.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006

Time: 7:00pm-10:00pm

Duration: 180 minutes

Category: Music Events

Hosted by/Camp Name: Lemon Tree

Email: [fluffhead@gmail.com](mailto:fluffhead@gmail.com)

### **Erotic Mathematical Performance Art**

Meet me at dusk at the mobius strip for an erotic experience that combines the beauty of mathematics with the sensuality of the body. I will also be setting the mobius strip ablaze!

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006

Time: 7:00pm-8:00pm

Duration: 60 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: Sarah B

Email: [infinitycool@hotmail.com](mailto:infinitycool@hotmail.com)

### **Thursday Night Center Camp Cafe Variety Show**

Thursday Night Variety Show: 7pm to 3am. A mixed-up, mish-mashed mash-up of wonderous performers from here there and everywhere...from marching bands to tse flies! Come and get it!

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006

Time: 7:00pm-3:00am

Duration: 480 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name:

Email: [tanya@burningman.com](mailto:tanya@burningman.com)

### **Conga Line on the Playa**

Come and Dance in the Conga Line Led by the Legandary Margaritavillejetski Art Car. Lets create the longest Conga line in history at BRC. Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006 - Sunday, September 3, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 8:00pm-8:10pm

Duration: 10 minutes

Category: Music Events

Hosted by/Camp Name: Dale Gerber

Email: [texwild@hughes.net](mailto:texwild@hughes.net)

### **Poe's Prohibition Parlor**

Fear is an empty bottle in a time of temperance. We must never forget the blight upon this good nation that was the 18th Amendment. And so, the folks at BloodyMaryLand offer you a trip back in time to hang with the original iconoclasts. The Lost Generation. Meet us in our speakeasy, located near 4:00 and the outer ring. Tell the doorman "Edgar sent me". The feds will be here by morning, and they can only ask questions if there is "proof". Drink from the barrels, meet our cigarette girls, enjoy some jazz . Flapper wear, fedoras, and suits encouraged!

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006

Time: 8:00pm-11:00pm

Duration: 180 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: BloodyMaryLand

Email: [alisonchilla@yahoo.com](mailto:alisonchilla@yahoo.com)

### **Fight Club!**

The Temple of Atonement proudly presents the return of FIGHT CLUB!

An opportunity to generate some heat, sweat and tears once more as the sun descends and the stars appear in the skies above. Submission, freestyle, Greco-Roman, and No-Holds-Barred wrestlers & fighters meet up and pair off by weight, experience and style. This event is all-inclusive: women, men, transgender, hetero, gay and bisexual are all welcome. The second hour will be open for nude oil wrestling. Bring a towel.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006

Time: 8:00pm-10:00pm

Duration: 120 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: Temple of Atonement

### **Rock'Em Sock'Em Robots!**

You're walking along the Playa thinking about your childhood and how simple it was to be amused. Suddenly, as a mirage, two robots loom before you. It's Rock'Em Sock'Em Robots, from your youth, but this time they're big enough to knock \*your\* block off. You climb into the boxing ring and climb into the Blue Bomber, and suddenly you've become an 8 foot tall robot fighting machine. Your trusty companion grabs hold of the steering controls outside the ring, while your two combatants gear up in the Red Rocker. The hot arena lights pound down on you while the crowd cheers you on. You hear the bell ring, and the fight is on!

Date: Wednesday, August 30, 2006 - Friday, September 1, 2006 (every Day)  
Time: 8:00pm-9:30pm  
Duration: 90 minutes  
Category: Performance  
Hosted by/Camp Name: Ultra Stunt Danger Academy  
Event URL: [http://ultrastuntdangeracademy.com/Projects/RockEm\\_SockEm\\_Robots/](http://ultrastuntdangeracademy.com/Projects/RockEm_SockEm_Robots/)  
Email: [rockemsockemrobots@daveola.com](mailto:rockemsockemrobots@daveola.com)

### **Z Spot: the Zombie Musical**

Zombies, those ravenous cannibalistic creatures of the night, have clawed their way up from the grave and into the middle of Homecoming festivities at St. Sebastian High School! Watch in terror as the hapless students and faculty bravely fight the infestation of the undead hordes, and shiver as the zombies stumble and moan on their neverending quest for sweet, delicious, candy-like brains! The zombies' primary weakness? Showtunes and disco music. They just LOVE to boogie.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006  
Time: 9:00pm-10:00pm  
Duration: 60 minutes  
Category: Performance  
Hosted by/Camp Name: DC Burner Choir  
Event URL: <http://www.zspotthemusical.com>  
Email: [eccyntric@gmail.com](mailto:eccyntric@gmail.com)

### **Flaming Blue Thursday**

7 Sins Lounge welcomes you to the 6th annual Flaming Blue Thursday. This celebration includes smooth rhythms, friendly games and pleasing potions. As you arrive, you will be greeted by our host Sinner and officially welcomed to the friendliest little pub on the playa. You will then be directed to our host bartender and invited to toast the approaching night with a Flaming Blue Phuck. Enjoy the company of your fellow Sinners as they watch other new friends get Phucked. Take a spin at the 7 Sins Wheel of Redemption. Remember to start your sins at 7!!!

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006  
Time: 9:00pm-1:00am  
Duration: 240 minutes  
Hosted by/Camp Name: 7 Sins Lounge  
Event URL: <http://www.7sinslounge.org>  
Email: [hellkickball@yahoo.com](mailto:hellkickball@yahoo.com)

### **Maria Mango**

Ukulele and guitar songstress. Whether busking on the Haight, performing in Hawaiian clubs, or serenading Burners on the Playa, she poses the same question eloquently asked by another musician -- "What's so funny about peace, love and understanding?" -- and shows us all that one can live with grace, beauty, and positive energy in a broken world.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006  
Time: 9:00pm-11:00pm

Duration: 120 minutes  
Category: Performance  
Hosted by/Camp Name: The Lost Penguin  
Event URL: <http://mariamango.com>  
Email: [mariamango@mariamango.com](mailto:mariamango@mariamango.com)

### **The PORN & EGGS PROM !!!!**

Cum undressed to impress.  
Girls with Boys, Boys with Boys, Girls with Girls, or... Girls (sorry, no solo boys at the PORN & EGGS PROM).  
Sexiest party on the Playa.  
Not to be missed.  
Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006  
Time: 10:00pm-1:00am  
Duration: 180 minutes  
Category: Performance  
Hosted by/Camp Name: Porn & Eggs  
Event URL: <http://www.PORNandEGGS.com>  
Email: [PORNandEGGS@Yahoo.com](mailto:PORNandEGGS@Yahoo.com)

### **Let your life flash before your...**

A 10 minute pyrotechnic dance with a Mexican fireworks bull, known as El Diablo, a flaming sword, and Lancers  
Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006  
Time: 11:00pm-11:10pm  
Duration: 10 minutes  
Category: Performance  
Hosted by/Camp Name: Cirque de Flambe  
Email: [maque@drizzle.com](mailto:maque@drizzle.com)

### **Hot Sex Fire Jam**

Who will be crowned the sexiest fire dancer on the playa? Categories: Men, Women, Couples, with some cool prizes this year.  
Contestants please arrive 15 minutes before the show. Fuel provided first come first serve.  
Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006  
Time: 11:00pm-2:00am  
Duration: 180 minutes  
Category: Performance  
Hosted by/Camp Name: ...and then there's only LOVE.  
Email: [jennifersteele69@hotmail.com](mailto:jennifersteele69@hotmail.com)

### **The XEssential Experience**

The XEssential Experience is a live performance that connects light and sound to exemplify the creative potential of the conscious human spirit. DJs, VJs, and

producers come together to create a dance environment that celebrates the awakening of the creator within.

Date: Thursday, August 31, 2006 - Saturday, September 2, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 11:59pm-3:59am

Duration: 240 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: XEssential

Event URL: <http://www.xessential.net>

Email: [info@xessential.net](mailto:info@xessential.net)

### **Free Range Hippie Roundup and BBQ**

Meet in Center Camp.

Self explanatory.

Bring your own patchouli.

Bring your own BBQ.

Actually, do you have one I could borrow too?

...and could you bring it over for me?

Charcoal too?

Got any lighter fluid?

Date: Friday, September 1, 2006

Time: 2:40am-5:20am

Duration: 160 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: Iron Rose

Event URL: <http://www.dykema.net/ironrose>

Email: [heidi@dykema.net](mailto:heidi@dykema.net)

### **Shaman Yusef's Funk and Mushroom Mad Tea Party**

The name says it all... grab your funky sunday best and join us for tea and refreshments!

Date: Friday, September 1, 2006

Time: 2:00pm-5:00pm

Duration: 180 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: Outpost 23

Event URL: <http://www.outpost23.org>

### **CRITICAL TITS 11th ANNUAL BIKE RIDE**

All women and girls are invited to join the coolest event and largest gathering of women on the Playa -- the Critical Tits Bicycle Ride. Meet at the Man at 4 pm (sharp) with bikes and painted chests. We'll celebrate the feminine power and beauty within each of us as we cruise the playa.

NEW THIS YEAR: Please bring a cup and refreshments to share with other riders at our new radical self reliance cocktail party. See [www.criticaltits.com](http://www.criticaltits.com) for more info.

Please respect that the ride is an event for women and girls only.

Date: Friday, September 1, 2006

Time: 4:00pm

Hosted by/Camp Name: Women on the Edge  
Event URL: <http://www.criticaltits.com>  
Email: [info@criticaltits.com](mailto:info@criticaltits.com)

#### **4th Annual ROMP of the Playa HOOKERS!!!**

Original playa hookers, glamourpuss Erica Candy Cane and Auntie Depressant (in her return to the playa after a spell at the funny farm), reunite to lead a glittery gaggle of glama-trashy-sexy-tragi-fabulousness in search of the seedy underworld of BRC (& a disco). One of the most anticipated & feared events on the playa! Gigolos & pimps also warmly welcomed. Get gussied up @ 3 pm at the Hope Yer Fearce Makeup Workshop.

DISCLAIMER: Although prostitution is legal in Nevada, the acceptance of money is strictly prohibited in BRC. Don't take the Playa Hookers too seriously...or they'll seriously take you!

Date: Friday, September 1, 2006

Time: 5:00pm-7:00pm

Duration: 120 minutes

Category: Parades

Hosted by/Camp Name: Comfort & Joy

Event URL: <http://www.klodhopper.com/joy>

Email: [erica@skimpee.com](mailto:erica@skimpee.com)

#### **Panty Camp's Fashion Show/Panty Awards**

Show off your best panty (or crafted panty creation) at Panty Camp's Fashion Show/Panty Awards! All participants in the Fashion Show will receive a special certificate of Panty goodness just for entering. Join us right at 5:30 p.m. for a pre-show Debriefing on the History of the Panty. Fashion Show will begin promptly at 6:00 p.m.

Date: Friday, September 1, 2006

Time: 5:30pm-6:30pm

Duration: 60 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: Panty Camp

Event URL: <http://www.pantycamp.net>

Email: [cotton@pantycamp.net](mailto:cotton@pantycamp.net)

#### **Princess Walk**

Join us for a walk around the playa in your bestest princess regalia. We will travel about the playa and show off our finery. An appropriately pink libation will be served to those who arrive in time... Queens, divas, princesses - all welcome. We'll meet in front of Spike's Bar and head out from Center Camp around 6:15 and go until we run out of steam...

Don't forget your wand and tiara!

Date: Friday, September 1, 2006

Time: 6:00pm-7:00pm

Duration: 60 minutes

Category: Parades

### **A Happy Hour (or two) Indeed!**

Happy hour cocktails and roof top pole dancing competition atop the Dragon Wagon. Judge and spectator 'viewing boxes' from below the Plexiglas dance floor. Come show us what you've got!

Date: Friday, September 1, 2006

Time: 6:00pm-8:00pm

Duration: 120 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: Fixxxation Station

### **Get Lost Fancy Feast**

Come dressed up in your (not so playa) finest and get lost at our annual Fancy Feast. Add some high-class style to your Friday night! Bask in the shade of our pole-dancing-ready dome. And no, we aren't talking conduit here. Only stainless steel for our special guests. Flamethrower Quesadillas and refreshing beverages for all.

Date: Friday, September 1, 2006

Time: 6:00pm-9:00pm

Duration: 180 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: Get Lost Main Dome

### **Center Camp Cafe Friday Night Variety Show**

The Annual Friday Night Center Camp Cafe Variety Show: 7pm-3am. A forward-looking and frighteningly fun night of freakadelic and fanciful performers from across the round thing we know and love and beyond the unknowable outer reaches of somewhere else entirely! Marching bands, hula hoopers, clowns, divas, circus acts and sundry bits of this and that! Hosted by Steven Ra\$pa and Friends For A Fancier Future on Friday.

Date: Friday, September 1, 2006

Time: 7:00pm-3:00am

Duration: 480 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: Flambe Lounge

Email: [flambelounge@burningman.com](mailto:flambelounge@burningman.com)

### **Garnish Fire Show!**

Come see the incredible Garnish Fire Conclave as they dance their way into your soul! Stilts! Fire! Fishes & Mayhem! Yar!

Date: Friday, September 1, 2006

Time: 7:30pm-8:30pm

Duration: 60 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: Suckie Fuckaye

Email: [davidwilsonlives@hotmail.com](mailto:davidwilsonlives@hotmail.com)

### **FLAMING LOTUS GIRLS FIREWORKS FRIDAY: Unleashing the Future**

Join the Flaming Lotus Girls and the Serpent Mother as we celebrate the arrival of the future, with FLAMING LOTUS GIRLS FIREWORKS FRIDAYS! The citizens of Black Rock City have reassured the Serpent Mother that the future, which rests inside her egg, is safe to be unleashed into the world. By harnessing her burning power, participants have safely transformed her venom of Fear into Hope for all life. This transmutation is now complete and will be celebrated with a 20-minute computer controlled fireworks show! Symbolizing her trust, the egg will remain opened for the remainder of the week.

Date: Friday, September 1, 2006

Time: 10:01pm-10:21pm

Duration: 20 minutes

Category: Burnings

Hosted by/Camp Name: Flaming Lotus Girls

Email: tasha@flaminglotus.com

### **The Rocky Horror Picture Show**

Camp 9 presents the ultimate midnight movie. Featuring a live cast - the Six Minute Players! As a special bonus this year, we will show Shock Treatment, the bizarro-semi-sequel, immediately following the show. Come burn your year's frustrations off by yelling at a movie screen! Audience Partici-pation at its best!

Date: Friday, September 1, 2006

Time: 11:59pm-2:59am

Duration: 180 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: Camp 9 From Outer Space

Email: necessity06@gmail.com

### **The Pink Taco Dancers**

Have the top 10 models from San Diego and have the best DJ mix on a big taco. With all the Horchata you want to drink. And more.

Date: Saturday, September 2, 2006

Time: 2:00pm-5:00pm

Duration: 180 minutes

Category: Performance

Hosted by/Camp Name: Victoria's Pink Taco's

Email: vickybear3@yahoo.com

### **Smooch workshop open to the public**

Where YOU get the chance to teach your very own smooch workshop ... share your smooch skills ... make new friends ... captivate your audience. What's a good smooch ... to YOU?

Date: Saturday, September 2, 2006

Time: 2:00pm-3:00pm

Duration: 60 minutes

Category: Classes/Workshops

Hosted by/Camp Name: Smooch Dome

Email: [melaniegold@earthlink.net](mailto:melaniegold@earthlink.net)

### **Flogger's Court**

Have a grievance? Bring your willing antagonist to the floggers court, where justice is always assured in twisted purity.

Date: Saturday, September 2, 2006

Time: 2:00pm-4:00pm

Duration: 120 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: Duck Pond

Email: [danacone AT gmail.com](mailto:danacone@gmail.com)

### **BRC Mermaid Parade!**

That's right kiddies & Kidettes we're going to have us a Real Nice Black Rock City Mermaid Parade presented by Mystic Marlow & The San Francisco Mermaid Parade Collective. We will have a camp on the playa so look at Info for directions to The Mermaid Isle Camp!

Date: Saturday, September 2, 2006

Time: 3:00pm

Category: Parades

Hosted by/Camp Name: The Mermaid Island

Event URL: <http://www.sfmermaidparade.org>

Email: [director@sfmermaidparade.org](mailto:director@sfmermaidparade.org)

### **Keno Mapp - World War Peace**

Keno Mapp is the lead singer of World War Peace as well as the author of the critically acclaimed inspirational poetry book, SENSELESS MURDER. Atma Anur aka The Jimi Hendrix of drums, with Uncle Funky/Juan Richardson living guitar and Bass 4 Your Face, UBi9000, rocks it tight!

Rock'in hard! In line with U2's message, World War Peace is a funky rock ride towards better. Keno and his group's music is very up beat, while still touching on issues we all share today. "What Is Waiting On Us Tomorrow" and "You Got To Believe" are some of the original songs performed along with covers from the likes of Sly and the Family Stone and striking poetic pieces reminiscent of The Doors. This All Star cast of musician's sets the stage off and will leave you feeling, thinking and wishing for more. It seems like "The World's Lost Its Way" and through music they wish to offer a fun positive experience that becomes a spirit catching eye opener for us all.

We only want to help the planet for it needs it...

Date: Friday, September 1, 2006 - Sunday, September 3, 2006 (every Day)

Time: 7:00pm-8:00pm

Duration: 60 minutes

Category: Music Events

Hosted by/Camp Name: Vau De Vire

Event URL: <http://www.kenosworld.com>

Email: [blkadam@hotmail.com](mailto:blkadam@hotmail.com)

**Procession To The Man and Luminiferous:**

Luminiferous: The Lantern Project. The fire that has burning all week long in the Center Camp Cauldron will be transferred to the Luminiferous. The Lamplighters will carry the Luminiferous and along with Gamelon X will process to the Great Circle that surrounds the Man. Once arrived the original ceremonial fire will be transferred to each of the Fire Conclave fire groups that will start their own fire dance before the Man is released in pyrotechnic delight.

Date: Saturday, September 2, 2006

Time: 8:00pm-9:00pm

Duration: 60 minutes

Category: Burnings

Hosted by/Camp Name: Fire Conclave Convergence

Email: [crimson@burningman.com](mailto:crimson@burningman.com)

**Samba do Sol**

Join Samba do Sol, the world's first flaming Brazilian drumline, as we celebrate the burning of the Man Saturday night. We will join forces with the Northwest Conclave's fire performers for a full-scale Carnival-style celebration, with Black Rock City flair.

Date: Saturday, September 2, 2006

Time: 8:00pm-9:00pm

Duration: 60 minutes

Category: Music Events

Hosted by/Camp Name: Samba do Sol

Event URL: <http://www.spinergyarts.com>

Email: [firesky99@gmail.com](mailto:firesky99@gmail.com)

**Save the Man Protest**

If the man burns, we have to go home! Join us in our efforts to save the Man. He's innocent. Visit our camp earlier in the week, or show up at the Burn with your protest sign.

Date: Saturday, September 2, 2006

Time: 9:00pm-9:30pm

Duration: 30 minutes

Category: Parades

Hosted by/Camp Name: Camp Save-the-Man

Event URL: <http://www.templetons.com/brad/burn/savetheman.html>

Email: [btm@templetons.com](mailto:btm@templetons.com)

**Ignite & Release the Man**

Within the Great Circle that surrounds the Man, the Fire Conclave, the largest gathering of fire performers in the world, will dance, spin, leap, eat, drum and roar with fire before the Man is released in pyrotechnic delights.

Date: Saturday, September 2, 2006

Time: 9:00pm-10:00pm

Duration: 60 minutes

Event URL:

[http://www.burningman.com/on\\_the\\_playa/performance/fire\\_conclave.html#top](http://www.burningman.com/on_the_playa/performance/fire_conclave.html#top)

Email: [crimson@burningman.com](mailto:crimson@burningman.com)

### **Afterburn**

Sometimes it only gets better after it all goes up in smoke.... Green Gorilla's post-burn catharsis will be \*the\* place to see and be seen!!

Date: Saturday, September 2, 2006

Time: 10:00pm-6:00am

Duration: 480 minutes

Category: Music Events

Hosted by/Camp Name: Green Gorilla Lounge

### **PlayaQ Iron Chef Battle and Championship Ceremony**

The 1st Annual PlayaQ Iron Chef Battle concludes with the Pulled Pork Massacre category and crowning of the PlayaQ Iron Chef Grand Champion. All category winners from the week are encouraged to attend Sunday's battle and final award ceremony. Watch as the competitors unveil their entries, bribe the judges and entertain the crowds. Points awarded for taste and style. All entrants must pre-register at the PlayaQ kitchen, provide food receipts from an approved source, and follow strict health code compliant preparation methods.

Date: Sunday, September 3, 2006

Time: 2:00pm-2:30pm

Duration: 30 minutes

Hosted by/Camp Name: PlayaQ

Event URL: <http://www.playaq.com>

Email: [sosboss@playaq.com](mailto:sosboss@playaq.com)

### **Dragon Performance**

Center Camp Dragon performance

all Drummers are invited to join us as we circle center camp with the world's longest dragon prior to the Temple Burn

Date: Sunday, September 3, 2006

Time: 8:00pm

Hosted by/Camp Name: The BurningTribe

Event URL: <http://www.burningtribe.com/dragon/index.html>

Email: [lyingbare@hotmail.com](mailto:lyingbare@hotmail.com)

### **Fire in the Belly Burn**

The Woman Burns Sunday Night!!!

On Saturday night in Black Rock City, The Man burns every year. On Sunday night a pregnant Mother will burn right where he stood to mourn the loss of her unborn child. Fire will ignite from The Mother's womb to consume the statue and adjacent two pagodas, releasing the sorrows and fears of all parents to the heavens. "Fire in the

Belly” was created so we can all release this pain in a ritualistic catharsis for everyone that has ever lost a child, or hoped for one, or feared for one.

Date: Sunday, September 3, 2006

Time: 8:00pm

Category: Burnings

Hosted by/Camp Name: Glimmer, Sunshine + Silicon Valley Pyro Team

Event URL: <http://www.fireinbelly.com>; Email: [fire.belly@yahoo.com](mailto:fire.belly@yahoo.com)

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## **Appendix B: 2006 Questionnaire for Performers & Responses**

### **Explanation of Appendix B: Performance Questionnaire**

In 2006, I created and distributed the Burning Man Performance Questionnaire with the help of the Burning Man Project through their on-line newsletter, “The Jack Rabbit Speaks.” Responses from thirteen individuals were received via email directly to me. The Questionnaire was sent out on the Jack Rabbit Speaks e-newsletter in Volume 10, Issue 14, dated February 22, 2006. The questions I asked were as follows:

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) What years have you attended Burning Man?**
- 2) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man formally (on-stage)?**
- 3) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man informally (off-stage)?**
- 4) What was your experience like as an artist and performer?**
- 5) What did you do to prepare and for what were you not prepared?**

**6) Did your experiences at Burning Man change or transform you as a performer?**

**7) Would you perform again at the event and in what manner?**

**8) What makes performing at Burning Man unique compared to other places/venues you have performed?**

Getting to understand participants through their answers helped me to explore performance-participants by way of a smaller self-selected group of Burners. Some respondents did not give me their official name from the default world but their playa name instead. Further, respondents sometimes used anecdotal experiences throughout their responses. These responses were quite helpful to me in better understanding the feelings which grew from their experiences as presented in their reflections to me.

In the nature of these questions, there was my own interest in learning about:

1) how participant-performers considered preparing for and reacting to the environment on the playa; 2) how participant-performers considered their tenure as performers on the playa in terms of time and energy; 3) how participant-performers saw the differences between formal and informal performing at the event; 4) how participant-performers distinguished the meanings of their activities away from the culture; and 5) how these participant-performers gauged the value of their experiences as performers at the event and if they had experienced any changes in their personae as artists.

In a follow-up to this Questionnaire in 2006, I also sent out a Stage Manager Questionnaire which offered some of the same types of questions but delved more into how the respondent considered helping facilitate performance on the playa as

either challenging or interesting. I had few responses to this Questionnaire as I was not able to locate very many individuals who had stage managed at the event on a given year except those who stage managed at the Man base in 2004 at the Off Planet Theater (10 participants), and those participants who had volunteered at the Center Camp Music Stage for stage managing from 2002 – 2006. Again, I received little response from these participants.

What information was learned from the Performance Questionnaire in 2006 was that participant-performers: 1) long for an earlier or future time when more attendees to the event were/ will be brave enough to volunteer to perform or creatively interact, that is, these people will understand the importance of play in the culture; 2) understand the difference between formal and informal performing and dabble in both categories; 3) consider performance and performing a “gift” to others; 4) have a strength of confidence as motivated individual performers on the playa, having overcome inhibitions to do so and by their example, feel they are “serving” the community of Burning Man; 5) see performance as a “partnership” and by its nature interactive; and 6) acknowledge the only limitation to performance is the weather.

Having included this Questionnaire, its responses and some of my own analyses in this dissertation and as a part of the Appendix, I am emphasizing the importance I place on the ethnographic work I have done but also the importance of communication in the Burning Man performance culture. I could not create a document that considers the greater value of performance to Burners if I did not talk with them and reach out in an effort to ask these questions. I do not think they were

the absolute best questions to have asked the participant-base via the largest communicatory device for the Project, the Jack Rabbit Speaks e-newsletter, but they represented my concerns and queries about people's experiences performing on the playa. Finally, this Questionnaire represents the only official document ever distributed to the Burning Man community that addressed the issue of *performance* and experiences as such at the event; and this includes any Census ever circulated (2002, 2004, 2005), as well as the *Afterburn Reports* for any year (2001 – 2005).

***Query Sent Out on Jack Rabbit Speaks List: February 22, 2006***

Date: Wed, 22 Feb 2006 22:01:01 -0800  
From: "Andie Grace" actiongrl@burningman.com  
To: bman-announce@burningman.com  
Subject: BManUpdate:V10:#14:02.22.06

Jack Rabbit Speaks  
Volume 10, Issue 14  
February 22, 2006

OK, I'm just going to say it: the world looks a lot like roses to me today, so if you don't ken too well to themes of positivity, inspiration, and community pride, you may be subscribed to the wrong newsletter. (There's a reason someone dubbed me "Pollyanna Scabies".)

Yes, we're going full-bore, both-barrelled starry-eyed optimism this week. Who can't use a little of that?

To wit: this week's San Francisco Bay Guardian has a cover story by City Editor Steven T. Jones, who visited our volunteer crew in Pearlington, MS last week (as did yours truly) and got his hands dirty pursuing the story of Burners Without Borders, and how members of the Burning Man community have taken their strangely appropriate skillsets (and sizeable hearts) to the areas affected by Hurricane Katrina to give away all the help they can.

The cover story by Steven T. Jones, aka Scribe:  
[http://www.sfbg.com/40/21/cover\\_katrina.html](http://www.sfbg.com/40/21/cover_katrina.html)

Companion piece (online only) by Burning Man's very own Tom Price,

entitled "Why I'm here": [http://sfbg.com/40/21/cover\\_why.html](http://sfbg.com/40/21/cover_why.html)

Burners Without Borders website:  
<http://www.burnerswithoutborders.org>

Swoon! And the work's not done, yet, and our crew currently plans to stay in the area until late March 2006, which means now is still a fine time for you to help. If you're interested in donating, getting involved, or just keeping up with the story, please keep your eye on the Katrina section of the Burners Without Borders website:  
<http://www.burnerswithoutborders.org/katrina>

LOVING the friends in our midst who have taken the time to go try and make a difference in the world. Thanks to all of you.

And that's just part of what we do, innit: there's still that city in the desert to attend to, that place that our shared ideals and sense of wonder manifest every year...and at just under halfway through the year, now's the time that we really come out of our slumber and start preparing. It starts with QUESTIONNAIRES galore, for those who are ready to register their projects: theme camps, art installations, and mutant vehicles already? Yep. It's that time! Find the links below in BRC news. Plus photos, upcoming events, a few ways to get involved, several shouts-out for the geeks among us, and...heck, a whole lot of stuff. Cruise on in, pull up a chair, and let's get started, because it's a hefty week here at the JRS, with 192 brimming-with-longing days left to go.

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BRC NEWS:

QUESTIONNAIRES GALORE!! ART, THEME CAMPS, MUTANT VEHICLE  
REGISTRATION  
HAS BEGUN!  
SAVE THE DATE: APRIL 8TH TOWN HALL AND 1ST FLAMBE LOUNGE OF THE  
YEAR!!!  
BURNERS WITHOUT BORDERS: GRATITUDE FROM THE BUDDHIST TEMPLE



*Questionnaire for Performers: Sent via email 13 February 2006*

Dear Performer,

I am a doctoral candidate and seven year burner who is writing about performance at Burning Man. In 2004, you signed up to perform at the Center Stage Cafe where I was stage managing. Today I am writing you in the hopes that you might be interested in commenting to me about your experiences performing both on stage and as a participant at the event. The information you give me will eventually go into my dissertation and with your permission, could be quoted using only your stage name.

As a PhD student in Theatre at the University of Maryland, I have been working closely with the Burning Man Project for several years and am now nearing the end of my research. If you would be so kind as to take the time to respond to my query, your stories and experiences shared could give a second life to your performing. If you have pictures you would like to forward to me for use and as a means of profiling your performance please do so and thank you for your time/help in this research project.

Best Regards,  
Wendy Clupper, PhD Candidate

Department of Theatre and Performance Studies  
Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center  
University of Maryland at College Park  
College Park, MD 20742

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Performers Questionnaire

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) What years have you attended Burning Man?
- 2) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man formally (on-stage)?
- 3) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man informally (off-stage)?
- 4) What was your experience like as an artist and performer?

- 5) What did you do to prepare and for what were you not prepared?
- 6) Did your experiences at Burning Man change or transform you as a performer?
- 7) Would you perform again at the event and in what manner?
- 8) What do you feel are the limitations or challenges to performing at Burning Man?
- 8) What makes performing at Burning Man unique compared to other places/venues you have performed?

THANK YOU!!!!!!

***Questionnaire for Stage Managers: Sent 16 February 2006***

Dear Burner,

I am a doctoral candidate who is writing about performance at Burning Man. In 2004, you signed up to stage manage at the Off-Planet Theater at the Man. Perhaps I spoke with you then when I was documenting. Today, I am writing you in the hopes that you might be interested in commenting to me about your experiences at the stages working on and presenting performance at the event. The information you give me should you choose to respond, will be confidential and eventually will go into my dissertation and with your permission, could be quoted using only your playa name.

As a Ph.D. student in Theatre at the University of Maryland, I have been working closely with the Burning Man Project for several years and am now nearing the end of my research. If you would be so kind as to take the time to respond to my query, your stories and experiences shared could give better insight into how theater is born and created at Burning Man. I thank you for your time/help in this research project.

Best Regards,  
Wendy Clupper, PhD Candidate

Department of Theatre and Performance Studies  
Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center  
University of Maryland at College Park

College Park, MD 20742

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Stage Managers Questionnaire

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) What years have you attended Burning Man?
- 2) What was stage managing at the 2004 Off-Planet Theater like?
- 3) Have you participated in performance there beyond stage managing?
- 4) What were some of the performances you found interesting and why?
- 5) What did you do to prepare and for what were you not prepared?
- 6) What do you feel are the limitations or challenges to performing at Burning Man?
- 7) What makes performing at Burning Man unique compared to other places/venues you have witnessed theatre?

THANK YOU!!!!!!

---

**The 2006 BM Performance Survey Responses, 2006. Created by the author and published on-line through the Burning Man Project. Thirteen respondents replied to the questionnaire for performers and are published here in their entirety including any accompanying correspondence.**

~Performers Questionnaire~

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Quentin Davis \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) What years have you attended Burning Man?

1995-2005

2) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man formally (on-stage)?

I haven't been on stage except that I was playing some junk sitting on a stage but it wasn't a formal performance

3) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man informally (off-stage)?

1996-2000 I did a continuous performance ( while at Burningman) Called Sheriff-by-consensus. I wore a standard uniform that did not change and I acted as sheriff but sheriff by consensus which means that if people thought I was doing a good job as sheriff then when I came by they said "howdy sheriff" and if they thought I was doing a shitty job then they just said hi Quentin. If everyone called me sheriff then I would actually have power and I would be sheriff by consensus.

I've also done random spontaneous performances with other people, Group dental flossing at the man, Light speed to the center of the universe ( start at trash fence and then ride as fast as possible right to the center of the cafe) "Get Them" Random people are selected and we run up and tag them then they join us and we get someone else, etc etc.

4) What was your experience like as an artist and performer?

I love performing at BM but I loved it more back in the last century. People were more apt to join in more freewheeling, more creative, less inhibited and more aware of where they were. Now folks tend to Watch, they don't understand that they are supposed to join in. I loved performing when at any moment another participant could suddenly steer the performance in a new direction. It required great improvisational skills but I never felt self conscious. Now I have given up and I just

let people watch. I perform at home and it feels more like that. people are appreciative but I'm looking for co-conspirators not an audience. performance was an all the time any time any place spontaneous affair everyone ready to play, and lots of strange scenarios and situations that allowed for performances that can never be repeated and had to happen then and there with those costumed people.

5) What did you do to prepare and for what were you not prepared?

I brought all my toys and made sure everything was built as strongly as possible. Invariable most things got broken, stoped working, were lost in the shuffle, or loaned out and never returned. I was prepared for all of that. I bring more than enough batteries for all my gizmos, I keep up my health by sleeping and eating enough. I try to keep my mind aware so that if a spontaneous situation arises I am ready to respond. I bring a bull horn and instigate interaction. i improvise with what I have. When I lost my voice I did intimate performances just for one person whispering in their ear. I wasn't prepared for the fact that it is hard to travel with my instruments (musical percussion) and so I can't get too far before I am tired and have to return. With I had worked out transport.

6) Did your experiences at Burning Man change or transform you as a performer?

Yes!!! emphatically. I was trying to find a new groove and BM just totally broke the mold. When I first came back I just did BM without telling anyone and it was surreal and great. My costumes became more elaborate and yet more practical. ( I had a large object mounted to the side of my helmet and after 8 hours My neck was so stiff I couldn't move it so now I think comfort first and then build from there) I

broke out of the stage and now I spend half my time crawling through the audience. I don't feel so constrained by theatrical rules. If it seems fun, I'll do it now. I have incorporated lots of mobile battery operated LED lighting in my costumes. I tell stories to the audience like I would speak to BM participants. ( I can't describe how that is different but it is)

7) Would you perform again at the event and in what manner?

I always perform, although I don't like to think of it as performing. BM offers an opportunity to act/live spontaneously, it is a world filled with comic nerdy geniuses high on drugs raving divine lunacy. Standing on a stage misses the point for me. I can do that the rest of the year. I like to break down the boundary between what is performance and what is life.

8) What do you feel are the limitations or challenges to performing at Burning Man?

Dust gets into all my electronics killing much of it. The chaos of an ill planned campsite has worn me down many a night and interfered with getting my show going. With some of my instruments they are too precious to be left to the masses because BM folks will bash a delicate instrument to splinters if left to their own devices. I have to either leave those at home or guard them. A current limitation is that everyone tends to congregate at the bright shiny places, the noisy places even if nothing is happening. My work is more subtle and so I need to be in the quiet places and really they are hard to find now and no one is there. Transport is always a challenge. I finally haul my things out to some far flung location and all the effort I'm ready to take it back and go to sleep. As stated before, most people don't understand

that they are the show, people who just sit and watch and don't become involved  
steer the performance into an audience /performer dicotomy. I like it to flow no one  
is on stage/ everyone is on stage.

8) What makes performing at Burning Man unique compared to other  
places/venues you have performed?

There is a level of danger, an opportunity to do certain kinds of art ( art at 35  
mph for example) the environment is constantly changing challenging you. White  
outs are great mood enhancers. People join in and change the performance add to it.

---

Name: Steve Schott

1) What years have you attended Burning Man?

1995, 1998--2005

2) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man formally (on-stage)?

As CoverBoy, accompanying a singalong of the entire Sgt. Pepper's

Lonely Hearts Club Band album on the electric ukulele, at our camp "You Are  
Here" (attendance 25 to 30) in 2004 & 2005

3) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man informally (off-stage)?

See previous response & you decide whether I was on- or off-stage

4) What was your experience like as an artist and performer?

Had a fantastic time, learned a lot about a lot of things re art, music  
and performing, and what moves people

5) What did you do to prepare and for what were you not prepared?

I worked on my arrangements and execution for 10 or 11 months, about as focused as I have ever been, and came very close to nailing it...was not prepared for such a positive response from the participants, nor for their flexibility, good humor and forgiveness when I flubbed

6) Did your experiences at Burning Man change or transform you as a performer?

Yes, it certainly did, mainly making me realize I have it in me to actually be a successful musician and within what parameters I feel comfortable attempting that (took me 35 years of dreaming of rock'n'roll stardom to finally pull that one out of my ass!)

7) Would you perform again at the event and in what manner?

I certainly would--have been working on Abbey Road since the 2004 experience (much trickier, but doable, with enough concentration time, which is scarce), and am thinking of a more promotion-oriented approach in a more visible venue--considering other events that might distract my potential "audience" of participants and planning ahead for that, etc...Critical Tits going past our camp (bless 'em all!) stole all my thunder, love it tho I did

8) What makes performing at Burning Man unique compared to other places/venues you have performed?

Well, first, the weather, the number of exciting things going on all over town, my energy level & general wellbeing (cracked a couple of ribs late June), my level of sobriety (fluctuates), nearly constant stage fright, the eclectic nature of the populace, the dust in the electronics and the planning & solutions

therefor, the need for electricity and insuring a dependable supply thereof (Just realized this is a pretty good answer for both questions 7 & 8, but for 8 I would add that the enthusiasm of the people of nearly all ages & backgrounds to something like this, the willingness to say about nearly everything around them, "Hey, that's pretty cool!" and not stand around expecting their money back, was so gratifying you would have have to be at Burning Man to know what I'm talking about)...but then again, you were...

Thanks for the opportunity to "vent". Good luck with your project.

--Alphadog

---

~Performers Questionnaire~

Name: Ed Joseph

1) What years have you attended Burning Man? 1999-2005 (7 years)

2) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man formally (on-stage)?

none

3) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man informally (off-stage)?

Solo dance performance on the open playa, using two umbrellas.

4) What was your experience like as an artist and performer?

Exhilarating. Confusing. Introspective. When an audience is present, I move a certain way. Witnessing is profound and valuable. But I need to not be bored even if there is no one watching. The dance needs an internal element that keeps being

profound to me. I get to see what really attracts an audience... and it's usually when I'm not trying to attract one... when the dance is internal. "Oh, there's people here now, drawn to this movement."

5) What did you do to prepare and for what were you not prepared?

To prepare, I bought my props (umbrellas), and thought a lot about my costume. And I have decided having no costume is best. I trusted that I was fully prepared to do such a performance. Not prepared... the wild weather (mostly wind) can halt a performance. And you can't really prepare for the random audience that continually comes by.

6) Did your experiences at Burning Man change or transform you as a performer?

Yes. Confidence was built. If I can do this, I can do anything. Many other details I could think of....

7) Would you perform again at the event and in what manner? Yes.

In the same way. It is so successful as it is. But I did think about what the next step might be. How it could evolve.

8) What do you feel are the limitations or challenges to performing at Burning Man?

The weather. The hot sun. Sore feet. Being prepared to handle all kinds of comments and reactions. Other things, I'm sure...

8) What makes performing at Burning Man unique compared to other places/venues you have performed?

The randomness of the audience. That there may be no audience for a while. That the audience often takes pictures. The audience comes from different directions: walking, and biking, and being on art cars. Nudity is allowed. Randomness of noise and music.

Wendy, I could go on and on. Do you want some pictures of this? One way is to go to the Burning Man image gallery, and just enter "umbrella" as a search term.

I'm available for any follow-up discussion/questions. Good luck on this project.

Ed

---

Hey Wendy,

These are big questions! Good luck with your reasearch. You can find pictures of me performing at burningman on my website: [www.leslierosen.com](http://www.leslierosen.com)

Best!

(((hug)))

Leslie

~Performers Questionnaire~

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Leslie Rosen \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) What years have you attended Burning Man? 3
- 2) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man formally (on-stage)?

I have performed for the burning of the man (3) times as part of Pyrosutra, fire troupe [www.pyrosutra.com](http://www.pyrosutra.com). I also did stilted fire processions with flaming wings in 2003 with Birds of Paradise. I directed a show called "Snow Queen" that pyrosutra performed in 2004 and directed the 60+ person show for the destruction of the Machine in 2005 [www.mach12e.org](http://www.mach12e.org)

3) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man informally (off-stage)?

We always run around and play with fire in different fun places. My favorite was roller skating with fire fans last year. I've also just gotten up and bellydanced in the hooka-doom

4) What was your experience like as an artist and performer?

It's hard work fighting the wind and sand but it's always a blast.

5) What did you do to prepare and for what were you not prepared?

You can't be prepared for everything. You just prepare for the worst and hope for the best.

6) Did your experiences at Burning Man change or transform you as a performer?

I always get a chance to be more fantastic and expressive. I find it deeply healing and refreshing to perform for a sexually mature audience. I have always felt cherished and NEVER uncomfortable with costumes and nudity that I could not perform in in the default world without harassment and negative sexual energy.

7) Would you perform again at the event and in what manner?

Of course. My performances are a gift for the community and a joy to me. I do both formal organized shows and spontaneous joyful outbursts at a moments notice.

8) What do you feel are the limitations or challenges to performing at Burning Man?

WEATHER!

8) What makes performing at Burning Man unique compared to other places/venues you have performed?

Everything. There is nothing else like it.

---

Hi Wendy,

Below are my completed questions. I'm so glad I got to participate in your study! Because you asked: I'm in the middle of writing my Master's thesis in

Latin American Studies. I study Mexican crafts and textiles, and how cultural/anthropological information about crafts is used by stores in the US as a marketing strategy. I'm doing ethnographic research in a couple of stores in San Diego (where I live) that sell crafts from Mexico and Latin America. So I basically hang out and eavesdrop on people while they shop, and I listen to the questions they ask salespeople, and what the salespeople tell them. :)

Good luck with your study!

:)Katherine

~Performers Questionnaire~

Name: \_\_Katherine Becvar\_\_\_\_\_

1) What years have you attended Burning Man?

2003, 2004, 2005, (2006) :)

2) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man formally (on-stage)?

At the last minute, I was added to the onstage performance portion of the Burning Bellies Cafe Invasion in 2005. I bellydanced onstage for about 5 minutes as part of a set of three dancers (probably about 15 minutes total). The onstage performance was the starting 'signal' for the Cafe Invasion to begin.

3) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man informally (off-stage)?

I hosted a daily event at my camp-- Fairy Tale Hour in the Alternative Energy Zone. The description from the WhatWhereWhen was "Who says fairy tales are only for children? Black Rock City is not a place without morals (of the story that is!). Listen to storytellers spin fairy tales.".

4) What was your experience like as an artist and performer?

A dear friend of mine, Alexiis, is one of the coordinators for the annual Burning Bellies Invasion of the Center Camp Cafe, where they invite any and every bellydancer on the playa to congregate and fill the cafe with spangles and shimmies. This year (2005), they had gotten half an hour on the cafe stage to kick off the invasion, and an amazing bouziki player named Faleek to accompany the dancers. I had raced to Center Camp on my bicycle, out of breath from riding in Critical Tits, and thrown on my coin-covered dance bra to be ready to dance. As we were assembling, and Alexiis and the other coordinators were telling us the plan, they realized that the second stage dancer hadn't show up yet. They asked, "Does anybody

want to dance on stage?" After several terrified stares and no brave volunteers, I raised my hand and said, "What the heck!" I had no idea what music Faleek was going to play, I hadn't known I was going to be performing five minutes before that, but I figured that the cafe audience was going to be the most supportive audience I'd ever danced for. Much of my time onstage is a blur in my memory, but I do remember thinking that this was probably the biggest audience I'd ever been dancing in front of (maybe 100 people watching at the time?). I also vividly remember this petite middle-aged woman sitting right in front of the stage, and the entire time I was dancing she was murmuring the most delicious words of encouragement to me-- "You are so beautiful, look at you! this lovely goddess gloriously dancing-- shake it, sexy girl!" I absolutely treasure the gift she gave me as I was dancing.

For my 'informal' experience:

I absolutely LOVE to read stories aloud, and I wanted to create a sort of 'fairy tales for grown-ups' time that drew upon some of my favorite short stories. I chose stories that I felt had some sort of moral or message that people of all ages would benefit from hearing. I had at least four listeners every day, although two of them were usually from the camp next door and one was a good friend. However I did enjoy the folks who drifted in, and drifted out again, the better for having heard the story.

5) What did you do to prepare and for what were you not prepared?

I wasn't prepared for how difficult the physical exertion of dancing would be. Normally I am tired after a performance, but the evening after that performance I was

so exhausted I felt drugged. It was all I could do to eat dinner and go to bed an hour after sunset.

For the storytelling, I had prepared by bringing several of my favorite stories with me to the playa. I had also tried to trim down some of the longer ones, because I tend to go hoarse after about a half hour of reading, and I figured that it would be harder with the dryness of the playa.

6) Did your experiences at Burning Man change or transform you as a performer?

I would say that it shifted the way that I look at performance. I've always enjoyed the experience of performance, but being able to express myself in that way in that environment of support and encouragement has certainly carried over into my life back home. It's hard to separate how Burning Man has changed my life as a performer from how it has transformed me as a person, because it most certainly has changed my life.

7) Would you perform again at the event and in what manner?

Absolutely yes! I plan on repeating the daily Storytime event this year, and I will certainly participate in the Cafe Invasion, though I don't think I'll dance on stage again-- I'd love to let someone else have that experience.

8) What do you feel are the limitations or challenges to performing at Burning Man?

Doing a performance like dancing, as a physical activity, is very strenuous in that environment. After dancing in the cafe, I had a really hard time catching my breath. I felt as if I was having an asthma attack, even though I don't have asthma.

My mouth was so dry that I think I drank my entire bottle of water in several large gulps (over 1.5 liters).

Also, at Burning Man there are a hundred possible distractions because of how much is going on, and there are a hundred logistical challenges that come up because of the extreme conditions. But at the same time, all sense of evaluation, a 'level' or a 'rating' of how good something is, really doesn't matter there. I've heard it described as the Special Olympics of art-- everybody plays, and everybody wins.

8) What makes performing at Burning Man unique compared to other places/venues you have performed?

What makes it unique is the boundless love and support of the audience! Every minute I'm performing, I'm loving that other people are there to witness and enjoy my art and my expression. The ethos of the event that demands participation means that the audience members realize their role in the performance. We are so immune to the power of live performance because of the passive media that surround us (movies, music, television). I feel like in Black Rock City, we finally get clued in to the level of partnership that is the best part of live performance. And the twin ethos of radical self-expression means that everyone else is primed and ready to witness your expression without standing in your way or judging you.

---

~Performers Questionnaire~

Name: Spicerack

1) What years have you attended Burning Man? 2000-2005

2) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man formally (on-stage)?

Center camp café for 2004 and 2005

3) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man informally (off-stage)?

\*\*\*BRCPO – made the Black Rock City Post Office happen, and lots of improvisational theater there and on-playa delivering mail. And lots of musical performance camp to camp with my guitar and often other musicians.

4) What was your experience like as an artist and performer?

\*\*center camp café was not great. People are often crashed out there, and not very responsive. But showing up at a camp, or the “performance” “art” at the BRCPO is pretty amazing.

5) What did you do to prepare and for what were you not prepared?

\*\*bring instruments, deal with BRC higher-ups for the center camp gigs. Not prepared for huge duststorm that came through center camp café this past year. I sang right through it though I couldn't see the audience very well....

6) Did your experiences at Burning Man change or transform you as a performer?

\*\*maybe, made me better at improvising, but no more than other experiences, though being on the playa is a bit more wacky and often one is under the spell of various substances.

7) Would you perform again at the event and in what manner?

\*\*oh yes, not at center camp café, but in other realms. More theater, more costuming and more antics.

8) What do you feel are the limitations or challenges to performing at Burning Man?

\*\*not many

8) What makes performing at Burning Man unique compared to other places/venues you have performed?

\*\*the “audience” and fellow performers are often very motivated. People who show up to play at the post office as customer or office worker are often hilarious.

THANK YOU!!!!

\*\*sure thing, best of luck with your research. Albert

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~Performers Questionnaire~

Name: Anthony Bubb

1) What years have you attended Burning Man?

9 consecutive years

2) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man formally (on-stage)?

In Y2K (or was it Y2K+1?) It was at any rate, the year of the theme “The 7 ages of man,” Damon Crawford and myself designed, created, scripted, etc... the Ancheint Kaos Funerary. This was a physical art piece designed as a re-creation of a 4th dynasty Egyptian tomb, and a ‘play’ if you will recreating the event of the death and burial of a royal family member (a queen). Obviously it was much contracted, from ~60 days to about 60 minutes... Overall, we were trying to be historically

correct. Since we could not actually embalm our living “dead” subject, we made symbolic anointments with a dagger, etc...

The performance was done 2X formally, and lasted about 1 hour, with a total of 12 on-stage assistants. Further-more, for about 2-3 hours per day for 5 days we did this interactively, on anyone who wanted to go through and be entombed. This was booked solid and toward the end of the week had a steady line.

3) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man informally (off-stage)?

Not really at all. I guess unless you count being a greeter or a ranger, which both involve being ‘in character’ but I’ll forgo that unless you want to know, in which case I can re-answer this whole thing in that direction. &nbs! p;

4) What was your experience like as an artist and performer?

It was fun. It was a lot of work, and cost plenty of money (over a thousand just in materials, plus transportation and 100’s of hours of labor. But I did it to be a part of the community and to have the experience of having done it. As a nerd (engineer) this is not a normal part of my life and was new to me. I got a lot of gratification for this out of some people who were obviously thrilled to participate either as co-actors, co-artists, or participants at the event. It meant a lot to me.

It was difficult at times to tend the project while others partied, to clean up while others relaxed, and to not be done with the work, even after the event was over.

It was more interaction than I was used to with strangers as well.

5) What did you do to prepare and for what were you not prepared?

In a way, I found I was putting myself in the service of strangers- and then of course feeling pressured to meet their expectations. Some people wanted to use it for

a healing process, some for fun, some for religion, some just to try it. As such they had expectations that were or were not met. It was strange hearing what they thought of it later...

6) Did your experiences at Burning Man change or transform you as a performer?

No, it allowed me the one-time roll of making and performing art. It gave me the experience and an appreciation for what it takes to do that sort of thing. I certainly am converted in terms of an appreciator of art, but not as a performer. I seek out the creators now and thank them for their work and relate what effect it has on me- since I appreciated that so much when I made something.

7) Would you perform again at the event and in what manner?

I am officially 'burned out' and ready for my next stage in life. I don't have the time or energy to dedicate to that, as my work and relationships are presently quite consuming (getting married this summer). I'm one of those people who has a job that pays well, but also has certain expectations. As such, I can probably retire young, having paid in advance for that, and then turn back to art and the like in the future. For now I say I have experienced seeing art, doing art and appreciating both. After 9 years at the burn, It seems that I can say that "that cup is full" yet I've never been to Egypt. It is the exploration of new experiences that drove me to perform once, and competition with new experiences that has presently retired any such interest.

8) What do you feel are the limitations or challenges to performing at Burning Man?

Time is the largest for me. I only have a certain amount of it. I dedicated a few months of my spare time in life to creating the project, and a few weeks of my time (not spare, it was PRIMARY) to transporting, setting up and executing the project. Refer to the above...

Money is also a factor for most. If I had not paid for the materials and transport of the project, it would not have been done. Disposable income is limited for most of those that have lots of time on their hands.

8) What makes performing at Burning Man unique compared to other places/venues you have performed?

The lack of expectations, or at least the diversity of it. You don't have to sell the performance and you can do as you like. Plus the crowd is receptive- they are there to see you and not rushed by traffic, their jobs (except for the others doing art?), kids, etc...

They all want to see what is going on and are there for that. It's like performing stand-up comedy (I have). You don't have to be THAT funny, because in reality, the people are there to laugh and will be determined to do so. If you are a "little bit" funny and they will.

I also think that the social borders are less at BM. The blue and white collars are mixed, the venue is universal, and there is no stuffyness to seeing one show over another. It's all BM. If you go to vegas and see 'O' at the Bellagio for \$200/seat that is different than seeing 'La Reve' at the Wynn for \$80 and certainly different than seeing the Variety show at the Wild Wild West for \$30 or the free show at Circus Circus... and the exectations are different depending on what you paid. The artist

and the audience are bound to an expectation by the 'sale' or the art and by it's venue. That is somewhat different at burningman, at least for me and my crowd...

-Tony Bubb

We may be what you are looking for and may not be.

In the year of the "7 ages of man" (2000?), I and a friend put on a bit of a production known as Anchent Chaos.

It was a reproduction of a 4th dynasty Egyptian tomb, complete with burial ceremony in costume. IT was done as a theatrical version twice, and as a participation version 2-3 hours a day, a shortened version in which any people willing to wait in the line could come be mummified and buried in the tomb.

Anyway, Damon and I were the priests who did the ritual.

If this is what you are looking for, send me a copy of the ?ionnaire and we'll fill it out. If not, no offense taken. I'm not sure of what you are looking for and if we meet the profile. Regardless, good luck on your project.

-Tony Bubb

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Hi, I have a page describing my campaigning for Arnold performance and will be happy to fill out your questionnaire:

<http://wmoore.net/bm2k3/arnold.html>

I was also a Tiny Dancer performer:

<http://wmoore.net/bm2k/ttd/ttd.html>

And if barking for the Ramp of Death II meets your definition of performing, you can read about that here:

<http://wmoore.net/bm2k2/rampofdeath.html>

~Performers Questionnaire~

Name: Bernie Beauchamp

1) What years have you attended Burning Man?

1999-2005

2) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man formally (on-stage)?

As a marionette puppeteer: Center Camp stage, Blue Monkey Sideshow

3) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man informally (off-stage)?

As a marionette puppeteer in dozens of camps and on the Playa; wherever I could get my generator for power to play music.

4) What was your experience like as an artist and performer?

Burner audiences are uniformly encouraging, curious and attentive to unusual acts like mine and make me feel very comfortable. The atmosphere in general is like no place else: magical, alive and mystical all at once. The cumulative environmental affect enables me to feel like I'm performing on a higher plane of consciousness than I am normally used to.

5) What did you do ! to prepare and for what were you not prepared?

I only need to bring all the goodies: Portable stage, puppets, Bose stereo, props and generator when necessary. It all fits on a handcart. I just punch in the music and the natural ambience takes care of the rest.

6) Did your experiences at Burning Man change or transform you as a performer?

As mentioned in #4, I am often able to transport myself to a higher level of performance with the ability to channel the added energy into my puppets.

7) Would you perform again at the event and in what manner?

Yes, a million times over; in the same manner as previous years, and for the first time this year, at night on the Playa with a skeletal elwire puppet.

8) What do you feel are the limitations or challenges to performing at Burning Man?

Only those presented by nature: wind, dust, rain etc.

8) What makes performing at Burning Man unique compared to other places/venues you have performed?

At Burning Man the overarching world view is all about the promotion of art on every level. Nothing is excluded and all are welcome. The results are understandably phenomenal.

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Name: Charles Dean Virden II

Aka: Dirt Clown (Gigsville)

Aka: Igor (BRC Rangers; Dirt Witch renamed me due to radio protocol )

1) What years have you attended Burning Man?

2003, 2004, 2005.

2) What memorable theater have you witnessed there?

The whole bloody city is a theatre, but I digress. My first year it was the Man burn that stands out, along with going to a fashion show With campmates. Second year I made an effort to visit mostly the playa art events. This last year I again stayed mostly out in the playa with Dance Dance Emulation, angels of the Apocalypse, and the Gigsville Science Fair in our village.

3) Have you participated in any in/formal interactive performance at the event?

Mostly helping set up for village events, the last two years has been spent working With the Rangers and spending time with village mates. (which is very time consuming given the size of Gigsville)

4) What were some of the performances you found interesting and why?

Last years Dance Dance, the fact that any burner could put the fire suit on and get in On the action.

5) What do you feel are the limitations or challenges to performing at Burning Man?

Logistics, the time one has to put into any level of production (individually or managing a group), getting yourself/materials there, and putting on the show (even if it is you in costume, just walking around)

6) What makes the performing at Burning Man unique compared to other places/venues you have witnessed theatre?

Ditto from #5, Even the most primitive Ren Fair has near by civilization (and in/out access). I have been to a few Pagan Rituals in the middle of nowhere, but even

then it was just overnite+. The whole event has the feeling of a Rocky Horror Picture Show with a really engaged audience.

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~Performers Questionnaire~

Name: \_\_\_Mark Gibson/ABO\_\_\_\_\_

1) What years have you attended Burning Man?

1999, 01, 03, 04, 05 (and planning 06)

2) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man formally (on-stage)?

I set-up my own small stand on the Esplanade called ASK ABO where I engage passers-by on subjects and questions that are all over the place. I consider it to be a performing arts project on my part of “outrageous improv”.

3) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man informally (off-stage)?

Up-beat interactions with other burners.

4) What was your experience like as an artist and performer?

Fabulous: lots of fun, many surprise questions and topics, much physical contact (embracing, caressing, hugging, etc), and often some deep, serious consoling with people on their real issues.

5) What did you do to prepare and for what were you not prepared?

I prepared indirectly by being in a number of stage performances in our local theater group, and I built a walk-up stand with shelf, sign, and two chairs (attached by cables). Took a large jug with me so that I could have a large cold drink while I was “at work”, took assorted costume goodies, and I took a notebook to write down the most memorable interactions.

Not prepared for/did not expect: more than half of my private sessions were on real/serious issues in people's lives, and most of these were women. I expected serious stuff to be minimal.

6) Did your experiences at Burning Man change or transform you as a performer?

Absolutely – gave me more confidence to do it more!

7) Would you perform again at the event and in what manner?

Yes, ABO will be back in 2006 as the “playaciatrist”.

8) What do you feel are the limitations or challenges to performing at Burning Man?

Limitations are one's time, resources, and imagination. There's room to do just about anything out there.

8) What makes performing at Burning Man unique compared to other places/venues you have performed?

Can go for the most outrageous behavior with people who respond in fun ways. I've pushed my improv skills more because there's no limit of subjects or delivery, and I can provoke all sorts of responses from complete strangers. I like catching [people off guard – makes it more fun for all of us. Met a lot of other free/fast thinkers who made banter just great. I kissed a lots of beautiful breasts at the conclusion of “consoling sessions” - doesn't happen in the outside world like that!

ABO

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~Performers Questionnaire~

Name: \_\_\_Alexiis aka Deborah Wright\_\_\_\_\_

1) What years have you attended Burning Man?

3

2) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man formally (on-stage)?

On stage @ last years Burning Bellies Center Camp invasion at 5:00 pm Friday evening. We opened the invasion and then danced within the center of the Center Camp. After gathering all the dancers we could, we then marched the 1/4 mile out to the Man and danced in front of him. After that, we collected even more dancers and danced for Dickie in his box. Finally, we were through!

One year (2004) I opened and proceeded the groom with the raucus beat of the Mutaytor drum section pounding out the rythmn in a playa wedding performed by the Clan Destino. Then the Mutaytor played a random show after the ceremony. good times!

Occasionally, I would drop in on the Hookah Lounge and stir it up.

Whew!!!

3) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man informally

(off-stage)?

Regularly danced as the mood or feeling struck. Often jumped into drumcircles as they happened. One morning, very sad, I wandered into the Center Camp to find a sorrrowful cellist playing such sweet, moody music. I joined in and simply expressed my deep ache. Very amazing moment and a memory I should go to my grave with.

4) What was your experience like as an artist and performer?

AWESOME!! Yet often I felt the true ephemeral quality of the performance as the desert dispersed the audience and the experience was washed away by the wind. Strange, good and brilliant yet lonely feeling.

5) What did you do to prepare and for what were you not prepared?

I always remind myself to physically anticipate my needs <h2O, rest, dust, heat...> But last year, my performance left me winded reminding me of how little cardio I had done in the high desert and how much more I must do this year to have better stamina. I also simply s-l-o-w down while out there making me a much more in-touch, sensual dancer.

6) Did your experiences at Burning Man change or transform you as a performer?

Yes. Profoundly. I take my dance more seriously, yet contrary-wise, I am less concerned with the audience. The dance is much more a gift I give. If it is greatfully recieved, good, if not, oh well! Less attachment to the final out come, I suppose.

7) Would you perform again at the event and in what manner?

Every freaking time I have a chance and whenever they will let me!!!

8) What do you feel are the limitations or challenges to performing at Burning Man?

Very few to tell the truth. Usually the only limitations are what you bring with you in your own skin. Like any art, Burning Man requires you to push your own envelope, no one else will do it for you. It is pure participation.

8) What makes performing at Burning Man unique compared to other places/venues you have performed?

The open reception of your performance is clearly accepted as a gift. I have been asked to dance for a drink at a camp and ended up being gifted with a huge meal and a whole slew of new friends whom I continue to interact outside of BRC. In fact I performed at their wedding this year!

-----

~Performers Questionnaire~

Name: \_\_\_angelicfiend

1) What years have you attended Burning Man?

96, 98, 2002-2006

2) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man formally (on-stage)?

i helped build life sized mousetrap, i helped builf rickshaws, i performed by and being in a game show and dancing on a table top...picture somewhere....

in 96 i took pics and brought them back to cellspace for decompression....had a walll of 8x 10 prints....

i have written poerty that is in one book,.I have a copy, burner poems and pictures...

my website has pictures....

I would love to read my poem from 1996 on stage...

3) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man informally (off-stage)?

all of the above..you mean like center camp on stage????? I have not done that.....yet.....if you want me to, i may try and sign up...i mean if that is what you need to participate in your study....

4) What was your experience like as an artist and performer?

the best time of my life

5) What did you do to prepare and for what were you not prepared?

everything i could think ok....never prepared all the way, i forgot my toothbrush last year....

6) Did your experiences at Burning Man change or transform you as a performer?

BM changed my life....it changes it every year....i find i always have one epiphany...

7) Would you perform again at the event and in what manner?

i am!!!!

8) What do you feel are the limitations or challenges to performing at Burning Man?

you have to try and plan around weather....

8) What makes performing at Burning Man unique compared to other places/venues you have performed?

wow, it is weird. you ARE asking for stage performers....i certainly consider myself a performer, which to me is a participant....but then you are asking the whole 3,550 of us what we do.....

ok, that was fun!

Thanks,

a.fiend

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~Performers Questionnaire~

Name: Rob Sturtz AKA Rob the Accordion Man

1) What years have you attended Burning Man?

1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005

2) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man formally (on-stage)?

On stage every year from 2000 with my accordion. Usually play late morning, early afternoon.

3) In what capacity did you perform at Burning Man informally (off-stage)?

I would walk around and play, or sit in the shade of my campsite or go to center camp, hang out and play. I would also perform on stage at center camp.

4) What was your experience like as an artist and performer?

Ah!!!! The best!

Here are a few stories to give you a feel for the musical experience that I had and I'm sure other musicians have had.

Walking around at night I was playing lots of different types of songs, I started playing an old Yiddish/Russian song that my Grandfather introduced me to, when a guy comes up to me and starts singing the song!

Another time I heard a wonderful fiddler... I followed the music to find a group of Cajun musicians sitting around and jammin. I sat down for a while and

listened... then I asked if I could join them, they looked at me as I took my accordion out of my backpack, asked them a few questions about the key they were playing in and joined in. What a blast! They were a group of professionals that toured America! After a while, one of the woman who was sitting and listening got up, went into her RV and came out with a guitar and started playing... Why didn't you take out your guitar earlier? I asked.... I didn't think we were in such a rush honey child she replied. When I finally said good bye, one of the other guitar players said wait a minute ran into his RV and came out with his accordion!

On many occasions this would happen: I would go to center camp, start playing quietly, then a drummer might come over and start playing, then a flute player, then some more drummers, then some dancers, within 15 minutes or so we would all be playing and dancing and having a ball.

Sometimes, when I would play in my campsite, other musicians would hear the music and just pop in and jam for a while... I've met some incredible musicians this way!

I once volunteered to play in a pyramid cubicle at the base of the Burning Man. It was Friday night, the night before the burn. I crawled into the performance space and I found myself right next to the stairway leading up to the Man with thousands of people walking toward me! I started playing... if people liked what I was playing, I met them... if they didn't like what I was playing, I never met them... so that night I met only accordion lovers! One man came over to me with his 2 year old son on his shoulders... so cute... blond hair cut in a bowl fashion. I started playing Old McDonald...and on his farm he had a....I paused so that the little boy could name an

animal... but he didn't know what to say so his Dad helped him. I brought the song around again for him to name an animal... I paused... the little boy was so excited he almost jumped off his Dad's shoulders....he...he... he had a SNAIL! The crowd exploded with laughter!

5) What did you do to prepare and for what were you not prepared?

I play my accordion every day... but that's what I do for fun... so by the time Burning Man comes around, I'm ready. The week before I go out, I start to use a moisturizer on my cuticles. I find that every year if I don't do that several times a day my cuticles start to split... even when I do that, sometimes I have to play with tape on my fingers.

6) Did your experiences at Burning Man change or transform you as a performer?

Yes... when I play at home and close my eyes, I'm on the playa.

7) Would you perform again at the event and in what manner?

Yes, I'll volunteer to perform at center camp... hopefully this year with my son who plays percussion. And I'll continue to play impromptu sessions with others.

8) What do you feel are the limitations or challenges to performing at

Burning Man?

It's hard to perform on stage when the temperature is up. It's physically very demanding... 17+ pounds on your chest, pumping and playing and putting on a "show". But it's no problem when I'm just playing no matter what the temperature is.

8) What makes performing at Burning Man unique compared to other places/venues you have performed?

Anything can happen... and usually does.

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### **Appendix C: DVD of Performances**

#### **Explanation of Appendix C: DVD of Performance Footage, Burning Man 2006**

My documentation to this dissertation includes an accompanying DVD of performance footage from Burning Man taken in 2006. The DVD contains fourteen clips of footage of performances, interactive art and of the event-space, which I captured with a digital video camera at Burning Man in 2006. Each of these clips was captured at night and so much of the footage is presented in black and white since it was filmed in 'Night Vision' mode.

Further, the clips I present in this Appendix are all of *formal* performance. This is because by its nature, the opportunity to film informal or spontaneous performance is problematic and once attempted often proves to be intrusive. If I have been privy to informal performances that grow organically at Burning Man, say an excited meeting on a Black Rock City street between two groups of people, I am not able to film fast enough to catch it or when I start filming, my actions affect the nature of the performance. Informal performance is improvised and playful but it is also fleeting and highly charged theatrically. Filming or attempting to film in the moment of an informal performance is extremely difficult but also problematic ethically. Therefore, I made the decision to offer in this Appendix, examples of formal performance activities that were advertised and staged in a variety of venues

during the same year on the playa a means of offering a showcase of current formal performance.

The performance clips I have chosen for this DVD highlight twelve examples of formal performance at the event. They were captured at four separate notable performances on the playa that year: *Burning Man: The Musical!* (shot at the Lost Penguin Café – this is the second year of the show which is participatory, staged in a smaller tent space in front of a smaller audience); *A Burly-Que Burlesque Show* (shot at Chez Snuggle theme camp which staged the event under a medium sized shade structure in front of a small crowd); *Cirque Berzerk* (a first-time performance shot in the Red Nose Village, this was a large-scale formal performance shot under a large-scale shade structure before an extra large sized crowd); and *The Hot Sex Fire Jam* (an outdoor formal fire performance showcase, staged on a raised platform in the open in front of a medium to large sized crowd). The titled chapter selections for the DVD in Appendix D are as follows:

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**The Performance Culture of Burning Man**

<b>Burning Man: The Musical!</b>	<b>Cirque Berzerk Marionette</b>
<b>Burlesque Show</b>	<b>Cirque Berzerk Jacket</b>
<b>Cirque Berzerk Aerialist 1</b>	<b>Hot Sex Fire Jam Dancers</b>
<b>Cirque Berzerk Aerialist 2</b>	<b>Hot Sex Fire Jam Spinner 1</b>
<b>Cirque Berzerk Aerialist 3</b>	<b>Hot Sex Fire Jam Spinner 2</b>
<b>Cirque Berzerk Fire Man</b>	<b>Fire Art at Night</b>
<b>Cirque Berzerk HoolaHoop</b>	<b>The Playa at Night</b>

To clarify these listings, they each represent a separate clip on the DVD that contains a section of a larger performance that was marked by a moment, either a particular performer or style of performance that set it apart, whether the genre represented or the nature of the performance itself. I also included two clips of the event-space at night to illustrate the expanse of natural area we are referring to as well as the importance of interactive fire art at Burning Man, which like performance, is a tool for convening participants at the event. This DVD will offer a better understanding of the event as a venue for performance, the scope and scale as well as the aesthetic look of some performances at Burning Man.

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#### **Appendix D: CD of Websites Used in Dissertation**

A CD-R I have compiled of each of the websites I reference in my bibliography will be included in the special features section as well. The Burning Man website ([www.burningman.com](http://www.burningman.com)) has been an indispensable resource to my work and will be fully represented in this CD, as well as journal and newspaper sites such as the San Francisco Bay Guardian which have done several ongoing series pieces covering Burning Man.

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## **Appendix E: Off Planet Theatre Announcement**

**This announcement published by the Burning Man Project and written by Larry Harvey is related to the 2004 Art Theme and the design for the Man which included ten stages, called the Off Planet Theatre, as a site for interactive performance and Spontaneous Interactive Theatre.**

([http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/2004/04\\_offplanet.html](http://www.burningman.com/whatisburningman/2004/04_offplanet.html))

Dear Aliens,

You may have read the following message in the Jackrabbit Speaks. If so, feel free to skip forward to the last paragraph of this section. Please allow me to begin this letter with a little history. Since the year 2001, the platform that supports the Burning Man has been a kind of stage set. Our theme in that year was called the Seven Ages, and the platform we constructed took the form of what I'm forced to call a quadrapedal pylon. More popularly, of course, most folks simply referred to it as a giant "A". This great pedestal was designed to raise Burning Man high overhead. The greater elevation allowed increasing numbers of participants to witness the Burn.

This platform was only modestly interactive. It functioned as a monumental gateway to other attractions arranged on axis behind it. People could also congregate at the top of its base to gain a higher vantage point from which to enjoy a better view of the surrounding playa. A system ladders within it led upward into a windowed chamber immediately beneath the Man, but access to this passageway was limited. It formed a very narrow aperture when matched against the thousands of people who wanted to gain access to the topmost level. Safety and logistical concerns restricted the actual flow of participants to a trickle. In the following year, Rod Garret and I designed a lighthouse as a platform for the Burning Man. Although this was better integrated into the theme of 2002 — The Floating World — it was still subject to the same basic limitations.

In that year, as I was rummaging around in the base of the Lighthouse looking for some mislaid props, I could hear participants on the platform overhead. They were jumping up and down in unison (for lack, I couldn't help feeling, of anything better to do). Rod and I had carefully designed the Lighthouse as a giant compass. Theoretically, participants could find their way around the playa by matching marks along the railing of the platform. They registered a full 360 degrees and corresponded to lines of latitude printed on our city's map. Even the triangular benches at the base of this structure were designed to serve and look like compass pointers. It was a clever scheme, we thought, turning the Man's platform into a giant navigational

instrument. But now I realized it possessed a fatal flaw. It didn't immediately invite people to participate. I'd guess that only one person in a hundred, at best, ever used it as we'd intended.

Instead, as I stood there in the semi-darkness of the platform's basement, all I could hear was a continuous Thud... Thud... Thud. The deck overhead was vibrating like the tympanum of a drum. I knew the structure could withstand this, and I knew, of course, that folks were simply having fun with what we'd given them. But, quite frankly, I must confess this seemed to me, in that moment, a little like the behavior of animals pent up in a zoo. The words of the famous song by Peggy Lee popped into my mind: "Is that all there is? Is that all there is? Because, if that's all there is, let's go on dancing, bring on the booze..." I was aware that our event is the largest interactive art environment in the world, and I knew that the platform of the Man was its geographic and symbolic center. I decided, then and there, that we could do better.

Last year, as part of a theme I titled *Beyond Belief*, Rod and I designed an enormous Pre-Columbian pyramid. A very hardworking army of highly skilled workers led by Andrew Sano constructed this edifice. The pyramid allowed participants to mount a monumental stairway that took them directly to the chamber beneath the Burning Man, and the building now featured a much higher viewing platform. But, more importantly, arranged around its base, we had created eight ceremonial niches — shrines within which any participant could sit contemplatively — our theme related to the immediacy of spiritual experience — and thus self-sanctify themselves. We put the word out in advance that folks should be ready to assume an "otherworldly" appearance in order to make their separation from the outside world dramatically compelling. Nambla the Clown, our friend Ggreg Taylor, heroically stepped in at the last moment to serve as a stage manager, and he and his assistants managed to cosmetically transform many people right on the spot.

I kept flitting out to the Great Temple, as it was called, to see just how this process was unfolding. By day and night, I witnessed dozens of people sitting cross-legged in these cubicles, staring out into space as if they inhabited some sort of Nirvana. Perhaps even more interestingly, I witnessed many more participants gathered before each shrine. Encouraged in advance, they came with gifts to offer these mendicant holy ones, leaving them in special begging bowls placed in front of each shrine. Later, I talked to a friend who had participated. Following the simple premise we'd created, he installed himself within a niche with no other purpose than to exhibit himself, to quietly possess his being, enshrined by a frame of sacred architecture. After a while, he told me, one particular person, an utter stranger, materialized before him. For several minutes — he told me he'd lost track of time — they silently stared into one another's eyes without a single word being exchanged. Then this person disappeared.

Afterwards, having completed his turn, my friend decided to stroll about the base of the Great Temple to see what other holy ones were faring. He saw what I had also seen. Very typically, some of the witnessing participants would become so engrossed

by the illusion framed in front of them that they would actually begin to lean forward against the slanted base of the pyramid, drawn closer and closer by the prospect of an entity, an "other", who appeared to effortlessly radiate spirit. Finally, when he stepped before a certain cubicle, he encountered the very person who had witnessed him a few moments before. There this person squatted, staring, with perfect equanimity, out into space. Within an instant, their eyes met. Then there occurred, my friend said, a startling and very intense frisson of recognition — the ritual cycle was now made complete.

He lingered there in this way, silently gazing into the eyes of this stranger. Finally, after some indeterminate lapse of time, he quietly walked away and never looked back. Neither party knew the other's name — but they had connected in a certain and very immediate way that many of us, even with our friends and lovers, might never quite achieve in so conscious a fashion. This story helped to make my day, maybe even my entire year, for I, along with hundreds of other creative collaborators, had worked for many months in order to produce such moments as this. We had succeeded in affecting many people; we had designed an interactive context with the power to transform experience.

I relate all of this because it leads up to our theme this year, Vault of Heaven, and an opportunity — available to everyone — to collaboratively participate in the creation of the most ambitious interactive art context that we have yet attempted. This year the so-called platform of the Man will be more than a platform — it will become a pavilion. It will be designed and built in the form of a classic observatory, with Burning Man atop the apex of its dome. However, the name of this impressive structure is almost a misnomer: within it and without, we will do more than observe. We'll encounter ourselves engaged in a truly remarkable variety of connective and creative activities.

I hope the following plans and ideas will be helpful to you as Off-Planet theatre organizers. I also hope it is apparent that the rules and structures I invoke merely furnish you with a context in which to create your own world and do not dictate the content of what it might be. In the spirit of radical self-expression, that particular gift must come from all of you. Below are my suggestions concerning how you can participate with us in creating Off-Planet world.

Sincerely,

Larry Harvey

#### THE NATURE & DESIGN OF OFF-PLANET THEATER

The Plan View and perspective study (labeled Observatory Stage) and the Blow-out View that are pictured above show the basic dimensions and shape of one of our ten identical theatre spaces. The Plan View or overhead view at top left portrays both the stage of the theatre and its adjacent green room — a secure backstage preparation

area. Bold lines represent walls, and other lighter lines represent the dimensions of 4-foot by 8-foot sheets of plywood employed in the construction of these modules. A doorway that leads from the inner chamber of the Observatory into the Green Room (please see the Vault of Heaven presentation on Burning Man's website for an overall view of this building), and a doorway that leads from the Green Room to the Stage, are indicated by arcs that show the hinged movement of both doors.

The illustration labeled Observatory Stage, immediately beneath the Plan View, renders how this theatrical space will appear in perspective from a somewhat elevated point of view. A door leading onstage from the Green Room can be seen at the back right side of the stage. Additional vertical lines on the floor of the stage and at the middle of each wall, indicate the junctures of 4-foot by 8-foot sections of the plywood from which the floor and ceiling of each cubicle is constructed. Finally, the Blow-out View, below the Observatory Stage view, literally "ex-planes" the panels that define the stage space.

### Basic Areas and Uses of an Off-Planet Theatre

Green Room is the traditional name given to off-stage preparation areas. These rooms are for the use of artist-participants. Each Green Room will be provided with a durable mirror, a table, and a horizontal pole from which costumes can be hung. Coat hangers will not be provided. Any participating group that takes responsibility for the upkeep and management of this space must supply all other conveniences. Doors will be securable. This little Green Room is a place in which to apply make-up, store props and other materials, and educate newcomers. These spaces will be lit at night. Participating groups may wish to bring additional battery powered lighting. Each little Green Room will also be supplied with a fire extinguisher. Groups who manage these spaces will be asked to post certain kinds of signage in each Green Room, and should come equipped to do this or perform any other alterations that may be necessary and agreed upon. Neither smoking nor any form of flame (including lanterns) can be allowed in these small and potentially flammable spaces. A Little Green Room, in summary, is that unglamorous space from which glamour, alien or otherwise, is spawned.

### STAGE AREA

The stage area of each Off-Planet Theatre will feature concealed footlights and some form of overhead lighting hidden behind the cornice in front of the theatre's ceiling (this feature is indicated by dashed lines in the perspective drawing above). The sidewalls, back wall, and ceiling of each stage will be covered by an illusionistic image that we will attach to these surfaces during the construction process. This space forms a kind of diorama — think of the verisimilitude of those scenes from nature that you have seen recreated behind glass in natural history museums. In this case, of course, we are not discussing our nature, but some other nature that abides by rules

that aren't necessarily subject to the natural laws of earth. The graphic designers who will create these backdrops will be encouraged to exploit the slanting sidewalls of each theatre to create a sense of forced perspective, and you, the aliens who inhabit this foreign environment, are also encouraged to do everything possible to render it a truly seamless illusion. Junctures and angles of construction should be concealed and blunted whenever possible. Background and foreground can be merged by the addition of scenery that seems to grow out of its surroundings.

The purpose of all this is to evoke a kind of *mise en scène* — the suggestion of a living world beyond the flatness of backdrops and artificial scenery. Parts of greater things, subtly intruding into this picture, can be made to suggest some unseen whole; unexpected animations can evoke a sense of life that lurks beyond the limits of the stage. Though walls and ceilings will be papered with a landscape and some sort of sky, the floor of each theatre, less visible to the humans who peer slightly upward into your world, will be painted a color that blends in with the play. However, your group may create some sort of alien ground, as long as doesn't burn toxically or generate litter-producing MOOP (matter out of place). Finally, it should be mentioned that dust is ever present on the play, and groups should come prepared to frequently refurbish their environment; cleaning, wiping, and otherwise removing dust from their planet as necessary. Alien housekeeping, unfortunately, is no less toilsome or tedious a chore as here on earth. Science tells this is mundane work throughout the universe.

## THE RULES AND FORMS OF INTERACTIVE THEATRE

The ultimate goal of all this adornment and scene setting is to produce improvisational theatre that leads to both human and alien interactions. Although our ultimate goal is to inspire spontaneity, improvisational theatre works best when premises frame it. Every world, like the earth itself, has its own immutable laws, and yours should be regulated by quirks and qualities that are inherent in yours. To express this in another way, all of parts, actions and details of your world should appear to belong to a greater whole. Since conditions may vary drastically throughout the universe, neither I or our Stage Manager are competent to tell you what these laws might be, though some of these exotic rules may be suggested by the image of the pre-existing world that you inhabit. These images will be displayed on our web site ([www.burningman.com](http://www.burningman.com)) in June. Whatever natural laws you choose to follow, however, must produce actions that lead to further interactions. As a practical rule, seven or so basic principles regarding your nature or the nature world that you inhabit will be sufficient. These may emerge against the background of a brief narrative or storyline.

It is very important that this content be succinct, direct, and easily remembered by performers. Long-winded narratives or complex rules requiring some sort of manual are very much discouraged. This is because this information must be easily communicated behind the scenes when inducting new participants. Managing groups

will be asked to post a simple storyline or background narrative and a set of natural laws upon a wall of their little Green Room. These two sets instructions should be no longer than one page apiece. The object of Off-Planet theatre is not to operate a private playhouse, but to connect with people whom you do not know. This, at heart, is the natural secret of alien being: an urge to connect with the other. Our goal is to allow as many participants as possible to transform themselves by discovering their own inner alien. In order to achieve this, it will be necessary to also adopt some strategies of off-planet interaction and recruitment.

Let me share a secret with you. I am naturally shy, and during my career as a public lecturer, I've discovered that it is very difficult to speak to folks en masse. Instead, I've taught myself to find one person in an audience — it might be anyone — who seems especially thrilled by what I am trying to say. I have learned to take in a room with my gaze, so that everybody feels that I'm talking to them, but, when this circuit is complete, I will always allow my eyes to come to rest upon this one special audience member. This forms a personal bond that can embolden one to speak naturally and intimately to a large group of people.

Likewise, when performing in Off-Planet theatre, it might useful to look for that one special person. Again, it could be anyone: the one who leans forward and stares, ready to be swallowed and absorbed, or the one who stands off at the back of the crowd, half-fearful, half-fascinated, eyes never leaving the scene you create. Others of course, won't be bashful. They'll tell you right out: I want to be you! However these connections might announce themselves, it is important to remember to give everyone a chance, to structure your actions in ways that will draw people in. It is not necessary to be a carnival barker. The object is subtler: to finds ways that allow potential participants to invite themselves in. In that moment you can tell them: come around to door nine! (The door to each little Green Room will be labeled with a number, like an alien hotel).

This strategy, whereby many people are allowed to freely cycle through your world, is also very practical. Taking charge of an Off-Planet theatre, however fun and absurd it might be, is also a serious responsibility. Ideally, we hope to see every theatre functioning as often as possible, hopefully during most hours of the day and night. For any single group, however large or well organized, to achieve this is probably unrealistic. Theme camps, to their detriment, are too familiar with burn out. Alliances with other groups may be helpful, but it's important to remember that your primary goal is to spontaneously involve passersby. From these ranks you'll make friends. With discipline and pre-planned order, it is possible to delegate authority, to accept the help of strangers and transform your alien world into a self-perpetuating entity. This, indeed, is the answer to a very common question: how do aliens actually propagate? They do so by absorbing the other. If practiced rightly, with some help, perhaps, from the Alien Stage Manager and his/her/its assistants, it will be possible to create, organize and perpetuate your world, while still enjoying the event.

Ten Observatory dioramas will be selected for production in June, and posted on the website; please watch the JRS and for that announcement. You will then be able to select one to work in. Groups who prove themselves ready to take primary responsibility for an Off-Planet theatre are eligible to receive an honorarium of \$300. Ten such honoraria will be awarded.

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