

Burning Man participant has big ideas, can't get shit together

by VICTOR TORRES & JOHN CORDARO

Rick Marshall, five-time Burner from Fresno, California, always has great ideas for Burning Man. His highly-stylized themes, rare found-objects and extensive construction research are things his fellow Burning Man campers have learned to count on. But like many who think big for the playa, the chance of his ideas coming into fruition are about as probable as finding a clean porta-potty on Saturday night.

"Yep, this year will be the big one," says Rick, as he fiddles with the ropes on the payload of his truck. "Last year was a flop, but everyone knows it was because of high winds that we couldn't get the elevator to the top of the six-story twisty slide." Remarkably, his campmates have a different story.

"God love him," said Jan Timmons, his live-in girlfriend and part-time masseuse/fire spinner/strip-per. "But Rick always gets these big ideas in that head of his. Next thing you know he's buying rolls of aluminum sheeting, fifty pounds of turquoise feathers, and enough rebar to build a skyscraper." Friend Mike Johnson adds, "It always ends the same. As soon as his shoes hit the playa, he's digging into the drug bag and completely forgoes the theme. If he could just focus while on Special K, we might actually get something done."

For the past two years, Rick's camp has had the unfortunate names "Junk Camp," "Shit Camp," and "That train wreck on the corner." Perhaps this year will be different. But it's not looking likely.

11 reasons why I'm not at Burning Man this year

by GIL VAN BLUHY

1. Spontaneous creativity has given way to dictated thematic homogenization.
2. Self-discovery involves a bit more than taking off all of your clothes and changing your name to Starflower Moonchild for a week.
3. My idiotic animal costume is still at the cleaners.
4. Last year had 30% less sparkle than previous Burning Man Experiences™.
5. I won't have to answer stupid questions like, "What do you guys do here at your camp?" all day long.
6. I've already had enough helpings of Critical Tit Casserole.
7. It's easier to fill out my federal tax forms than it is to register a theme camp or art car.
8. The multitude of self-important fire performers has taken on all of the banal intrigue of watching a thick coat of Sherman-Williams dry.

BRCP0: Why bother?

by ALBERT KAUFMAN

The Black Rock City Post Office will once again be open 24/7 this year. But what the fuck is it? Why do we need a post office on the playa? Is it really a post office? I slave at the BRC Post Office because it is, quite simply, the most interesting interactive one-on-one improvisational theater on the planet. Take sleep deprivation, mix in some willing actors, and throw in a great facade with props, such as our own playa postage, postcards, and official-looking laminates. Add in some seriously crazy attitude, not to mention bribes from the customers, and you've got either a laughing spool or a seriously-sparked bottom that you'll never forget.

When's the best time to visit? Anytime your heart desires! And we're always looking to train exceptional volunteers — especially after midnight. The BRCP0 will take pre-stamped outgoing mail and stamp it with our super-cool Burning Man stamp which will be sent to your loved ones. We also deliver mail and other items, such as strip-o-grams, chicken-grams, and 24-hour singing telegrams, 24 hours a day. Come visit! You won't regret it.

What's up with the Greeters?

by ADRIAN ROBERTS

If you're like us here at *Piss Clear*, you just want to get the fuck through the gate as quickly as you can, without having to deal with an annoying Greeter. These people are usually first- and second-year Burners, and their job is to hold you up, hand you a bunch of crap you won't even read until you get back home, and subject you to a bunch of stupid questions. So now ... it's payback time! We hooked up with the Greeter Project Manager, Susan Bernosky aka Sweetthang, and subjected her to some stupid questions of our own.

PISS CLEAR: How the hell did they rope you into this thankless job?

SUSAN BERNOSKY: Money, fame, alcohol, and sex.

PC: Okay, I take that back, I guess it's *not* really a thankless job. What are the best job perks that come with being a Greeter?

SB: Working with volunteers and tapping into the energy of Burners who are just arriving at Burning Man. It's a pretty good fix. And I've been given some cool shirts.

PC: That sounds like *such* the bullshit answer. Tell me, what's the best thing that's ever happened to you as a Greeter?

SB: Meeting a stranger in the real world who remembered me from Burning Man because I greeted them.

PC: That's it? What about the worst thing?

SB: Being embarrassed that I was taking the position SO seriously that I had to be reminded by my friends that it's only a week in the desert.

PC: You know, the Gate people think they're much cooler than you guys.

SB: Everyone thinks they're cooler than the Greeters. However, everyone



Sweetthang with Greeter Right-Hand Man Abdullah

stupid questions

would like to be a Greeter at least once. Go figure?

PC: Why do so many of the Greeters seem like Moochers, asking people if they've got anything for them?

SB: Holy shit, these questions are getting hard! In the years past, a good idea went bad and we have since remedied it. Greeters shouldn't do that, and as far as I know, in the last couple of years, they do not ask for shit. They may talk shit — but not ask for it.

PC: Do you find that most Greeters seem to be second-year zealots, swept up into the spirit of Burning Man, and thinking that they've "got it," even though they've only been to the event once?

SB: We don't have a time requirement to be a Greeter, so there are a lot of newbies and second-year Burners. For the most part, they're trying to figure out what the fuck is going on, and

being part of our group helps them feel a part of Burning Man. We have training and require Greeters to read the Survival Guide, the Jack Rabbit Speaks, the Afterburn report, etc., so that they understand more and can maybe answer questions that Burners may have.

PC: If that's so, then why did two different Greeters, two years in a row, have no fucking clue what Piss Clear was, even though we distribute 32,000 newspapers each year on the playa?

SB: I would direct that question to your advertising team and suggest that they get right on it! We might consider making Piss Clear required reading — have your guy call my guy.

PC: Obviously, there are "good" Greeters and "bad" Greeters. To you, what's the difference?

SB: A good Greeter passes out the col-lated material and garbage bag to everyone, doesn't let a registered theme camp in without making sure they are placed, and tags as many video-capable cameras as come by him/her. A good greeter understands who they are greeting almost by ESP and touches upon what this person could use as far as info is concerned — and doesn't waste anyone's time.

A bad Greeter ... hmmm ... is probably very drunk and demands that the person they are greeting get out of their vehicle, give 'em a beer, and kneel on the ground and beg permission to enter the city.

PC: What's up with the phrase "Welcome home?" Doesn't it smack of cult-like lingo?

SB: Yes — but it feels good at the same time — maybe we are a fucking cult!

WHAT'S OUT WHAT'S IN

annoying greeters	annoying the greeters
astronauts	transvestites
beer and ludes	acid and Viagra
Black Rock Gazette	one-ply toilet paper
BLM	BMS
Bush '04	Harvey '08
bush/dick	two Johns
Center Camp	open playa
cold soup out of the can	meth diets
Critical Tits	naked guys on pogo sticks
dust masks	just breath it
Earth	Uranus
"Elvis" sunglasses	aviators
foot rubs	titty twisters
fur coats	lederhosen
heterosexuality	crimes against nature
hippie crack	crack
holding it in	puking your guts out
"just say no"	"wake and bake"
lip balm	bag ball
Mohawks	mullets
near-perfect weather	blinding dust storms
Patriotism	Satanism
pierced bellybuttons	hairy backs
playa events schedule	randomly finding fun stuff
priests	priestesses
public art	public sex
pussy	poontang
PVC	PCP
Reno	Sparks
Saturday night	Wednesday afternoon
shade domes	observation towers
shirt, no pants	anything that covers your hairy balls, please
skipping this year	never coming back!
temples of belief	heads in the stars
this year's theme	last year's theme
trance camps	pancake camps
trance music	Ukrainian folk music
trucker hats	cowboy hats
Utitilkits	Utitilskirts
virtue	vice
water	beer
water bottles	water sports
yoga	push-ups

— list compiled by Eggchair Steve and Rooster Seix

Dirty dozen

LadyBee name-drops cool shit on the playa

by LADYBEE

This is an annual list of theme art projects that I can't wait to see. There are far too many interesting projects to mention, but here's twelve for starters.

Bok Globule by Leo Villareal and Carter Emmart aka Barbie, New York City
A dome featuring Barbie's fish-eye projections of the entire universe from the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Plus, Leo's light installation from P.S. 1 is displayed on the outside and his gravity chairs are inside. This is the place to hang out at night. Love these Disorient people. On the walkway from the Man to the old temple spot, left side

Jadu Beta by Saul Melman, Brooklyn
From the same artist who brought you the giant urinal from last year, this 450-foot-long walk-in inflatable sculpture is made of 500 inflated plastic "pods" that are organically soft and buoyant to the touch. As you adventure into the sculpture, you will hear the strains of an alien sound score. Make sure you treat every bubble gently. Climbing or jumping on a "pod" will quickly destroy the sculpture. Instead, press your face gently into its semi-transparent skin and get a new perspective on yourself. The only thing missing is a bar! 1:30 Deep Space

Wheel of the Sacred Earth Year by Kasia Wojnarski, Portland, Oregon
This is Kasia's big year — she brought us the walk-through fire tunnel of years past and this year, is doing multiple fire installations. 6:30 Esplanade

Everything inside and outside the Observatory
There are ten different installations inside and interactive off-planet theater outside in the ten dioramas, managed by NAMBLA The Clown. In the Vault of Heaven, everyone's a star!! Burning Man

White Noise by Emily Trutt, Los Angeles
A white house, a white picket fence ... white on white on white ... eerie. 10:45 deep playa, left side

Cosmic Dance by Daniel Dunkle
A 40' diameter Foucault's pendulum will live at the Keyhole. Watch the pegs tumble. Center Camp Keyhole

Observer, Observed by Kate Raudenbush, New York
Fun with mirrors! It's a walk-in mirrored cube by day, a voyeuristic peepshow by night. 1:00 deep space

Deeper by Peter Hudson
Remember the swimmers zoetrope? Peter's back with a figure that appears to dive out of the sky and into the playa. Actually, I should say, it's an endless stream of divers. Off the walkway to the Man, right side

Alien Semaphore by Hedley
You can control the look and feel of twelve big white light sculptures. Cool! 10:45 deep space

Temple of Stars by David Best
Somewhat grander in scale than previous temples, but horizontal rather than vertical, the Temple arcs a quarter mile across, and is inspired by Japanese sculptural landscapes. It will burn on Sunday night. Farther out there

Crash Landing by Anakin Koenig
A radiant object, part meteorite, part spaceship, crash-landed on the playa. 10:00 between Mercury and Venus

There are over 200 other art installations out there — get on your bike and go discover them!!

You may not buy anything while you're out here, but you sure had to buy a bunch of shit before you got here, didn't you?

BM breeds consumerism!

by DAVE DEESE

Being one who tries to plan ahead, I paid \$165.00 for my ticket. But many Burners paid \$200-\$300. Is this too much? I don't know. But I do know that the entire cost of one's Burning Man trip starts to add up fast — and is rarely mentioned. Rental fees, fuel, food, ice, water, drugs, camp equipment, liquor, costumes, etc., etc., etc. And this doesn't even include hidden costs, such as vehicle wear and tear, insurance, taxes, and other things people don't factor in. The truth is, Burning Man is an enormously expensive event to attend. It's become a playground for the affluent and well-to-do. And I find that hard to justify.

Eccentric lefties/artists/anti-capitalists/counter-cultural types are seldom good at economics. Why would any of the aforementioned be in favor of Burning Man? BM breeds consumption and waste on a huge level. Big box retailers love BM! The anti-corporate, anti-Wal-Mart, anti-capitalist/globalization crowd should be vocally against Burning Man. Sure, there may be no commerce in Black Rock City — but that's only because everyone has already bought everything from corporations before they got here! The BM "experiment in temporary community" in its present form is only made possible by large corporations.

Anyone care to guess how many gallons of gas are used in the name of Burning Man? George W. Bush thanks you.

The kooky Left loves a good conspiracy: maybe Burning Man is actually an event cooked up by rich capitalists, in an effort to extract money out of dyed-in-the-wool liberals. Think about it.

Me, I didn't burn a thing

by JANELLE BROWN

I'm no Nature Girl. Sure, I've done my share of cooler-and-cooler camping trips, but I'm not one for immersing myself in the great outdoors. When I do go camping, I stay in well-maintained national parks with running water just a few steps away. In my City life, Nature holds few surprises for me. Weather is simply an annoyance that forces me to carry an umbrella or sunglasses during certain times of the year. I certainly never think about survival — everything I could possibly need is as close as the organic corner store.

In short, spending a week in the desert at Burning Man is the antithesis of my lifestyle. When I visit la playa, I feel as if I've been slapped in the face, shaken, and reminded that the elements are still in control. Black Rock Desert lies pancake-flat, 3,905 feet above sea level, and stretches for 400 square miles. The temperature can break 115° during the day, and wind blows the dust into furious stinging storms. Rain appears from nowhere to turn the playa into an immense sea of sucking mud, which dries within minutes when the sun returns. There isn't the slightest bit of vegetation — even the insects stay away. It is completely uninhabitable.

Thousands head out here for Burning Man every year anyway. And I've been one of them. Like them, I am drawn to Burning Man to experience something cathartic, freeing, new, and rejuvenating. But I don't run naked and wreak havoc. Instead, I seek inspiration from a community of unique faces, visual fodder for my camera, quality time with my friends — hell, even a tan.

This year I think I'm prepared. And in many ways, I am. I know exactly where I want to camp (half a mile from the chaos of Center Camp), how much water to bring (a liter a day), how to erect a shelter (blue plastic and lots of stakes). But year-old memories don't do justice to the playa's nothingness, vastness of sky and dirt so vast that the milling masses in Black Rock City are dwarfed. Arriving at Burning Man feels nothing short of landing on the moon, and I still experience a disconcerting dizziness when I step out of my air-conditioned car and feel that first



Janelle!

blast of dry heat and the crunch of dirt under my foot. Setting up camp takes about an hour: wrestling with those tents is the most activity that I achieve all week. The heat is so extreme that I am immediately turned into an immobile lump. There are a million things going on, but I can barely muster the energy for a bike ride. Instead, my friends and I lounge in our camp, listen to the radio, and read sex tips aloud from Piss Clear. Activity consists of going to cocktail parties in neighboring camps, where we sit in the shade and paint our fingernails blue. Immersed in this lethargia, the time seems to inch by: minutes last for hours. I feel I've aged a year in a day.

Sleeplessness extends the day. I go to rave camps each night once it's finally cool enough to move and dance until the small hours of the morning. But the stifling heat of my tent awakens me each morning at dawn. I'm stuck in a limbo-land of exhaustion: I can't sleep because I've hardly moved all day, and I can't move because I've hardly slept. I lie in the eerie blue shade of our plastic tarpaulin in a semi-lucid state, spray bottle in one hand, gin and tonic in the other.

The deeper I sink into this state, the more I become aware of what's happening to my body. I savor the heightened sensations: the sun on my face, the stickiness of the grim on my skin, mud between my toes and dust in my eyes.

I am paranoid about what's happening to my bodily functions. People have died out here, they say, and my inexperience with wilderness survival forces me to take those warnings seriously. I smear on fresh sunscreen every hour; I scold my friends about drinking and dehydration; I follow the "piss clear" rule when I visit the porta-potty (if your

urine is dark, you better drink some water, fast). I lose my appetite, and the Pop-Tarts go uneaten; instead, I suck on the grapes that float in the melted ice in our cooler.

Mostly, I just sit and think. Like many young urban people I know, I am often consumed by restlessness and discontent. While others seem to be jetting off for six-month jaunts through Thailand, I sit in front of my computer for ten-hour days, worry about things like credit card bills and high-yield investments, suffer from sleep deprivation. Work stresses me out, relationships are elusive, and time passes faster than I can seize it.

The normal concerns of a twenty-something urbanite, yes. But in the city I am so buffered by my comforts that it's difficult to take a step back from my possessions, my lifestyle, my routines, to see what really matters. I get lost in the mundane details and overlook the big picture, focusing on petty concerns like whether the bus is late in the morning, what phone calls I need to return, if my socks match my shirt. But going to the desert with only a careful of essentials, I am forced to reprioritize. Suddenly life is reduced to the elements: sleep, drink, food, shelter. Those everyday crises dissipate under the immensity of the sun, my mind is wiped clean of the daily events so that I can take a breath and focus on the state of my mind instead of the state of my datebook.

I realize I have a love-hate relationship with Burning Man. I don't go back for the events — last year I didn't make it to a single planned activity, not even the burning of the Man. The inactive hours and extreme conditions often grate on my nerves. But I am drawn back by the flat cracked emptiness of the earth and the potential it offers.

Burning Man is all about catharsis — burning away the inner demons, clearing the psyche. Some experience that catharsis from participating in the events, letting go of their inhibitions to build and burn and participate in mass destruction. Me, I didn't burn a thing. The desert burned it all away for me.

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Beware of the Playa Nazis

by DAVE DEESE

Surely you know of the Playa Nazis. These people are the pinnacles of environmental stewardship, the defenders of Mother Earth, the thin green line between the sacred playa and 29,771 ignorant burners. "Leave No Trace" — except tire tracks, air pollution, motor oil, antifreeze, transmission fluid, power steering fluid, brake fluid, gas, etc. What, you think those thousands of vehicles parked on the playa don't drip? How about all the 30-year-old hippie buses? No smog checks, six miles to the gallon, and lots of old seals to leak. Very eco-conscious. But it's okay, because the deadlocked hippie crews are so artsy, so creative, so spiritual, and they brought great E. And I'm sure they all parked on a tarp with drip pans.

Besides cars, you know what else is bad for the playa? Pee. Water, urea, vitamins, and metabolites of whatever drug you did the night before harm the playa by staining it yellow, and giving some poor slob playa pee clay foot.

Everyone is supposed to pee in 134-degree porta-potties, or in bottles. It is not known exactly why peeing on the playa is bad, and if one is "pissing

clear," it's hard to see any major impact. If the Playa Nazis were so concerned about this issue, one would think they'd be against BM altogether. When 30,000+ people come out to the desert, drink tons of fluids, do drugs, and party all night, you will have thousands of people pissing on the playa.

I wonder — where does old Johnny-on-the-Pot take those tons of sewage? I'm sure they dispose of the muck in a very "eco-conscious" way. If you're curious, call their corporate office. The phone number is right next to the big corporate logo on their trucks.

You know what else is bad for the playa? Burn scars. Fire causes the playa to feel pain, and may leave a hazardous hard spot on the ground. Of course, the DPW provides 22 relatively unsupervised burn platforms that anyone can throw "approved" matter into. These cages become overflowing, toxic-smoke-spewing, raging infernos as people throw in plywood (made with glue), painted wood, paper, cardboard, and anything

else. As long as you're not caught, you can burn anything against the rules. And people do — I saw them. But burn scars are what's really important. Because it's Leave No Trace, man, or we won't get our permit next year, dude." One would think DPW or the Earth Guardians could put liners on the ground around the burn cages to prevent these terrible burn scars.

Never mind all the pollution from burning paint, plastic, glue, fabric, vinyl, etc. Forget about the ashes going in a landfill. Don't question the glorious Man burning. Then there's the Temple of Stars, the burn barrels, and all the art that's burned. I shouldn't mention these facts because it might interfere with the Burning Man Experience.™ Yes, it's as if the desert spirits are saying to us, "Hey party people, it's cool if you're polluting the air, all that soot will end up 50 miles away, and eventually in the ground water, but no one will ever know. So party on! Take some more acid and burn your couch!"



Dude, burn your couch!

Helpful hints for the playa

by FUCKO PETE

Welcome back to BRC! It's that time of year again — the time of year Christmas wishes it was. By now you have probably at least partially set up camp, have cursed the wind, dust, and/or heat more than once, and tasted the salt of your own sweat. This means it's time to start drinking heavily. Wah-wah, H₂O, life-juice... vitamin water? Just drink it often, in large gulps all day, and try to avoid ending up where I did the afternoon of the Burn four years ago — laying in a Medical Camp gurney with an I.V. stuck in my arm next to two guys in gorilla suits who also had .06% sodium drips because of dehydration. There's nothing quite like waiting for a Med-Camp porta-potty in a flame shirt and cowboy hat, holding your own I.V. bag and smiling dolefully as other Burners stare at you while a medical tech hopelessly looks for a key to the toilet. But I digress. To further your Burning Man Experience™ this year, I have compiled a list of helpful hints for your inconsideration.

1. Rebar is bad for the shins.
2. Your private parts will sunburn like no other area on your body.
3. Playa boogers can be thrown further than regular snot.
4. Filling your camelback hydration bladder with margaritas is a subversion of said device. I have mixed (drink) feelings about this.
5. Glitter is not sun protection.
6. More gas is better (only when starting fires).
7. Tell any whiners who say "that's not very safe" to read their fucking ticket.
8. Glowsticks can and will find their way into any orifice (but become less trade-able).
9. Don't open your mouth while chasing the water trucks.
10. Just because she's wearing tie-dye doesn't mean she has hairy pits and a yeast infection.

Leave No Trace: the next level

by VICTOR TORRES & JOHN CORDARO

Lori "Flittergirl" Wells, 26, is pushing Leave No Trace, the mantra of Burning Man's past, present, and future, to the limit. Flittergirl says that this year she will attain her highest level of Leaving No Trace on the playa by staying at home. "I'm going to look through the many picture books I've bought over the years and take mugs," says Flittergirl. "My roommate has a couple of broken stereo speakers that I'll have playing trance and Goa for 24 hours straight at full blast," she adds. Flittergirl also plans to roll herself in a combination of gypsum dust and sugar water to add to the desired effect. "I don't plan to shower for a week and the arm of my sofa is going to get a work-out while I watch the Burn streamed on my Mac." She has not confirmed if she will be squatting between cars to urinate.

Vault of heaven?

by REV. BLIND TOASTER

Vault of Heaven? Bartender, I'll have what the man in the white hat is having. Alright already, enough with the themes! For the most part, people bring the same shit out here every year, the streets are all laid out the same, the lamplighters light the same lamps. Since when do we need a new theme every year when the whole place is a fucking theme park? What's the deal? Is this to give graphic artists something to do? Larry's ideas are starting to sound more and more like that dead king guy who ordered all those Easter Island heads built. "Hey, I know! Let's not just make a 120-foot Man, let's put it on top of a dome this year!" Rumor has it that next year's theme is going to be "Seven Brides for Seven Sisters" and the streets are going to be named after lesbian show tunes. Why not? It couldn't get any crazier than it is now.