



BLACK ROCK Gazette

Saturday, September 2, 1995

Largest circulation daily on the Playa since 1992

FREE

Mud Sharks Hungry For Meat

Grist Etc.

by Van Vrooder von Shrooder

A reliable alarm, either battery-powered or wind-up, is needed at the Tripod. Located 800 feet due south of Central Camp, the Tripod takes a picture every 11 seconds for use as time-lapse photography.

Extras are needed at Movie Camp tonight at 10:30, located about a mile north of Central Camp. Bring instruments and utensils to play if you wish. Ask for Robert.

Café in center camp is open for business, serving all your favorite stimulants, fresh-squeezed OJ, and biscotti until midnight or so every night—behind the cabaret stage, under the big green parachute. Volunteers are still desperately needed to serve coffee to caffeine-starved campers. Inquire at the Café in Central Camp and ask for P. While you're there, check out the zine table for an assortment of alternative reading.

Drive Home in Style—Gerlach High School is holding a car wash on Monday, 10am to 2pm, behind Bruno's. Your \$5 donation helps the local kids.

Bock, Bock—Many people have been inquiring about the whereabouts of a loose chicken that was last seen on the camp's south side. The hen is named Snowy. If found, return to Tobone, the guy in the tutu, on Shakedown Street.

No Trespassing—The owner of Fly Hot Springs has requested that we honor his private property rights and stay out. Let's honor his wishes. Trespassers face a \$150 fine.

Slow Down—in camp (beware drunks and dogs), on the Playa (the faster you go, the more dust you kick up for everyone else) and in town (the speed limit is 25, and there are a lot of kids and dogs who are used to it being that way). What do you want to go charging around so fast for anyway? Slow down, take it easy, and enjoy the view.

Be Nice! Despite the occasional fundamentalist grumbler, our neighbors in the surrounding communities are generally pretty tolerant of what we do, and always interested. When they say hi, say hi back. Go ahead and talk to them, and show by your example that although we may be weird, we're just folks. Works in camp, too.

Stop asking me what time it is! Check out the annalamic sun dial in center camp, a civic improvement courtesy of Dean Gustafson, with an assist by Erik Salmonson.

Black Rock Rangers report that while most festival participants are sticking to the established paths and experiencing no trouble transiting the Playa, a growing number of wisdom-challenged motorists are sticking to the Playa in an entirely different fashion: as of this writing, no fewer than 14 vehicles have become mired, 12 of them yesterday alone. Ranger resources are stretched to the limit, and Danger Ranger announced in a hastily-assembled press conference that while Ranger units would continue to rescue stranded motorists, return them to camp and help them get a tow truck from town, there would be no more on-site extractions.

A revised travel advisory is also in effect. Don't go north. Not at all. Just don't. The east edge of the Playa and its southern tip are also treacherous, and travel to any destination other than Black Rock Station and the entrance to the highway are discouraged for any driver not familiar with the area, and only in daylight hours. Driving to Trago at night is also not recommended.

If you're not sure, don't go. If you get lost, stop what you're doing and head west, back to the north-south Playa track and regain your bearings. And if, despite all good advice, you manage to get stuck, stay where you are, light a flare if it's dark and be patient. Someone will pick you up eventually. And remember: if a tow truck is needed it's going to cost you at least 100 bones. In cash.



Thousands throng playa for tenth annual Burning Man festival in Nevada's Black Rock Desert

Media SLIME

This year's press roundup includes a wide variety of media, almost covering the full spectrum of worldwide political thought.

Even though The Nation, National Review and Woodworker's Journal didn't show up, we did manage to sucker in some interesting folks: The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Spin magazine, Horwired online magazine, CNN, Channel 2-Utah and Discovery Online.

Alex Bennett, known to Bay Area radio geeks as the morning show host on KITS-FM (Live 105), will be linking with his own World Wide Web site on a regular basis.

Tom Tommorow, known for his weekly comic strip of the same name, is also purported to be on the playa. The Gazette respectfully insists that he submit a panel. Pens available.

RUMORMONGER

A Few of Our Favorites...

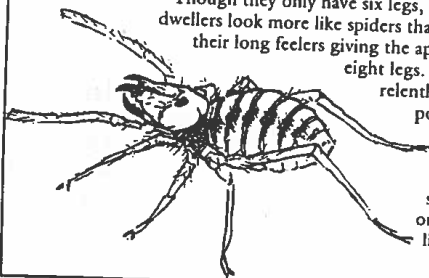
1. Surviving Grateful Dead members to reunite here; 20,000 en route.
2. MTV's "Real World" cast camping near Dream Circus.
3. Black Helicopters spotted overhead; Militia Camp says we're ready
4. Judge Ito rules against Crucifixion-with-a-celebrity camp; OJ services no longer available.

Jr. Ranger Science Corner

The solpugid, or wind scorpion, is a non-poisonous arachnid that lives in many of the world's deserts, from Australia to the American West. These hardy, aggressive predators will eat just about anything they can sink their unique 4-jawed mandibles into, including most insects, small lizards, and even baby snakes.

Though they only have six legs, these Playa dwellers look more like spiders than scorpions; their long feelers giving the appearance of eight legs. Their speed, relentlessness, and

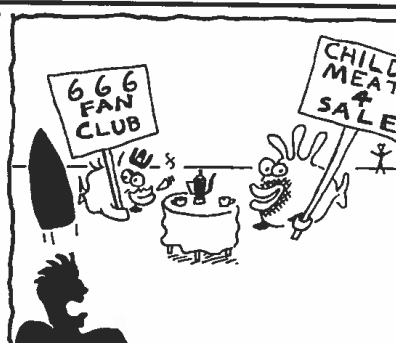
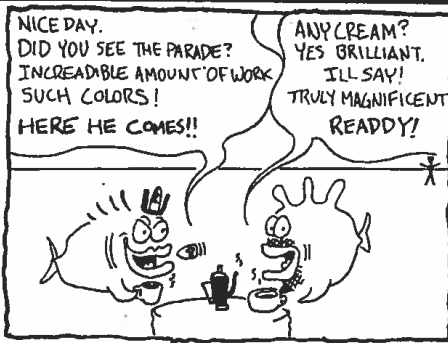
powerful jaws, which operate much like the business end of an engineering pencil, make them successful enough predators to survive just about anywhere, even on the fringes of the seemingly lifeless Black Rock Desert.



There is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion. —FRANCIS BACON



Murry of Da Desert



Dr. Anderson

THIS COUPON ENTITLES BEARER TO

FREE ? ACTION

AND THE SUSPENSION OF ANY AND ALL CONSEQUENCES ARISING THEREFROM

Man Sports Controversial New Look

When the Man was raised last night, the citizens of Black Rock witnessed the unveiling of an entirely new neon design: a two-sided installation in blue and red that appears to give the structure both male and female aspects. According to sources who asked not to be identified, Project Director Larry Harvey was just as surprised as everyone else at some aspects of the design change, and not entirely happy.

Around camp, however, the general consensus seemed to be approval of the new look. Women and Wiccans seemed particularly pleased that the figure now seems to manifest (personifest?) a little more Goddess energy. At any rate, when the moon is down and the penetrating glow of neon becomes the Playa's dominant light, there's now twice as much Burning Man to love.

Black Rock Gazette is published on-site by the Burning Man Project's Ministry of Propaganda and a dedicated cadre of fanatical volunteers. Not copyrighted. Not for sale. Not for everyone.

CEO: Stuart Mangrum
 Publisher: Stewart McKenzie
 Editor: Adrian Roberts
 Assistant Editor: Your Name Here
 Contributing Writers: D.S. Black, Lloyd Void, Aunt Jemima & Uncle Buck
 Comics & Illustration: Dr. Anderson, Bill Barker
 Online Editor: Jeffrey Gray
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 Your shoe's untied. No it isn't.

CLIP 'N' SAVE! CLIP 'N' SAVE! CLIP 'N' SAVE! CLIP 'N' SAVE! CLIP 'N' SAVE! CLIP 'N' SAVE! CLIP 'N' SAVE! CLIP 'N' SAVE! CLIP 'N' SAVE! CLIP 'N' SAVE! CLIP 'N' SAVE! CLIP 'N' SAVE! CLIP 'N' SAVE!

Mix 'n' Match! **BURNING MAN**

BUZZ PHRASE GENERATOR™

Hey, try this at home! Make your own groovy individual buzz phrase by making up a 4-digit number and combining one word from each column! See how many combinations you can make! Bleed on the paper!

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
1 Interactive	Cyber	Anarchic	Happening
2 Postmodern	Tribal	Absurdist	Experience
3 Psychotronic	Primal	Dionysian	Tractor pull
4 Non-linear	Ritual	Drug-fueled	Meltdown
5 Surreal	Techno	Anti-establishment	Freakfest
6 Psychedelic	Abstract	Hyper-caffeinated	Community
7 Proto	Pagan	Non-traditional	Hukilau
8 Twisted	Alcoholic	Extra-rational	Hoedown
9 Neo	Apocayptic	Mind-bending	Sensory Strew
0 Dusty	Alternative	Survivalist	Pyropalooza

CLIP 'N' SAVE! CLIP 'N' SAVE! CLIP 'N' SAVE! CLIP 'N' SAVE! CLIP 'N' SAVE! CLIP 'N' SAVE! CLIP 'N' SAVE! CLIP 'N' SAVE! CLIP 'N' SAVE! CLIP 'N' SAVE! CLIP 'N' SAVE! CLIP 'N' SAVE!

Playa Sightings: Jerry is ALIVE!!!

Jerry Garcia, the late leader of the Grateful Dead and icon for generations hanging out in Golden Gate Park because they can't afford the rent on Haight Street, was locally identified in four separate locations yesterday.

Sources close to the Gazette spotted a toothless and bearded white man leaving the Empire grocery store with a 12-pack of Miller Genuine Draft, reportedly priced at \$9.86.

"It was him, it was definitely Jerry," said J.P. Tarpulin, a Burning Man participant who had stopped for groceries. "Big, fat, snow-haired dude, asking with a half-smile on his face if anyone had a chili dog."

Tarpulin, still in mourning over the recent death of Garcia, is a first-timer to Burning Man but has been to over 200 Grateful Dead concerts. He considers the Burning Man experience "better than group therapy."

Garcia was also spotted earlier actually driving the speed limit on Highway 447, through Wadsworth and Nixon. A police spokesperson reported seeing what looked like a bearded man driving a BMW 320i and hauling a porta-potty decorated in rainbow colors. Garcia was not detained, unlike many unwary Burning Man carpetbaggers.

To the millions who knew him, Jerry was the grandfather of every tie-dye lovin', tofu-makin', VW Microbus-repairin', whippet-shootin', vibecrunchin' megafreak known affectionately as a Deadhead. Without Jerry Garcia leading the Dead, there just might not be Ben & Jerry's. Or tie-dye. Or hell, ties.

Anyone with information on the whereabouts of Jerry Garcia should report immediately to Shakedown Camp in the inner circle.

Rumors that other members of the band were en route, trailing a patchouli-scented army of 20,000 fanatical fans, were unsubstantiated.

SCHWA
 CODE
 ALIEN
 SHIP
 STICK PEOPLE
 SCHWA CORP.
 OTHER

BILL BARKER
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BECAUSE of heavy processing requirements, we are currently using some of your unused brain capacity for backup processing. Please ignore any hallucinations, voices or unusual dreams you may experience. Avoid all concentration intensive tasks until further notice. Thank you. **THE SCHWA CORPORATION.**



Rangers Rescue Locals

Grist Etc.

by Van Vrooder von Shrooder

Be extremely cautious driving ANYWHERE on the playa. Rain has been a fact of life this weekend and wet patches still lurk. Avoid rutted tracks and obvious signs of mud, especially where the desert highway meets the paved one. And once you're back on Highway 447...we highly recommend observing EVERY posted speed limit.

If you stop for gas in Gerlach, make sure you say hello to Bill Stapleton. Bill was brought here nine years ago "via the wind." He hopes you won't ask him where Burning Man is, but if you're missing a black-n-white doggie please inquire at the Texaco station in Gerlach.

Mike Weber was the lucky winner of the Trego to Burning Man Walk/Run, a 3.5 mile trek held yesterday morning. Weber took the pack of 25 (including 4 naked people) in just over 22 minutes.

Locked out—A locksmith or mechanic's presence is requested to help break into a minivan with keys in the ignition. Follow the flags west from central camp, keep right, and hang right at the first set of crappers. Look for a blue tarpulin over a minivan. Ask for Jack Passadore.

Bock Bock Update—Tobone thanks one and all for the extreme concern shown for his misplaced chicken named Snowy. He still hasn't found her, but there was one report that Snowy was seen wearing a big floppy hat and on her way to Rave Camp.

Jaryn Marston sez: Hi Gayle Rubin. All is better than well.

IN MEMORIAM

"DOOBIE"
DWAYNE WILLIAMS
1918-1995

A memorial service was held for the guru of Gerlach yesterday. At Doobie's whimsical yet profound creation "Guru Lane," about one hundred local residents along with many out of county and state friends honored the creator of Nevada's most benign and subtly moving artistic statement.

Doobie, who passed away on January 19, will be remembered by those who knew him and those who will stroll down Guru Lane throughout the year.

Try to stop at Guru Lane 3 miles north of Gerlach on Highway 34.

Even before the storm hit yesterday afternoon, the Rangers have kept busy assuring peace and stability on the playa. At 5:30 a.m. on Saturday morning three Empire teenagers decided to leave the main camp to head home. Trouble was, these poor locals went exactly in the opposite direction towards Empire. Their Mazda RX-7 became mired in muck. Though they stayed with the car at first, eventually all three wandered off on their own. Without water or proper clothing.



Fortunately, the Rangers and the Washoe County Sheriff's office located all three by 6 p.m. And yes, we called their parents. Special accolades are bestowed to Little Joe, who alone went out onto the treacherous and remote Quinn River basin. He found one of the boys in spite of the fact his car blew out the electrical system and cracked an axle (incidentally, Little Joe is graciously accepting donations towards his car repair—inquire with a Ranger).

There were two Medivac rides to Reno as well. Both were motorcycle accidents, one confirmed with neck injuries. There were also reports that someone shot up the campsite and vehicles at Bordello Springs, and the Billboard Liberation Front graffitied five separate slogans on Black Rock Radio 99.5 FM.

How We're Supposed To Do Things Tonight

1. The Burning Man procession tonight will be led by the Mermen, scheduled to start performing at 6:30 p.m. Sometime between that time and sundown parade headmaster Fantuzzi leads a growing procession through the Straw Portal to the Man.

2. The procession continues to the man and circles around the 100-foot "No Man's Land" safety perimeter. Performers will be located as follows around the perimeter: to the north, Mud People and Dream Circus; east, Screaming Divas; south, Kasorry and Collapsing Silence; west, Anna Hallat.

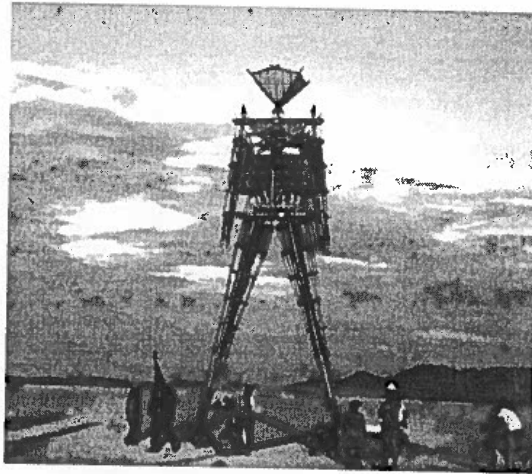
3. Soon air raid sirens blare and participants should join hands and expand the circle as wide as possible, chanting in unison "Circle, No Man's Land.... Circle, No Man's Land."

4. Then a red flare signals Dezzo Molnar of Yo-Yo Dynec Jet Car Propulsions Lab to circle inside "No Man's Land" safety perimeter.

5. The arms of the Man raise up and the drumming collective will start the heartbeat of the Man. Participants will come forward and sit for a moment of silence. After this, the fire performers begin—Dream Circus, Collapsing Silence, Hollow Earth, Pyrodesiacs, and Fireplay.

6. The Man is then lit by Crimson Rose and Will Rogers.

7. Participants then proceed to the adjacent Fire Lingam where Scott Jenerik's Dangerous Rhythm, Sharkbait, Hollow Earth, Collapsing Silence and Dream Circus will perform The Sins of the Leopard. Nearby will be the pyrodermia of Seemen.



Burning Man in all its glory.

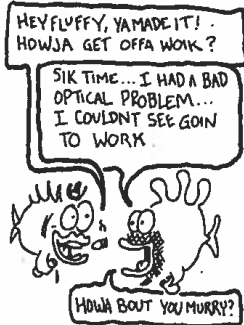
YES, YOU! PICK UP YOUR DAMN TRASH!

EVERYTHING must be removed from your campsite—every beer bottle, cap, matchstick and cigarette. Trash does not magically disappear if you leave it on the ground, and to ensure we can have this event in future years the playa must be unscathed by humankind's waste.

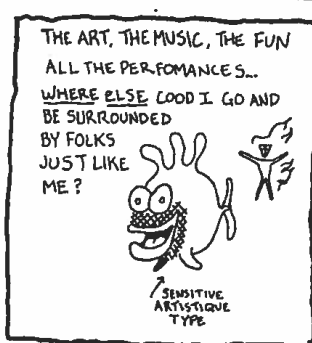
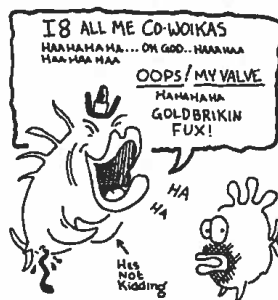
You must take your trash withyou. There is a dump in Gerlach, but it has been closed for years. It is highly recommended to take garbage to Lockwood, which is Exit 22 off of Interstate 80. The dump is about three miles off the highway, and it's open from 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Life is like a sewer—what you get out of it depends on what you put into it.

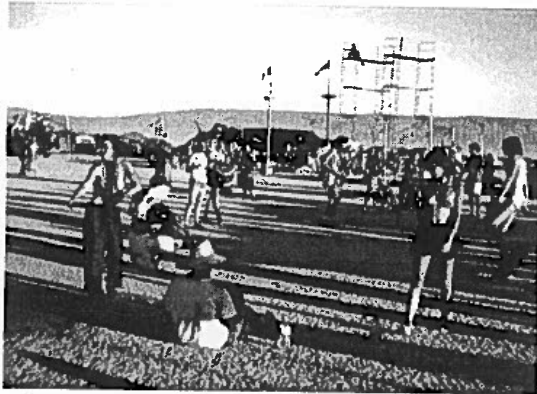
—TOM LEHRER



Murry of Da Desert



Dr. Anderson



Central camp throbs with activity before storm hits yesterday.

Panic on the Playa... NOT!

After two poundings on Saturday (afternoon and evening) by the rain deity, Black Rock residents found themselves left to their own devices....again....and came out the better for it.

Burning Man participants flew kites and secured wind-sailables, yet many watched canopies and tents fly away like paper. Unfazed, a double rainbow appeared to stir hopes and relieve the lightly wet and ever unflappable happy campers.

Late stragglers that were still driving up Highway 34 were greeted with a closed entrance to the playa. Fortunately the entrance was only closed for about an hour and a half—though many in 4x4s ignored advice and went roaring off into the mud, making the entrance far more treacherous if it does rain again.

Though a few took off back to civilization, many felt pumped by the experience. We used what we brought with us, and what was available to help us survive under the circumstances. It is a gentle reminder that survival is paramount.

VOICES ON THE PLAYA

accounted by Mistah Black

Scott, Berkeley:

I'm really excited to be here because there's absolutely nothing here in the beginning, and then it all happens and then it goes away again—a lot like life. Real life is plain little metaphors that work like that. Because I've been traveling a lot, it's kind of nice to settle down with a bunch of family. It's good to look into people's eyes and recognize each other for the shared purpose of fun and frivolity and fabulous good times. The Man to me represents the archetypal creation and destruction of life. We're creating this life, then together we will sacrifice it to the gods. This is my first year. I'm already planning for next year.

Dawn, Oakland:

What does the man say to me? I don't know about the man being out here...I guess it's a whole bunch of things: it gives me hope in community and freedom. I'm looking forward to explosions and fire and all sorts of chaos.

Kevin, Los Angeles:

There's a certain freedom to this that's definitely lacking in Los Angeles. You can actually breathe the air, well most of it, anyway, there's still a lot of dust. The most important thing is actually being able to be myself and not worrying about what other people think.

Desert's a-Tad Older Than Ya Thought

In an area so dry that water (or beer) is our most precious commodity, it is difficult to imagine that this was once a gigantic lake surrounded by marshes, where saber-toothed tigers, cave bears and mastodons once roamed. From 7,500 to 12,000 years ago, this desert was Lake Lahanton, a body of water as vast as the playa we see today.

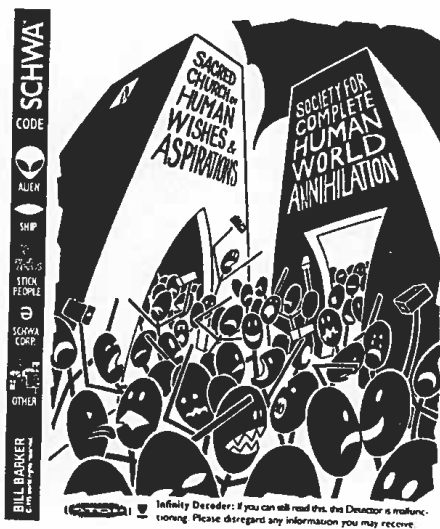
Standing on the dry, cracked clay of the desert floor, it is equally difficult to imagine that beneath the crusty surface, the primordial ooze descends ten thousand feet. For paleontologists like Billy Clewlow, who has dug in the Black Rock environs for over a decade, this area abounds with buried treasure. Clewlow expects to find evidence of pre-Clovis man on the periphery of the Black Rock basin.

In 1992, Clewlow uncovered the oldest mastodon bones found on the North American continent here on the playa. He believes that this area, with fossil records dating back as far as 400 million years, may well have been the Tigris-Euphrates of the Americas, and that the primordial mud we stand on will contain the remains of countless other creatures.

Clewlow's work has taken him to other areas around the playa, including the Yellow Rock Canyon, the site of petroglyphs which date back 23,000 years.

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You Forgot The Thanks: We're outta space.



Infinity Decoder: If you can still read this, the Decoder is malfunctioning. Please disregard any information you may receive.



Playa Heat

Sunday, September 3, 1995

Supplement to the BLACK ROCK GAZETTE

Horoscope

by Mme. Celeste

Aries 3/21-4/20

There's no moon, so curb the tendency to organize night excursions. There are no signposts on the playa, except during the Burn.

Taurus 4/21-5/21

All you Tauruses will spend the whole weekend complaining that it's just not like it was last time; you might as well get over it, because next year you'll be missing this year.

Gemini 5/22-6/21

You can do anything you want this weekend because next week you'll be someone else; your self at this time will feel the repercussions, but it will be dead anyway.

Cancer 6/22-7/22

Cancers will be very popular, since everyone knows you wouldn't leave home without band-aids, aspirin, and extra bottles of booze.

Leo 7/23-8/23

Basking in the glow of being part of this momentous event, Leos will spend all their time talking to each other.

Virgo 8/24-9/23

Tidy Virgos will have a vexatious weekend, having run out of replacement bags for the dustbuster by Saturday night; act uncharacteristically—chill until The Burn.

Libra 9/24-10/23

Is this experience a spiritual epiphany or a hell of a party? Libras will spend the entire weekend waffling between these positions. What else is new?

Scorpio 10/24-11/22

Tonight's Big Burn is just another smoldering moment in the life of the Scorp. Try not to incinerate yourself.

Ophiuchus 12/1-12/10

A sub-set of Sag, natives of this sign are an astrological anomaly. No one knows what you're supposed to act like, so dare to be weird; someone may notice.

Sagittarius 11/23-12/21

Impulsive Sag probably wandered out for the weekend immersed in the mystery but oblivious to details. Find a Cancer to get some water.

Capricorn 12/22-1/20

You Capricorns are the ones who'll be giving out their business cards and power lunching at The Desert Rat Cafe. Work that playa; no one will have voice mail to run interference.

Aquarius 1/21-2/19

Climb out of your heads and onto the playa; there's no harm in living somewhat in the future, but this event will be over in a few days. Be here now, at least part-time.

Pisces 2/20-3/20

You Pisceans came in search of Meaning but found mostly cocktails. Drown your expectations in lots of lite beer and return to your aqueous element.

Measuring The Long Arm of John Law

by Mike Wooldridge

For John Law, the 35-year-old gonzo artist responsible for the Man's precindinary neon glow, it was as much the spontaneous cooperative spirit of Burning Man that impressed him as it was the pyrotechnic spectacle.

"Like a lot of people, I had just heard about it and thought, 'What an amazing thing,'" Law says of his first burn in 1988. "But what really impressed me was the participation. People who showed up just to see what was going on suddenly were helping build the man and lift it with the rope. They were part of the experience."

After the event the next year, when beach authorities halted the festivities before the man could be set aflame, Law became even more involved. He and fellow members of the Cacophony Society joined with Burning Man organizers to help keep the tradition alive, moving 300 miles northeast to the sands of Black Rock.

"Cacophony had been planning to do a desert event for awhile," he says.

"Basically, we were going to go out there and shoot guns and blow things up, just have an amazing, freestyle wacko event." Everyone agreed that the desolate expanse of the desert would be the perfect location for Burning Man. The next year, what had been salvaged of the untorched man was hauled to Black Rock and erected.

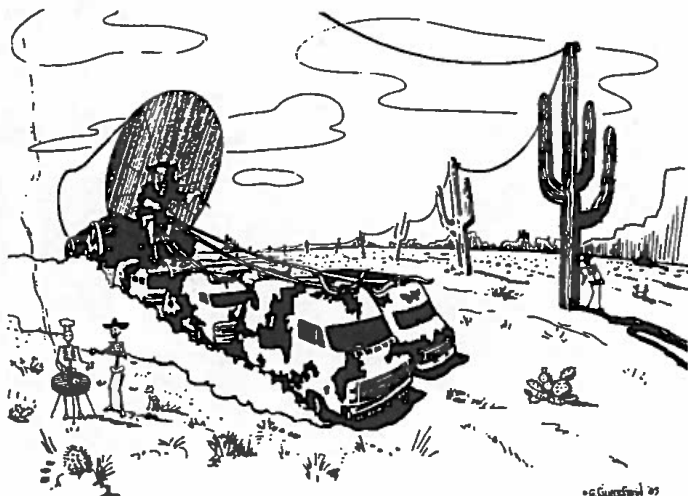
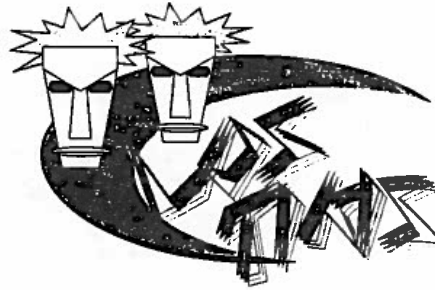
Law brought along an assortment of lighting supplies that year as sort of an experiment, he says. The first neon design was a 100-foot in diameter ring around the base of the man that illuminated the legs, combined with spotlights on the torso that shone on the man's upper half. The neon was well received, and the next year Law and Burning Man founder Larry Harvey designed a neon skeleton to install on the man itself.

With a few slight anatomical tweakings, the skeleton design has remained the same, with a set of ribs, stick legs and arms, and a Japanese lantern head. It takes about 130 feet of neon tubing to create the design, with a mixture of argon and mercury in the tubes creating a blue glow visible all the way to the horizon. "The only thing limiting its view on the desert is the curvature of the earth," Law says.

In addition to designing the neon, Law has also served as one of the main liaisons between Burning Man and desert area authorities, a relationship that, thanks to sensible diplomacy, has been one of the easier aspects of the event. "I think we were able to convince them early on that we were respectful land users," Law says. "We were serious about leaving nothing behind but our footprints and fire tracks."

Burning Man has helped spawn other desert neon installations for Law. For the past two years, Law has participated in Desert Siteworks, an outdoor art event organized by Bay Area photographer William Binzen held in Northern Nevada. His neon exhibits have included a yellow stripe of neon more than a football field long snaking across the landscape.

When not decorating deserts with extravagant light creations, Law runs a small neon design business in Emeryville.



© 1995 Mike Wooldridge

"Life does not cease to be funny when people die any more than it ceases to be serious when people laugh"

—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

across

- 2 faire
- 4 the wholly _____
- 6 fly
- 8 the southern city of wackos
- 9 ego's opposite
- 10 this desert
- 12 horned _____
- 13 correct
- 15 larry, curley (flash) and _____
- 16 scale
- 19 wolf's friend (to the Palutes)
- 20 '95 - the _____
- 24 never have enough of
- 25 stuff you sit on in 18 down
- 26 snake
- 27 you are in it
- 28 Syn. of 15 across
- 29 _____ Stubble
- 31 crossing for jose
- 32 crimson's partner
- 33 color of floss
- 34 naked
- 36 Flash's place
- 39 riot
- 40 bitter
- 43 _____ something
- 44 run
- 46 indians to the east
- 47 donner
- 51 X tribal gathering
- 52 rocket man
- 53 joke
- 56 and to brutus
- 57 age
- 58 boogie
- 59 elated

- 60 crimson _____
- 61 is to pedro

down

- 1 remnants
- 2 unit of inferno
- 3 _____ on a pipe
- 4 Druid tree
- 5 young boy
- 7 rite
- 8 sacrificial
- 10 our friends
- 11 harrod mobile
- 14 tiki drink ingredient
- 17 island dress
- 18 baths
- 21 miguel y miguel's yell
- 22 shake _____ and roll
- 23 annie's thing
- 25 40 feet
- 28 moodmusic
- 30 1995 plague
- 32 W. Virginians, banjo players and daughter-wives
- 35 bet you can't beat only one...
- 37 thanks science
- 38 Creator, He, Him, the man, or just.... get the hell out of my ice-box, larry
- 41 flood valley sun god
- 42 stud, or draw
- 45 state while imbibing in 37 down
- 48 parking lot
- 49 what you don't see in the city at night
- 50 water+dirt=
- 54 rest
- 55 play the fool

The Sunday Drool Rag

By Herb "Baghdad in the Dust" Pane

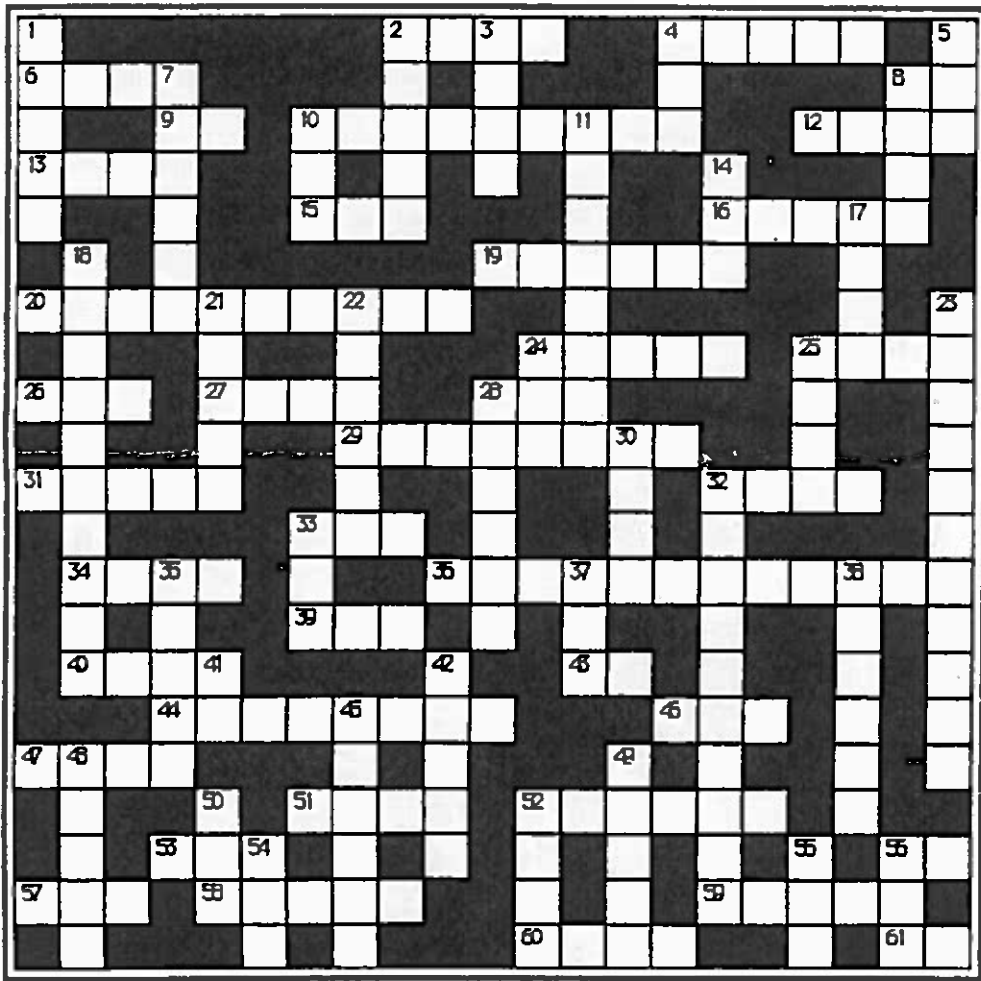
Ashes to ashes dep't: Over Labor Day weekend, the ole Sacto kid packed up his trusty Underwood and made tracks for the scalp-scorching wastes of northern Nevada to witness yet another incarnation of Burning Man, that annual celebration of weirdness that's become a Frisco tradition even though it's seven hours (and two flat tires in the old Jag) east of our easternmost 'burbs. My friend Ann, whose idea of adventure travel is a decaf latté, rubbed the old chrome dome with SPF 1000 and sent me au solo, making sure my lunchbox was packed with Stoli and the batteries in my Life Alert were au courant. Hep hep, as the camel jockeys like to say...off to the desert, Baghdad-by-the-Bay style!

After a brief but delightful sojourn in Bruno's Country Club casino (won ten bucks on quarter slots, lost it all shaking dice with the sexy young barmaid), I turned the old XJ onto the playa of the Black Rock Desert and drove into camp, a sprawling Rube Goldberg array of vans, tents and assorted what-nots. Festival organizer Larry Harvey, wearing his trademark fedora, tried to explain to me What It All Meant, but frankly my attention span just isn't what it used to be, and it didn't make much sense. Who needs a raison d'etre anyway when you've got a bunch of naked people running around? I settled for a beer and PBD (peanut butter & datura) sandwich from Flash, the playa's premier 'publican, then curled up in the back seat of the Jag for a quick coma before the burn.

For a long weekend the playa turns into a dream city: no mayor, no pigeons, and plenty of free parking. Still, this little Brigadoon has its share of big city problems. Like that certain SF morning deejay who got on the local pirate radio station and wouldn't shut up with the "f" word. And those Reno frat boys, similarly sophomoric (or freshmanic) who showed up at the last minute, drunk on cheap beer and testosterone, and poisoned a lot of moods with their high-volume boorishness. Despite the tireless work of the local gendarmerie, the Black Rock Rangers, there were a few unhappy incidents - a burglary, some broken bones, and the like - but still rather less misery than one might expect from a crowd estimated at 1,500. Kudos to all the volunteers and artists who helped put it together, unpaid and generally unrecognized...a special tip of the hat to Lloyd Void and his newspaper crew, who managed to put out the local daily - the Black Rock Gazette - despite computer trouble. Offered to loan them the Underwood, but they didn't seem to understand what it was for...damn kids.



PLAYA PUZZLER



Sight-ems galore in the wasteland: a full-camp tiki bar, complete with cardboard palm trees, blender drinks, and a little wisp of a siren in grass skirt and coconut shells who kept eluding my old but entirely honorable grasp...a fully functional camera obscura in a crawl-in pyramid, entrance too low for my teflon hip and battered knees (less cartilage left than Montana's) but reportedly sporting an amazing view...art cars galore, including a great toothy shark and a salty land yacht...cold gin and tonics at 1907 camp, an amazing reproduction of one of the City's finest salons...a young woman on a bicycle, Doda-sized cleavage bared to the elements, trying to locate a pump that would "fit her valvestems"...huge banner reading: "Coming soon - a new McDonald's"...neon artist John Law ramming old TVs with his rental car...exploding clowns...firearms...Fly...screaming across the playa at 125, lights out and windows down, laughing like a madman into the starry, starry night...

All in all a good time, though not as good as last year and certainly no match for those halcyon days on Baker Beach...fog rolling in over the bay...majestic spires of the Golden Gate behind the Man...fire seemed to burn brighter then, brighter and purer...match heads...dead seagull in the sand...her hair...car keys...fire...fire...fire...