

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1999:  
BLACK ROCK CITY POPULATION:  
16,416

## OUTER LIMITS

No, that's no mirage out on the Otter Limits, it's Omarz Otter Oasis. At 3:00 and Neptune, Omar, Marz and the Otter clan have created a bigger, better fountain and oasis surrounded by plants and cacti from around the planet. Here, you can catch a breeze under the open tents and take in an unobscured view of the playa (and the railroad tracks). "I didn't want to just come," says Marz, who has been improving on the fountain every year for four years. "I wanted to hit the ground running." Today at 3, the Oasis clan will gather before the fountain for the annual joining of the waters. This year, the clan has brought water from places as far away as the Ganges and Tibet.

## Driven: Pirate Ship

Pirates sail the playa, and if you cross their path there is a good chance you'll end up with a bellyache. That's because Captain Cordog (not corndog) and his band of pirates are cruising in their home-built pirate ship (a work in progress). But Blackbeard might cringe at "reverse pirates" mission, which is to bring the booty rather than take it. They swoop down on Black Rock citizens with candy and wine, hence the bellyaches. "I like these pirates, because some of them are naked," said one happily pillaged citizen as he pulled back on a MGD. "And they're female. And good looking." Times change: these pirates were held up in Moon Circle while their good cap'n filled out paperwork. "Paperwork is for scurvy dogs and hen hearted rascals!" quoth the pirate Blueballs. Yo ho ho, the pirate life is for me!

## Russian Atom Smashing in Nevada Desert

The beautiful light show in the sky last night was rumored to be nothing more than a meteor shower. Official reports contradict this with facts leading to the belief that a Russian photon experiment went awry last night resulting in a beautiful lightshow and years of fall-out radiation which we shall feel the effects of for years to come. Others believe the lights were caused by a methane explosion in a Port-o-potty that sent one of the mean green machines flying over camp. Chris Lee says it must have been an Iridium satellite burning up in orbit—causing the temporary deterioration of his satellite phone service.

## THE OTHER BRG

We at the Black Rock Gazette are delighted to see that another newspaper, inventively called, the Black Rock Gazette—with the cutest little masthead—has been distributed in Black Rock City over the last couple days. It's so clever! But, we'd like to point out that they repeated, verbatim, information found in the WhatWhereWhen guide. No matter. Everyone has to start somewhere; and in support of their effort, we'd like to suggest a few "original" names for their periodical efforts... how about "BRG Wannabe," "Dim Mineral Digest," or "Belly-button Gaze-at." Keep up the great work, guys!

## where to find US!

Pick up your copy of the official newspaper of Black Rock City at the Black Rock Gazette HQ behind the Costco Soulmate Outlet in Center Camp. The Gazette can also be found at the village centers, the two ranger outposts, Central Cafe, Costco Soulmate Outlet, BEHOP and Checkpoint Salon (and maybe try the trash fence).

# WHEEL OF TIME

The theme of Burning Man this year is the "Wheel of Time." Burning Man has invited over twelve artists and groups—whose works you may have seen in Black Rock City in previous years—back to interpret through their own creations the ages that our city has been divided into: The Primordium, The Present and The Future. At 6 p.m. this Friday evening follow the Bone Tree, by artist Dana Albany, as it travels the Wheel of Time around the Man to participate in these celebrations and surprises. Read about some of the artists whose works you are about to encounter.

## Women Artists In Black Rock: Magical Collaboration

by Janaki Ranpura

Making art is punishing work in the best of circumstances. Being a woman artist making large-scale art in the desert would be close to impossible without a degree of collaboration which the artists call magical.

Lisa Nigro has been out in the desert since early July preparing her installation, the Fertility Sundial. A twelve-foot tall mud-plastered woman assuming an ancient position for childbirth serves as the gnomon of an enormous sundial on the esplanade. The project has grown and changed significantly through the ideas of other artists, including Dana Albany.

Dana's work, the Spirit of Time, in Center Camp, started a month ago as a rolling tree made of animal bones and has since bloomed into an extensive therapeutic performance including sculpture, puppets, original composition, dancers, and lights. As the Spirit of Time leads tonight's Grand Procession, it invites Burning Man celebrants to harmonize with the musical tones, signs of the zodiac, parts of the body, and elements which guide the revolution around the Man.

Peri S. Pfenninger's piece, Love's Rebirth, is a sacred circle of larger-than-life goddess sculptures at 4:00 around the Man. The idea for the work was sparked during last year's Burning Man, after which Peri sculpted a glittering fire goddess. The goddess inspired further components for the

just lit it, and we just sat and watched it burn. It burned all the way down to the level of the water and then stopped, and I thought, "That was kind of cool." She built a small prototype, which can be seen on her website, www.kiki.org. The prototype's ignited fuel and water mix can be held in the hand, and Kiki is eager that the larger model express the same participatory playfulness.

The artists' projects are marked by a generous synchronicity of ideas, people, and time. Lisa, who has been working in costume design since her last big sculpture five years ago, had an idea to make a sundial focusing on a giant woman before she was even aware that this year's theme was about time. Cosmic Kitty, who collaborates with Dana on the performance aspect of the Spirit of Time, explains that the ongoing goal of her work, "has been to do giant magical rituals to heal the earth," for which Burning Man '99 provides an ideal vehicle. Kitty also comments on how people have spontaneously flowed into the right place at the right time: "People just come. Because it's being guided magically things are just happening."

The performance element of Lisa's piece illustrates Kitty's point. Thirteen women dancers representing the four elements emerge from between the gnomon's thighs. Lisa met fire dancers at this year's July 4th performance on the playa. She found water movement in the Japanese butoh dancers employed in Dana Albany's project.

That time has collaborated is evident in Dana's work, which has seen such exponential growth, since a month ago, that it clearly testifies to the playa's capacity to cup and concentrate time. The only thing which could be accused of not fully cooperating is the playa itself. The violent winds, the burning sun, and the lack of supplies can drive the artists not a little mad. But looking up through the branches of the Bone Tree into the hot blue sky, accusations vanish into thanks.



Photo by Janaki Ranpura ©1999

piece, including a central altar and divine allegories of the other three elements. She says her piece has been strengthened since returning to the playa, where she has been joined by volunteers in creating, "an installation based on the past, present, and future, which brings in visions, hopes, dreams, and prayers for the Millennium."

Kiki Pettit's burning fountain, on the esplanade at 4:30, sprung from a brilliant story about a bad camping experience:

"I got the idea when I was on a camping trip with a friend of mine. He bought the camping equipment, so I bought the camping fuel. Apparently someone had bought it, emptied it, filled it with water, and returned it. His stove didn't work. He emptied out the stove into a cup, and, we having nothing to do and nothing to eat, he

Fire largely functions in the women's pieces as a symbol of liberation and focused energy. In Kiki's fountain, it takes on a sensuous, tactile quality. Kiki distinguishes two kinds of people who love fire: "There's a type that likes to stand back and watch huge things blow up, and there's another type of pyro that likes to be in close and control the flame." She thanks her Mom for allowing her to grow into the latter type.

The women emphasize fire as an energy capable of purification and healing, whereas men's groups such as See-Men, SRL, and Christopher Ristow utilize fire as a force for destruction. Destruction and healing, however, like the chicken and its egg, are fundamentally linked, chasing each other in a circle through time. ☺



Photo by Donn ©1999

## Kal Spelletich's Metal and Fire Ballet

by Fang

What drives a man to build sculptures that spit fire and chew metal? Why do Seemen robots destroy images of strip malls? The crowds are agog. Things burst into flames, but there's more happening than just oohs and ahs. People interact with these terrifying creations hands on. Kal Spelletich, the head Seeman: "You're hoping to give them a religious experience, like "Oh my god. Everything is different now. I see things differently."

From "Bum-Fuck, Iowa..." originally, Kal Spelletich describes the cultural environment that gave birth to his direction: "Demolition derbies. Monster trucks. Every other carny came through, and we went to freakshows. By the late 70s I found punk rock, and everything changed. That original punk culture was "do it yourself." You created your own culture. You were bored to tears so you just started winging it."

Participants from '96 will remember the Helco performance satire built by the Seemen where Helco, a fictional corporation bought Burning Man in a hostile takeover and erected a "mall from Hell" complete with Starfucks and Taco Hell in Black Rock City. Spelletich is going with the stripmall theme again this year. Churches, banks, towers, ponds and fountains will provide interactive, mechanized reminders of a consumer-oriented society.

"It's empowering to run a flamethrower," There's a difference between these playground art pieces and carny ride thrills. You can be pretty certain you won't die on a roller coaster, Kal says. Interacting with these pieces lets you look at your mortality more closely.

The message isn't merely destruction, though. "I deal with death because I'm into life; I want to bring things back to life. Everything is precious." He points to a sculpture made of metal and dried bones.

Spelletich is outside his studio in the San Francisco industrial district. "This is my garden." It had been a dump filled with rusted out cars, rubbish, and used needles. I couldn't tell from the oasis of green before me. Corn, 11 feet high.

## Learn No Trace

Mike Bilbo, BLM Outdoor Recreation Planner from the Winnemucca Field Office, will be presenting lectures on *Leave No Trace* programs on the playa. Mike will present *Leave No Trace For Kids* on Friday at 2pm at Kid's Camp. *Leave No Trace for Adults* will take place on Saturday, 12 Noon at the Earth Guardians/Black Rock University in Central Camp. ☺



# Sands of Time—Big Bang on Walkmans by Lesley Anderson

Do you anticipate increasing Millennium hype with increasing dread? Think that the "Year 2000" is an arbitrary measurement of time? Feel forced to hear about, talk about, and participate in, a cultural event that has little significance for you?

Antenna Theater, in its first year at Burning Man, has built an alternative to Y2K Hype in the installation sculpture *Sands of Time*. Beginning each evening at sunset, "Sands" is a self-guided tour around a giant clock made of torch-lit, raked earth and sculptural clock parts. Participants are given Walkmans, on which they listen to meditations on the Big Bang, the formation of the Universe, and the emergence of civilization, while strolling around and through the legs of the Man.

Chris Hardman, the 48 year-old founder and head of Antenna Theater, conceived of *Sands* as part of an ongoing crusade to, as he puts it, "debunk Millennium Madness."

"I think it's absurd that such a short period of time is being treated with so much pomp and circumstance," said Hardman, "considering how much of an expanse of time there really is."

The audio that *Sands* participants hear via Walkman is composed of interviews with time scholars, including authors Timothy Ferris (*The Whole Shebang*) and Stephen Jay Gould (*Questioning the Millenium*) discussing the way humans see themselves in relation to a universe that is over 12 billion years old.

In addition to *Sands*, Hardman is planning an alternative New Year's Eve party for Antenna's home base, Sausalito, to celebrate *All Time* rather than the year 2000. The party, which

has received official support from Sausalito mayor Amy Belser, will feature a giant clock that will measure time since the Big Bang, while floating in the bay on 100-ft. wide concentric rings. This *Clock of All Time* will spurt water as it strikes midnight.

Another part of Hardman's crusade is to replace what he feels is a politically and culturally biased B.C./A.D. system with his new calendrical system. Today's A.D. dates, like 1999, would be added to the number 12 Billion (the most recent approximation of years the universe has existed), then abbreviated, for easy use in checkbooks, etc, as 12B 1999. B.C. dates would be subtracted from 12 Billion, so that the birth of Caesar, in 63 B.C., becomes 11,999,999,936. Hardman proposes abbreviating these dates as 11>, so that Caesar's birth becomes 11>9936.

Hardman hasn't always been obsessed with time. *Pandemonium*, for instance, an Antenna performance in 1997-98, explored sex, hedonism, and the Rites of Spring. Participants followed cavorting puppets and masked actors through a dark wood in the Marin Headlands, while listening on Walkmans to the words of lovers, scientists, and academics blended with eerie sound effects. Another Antenna piece using taped interviews of Bridge Jumper policemen, psychologists, and others, tempted participants to jump from a 4-foot replica of the Golden Gate Bridge onto a fog pillow.

To experience *Sands of Time*, pick up a Walkman at Center Camp at the base of the road leading to the Man. You can also learn more about how to use the new calendrical system, and start spreading the word about All Time. ☺

## Follow the Circle to the Opera and find the Era



Photo by Gary Cairney ©1999

The Circle of Time inevitably leads to Pepe Ozan's opera *Le Mystere de Papa Loko*. Tomorrow's production brings together over 300 performers for up to an hour of ritual initiation by fire and voodoo dancing enhanced by the traditional consumption of rum.

Inspired by Haitian culture, this year's opera creates a new syncretic religion symbolized by five different sects (Lwas). Manifested by groups of performers, the Lwas will act out a drama in three parts: engagement of the primal being, the calling of the heavens, and transformational rites which culminate in the traversal of a ring of fire into a New Era of Ecstasy.

Pepe is a native of Argentina and a sculptor by trade. The development of his productions over the last years have been the result of collaboration with co-producer Twan and co-writer/stage manager Christopher Fueling. The opera's dedicated group of performers remains in

touch online year-round, developing their roles and preparing for the next performance.

The first opera production in 1996 was set to music inspired by Byzantine art Pepe observed in Turkey. Being a large success, the opera evolved into a more elaborate performance tying together visual and performing arts with ancient ritual. To Pepe, the opera is a tableau —there is no plot in the literal sense, and no specific symbolic meaning: the performance is simply meant to be experienced immediately and directly. Pepe chooses to communicate through religious imagery and ideas because he feels they stimulate perception, "beyond the rational, in the direction of primal rites and mysticism. The opera tends to be an experience rather than a story."

Twan sees the opera as "a forum for self-expression, a place for willing people to lend their creative skills, in some cases skills they didn't even know they possessed. It is about ritual celebration, which is sorely lacking in modern society. Ancient cultures knew the importance of ritual and integrated it into their lives. Somewhere along the road of time, we have lost this necessary activity. The opera is about having the time of your life."

The producers of *Le Mystere de Papa Loko* request that no film or video recordings be made during the event. It takes place Friday night after the Wheel of Time. ☺



By Sister Dana Van Iquity

PLACES TO GO; PEOPLE TO DO... Ignore your official program and don't miss:

"Wheel of Misfortune" — Are you game? then get over to 4:15 Mercury. Vanna White be damned! This is no place for whitebread game show hosts. And the secret phrase is NOT FCC-approved (nasty stuff). Spin the wheel and get your prize — could be as severe as a wedgie. Hey, you takes yer chances.

"Lounge Lizard Cabaret" in Drano Village — Unwilling to drive all the way to Reno for those bad casino lounge acts? Why not stop by The Lizard to satisfy that Steve'n, Eadie/Wayne Newton craving? You may want to perform and possibly get recorded onto their next CD. Ah Stardumb!

"Drug-Free Camp" — All I know is it's NOT located at 4:20! This will be a very teeny tiny camp, rather deserted, not terribly colorful or creative. Look for the flashing neon "Just Say No" sign and a life-like Nancy Reagan arm-wrestling with Betty Ford. Okay, I lied; no such camp. Made ya look!

"Artists' Republic of Fremont" — In addition to bringing a bit of the Pacific Northwest to Burning Man, rumor has it that now that Mustang Ranch is closed, ARF is offering free blow jobs. Also catch ARF's version of Chippendales, Pac No'west style lumbermen, at 4:35 S. Mercury.

"Blair Witch Camp" — featuring various cult film screenings including "Rocky Horror Picture Show" with simultaneous live actors. Be sure to bring your own popcorn, cuz you might need the empty box to hurl in after seeing the BW Project.

And speaking of Projects, check out *Projet Haute Couture* at 7:24-27 Mercury — lucky clients will get custom tailoring of Walmart-quality outfits hand-sewn by Kathy Lee Gifford's sweat-shop children and later modeled at the low fashion show.

"Kids Camp" — Located at Mars 5:30, this is a safe space for the wee ones to play [and wee, no doubt]. It's a fantasy-land where marauding bands of munchkins can become pint-sized pirates and use pirate-like expressions: "Yo ho ho and a bottle of ... root beer," and the ever-popular "Yar!"

Lastly, *Small After All World*, Friday on the Wheel of Time, is a must-see, must-burn, must blow up. Sister Dana's boat once got stuck on the Disneyland version, forcing him to listen to 30 minutes of those damned small-fry puppets repetitively singing *ad nauseum*. Anyone who detests this ride will have a wonderful therapeutic healing experience as this performance blasts SAAW to smithereens. Take that, Michael Eisner!!! ☺



Photo by Bryce Perry ©1999

**A Nude Reminder...** Don't miss this opportunity to participate in *Krystal* by photographer Spencer Tunick. Pose nude on Saturday morning, September 4th, 8:30am sharp, rain or shine for a massive nude group photograph. The entire event will take 30 minutes.

Immediately following come pose for the Black Rock Gazette newspaper *The Naked Truth* photograph to be published in the Sunday edition of the gazette!

### Bernie's Index

Number of Burning Man participants in 1998 who lived in foreign countries:  
1 out of every 300  
In 1993: 1 out of every 300

Number of radio stations broadcasting in Reno, NV (population 133,850) in 1998:  
43  
In Black Rock City (population 14,000) in 1998:  
16 (today: 21)

The beginning of Man:  
A primordial swamp  
The beginning of The Man:  
Baker Beach

Youngest Burning Man volunteer staffer on record to date:  
Ian Victor Aushani, Access crew, 1998, age: 4 months

IF YOU HARBOR INTERESTING FACTOIDS, PUT THEM TO WORK FOR BERNIE'S INDEX. SUBMISSIONS TAKEN AT THE CITY DESK (IN FRONT OF THE BLACK ROCK GAZETTE HQ).

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