Enter the Vault of Heaven

Interactivity at the Observatory

Leslie Landberg

The platform beneath the Mal will soar to new heights this year, thanks to innovative interactive theaters below the observatory. Burning Man Executive Director Larry Harvey recruited three experimental theaters this year: Black Rock Gazette writer Leslie Landberg, who is also creating a diorama in the Vault of Heaven; and Larry Harvey, who is creating a diorama at the observatory, about this vision of interactivity.

Larry: That's the intention. People attributing to invent, in imitation of the burning Man, benefits and celebrations of various kinds, and one of the luminaries you hear is, "Well, it's very difficult because all of these outsiders come in, these straight people, these people that don't "get it," will get it. Once you've engaged people on those grounds, you become participants without even having intended to be. It isn't necessary to retreat from the world and insulate yourself, inviting only those whom you think are members of your community. And it isn't necessary to engage to undertake a pilgrimage to a distant spot.

Leslie: Inclusivity is integral; then, to this experience?

Larry: Absolutely! I have a fantasy that someone will come with their grandmother -- one of these family reunions that are so common now -- and one night they'll find themselves peeking into this strange, alien world and they'll see these two outrageously alien creatures engaged in some kind of mutual exercise of some bodily function, only to realize, as they peer deeper into this exotic space, that one of them is, in fact, their own grandmother! It would be a healthy experience for anyone. In fact, I intend to be in one of those worlds -- more than one if I can. Last year I didn't go in any of the niches and then I regretted it. This year I think I will, so maybe I'll encounter you on another planet?

Larry: Great! You're spending a lot of time around my own alien world, of course, and helping people to discover how it works and to play with them there.

Leslie: That's very much what I'm hoping to achieve with own my diorama, the Theatre of the Heavens, which is a do-it-yourself alien oracle. I've created, with your help, a new kind of theater: a combination of oralic channeling and theatrical improvisation, which is fundamentally inclusive and very spontaneous.

Larry: Sounds great! Most importantly, the one big idea that I'm hoping to suggest to people this year is that you needn't retreat to a space that's all removed from the world to create art. It's possible to embed interactive art in the very heart of your hometown.

Leslie: Is this integration possible?

Larry: Yes. It's a seduction! I've suggested to the people who are on those stages that they look for those who leap forward and look as if they wanted you to absorb them whole, or people who hang back but can't take their eyes away from what they see. They'll know them when they see them, and when they do, they're asked to tell them to come back around to door six or seven or eight -- because this is after all an alien motel! And they lead them to a green room and this green room will contain a very condensed initiation into the premises, the back story and basic rules of interaction. People who do improvisatory theater know that it works best when you begin with a few premises. What keeps some people from going on stage is that they're afraid they'll be embarrassed in front of other people, but the intention is to seduce people onto these little worlds, and then give them a few notions and a few rules that will give them a little confidence and then, in that social context, allow them to behave spontaneously.

Leslie: Giving them parameters will free them up.

Larry: It's a very basic theatrical premise. In doing that we hope to cycle hundreds of people through these worlds. And it will produce some very potent interactions and probably a few transformations. I mean, transformations that go deeper than the greasepaint or the costumes!

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Publisher's Note

Some things didn't get coverage in the BRG that may have deserved some. No "DROP THE POOP". Gift to everyone, because you don't know how much someone has participated. Some need help with dust abatement, Some need help with dust abatement, Some need help with dust abatement. Don't drive when the roads are wet to help with dust abatement! The sound volume policy will be enforced! The sound volume policy will be enforced! The sound volume policy will be enforced! You own your experience at burning Man, benefits and celebrations of various kinds, after the Esplanade, the goddess Nut, or a domed stadium is up to you. The unpolluted desert sky reveals the true scale of the stellar universe. Once the sunset starts, the embers are lit in closed spaces. I'm hoping this thought this Vault of Heaven formed a dome, a solid ceiling overhead. But they barely scratch the surface of the Vault of Heaven. The familiar Big Dipper is soon drowned out by the sheer number of neighbor stars, then and only, almost imperceptibly, the small illusion that comes to pass when one forms a canopy from one of the sky to the other. Modern science tells us this is only the begin-ning. Beyond this swarm of lambent light-years, the universe extends for 14 million light-years. This year's theme will probe this depth of outer space; combining science, fiction and the purest fantasy to bring the vast span of the heavens down to earth.

Early references to the Vault of Heaven concept can be traced back to the 1940s. The idea of the universe as a domed stadium supported by mountains (an idea that might be consid-ered by BRG management as an antidote to dust). A little more eye-pleasing, the European version featured the naked figure of the god-dess Nut, arching face down-ward, arms and legs as pillars, hands and feet touching at the four horizons. Our modern conception of the heavens dates from the discoveries of the American astronomer Edwin Hubble, and his measure of the expansion of the universe. Today, the ancient vision of the heavens is pegged to the size of the expanding universe. Once the sunset starts, the embers are lit in closed spaces. I'm hoping this thought this Vault of Heaven formed a dome, a solid ceiling overhead. But they barely scratch the surface of the Vault of Heaven. The familiar Big Dipper is soon drowned out by the sheer number of neighbor stars, then and only, almost imperceptibly, the small illusion that comes to pass when one forms a canopy from one of the sky to the other. Modern science tells us this is only the begin-ning. Beyond this swarm of lambent light-years, the universe extends for 14 million light-years. This year's theme will probe this depth of outer space; combining science, fiction and the purest fantasy to bring the vast span of the heavens down to earth.

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Mutant Vehicles and You

A small but visible percentage of Black Rock City’s population participates by becoming Mutant Vehicles (MVs). Though there are many different kinds of MVs, all have one thing in common: they are streets. With 30,000 people and 500 MVs, the motorized few are in a position to affect the experiences of many. But there are some things that Black Rock City dwellers believe are necessary in order to enhance their experience when interacting with these amazing mobile works of radical art and participation.

Types of Mutant Vehicles

Essentially, MVs fall into three categories—highly interactive/community-service based (e.g., BRC Bookmobile, mobile dance clubs); what we will call the “Parade,” (e.g., Fishbowl, The Other Side of the Mirror Parade) and performance-oriented (e.g., BRC “Hell no, “or,”I think parents who do this to young children are crazy . “But the motivations that draw experience could be mystical and how everything felt different on the playa. Alex agrees that when his environment.

KIDS WELCOME! REALLY!!

BY LISA PIMENTAL & ALI HAWXHURST

PHOTO: Brad Templeton

PHOTO: Zaphod

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CENSUS 2004 Participate

The Burning Man Project is conducting its third annual Black Rock City census. Have you ever wondered why people attend Burning Man, how many attend regional events, or just how many folks get married here? Volunteers may show up at your camp with questionnaires that will help answer these questions. They will be organized outside of a desk at Playa Info by the Countess an anthropologist, a demographer and a participant. Census results will be published on the Burning Man website. This is NOT a market survey, Information that is gathered will never be sold or used for any commercial purpose. They goal is to inform us all of who we are.

Point/Counterpoint: Playa Bacon

From time to time Black Rock Gazette Staffers have debated the important issues facing playa denizens. Michael Durugovic and Suzanne Zalesy recently faced off over bacon.

MD: Bacon is so darn tasty! SZ: But it’s not good for you. A single serving of three medium slices contains 378 calories, 60 percent of your recommended daily fat intake and 72 percent of your recommended daily saturated fat intake. And if it’s as good as you say it is (I haven’t eaten it in about 12 years, so I’ll have to take your word for it), you won’t stop at just three medium slices.

MD: Yeah, but it’s low in carbs, and high in protein, as suggested in all the latest fad diets. Not to mention the healthy sheen it gives your skin and coat, err . . . hair.

SZ: Didn’t you see what saturated fat did to the guy’s liver in “Super Size Me”? The doctor said it practically turned into pate.

MD: But it combines so well with other foods, and makes every other food taste better. Scallops are good. Scallops wrapped in bacon are great. Brussel sprouts, nasty. Brussel sprouts wrapped in bacon, great!

SZ: But pigs are cute little animals. Besides, it’s more fun to fly pigs on the playa than to eat them.

MD: Pigs are cute, smart and sweet. All that actually adds to the flavor.

SZ: But god doesn’t want you to eat pigs – it says so in the Bible. And the Eyes of Gawd are everywhere. You can’t believe everything you see in documentaries! For every bad bacon association there is a good.

MD: And bacon is the perfect playa food. As a cured meat, it’s resistant to spoiling. The smell of cooking bacon brings over the neighbors and fosters community.

SZ: It’s that good, there won’t be enough to go around. And it’s messy to cook on the playa.

MD: So how would you go to bring home the bacon? Nobody approves of eating bacon on the playa only if the pig is still alive when it arrives. And respect Nobody Besides, Nobody knows how to make chocolate-covered bacon.

SZ: You’ll have to introduce me to this Nobody person. Sounds like he has his swine in a line.

MD: The phrase is “ducks in a row.” That’s a totally different story.

For those who believed that a good life was made better with bacon.

Burn Platform Evolution & Outreach

The back of my minds eye will always have a burn scar.

It was branded deep back in good of Burning Man ’96. Our fair city was just discovering itself and toward the end was behaving much like teenagers with their parents away for the weekend. The theme for that year was all about fell and brethren, we went there. Just about everything burned! I remember it was well into the fire tornadoes of late Sunday night (that’s the night the Man used to burn), when I was to look back on an ash-pan city ablaze with reckless abandon! And more mind blowing, it was on purpose! Like a skylight of flaming towers, the entire horizon split open and shot flames high enough to scorch the heavens.

It was a life changing dance with fire, but when we pulled ourselves out of the rubble the next day, with God’s flashlight shining down on us, thick black billows of burnt-plastic-stench smoke filled the skies for two days. We looked upon this post-battle scene and vowed to ourselves that the toxic sludge is certainly one aspect that our magic summer city can do without.

The memory of that night will always be a glowing ember that keeps the furious release of our spirits simmering on the store; but we learned that year that we were also going to have to keep a lid on it. As fire sculptor Pepe Oxnard once said to me, “After all, we are playing with fire!”

It doesn’t care what it burns. Choking on flames, we were starting to.

In 1997, the event moved to the Huualapi playa where Washoe County forbade the open burns so we suggested the usage of cement culverts in specific locations. 1998, the event moved back to the Black Rock Desert, and having those specific locations consolidated the one time massive scarring, but deep scarring still remained. In 1999, experimentation with elevated platforms started. That year, we witnessed the birth of burn platforms that have been steadily evolving ever since. Hall hail to the burn platforms!

Many of the growing pains of our city were solved, indeed, but a main nagging problem still remained. People were still putting plastic chemicals, no nada! Tell your friends! Tell your neighbors that your burn contains the platform to avoid playa scarring. We do this because it’s best for everyone, and also because it returns the favor back to Black Rock City for even providing a spot for you to burn things in the first place. It is a “pack it in, pack it out” philosophy community after all.

So ‘tis said. Have a solid ball in BRC, and see you at the burn! After all, our event has always had the same thing smoldering at its core — FIRE!

Interplanetary Sports Space Age or Space Cadet

Good Playa to you sports fans! After putting on my sports pants and searching for signs of sensible sports behavior in the default world I turned my attention to the summer Olympics. Though folks competed in the "vault" it was not of the heavenly kind that we have here in Black Rock City. Our super conscious and much decorated fiery desert tribe looks for more. Undoubtedly there will be the usual and an unusual view of aliens apparent at BRC this year, and a plethora of thoroughly extraterrestrial behavior from bargain basement alien imitation. The Black Rock Gazette Sports Beat will follow on-playa interplanetary sports and seek out attractive new ways to benefit all species, and maybe even enhance playa sports this year in the Vault of Heaven.

What can we learn from alien visitors whilst competing and participating on the playa? Are they enduring, fit and healthy? Will they bring new paradigms for sporting conduct? Are they just slothful, manipulative dinks that have some crappy magic to thrill naive shucked headed humans? Are they really from Venus, or just from Vegas?

We’ll find out as we participate at play with our fellow interplanetary beings. Undoubtedly we’ll see an amazing display of ambiguous space age human sports and perhaps some actual bona fide space cadet spats at Black Rock City 2004 too.

When you see these gray alien guys out on the playa, be nice, but don’t send them over to Thundertowne! An elongated cranium spells trouble when you haul out the pig sticks. And definitely keep some snacks, water, earplugs and a bandana handy. Game on!

Regional Burning All Year Long

A Glimmer Monkey loves at Flippity.

Scott practices pot in Reno.

Ranger Beauty at Burning Toast.

A new bandana handy.
**Remember that Fire, EMS, Law Enforcement, and Emergency Services resources need to respond to emergencies in BRC just like every other city. When responding to an emergency they will use their emergency lights and sirens, as appropriate. Please yield right of way by moving to the right and coming to a complete stop, regardless of whether you are on a bike, an art car, or other vehicle.

Sometimes responding units will kick up dust, but only if it is a true emergency. Otherwise, you may exceed the 5MPH speed limit applied to all public service announcements and keep you informed while pumping good tunes to the playas.

Playa Info in Center Camp at 6:00 has all of your information services needs. Our Oracle answers participant questions, help recover found items, and provide personal video use tags. Use the Directory to leave messages for friends old and new, let folks know where you are camped, or catch up on the latest trivia. You can find theme camps, people, the latest event listings, and much more! Bring a push-pin with your camp name and attach it to the Dynamic Board map of BRC. Post messages about your theme camp on the Bulletin Boards and find fun things to do in Black Rock City. You can also find volunteer opportunities at Playa Info to PARTICIPATE. Burning Man Information Radio (94.5 FM) is your only source for public service announcements and keep you informed while pumping good tunes to the playas.

**Recycle Camp – Accepts your aluminum cans. Monday through Sunday from 10am to 5pm. Come join in the fun at the hardest working camp on the playa. Ride the bikes, the beer will be the solution… Reduce, Re-use, Re-think and Recycle.**

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**Memories**

Peter Hudson was afraid to jump off the high diving board when he was 8 or 9 years old. He stood there for what seemed like an hour before turning around and climbing down. This time, he's taking the plunge.

To Hudson, who created the "Sisyphish" swimmers in 2002, "Deeper" is about overcoming fear. The art installation will appear to show a diver taking the plunge from a height of 12 feet — about the height of that high diving board — into a pool and then into the ground, which will splash flames, representing the four elements.

Hudson said that at the center of this project is a diver who starts in the air, then hits the water — which will splash as the diver hits the pool — and then the ground, which will splash flames, representing the four elements.

Thank you in advance for cleaning up when you leave the Cafe. Remember that any and all items, not coffee trash or community art projects must be removed when you leave. This especially goes for those gosh darn cigarette butts!

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**Ethereal Connection** - The Embassy will again provide Internet access in Black Rock City via a wireless network. To connect, all you need is a laptop with a wireless card. The network name (SSID) is "internet". For details visit The Embassy at 4:44 Esplanade.

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**Introducing the Whack-N-Pack ShishCUPbob**

This is a new system invented by a female staff person for you to dispose of your Cafe waste and have fun doing it. These interactive stations will be located throughout Cafe (look for the logo). Each ShishCUPbob station consists of metal spikes over a grate and bucket. Simply pour out any remaining liquids into the bucket and your cup over one of the spikes to stack it on top of other cups. The spikes are at different heights to accommodate a variety of people heights and WHACKing styles. When have you had so much fun taking out the trash?

Even more fun than WHACKing your trash is not to make any trash in the first place. This year, for the first time ever in Black Rock City, you are allowed and encouraged to bring your own re-useable mag to the Cafe for beverages! There will not be facilities to clean your cup at the Cafe. Make sure your cup is clean before you get there.

Also this new year are the 9 or beverage containers used for espresso and small beverages made out of 100% sugar cane. They won’t sweeten your coffee, but they are incredibly eco-friendly.

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**Meet the Whack-N-Pack ShishCUPbob**

**GOING DEEPER**

There are no trash cans or recycling bins or curbside services in Black Rock City. Burning Man is a “Pack it in, Pack it out” event and our goal as a city is “Leave No Trace”. The one exception to this rule is a very dedicated theme camp full of volunteers that are intensely devoted to Recycling.

Recycle Camp is back in full effect in Black Rock City this year. Please remember, and remind your campmates and neighbors alike, to separate everything. Our major objective is to educate participants in waste management practices, sustainability and of course recycling.

We will gladly accept your clean aluminum cans. We do not accept any other recyclables and we will not take your trash or compost. All of these things must be taken back with you and dealt with properly.

We collect aluminum cans, trash them and bag them up, all with your help of course. We donate all the cans to the Gerlach School where students and parents take them to the local recycling center. The proceeds go into the student activities fund and help to pay for classroom supplies and the annual prom among other things.

We have a brand new State of the Art “Crushing Machine”, dubbed the Blue Duck, making its debut at Burning Man. Come on by and check it out and ride the bikes that power it. It’s part of the solution everyday.

We are located in Center Camp again this year at 6 o’clock and The Center Circle, across from the Cafe. We will be open for collecting and crushing aluminum cans from 10am to 5pm Monday through Sunday during the event. Please try to bring us your cans starting early in the week so we aren’t slammed at the end of the week and so you don’t end up running into burned out volunteers that have become grumpy. Please join us in making Black Rock City the cleanest and most eco-conscious city in the world. We need help everyday, so if you are a recycling nut like we are and you're looking for a great way to participate, stop by and we'll get you involved.

“Dive and Remember,” “Never let it hit the ground.”

By SUZANNE ZALEV