

ELECTRIC ESPLANADE



Photo by Mr. Lucky

BY MRS. LUCKY

Two art projects on the playa this year share a burning passion: Nikola Tesla.

Like a pair of giant silver donuts, twin toroids rise in front of Sextant Camp at 6:30 and Esplanade. A Tesla coil element, these transformers step-up the voltage high enough to throw a charge across the gap and create man made lightning bolts. Black Rock citizens of the late 1990s will remember Dr. Megavolt standing untouched in his metal suit while the killing power flowed safely around him. It's super hero stuff, no doubt.

"We really want to knock people's fucking socks off," says Sarge, who spearheads the effort.

I find Sarge seated in the shade, his cowboy style hard hat on the chair, studying a white board. It lists 15 items

to do by noon. It's 2:30. "This is Tesla circuit 2.0," he tells me. Sextant had a smaller version of the coil here in 2013 at 7:45 and C. This time around electrical engineer Dan Moyer and the Cal Tech nerds from Coupe de Foudre have shared expertise and critiques of each other's work. "Our design was suffering from corona loss. Same spelling as the beer," Sarge says. Their discoveries in the area of high resonant gain inductors may make it in to a peer-reviewed article some day.

But that's not the point now. This is Monday of Burn Week, and all they really want to do is to put on a good show. They are determined to spark it tonight. "This is either a huge waste of time or a way to heal the world," says Sarge. That seemed extreme. Then he explained, "The problems we face are not easy, and Black Rock City is not easy." Accomplishing one empowers the other. Who

said wielding primal forces was meant to be a piece of cake?

By midnight Monday the bigger buzz on the Esplanade was coming from the Coupe de Foudre Project (inner Playa 5:00 / 2100). This device throbs in time to music and hurls lightening bolts into the air. It is a solid state Tesla coil, explains creator Matty. Participants step in to special cages and interact with electricity in surprising ways. The charge is so high that even standing and watching raises the hair on your arms. 🐉

Nevada Burners unite for their sixth annual group portrait and celebration of The Man. Thursday, 4 p.m. Spread the word, and don't be late!

BMORG BUDGET MYSTERY DEEPENS

BY MITCH

Turns out the Burning Man organization is telling the truth about its income: almost all of it comes from ticket sales. That means either the budgets posted on its website from 2007 to 2013 overstate spending by an average \$3.5 million a year or the Bmorg has some source of income that is not related to the annual event in Black Rock City.

The Beacon used a Freedom of Information Act request to find out how much money Burning Man has paid to the federal government since 2006. We were trying to understand how the organization seemed to lose money every year based on its expenditures and our estimates of ticket revenue.

One of three kinds of payments the Bmorg makes to the Bureau of Land Management is a fee based on 3 percent of ticket sales, with adjustments a government spokesman said were minor. Knowing the fee tells you how much the organization reported as revenue in a given year, although the government reports on a fiscal year that starts in October, complicating the comparisons. The numbers also indicate payments are made ahead or behind of when the revenue is received.

We found that over the long run, the estimated ticket sales are roughly in line with the amounts paid to the government. The 3 percent fee indicates an annual average adjusted gross income of \$16.0 million over the period from 2006 to 2014, compared with our calculation of \$15.7 million from ticket sales. The difference can be explained by ice, coffee, and similar revenue.

Since spending from 2006 to 2013 averaged \$19.5 million, the event seems to be chronically unprofitable. (The Bmorg used its switch to nonprofit status as an excuse not to report its spending for last year on the AfterBurn for 2014.) That doesn't jibe with the \$7.4 million value at which the event was appraised in connection with its transfer to the not-for-profit Burning Man Project last year.

The Burning Man organization, as is typical, did not respond to an emailed request for comment.

The government said it does not care about Burning Man spending. "BLM does not officially monitor BRC's expenditure postings because BLM does not have any authority or responsibility in monitoring how much money BRC spends," David Freiberg, project manager for Burning Man, said in an emailed statement. Uncle Sam only looks at revenue "associated with the event on public lands," he said, and for identifying that income, "we have a good process in place." Income from sources related to the Burning Man "brand, products or other business is not subject to that fee, and is outside the purview" of the agency, he said.

If there is such income, it is hard to imagine what it is. There would have

continued on other side

Black Rock City Mayoral Elections Under Way?

BY STORM

Most major metropolises have a mayor. Black Rock City is no exception, according to a sizable group of Burners, who also claim 2015 marks an election year.

Throughout the week, a giant domed art car dolled up as Black Rock City Hall is making the playa rounds, sponsoring rallies for the two main candidates: incumbent Dr. Fox and challenger The Dillman. On Tuesday morning, several dozen Fox supporters gathered at the 7:30 Plaza to cheer on a man they say has successfully governed Black Rock City according to the ten principles for the past four years.

"Not only is he a fox, but Burning Man can be dangerous, and sometimes

you need a doctor," said Caramello, who was spotted waving a "Four More Years!" sign. "Let's keep Black Rock City the way its founders intended."

While Dr. Fox's platform leans toward the principled, Dillman's appears focused purely on partying. "The past four years have turned Black Rock City into a pretentious, high-falootin' hipster circle jerk," he said. "We are the Party Party."

Fox cautioned against that mindset. "During Burning Man week, Black Rock is the third largest city in Nevada," he said. "The mayoral job is one that should not be taken lightly, and my challenger has turned the electoral process into a hedonistic joke."

According to a website purporting to be sponsored by the Black Rock City Elections Commission, BRC's mayor

is responsible for a variety of duties, including serving as a figurehead before the Nevada legislature, holding public events during Burn Week, and appointing positions ranging from Radio Censorship Liaison to Weed Inspector.

Burning Man officials did not return requests for comment as to the race's legitimacy. But Fox explained the elections take place independently of Burning Man in accordance with state law. "Burning Man is a private event and its organizers have no need to get involved in politics," he said.

Elections take place Friday at various polling stations throughout Black Rock City. Undecided voters should keep an eye out for the Black Rock City Hall art car for more information.

"I didn't know there was an election, but now that I do, it's one more



Photo by Stryke

thing I want to do at Burning Man, because here is a place where your vote actually counts a lot more than in the default world," said Kermie, a virgin Burner.

He hasn't settled on a candidate yet.

"I have a little party in me and a little social consciousness in me, so I'll just have to wait until election day and see what's comprised more of my Burn." 🐉

POPULATION: Ask the mayor.

"Everything being a constant carnival,
there is no carnival left."
- Victor Hugo

BLACK ROCK BEACON

"You can't cheat an honest man. Never give a
sucker an even break or smarten up a chump."
- W. C. Fields

BMORG BUDGET, CONTINUED

to have been income from or divestitures of millions of dollars of assets acquired when Burning Man was just a little festival in the dust, massive borrowing, or nontax-deductible contributions, none of which is likely to have escaped the notice of the Burning Man community.

What has not escaped notice is the idea that the six members of Black Rock City LLC are allocating payments to themselves in various ways.

In 2010, after several years of hemming and hawing, the Bmorg decided to go non-profit. That year, total salary expenses more than doubled, to \$7.3 million, without a similar increase in population or staff, though rank-and-file employees were given 401k plans for the first time. The average cost of the event per citizen jumped to \$349 from \$288 while the population rose only 18 percent; thus about \$50 a year may have been added to the ticket price for some unseen purpose.

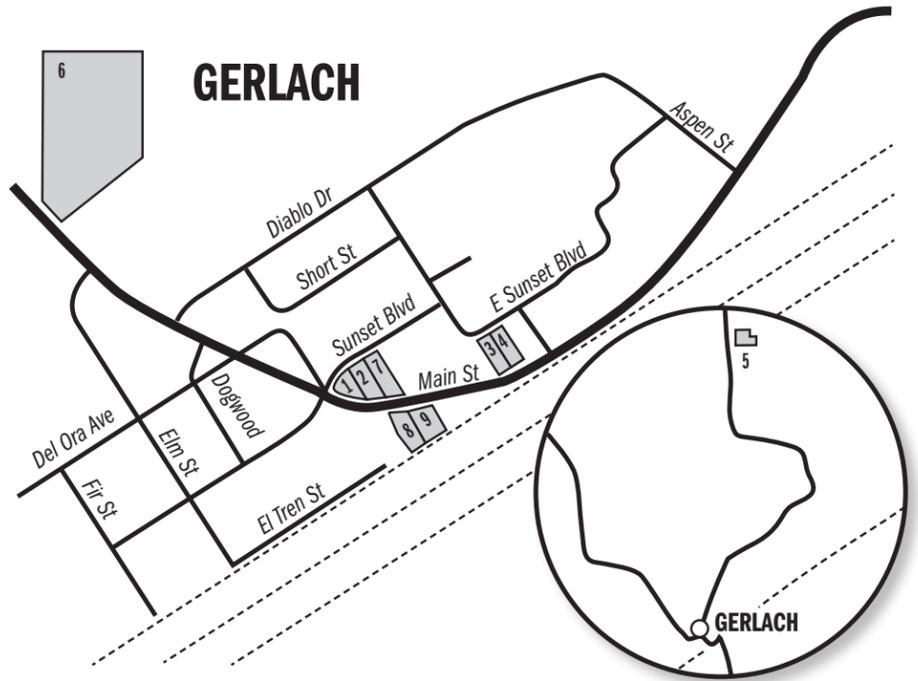
Another anomaly was the announcement in January that the LLC members had transferred most of the Burning Man assets to the new, not-for-profit Burning Man project on New Year's Eve of 2013. The event was valued at \$7.4 million by independent appraisers, according to Internal Revenue Service form 990, which is publicly available. On the face of it, the LLC members received very little, \$46,000

each in the form of a promissory note. The upshot is that each of the sellers made a \$1.2 million contribution to a charitable organization. Generating a large tax break can be an indication that a taxable gain is being sheltered.

The 990 also revealed that the spectral Decommodification LLC, owner of the Burning Man trademarks, remains with the Black Rock City LLC members. Larry Harvey and Michael Mikel indicated in January it will be transferred by donation in 2018, but until then, the not-for-profit pays up to \$75,000 a year for the privilege of using it (and such). Another possible element of the cashout, hidden in plain sight, are the property holdings in Gerlach, transferred for free from the LLC to two private companies owned by the six members, according to Washoe County records.

Some of these properties are abandoned, but two are likely to generate rental income: the Burning Man office at 390 Main Street and the out-of-town work ranch at 88 Jackson Lane. There is also a hot springs park at 255 Main that you might not know about because it is off limits when BRC is open.

The aggregate cost of the properties was about \$450,000. Several were bought at "fire-sale prices" in 2008 after a utility abandoned plans to build a coal-burning power plant near town, Maid Marian, now the Project's chief executive officer, said at the time.



Key: 1. 355 Main Street, empty lot on corner of East Sunset, bought 2/8/2008, purchase price \$29,909. 2. 365 Main, building next to empty lot, 2/8/2008, \$39,303. 3. 425 Main, building next to Bev's Miner's Club, 6/5/2008, \$54,925. 4. 435 Main, empty lot next to Bruno's country club, 6/5/2008, \$62,575. 5. 88 Jackson Lane, 200-acre work ranch, 2/27/2001, \$25,610. 6. 255 Main, Gerlach Hot Springs Park, 4.86 acres, 1/29/2004, \$130,000*. 7. 375 Main, Building next to Joe's Gerlach Club, 9/27/2004, \$75,000. 8 & 9. Two lots on one deed, 380 and 390 Main. 380 Main is Burning Man office. 6/16/2000, \$39,927*. Properties 1-4 owned by Gerlach Holdings, 5-9 owned by Black Rock City Properties. *Purchase price approximate, derived from tax stamp.

Finally, all six LLC members are now employees of the not-for-profit. Their pay may be disclosed in the 990 form for 2014. By way of comparison, the Burning Man Project's treasurer, Jennifer Raiser, the only person whose salary was revealed in the

2013 filing, made \$111,427 for a stated 45-hour work week. Salaries for the LLC members are to be set by the standards of not-for-profits, but it would be hard to see why they should make much less per hour than the treasurer. 🐛

Sweet Playa Surprise

BY CURIOUS

It was the second time I saw her. You don't, as a rule, run into the same person twice in this massive, crowded, pulsating city.

She was a man, I estimated in his 60s or 70s (hard to tell), wearing a Goldilocks-yellow wig, a charming dress, and a Girl Scout vest (Troup 666). She was loaded with patches, some perplexing, like one with a nuclear test site symbol. She towed a wagon bearing long white cylinders that would typically house architectural drawings or maps. When she stopped, she opened and upended one of the cylinders, and buttons rolled down the barrel like a rainmaker, buttons she gifted: homemade Girl Scout badges.

Her whole get-up made me smile. I stopped the second time to offer her one of my gifts. A teabag of organic, home-harvested peppermint.

She dug it. "What's the first year you came to the Playa, honey?" She had badges for every year. Each of those cylinders represented a Burn year. My badge year was represented by the Virgin Mary, somehow. Another woman rolled up and stopped to say hi. She was a Girl Scout leader in Australia.

"This is my first burn," the woman said, in reply to the prompt. The ur-Girl Scout selected the appropriate cylinder and plucked a badge/button that had QE1 as the poster child for this year. She invited the Australian to recite the pledge (I noted our veteran Girl Scout raised her hand in the live-long-and-prosper Spock salute, a Girl Scout after my own heart):

**I hereby swear
To wear sunscreen
To stay hydrated
To be respectful
to the person
I just tied up
for sex.**

She turned to me. "I have a gift for you, too." (She'd loved the peppermint tea bag.) She pulled out a pack of Thin Mints, tore the package open with her teeth, and flipped the top cookie up from the outside of the plastic, respectfully not touching it with her fingers. 🐛

What The Street Names Mean

Arcade - A tent for coin-operated amusement games; progenitor of the casino.

Ballyhoo - Outside pitchman's patter, supplemented with visits from performers, to lure visitors to a side show. Term originated at the Streets of Cairo pavilion of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair when an exhibit manager called Beledi dancers to appear. Beledi (or baladi) dancers were Arabian folkdancers. The term "belly dancer" is said to have the same origin.

Carny - A carnival worker.

Donniker - A restroom. From "dunnekin," a lower-class British word of the 1700s meaning outhouse.

Ersatz - A substitute or imitation, usually of lesser quality. You could say that about many things that appear at carnival midways.

Freak Show - A display of human oddities. Some freaks were born (giants, Siamese twins), some made (tattooed and obese people), some faked (mermaids). A fourth category, "working" or "novelty" acts, were performers such as sword swallows or strongmen.

Geek - Performers whose acts consisted of the shocking and repulsive. Biting the heads off chickens kind of stuff. The phrase "pencil-neck geek" was coined by the wrestler Freddie Blassie to describe a carny of his acquaintance.

Hanky Pank - A game in which every customer is both winner and loser. Prizes are guaranteed but are worth less than the cost to play.

Laffing Sal - An automated Ballyhoo character used to attract customers to indoor attractions such as tunnels of love and funhouses. It was produced by the Philadelphia Toboggan Co. of Germantown, Pennsylvania, during the 1920s and 1930s, stood nearly 7 feet high, and had a raucous laugh.



Illustrations by Ren

Compiled from various sources, but if you like this kind of thing, check out www.goodmagic.com/carny

ALMANAC



Stargazers can easily find Vega in the evening sky: it should be right overhead at sunset, blazing fiercely. It's interesting for a number of reasons, among them it was once and will again be the pole star (wait 12,000 years). With two other nearby bright stars to the east, Altair and Deneb, it forms the Summer Triangle. The Big Dipper begins the night low in the northern sky and you probably know how to use it to find Polaris, the current pole star and part of the Little Dipper. Moving east, the constellation that looks like a W is Cassiopeia. - Courtesy of Dominic Ford's *in-the-sky.org*

Wednesday • September 2

Sunset • 7:30 P.M.
Twilight ends • 7:58 P.M.
Moon rise • 10:09 P.M.

Thursday • September 3

First light • 5:57 A.M.
Sunrise • 6:25 A.M.
Sunset • 7:28 P.M.
Twilight ends • 7:56 P.M.
Moon rise • 10:52 P.M.

Friday • September 4

First light • 5:58 A.M.
Sunrise • 6:26 A.M.

courtesy of SunriseSunset.com



Illusion - An attraction that appears to be something remarkable but is really just a case of good camouflage. A recurring example was Spidora, which was created by having a woman's face appear on top of a spider's body inside a web. The performer poked her head through a hole that concealed the rest of her.

Jolly - A euphemism for "slightly drunk." A sobriquet for Bacchus was "the jolly god."

Kook - An eccentric person. The kind of oddball or weirdo who would be right at home in a Carnival of Mirrors.

The Black Rock Beacon

10 Years Ago

Thursday, September 1, 2005
Delerium Edition

Project X was a monumental psyche. Burners in various cities were given part of the project to construct and told not to talk about it. A fictional coordinator was said to have bilked contributors, leading to Internet flame wars. Nobody knew where the project would be placed or what it would look like. In the end it was a five-times scale model of the Man's head and one arm, reaching out of the Playa (a la the closing scene of Planet of the Apes). Psyche. 🐛 A crew of about 70 Burners largely from Seattle and

other West Coast points created The Machine, an interdisciplinary artwork designed for a single Friday performance that represented the Freudian model of a person's psyche: Atop a structure that looked like one of those Valkyrie hats in a Wagner opera, acrobats represented the conscious mind. Below them, performers suspended in clear pods were the subconscious, and fire dancers on the ground portrayed the basic urges of the id. An original soundtrack was composed.

PERPETRATORS OF THE BLACK ROCK BEACON: **Ali Baba**, president. **Naughty Zed**, treasurer & stunt double. **Mitchell Martin**, president of vice. **Smash**, editor. **rednikki**, editor. **Larry Breed**, tino kaiwhakatika tārua. **Rockstar**, camp manager. **Francis Wenderlich**, artist. **Mrs. Lucky**, deep thinker. **Suzanne Zalev**, editor in absentia. **Taymar & WeeGee**, photographers on hiatus. **Durgy**, doer of stuff. **Lena Kartzov**, masthead. **Sunami**, wave of repair. **STAFF THIS ISSUE: Editor**, Smash. **Production Goddess**, Naughty Zed. **Writers**, Mitch, Curious, Mrs. Lucky, Storm. **Photographers**, Mr. Lucky, Stryke. **Illustrator**, Loren Albrecht. Thanks to jeffjonesillustration.com for use of the masthead pig.

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