

miss clear

Black Rock City's only alternative newspaper

the return of the
DRUG GUIDE
FOR THE PLAYA



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Utopia-On-A-Stick? by STEWART MCKENZIE

Editor's note: The lovably cynical Stewart McKenzie wrote this two weeks before we set out for Black Rock. If you see him out on the playa this weekend, see if his mood has changed any...



Heather Shirkey

Once again, Burning Man is upon us. Once again, all of the planning, organizing, drinking, screaming, purchasing, reserving, weeping, and gnashing of teeth is coming to an end and all that lays before us is the wide open playa floor. It is our

last rant

palette and canvas, to create the world we can't enjoy at home. Once again, it's a **hella** lot of work to get here and it's a **hella** lot of work to get back. Once again, it all seems worth it once the **drug-induced haze** has worn off.

I've been going to Burning Man, off and on, for the better part of this decade. Every year I write the same dumb article, about how bitter I am that it was **sooooo** hard to organize things last year and how **SICK** of it I am. I then vow in print never to come back, or at least take the year off. And finally I did it—I took the year off last year. It was very **anti-Burning Man** for me because I had to exist in the Real World. Of course, existing in the Real World had huge drawbacks last year, mostly by coincidence. Princess Di **kissed** asphalt, and the world's media went into crisis. I took a ride on Amtrak and my train killed two teenagers at a railroad crossing. Meanwhile, I got to read about Burning Man in a **dry** Associated Press wire story.

And now here I am, writing the **same** dumb article that I write every year with an important difference:

I feel nothing.

I know how **COOL** Burning Man is. I know the delight of sitting on my ass and sharing tales with friends. I love looking at the creativity and **debauchery** that flows through Black Rock City. I swelter in the heat and cool myself in a makeshift shower or distant hot spring. I trip on the **endless** theme camps, decorated automobiles, artistic talent, and **SCARY** food I create. I take a swig out of my plastic water container and wonder when the drugs will hit.

I know all of this, and yet I'm **indifferent**. I don't feel like I'm breaking new ground or going out on a limb to attend Burning Man anymore. Perhaps I'm clouded by the responsibilities and turmoils of the Real World and the fantasy of Burning Man hasn't registered. **I don't know**. All I can think about is: getting there will be a **pain**; getting the supplies together will be a **pain**; getting the RV will be a pain. Money, money, money, **money**, watch it disappear...

Perhaps part of my indifference lies in the fact that, even after six years or so, I still **haven't** figured out what Burning Man is **about**. Everyone has their theories, but even Larry Harvey doesn't know what it's about. It's pagan. It's anti-religion. It's a Trojan horse. It's a **cheapo** vacation for the Mission slacker set. It's a chance to get out of town and hang out with some good chaps. It's sex and drugs and trance music. It's artistic expression. It's a week of survival on chips-and-salsa and Clif Bars™.

Even if there is no **there** there, it isn't exactly like a secret society or anything. As mentioned before, Burning Man is well-known by the media outlets, from the *Reno Gazette-Journal* to CNN. It was almost regulated out of existence by the powers that be in Washoe County, but negotiation **cooled** the authorities. **Shit**, you could film *The Donna Reed Show* out here on the playa, it's become so goddamn **wholesome**.

So, if I feel nothing and I'm indifferent, why go? Because I want to see my friends, something that's becoming increasingly **rare** as time incessantly **creeps** on. Because I do like the desert environment and it's **nice** to leave California once in a while. Because it's nice to see us adults eschew responsibility and act like the immature **spoiled** First-Worlders we **really** are, like characters in a Wim Wenders film. Because this is utopia, but none of us have to hang out for very long to actually manage it. It's Utopia-On-A-Stick.

Because I write the same **dumb** article I write every year. Because once I'm at Burning Man, I **will** feel something. Because I **will** feel different. Because it's Burning Man, **dammit**.

