

# BRC WEEKLY

BLACK ROCK CITY'S INDEPENDENT NEWSWEEKLY · AUG 27 – SEPT 4 · 2023 · ISSUE 14



Indeed, the rumors are true. After 14 years of playa publishing – or 27 years, if we count *Piss Clear*, our esteemed predecessor (and damn right we're counting it!) – it's finally time to end our run as **Black Rock City's favorite – and currently ONLY – newspaper.**

"Whyyyyyyyyyy?" I imagine you all collectively screaming, getting dusty knees as you drop to the playa, shaking fists at the sky. Well ... this week marks my 30th trip to Black Rock City, which is a couple times more than **Larry Harvey**, the late founder of Burning Man. In fact, I've been coming to this dusty metropolis longer than probably anyone else on Earth, with the lone exception of **Danger Ranger**, likely the only person here who's been a "burner" longer than me. But unlike him and the rest of the **Burning Man organization (BMorg)**, I don't get paid to be here. In fact, just the opposite – I've *paid* to be a citizen of Black Rock City, to the tune of six figures over three decades. So yeah, I love Burning Man and all but... **this bish needs a break.**

# LAST ISSUE EVER\*

by ADRIANA ROBERTS



happened? Well, a lot of things. Look around. **This place is fucking BONKERS.** I'm still floored by the scale of it all. **I've been coming here longer than half of you have even been alive,** and still... year after year, without fail, as soon as I get camp set up and bike out to the Man, I'm just... utterly blown away. Every. Single. Time. **This place is fucking EPIC.**

So yeah, there's a lot more here. More infrastructure. More staff. More staff who are actually PAID these days, rather than BMorg relying solely on volunteers, like they did in the past. A lot (but not all) of the **"big art" out in deep playa** is partially funded by your ticket dollars. And of course, the federal land fees from the Bureau of Land Management have been jacked up, the state of Nevada adds their own tax, there are porta-potty and equipment rentals, and the list just goes on and on. Look, you want an **epic experience** of living in a temporary desert city of 75,000 that values **art, culture, and connectivity,** while **trauma bonding** because it's in a place where **no human being was ever meant to live?** Well, this is what it costs.

Pre-pandemic, I was okay with that. Back then, I was in a higher income bracket, before Miss Covid decimated my nightlife event business. So sadly, I can now no longer afford Burning Man, much less pay for newspaper printing. I've been **"priced out."** (No, I don't get a free ticket just because I publish this newspaper, especially not one with a loud-mouth editor like myself.) The only way I've been able to afford these last two years was by having **IndieGogo** campaigns to raise funds – and I'm insanely grateful for the support.

**continued on the inside** ►

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- Don't leave fun for fun and 8 other don'ts**
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- Dumping your trauma at the Temple**
- And of course, the last year ever of our Out/In List & Lingo... for now**

## 6 Reasons Why I'm Breaking Up With Burning Man

**1. After 30 years, I'm no longer "privileged" enough to be here**  
As you no doubt know, **Burning Man is EXPENSIVE!** There's a reason this place has gotten a reputation for being an **adult playground for rich bucket-listers.** Ticket prices (with fees and vehicle pass) will top out over \$900 next year, and that's not even counting all the other expenses just to schlep your sorry ass out to one of the most inhospitable deserts on Earth. This ain't a place for poor

people, unless you're getting (under paid to be here by either working for BMorg itself, or being hired by any number of "concierge camps" (aka plug-and-play or turnkey camps) to cater to **well-heeled burners who prefer their survivalist desert camping to be a little less survivalist.**  
When I first started coming here in 1993, the ticket price was \$40. Adjusted for inflation, in 2023 dollars, that's now... hey wait, that's only \$84.46. So, um... what the hell

\*Probably. I mean, almost definitely, but who knows? Maybe? Never say never. I'm allowed to change my mind, but... yeah, this is likely it.

**Help deliver the BRC Weekly!**

This is our last issue, so this is your last chance to help deliver this newspaper! If you'd like to help us out, please stop by our offices at **8:00 Rod's Ring Road, near 6:30 & Bigfoot.** Look for the *BRC Weekly* logos on the shade structure and RV. We have a box of newspapers at the front of the camp next to the **red newspaper box.** If it's early, we are likely still sleeping, so just grab a stack of papers and go to town! It's a great way to meet people! **Take all you want, but deliver all you take!** Thanks, Black Rock City!

# BRC's hot air and changing climate

by SCRIBE aka STEVEN T. JONES

The climate is changing in Black Rock City. That's true around the world, which has seen record hot temperatures this year. But the climate within the **Burning Man Project** leadership is remarkably stable — it's as **insular, immovable, grandiose, and self-serving as ever** — even as it makes bold claims about reducing our carbon footprint.

It's getting dangerously hot, and all the hot air we're spewing about addressing climate change and "changing the world" just ain't helping much.

Climate change drew me back to the playa this year after taking several years off. I'm camping with my climatologist friend **Andrew Oliphant** who, along with some academic colleagues, is reprising his **100-foot-tall flux tower experiment** from 2013 that measures Black Rock City's carbon emissions, heat and vapor exchanges, and other micrometeorological data as the city rises and falls.

His findings last time were fascinating. Our dense little city spews carbon pollution at levels comparable to central London and Mexico City — very dirty, that is. But unlike those cities, or almost any city in the world, the transportation sector in bike-friendly BRC is a very small contributor to that carbon pollution, at least during the week. **(Yes, carbon emissions peak during Exodus as cars idle for hours).**

"It's the only city I know where the transportation sector is one of

the smallest contributors to carbon emissions," Oliphant, a professor at San Francisco State University, told me. "In fact, carbon contributions by the transportation sector are less than human respiration."

Yes, **we're actually exhaling more carbon dioxide than our art cars and fire poofers.** And all that hot air we're spouting is measurable.

By far the biggest source of BRC's greenhouse gas emissions is the generators that run most camps. That's why, 10 years ago, Oliphant and his team found that **one of the lowest carbon emission times was on Saturday**

**evening leading up to the Man burn** — because so many camps power down as everyone gathers in the inner playa — only to shoot back up to some of its highest levels right afterward when people return to camp.

Oliphant is very curious how things have changed over the last decade. Solar technologies have advanced and been adopted by more camps, as well as being pushed hard by Burning Man's leaders as they've tried to green the event. Will he measure major reductions in carbon emissions this year?

"Now that everyone races around on scooters and e-bikes, they need to be charged. So how will that affect it?" Oliphant said. "The organization is either greenwashing or trying hard to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, because they tout that a lot on their website."

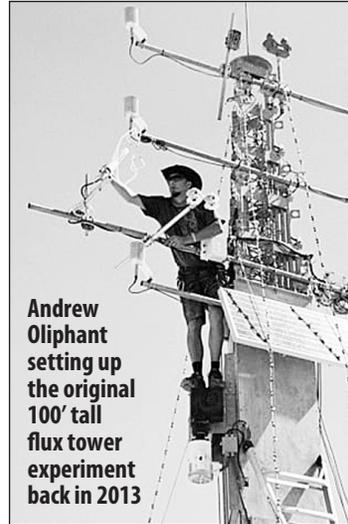
## Roadmap to sustainability

The Burning Man Project has claimed big environmental goals for itself since 2019, when it published its **2030 Roadmap to Sustainability** report, announcing an intent to make Burning Man carbon negative by the end of this decade.

That's a very ambitious goal for a city that cranks out more than 100,000 tons of carbon pollution, by the organization's own estimate. But delve into the details of their plan and **it looks a lot more like greenwashing rather than a bold effort to reduce BRC's greenhouse gas impacts.**

While organizers have added some solar capacity to its operations and encouraged theme camps to do the same, most of the plan's strategy for carbon neutrality involves so-called carbon offsets — "planting man-groves, removing carbon dioxide from the air, sequestering carbon in rocks" — rather than significantly reducing BRC's carbon pollution.

In late July, Burning Man released its annual update on its progress, a two-hour Zoom session of its employ-



Andrew Oliphant setting up the original 100' tall flux tower experiment back in 2013

ees and allies congratulating each other. It was long on true-believer **happy talk and empty aspirational claims** — "if you're on this call, you're already part of the solution" — and short on anything resembling actions that might actually make a big difference.

"That's why it's a 10-year plan. It's meant to be deliberate and a cautious way of how to look at things," **Burning Man CEO Marian Goodell** said on the call, later adding, "It's a global problem. It's a global crisis. Burning Man wants to be a player in the solution."

Player? On combatting global climate change? How about first working to make BRC less polluting? On the call, Marian also undercut the focus on environmentalism that she claims by noting that her employees **had to pester her for six months** before she reviewed the roadmap.

Despite emphasizing their focus on green partnerships, nobody from Burning Man ever reached out to Oliphant and his team about their project 10 years ago or since, even though it's the only academically rigorous study of BRC's actual carbon emissions that's out there, one that earned him wide acclaim in the climatology profession. And they did nothing to help his experiment return.

In the meeting, BM's **Director of Civic Activation Christopher Breedlove** focused on this meta-goal: "By the end of the next decade, we want it to be better for the ecology of Earth for Burning Man to exist than not to exist."

Yet it's hard to see how that might happen. Even if the org can convince most camps to switch from generators to solar power — and that's a big fucking "if" — the organization admits that **over 90% of its carbon footprint is transportation to and from**

the playa.

So instead, we get aspirational statements like that of **Lauren Day, BRC's associate director of operations**, saying, "We need to focus our collective creativity to make this a sustainable city. And it's happening."

Really?!?!

## Climate and weather

During this sweltering summer, most burners are probably focused more of the immediate concerns about the weather than about long-term climate change. How hot is it going to be this year? It's a source of anxiety for some after last year's scorching and windy weather and this year's record-breaking heat waves.

In Black Rock City, the person most in charge of weather — except for Mother Nature — is **Ted Hullar**, a UC Davis weather researcher who serves as the weather marshal in Black Rock City. It's his job to track incoming weather and issue alerts to playa volunteers and big projects when needed.

Hullar has been doing the job for more than 20 years. And while he says it's hard to measure climate change through a few week's worth of annual weather forecasting, Hullar has noticed a change. Late August weather can either follow typical summer patterns (hot and dry) or autumn patterns (cooler and changeable), depending on the year and weather dynamics.

But as the years have gone by, Hullar said it's now the summer pattern that predictably guides the weather during Burning Man.

"It seems to be changing," he said.

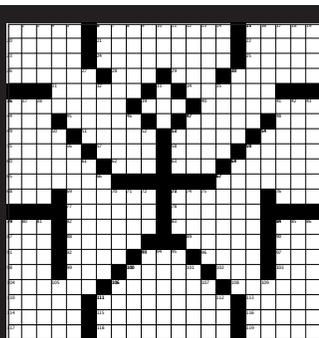
And that change will likely continue, as long as **Black Rock City LLC** insists on creating a city of 80,000 carbon-spewing souls — and as long as the climate within Burning Man allows its leaders to brag about developing renewable geothermal power on its Fly Ranch property **while taking legal action to block a massive geothermal plant in Gerlach.**

But how is that social climate affecting climate change? What are the realities on the ground and in the air? Are solar panels and other green initiatives making a measurable impact on Black Rock City's carbon footprint? Or are e-bikes and other conveniences making things even worse?

Oliphant and his colleagues are trying to answer those questions, right here on the playa: "That's what brings me back this year." **BRC**

Discussions of Oliphant's BRC climate data findings happen on Tuesday and Thursday from 5-7pm at LandPhil Camp, 8:30 & Bigfoot. Your author will be bartending.

SCRIBE



We really wanted to run this great Burning Man crossword puzzle by Sean O'Brien, because every newspaper should have a crossword. But sadly, editorial space was just too tight to fit in this epic puzzle of 231 clues. So instead, visit Camp Labracadabraty at 8:15 & Dingbat just after sunset to pick up a copy, or print it yourself at: [brcweekly.com/crossword](http://brcweekly.com/crossword)

# So long, and thanks for all the drugs

by BUCK AE DOWN

**W**ell, here we are at **the end of all things**. Like Samwise and Frodo on the side of Mount Doom, only it's WAY hotter here, and we're both probably hungover.

I suppose I could have started this with some I Ching bullshit on how we change and our changes change, but maybe the problem is that some of us DIDN'T change, or at least didn't change enough. It could be that we stayed the same, and the event changed around us until one day, some of us woke up and didn't recognize it anymore.

For those of you who haven't been here since the '90s, forgive us for bitching about the furniture getting moved around a little. Trust me – most of you probably wouldn't have liked the Burning Man we started with. It was **dark, dangerous, ratchet AF, and EVERYTHING was on fire** – whether it was supposed to be or not in some cases. We all joke about Burning Man being a cult – but circa the late '90s – half of Burning Man looked a lot like some sort of occult Black Mass happening at a convention hall scale, and that was when we were just making shit up as we went along.

Every scene ends with **grumpy middle-aged people bitching about how it was better "back in the day"** and "you had to be there, man." Jaded, aging hipsters rehashing boring stories that get more dramatic with each retelling. The only difference is that we made two newspapers dedicated to it for 27 years, which is a LONG time to complain about something we just kept doing anyway.

## A funny thing happened on the way to Burning Man being ruined

I wrote an article on **Medium** called "What the Fuck Just Happened at Burning Man" shortly after the event last year (Google it!) One of the main points was that at least some, if not most, of the changes in Burning Man's demography have been driven by rising housing costs in the feeder cities where an overwhelming proportion of the first-wave participants and artists came from. Turns out that watching your housing costs rocket up something like 40% chews up a LOT of the disposable income one would spend constructing a **shoddy "sculpture" built with shit that unskilled twerkers stole from a construction site** only to drag it out here and burn it to the ground in the service of **entertaining your shitbag friends**.

Toss in there that our landlords, the **BLM**, can crank up the rent for no

reason while simultaneously arbitrating exactly how many tickets you can sell, and then it's not hard to see how this place got overrun by folks with a bit more **affluence**, who were too busy getting rich in the '90s and early '00s to come watch the rest of us giggle with our pants off while we **blew up each other's shitty art for kicks**. To be fair, we've been griping about "tech bros" "ruining" Burning Man for literally the entire history of the event – the big difference is that back in the day, they didn't have the leverage that comes with being panhandled by the BMorg constantly in order to keep the event going once the money got tight, especially during the pandemic.

The only area where this place hasn't gotten more square is that at least it's not so goddamned **monochromatically White** out here. The addition of a new wave of folks of color is the most exciting thing to happen to Burning Man since forever, and honestly – the more influence P.O.C. gain here – the better it is for the future of this event. In fact – I'll just go out on a limb and say that **the blacker / browner Burning Man gets – the longer it will last**.

## Are ya winning, son?

I have often wondered if the people who come now still get the thing we all got 20-plus years ago out of this. Maybe they do. **Gawd, I HOPE they do**. This is a LOT of resources to burn not to have it **radically transform** your life. Perhaps that's it – many people who come here now don't NEED their lives fundamentally transformed. They are comfortable. They are wealthy enough to afford this expensive indulgence, and this is just an extension of their existent networks of like-minded bleeding-heart libertarian go-getters looking to **freak-wash the engine of their new vapor capitalism by coming out here and smoking a shit ton of D.M.T. in service of coming up with the next killer app**. It turns out you CAN pass a camel through a needle's eye once you obtain 501(c)(3) status.

Burning Man used to be this **strange little bug light way out in the vacant heart of the Wild West** where broke, atomized weirdos in the age before social media discovered that not only were they not alone, they could build an entire city together around a very fringe, improvised value system while simultaneously being high as balls in the middle of the desert and **GET AWAY WITH IT** – mainly because the rest of society was busy ignoring us even MORE out here than they were while we were living like pirates in dirty warehouses on the



Adriana Roberts

**Your columnist with editor Adriana. If we didn't get at least one selfie like this each year, then we failed Burning Man.**

edge of the city back home.

During my first conversation with **Larry Harvey** around 2002 or so, I asked him when he thought Burning Man would be over. His response was immediate. **Burning Man would be over when it's everywhere else**.

Is Burning Man everywhere else yet? Well, not EVERYWHERE, but certainly a LOT more than it used to be. Even the last *Star Wars* movie had an obvious Burning Man visual reference. The longer you leave on any television these days, the odds of someone making a Burning Man reference approach one out of one.

Thanks to the fact that none of us could keep our fucking mouths shut at all, ever, for even a minute about Burning Man for three straight decades – now **EVERYONE knows what we're doing out here**. I stopped having to explain what a Burning Man was in polite company well over a decade ago. Some of the wealthiest, most influential people on the planet are pouring OCEANS of money in and around our little burg, and I promise you **Joe Biden** could most likely do a tight two-minute explanation of what Burning Man is and probably not be too far off.

## Yay! We, um... did it?

We have reached a deadlocked stasis, where there's about as much Burning Man poured out into mainstream society as there is mainstream society poured into here. Which is to say, more of either than you'd expect. Certainly, more than we thought there'd be 30 years ago. Nonetheless, we may have reached a saturation point. Things come together. The center holds. It's pleasant, but **counterculture loses some of its subversive fun when it just becomes The Culture everywhere**, all the time.

Call it a stalemate. Call it a draw. I'd say declare victory and go home, but "home" is apparently everywhere now. **Way to go, everyone**.

Look – I'm not saying the party

is over. It's still the most exciting city on Earth. You can still see something on any given day in Black Rock City that you will laugh about on your deathbed, but this is probably about as much as they're going to let us change the world.

It's probably a fantastic time for us **bitchy old crust punk queens** to STFU and get out of the way and let someone else do all the work for a change. This really is a young person's game. No one wants to be reminded of what the horrors of old age do to a naked human body, and 53 years old seems a little long in the tooth to be pounding T stakes into the rock-hard ground for kicks.

## The next generation

Someone here out in this desert, there is a **beautiful, mid-20s trans goth girl** that's got a kink for journalism that can start a new paper up, just like there is probably another **punk rock zine writer guitarist** that will see her picture and get enough of a crush to volunteer, and with a bit of luck, they and their friends can pull together **the next great alt-weekly for Black Rock City**. If they're REALLY lucky, at least SOME of them will still be friends 20 years later, and it will be THEIR turn to bitch about how shit isn't as cool as it was back when they were younger and everything was still weird enough to get everyone's rocks off.

It may be our turn to chuck the magic ring into the fire and move on, but it doesn't have to be yours. **Don't let our jadedness fuck up your good time**. The one thing I've definitely learned in **25 years of beer-bonging the Koool-Aid** here is that it's all about THE PEOPLE. There are 80,000 ding-dongs out here, and yes, an increasing number of them are **irredeemable douchebags** – but chances are, anyone who came all the way here to the 9th Circle of Hell to party like we're all going to die tomorrow probably has a lot of important-to-you shit in common. Go find them. Get loaded and fuck or talk each other's ears off or whatever it is you people do to **trauma bond for life**. Because sooner or later, you'll get sick of this shit, but THOSE people will always have made it worth it.

We're gonna take a bow, step aside, and let the next people stand on stage and whack themselves over the head with the stupid stick for everyone else's amusement. In any event, so long, and thanks for all the drugs. We'd do it all over again in a minute if we could. We just don't want to HAVE to.

You kids have fun, though. **We sincerely hope you learn your lesson**.

It's a good one. **BAC**

BLACK ROCK CITY'S MASHUP POP PARTY SINCE 2006

# Bootie MASHUP

## BRC 2023

DJs: ADRIANA A · JUPITER GATLING · AIRSUN

### MONDAY AUG 28

**EGGS BAR** OPENING PARTY / HAPPY HOUR  
ROD'S RING ROAD @ 5:30 & AFANC · 4-7 PM

**THUNDERDOME** DARK AGGRO FIGHT SET  
ESPLANADE & 4:30 · 9-11 PM

### TUESDAY AUG 29

**XPAT ALIEN** TAYLOR SWIFTAGGEDON  
CENTER CAMP PLAZA @ 5:45 · 4-7 PM

**BAAAHs** CHAOTIC GAY MASHUPS FOR TRAINS  
BLACK ROCK STATION, DEEP PLAYA · 11 PM-???

### WEDNESDAY AUG 30

**SALTY JACKS** BAEWATCH PARTY  
8:30 & GROOTSLANG · 4-5 PM

**SPANKY'S WINE BAR** SEXY SET  
7:30 & ENCANTADO · 9 PM-1 AM

### THURSDAY AUG 31

**BAD ASSTRONAUTS** ...IN SPAAAACE!  
7:30 & BIGFOOT PLAZA · 8-11 PM

### FRIDAY SEPT 1

**AUTOSUB** OUR LAST PARTY EVER?  
ESPLANADE & 3:30 · 9 PM-SUNRISE

STILL GIVING AWAY FREE BOOTIE MASHUP CDs!  
BOOTIEMASHUP.COM

# All the ways that the BRC WEEKLY DESTROYED the BURNING MAN PROJECT



Infographic by: Lenny & Claudia Jones

If you like the BRC WEEKLY, you'll love PISS CLEAR!

## PISS CLEAR is a book!



"The alternative history of Burning Man, written as it was happening."



From 1995 to 2007, the alternative newspaper *Piss Clear* was a fixture at Nevada's annual Burning Man arts festival, its cheeky name deriving from the Black Rock Desert's #1 survival tip: "drink enough water so that you piss clear." For 13 years, editor **Adriana Roberts** and her staff of writers wrote about the colorful culture of Black Rock City, and their snarky and sarcastic tone gave *Piss Clear* its well-earned reputation as the "Vice magazine of the playa."

hard-hitting articles, acerbic rants, witty commentaries, and funny lists. Along the way, it documented – as it was happening – the growing evolution of the Burning Man event.

*Burning Man Live: 13 Years of Piss Clear, Black Rock City's Alternative Newspaper* compiles all 34 issues of *Piss Clear*, and includes a brand-new essay from longtime columnist Malderor, as well as an introduction from Brian Doherty, author of *This Is Burning Man*. There are also yearly chapter introductions from Adriana Roberts. Telling it like it was, this is the alternative – and yes, opinionated – history of Burning Man.



Forget Amazon! Get a personally-signed book direct from Adriana! Email: [brcweekly@brcweekly.com](mailto:brcweekly@brcweekly.com)