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Mergers & Acquisitions: The Life and Times of Theme Camps

By Chris Penny

As you page through the list of theme camps, you might wonder how they came to be. In nearly all cases, the idea for a camp starts with the vision of a few individuals. But over time, camps change; new members join, old members leave, camps merge and others split.

Planet Wow is a great example of a successful merger. Coordinated by Joegh Bullock and Mark Brava, the camp is a compilation of Zebulon, Playa Video camp, Anon Salon and Oracle Millennium.

"Lots of camps are merging," said Jeogh. "If you do it right you get bigger, stronger and more efficient."

After years of stressful organizing, they were sick of all the meetings, so one year they decided to wing it. "We are all event planners," said Mark. "We know how to do this stuff. Nobody wants to work that hard, so we merged with complementary camps and just went with the flow. It's easier if you have talented people."

Hookahdome is celebrating its fifth year at Burning Man. "You can really see how the camp has evolved by our infrastructure," said camp leader, Steve. The first year they had one dome and one hookah. In subsequent years they added more domes, more hookahs and more services. But they are also evaluating what they want in future years to ensure they achieve the right size. "We've seen other camps grow to the point where they lost their vision and fell apart."

Ironically, one camp that suffered a split was Hookahdome itself. Its founders split off this year to form Winking Lotus, the original concept for Hookahdome was a chillout



Photo by Chris Penny

Egg Chair Camp merged with Pyromid to become The BlackRock BierGarten.

space," said Guru Steve. "Over time the camp became bigger and noisier and the vibe changed. We love those guys, but wanted to get back to our original vision." The Winking Lotus definitely has a chill vibe, with a beautiful spired dome, lounging pillows and mellow music.

Lush is a camp that is a compilation of several smaller groups. "We think of ourselves as one family, many tribes," said camp spokes-goddess Uzume Love. The groups came together in an organic fashion. "We would see each other's style and decide to come together based on the vibe," said Uzume. "What each group brought to the playa is what we ended up with."

In some cases a merger can lead to conflict. The BlackRock BierGarten is a new name for an old camp. Back in 1997 Egg Chair Steve founded Egg Chair Camp. A few years later it merged with Pyromid. "Momentum built up and things became more than they were ever meant to be," Steve said. "So, in 2003 it was decided that the two camps must battle for superiority. The conflict was so fierce that both camps were annihilated. And out of the ashes rose the

BlackRock BierGarten."

Sometimes a camp can change because a top person drops out. Renie Fraser is serving her first term as postmistress of the Black Rock Post Office after working at the camp for years. "In 2000 I was walking by and got grabbed and put to work," Renie said. "Sylvia was the postmistress for years, but she just got married and didn't come this year." Renie is in charge of the post office, but the Soup Advisory Board is in charge of the camp. "The Soup is a melting pot of artists," said board member General Purpose. "Each one is an ingredient and together they create the flavor of our camp." The Post Office has had some mergers and spinoffs, but has had success with looser affiliations. "We have some Friends of Soup," said General Purpose. "Spike's Vampire Bar, SFT, Choopacabra and DPW Ghetto are all friends." The camps support each other while retaining their unique identities.

While some camps merge and split, others work to prevent that from happening. "We are different from many camps because we are all friends outside BRC," said Curt Larson. "We welcome visitors, but we don't merge and don't just let anybody join our camp." Over the years they have tried different camp features. This year they are scaling back and going with what was most popular in the past, making them more efficient.

"When it comes to camps, it's all about the numbers," said Curt. "Camps merge because they are too small and split because they are too big."

Art Car Darwinism: Only the Fit Survive

By Matt

"I don't want to wait for harm to come to somebody before taking steps toward prevention," says Burning Man Project Organizer Larry Harvey, when asked about mechanized vehicle rules and practices.

"Art cars, or mutant vehicles as they are also commonly referred to, are important to the event. In '96, the organization elected to ban cars as a hazard to our growing community." Harvey said. "As a result, hundreds of people began to create art cars on a national level. It is something I am very proud of."

According to the Black Rock Rangers, vehicle rules have not changed over the years. "What makes this year different is the Rangers' focus on enforcement of



Photo by Weegee

existing rules," explained Wicked, BRC Ranger Interceptor Supervisor. The Rangers are looking for irresponsibly driven art cars licensed by the Department of Mutant Vehicles as well as unlicensed mechanized vehicles, he added.

The heightened Ranger attention is far-reaching. "I was pulled over by a Ranger the other day," said Larry Harvey. "He couldn't see my DMV permit, so he stopped me to check it out. I did not feel threatened or intimidated by the experience. He checked the permit and I was on my way."

The BRC Impound Yard is a busy place this year. "Eighteen unlicensed or unsafely operated vehicles are now awaiting redemption by their owners at the conclusion of the event," Ranger Interceptor Manager Crow said. "We have our own tow service within the city and when impound becomes necessary, the vehicles are removed to an impound lot located outside the event perimeter." Unlike other cities, fines are not levied for impounded vehicles.

One thing that has changed this year is the registration process. "This is the first year we have required pre-registration for mutant vehicles," explained Juliebob, a DMV coordinator. "This is something new and changes can bring frustration to people."

DMV's criteria are functional, not esthetic. "We're not judging their art; we're focusing on safety, no basic vehicle remnants visible, and vehicles permanently altered for the event."

Larry Harvey said the rules are meant to enhance the Black Rock City experience. "Driving 40 or 50 miles per hour through areas congested by pedestrians and bicyclists is not a gift to others," said Harvey. "I'd actually like to see more vehicles—beautiful, funny, hilarious vehicles."

Heaven Can Wait for Off-Track Burners

By Durgy

Sergei and Ludwig, a couple of sweet kids from Warsaw, arrived early at Black Rock City to set up their theme camp "The Pole Vault to Heaven." Participants were encouraged to learn how to pole vault into a pile of stuffed angels. For reasons the pair could only guess, their project was shut down. Most think it because their interpretation of this year's theme was judged "just plain wrong" by The Project, though others believe that the shifting angels on the ground created a serious risk of spinal cord damage.

By now, everyone should know that this year's Vault of Heaven theme is about science. The night sky that inspires really, really big thoughts related to the universe and physics and whatnot. The story of Sergei and Ludwig's blatant misinterpretation of the theme, followed by a reprimand, is not an uncommon one.

One disappointed Burner, Rac, thought he had interpreted the theme correctly by driving his Mercury Topaz all over the event. He has also been shut down with his art car project. He believes that he was asked to park for the

duration of the event because when asked why he was driving the Mercury, he said it was because of the God Mercury from heaven and not because of the planet. "I think they have it out for me," says Rac.

Theme interpretation conflict has been raging at Burning Man on playa and in the default world since the "Floating World" misunderstanding of 2002. That year was about a Shinto concept, but most folks were drawn to nautical designs. Even The Project sent, at best, mixed messages by having navigation-based radial streets and a giant lighthouse below the Man. Of course, this year almost all would agree that they've nailed the theme with the giant igloo under the Man. Where better to observe the most marvelous wonder in the evening sky, the aurora borealis, than in the arctic, and in what better viewing room than in an opaque-roofed igloo? Nowhere and none!

So if you see beautiful angels or people dressed as bank managers floating down the Esplanade, be kind. They probably already feel bad enough about misinterpreting this year's theme as it is. Oh well, make the best of it, better luck next year, and BURN ON!



Photo by Pearl

Nice, but wrong.

Wanted: Heavenly Stars

by Nambla the Clown

The Black Rock Observatory is looking for performers and volunteer staff to recruit performers for the 10 Off-Planet Theaters operating below the Man every night from 8pm to 3am.

Some of the theaters are themed with costumes provided, enabling Black Rock citizens to step off the Playa and into another world, assisted by the Off-Planet crew. Others are free form, allowing anyone the chance to perform. Rubber Chicken Karaoke, for example, is threatening to make an appearance this week.

Individuals or groups interested in performing can either come to the Observatory any time it's open, or sign up with Nambla the Clown for scheduled performance times at the Artery in Center Camp between 10am and 1pm.

Volunteers who would like to help enable people to perform with the Cosmotologist team can also sign up at the Artery for either 8-11pm or 11-3am shifts.

Wholly Shit!

The head has come to a crisis, and the Burning Man project is calling upon the entire community to help put a lid on the situation before the event is canceled. All sorts of items that could not possibly have visited a human gastrointestinal system -- clothing, trash bags, watermelons -- have been found in the porta potties, and the vendor that services them is threatening to leave, which would close Black Rock City. The organization is asking people to stand out by porta potty banks and adopt nearby potties. If you see ANYONE leaving ANYTHING in a potty, out them, tell your neighbors and report it to a Ranger.

Pagoda Burn Delayed

High winds. It sounds like a euphemism for flatulence or some blow hard, but it's the meteorological reason that the Pagoda Burn, originally scheduled for tonight, will take place on Thursday instead. See page 20 of What Where When, look in the middle column under the photograph, and mentally add a day to the Pagoda Burn Processional and the erstwhile Wednesday Night Burn items.

Lights! Camera! Hyperactivity!

Jin Joo tired of the long hours and tedium needed to make movies. He thought other moviemakers might too and created moviemaking's equivalent of Iron Chef.

In August his project, Cinemasports, held events in San Francisco and London. In the upcoming months, they plan more events in New York City, Vancouver, and Los Angeles, but today and tomorrow they do it here. Beginning Wednesday 2pm at the Man, Center Camp side, they announce the ingredients teams must use during the next 30 hours to make their 3 minute movie.

"Filmmaking has always been a collaborative enterprise. These projects are a microcosm of a large, real film project," says Joo. Compared to the time, money, and people needed to make a feature film, the works produced may astound you. Joo delights in the wacky variety that results from identical ingredients and instructions. See them beginning Thursday at Camp Videogasm in Snowflake Village.

Answers to Tuesday's DUMBLE

PLUNGE
FINED
DESERT
CRACK

When the two art cars met they were really FUCKED

Correction

The photograph of Wizzard in Tuesday's Black Rock Gazette was taken by Johnny Switchblade

Hot Times for Precocious Burners

By Daisy

Mason, an 11-year-old Burner, is experiencing his first year with his seasoned Burner parents. "Everything changes out here," said Mason. "For example, I like hot sauce. I have never liked hot sauce before." Mason did admit it is louder here than he expected, but otherwise he loves it. "Everyone is so nice. The only thing that would ever keep me away in the future is if the military took control of the playa." Mason's mother, Poproxz, met her husband, Ivan, at Burning Man last year. Ivan stated that this is where his family was literally created and it is special for them to bring out Mason this year and are expecting another child in less than 2 months. Mason is finding great ways to experience Burning Man. Monday night he took a ride on the metal wheels circling on the playa and for the rest of week there are plans for the family to hit the roller disco, take rides on art cars and fight in the ThunderDome. A fellow campmate is teaching him how to do back flips. Mason and his parents also volunteered for the airport on Monday afternoon. His favorite "art project" so far has been helping to paint airport parking lines in the hot afternoon sun. The airport provided Ivan and Mason with a golf cart to take the paint out to the landing strips.

Kai, a 12-year-old, is also experiencing his first year at Burning Man. His mother,

Connie, is experiencing her virgin year out at Black Rock City with her son. They are camped at Kidsville with about 40 other families. About a year ago, Connie enrolled Kai in fire spinning lessons. He will be participating with the other fire art performers in front of the Man Saturday



Photo by Babesodelicious

night before the burn. He prepared for Burning Man by dying his hair. He will be able to keep his hair blue when re-entering the "real world" because he is enrolled for the first time in a school where the dress code allows "unnatural hair color." The biggest downer for Kai is the homework that he had to bring out here for the week. His art/Spanish teacher gave him the task of creating art and prac-

New Weapon in War on Pantsless

By Gothermalot

Death to Donald Duck! The D look (that is, shirt with no pants) is out. It never was in actually according to the Pantzooka Patrol. The Patrol is a special operations team dispatched from the Antistatic Section of the Ministry of Culture of the Proun Republic.



Photo by Pearl

Not nice and wrong.

Citizen X, Third Assistant Deputy Commissar of the Section, says: "Section Leader Heinmar 'v.1.9' Glock had read reports of Burning Man sartorial offences. He forthwith dispatched me and my colleague Seder Cookinski to bring pants to the pantsless."

Pantzooka Patrol's motto is the classically inspired phrase "Ave Hominem Vestitum" meaning "Praise the clothed man."

"We have nothing against full nudity, we love it! It's just that we don't like half measures. Dress appropriately or not at all," chimes in Seder while he mulls over new pantzooka cartridges that were designed for longer range than last year.

Pantzooka technology has improved this year with a more mobile unit. The old model Pantzooka was a little cumbersome with air compression units needing to be in tow. The new model allows the team to lie in wait for their bare-buttocked victims. It didn't take

long for this reporter to witness first hand the speed and accuracy of the 2004 model. With the old model Pantzooka the range was a satisfactory 25 feet. With the 2004 model your reporter saw a pair of tighty-whities launched toward its unsuspecting target with a shattering crash, in some instance reaching up to 60

feet. Victims are tagged with a coroner's toe tag stamped with insignia of the Pantzooka Patrol and the date of execution as a friendly reminder of their experience on the Playa.

Seder says, "In addition, we feel that we are providing an important public health service as well by helping inattentive Burners avoid Playa Scrotum; on top of that no one wants their furniture juiced."

Pants cannons have been sighted in previous years in places like Thunderdome and Camp Carp, but this team is the real McCoy. When the camps were approached and queried Thunderdome flatly denied any involvement or apparatus; a Camp Carp member remarked "It's early who knows what we'll come up with, possibly a cluster-pants bomb."

So if you plan on wearing the D look, man or woman, keep your eyes peeled for a shadowy pair lurking from shadow to shadow, bearing their instrument of fashion correction.



ART BY CHRIS W. SPECIAL THANKS TO ASHRA! ©2004

ting Spanish with fellow Burner participants (his favorite homework assignments), but his math teacher was less forgiving, as he believes a couple of his teachers who are not fans of Burning Man gave extra homework assignments to him for the week. Kai said his experience so far has been "really cool", but stated that it is dustier and hotter than he expected out here." Connie said that she has "always tried to expose my son to a wide variety of experiences and Burning Man is at the edge of the spectrum."

Kidsville is also doing performances in the evening that Kai will be participating in. The trampoline seems to be the favorite activity for most of the kids at Kidsville. When asked if any of the three-to six-year-olds wanted to be interviewed for this article, the typical answer was, "No. I am going to play on the trampoline." One parent watching the children on the trampoline said that Kidsville allows children to hang out with one another, which seems to enrich their own experiences out here. However, Kai and Mason seem to be having a great time with the adults who have been making their experiences out here so rich. Kai stated, "I've always been a bit of a pyro, so I am fitting in really well here."



Photo by Lord Fouffypans

You can't kite a check in Black Rock City but you can fly a kite.

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Weegee, Durgy, Ed Carter, Caleb, Naomi, Jonno, Worm, Babesodelicious, Tom LaPorte, Howieid, Gothermalot, Abby, LiAnimal, Stacy, Mary Jane, Leslie Landberg, Chris Bullseye, Richard, Alabama, Worm, Caleb

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