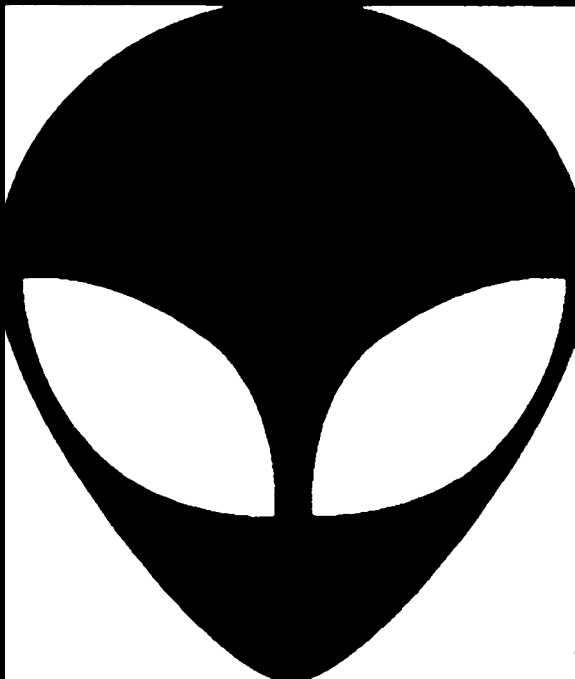




BURNING
MAN 1997



WELCOME TO



THE INTRANCE



Bay Area
Cosplay





Don't Shake Me

Issue One

January 2005

Published by
Back Numbers Press

Editor Warren Harris

Staff Artist
Anjuli Towner

Front cover design by
Warren Harris

Back cover art by
Anjuli Towner

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email: backnumbers@gmail.com

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Issue One Contents:

Art	Anjuli Towner.....	2
Editorial	Warren Harris.....	3
Convention Roundup	Warren Harris.....	4-13
SCHWA Cartoons.....	Bill Barker	12-13
Burning Man Festival 1997	Warren Harris.....	14-27
Wired NextFest 2004	Warren Harris.....	29-33
Back Cover Art.....	Anjuli Towner.....	34

Editorial

So a long time ago, say 10 years or so, I got a crazy idea to put out a Science Fiction/counter culture/hardboiled zine. It's been in development ever since. The only thing in this, our first issue, that remains from the early proofs is Bill Barker's SCHWA cartoons, the title, and part of the front page. The article on Burning Man has been sitting in the files for almost eight years now. So when I wanted to publish a convention report that didn't seem to fit into my regular zine, *Back Numbers*, I thought it was about time I stopped talking about putting out an issue of *Don't Shake Me* and finally do it. Of course, that convention report ended up running in issue two of my second zine, *Cosplay Magazine*. Just think of this as the "leftovers" zine from Back Numbers Press.

The runaway success of *Cosplay Magazine* caused me to put this zine back into mothballs, but since I just might show up for Corflu Titanium, (nope, don't have the money to go) I thought I should actually do something that looks like an SF zine beforehand. *I joke about the runaway success of Cosplay Magazine, I doubt anybody from the SF community is reading it, and the cosplayers seem to prefer web-based rather than PDF-based content. In fact Cosplay Magazine is now on permanent hiatus, I'm now just posting my photos at www.californiacosplaytimes.com/ctimes.html*

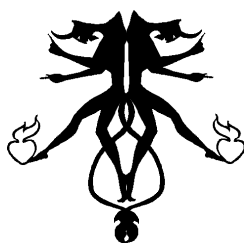
The NextFest article is new, as is the art by Anjuli Towner on page 2. Anjuli also provided us with new art for our back cover. I'm also going to put in a convention roundup from the first few weeks of this year. The SCHWA cartoons date from when I worked for Bill Barker, and he gave me permission to run them in my zine. Little did Bill know it would be so long before I got around to publication. Barker and his SCHWA empire seem to have disappeared without a trace, much like the stick people that populate his alien infested landscapes. It's just like Bill to disappear mysteriously off of the face of the Earth.

The title comes from "Don't Shake Me, Lucifer" by the legendary acid rock pioneer and horror film fan Roky Erickson. I like Erickson's music, and I figure nobody else has used it for a zine title. (I'm sure I'll find out quickly that some luminary such as Ted White has been using the title for years.)

I hope you enjoy this departure from our regular pulp-focused work.

I'm hoping to have an issue two. I have a wonderful cover from Anjuli. Expect it sometime before January 2015.

—Warren Harris



Heavy Con Schedule for the Bay Area

Photos and Text by **Warren Harris**

The San Francisco Bay area is a convention-rich environment, with a convention to suit almost any fan's taste. This year has started off with a wealth of conventions and gatherings, averaging two events a month through May. On more than one weekend there will even be two cons held simultaneously.

In January there was a small comic book and anime convention held in downtown San Jose. This was a less than stellar convention, with a sparse dealer's room, no panels, and the anime program consisted of old anime shown projected on a wall in a darkened back corner of the dealer's room. It was a fairly long trip for me, and the only reason I went is that I wanted to try out my new digital camera before I started hitting the major conventions.

It was cheap, only \$5 to get in, and although I arrived late following a morning hunting for



ASTRO shows off her new costume. I forgot to ask her what character she was portraying at San Jose.



Youko Kurama as Sesshomaru from the manga and anime Inuyasha at the San Jose show.

books at library book sales, I ended up having a great time. This was entirely because of the cosplayers who were there. While there weren't very many of them, those who did show up were familiar faces from other conventions. Because it was a small con, with little going on, there was more time to hang out and talk.

Since BSaphire couldn't make it, and her daughter, Youko Kurama, wanted to be in the costume contest, I ended up juggling both my new digital camera and hers taking photos of the event. It worked out pretty well. I actually got some usable photos of the contest. Hopefully I didn't do too bad of a job with her camera.

Taking photos of a contest is always difficult, almost to the point that I'm going to give it up. I much prefer taking photos of hall costumes. During the contests the lighting is always difficult to work with, the participants move too fast and it's hard to catch the action or frame a good shot.

I think some of the folks I know from "regular" fandom, particularly pulp and fanzine fandom, wonder just what it is that I see in cosplay



Hanyaan Faery also had a new outfit at San Jose, this one has hand-painted gold detailing.

fandom, particularly since I don't cosplay myself, I just take photos. Well, I'm surprised myself. I got into this because I was taking photos for a con report at Fanimecon and Baycon last spring and much to my surprise I found that the cosplayers were really nice people.

I'm not the friendliest of persons. In fact I'm distinctly anti-social. I've heard for years about how SF cons are warm friendly places, I've gone to cons for years and usually I don't talk to a single person during the whole con. I'm just not the sort of person who can walk up to somebody I don't know and start up a conversation. In fact, I've been spooked by fans before. At Wondercon a few years ago, I got off of BART in downtown Oakland and was accosted by a guy who asked me "are you one of the brethren?" At first I thought he was trying to recruit me to join some kind of cult. But it turns out he saw my beard, my "faanish" physique and my backpack and immediately tagged me as "one of us". Needless to say I was disturbed. I like to think I can pass for normal. And frankly, when I have had some social interaction with my fellow fans, well, it hasn't gone well. There are fans out there who are, well, "out there".

The first exception to this has been pulp fans, who are very friendly and welcoming as I discovered when I attended my first Pulpcon and made many lasting friendships. The second is cosplayers. Almost without exception, the cosplayers I've met have been very nice, intelligent and interesting people.

While you might think that folks who like dress up as cartoon and video game characters would be a little off, I've found them to be very pleasant, well-balanced folks. They have a tremendous amount of talent to be able to create accurate, attractive and wearable costumes from little more than fabric and very sketchy reference material. They also usually share a deep interest and appreciation for Japanese culture.

So I got into being a cosplay photographer pretty much as an excuse to walk up to interesting people at a con and chat with them. So far it's worked out pretty well.

I also think that people who cosplay are adding value to the events they attend. Taking photos to document the "performance art" (and the costume art) and posting them is my way of contributing and thanking the cosplayers for making my experience more enjoyable.

I'm not really into taking photos per se, it's just an excuse to be social. I need a reason to walk up to interesting people and strike up a conversation. And the conversation alone was worth the trip down to San Jose two weekends in a row.

Sometimes I feel a little out of place, being the old guy with a



HITORI, also at San Jose, adds new details to this outfit each time she wears it to a convention.



San Jose Elegant Gothic Lolita Tea Party organizer Felicity with her boyfriend at the park.

group. It turns out that the organizer and her boyfriend were even later than we were and several more people also showed up.

The EGL style isn't technically anime related, although there are anime and manga that make use of the style. But it is part of Japanese pop culture so there is a considerable overlap of interest. It's not uncommon to see EGL, JPop and JRock (Japanese pop and rock music) cosplayers at anime events.

A group shot of all of the EGL cosplayers at the tea party.



camera in street clothes, but the cosplayers don't seem to mind.

An example of this being-out-of-place feeling occurred at another small event that took place the weekend after the San Jose comic show, also in San Jose, on the last weekend in January. An Elegant Gothic Lolita tea party was held at a local park that had a very nice Japanese tea garden. It was a great setting, but I didn't end up taking very many photos.

The trouble was that it was a very small gathering, only five people showed up in costume and it ended up being more of an excuse to hang out than an opportunity to take photos. I expected more of a photo-shoot atmosphere. But I'm glad I went. Even though I had not met any of the cosplayers before, they were, again, very nice.

When I first showed up I thought perhaps I had missed the gathering as there was nobody around in costume. It's pretty hard to miss EGL cosplayers in full regalia. I did spot one cosplayer wearing a sweet Lolita outfit though, and, although reluctant to do so at first, I did introduce myself, and she turned out to be very nice and a great person to talk with. So we went looking for the rest of the

The EGL style plays off the Japanese obsession with cuteness and often combines it with a darker goth sensibility. The outfits tend to be quite distinctive and elaborate.

The weather couldn't have been better for the party, particularly for late January. Five people showed up in costume, well, six counting fellow cosplay photographer Brocas, who at least wore black and had a cool hat.

BrokenPuppet brought a fancy cake red and white checkerboard



Styles at the tea party ranged from Sweet to Elegant Gothic.

cake and some tasty rose-shaped cakes, all very EGL in style, and after cake and tea, the group wandered around the Japanese tea garden, chatted and drew strange looks from passersby.

I had a good time meeting some very nice people at the event. It was worth the drive down, even if I didn't take many photos. Afterwards four of us had a tasty lunch at a nearby vegetarian Vietnamese restaurant.

I really enjoyed the afternoon, even though I felt uncomfortable as a photographer there. Once again I felt like



the creepy old dude intruding into somebody else's world.

I'm used to anime cons where the costumers are there to have their photos taken, and this was more of a social event.

I suppose I would have fit in better had I worn something goth. Frankly I don't know where I'd start. I'm goth impaired. Felicity, the organizer,



The Sacramento Anime Show had a surprisingly large turnout of cosplayers, including these who posed for a group photo.

posted her photos and the last photo on the page is one of me. That led someone to post the comment “Who the hell is the guy in the last photo?” In any case, I think I’m awkward enough when I’m trying to be myself without trying to be or dress like somebody I’m not just to fit in. I suppose I’ll avoid these specialized events in the future, even if I enjoyed this one, as I don’t want to be the odd person out.

The weekend after the tea party didn’t have an event, but the following weekend there was an anime convention in Sacramento. I usually don’t travel up to Sacramento for cons, but a number of top-rank local coplayers said they were going to show up, including my friend Pegasus Maiden, who hadn’t made it to the previous several cons.

I had badly hurt my knee earlier that week, so it was fun driving a car with a manual transmission and then walking up and down stairs and through the dealer’s room. But by afternoon my knee loosened up enough that I almost entirely lost my limp. Nothing makes you feel more like an old man than having to hobble up and down stairs on a gimp leg.

This was an inexpensive con, only five bucks. It was run by the same person who put on the earlier San Jose show, so again we had old anime, but at least this time it was in a separate room.

The dealer’s room was pretty good, and I picked up a couple of volumes of manga that were on sale and a couple of inexpensive DVDs. I tried to stay away from the dealer’s room as much as possible. I don’t know how I’m going to pay my way to the next several cons.

The lighting inside was poor, so I took most of my shots outside where it was really almost too bright. I only used my new camera and it seems to work well outside, but not as well inside. The costume contest only yielded a handful of good photos, mostly of Pegasus Maiden and PikminLink,



Youko Kuraama, here as Inuyasha from Inuyasha was also at the Sacramento show.

While only recently licenced in the U.S., the anime and manga of NARUTO is very popular for cosplay. PikminLink, far left, won first place at the show for her Kakashi.



Left: Sylriel as Miaka from the anime Fushigi Yugi, Above: Janko Raven as Blue, Jason as Quint and Catrini (sitting) as Chezza from the anime Wolf's Rain, Right: Master Jedi as Neo from the Matrix Reloaded; all at the Sacramento Anime Show

both experienced contestants who know to pause for a few seconds to allow photos to be taken. Once again we had great weather for this convention.

I had a great time, probably the best time I've had at a con since Tales of Anime last fall. I think I was more relaxed than usual. I'm getting used to my new digital camera. And the cosplayers were great fun to hang out with.



Pegasus Maiden with one of her elaborate, detailed and extremely well-made outfits. This one is from the manga Angel Sanctuary with a number of original touches



I'm looking forward to next weekend, which is the three-day Wondercon event. There's going to be a strong cosplayer turnout, I think, and I'm planning on having a great time even if it is mostly a comic book show. And I have found pulps for sale there in the past, too.

The weekend after that is Corflu Titanium, the convention for fanzine fans. I'm not too sure about this. I was enthusiastic about going until I found out it was going to be \$75 to get in at the door. I can

go at most two days, more than likely only one, and I have to pay a \$5 bridge toll, gas and parking each day on top of that. This is one seriously expensive convention. I like fanzines and all, but \$75 bucks? I simply am not going to be able to afford to go to this one.


Particularly since the following week is Anime Overdose in San Francisco. It is another three-day convention that is a major cosplayer/anime event. The same weekend, also in San Francisco, is Potlatch, a literary science fiction convention where they have a book of honor instead of a guest of honor. I can't see how I'll make Potlatch, I'll be too busy at AnimeOD, but I may try to sneak in for an evening or something. Hey, maybe I can get a gang of cosplayers to crash the event. That'd shake things up.


The next weekend has the one-day Reccacon, a small, but impressive and fun, convention in Pittsburgh, over in the east bay. It's the anime con version of a relaxacon.


We then get a break until the Cherry Blossom Festival in San Francisco in April. While this is not a


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convention, in recent years there's been a strong cosplayer turnout and the local events have expanded to include anime showings and other con-like features. Plus it's a great event just on its own. The same weekend has a "Campus Invasion" event scheduled for UC Berkeley, but that will probably not be worth it, not when it's up against the Cherry Blossom Festival.


Then in May we have the big two: Fanimecon and Baycon. Both in San Jose. Both the same weekend. I did both cons last year. I hope to do both this year. Plus there's a tentatively scheduled cosplay picnic for the weekend before.


And that's just the events that have been announced through May.


So who needs to travel to cons when you live in the Bay Area?


More of my photos from the Sacramento and San Jose events can be found in the user's photo section of www.californiacosplaytimes.com/ctimes.html. Photos from the other cons listed above will also be posted.


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PEEL 

Burningman 1997: A retrospective report

Over the years I had heard of this thing called Burning Man. Living in northern Nevada in the late 90s, I could hardly have escaped hearing something about the annual battle between the freaks and geeks of San Francisco and the prudes and puritans of northern Nevada.

SCHWA creator Bill Barker had mentioned it to me a few years back, he was connected to the art crowd that put it on, but he always bailed on the event itself, preferring to go out during the setup activities.



But in 1998, fate, and some free tickets provided through my then-employer, conspired to give me the push I needed to go. While I originally wanted to go three days, I ended up being delayed at work on Friday and so I arrived reasonably early Saturday. The camp that year was a couple of hours north of Reno, in an area of Washoe County that is sparsely populated and mostly consists of empty desert. The camp was set up at a dry lake bed, called a playa.

I arrived and found a campsite that was not too bad, just lumpy, a little damp and with a few cow pies to add to the experience. I introduced myself to my neighbors, two guys named “Mike” and “Tiger”, and started to set up my tent. In the meantime, Tiger had met a willing young lady, and while I was making camp, they fucked like rabbits, loudly and with great enthusiasm, in his tent much to the amusement of the neighbors.

Once I got my tent set up, I noted that Mike and Tiger were flying a pirate flag at their camp, so I would have a point of reference to find my way back, and went off to explore.

I went down to the main promenade, which is where all the theme camps are found. I started at the end nearest to my camp and worked my way down to the far end of the camp. The camp was organized into a large half-circle surrounding a large empty space with the area where the Man was to be raised in the center. The Man was down on the ground when I arrived, a team of volunteers hoisted it into position later on. The man was a large statue made of wood and neon lights that was to be ceremonially burned on Sunday.

I looked into Bianca’s Smut Shack, The Fern Grotto, The Anti-Artic camp with their penguin theme, stopped to watch a game of alien chess, and just looked around. I passed by the camp where a completely nude, very tall blond woman was shaving the heads of passing volunteers. A sign read “Heads and ? Shaved Free” She was proof that heads were not the only things they shaved, although it left doubt if she was a



natural blond.

There was also the mud pit where people stripped to wallow, and the woman who was dressed as a caterpillar sitting on a mushroom, smoking a hooka at the Wonderland camp and the phallic tiki statues.

I then noticed that not all the action stopped at the edge of the camp but continued out into the playa. Across the desert I could see not only the Burning Man itself, but also other art installations.

So I struck out across the burning sands to see what there was to see.



One of my favorites was a huge colorful tent that was mostly exposed, it was just for shade. They had placed four nice beds out there for people to recline on. The juxtaposition of the beautiful tent, cool shade and naked resting people in the center of desolation surrounded by nothing was quite keen.

Further out was the Man itself and beyond that was a stage, works of art and lots of, um, colorful, people. One art installation was the solarium, which had glowing globe for the sun and various objects representing planets placed at appropriate distances. The inner planets were quite close, a note said that





cool temple/stage thing. It was one story off of the ground but it had carpeted steps up to the platform. The structure was made of chicken wire and rebar and covered with mud. The mud was sculpted into ornate representations of feminine gods and female

mythical figures such as Medusa. Rising from the center was a huge tower, thin and tall, capped by horns. Obviously a phallic symbol. I walked around to the back and noticed something odd. At the very base beneath the tower was an opening that was obviously a representation of a feminine orifice. It was crammed with firewood. I was puzzled. Why did the artist cram a vagina full of wood? The symbolism seemed suspect. There were plenty of places to stack wood in the surround-



Saturn was the Christmas tree off to the north, sure enough I could dimly see a Christmas tree in the distance, and that the outer planets were yet to be placed. Pluto was in Oregon or Washington or somewhere. I encountered a man dressed on stilts in an elaborate silver costume who was very much into character as a demented robot. He was quite amusing. I blew the last of the day's film on him. I also saw the big wooden duck and then saw that far out into the desert was a thing rising from the desert. I decided to investigate.

Upon closer examination I found it was a really





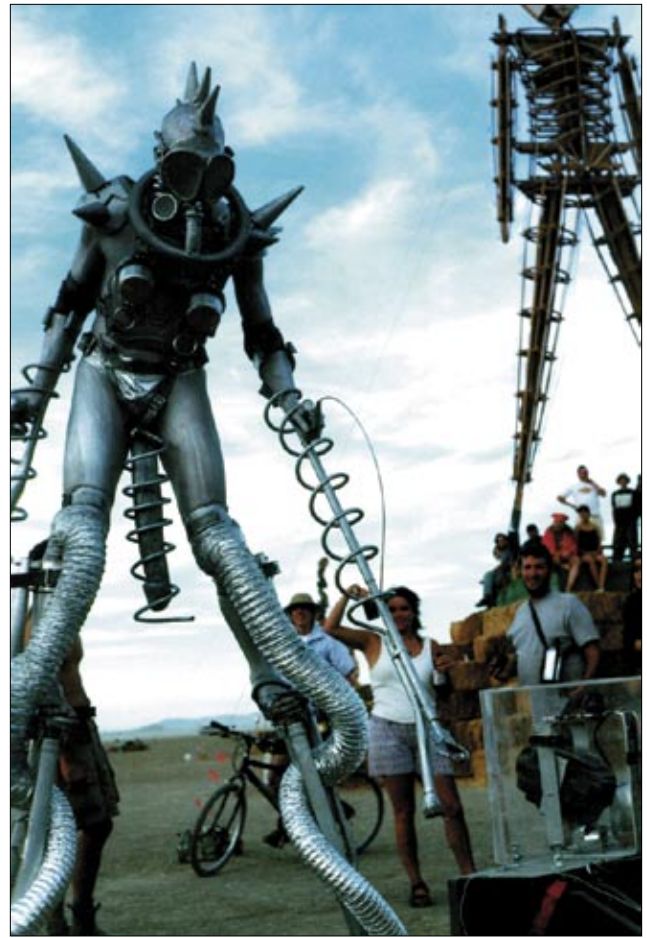
ing desert and I noted that there were already several piles ready to be lit into bonfires.

Bonfires by the way are big at this thing. Actually anything dangerous, explosive or flammable seemed to be the order of the day.

I had unfortunately ran out of film and it was too far to go back to my car, reload and come back, So I decided to take a photo of the temple the next day because I really liked it. I was confused, but I liked it.

The next day when I returned I realized that the platform had collapsed. I overheard that they had burned it during the night to cap a performance but that the rebar supporting the tower had not melted as expected. The stage had been build for some sort of opera performance that I missed.

Now I understood. The power of the feminine was supposed to burn so hot and bright that it destroyed the masculine. An emasculation if you will. But the power of the cock had been too strong and the feminine temple was destroyed by its own





around a bit, and on the way back I found a group building a giant wooden horse. I'd never thought the story of the Trojan horse was particularly believable. After all a bunch of soldiers on a battlefield building a big artistic horse. However, these guys, aided by power tools and a crane, were actually doing it.

I wandered past a naked guy with wings jumping on a trampoline in an attempt to fly. I was hoping that a cute naked chick would be given the wings but I got bored waiting. Someone was trying to organize a game of naked twister.

I found the center camp and found that most of it was shut down. I had a burger at Daddy Love's Redneck Bistro, the food concessionaire allowed in the entire camp. I stood in line behind only a guy who looked like biker-tattoo-covered Howard Stern, only uglier. He was wearing a purple satin slip that didn't cover nearly enough. He was with his fairly-straight-looking girlfriend. It makes me wonder how guys like this can find accommodating sexual partners. And then it makes me wonder why I can't find a nice girl to settle down with. I guess I'm just not pierced in enough weird places. Or any weird places. Or any places at all.

One cool thing at the center camp area was an arch made of rebar and covered with bones that had been scavenged from the desert. I thought it was very well done.

passion but the cock stood tall and undamaged. I love irony. I took lots of photos of the wreckage.

On the way back I headed over to the far end of the encampment. The camp consisted of a central camp with the main esplanade facing the lakebed stretching out in a crescent to either side. Camps of the not-so-blessed as to be a privileged member of a theme camp were arranged in rows behind. I was amazed at how damn big the whole thing was. I've heard that 12 to 15 thousand people showed up. For a weekend the playa was host to one of the 10 largest cities in the state.

So you can imagine it was quite the hike from one end to the other.

I've heard people say Burning Man is like Woodstock, it's like Mad Max, it's like Alice in Wonderland or some such. In the end, I thought it was just a bunch of freaks killing badly needed brain cells.

But back to the story. I wandered





The performances and music and other activities were all slated for later in the evening. By this time I was beat, and not feeling well.

After leaving, I stopped by for a minute to watch the beginnings of a Goddess worship ceremony. They were handing out scripts to any passerby who looked interested. They never even glanced at me. I guess I just exude squareness.

I tried to stumble back to my tent, feet aching, tired and thirsty, but the sun had gone down and I realized that I could not find my campsite. I wandered for a long time. Since I had camped, other people had come in and changed the nature of the area. Nothing looked the

same and I had not had the foresight to bring a flashlight. While there was light from the various campfires, bottle rockets, explosions, strobes etc. I couldn't see very well and wandered around fruitlessly looking for my camp. I finally started over from the spiral camp, easily recognizable because of the blowing streamers and found my way home. I had been relying on finding a big black pyramid to orient myself, and on my neighbor's pirate flag to get me the rest of the way home. Unfortunately after the first few minutes of leaving my camp, I never saw the pyramid again and every other damn camp was flying the Jolly Roger. It's hard to see an black pyramid at in the dark, and I had never even considered that it would be an extremely popular flag.

I rested in my car for a while as I was exhausted, and I guess I dozed. I got up around 10:30 p.m. and went to bed in my tent. It was big mistake. At least in the car I had some insulation from the sound if not any actual privacy. This thing goes on, very loud for all hours of the night. Music, booms, drumming,

loud radios, loud voices, people with bull-horns, vehicles running around. In addition it was hard to find a comfortable position as the ground was lumpy. At least it kept the strobe lights out of my eyes.

I tell you, the only thing that kept me from packing my bags is that I figured that as long as I had endured this much I was damned if I wasn't going to see the camp burn to the ground. I was feeling lonely, pissed off, tired, sore, ill and generally not enjoying myself. I had a headache from almost the moment I got there that



didn't let up for the whole thing.

I guess I got a bit of fitful sleep. I woke up to the sounds of the band camp playing religious marches. Badly. But with great enthusiasm. Over one of the several pirate radio stations I heard that a plane had crashed at the landing strip. (Yes we had our own mini airport, home to a media chopper, police chopper, parasail, and several light planes.)

I ate a meager breakfast. I had brought juice, peaches, milk and cold cereal and canned goods but I really didn't feel like eating. I did suck down a couple of Pepsi's for the caffeine content, a bit of tinned food and a couple of dried apricots. I tried to drink as much water as I could as I was concerned about dehydration. Other than the Pepsis, I never did use any of the stuff I brought in my cooler and on second thought I could have avoided the expense of buying a cooler and filling it. And yes, I've been through enough conventions in my life to know that you have to make time to eat, but I was feeling too ill to take my own good advice.



I looked over at the camp across the way and recognized a rubber lizard attached to a string that they'd set out in the road. I'd stepped over it in the night. I'd walked right by my car in the dark and never knew it.

Mike and Tiger were active. They were offering chunks of pineapple to passers by. Mike soon rode off on his bike, golf bag under his arm to round up the rest of his foursome. He was only wearing a grass skirt.

I saw the police helicopter make a second pass over camp, lower this time. Must have spotted some cute nudists or some girls taking a shower or something. The policing at this event demonstrates the conflict between the Burners and the locals. Part of the reason the event is so expensive is that the event is required to pay for many local police officers to police the event, at overtime rates. The police don't actually do any policing, they just drive around the camp periodically, sealed inside their SUVs looking for naked women. Sometimes they give their girlfriends rides to show off the freaks. Kind of like one of those wild animal parks where you can drive around and see

the wildlife from the safety of your vehicle. Usually the officer riding shotgun has a video camera trying to take as many shots of naked women as he can. It's a very popular event for the local cops. They get paid mucho overtime, don't have to work, and get their jollies. Except for people blatantly selling drugs, they pretty much ignore all the public dope smoking. The actual policing at the event is done by volunteer "Danger Rangers" who are more interested in making sure everyone is safe while pursuing their bliss than in busting people.

I rested and watched a bit of the passing parade on Sunday morning and then got up my gumption and decided to face the celebration yet again.

I loaded up with film and set off. There were many weird sights. There were guys in skirts dancing the Macarena and, amazingly enough, passers-by stopping their cars in the road to jump out and join them. A guy with a loincloth made out of CDs, Many people who really should have worn some clothes and a few others I wished had worn less.



I'm firmly convinced that less than 1 percent of the human race should ever be without clothes. And the 1 percent that would look decent nekkid realize that they are attractive enough that they don't need to take off their clothes to be noticed.

I trekked out and back and around and took lots of photos. I saw much of the same stuff I'd seen the day before, the tiki statues and the giant dominoes and such.

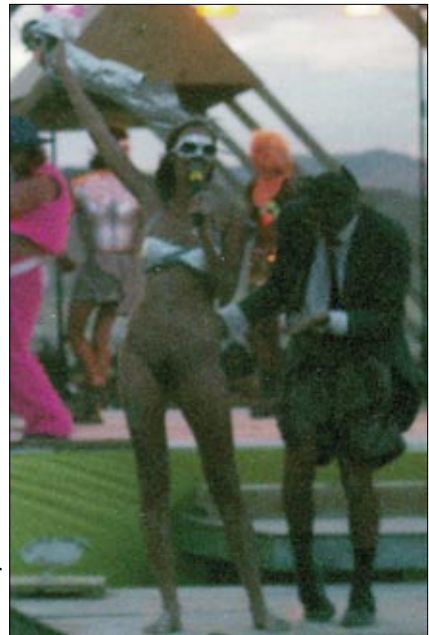
Over the course of the two days I first spotted the world's fastest battery-powered couch. Then a slower couch with an awning, rumble seat and occasionally a tiki bar trailer (signs on it read: "Naked Chicks ride free" and "see barter board for ride fare." The barter board just had "beer.") Then I saw an easy chair and a strobe lamp go past mounted on a three-wheeler. Then I saw the living room sail past. A whole damn living room moving under its own power. Couch, chairs, bar with bar stools, shag



carpeting, flag.

I watched a couple of chess games at the Alien Chess Camp. This had a tent whose floor was a chessboard. There were large iron chess pieces in the shape of various aliens. When I got there, there was a cute little girl who was playing with her father. The chess pieces were almost as big as she was and had to struggle to move the metal pieces. She seemed oblivious to the completely naked guy who was standing there waiting for the next game, which was typical of the cavalier attitude toward public nudity.

Across from the chess game, I watched the Artists Republic of Freemont issue



passports. And I saw at the neighboring Lecherous Passport Control passport officer stopping passing beauties and trying to get them to expose their breasts for a visa stamp. It surprised me how often it worked.

I left the main drag and headed back out into the desert.

The man itself was down on the ground, later dozens of people would raise the man in preparation for the festivities.

A new installation that ranked up there with the temple and the sail tent was a metal sculpture called "Future Primitive." The guy had hauled out scrap iron, rebar and the metal mesh used in reinforced concrete and had done a brilliant statue of a man kneeling down and screaming an anguish. It was friggin' huge. You could see the skeleton, the wire mesh forming musculature, his eyes popping out of his skull. I, of course, took photos. I was impressed and listed it as one of the four true pieces of art I saw. (The others being the sail tent, the bone arch and the temple/stage.)

I distinguish between art and what some morons did with power tools, plywood and flammable substances. Lots of the later at Burning Man, all too little of the former.



I didn't think much of the Ice Globe. It was billed as some kind of Egyptian-themed time-piece with melting ice and obelisks and such. The ball was kept in a straw insulated box most of the time and only partly melted by Sunday afternoon. They had promised cherry syrup that you could pour on it and lick but I wouldn't have tasted that dirty ice for anything. I don't care how refreshing it would be. The obelisks were blocks of ice impaled on metal posts. Not very impressive.

I headed out to the temple as I've described before and then returned to the main encampment.

I paused in the shade of the main pirate radio station's broadcast center intending to quietly watch the passing parade. Ironically I got more social interaction in the next few minutes than in the whole rest of the trip.

First a nice, but kinky, couple who had just been married by Pirate DJ Speed Racer asked if I would take their picture.



After this, a girl on a bike with huge gold-painted tits rode up and asked me if I knew where the Critical Tits bike ride was. I didn't know. I also didn't know what to say. Not every day you get to talk to a pair of enormous gold-painted tits. She rode off. I should explain that every month in San Francisco there is an event called Critical Mass where bike riders ride around the downtown area to prove that cars are bad. Critical Tits is similar but it is some kind of feminist thing where women paint their breasts and ride around camp on bicycles without their tops. I don't know what, if anything, they are trying to prove is bad.

Not seeing Critical Tits happening at the moment, I got interested in the sperm races. They were auditioning sperm. By a limbo contest doncha know. More to the point I got interested in a really cute girl who was a potential sperm. We're talking huge breasts and all she was wearing was tight green sparkly hotpants. I took lots of photos of the trials until she lost and rode off on her bike with her boyfriend. I then lost interest and was sucked away by the sudden onslaught of Critical Tits. A lesbian friend of mine was interested when she heard about it so I took lots of photos. Just for her benefit you understand. I thought it interesting that the 30 or so women participants were followed by twice that number of slack jawed guys in pursuit.

After they rode by, I wandered over to the center area where some performance artists were using the sun's reflected rays to try and melt a Barbie doll. I felt it was pretty pointless. I listened to some bad poetry, one of the girls reciting took off her top to



make a point, but she wasn't anything to write home about, and I went back to by car for some water and more film.

I once again was tired and sore, but I was feeling better than the night before. A bit more centered and a bit more resigned to my place in the universe.

I rested a bit and then determined to make one final trek to the man, find a spot and stick to it. I got a little side tracked.

I got there in time to see the man raised and get photos. I walked to where they were assembling the Trojan Horse. They were running late and struggling with the crane. I never did find out what they did with it. Probably burned it. Took some photos.

I then realized that they were doing a fashion show at the main stage. I immediately went there and took as many photos as possible. One participant, a member of the Space Cowgirls, was so upset that someone had stolen her bike that she, who was fairly naked to begin with, tore off her tin foil mini skirt on stage. It was, at the very least, an interesting form of protest. She seemed really distraught. Must have loved that bike. I mean, she wasn't even wearing panties. Or anything.

Because I got there late, I was too far away to get many good photos, but afterwards, some of the participants decided to dance around and give us photographers a chance to take some better photos. I made the best of the opportunity. I especially liked the photos I got of the bunny girl dancing with the demon chick.

I then saw a Danger Ranger recover the seemingly stolen banana cycle from an innocent thief. The bike had passed through several hands but it seems the original owner wanted it back.

I found a place off to the side of the Man, not the best place but it had the advantage of being a seat on a bale of hay just at the circle surrounding the Man. Most people had to stand and I was tired enough to appreciate being able to sit. Comfort won over viewing angle. It turned out to be a good spot. We waited. There were bonfires and explosions and fireworks and rockets and flamethrowers and rocket bikes and rocket cars and flares and chemical glow sticks and such. Not to mention the guy impaled on the self-propelled crucifix.

I don't understand why people take so many hallucinogenic drugs at this thing. I was completely straight the whole weekend and sometimes I couldn't tell if what I was seeing was real or an illusion.



I happened to be sitting near to a couple of people who were also from Reno and a desert rat kind of guy who knew his way around the Nevada desert. We all agreed that the Californians were freaks and that no Nevadan would act in such bizarre ways. I would like to note for the record that all us Nevadans were fully clothed. In normal clothes no less. I was the oddest one, and that was only because I was wearing a pith helmet to keep the sun off.

The procession arrived, paraded around the circle a few times. It was very ceremonial, with people in animal masks and drumming and people flinging fire around and a guy on stilts who set his stilts on fire and lots more weirdness that was too much to take in.

They set a guy on fire, like in the movies, and he ran up the staircase and danced around and lit the man on fire and ran down and was doused by waiting firemen. The Man started to burn and some fireworks were set off inside the structure and some hay bails at the bottom were also alight.

Some stupid guy with a death wish then ran up and got onto the hay bales in back, ones that hadn't caught yet, and started goobering around. A firefighter yanked him off and literally threw him to safety

just seconds before the whole thing exploded into massive flames. If that firefighter has been a step slower, the guy would have been crispy fried.

So because I had a seat to the side and back, I got to see that which was hidden from most of the spectators.

The fire burned and the man collapsed and that was the signal to dash forward into the formerly forbidden zone and dance around the fire. I used the rest of my exposures. I got caught up in the center mass and tried to make my way inward because I figured that would be where the cute naked chicks would be, but it was just a mess. So I extricated myself and got the hell out of there.

I walked back to the sail tent and checked to see if anyone there was doing anything interesting. No one was. Earlier that day I had seen the most beautiful dark-haired girl there. She was drowsing the in shade during the heat of the day. She was wearing this white gossamer outfit that left one perfect breast exposed. It was an exquisite sight. The only thing to mar the scene was her





boyfriend who was lying in bed with her stroking said perfect breast. Bit of a downer that.

I stopped for a last look at the Alien Chess Game, sorry that I had no film left to take a shot with it glowing in the black light.

I wandered up to my car, broke camp and was on my way home. I had to take the long way around camp as Mike and Tiger had decided the middle of the road would be a good place to put a campfire and light flares.

And with that I left and drove back to Reno. There was still much revelry in the camp and much left to burn but I'd seen what I came to see and was done with it.

I doubt I'll ever return, even though I'm now one of the very same Californiyoyos that I derided when I was a Nevadan. There's plenty of weirdness to keep me occupied here in the Bay Area and I'm not much for Spartan camping in the high desert. My idea of roughing it is staying at a Motel 6 when the ice machine is busted.

While it was certainly an eye opening experience, I don't think I'm a "Burner" by nature.

I was unprepared for the camping experience. I'm not much for discomfort and I was uncomfortable for much of the weekend. I walked until my feet hurt, I was out in the sun until I got sunburned, I didn't eat well, I had a headache for most of the two days, and was generally feeling unwell.

I'm essentially a loner, a very anti-social person in a very social gathering. Everyone around me was having fun with their friends and I was there alone. I didn't even have enough friends that I could find somebody who wanted to use the second free ticket that I had. I'm not social enough to just meet some new people.

By nature I'm an observer, and the whole festival revolves around "no spectators, just participants." Well, I don't participate worth shit. "Doesn't play well with others." That's me all over.

I'm just not psychologically capable of acting silly and being weird and taking mind-altering chemicals and getting drunk and being crazy and exposing myself to potential ridicule. Even though no one would have batted an eye had I gone stark naked, painted my cock blue and wore aluminum foil wings, (all of which I saw put into practice) I'm just not going to do it. Hell, wearing a pair of shorts is getting wild and crazy for me.

So I just took photos. More than 250 exposures. I find that the only way I can deal with such experiences is to put a wall between me and them. As a photographer or as a reporter I can remain outside, too cool for school, aloof to the experience. And at this event, where everyone was into experiencing the experience to the fullest, I found it unsatisfying.



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The Future Ain't What It Used To Be

In the future... It will still be impossible to find a parking space in San Francisco.

So I decided to go down to the Wired NextFest in San Francisco. This was an event sponsored by Wired Magazine to showcase what the organizers think are going to be the next big cool technologies. This was a two-day event held in an old Army warehouse at Fort Mason Center, the old Army supply base that has been converted into an arts center.

The advance on-line ticket sales had been disappointing, the organizers had apparently thought that people who were interested in future technology would use modern technology to register. So several participants pulled out and the organizers were surprised at the hordes of people who turned up to buy tickets at the door. Lines were quite long and parking was a nightmare, even worse than usual for the city. I normally park in this neighborhood when I'm in town, but I circled for a long time and couldn't find a single parking place. There was a shuttle running, I think, but there were no signs as to where to park to catch it and the attendants didn't know anything. So I parked across town and took the MUNI bus back. By the time I got back, they had stopped letting in any more people for the day. So I went home.

Sunday, the next day, I came back. After circling for only 15 minutes, I lucked out and found a tight space where someone was just pulling out. Luckily I have a sub-compact and could fit.

In the future... Flying cars still won't fly.

One of the big draws for me was the promise of seeing a flying car. More than Moon-bases or robots or ray guns, flying cars spell the future for me. For at least seventy years now, there have been promises that in the future we'd have flying cars. Wired advertised that they would have a flying car, com-





plete with photos of the car supposedly flying through blue skies. Now when you tell me that I'm paying \$10 bucks to see a flying car, I expect to see the damn thing take off, hover, fly a couple of laps, and land. In other words, I expect a car that can fly. This one just sat there. Oh, it looked all futuristic and such sitting there in the warehouse, but IT DID NOT FLY. Heck, it didn't even move. On a TV in the background they were showing clips of it supposedly hovering WHILE ATTACHED TO A CRANE. I felt deeply cheated.

There was also a personal helicopter on display. It didn't fly either.

In the future... We still won't have powered armor suits.

Another cool thing I wanted to see was a demonstration of a suit developed in Japan that uses an exoskeleton fitted with sensors and hydraulic systems to enhance the strength of the wearer. I've liked the idea of power armor since I read *Starship Troopers*. Of course, I'm also a big fan of Mecha shows in anime. Well, this too didn't live up to billing. The suit itself was not demonstrated while I was there, and there didn't seem to be anybody there to talk to about it. They just had it hanging up like an old coat on an industrial-strength coat stand. They did have a video and this was about as convinc-

ing as the video for the flying car. Sure, you could very slowly lift a person from a shoulder-height table and place him onto another shoulder-height gurney. But there was no leaping of tall buildings, knocking down of brick walls, firing of auto canons, fighting alien invaders or other things that I'd use a powered exoskeleton to do.

There were some interesting ideas for battlefield gear for the armed forces, but nothing I thought of as new or particularly startling. Besides, from years of watching anime, I know that the army isn't going to save us from 20-story tall alien monster-invaders. It's always the awkward high school student who somehow ends up as the only person capable of piloting the kick-ass mecha that saves the day.

In the future... NASA still won't have a clue.

NASA was represented and while they didn't actually run a demonstration, they had information on an experiment where they used ground-based lasers to power a small model airplane and keep it in the air indefinitely. Now this was cool. Broadcast Power, although NASA didn't call it that. Now there's a science fiction concept. So I talked to the guy from NASA and we just didn't connect. He didn't seem to





have any vision of any cool applications for the technology. When I brought up power satellites in orbit, he seemed completely unable to grasp the idea of using the system to generate power in orbit and send it earthbound. He didn't have a clue about any potential commercial applications on Earth. In the experiments, apparently nobody had bothered to figure out what the efficiency of transmission is through the atmosphere and how that compared with traditional power transmission over wires. He did mention that somebody earlier had been interested in the technology as a way to power a space elevator, but he seemed baffled as

to why anybody would be interested in such a thing. I'm glad that there has been some progress, slight though it has been, to commercialization and privatization of space travel, because these NASA guys just don't have any vision.

Oh, and NASA did have a display of a ball-shaped robot they wanted to use on the International Space Station. Trouble is, it doesn't really exist. They just had a model of what they wanted to build. They haven't managed to build it yet.

In the future... All the cool stuff won't work, all the scary stuff will.

One thing I noticed is that if I feared a technology, particularly if it invaded my privacy such as face recognition technology, biometric identification, or RDF tags, it seemed to work way too well for my peace of mind. If I was excited to see something, like robots, they either didn't work or they didn't have any real application. I saw a demonstration of a robot system that allowed one tiny box-like robot to be remotely controlled and automatically followed by a half dozen or so other robots automatically. Except that they really didn't do a good job of following each other. And even if they did, what practical application is there for little rubix cubes on wheels that can follow each other around?

In the future... It will be standing room only because the only chairs will be short, hard, uncomfortable plastic ones.

The venue did have an area to sit down and rest. Unfortunately the chairs were all very hard plastic ones that were only a few inches off of the floor. Who in the world designed and manufactured these chairs? Either somebody sadistic, or somebody who wanted to discourage people from sitting down.

In the future... Invisible men still won't be invisible.

I'd read news reports about the Japanese



researcher who had invented an invisibility cloak. Now this was cool and something I really wanted to see. So there I am at the demonstration and they get some Japanese grad student to don the cloak and then he starts dancing around the stage in what I can only assume is some sort of “look I’m invisible” dance and waving a hand mirror in front of him. The only trouble is that he looked to me like a Japanese grad student in a green poncho. Everyone is oohing and ahing like he’s invisible. I felt like the kid in the story. “Look the emperor has clothes! And I can see them! And him!” Then I noticed that everyone is taking turns looking at the guy through a little 1-inch viewfinder. So I get in line and sure enough, he’s sort of vaguely translucent IF YOU LOOK AT HIM ONLY THROUGH THE VIEWFINDER. What a useless invisibility cloak. “Excuse me sir, could you only look at me through this viewfinder for the next few minutes? I want to turn invisible and do stuff without you seeing me.” The inventor has said that he could see applications for the technology such as allowing pilots to see through the floor of the cockpit when landing. Now humankind has landed

a lot of planes over the years without needing this, and if we did need to do this, I think it would be a lot cheaper just to use a closed-circuit TV system to accomplish the same thing. In fact, the last thing I think a pilot would want to see when landing a plane is the ground rushing up under his feet. I’d think it would be a distraction more than it would be a help.



In the future... Inventors will invent useless things or not understand the real application for their inventions.

One thing I thought was interesting was a virtual reality helmet. It took video and audio signals from head mounted sensors and processed them through a computer that fit into a backpack. The data was then rebroadcast to the wearer of the helmet. I can see a terrific use for this sort of thing. Just imagine walking down the street wearing one of these and being able to have the computer automatically edit what you are seeing and hearing. I’d use it to edit out the bums that ask for money, graffiti on the buildings, people having loud conversations on their cell phones, couples having lover’s spats, passing cars blaring out rap music, teenagers with droopy pants and other undesired visual clutter and noise. With enough computer processing power, you could even lay a “skin” over the real world and make



New York look like Moonbase One if you wanted. But no, the inventor of this thought that the application for this technology was to reprocess the video signal and rebroadcast it to the wearer as an audio signal and vice versa with the incoming audio signal. So you got a visual goulash that spiked when there was a loud noise and white noise that changed as you moved your head. There wasn't any information coming in on the signal. Not any that I could determine. It wasn't as if you could "see" what the noise was and figure out what it was.

In the future... There will be some cool new things that work, but they won't be the things we're expecting.

I did try out a pretty cool head-mounted laser display unit that beamed an image directly onto one's retina. While the image was primitive, a little above the video from an old Atari game system, it did do what it promised. I had no trouble following the three-dimensional object as it moved about the room. While only I could see it, it looked to me like the object really existed in realspace. They folks showing this technology had been barred from putting up a sign over their booth, so in a clever move, they put a virtual sign up that could be seen by those trying out the technology.

Another really cool thing that actually worked was a 3-D fax machine. This used a standard high-end ink-jet printer to "print" binder onto a bed of granulated material. Through repeated passes, the object desired was built up. Very intricate designs could be produced, including working bearings with free-moving ball bearings inside. I was impressed that you could create a free moving ball inside a housing. It took a while to create anything big, and the objects were just made out of a plaster-type material, but it looked like a pretty good stab at replicator technology to me.

While I thought it had limited practical uses, the spray curtain that could be used to form an insubstantial display screen was also cool, although I think it would have worked better in a less windy location than the front entrance. I also noticed that the picture quality really degraded the farther away it was from the mist projectors. I think to really make this work you'd have to have mist projectors on all four sides of the display area.

So after attending the NextFest, I think the future looks less than utopian.



