

the intergalactic
OBSERUER



"It's fine if we watch, right?"

NOVEMBER 2019 | ISSUE 01

Letter From The Mayor

Chris Kodiak

Hello to all you wonderful Intergalactic Sasquatches!

I hope that this magazine is finding you safe and sound back in your individual default worlds. I want to thank each and every one of you for another wonderful year in Black Rock City. The magic created by Intergalactic Sasquatch Village at Burning Man is not possible without participants like you.

This year we were able to pass on our gift to thousands of Burning Man participants—more than ever before! The circus was bigger than last year, the lines were longer, and we even had a dinner before the show. Lines were wrapped around the block, which was truly amazing to see. Offering soft-serve was another great success, filling the camp during the middle of the day. Our music was better than ever. We served way, way more tea than ever before. All of this added up to the highest level of interactivity we have ever offered, allowing all of us ‘Squatches to serve thousands of more Burning Man participants than we ever have.

None of this could be accomplished without you. Thousands of hours of volunteer time were gifted to make all of this happen. Everything from circus performers to loading porta-potties, from bartending to cleaning the kitchen, from building to mooping all contributed to making this a wonderfully successful and magical year.

We started as a small group of friends on 2:00&K who came up with the idea of Intergalactic Sasquatch Village as a place for us all to camp together. What began with a group of about thirty-five people and a sound camp in a dome located way out next to Voted Best Camp has grown into a fairly well known camp. We now have about 150 people per year with A-placement gifting thousands of people a circus, bourbon tea, high-quality sound, soft-serve, and even food. Each year we add on additional offerings of interactivity and aesthetics. All of this is possible due to your volunteering for build and camp dues.

Please contact us with your thoughts on what worked and what did not work. We have a few thoughts on improvements for next year but would like to hear what you have to say. If you have an idea for improvements, or would like to volunteer to take over a project, please reach out and let us know. Every year there is room for improvement but, without you letting us know, we do not always see where to improve.

In addition, please keep in mind that Intergalactic Sasquatch Village, like Burning Man itself, cannot happen without participants. We always need volunteers for camp build in Vegas (once it starts), loading, unloading, build on playa, loading on playa, and unloading back in Vegas. Each year, thousands of volunteer hours are donated in Las Vegas and camp would not be what it is today if we did not have ‘Squatches putting in that time.

Thank you again for a wonderful 2019 and I can't wait to see you in 2020. We will not be increasing camp size so keep an eye out for camp application and dues payment to open sometime between March and May so you can reserve your spot.

—Kodiak

How was your 2019 Burning Man experience? Let us know at the link below; your feedback helps us improve camp for everyone.

<https://bit.ly/2BZUK93>

NEXT YEAR WAS BETTER

So what's in store for the next 365 days?

2019 was another successful year of Burning Man for Intergalactic Sasquatch Village, and we're already looking forward to the next year, but first, some changes. You might have noticed by now that the camp newsletter looks a little different than usual. That's because it is.

This year, we aim to keep that Burning Man inspiration and excitement fresh right up until you arrive on the playa in 2020. To do that, we'll be bringing you Las Vegas burner news, pieces of playa humor, tidbits of fresh music and other hot garbage year-round. We want to put out a quality publication on the first of every month and we hope you'll join us in making that happen.

We're biting off a lot this year and we hope you'll help us chew it. We are committing to building a camp website, implementing a project management structure, and publishing this magazine—The Intergalactic Observer—to hopefully take some weight off of John, Chris, and Tyler's backs. Our management team works tirelessly all year, every year, to make camp happen and we really want to take a huge load from them, but we need your help.

We need your photos, your Burning Man playlists, your ideas, and your bad opinions. We need your humor and your burner life-hacks; you are welcome to contribute as much or as little as you care to.

— Casey Sparks

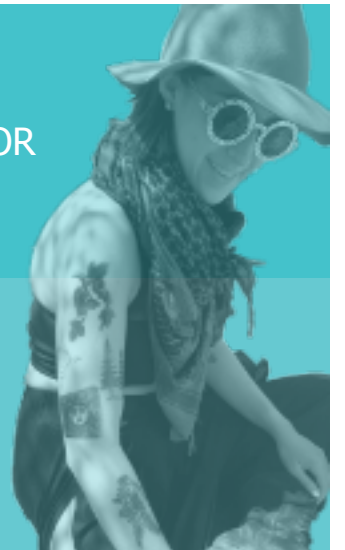
The Intergalactic Observer would like to thank the following campers and friends for their contributions to this issue: Bret Pfister, Ryan Steimer, Boots Baker, Katie Swalm, and Dave Levy for writing articles, as well as Tom Ward for contributing his photos, and redditor [u/justaliv3](#) as well as Mayor William Nishri of The Lost Penguin Café for allowing us to reproduce their works.

If you'd like to write an article for The Intergalactic Observer, just mail your submission to intergalacticobserver@gmail.com, fill out our form at bit.ly/2IUBDs2, or scan the QR code on back cover to get started.

Casey Sparks
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Katie Swalm
MANAGING EDITOR
STAFF WRITER



Dave Levy
STAFF WRITER



Lacy Knaffla
HR
STAFF WRITER



Taskwatch
STAFF WRITER



Charly Wolney
MANAGING EDITOR
STAFF WRITER



Three O'Clock Plaza

& Esplanade

with
Katie Swalm & Casey Sparks

Burner Mondays

November 4, 11, 18, and 25: 6:00 p.m.
Phoenix Bar & Lounge: 4213 W Sahara Ave, Las Vegas,
NV 89102.

Food Drive for Three Square

November 1-26.

Bring clothes, school supplies, food, and other goods to John Henry's house at any point this month and they'll be donated to a non-profit. Donate online at threesquare.org/how-to-help/food-drives-and-donations.

Storytime Speakeasy—Artumnal Gathering Celebration (Ticketed)

November 16: 9:00 p.m.
Great Northern, 119 Utah Street, San Francisco

This experiential event, presented by Pink Mammoth, will kick off a weekend devoted to Artumnal celebrations. Dance the night away in style at this fundraiser to benefit the Burning Man project and the Mammoth Arts Foundation.

Library of Babel—Artumnal Gathering Dinner & Auction (Ticketed)

November 16; 5:00 p.m.
Terra Gallery: 511 Harrison Street, San Francisco, CA,
94105.

A fundraiser to benefit Burning Man's Art and Civic Engagement programs.

Editor's note: Since most of our camp resides in Las Vegas, this is where we tend to focus. If you want us to include another locale, please let us know.

Burning Man 2020 Theme: The Multiverse

Good news, Sasquatches! BMOrg has announced the theme for 2020 and it's one that was tailor-made for our own little Intergalactic Sasquatch Village.

In case Burning Man wasn't surreal enough for you, the 2020 theme—The Multiverse—centers on quantum weirdness, parallel universes, and a playa where all possible occurrences happen at once (at least until they're observed).

From Stuart Mangrum, *Burning Man Journal*: "The 2020 Black Rock City event theme explores the quantum kaleidoscope of possibility, the infinite realities of the multiverse, and our own super-positioning as actors and observers in the cosmic Cacophony of resonant strings."

What that might mean is relative to your position, but you can be sure that sasquatches will be involved. I, for one, am excited to become entangled with the dust and my campmates again next year. Until then, I'll try to think of some intergalactic and multiversal ideas that could be put to use as an art project, an article, or just a good time.

Meanwhile, try not to worry about the infinite worlds and parallel universes in which you exist, and remember:

It doesn't matter if you don't know where you are, just as long as you know how fast you're going, so knock the dust off your clothes, pick yourself up by your quantum boot-strings, repeat that "it was better next year"...

...and don't forget to bring a box full of dead cats.





Do You Know Your Sasquatch?

You think you do, until you don't. Take this quiz and find out how much you really know about your Sasquatch.

—Charly Wolney

Q1
Sasquatch, also known as Bigfoot, is an Anglicized derivative of the word "sésquac," meaning "_____."

- A** big, brave, brick of meat.
- B** Smash Lampjaw.
- C** wild man.
- D** Thick McRunfast.

Q2
The Pangbouche Buddhist monastery in Nepal claims to possess what part of a Yeti?

- A** Preserved genitalia.
- B** A hand.
- C** A skull.
- D** A foot.

Q3
The earliest accounts of Sasquatch refer to:

- A** Mingling the blood of man & beast.
- B** Giant Indians.
- C** The enemy's mother.
- D** The god of decaffeinated coffee.

Q4
In Jack Black's fantasy scene in *Tenacious D and the Pick of Destiny*, which actor portrayed Sasquatch?

- A** Meat Loaf
- B** Dave Grohl
- C** Colin Hanks
- D** John C. Reilly

Q5
According to the *Official Bigfoot Survival Guide*, when encountering a Bigfoot, playing dead gives you a _____ chance of survival.

- A** 90 percent
- B** 35 percent
- C** 0 percent
- D** 15 percent

Q6
Alternatively, _____ gives you a 60 percent chance of survival.

- A** punching yourself in the face
- B** throwing your wallet and running away
- C** crying
- D** attempting fellatio

Q7
In 1965, Bigfoot was officially put on Russia's _____ list.

- A** Endangered Species
- B** Best Roadside Attractions
- C** Top-10 Most Wanted
- D** Most Eligible Bachelors

Q8
In Louisiana, Bigfoot goes by "The Honey Island Swamp Monster" and—as legend has it—is half chimpanzee and half _____.

- A** gumbo
- B** man
- C** alligator
- D** swamp

Q9
Sasquatch's favorite foods are meat, fish, berries, and _____.

- A** Kit-Kat
- B** Milky Way
- C** Baby Ruth
- D** Trick question, it's actually M&MS.

Q10
Researchers believe that Sasquatches _____ their dead.

- A** mummify
- B** cannibalize
- C** ritually dissect
- D** bury

Q11
Immune to pepper spray, it is said that Sasquatches are incapable of _____.

- A** blinking
- B** sneezing
- C** violating ape law
- D** salivating

Q12
Sasquatch goes by many names including Bigfoot, Yeti, The Abominable Snowman, and The Ohio _____ Man.

- A** Florida
- B** Grass
- C** Not All
- D** Prairie Weasel

Q13
According to *The Bigfoot Hunter's Essentials Checklist*, attracting a Sasquatch requires the use of _____.

- A** deer urine
- B** a trail of Reese's Pieces
- C** the friends you made along the way
- D** a box-and-stick trap

Answers

- 1 C. Wild Man
- 2 B. A hand.
- 3 B. Giant Indians
- 4 D. John C. Reilly
- 5 D. 15 percent
- 6 A. punching yourself in the face
- 7 A. Endangered Species
- 8 C. alligator
- 9 A. Kit-Kat
- 10 D. bury
- 11 B. sneezing
- 12 B. Grass
- 13 A. deer urine

GOOD CLEAN FUN

These porcelain beauties can't wait to help you decompress.



Left: This thin, pale babe has been waiting for you all week. Don't be nervous, she's already wet.

Middle: She might look shy, but this beauty has a 36-inch long hose that's sure to keep you satisfied for hours...

Top right: Come on in; the water's fine and this pristine queen can't wait to get hot, steamy and dirty with you. (Measurements: 60-48-48)

Bottom right: This all-American beauty is a sleight 400 pounds and all she wants is to feel you slip inside her!

knees & toes



"Nine out of ten sasquatches prefer it!"

NO K' UNTIL WEDNESDAY...

Shan't we?

Taskwatch

There are some times in life when one comes across what turns out to be their "big idea."

A life-defining moment, in that all other moments in your life will be compared against it.

It's possible that on the evening of Tuesday, August 27th, while sitting at the hepatitis heptagonal bar of Intergalactic Sasquatch Village; I, Taskwatch, had my golden-ticket idea.

Four simple words:

No Ketamine 'Till Wednesday.

Okay, okay, I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, "*Hey Taskwatch, that's actually two simple words, one complicated word, and one half-word, because 'till' should always be written out as its full form, 'until,' according to the 1974 revision of the New York Times Manual of Style and Usage.*"

Well you're right, dear 'Squatches; it is two simple words, one complicated word, and one half-word, but more than that, it's a REVELATION. A revelation that is going to solve every problem we've ever had. Also, I like the way NKTW sounds more than I like NKUW.

"Solve every problem we've ever had!?" You ask yourself in disbelief.

Every. Single. Problem.

Let's turn to a bulleted list for some reasons why:

- It just will, okay.
- Don't pressure me for real research.
- {insert third fact}

I will now continue to impress with my supreme understanding of the reader's mind by preemptively answering some of your questions.

Can we still do acid on Monday?

Yes, you can of course do acid, as

well as any other substance you'd like, but don't do any ketamine until Wednesday.

Can we still do ketamine at Burning Man?

Yes, starting at 12:01am on Wednesday morning.

May I bring my pet lizard to Burning Man?

No, I'm afraid animals are not allowed at Burning Man this year. Illegal drugs are also not allowed. However, if you happen to be carrying some for a friend, please wait until Wednesday to take the one that starts with K.

Now, dear reader, I turn to you. I encourage you to carry this idea forward and spread it generously to each and every set of ears that will listen.

It is through a true Black Rock City understanding that, at this burn, we will truly discover every level of the Multiverse... from Wednesday onward.

The Crystal Grid

Casey Sparks

Hi there, and welcome to the Crystal Grid: your dedicated monthly music column. To kick off the first issue, I thought I'd skirt around writing about music directly and instead write about music as it pertains to another personal interest of mine, technology, and hopefully provide you with some useful tools for quickly discovering new tracks and artists that suit your tastes.

Like many people, I was startled but not surprised by the news of the Cambridge Analytica datasets, which were purported to keep information on 50 million Americans without their knowledge or permission. The news cycle quickly painted big data companies as villains while Google and Facebook ran spin campaigns and their users swore left and right that they were quitting social media for good (or cutting back at the very least). The spin campaigns were surprisingly successful, and much of the conversation swung from decrying Facebook to vague concerns about "algorithms" and the risks they pose to society.

While many of my friends were happy to talk at length about how terrible the unseen force of "algorithms" can be, none seemed to be willing to give up the comfort they provide. Though everyone was happy to talk about how creepily specific Facebook ads are, no one wanted to step away from their tailored newsfeed. I'll admit it, neither did I.

At this point, you might be saying, "But Casey, this is a music column!" and you'd be right. Bear with me.

Ever the contrarian, and still unwilling to leave the cage of social media, I had a thought. *If I'm to live in a cage, I would prefer a gilded cage.* I formulated a plan. While others were feeling guilty for routinely ignoring their Screen Time limits, failing to cut back on their social media usage, and falling short of evading the omnipresent "algorithm," I was going to double down. I would increase my social media usage and actively give feedback to each and every algorithm I interacted with in an effort to tailor each platform to my liking. I was quickly spending six hours a day between Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, Spotify, Youtube, Netflix, and Google Plus (I'm kidding about that one.) If a platform gave me the option to provide feedback, I was doing it. I quickly fell into a routine of liking, subscribing, and following; as well as unsubscribing, disliking, and hiding every piece of online content I saw. Facebook groups got muted or unfollowed, targeted ads on Instagram got liked, and Youtube channels were subscribed to.

After only two weeks, I began to reap the fruits of my labor. Facebook became a quiet platform full of independent news sources and updates from only my closest friends; Twitter was populated solely by things that made me laugh, and Instagram got a *lot* more vaporwave. In the midst of this, I saw the highest return-on-investment in two services: PornHub and Spotify... but what happens in incognito mode stays in incognito mode,

and this article's about music.

Without further ado, here is my guide to optimizing your Spotify to the point where it does all your work for you.

Clean house. A really good starting point for anyone wanting to find great new music is to stop and look back at your old music. Spotify provides an automatically curated playlist of every song you've ever liked on the platform before. It's conveniently titled "Liked Songs," and you can find it in the right-hand menu under the "Your Library" section. I recommend you take the time to scrobble through it and remove any songs you don't listen to anymore as they might skew what Spotify thinks you like (especially if there aren't that many songs on it to begin with.)

Optimize your Discover Weekly. Anyone remotely familiar with Spotify is aware of the Discover Weekly playlist, but I was surprised to find out that many of my friends don't use it to its full potential. As far as I can tell, the feedback you give to your Discover Weekly playlist has the single greatest bearing on the music Spotify suggests you listen to; it's also the only playlist that lets you "dislike" tracks. Take the time each week to slowly go through your Discover Weekly and either dislike songs (with the round button on the right) or like songs (with the heart-shaped button on the left.) Do this for each and every song on the list every week.

Make playlists, then make more playlists. Once you've exhausted your Discover Weekly, take the songs you've liked throughout the week and sort them into playlists. I typically add every song I've liked into rotating, bi-monthly playlists so that I can come back to them in the future and relive the memories I made while listening to them. (I've linked an example on the far right of this section.) I also organize songs by genre. If one song belongs in multiple playlists, then add it to multiple playlists; it will help you a lot later on.

Listen to your playlists. After your liked songs, the next biggest factor is the songs you listen to. This part is pretty simple; just listen to the songs you enjoy. If Discover Weekly hasn't given you anything worth listening to, go listen to a playlist of your old favorites and next week's suggestions will be better.

Demand more from your music. If you're reaching the end of the week and you're still itching for new music, find a playlist you like and scroll to the bottom of the page. At the very bottom you'll find the "Recommended Songs" tab: a short list of tracks that might fit well into your playlist—give them a listen and add songs as you see fit. If there's nothing there that catches your ear, just hit the "Refresh" button and you'll have a new selection of tracks to choose from. Just remember to like each song as you add it to your playlist.

Go a step too far. Creep on your friends. If your friend has good taste in music, say "Fuck it!" and follow their playlists too.

Curate, curate, curate. Upkeep is the hard part, but it's crucial. Over time, you might find that a playlist you once loved has lost its appeal. You don't have to delete it; just go through and unlike any tracks that have lost their bop. As a side note, I *never ever* delete a playlist, but I do archive the shit out of them. Make a new folder (*Ctrl+Shift+N*), title it "Archive" (or something to that effect,) and put your old playlists on the shelf so you can come back to them on some rainy afternoon.

While you're at it, make folders for all your other playlists too. In addition to an archival folder, I have folders to sort playlists by the dates they were created and the genres they belong to, as well as a folder full of friends' Discover Weeklys and the other procedurally generated playlists Spotify provides me with.

In case you're curious as to what six months of algorithm optimization sounds like, I've included a playlist on the left. Click the link or scan the Spotify code on the left to listen to *September // October '19*, which contains every song I've found in the last two months.

If you're *still* curious about Pornhub, the process is pretty much the same.



The Intergalactic Observer is on Spotify!

The Crystal Grid will bring you the music of the play as heard by a different Squatch every month, so follow us closely and keep your ears peeled for hot new sounds each issue.

If you think you've got what it takes to write for *The Crystal Grid*, scan the QR code on the back of this magazine and submit your idea today!

You can listen to *September // October '19* by scanning the Spotify code or via the link below.

[spoti.fi/2MAxHYB](https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2MAxHYB)





Images by Tom Ward

Principle of the Month Radical Inclusion

—Dave Levy

The 10 Principles of Burning Man: we all explore, utilize, and are exposed to them at some point during our time on the Playa, but how often do we actively examine the principles and consider how to effectively implement them? Is it reasonable—or even possible—to utilize them one hundred percent of the time?

In 2004, Larry Harvey compiled the 10 Principles of Burning Man. They were not intended to be a set of rules, but scaffolding for the community to build upon. As no one Burner is the same, there are many approaches in the expression of these principles.

I will be opening up a dialogue through a series of articles diving into each principle and addressing whether or not these principles are truly transcending enough to apply universally and, in initiating those discussions, there is no better way to start than with addressing Radical Inclusion.

Many people's journey begins on the Burning Man website where you can find the 10 Principles. At the top of the list, we have Radical Inclusion. It reads:

“Anyone may be a part of Burning Man. We welcome and respect the stranger. No prerequisites exist for participation in our community.”

I see the importance of Radical Inclusion because none of this is possible without people, not to mention the benefit of being exposed to other views. Radical Inclusion is almost a passive by-product of Burning Man as you invite all of the amazing events into your life. At camp, it comes naturally to have an open invitation for everyone to take part in the experience we have to offer.

As the drive to consume permeates our culture, I can recognize this sparking curiosity in new experiences. Subsequently, Burning Man has become a destination for tourists and visitors.

Granted, we are all tourists from time to time but, while it can be frustrating, I see the value in tourists. Even if they do not fully embrace or subscribe to the essence of Burning Man, at least they are exposed to it, and this can be a positive because the alternative is going through life unaware.

I attempt to implement Radical Inclusion in the default world. While the principles were not crafted for this specific purpose, any aspect of life can benefit from practicing them. Radical Inclusion does not exist without its faults. There are some major issues with this type of inclusion, with the first thing to be lost being a sense of intimacy; it can be more difficult to make meaningful connections when you are connecting with everyone. In addition, hosting undesirable characters can make people feel unwelcome because of the stress or environment created in an attempt to accommodate everyone.

The people are a main drive of why I host events on such a frequent basis and have so many interests. Full disclosure: I view myself more of an extrovert, so this comes naturally to me. It is important to consider people that are more introverted and the toll it takes on them to exercise Radical Inclusion. What is particularly fascinating to me is that, for all of these reasons, it is sometimes necessary to exclude in order to be Radically Inclusive.

The reality of the matter is that this is not simple nor a problem to be solved, it is just a more complex value to tackle than it may initially seem on the surface, and I want to hear what others have to say. I welcome and value any feedback or examples of both successful and unsuccessful Radical Inclusion as well as your position on the principle.



The dust pours in as thick as clam chowder outside the window and I am forced to slow to a halt to avoid hitting the RV in front of me. We've already strapped goggles to our faces and placed scarves around our necks in preparation. I take a few photos of the novelty in preparation for the week ahead, when I'll surely be locked in one of these famed storms. A few months ago, I certainly wouldn't have expected myself to be here and there's no backing out now as we're in the middle of a traffic grid.

This is our first glimpse at the strange community in the middle of rural Nevada. Other burners begin to trickle out of stopped cars, attaching tape to windows to keep out the ever-present dust and stretching their legs after the long drive. They wear cowboy hats, goggles, tiny tie-dyed tops or skirts, and always heavy boots.

Though there is a three-hour wait, we are in high spirits. We're not an especially earnest group, but I can't resist setting an intention for the week. It's one of those practices that I do in spite of the small, critical voice inside me that knows better, knows that the universe isn't sending messages and that coincidences are just that, but wonders if the universe is cohesive. It's a force of habit, I suppose, to crave ritual. The intention? To reflect, to find balance.

We finally pull through the line and, as we draw closer, see other virgins lie down on the ground and make wide dust angels with their arms, covering themselves in the playa.

I have heard many stories about Burning Man over the past year but still have very little practical concept of what it is. I know you have to arrange your own services when you go to Burning Man, yet eighty-thousand people figure this out every year and manage to create the most surreal experience while doing so. It is near-sacred to my loved ones who've attended before. I spent plenty of time painting, sanding, measuring, packing, Googling, researching, and talking beforehand. I have a large tent; the car is packed with thirty-three gallons of water; we're camping experts. But before I left, my mom sent me articles on securing your tent in seventy-mile-per-hour winds. I do not feel prepared. I feel nervous.

We eschew ritual and don't make the dust angels, giving the greeter a hug instead.

And—we are in! We drive the car slowly down the roads, avoiding bikers, excitement growing. The dust clears as we near the city. We arrive at camp, change into clothes more appropriate for the heat—light linen pants, fishnet to let the breeze in, a tank top—and set up our tents. Afterward I find an RV for a nap.

When I awake three hours later, it is dark; I don't know where anyone is and I am nauseous. I find the food I've brought for dinner and our camp finally begins to come into vision. Feeling more alert, I decide to ride out to the Man to familiarize myself with the area. I try to memorize our neighborhood's combination of lights so I can find my way back, but soon give up this up—there are too many lights. I ride through the Esplanade to the Man. Its neon lining grows bright, seemingly unaware of how it will be eviscerated later this week. For now it sits, arms overhead, watching over the city.

I wake up the next morning drenched in sweat; the sun must have recently reached the canvas lining of the tent. I'd been told that I wouldn't be able to sleep past 8:30 a.m. in a tent, which was proving to be true. It is too hot to stay another second. I put some toothpaste on my toothbrush and leave. Other sleepy-eyed campers wander around and people sit at the bar, or maybe they hadn't slept the night before. Everyone running our camp works. Because it is my first year, though, I am told I should wander and do whatever I want, to experience fully without as many obligations.

Though we're a bit out of the way of the main drag, people in costumes,

wings, one-pieces, crowns, hats, bright colors, or without any clothes on at all, bike past us.

On the first day, we want to explore the Esplanade. We take our bikes, push off the dust, and head down the myriad neighborhoods comprised of camps themed after everything you can imagine: famous films like Moulin Rouge, a circus camp where you can learn to walk on stilts, Bob Ross, a tropical paradise, a camp where everyone decides to act like a cat at 1:00 p.m. sharp, a camp where everything is in miniature (aptly named Tiny Camp), and a Thunderdome that mimics the Mad Max movie franchise.

We ride out into the desert to see the artwork: a giant head, a whole building that looks like a combination of a far-away desert planet hideaway and a pirate ship filled with little treasures like animal bones and old books. We ride to Center Camp to buy ice and coffee. The weather is a perfect ninety-three degrees and there are dust storms on only one day.

On one of the nights, we attend the circus in our own camp. The king tent towers far above all the other tents in our neighborhood. When we walk in, the lights are purple, the playa has been covered up with beautiful maroon patterned rugs, and tables run around the edges of the tent surrounding a small stage in the center. We proceed to eat a five-star meal and watch a circus show where acrobats whirl and dance around the room and through the air, and magicians and comedians banter. It will probably live on as one of the most surreal experiences of my life.

At one camp, they offer us tequila shots in exchange for participating in Truth or Dare. They ask me, "Are you happy?" I reply, "Not yet, but I will be." The simple acknowledgement feels like a first step.

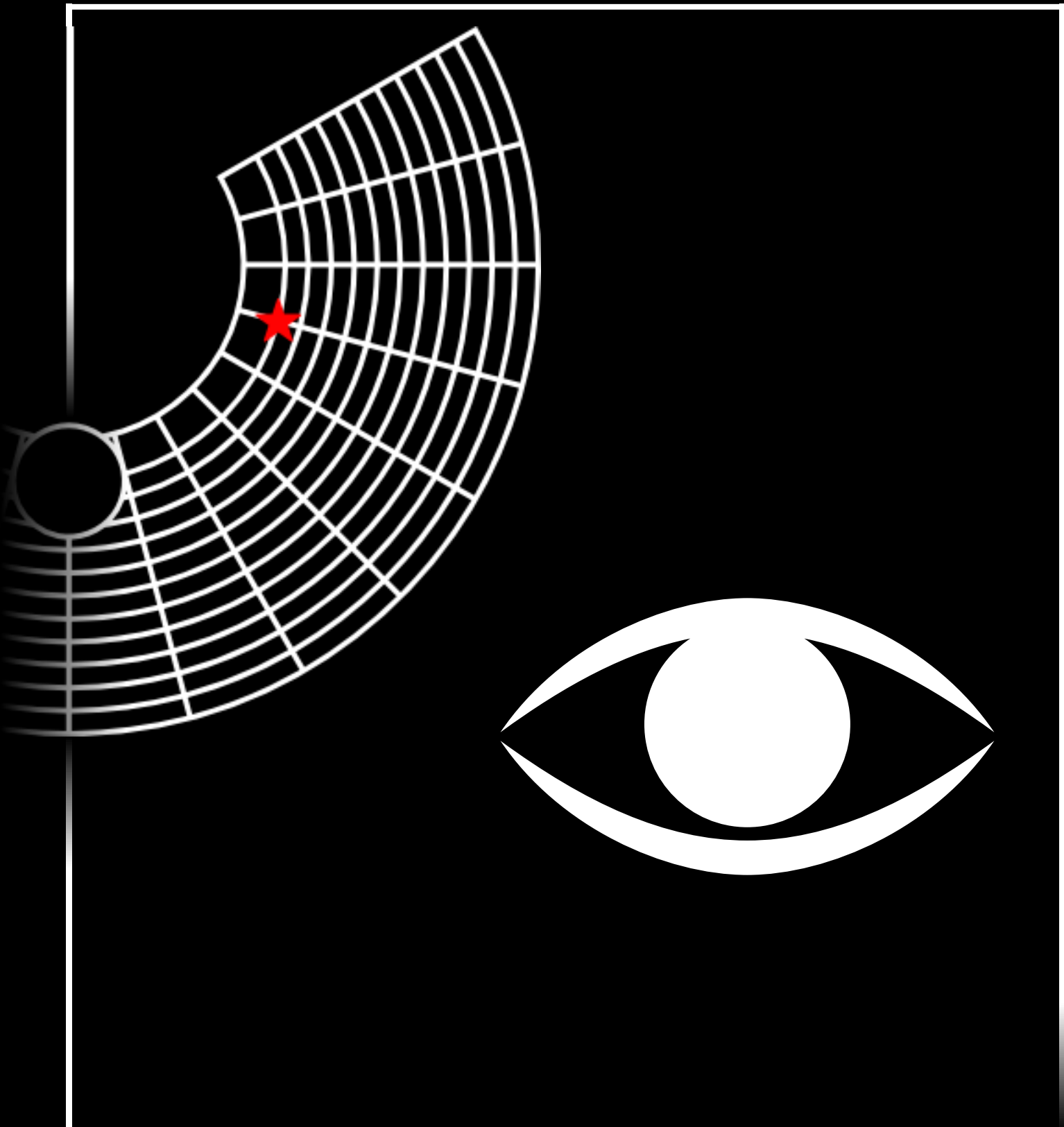
Throughout the week, we drift in and out of camp to art and music, to visit friends in far-away places, to make meals together. At 3:00 p.m., it is too hot to move. We sit underneath the tents and talk and joke. There are no nagging or pulling thoughts. There is truly nowhere better to be in the world than in the camping chairs. Though I know that many people come to Black Rock City for the party, my favorite part so far is the slow pace of life, the moment-to-moment assessing and attending-to of needs, the primitivity of humans camped in close proximity.

Alternatively, some nights we leave to bike far out into the deep playa. As we pull away from the city, the endless neon lights and lasers from art camps shoot into the sky, polluting the stars (though we can still see them). My eyes adjust to the deep blackness and the dust and the desert stretches before me like the endless expanse of the sea floor. The wheels on the bikes whirl with lights as we find hidden art treasures such as Colorland, a multicolored interactive lights on canvas where we dance and make shadows; Awful's, a fake gas station where campers wait twenty minutes to "fill up" their bikes with gas; and a living room with floral couches and no walls where we sit and smoke for awhile.

On the last night, we watch the Man burn. Fire dancers begin the ritual, throwing sparks into the sky, turning with precision. I sit among strangers-turned-friends and watch as fireworks kiss the sky and an explosion brings down the Man (*more quickly than other years*, I am told.) We leave before the Temple burns. Some rituals stay, some do not.

There are no unique conclusions I can draw or morals I can come to, no way that I can make it any more coherent for those who come after me.

Stepping away from a digital community, the second-best replacement for constantly being with loved ones, allows one to work through an emotion entirely, to sit until it passes from the beginning to the end. Simply sitting, existing, and surviving (combined with the crash course in intimacy) is irreplaceable, primal, and healing—like telling stories around a fire as the ancient humans did.



Seen something? Say something!

It's your civic duty to write for The Intergalactic Observer. Scan the QR code to submit your idea for the next edition.

