

FUN UNDER THE SUN

EW'S GUIDE TO 2004 SUMMER EVENTS, FESTIVALS AND ACTIVITIES

Dig out the flip flops, the Chacos, the Tevas — summer's here! *EW's* Summer Guide 2004 has information about great ways to spend the season. As usual, the events listings give you a choice of something fun to do just about every day during the break.

(Please keep in mind festival line-ups are always subject to change.) We also have information about planning kids' activities, trekking out to a big gathering like the Burning Man festival, insight into the local club scene and a downtown outdoor film festival that will keep you busy right here at home. We wish you a long, lazy summer full of fun with family and friends. — *Bobbie Willis*



FEEL THE BURN

Eugene locals follow ritual of radical self-expression.

BY BOBBIE WILLIS

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JUST BEFORE LABOR DAY EVERY SUMMER,

in the middle of the desert on a dried lake bed called the playa, 120 miles from Reno, Nev., masses of people congregate in an experimental community of free self-expression. They come together around art and music, community and wild creativity, survival in the harsh physical environment of the desert and the playa. They build gigantic art pieces, mammoth play structures, massive sound systems out on the flat expanse of desert. They come together in what they call "radical self-expression." At the end of a week's time, this temporary, experimental community burns a 40-foot tall wooden effigy — the spiritual center of the community — and the burn marks both an ending and beginning for the ritual participants.

This is known by many as Burning Man, and since its conception by Larry Harvey and friend Jerry James on a San Francisco beach in 1986, it has grown from something shared by a small group of people to a 25,000-mem-

ber community that gathers and organizes toward the end of every summer on the playa at Black Rock Desert. Each person is greeted at the gates with the phrase, "Welcome home." For many, the salutation is appropriate, welcoming them back into something of a family they've created and named Black Rock City.

'BURNING MAN ALLOWS ME TO BE THE PERSON I WOULD LIKE TO BE, RATHER THAN WHAT MY JOB AND LIFE WANT ME TO BE.'

— MICHAEL BYRD

In that spirit of radical self-expression, these tens of thousands of people congregate and share every form of art and creativity — from massive sculptural installations in a wide range of media, to art cars, art bikes and wildly decorated bodies and faces. For a few weeks in late summer, this stretch of desert landscape is transformed, literally, into a whole other world.

For Eugene-based carpenter and local

Ginger Hustlers drummer Michael Byrd, this year marks his tenth return to the Burning Man world. He and his better half, Ilona, an eight-year Burning Man veteran herself, make the trip with the same group of friends each year (they no longer lobby too hard for newcomers, as the experience can be a little intense for the uninitiated). It's always a road

trip from Eugene to Black Rock City, with extensive planning and preparation in the summer months preceding. Living for a week in the harsh climate of the Nevada desert requires sufficient food, water and shelter for each person. Part of the Burning Man process for Byrd and Ilona is in the preparation and in the collaboration with their traveling partners and their camp neighbors at Black Rock City.

Byrd remembers his first Burning Man trip in 1994 as "amazing." "There was less organization back then," he says. "It was just random — the Man, sculptures here and there, people everywhere in costume. We instantly met all our camp neighbors, and I think our deepest connections were made early on. We still look forward to seeing those same people year after year." Byrd and Ilona even have what Ilona calls "Burning Man parents," an older couple they meet up with every year in Black Rock City.

In the time that he has gone to Burning Man, Byrd has seen the gathering grow from 2,000 people to nearly 30,000. "It changes things in a lot of ways," he says. "Just the scale is different. There's way more structure and more rules to accommodate the numbers of people. Around 1997 I noticed I was hearing stories about art and stuff that I had never even seen — the gathering was just starting to get too big for a person to see everything."

Black Rock City has gone from a random layout of camps to a very organized city of