Ticketing Demand Back to Normal

BY MITCH

Black Rock City ticket sales for 2013 were clearly a success, especially when judged against the world-class cluster of the previous year, funneling a record amount of cash into the Burning Man Organization’s unexpectedly anemic treasury.

Paradoxically, the proof that this year went well is that prices on secondary markets are higher than they were in 2012. Completed Internet auction sales in mid-August were running from the face value for most tickets of $380 (by those few souls who were playing fair) to the mid-$500s, with a single ticket at $600. Classified ad listings were in the same ballpark, with asking prices having come down by about $100 relative to the auction sales over the past month.

Prices are a little higher than they ought to be if people are selling at face value, but when you factor in shipping costs, the premium is not outrageous, especially not in the United States. Londoners seem to think it’s okay to just change the dollar into pounds. Some joker with a 626 area code listed two tickets for 450 euros ($600) each in Paris with an explanation that Burning Man is “one of the most famous music festivals in America.”

At the same juncture last year, auction prices had fallen below the $390 top tier, with some below $300. That indicates a mismatch in supply and demand, not necessarily in the $380 face value tier. The lack of anguish over tickets on the Internet indicates that everyone who really wanted to be in BRC made it.

This year, no such mismatch seems to have developed, and the lack of anguish boils down to the Internet indicating that everybody who really wanted to be in Black Rock City made it to Black Rock City. [Ed. Except those looking for tickets in Gerlach and Emery, and those convinced to turn around by the SOLD OUT sign immediately after turning onto 447.]

The comparison with last year isn’t exact because the three main tiers are gone, replaced with a single price of $380. If you were paying more attention to the parity than the slight of hand, you might have missed that the Bmorg is gulping down a lot more dough than in the past. It is possible to calculate ticket revenue more precisely now than before 2011 because the event has sold out. Along with details of low-priced ticket sales being released, the revenue data is now fairly accurate, unlike in past years, when you had to guess at ticket sales based on attendance and when discount purchases at the Gate were priced at unpublicized penalty rates.

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Last year’s budget of $22.1 million is not a whole lot less than this year’s revenue, though with population growth of about 3 percent, 2013 could be in the black. Still, a profit of $1 million a year would not be enough to allow the six owners of Black Rock City LLC, the corporate entity that owns Black Rock City, to cash out with what they — and even you — might consider adequate retirement packages and turn the company over to a not-for-profit organization anytime soon, as is their plan. (Or maybe not?; see the SFGate’s evaporated coverage of this issue at tinyurl.com//sfgate-mark.)

DPW Wants You(r Leftovers)

Can’t fit those last bits of food or bottles of liquor back in your car before you head home? First aid kit won’t fit back in the Temple burned?

Don’t leave that stuff in your camp to get blown to the trash crate. Some passing Burner isn’t going to take your stuff away. Instead, donate them to a group that could really use them — the hard-working folks at DPW and the Restoration crew, who will be cleaning up the mess you made for weeks to come. Anything that isn’t used this year will be saved for next year or donated to a worthy cause in Gerlach.

We contacted Fluffer Nips, who heads the Collexodus team — they sort through all the items Burners leave behind to find items DPW can use. You can make the team’s life easier by leaving them only these items. The Collexodus team makes it easy for you by placing donation bins on the Gate Road, right where the Greater stations were located on the way in. The Collexodus bins are the ONLY place to leave food or other donations for DPW.

What does DPW want? Think: ready-to-eat, single-serving and shelf-stable — the sort of thing that can survive on the Playa for several more weeks, and can be cooked and eaten without the need for a separate bowl. Bags of jerky, chips, salty nuts and mixes, dried fruit, sprout cheese, and ready to eat foods like foil pouch dinner and cup soup. Canned foods like fruit, vegetable, meat, fish, and sardines are also great.

Pack your rations and your perishable foods — there’s no chance for those at DWP.

DPW also wants liquid! Unopened containers of fruit juice, sodas, energy drinks and drink mixers are always welcomed, as are single-serving bottles of water. But if you really want some fans, drop off unopened containers of beer, whiskey, or other alcoholic beverages, as well as mixers.

Take your jugs of water and your shandy half-drunk unidentifiable bottles of liquor home with you. DPW isn’t that desperate.

Oversupplied on toiletries? DPW can always use items like lotion, soap, deodorant, toothpaste, UNUSED toothbrushes, shampoo, conditioners, UNUSED lip balm, sunscreen, and unopened baby wipes.

Looking to lighten your load a little further? DPW can also use duct tape, permanent markers, ziptop bags, garbage bags, goggles, sunglasses, lighters, plasticware, plastic bins, bandanas, medical tape, hydrogen peroxide, eye drops and other non-emergency medical supplies. Also, plenty of members of the crew will be glad to provide a home for your unopened packs of cigarettes.

Leave no trace, but gift a thoughtful donation to the DPW crew by depositing it into a Collexodus bin. Collexodus bins are well-signed on the way out as you enter the Gate Road.
IT MAY BE SHIT TO YOU, but it's bread and butter to him

Black Rock Beacon 9 2013

It had been over three years since I stepped out into the circus of burning. That was 77. He died of cancer this spring at home, in Berkeley Hills. He was 77.

This year Mrs. Lucky is writing a book. Last year's Burners produced a special edition of The Black Rock Beacon, but who wants one of those? This year Mrs. Lucky is writing a book. Last year's Burners produced a special edition of The Black Rock Beacon, but who wants one of those?

Almanac

Tuesday • August 27
Sunset: 7:26 p.m.
Twilight ends: 8:03 p.m.
Moonrise: 11:32 a.m.

Wednesday • August 28
This moon, which will reach its last-quarter phase at 2:36 a.m., will be in the sky all day.
First light: 5:52 a.m.
Sunrise: 6:29 a.m.

HOW I LOST MY BLINDERS

BY MRS. LUCKY

Les Blank didn’t dance, sing, or talk much. He shot film. He was finishing his Ph.D. at the University of Southern California on Easter Sunday in 1967 when he grabbed his 8 mm wind-up Bell and Howell and headed to Elysian Park for the Love-In. The folks in that 20 minute film look like burners. Men cavort in loincloths. Hennaed bellies look like burners. Men cavort in loincloths. Hennaed bellies look like burners.

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Les Blank could make staring seem interesting. “He had a knack for the iconographic,” says Les’ son Harrod, also a documentary filmmaker. Les first came to Burning Man in 1995 pitching in on his son’s project “He was the cameraman and I was the director. But he shot so much footage I couldn’t afford it. So I had him shoot b-roll instead.”

He did so for 15 years, often sleeping, making out, dancing. He watched for moments of ordinary human experience, people like everyone else. He died of cancer this spring at home, in Berkeley Hills. He was 77.

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Hugs are offered outside of the Lost Pampas Cafe. Horse blenders on, shields up, I stepped out into the circus of the Esplanade. It’s just what I wanted to use, the old defense. And there he was, calling for my attention. A man, not a carney, as beautiful as any art installation in the deep playa. “Hugs or chocolate?” he asked. I am a product of greed. I took both. He asked for nothing in return. My blenders melted off. Call me Decommodified. Free now to smile at a stranger. Free to walk the City with my own bag of tricks, gifts to share.