

Forcing Change



Celebrations for Transformation: From Burning Man to Tomorrowland and Beyond

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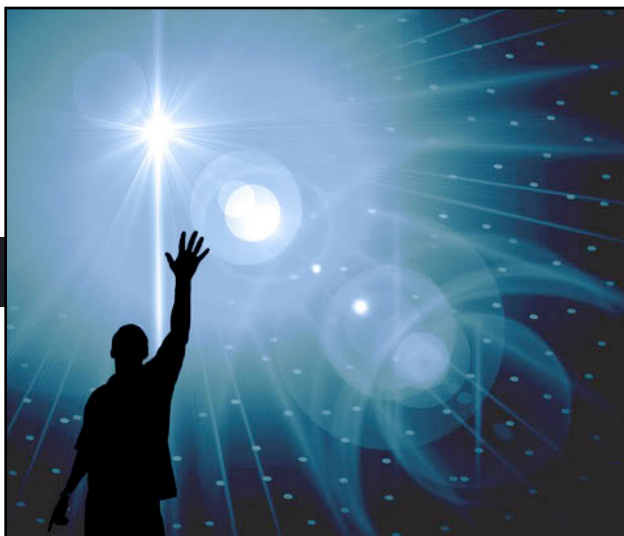
Note: This is an extremely important essay, outlining a massive and expansive trend that seeks to birth a new world of emergent spirituality and evolutionary change. This movement is festive and energizing, and its appeal is staggering as our anchorless, post-modern society seeks for meaning and reality.

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Carl Teichrib, Editor.

Research Note: Since starting *Forcing Change* in 2007, I have been wanting to write a report on this subject but desired to do so after attending one of the described events myself, thereby giving you a firsthand account. Alas, the resources for such an undertaking has never come together, but I believe the importance of this topic reflects the need to tackle it now. Although I haven't been able to attend, I am writing with some detail based on solid secondary knowledge, for I have watched this growing phenomena from a distance via on-site live streaming, talking with attendees, reviewing event footage and listening to lectures from and about these festivals, reading reports and essays, digging into the history of the movement, and interacting with participants inside Second Life (SL is a virtual world).

Once a year, for the period of one week, a city rises out of the choking dust and blistering heat of the Black Rock Desert in northern Nevada. Yes, it's a real community – laid out in a massive “C” configuration with concentric and radial streets, a temporary airstrip, medical facilities, and its own FM radio station. And it's not small. This year, approximately 68,000 people converged in this inhospitable environment; living in tents and motor homes, bringing their own food and water, and engaging with each other on a multitude of experiential levels. Then, after the week ends, the city disappears and the empty desert returns.

Welcome to Black Rock City, the home of Burning Man. Welcome to an international phenomena speaking to global evolutionary transformation.

Around the world a culture of transformative celebration is bursting forth. Events like Burning Man – the reason Black Rock City comes to life each year – provide an intensive combination of interactive art, music and dance, immersive community living, radical inclusiveness, and ritualistic group experiences. Sacred spaces are formed, spirituality is explored, and collective participation in ecstatic activities reinforces feelings of connection and cosmic awareness. These events are festivals for evolutionary revolution, and they represent the new and emergent cultural shift now taking place, becoming both the engine of change and the outcome.

An aerial view of Black Rock City. In the center of the “C” is the Burning Man effigy. This year was record breaking in terms participant numbers.



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Unknown to the majority of Christians, there is a *massive* and growing global movement that's actively seeking to create a new reality – an emerging cultural-spiritual-techno framework that, through shared group experiences, considers itself as a viable and meaningful counter to the exclusivity of traditional dogmas and doctrines. This movement is expansive, with over 90 festivals in 2012 and new ones added annually. Some are small with only a few hundred attending, many others host thousands, and some see tens of thousands. Sziget, a type of crossover festival in Budapest, regularly has numbers just shy of 400,000. Moreover, this phenomena is geographically diverse; although a large percentage of events are found in the western half of North America, this loosely defined “transformative festival” movement can be observed on every continent. And the colorful and exotic communities that form within many of these festivals are appealing to the multitudes now adrift in postmodernism; *we are creating a New World, and you are invited to participate*. Conservative Christians, however, are often unprepared to engage this trend.

Why are we unprepared? For the most part we don't even know this culture exists, for if I mention Burning Man, BOOM, Lightning-in-a-Bottle, Rainbow Serpent, OZORA or TomorrowLand, what comes to mind? The purpose of this article, therefore, is to open your eyes to a formerly underground or sideline movement that's now exploding as a trend-setting social experiment, cultural rallying-point, and an engine for evolutionary spirituality.

Along the way we'll briefly list and explore some of these festivals – celebrations for transformation – giving you a heads-up to something now poised to move from the fringes into mainstream. At the same time, it must be noted that a few of these events are mainstream already: Burning Man and TomorrowLand, representing two very different approaches, are both recognized entities. Burning Man draws tens of thousands of participants from all walks of life, including corporate CEOs and Hollywood personalities, and has inspired burn communities and other similar festivals around the world. TomorrowLand, the super-bowl of dance, had over *2 million people* jockeying for the 180,000 available tickets for this year's gathering. When ticket sales opened, the event was sold out in seconds (reportedly at *one second* – making this the fast sellout event of this size in history).

Criteria for Transformation

“Transformational festivals,” a term used by sound artist Jeet-Kei Leung during his 2010 Tedx talk in Vancouver BC,¹ are noted for their energy, atmosphere, and diversity. Here you will find sweeping artistic and spiritual expressions, various lifestyle choices and sexual identifiers, and personal associations with all types of thematic groups. Wiccans and New Agers and partygoers and ravers and artists and the just curious: all intermingling under the banner of radical tolerance.

However, amidst the diversity, core commonalities are evident. Techno-music and ecstatic dance is one similarity. Other common features include the interaction with emergent spiritual pursuits – yoga and other activities to awaken one’s consciousness, collaborative and visionary art, a proliferation of esoteric symbolism, workshops and lectures, altars and sacred spaces, group dynamics (“no one is an observer”), the cooperative building of “community,” and deep-rooted inclusiveness. A few events have notable differences, but the primary theme of transformation – cultural, spiritual, social – remains as the dominant paradigm.

As Jeet-Kei, one of the most vocal proponents of this movement, explained in his first episode of *The Bloom*, a documentary series on transformative festivals,

“It may seem hard to believe that electronic dance music culture has now been around twenty five years. And it continues to thrive to this day. The emerging culture of transformational festivals builds around electronic music’s core ritual of ecstatic dance to incorporate visionary art and performance, workshop curriculums in a spectrum of new paradigm subjects, the creation and honoring of sacred space and ceremony, and a thriving social economy of artisans and vendors.”²

It also must be noted that Jeet-Kei defines a transformational festival using the following criteria,

- “Co-Creation of an Immersive, Participant-Driven Reality.”
- “Ecstatic Core Ritual provided through Electronic Dance Music.”
- “Visionary Art and Performance (also Art Installations, Live Art).”
- “Workshop Curriculum covering spectrum of New Paradigm subjects.”
- “Creation and Honoring of Sacred Space, Ceremony and Ritual.”
- “Social Economy of Artisans and Vendors (or, Alternative Gift Economy).”
- “Takes place in a Natural, Outdoor setting (Honoring of the Earth).”
- “Occurs over multiple (typically 3-7) days.”³

The above criterion provides a basic model, albeit with some room to maneuver. That said, Jeet-Kei offers another important characteristic: “Conscious Intention to Support Personal and Social Transformation.” This, I would suggest, is the framework upon which all-else hangs.

Jeet-Kei speaking at the Tedx Vancouver event in 2010.



Full Spectrum Experience

“Everywhere you look, everywhere around you, is the experience.”⁴

The above statement reflects the reality of transformational festivals. In this environment, everything becomes relevant to the task of full spectrum change: community, education, art, landscape, and music.

The role of community in shaping the experiential process and subsequent worldview shift is critical. Often expressed as “organic community,” this thematic gathering is where visionary idealism meets with social interaction, providing the context through which transformation is encountered. And it’s not abstract: Attendees create tangible communes. Theme camps, tribes, and micro-communities form within the larger festival “village,” and in the case of Burning Man, an entire city is created. Economic and political structures exist too. For example, money as a medium of exchange is discouraged, replaced by a system of “gifting” – the bartering of goods, free giving and “sweat equity.” It’s a unique way of economically functioning, and it inspires people to socialize instead of commercialize. Politics arises too as camps and tribes are encouraged to use cooperative decision-making processes and consensus building.

Education is another common feature with workshops and seminars taking place. You can attend classes on environmental issues and green living, feminine mysticism, artistic skills development, storytelling, Native spirituality and shamanism, costuming and fashion design, yoga, team building, alternative economics, health and healing, sacred sex – the list is long. The bottom line is that these festivals are more than just a place for celebration and social interaction, but empowerment through learning.

Transformational festivals are also places for artistic release. Painters, sculptures, builders, and choreographers both create and display their expressions, holding-out visions for how mind, spirit, and matter interact. Jeet-Kei provides some insight, “...visionary arts seems to have as its unifying focus the mission of making tangible on canvas – and other mediums – an awareness of our multidimensional reality and the divine nature of our human experience.”⁵

As visionary artist Alex Grey explains,

“This visionary reality is now being portrayed by visionary artists who have been trained in the Western tradition so that they can create a kind of sense of spatiality in the way that our minds understand a pictorial space, and they also are familiar with the cross-cultural, sort of mapping of psychedelic, or visionary-mystical reality.”⁶

According to artist Autumn Skye Morrison, these unique creative encounters allow participants to “rise into their divinity.”⁷

Continuing on the art theme, music and dance hold a special place in these festivals. In fact, the element of music and dance – primarily EDM (Electronic Dance Music) – is central to the global phenomena. Placed in this intentional social/spiritual context, EDM or “trance” becomes a vehicle to move individuals into an ecstatic state of mind and apparent connectivity. Organizers, producers, and sound artists alike recognize this unifying function, one

that transcends faith and ideology, sexual orientation, and ethnicity and nationality. At the 2012 BOOM, a festival in Portugal, one EDM stage lighting technician described it this way,

“...you have this musician that’s kind of like, some sort of neo-contemporary type of magician or wizard that has this sound that unifies all the people. And the trance is very good at getting everyone into the same rhythm, and so I try to put the intention into my visuals to enhance the spell of the music producer to create even a more cohesive experience. So part of the technology of the main dance floor is to create almost a machine that helps people let go of themselves and surrender to this experience they’re having – and the more collective that experience can be, the more they’ll let go of their individuality, and can enjoin into the collective we-are-all-one that is part of the BOOM mantra.”⁸

Sound artist and producer Jeet-Kei gives us some background on why EDM fits so well in the festival scene,

“When rave culture birthed out of electronic dance music, what this represented through a new generation... was nothing less than the full return of the ecstatic tradition into Western culture. And whereas Rock [music] had retained the idolatry of the band as quasi-religious spectacle, rave tended to emphasize the communal and participatory nature of the dance-trance ritual... this is the oldest way of being, used for spiritual and shamanic purposes, among countless cultures for time immemorial. Some suggest, perhaps, the roots of religion itself.”⁹

Finally, the physical landscape plays a role. Transformational festivals are typically found in natural settings; deserts, forests, shores and beaches, and rural or park-like surroundings. Some, like TomorrowLand, create vast and detailed artificial constructs around natural features such as lakes and woods in the attempt to instill a mythic-like quality. In each case, the intent is to develop a sense of mystical expansiveness: Oneness with the Earth, a feeling of connection, and the anticipation of primordial awakening.

Jeet-Kei explains that a contextual history exists in the EDM-wilderness experience with the early days of “full moon” rave parties in the Mojave Desert and British Columbia’s breathtaking Elaho Valley. This, he noted, caught the attention of others.

“Wiccan, Pagan, New Age and eco-feminist influences saw us intuitively timing our gatherings with the full moons, the solstices – honoring them with some kind of ritual; opening circles, closing circles. In this way, there was a re-alignment with natural and cosmic cycles. A tuning-in with the Mother; a re-connection and restoring of a relationship full of honour.”¹⁰

And in this wilderness-dance experience, he emphasized, “We had stumbled back upon the most ancient of tribal rituals.”

“So Overwhelming and So Powerful”

Transformational festivals are more than just dance and art and community. At the personal level, the experiential results are often described in ways that mirror the language of highly charged religious encounters – of having an awakening.

Chicken John, an event promoter, talks about his early Burning Man experience as “simply the most extraordinary spiritual and political and cultural thing that has ever happened to me, and... of course, it completely affected the rest of my life.”¹¹

Jesse Flemming, the producer of the California-based Lightning-in-a-Bottle festival, credits his Burning Man visit; “The experience of Burning Man was just so overwhelming and so powerful, that it literally sent my life on a 90 degree turn from the direction it was heading, and I never looked back.”¹²

An attendee of OZORA, a major trance-festival in Hungary, put it this way; “Having the trance experience changes your life forever... I don’t think there’s any way you can see the world the same after you’ve been through that experience.”¹³

One sound-performer at the Envision Festival said, “It’s like if you go to church [motioning to the stage] and then you’re sitting here and you’re watching the minister... we’re all coming to listen to the transmissions of the different people... whether it’s music or the speakers, trying to see something, learn something, find something – connect.”¹⁴

Festival producer Debra Giusti describes it like this,

“These festivals are really doorways to open a whole life altering change, and that leaves a real open door for the person, maybe, who likes this music act and they come for the music act, and then they find a whole another world of spirituality or health that they kind of heard about, but they never knew. And then it takes them into a whole another journey in life that they never expected.”¹⁵

Jeet-Kei picks up on this spiritual aspect,

“No less profound is this emergence of a new type of spiritual culture in these festivals; A spiritual culture completely uninterested in charismatic leaders, dogmas, or doctrine – where ritual does not require that we surrender our autonomy as critical thinking individuals, but instead arises as the shared acknowledgment and honoring of our sacred experience together.”¹⁶

And here we need to realize that this personal transformation reflects a deeper collective desire as encountered within these festivals – a global connectivity through unity-in-spirit.

“In invoking the sacred together, spirit answers and uplifts all of us. You can feel the joy sweeping through the assembled circle, the love being magnified – that exquisite, overflowing love that brings us to tears. And in the prayer-performances [group rituals that invoke a prayer atmosphere] and the share-emonies [ceremonies for group sharing], we are infusing sacred conscious-

ness with new creative juice. In a global culture, we are aware of the many faces and practices of worship, and strands of these practices and prayers are woven from many traditions as equal devotions to the Divine.”¹⁷

Although transformational festivals are practically off-the-radar in terms of the Christian community’s awareness, they nevertheless play an important part in shaping our new post-modern culture. “We integrate that experience into our cultural body of knowledge,” explained Jeet-Kei.¹⁸

This is why we need to be attentive to the movement: It represents the knife-edge of a social and spiritual shift, one that resonates with post baby-boom generations. And already this movement is influential. It feeds into the field of information technologies, the cultural acceptance of radical lifestyles choices, and modern art and social expression. It also forms an indirect roadmap into emergent Christian cultures – the emphasis on an experiential spirituality, organic community, and the pushback against exclusive truth claims.

If anything, transformational festivals demonstrate the fact that we are on the cusp of a worldview shift, one that bridges the past with the future, spirituality with technology, and the forming of new ecstatic religious experience as traditional dogmas and doctrines are rejected. Consider the words of Jeet-Kei as he expands on the primordial nature wrapped into these celebrations, and how it transfers into tomorrow.

“And as much as this is the reinvigoration of a timeless lineage, this is also a future culture. This is the counter-culture of the internet, of the web 2.0 generation. And rather than being Luddite back-to-the-landers, we are early adopters of technology: electronic music is a type of digital art. There have always been lots of techies, web developers, digital media artists in [this] culture. So at the same time we see this tribal, ancient, mythic meme moving through, we also have this sci-fi, galactic, techno meme happening at the same time. So: An ancient future culture.”¹⁹

As one BOOM participant said, “It creates a vision of the future. A [festival] space like this allows one to see the vision of the future - the heart of humanity beating as one...”²⁰ Jeet-Kei described it as “Future Now” – “it’s not just the idea of ‘the world we want to live in,’ it’s the actual experience...”²¹

Dance Temple at the BOOM Festival. Approximately 25,000 people from around the world attend this event in Portugal.



Welcome to the New World

In this section I want to introduce you to a few “transformative festivals.” Some basic data is provided for each listing, helping you to better grasp the nature of this movement and its particulars. Keep in mind: this is only a small taste of the total number of events (Note: this listing follows no particular order).

Burning Man

Where: Black Rock Desert, Northern Nevada.

When: Last Monday of August to first Monday of Sept.

First Started: 1986.

Attendance: 68,000 this year.

Comments: Burning Man is the standard bearer of transformational events – a place of experimental art, bohemian living (lots of nudity), workshops and lectures, music and dance, and everywhere “organic community” in action. On the last Saturday, the city gathers to party as a 40+ foot tall human effigy is burned to the ground. On the last Sunday, the city gathers to silently watch the razing of the temple – a sacred place where people, during the week, leave notes and items that reflect individual struggles, grief, joy, spiritual healing and awakening.



Burning Man is a massive cultural trendsetter, and has often been described as “the Petri dish of postmodernism.” Burning Man has also been the inspiration for other transformative festivals, has birthed a global “burn” community, and stimulated the creation of other “burner” events around the world. These regional and national burn festivals range in size from a few hundred participants to many thousands. Today, Burns happen in at least 24 US states – with some holding multiple events – and in four Canadian provinces. South Africa too has a Burn, attracting over 7000 to the isolated Stonehenge Farm near Tankwa Karoo National Park. Other countries with Burns include Sweden, Japan, Spain, Israel, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and Ireland.

Burning Man (photo above) and the Black Rock City Temple of Transition from the 2011 Burn (right). This massive temple structure, like the Man, was ritually razed.



TomorrowLand

Where: Boon, Belgium and as of September 2013, Chattahoochee Hills, Georgia, USA.

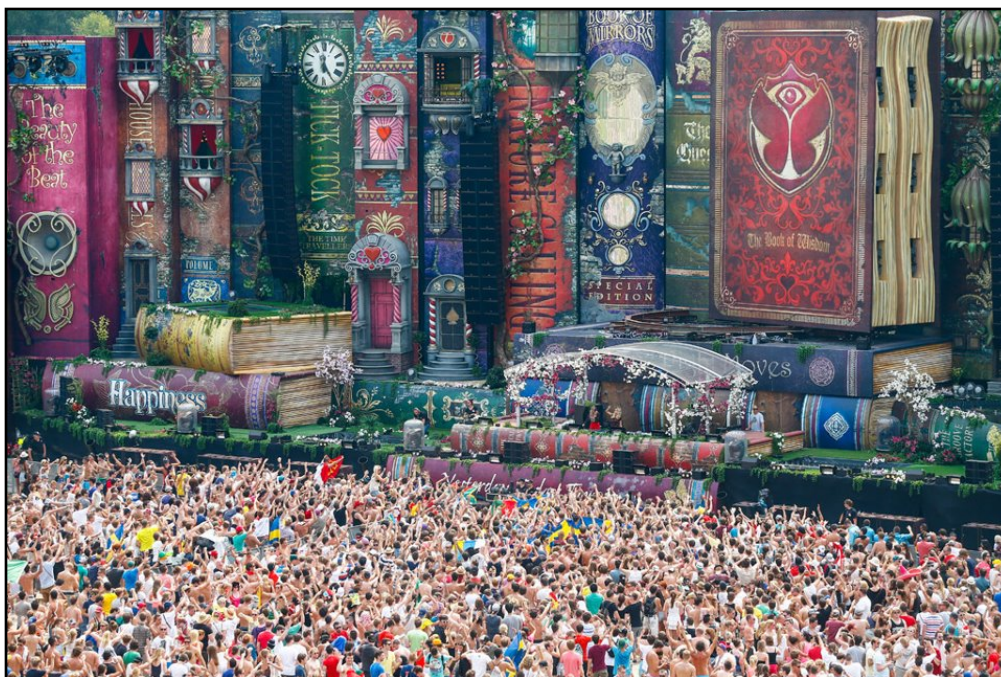
When: The Boon event takes place in July.

First Started: 2005.

Attendance: 180,000.

Comments: This is the world's premier electronic music festival, and it has a larger national representation than the Olympics. Although it doesn't cater to participatory art or sacred space, the event is constructed around a transformational theme and a magical-alchemical story setting, one brought to life through surreal stage sets and what has been described as "phantasmagorical decorations." For 2013 the storyline centered on a "brilliant scientist" who lives upon a mountaintop; "A few days ago he made a remarkable discovery," the promotional trailer explains. "The stars will soon be perfectly aligned to make the next step in the evolution of our consciousness. Join him on this journey to a new dimension... unite, and bring to light, the tale that will be written at TomorrowLand."²²

Besides the multiple thematic stages and elaborate design work that brings a unique atmosphere to the event, TomorrowLand has its own "city" – DreamVille – comprised of 35,000 campers. Here, if you want, you can upgrade to stay at a DreamVille "Mansion" with your own private garden, jacuzzi, and butler service. DreamVille has a village marketplace, community centers, and a massive warm-up party called "The Gathering." Other attractions include fairground rides and the Church of Love, a small chapel with a bed, presided over by two scantily dressed "Nuns" who rent out the space for ten minutes – complete with a complimentary condom.



This is an actual picture of one of the TomorrowLand thematic stages with the dance crowd below.

Rainbow Serpent

Where: Lexton, Western Victoria, Australia.

When: Australia Day, January.

First Started: 1997.

Attendance: 10,000 plus.

Comments: Rainbow Serpent fits all the descriptive criteria of a transformational festival, and has been considered one of the most colorful and dynamic events of its type in the Southern Hemisphere.

Wanderlust

Where: Festival locations in the Western Hemisphere (for 2013: Chillan, Chile; Bondville, Vermont; Copper, Colorado; North Lake Tahoe, California; Whistler, British Columbia; Mont-Tremblant, Quebec; Austin, Texas).

When: Dates vary due to multiple locations.

First Started: 2009.

Attendance: Varies by location.

Comments: This is a young and growing festival with a dedicated yoga-Hindu focus. Music and dance, cinema, and lectures are included. Another feature of Wanderlust is the attention to outdoor experiences; hiking, yoga stations set in natural vistas, rock climbing, downhill mountain bike runs, etc.

Glastonbury Festival

Where: Near Glastonbury, England.

When: Last weekend in June.

First Started: 1970.

Attendance: 135,000.

Comments: Started by a farmer who was inspired by attending an outdoor concert, and held at Worthy Farm, the Glastonbury event (originally called the Pilton Festival) is noted for its incredible size, the diversity of music and the super-bands/musicians who have performed (Rolling Stones, U2, Bruce Springsteen, Kylie Minogue, etc). Over the years it has expanded beyond the music experience, moving it into the transformational festival scene with art and theater, spiritual encounters, workshops, and tribal reconnections to the earth. Even the music staging has shifted from primarily conventional platforms to overwhelmingly immersive and interactive performance sets. For all practical purposes, Glastonbury has become a city in its own fashion with multiple staging areas, villages, micro-communities, carnival attractions, and thematic spaces.

The Glastonbury Festival encompasses 900 acres and has an 8.5-mile perimeter.

Lightning In A Bottle (LIB)

Where: Locations in Southern California.

When: May.

First Started: 2000.

Attendance: 15,000.

Comments: LIB is a magical-like celebration of art, music, green living, and community. Its art installations and “live painting” are drawing cards for many, and the vibrancy of its color and light installations are renowned. LIB is also recognized for its spiritual dimension; yoga, healing and meditation classes, and “devotional music.” Much of this spiritual aspect is found at the LIB Lucent Temple of Consciousness, a “sacred-space” where participants can “expand your mind and explore science, playfulness, and the inner and outer reaches of spirituality.”

Sziget Festival

Where: Budapest, Hungary.

When: August.

First Started: 1993.

Attendance: 362,000 in 2013. The highest year was 2009 (390,000).

Comments: Located on the Old Buda Island in the Danube River, in the heart of Budapest, Sziget is non-stop weeklong music and cultural festival. Unlike other transformational events with an EDM-only focus, Sziget gives the spotlight to a variety of musical styles, including pop/rock, heavy metal, jazz, blues, folk, Reggae, world music, and of course, lots of EDM/trance. How big is this event? In seven day, 1000 performances will have taken place on 60 stages.

Started in 1993 as a student musical festival, this event has exploded into a cultural montage of sounds, sights, and experiences. Theaters (including vaudeville), circus acts, visual performances, carnival rides, fantasy sets and thematic attractions, yoga and tai chi, workshops, cultural pavilions, gaming and sporting activities, and an area to interact with civil society groups and European Union representative are all part of the festival landscape.

Sziget has been called “Europe’s biggest festival” and “Paradise City,” and has been described as a European alternative to Burning Man – a unifying experience outside of normal reality.



BOOM

Where: Idanha-a-Nova, Portugal.

When: July/August full moon, every second year.

First Started: 1997.

Attendance: 25,000.

Comments: Around the clock trance-EDM is the core of BOOM, and the stages are built around evolutionary and alchemical themes. Sacred spaces, sustainable living, art displays meant to convey new realities, and deep community interaction are part of the BOOM experience. The event has been dubbed a Mecca-like encounter and has a reputation for its tribal atmosphere. BOOM has also developed a global network of ambassadors who raise event awareness in other parts of the world, and act as a liaison between the festival and “Boomers.”

OZORA

Where: Near the village of Ozora, Hungary.

When: Usually early August

First Started: 1999, during the total eclipse of the Sun.

Attendance: 24,000.

Comments: OZORA, like BOOM, is a trance festival built around EDM. And like other transformational events there are interactions on a multitude of levels – dance and interactive stage sets, art exhibitions, circus workshops (professional circus performers are brought in to teach juggling, trapeze, etc), a fire performance arena, a “wisdom wheel,” and a marketplace/bazaar for artisans. Community too plays an important part in the experience, and the event is considered a “psychedelic tribal gathering.” A new age, a new world, and a new reality: this is the OZORA experience.



So many other similar festivals exist; Three Days of Light (North Carolina), Symbiosis (Nevada), Luminare (New Zealand), Ascendance (Mexico), Rootwire (Ohio), Lucidity (California), Inshala (Alberta), Transformus (New Jersey), Open Mind (Quebec), Fusion (Germany), Envision (Costa Rica), and Universo Paralello (Brazil), to name but a few.

As stated before, this is a growing and *global* movement – an “ancient future” paradigm for a postmodern world seeking spirituality while rejecting “religion.”

Response

To formulate a detailed response in this article is unrealistic. The point of this essay, as inferred earlier, is to inform you about this movement and the worldview it represents. In other words, it's meant to give you a starting line.

A few points, however, need to be raised if we are to consider a response.

First: transformational festivals represent an undeniable paradigm change in the Western world. This is a switch from the Biblical framework – its exclusive truth claims, sin and repentance, and moral guidance grounded on God's laws – to inclusive perspectives based on radical tolerance, moral relativism, and cultural subjectivism.

Second: it represents an intentional rejection of cultural and religious judgmental attitudes. Acceptance is the name of the game. And yet, for the handful of Christians who have purposely interacted with this movement, they have often found it bitingly intolerant of anything outside of the festival's accepted norm.

Third: this is a rejection of "organized religion," typically referring to any form of Christian church life. Organized religion is replaced with organic community – spirituality is in, organized religion is out.

Fourth: transformational festivals demonstrate a cultural yearning for a more meaningful, colorful, and exciting way of being. Sadly, the Western world is now a place where neighbors are strangers, families are often splintered, where commercialism and materialism have enslaved us, bureaucracy rules the day and risk aversion stifles creativity, and where the grind of existence dulls the soul. These celebratory events, on the other hand, offer a reprieve and alternative reality.

Noting the above helps us to recognize the situation. However, in contemplating a Biblical response, I would suggest a model exists for us to consider: Acts 17:16-34 (see page 17). Here, the Apostle Paul is in Athens, a city known for its culture, philosophical explorations, diverse spirituality and unabashed paganism. When reading this account, take note that he understood, acknowledged, and even *leveraged* the Athenian worldview. By doing this, the door opened for him to make the case for the true God, the nature of existence, repentance, Jesus Christ, and judgment. Some who heard laughed, others wanted to hear more, and a few believed.

I would also recommend looking at how Jesus Christ responded to the woman at the well in John 4:4-26 (see page 18). Here, Jesus interacts with someone outside the accepted cultural norm – a Samaritan woman in her environment. How he connects and communicates in this setting is very telling.

Paul E. Little, in his classic on evangelism, *How To Give Away Your Faith*, outlines some basic principles Jesus used; Contact, common interest, arousing curiosity, restraint, don't condemn, staying with the main issue, and confronting directly.²³

1) Social contact – connecting with others: This seems obvious, but for many Christians the tendency is to surround oneself in a Christianize cultural cocoon, like a safety blanket. Connecting with others in a meaningful way almost always means stepping into their world, entering into their comfort zone. This is not to say we all need to run to Burning Man. It is,

however, recognition that if we are going to respond to the transformational festival movement, we will have to interact with those who embrace this new culture.

2) Note a common interest. The well and water were the common interests in John 4. As Christians we tend to overlook these types of routine details, but the lesson cannot be ignored, for the reality of this principle is that it opens a two-way conversation. Common interests act as reference points that enable us to formulae a meaningful encounter. Remember, this was the starting point Jesus used to initiate a conversation.

3) Arousing curiosity. In examining John 4:9-14, Paul Little writes, “It is fascinating to see this woman’s curiosity kindled and beginning to burn as our Lord draws her along. First, He came to her where she was. Second, He showed an interest in her concerns. Now, He is using His actions and His words to arouse a positive response to Himself and His message of truth.”²⁴

4) Restraint, or “Don’t go too far.” Jesus Himself held back on giving the woman “the whole story” all at once. When she was ready, Jesus told more, and when the time was ripe, Jesus revealed Himself to her.

5) Don’t condemn. Paul Little reminds us, “In the fifth principle we see that our Lord did not condemn the woman. As she answered Him about her husband, her sin itself condemned her.”²⁵ Something similar also happens in John 8:11 with the woman caught in adultery.

6) Stick with the main issue. The woman in John 4 asked about *where* to properly worship. Jesus, however, steers the conversation back to what’s important, moving the talk toward a finalizing revelation – He is the Messiah.

7) Confronting directly. In verse 26 we see Jesus making a direct truth claim that the woman now has to accept or reject. If Jesus Christ is indeed the Messiah, then like the woman at the well, we too must respond one way or another. Jesus Himself didn’t hide the end goal of the conversation when it arrived, but declared it fully.

The above examples of Jesus and Paul provide us with a framework upon which to operate as we interact with our post-modern, spiritually-seeking culture. No doubt as you study Scripture and contemplate the rise of transformational festivals, other Biblical response points and considerations will become evident. And now that you know this trend of evolutionary culture exists and is rising, you will begin to see where it intersects with and impacts upon our shifting society.

In conclusion, it is my hope that this essay will open your eyes to the social, spiritual, and cultural change the Western world is experiencing, and that you will recognize and begin to think through the broader implications – including possible responses and lessons to be learned. **FC**

Carl Teichrib is the producer and editor of *Forcing Change* (www.forcingchange.org), a monthly publication dedicated to documenting and detailing our changing global reality.

Endnotes:

- ¹ Jeet-Kei Leung, "Transformational Festivals," TedxVancouver, Vancouver BC, November 27, 2010. The video of this talk can be accessed through www.ted.com/tedx/events/947.
- ² *The Bloom: A Journey Through Transformational Festivals, Episode 1 – Fundamental Frequencies* (Directed and produced by Jeet-Kei Leung, in association with Elevate Films, Keyframe Entertainment, Multi Music, and Grounded TV; Released March 21, 2013).
- ³ Jeet-Kei Leung, "Guidelines for Inclusion on Transformational Festivals Map, January 20, 2013 (<http://thebloomseries.com/guidelines-for-inclusion-transformational-festivals-map>).
- ⁴ *The Bloom: A Journey Through Transformational Festivals, Episode 1 – Fundamental Frequencies*, interview with DJ and Stage Manager, Martin Dragonfly.
- ⁵ See *The Bloom: Vessels of the Divine – Spotlight on Visionary Art* (Directed and produced by Jeet-Kei Leung).
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ See the video documentary, *Boom Festival 2012: The Alchemy of Spirit, Part 1*.
- ⁹ Jeet-Kei Leung, "Transformational Festivals," Tedx Talk, Vancouver BC, 2010.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ See the documentary, *Dust and Illusions: 30 Years of Burning Man History* (Madnomad Films, 2009).
- ¹² See, *The Bloom, Episode 1*.
- ¹³ OZORA Festival 2012 Official Video (Produced by O.Z.O.R.A Festival, with Attila Nikleczy as Producer, 2012).
- ¹⁴ *The Bloom: A Journey Through Transformational Festivals, Episode 2 – Practicing the New World* (Directed and produced by Jeet-Kei Leung, in association with Elevate Films, Keyframe Entertainment, Multi Music, and Grounded TV; Released May 21, 2013).
- ¹⁵ See, *The Bloom, Episode 1*.
- ¹⁶ Jeet-Kei Leung, "Transformative Festivals," Tedx Talk, Vancouver BC, 2010.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Interview with Jeet-Kei Leung by Saphir Lewis. *The 2013 Festival Guide: Gatherings for Cultural Transformation*, Issue No.1, p.15.
- ¹⁹ Jeet-Kei Leung, "Transformative Festivals," Tedx Talk, Vancouver BC, 2010.
- ²⁰ See the video documentary, *Boom Festival 2012: The Alchemy of Spirit, Part 1*.
- ²¹ Interview with Jeet-Kei Leung by Saphir Lewis. *The 2013 Festival Guide: Gatherings for Cultural Transformation*, Issue No.1, p.15.
- ²² TomorrowLand 2013 Introduction Trailer. TomorrowLand *YouTube* Channel.
- ²³ Paul E. Little, *How To Give Away Your Faith* (InterVarsity Press, 1966), pp.26-45.
- ²⁴ Ibid., p.34.
- ²⁵ Ibid., p.41.

Acts 17:16-32

Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the *Gentile* worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there. Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, “What does this babbler want to say?”

Others said, “He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods,” because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.

And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new doctrine *is* of which you speak? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean.” For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription:

TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: “God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’

Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising. Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”

And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, “We will hear you again on this *matter*.”

Jesus at the Well - John 4:4-26

⁴ But He [Jesus] needed to go through Samaria.

⁵ So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ⁶ Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from *His* journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

⁷ A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." ⁸ For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

⁹ Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

¹¹ The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? ¹² Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?"

¹³ Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

¹⁵ The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."

¹⁷ The woman answered and said, "I have no husband."

Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly."

¹⁹ The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you *Jews* say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."

²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. ²² You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴ God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

²⁵ The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things."

²⁶ Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am *He*."

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