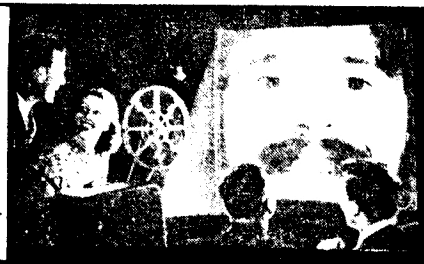


# THE FAN DANGO

## BILLY CURMANO FAN CLUB NEWS

"As American as Apple Pie, But Better for You!"



Vol. 21

2000

## THE BLOCKED APOCALYPSE ISSUE

### APOCALYPSE BLOCKED

That's right folks! We're pleased to say Billy and the Apocalypse Blockers were able to put the end-of-the-world on hold with the big Death Valley 40 day performance art fast. Look for details in the *Desert Classic* article, but suffice to say anyone that didn't send project support, money, prayers etc. **owes us big time.**

We still stand by the predictions listed in last issue's "Handy Apocalypse Guide". They've just been postponed indefinitely. Here's a tip. The first week predicted the social, political and economic collapse of the USA and was followed by stuff like extraterrestrials going public on TV, Hitler rising from the dead and the entire island of Japan bursting into flames. If you happen to notice any of these events, or others from our guide, say your prayers, the apocalypse is probably back on.

### CALENDAR

Online anytime: *Swimmin' the Mississippi*  
[www.franklinfurnace.org](http://www.franklinfurnace.org) History of the Future Series  
 Click on: Fall 1999 Season then on Billy X. Curmano.

**April 1: All Fools Pizza Party Concert**, with the New X Art Ensemble and the Amazing Tess Toster Tones, Godfathers, Walnut @ Levee, Winona, MN, 8 pm.

**April 13-May 14: 2nd International Mail Art Biennial**, Group Exhibition, Art Building, Bodenburg Castle, Bodenburg, Germany

**May 1-30: Artist-Banknote-Works**, Group Exhibition, Museum of Modern Art, Nordstrasse 31, Weddel, Germany.

**June 17-Sept. 10, 2000: 41st Midwestern Invitational Exhibition**, Group Exhibition, The Rourke Art Museum, 521 Main Ave., Moorhead, MN 218.236.8861

**Jan 19-Feb 17, 2001: Natural Histories**; (Group Exhibition) Cleveland State University Art Gallery, 2307 Chester Ave.; Cleveland, OH.

### DEATH VALLEY DESERT CLASSIC

12/12/1999 - 1/20/2000

From *Swimming the Mississippi* and its abundance of water to the absence of water in the desert, Billy's search for the spiritual in art continues. He greeted the millennium with a 40 day juice and water only performance art fast at Texas Springs, Death Valley, CA.

### Welcome to the Ministry of Art

Sex and drugs and rock n'roll have there place, but I've grown weary of the arts and a culture that, too often, sells out and strives for the lowest common denominator. Don't get me wrong, I'm as hedonistic as my cat and haven't put Mr. Penis out to pasture. I just expect more from art. I've been searching for that undefineable quality, the spiritual in art.

The fast began in L.A. just before midnight Dec. 11. Project coordinator Sant Kaur and I traveled to Texas Springs, Death Valley the next day where we met Dr. Dave and Tom Christenson. It's a long drive and I was hungry. We set up camp. What would be temporary shelter for the support team, became my home in the desert for the next 40 days. We had to work quickly that first day, before losing the sun. Tom took the lens and became camera operator for a week.

During my journey, I planned to search out and capture a singular moment from each day that would represent the spiritual in art. The moments would tie together and reduce 40 days to 40 minutes and survive beyond the desert in an unedited video, *Death Valley Desert Classic*.

Much of my time was spent in solitude, but I was joined by an ever-changing cast of characters as the weeks drew on. The interactions were very much a part of this work, so much so, I decided to credit the "Death Valley Collective" as assistant producers, directors, players and camera operators. They are:

Mina Bellavia, Dave & Tom Christenson, Jim Degnan, Tony Greensward, Pete Hansen, D.L. & Gene

Hunt, Sant Kaur Khalsa, Scott Miller, Kenneth Patrick Payne, Bill Russell, Steve Smith and The New X Art Ensemble with the Amazing Tess Toster Tones.

The video remained unscripted, an improvisation, open to physical, emotional and spiritual changes brought on by the fast, the environment and the times.

Death Valley's extreme and sparse landscape offered romance, spirituality and magic. A valley floor with the lowest, driest and hottest point in the western hemisphere (282 feet below sea level) rising rapidly to snow capped mountain ranges with cold and diverse ecosystems and everything in between. The highest point in the contiguous United States, Mount Whitney, is just 80 miles from Badwater, Death Valley's lowest. Mysterious boulders appear to move on their own across the racetrack playa floor. Of course, scientists have their theorys and don't believe in spirits, but no one knows - for sure - the how or why of it. And finally, creatures from ravens, road runners and coyotes to scorpions and black widows offered their guidance.

Being slight of frame to begin with, I began an all out, 15 or so pound, self-indulgent weight gain prior to the fast. I paid for it dearly with the initial toxin release and a headache so grand it laid me low. A broken tent zipper, relentless high winds and sandstorms introduced me to the "death of romance" harsher side of Death Valley. Each morning I asked for guidance and sometimes wondered what I was doing there.

"I felt crummy. Much stomach gurgling and slight headache and dusty throat leading to 'Death Valley Cough'. I went to bed and even had to get up during the night for a bathroom run. It was hard to get warm enough to face the outside. Hell, I was cold inside my sleeping bag. There's a pee bottle in the tent and all the liquids have made me use it several times most nights - but this was beyond that."

"When I returned, I felt better, but too cold to remove my clothes. Just crawled back in the bag and put my head under the covers. Mom, I'm hungry and I wanna go home." Day 27; Jan. 7, 2000

Visions and floating dreams colored the nights. Hallucinations sometimes turned tactile or auditory as I slapped and scratched at imaginary infestations. Foods I hadn't eaten in years and sexual fantasies haunted my dreams.



"Child of the 60's - Make love Not War - Since I went to war, I took that phrase to heart and tried to undo war with love. Sometimes to shallowly. Thoughts during a fast." Day 7; Dec. 18, 1999

The sun's warmth was shattered by sometimes below freezing nights. With few calories to spare, hypothermia became a nightly fear. Fortunately, it only embraced me one night, but a night that escalated future fear to terror.

Fasting while in performance kept my energy levels amazingly high. Days were spent wandering, art making, searching, and meditating. The supporters and I were often surprised by my desire to climb up and down and up and down the valley. One even offered testimony to his amazement at being outclimbed by a faster.

From the very beginning, interesting celestial and numerological phenomenon synchronistically surrounded this project. Without prior planning or knowledge, the first night of a first visit to Death Valley was marked by Jupiter and Venus appearing above the moon for just that night. The starting date was selected solely to avoid inflationary airline prices that usually accompany school breaks. Only after arriving in the valley did I discover it split the fast in half: 20 days in 1999 and 20 in 2000. The first full moon of the fast and last of the millennium was in perigee. It appeared larger than it had in 133 years. And finally, the fast's fortieth day was punctuated by a total eclipse of the first millennial full moon.

"As we lost light, I hurried the pace and they had trouble keeping up. I wanted to make the summit before dark. What a grand and glorious feeling."

"I'm empty. Cleaned out. On top of the world and an eclipse unfolds before me in the desert. A celestial circus of uncompromising beauty. First, rainbow rings then amber tones about a waning moon. The bright point gives way to haze as the stars return to an ever darkening sky. Coyotes call out for her restoration from far off in the night. We pass binoculars and thoughts until the dark and cold creep up on us. Thoughts of being stranded overnight interrupt our reverie."

"I decide to take a walk to see if I can negotiate the mountain in darkness. I gather my senses and move slowly in several directions. I get to the cliff edge and dangle my feet over the side. Stones tumble into an eternity of dark nothingness - but I could find

my way. I return to the family. They were concerned when I left. We lay about the ground - uneasily napping. The cold forces me to a fetal posture until I realize a walk will warm me. I head out - First higher; then towards home - then up another peak."

"The coyotes I've tried to record for over a week now sing to me and I've got them. I return the song with my harmonica and realized later it would have been a classic to record - '40 day total eclipse harmonica solo' - but then maybe it would not have repaid the coyotes."

"My return found the group cold and anxious to leave. I guided them through the darkness and as I watched them struggle for each step, I first realized I was the only one adapted fully to this environment."

"Eventually, the moon reawakened and returned to its post lighting the night. The walk grew easy and I videoed the enlarging globe of light. I put the camera away only to have to get it out again as the moon gained two sets of returning rainbow rings. Finally, it released its hold on me and we went to bed." - Day 40; Jan. 20, 2000

We drove the 4 hours to L.A. the following day to set up "Out of the Desert". It was the world premiere of the *Death Valley Desert Classic* video and a performance with the New LA X Art Ensemble. The ensemble was a mix of New X regulars and LA players. Leaving the tranquility of the desert for spinning tires, concrete and steel was topped off with this unedited, world premiere on Saturday, the very next night, at L.A.'s Golden Bridge.

I decided to break the fast after the event. I suspected I may never have the where-with-all to achieve this state again. I wanted to savor its affects in performance and share the impact with the audience and band. There was also some concern about how my system would take to the reintroduction of food. The video and performance were well received, food not so well. Initially it was a treat to make my taste buds jump and sing, but then...fortunately, I waited. I broke the fast 'round midnight and intestinal distress followed for the next two days.

Official pre-fast weight 150+ lbs.; Official post-fast weight: 124 lbs.

"I hope next time I think of a way to make my work easy. Art shouldn't have to be so hard." Day 10; Dec. 21, 1999



"A movement does not depend for its success on the intellectual or material resources of its sponsors; but it depends solely upon the spiritual resources, and fasting is the most known method of adding to those resources.

Fasting is an institution as old as humans. It is my conviction that a fast undertaken out of a genuine love cannot have any negative result. It will only bring good in its wake." - Mahatma Gandhi



### Special intentions: 3 for a Buck

With the apocalypse averted and everyone less nervous, we've decided to offer a giant, one time only, Special intentions Sale. Send a dollar with any 3 special intentions and Billy or a staffer will pray over them.

### Officials Say, "No Way, Saint Billy"

The movement to canonize Billy as a "living saint" hit a snag when it was discovered his 3 miracles were actually Miracle Whip, Miracle Gro and Miracle White.



### Adventures with Billy

Some of the art Billy produced in the desert went to the Rochester Art Center (MN) *Big Bang* Exhibition, the Minneapolis Art Institute *Foot in the Door 2000 Show* and the Sharjah Arts Museum (United Arab Emirates) Exhibition and Archive.

It was another bicoastal tour as Billy went West for *Death Valley Desert Classic* and *Out of the Desert*; then back East to New York City to screen slides and video for *Public Art; When Is It Art?* at the College Art Association Annual Conference.

## BE SMART; BUY SOME ART

**Post Cards:** NYC's *Untitled* at 159 Prince St in Soho is the latest outlet to add Billy's post cards. Get them there or by mail directly from us. Mixed sets from various projects 12 for \$9 plus \$3 S/H, that's \$12.

**Swimming the Mississippi** is archived on the internet and available from Franklin Furnace (NYC) free with RealPlayer (See Calendar). The video is an art-adventure-travelogue. The Mississippi River swim from source to gulf with an original musical score. Get a great 29 min. VHS copy from Art Works USA. \$25 plus \$5 S/H.

**Death Valley Desert Classic:** The video that survived the fast. Billy says its his best work yet. About 40 minutes for \$75 plus \$5 S/H.

**Sampler 2000:** We're producing a new sampler with 3 life-changing journeys on one tape. It will include the *Performance for the Dead*, Billy's 1983 3 day live burial,

followed by *Swimming the Mississippi* and *Death Valley Desert Classic*. It totals about 90 min. feature length education and entertainment for \$125 plus \$5 S/H.

**Amanita CD:** Maybe it's acoustic folk jazz when Billy and John Pendergast (1/3 of *Fly Agaric*) play 74 minutes of "Oh! So sweet - but never saccharine - sounds". Ten bucks plus \$3 S/H.

**Apocalyptic Fashions:** So Y2K was a bust, so what! We all have to go sometime. *Mortem Vitae Sequens*. Our *Apocalyptic Fashion and Etiquette Guide* covers what to wear and how to act when you meet your-Maker. \$10 plus \$3 S/H for 1 to 12 guides. You tell us how many.

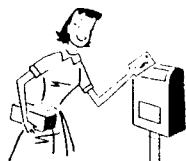
Remember: MN residents add sales tax on all orders.

**Secret Messages:** 'Politics' is derived from the word 'poly' meaning 'many' and 'ticks' meaning 'blood sucking parasites'. -Larry Hardiman. Last issue's message translated: You are overeducated if you can read this.

## YOUR INVITATION To FUN & ADVENTURE

### The Billy X. Curmano Fan Club

If you enjoy contemporary artist Billy Curmano, here's a great way to stay abreast of his projects. Join the discriminating crowd and become a member of Billy's own Fan Club. Simply send the completed form, all correspondence and annual membership dues to:



ART WORKS USA  
RR 1 BOX 116  
RUSHFORD, MN 55971-9634  
RING: 507.864.2716  
smitty@rconnect.com

Marion "Momma" Curman, President

Kimberly Haedtke, Membership Vice President

#### MEMBERSHIP TYPES

\$2 **CHEAPO:** Wallet size membership card & some mailings.

\$10 **REGULAR:** As above, plus a handsome wall certificate.

\$25 **DELUXE:** As above, plus Great Moments in Performance Art nonadhesive stamp series and all appropriate club mailings.

\$100 **DELUXE PLUS:** As above, plus original print.

\$500 **SUPER DELUXE:** As above, plus gift certificate & weekend vacation at Scenic Art Works USA (travel from Winona, MN included).

\$1000 **SAINT:** As above, plus vacation extended 1 full week.

\$5000 **BUDDY:** As above, plus 1 of Billy's special pizzas and Billy will pal around with you for 1 week.

**Institutional rate:** Please add 20% surcharge for double newsletter mailings. 1 to circulate; 1 to archive. **Family rate:** Add 10% surcharge and the whole family gets membership cards.

*The Fandango* is published sporadically by Art Works USA RR #1 Box 116 Rushford, MN 55971-9634 Ring: 507.864.2716 You can write or call us about-just-about any-old-thing. When ordering or sending money, don't forget to indicate what the heck you want. Unsolicited manuscripts, photos and drawings are not solicited, but if you ever want to send us something, go for it. No returns without S.A.S.E. The masthead image was created by Bill Gaglione. Steve Smith relays e-mail: smitty@rconnect.com **Warning and disclaimer:** Joining the *Billy Curmano Fan Club* leaves an indelible mark on your person. You can't always see it, but believe you me, it's there, buddy. See: *The Fandango*, Vol. 17 1-2, 1998, for removal information.

Make checks payable **Art Works USA**. Allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery. Premium substitutions may be made at our whim.



#### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Okay Kimberly! I just can't wait, here's my annual dues. I want to join Billy X. Curmano's Fan Club.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Type \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

