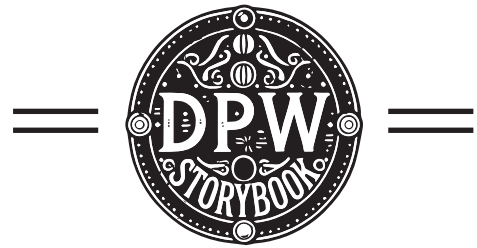


MARCUS

Marcus is from Sweden and experienced his first Burning Man and DPW in 2016. He was assigned to the Man Base crew as a Roustabout. His journey to Burning Man began unexpectedly when he met a girl on a bus in Los Angeles who talked to him about the event. Marcus found the experience to be both rewarding and unique, highlighting the stark cultural differences between Sweden and the United States.

This interview was conducted by “Flo”, Flore Muguet, a French anthropologist, in 2016. Most of Flo’s questions have been omitted to improve reading flow.



So, I was on holiday in Los Angeles, and then on the bus ride to the airport: when I was going home, I started to talk to a girl. We were talking about festivals and stuff, and then she told me a few words about Burning Man. And I was like, “Wow, that’s cool.” And then before I said goodbye, she was like, “Hey, you should come work for Burning Man.” And that’s how I got invited. [That was] in April.

We started some emails and stuff. But I never got any response, so then I got Duchess, and then she responded in July. So, we started with that. It was like “Alright, we prefer if you can be here two weeks



Marcus in Stockholm during the 2017’s Burning Man European Leadership Summit. Photo credit: Flore Muguet, 2017.

before the event.” I was like, “No, I can’t get that time off and stuff.” So, she just responded like, “Yeah, just book your flight and come here whenever you can.” So, I booked a flight in almost a month before I got here. I was just thrown into this thing. It’s very special, you know? I just applied and then I got here somehow and... yeah. It’s been crazy.

Yeah, so I got here on a Friday night. It was the night before the Early burn. I was so tired and jetlagged. It took me five hours to get there. So, then I met Trainwreck, the girl who invited me, and I just slept in her RV because she had an extra bed. And then the next day, I had an acclimation day and was just setting up my tent and was very tired. And then I went to see the Early burn. I almost missed it because I was so tired. Yeah. I fell sleep very early and just woke up and went to the burn. ... I kind of understood what was going on. Like, every department had one piece to burn and...

The second day you’re supposed to start work. But there was no morning meeting, so I just woke up and was like, “alright, so what’s happening?” I just went to breakfast like, “what’s going on?” And then when I got back to camp, I’m like “Dale?” And he was like, “hey, man, what’s going on? Do you want to work?” Because he was on his way to the Artery to set up poles and stuff. So, I joined him and we, yeah, we started work, that was like the first working there. They were working and it was dusty and hot in the sun. Then, in the afternoon, they took us to go swimming. So, my first working day was only a half working day because

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“In America, sometimes, it feels like nothing is for real, you know? Like everything is a big movie or something [...] But, not in a bad way. It’s fun.”

all the crew that was working there went swimming...The lake up in the mountains; Sqa-something, like a forty-minute drive from here.

The next day I went to have breakfast and then I talked to someone at the Man-base crew who was like “hey, we really need people there. Tell Logan we have to go to the Man-base and work.” So, I got to the Man-base to work and then I’ve just been there working with the Man-base and stuff.

First, we were setting up shade, we were building shade structures, so basically all the structures were already built but we just nailed the shade to it where all the workshops were. We were up there on the roof with the shade. I nailed and stapled the shade and then put some wood on it so it would stay to it, and we did these three days or something. It was a very tight schedule. The whole Man-base crew was behind schedule. And then, when the shade was done, we did a little bit of everything. You know, most of us did easier stuff. I mean like cleaning up the place and stuff like that. Carrying things. One time I got to work on the Man. The inside of the wheel has—I put metal plates on the inside of the wheel. I think we did the shade for three days. But the third day we worked up to midnight.

It’s intense. But I like the work. It’s fun. Then the last day, before the event, the Man was up. We raised him up with big cranes and stuff. They mounted him to all the machinery and then we were supposed to spin the wheel and see if it worked. And it didn’t work. So, the bolts snapped. I think the Man was completely loose.

We had ten guys trying to spin it. It didn’t work. It just clicked. Then the bolts went down and stuff. They were like, “alright, everybody out, everybody out” and there were two people on the roof. Joe the Builder was on the roof working on the Man. I think the Man was completely loose. So, then they had a big crane come in just a few minutes and adjust the whole thing back. I don’t think anyone got hurt during work on that.

I actually think in Sweden we work harder, so I’m used to it. I worked as a car painter for a few years. The only problem for me was the heat and the weather. Many people say it’s hard to make it to the Man-base crew. I think I earned my way into there because I worked with them after the event. Some people here go to parties every night. I can’t do that. I wouldn’t survive. I mean, like being tired every day after work and stuff.

I don’t think we have anything like this in Sweden. I always feel like, in America, sometimes it feels like nothing is for real, you know? Like everything is a big movie or something because everyone is so... It feels like a big game or something. But, not in a bad way. It’s fun.

I’m used to being more deep and stuff. It’s nice that everyone here gets along no matter what you look like or what you do. It really is like a big family. I’m not used to that. It’s very hard to see or find it in Sweden.

[The Burning Man experience] was a shock. That was so different. Just everything was crazy. I really had to process what the event was all about, you know? All the time it was just

crazy wherever you went. I mean, it was fun. And... there were some days where I was like “wow, this is too much.” It was more during the event. The event week was harder than the working week just because of all the stuff going on. Things to do, and parties and stuff. So much.

I worked that Friday night of Man-base strike. I didn’t have to work. It was optional. But I went just because I thought it would be fun. I just went because I knew some people that were gonna work there. The strike was just tearing everything down from around the Man. All the shade structures and everything. Then we stuffed the big structure, the Man structure, with firewood. Just so much wood, so we burn this. Then after the event we sorted all the wood, so it can be used again. I know they donated some wood to a girl who works in DPW who has a farm and her house, or something burnt down last year. So, they donated a lot of wood to her, and I think some of the people are going to go there and help her with the new house.

[During Burning Man event] Everyone was just like opened up and inviting everyone to everything, like camps. At camps you can just walk in and make friends with everyone. The whole giving culture. Sometimes I found it really, like when people just gave you stuff all the time and... sometimes I thought it was... everyone just giving some crappy things and stuff and was like “wow, this is just a waste of resources.” Because a lot of times it’s plastic, a lot of plastic things. And I was like... sometimes it felt like there’s more ways of giving and gifting than just giving away things, you know? It’s

very... a waste of resources. That’s very American to like... they are more materialistic with how much stuff.

The only hard thing is when you really want to be alone or something. I’ve been having a rough year back home. So, before I went, I was like, “Wow, I really need a holiday.” But everything is so intense. So, it’s hard to just be alone. Things happen all the time and it’s so loud during the event. I thought the event would be a lot calmer. At least during the days. It was like, sound systems everywhere. It was crazy. I mean... Yeah, it’s very American. Like I said, Americans: it’s easy to meet people. It’s easy to make more shallow relationships. You become friends instantly but it’s not that deep.

I feel like I don’t have any answers. I’m still processing everything. Before I got to Burning Man, I was so exhausted. I had a rough year, and it was just thrown into this. I have so many things to take in and to process, to understand. You know?

[About identification as a Burner or DPW member] Maybe a little bit of both. It’s so different. I’ve been asking people a lot of questions about DPW. Exactly that question, you know? Because some people are like “I hate the event.” And some people don’t go out during the Burning Man week and... but I don’t know. I feel like this year I have to do the most seeing and learning. There’s been so many new impressions every day, so it’s kind of hard to take in everything. I guess many people who come every year for DPW: they’re living two lives. The outside life and... I don’t know.



“I think the Man was completely loose. So, then they had a big crane come in just a few minutes and adjust the whole thing back.”