

# Burning Man co-founder warns barely recognizable festival has lost its soul to sex, drugs and delusionists

Artist John Law co-founded Burning Man Festival with Larry Harvey and Jerry James in 1986, with the Nevada event having now come a long way since its beginnings

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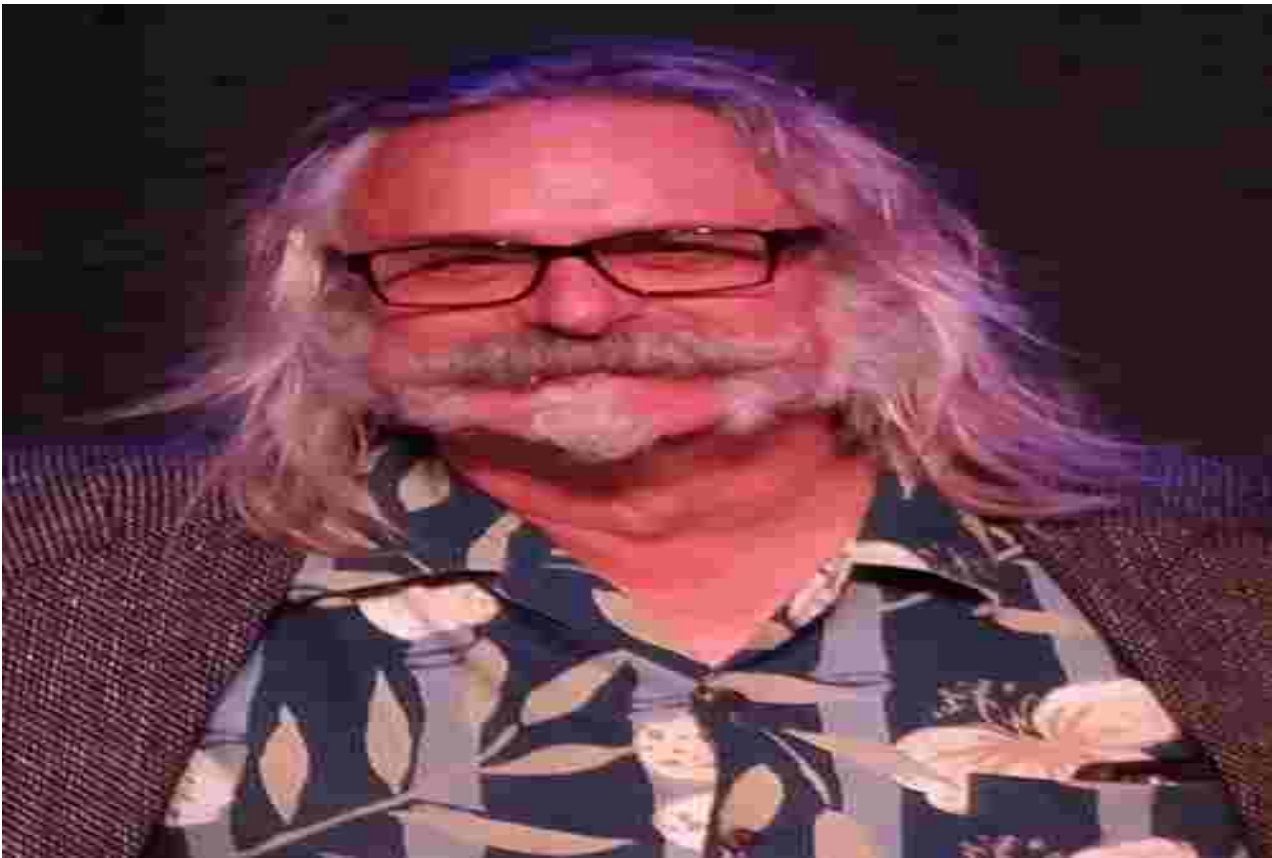
One of the founders of Burning Man has spoken out about what the festival has become, suggesting it has now "lost its anarchist soul."

John Law co-founded **Burning Man Festival** with Larry Harvey and Jerry James in 1986. The festival has grown a lot over the years, with around 70,000 people flocking to Black Rock City in **Nevada** last year to take part in the fun.

Burning Man will return this year on Sunday, August 30, and will see festival goers enjoy a week of expressing themselves and celebrating art, with **a number of camps and activities on offer, including the controversial Orgy Dome.**

While fans will no doubt be excited for the festival, founder John has explained he's tried to distance himself from the event over the years as he's "moved on to other things" and admitted he's "a little sad" over what the festival has now turned into.

Writing in **The San Francisco Standard**, John conceded Burning Man is still fun, but said it is "barely recognizable from what we made" and suggested the event has "lost its anarchist soul."



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### **John Law has spoken out**(Image: Salvatore Testa)

Today, John said the festival has become something purely for the middle classes. He hit out, "You can buy into luxury camps with private chefs and have a stylist curate your outfits. You can fly in on a chartered plane. It's become a commercialized escape hatch — a week when anyone with enough money can leave their real life behind entirely."

In contrast, the co-founder said Burning Man was "small and scrappy in the early days" as it relied on good will and wasn't owned by anybody. Eventually, the festival blew up and grew from the 80 attendees who went in the first year.

John recalled, "By the fourth year, 1993, the entire thing assumed the more involved ritual, performance, fashion, and artistic influence of Desert Site Works and was soon to be invading the day dreams of the Silicon Valley elite,

as well as thousands of less career-oriented seekers, artists, ravers, new age wannabe guru types, bored suburbanites, and many, many others."



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**Thousands of people attend Burning Man each year**(Image: AFP via Getty Images)

By 1999, Burning Man had grown to having 25,000 attendees. It was at this point John suggested the festival "became a very different kind of animal" as it attracted wealthy businessmen such as Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk.

John described the change in the event as being "controlled" and all about "status-generating." As for the festival nowadays, the co-founder said it has "become so wrapped in celebrity and red-velvet-rope exclusivity that it projects an image as glossy as anything emanating from Hollywood."

the increasing prices of tickets as part of the problem. Ticket prices for the 2026 event ranged from \$550 to \$3,000, with organizers noting there would be a "very limited number" of the cheaper tickets available.

