VARIETY

Critical Mass: going places, getting noticed

By Chad Simmons
Staff Variety Editor

The City of Las Vegas has two levels on which the community operates.

The first is the ultra-conservative faction comprised of the city council and most community leaders. The goal of this point of view is to espouse a mixture of "family values," rhetoric and action in order to over-compensate for the evil image of "Sin City" which Las Vegas has.

With the help of the police and concerned citizens, this faction of Vegas life does its best to make the city a better place to live and raise a family. This is a highly commendable position to take but it does have its drawbacks.

For one, the status quo is strictly enforced. Anything that does not immediately appeal to the idea of family values and conformity is kicked to the sidelines. Any notion of a free-thinking and creative community must meet up to these standards or be forced to work its way into the guidelines set down by the community elite.

For example, tight regulations are enforced on all-ages clubs where cheap underground music is available to the public. This is an issue which directly confronts the idea of family values. This concept *does not consider all the factors.*

Do people ever wonder what their children are expected to when they have free time? Are drugs or criminal acts what children are expected to be doing?

The other level involved in this community is the level of the individual. This concept has been washed over to the point where we might not even consider most

people to be individuals. This is a result of two different things. Number one, Las Vegas is still Las Vegas and, in their spare time, most people will find themselves on a desperate, drunken search for entertainment and adventure instead of trying to come up with things to do that are healthy, productive and enjoyable. This is a direct result of the gambling-based economy that is sadly the only real reason why this town has grown to the size it is today. Strangely, it has actually become illegal to be inside of the city in certain areas, unless you are spending money! The second reason for this lack of creative outlets must be attributed to a general feeling of apathy and laziness which we all have problems with. Something we are all guilty of.

The question is: Where can we as a community find things to do which will help us come about with a more creative environment? And which will benefit all in a more productive sense, and which isn't a boring cafe discussion group or a mediocre drunken party? Something is need to appeal to both aspects of this community and to bring all people together that doesn't involve spending money. How about a bike ride?

Critical Mass is a movement of sorts that has taken hold in many big cities around the country. It is a monthly bicycle ride on the streets which has many different functions according to what you want to get out of it yourself. In some of the larger cities these rides attract hundreds and sometimes thousands of people. When large groups of people on bicycles take to the streets, it turns into more

than just a bike ride. It becomes a statement. Curiously, this "protest" is more of a free moving party than a major attempt at changing the world. But who said changing the world can't be fun?

For the majority of the Critical Mass regulars, this is the main point of the ride. It is a chance to get together with like-minded people and to make some new friends, as well as adding strength to truly alternative points of view outside of the mainstream.

"I don't think most people realize what kind of function something like this has in getting people together," said Mark Simmons, a supporter of Critical Mass for over a year. "The more people that join in the merrier."

Many riders have taken to dressing up in outlandish costumes which, in turn, adds to the festivities as well as drawing more attention to the message of the ride. There is no way to ignore a bunch of clowns on bikes taking over the streets.

The deeper meaning that is apparent in the ride is also something that is open to interpretation.

The streets of Las Vegas are notorious for being dangerous to pedestrians as well as to bike riders. When bicyclists are teamed up with 40 or 50 more people, they have more of a chance of being seen by careless drivers. It is a good way to assert the right to ride a bike without fearing for your life.

Some of the more radical voices in the ride feel it is a direct statement against the dehumanization of the automobile-dominated city where parking lots and freeway overpasses take precedence over human lives. Some question the idea that smog is a simple fact

Illustration by Danny Kim

of life that we must live with. Others consider it an injustice to those who do not drive automobiles and compare it to second-hand cigarette smoke.

Another interesting aspect of this event is the fact that it is loosely organized. Rides are planned involving everyone's input. So not only are riders members of the pack, they are under no obligation to spend a cent.

Rides in the past have gotten to be very big. The members of this collective would like to see it grow

even larger. They offer an open invitation to all bike riders and free spirits willing to do something different with their time and energy. The ride for this month begins behind the Cafe Espresso Roma on March 28 at 6:00 p.m.

Rides tend to last two to three hours not going more than just a few miles at a leisurely pace. Because it's not how fast you get there, it's how you get there.

Next time you feel that there aren't many places to go in Las Vegas, think again.

The long awaited 'Street Fighter 3' hits arcades

By Danny Kim
Variety Editor

In 1987, Capcom brought the world *Street Fighter*, sans any Roman or alpha-numeric numbers. The intimidating six-button game vaulted a new concept to the gaming world, which was still mired in *Ms. Pac Man, Gauntlet and Super Mario Bros.* Inspired by fighting games such as *Kung-Fu, Double Dragon* and *Karate Champ*, *Street Fighter* proved to be beyond its time, still playable by today's standards.

In 1991, Capcom released the sequel, *Street Fighter II*, which is probably the most popular game of the 90s. With eight playable characters and dozens of more special moves, players came to be known as "that fireballing asshole" or "that cheap thrower." With SFII, what became evident was that random button pressing, the kind of gameplay effective in older shooting games like *Galaga* and *Centipede*, was futile. Adding duration to each punch and kick, timing had to be gauged to avoid leaving your character open to attack. Combinations, hits linked together by less than a few frames and executed with precise timing, is what separates beginners from masters.

Since 1992, Capcom has released over seven variations of Street Fighter II: *Hyper Fighting, Championship Edition, Super SF2, Street Fighter Alpha, Street Fighter: The Movie Edition, Street Fighter Alpha II and X-Men vs Street Fighter.* The quantity should give you an idea about how most gamers felt regarding the Street Fighter lineage. I stopped playing after Super Street Fighter II. The direction of the series' artwork has become more cartoonish, inspired by Manga/Japanese Anime. The animation is somewhat choppier in

gameplay and unattractive.

Fighting games are currently the most profitable and universally popular arcade coin-ops, with driving and shooting games in a distant second and third. In 1993, Midway's Mortal Kombat broke into the fighting game arena. With photo-realism, gruesome decapitations and spiked pits, MK quickly became popular, becoming SFII's first big competitor. That same year, Sega released *Virtua Fighter*, the first polygon-based fighter. Though odd looking, the smoothness of the kicks and punches were something to be-

hold.

From '93 to today, not too much has changed in the fighter market. The latest installments of arcade mainstays include *Virtua Fighter 3, Killer Instinct 2, Street Fighter: EX* and the soon to be released *Mortal Kombat IV* and *Tekken 3*. The market is now divided among 2-D cartoon (SFII), 2-D photorealistic (MK & KI) and 3-D polygon-based fighting games (VF & Tekken). The most advanced of the three is undoubtedly 3-D animation, and although the gameplay has come along way since Virtua Fighter, there is still room for improvement.

Finally, after six long years, Street Fighter 3 has made its way into arcades. Without any huge fanfare, Street Fighter 3 may have hit the market two year too late. Borrowing a little bit from each variant, the most interesting feature is that there are eight brand new characters, including the original SF characters, Ryu and Ken. The most irritating part of the most recent variants was that they were getting too complicated, sometimes consisting of over six different steps to execute a combo. Super-combos, introduced in Super Street Fighter II, give tracers as the character does a multiple