



Remy Holwick, *Mercedes 3*, 2016

The Picture | The Story

Mercedes 3

I met Love Bailey at the wake of a mutual friend. She looked ethereal and genderless, wearing a gown and hat over a foot tall, and when she got up to share memories, she almost spoke in poetry, and she seemed to be levitating. We ended up speaking for over an hour after the event ended, and were the last to leave.

Two months later, I got an email from her, with a couple of vague, poetic lines, inviting to someplace out in the desert, with the directive "think of the Source Family", and an address that I couldn't exactly find on maps, and dates-- nothing else. I happened to be in LA that month, and I happened to be free those days, so I packed my cameras, and some clothes, and headed out to get lost trying to find whatever address maps wouldn't direct me to.

I ended up on the Savage Ranch after being lost for 4 hours on dirt roads, and was welcomed by Love, lipstick smeared across her face and a big smile plastered across it, flanked on either side by beautiful, nearly nude people, covered in paint, trudging up the road in sandals. "Welcome home", she lilted, and I took it.

This was the beginning of a two- year long project, photographing the experimental fantasy of Love Bailey and the Savage Ranch. The family, as we referred to ourselves, were all engaged in the experiment of building a utopia away from the stereotypes of gender, bent on self-

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expression, love, and deeper meaning-- we wanted the full hippie spiritual fantasy, but we wanted it set against the arresting juxtaposition of Thierry Mugler-style couture and the untouched, raw, and difficult beauty of the southern California desert.

I fell deeply, hopelessly in love with these people, and my work with them was as much in support of finding that utopia and expressing that love as it was about creating images-- Bailey, and so many of the rest of the family, were natural born show people, shining as brightly as any supermodel ever could, so my work was easy.

The Mercedes images were from my second trip to the ranch, and were not planned, but documented about ten minutes of spontaneous action outside of the front door of the ranch, where Love had just happened to perch up on designer Kyle Kupres' Mercedes. I was shooting Kodak Vision 3, which is motion picture stock that my assistant and partner in crime, Dylan Gordon, had repackaged for me into 35mm still film canisters (I would later learn to do this work myself). The stock is balanced for tungsten light rather than sunlight, which gives it a very stylized, vintage movie color palate rather than the more naturalistic palates of Portra or Fuji stock, and really makes the work feel even more cinematic. It was also very cheap, which was crucial for me at the time. When I shot this, I had no idea if the stock was even viable, having expired years earlier and been packed into the desert in summer with no refrigeration, and I wasn't thinking of showing these images, or what would come next-- the only thought was how lucky I felt just to be there in that moment, a little tired and a little lost and a little overwhelmed, and dizzyingly in love with what was happening in front of me.

- Remy Holwick (January, 2018)