

THE BACKBONE #10



DENNIS BROWN
Telluride, CO

Try a
BREATH MINT,
Dick.

DICK CHENEY?
I thought this was
FOX NEWS...
If it isn't you
can all
F--- yourselves!

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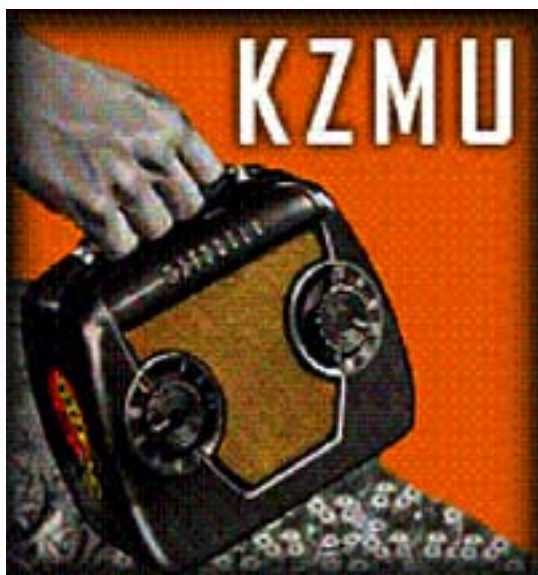
MOAB
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YOU!**



KZMU community radio

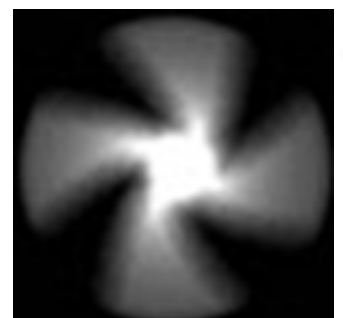
90.1 & 106.7 FM

KZMU is a grassroots, community, public radio station isolated in the dramatic landscapes of Canyonlands and the Colorado Plateau country. KZMU is truly an aural oasis in the desert airwaves of southeast Utah.

**REQUESTS:
259.5968**



100% wind-powered



**LISTEN TO US
ANYWHERE ON THE
WORLD WIDE WEB.**

www.kzmu.org

MAN..CABEZA...STEEL

By Tim Lengerich



PHOTO CREDIT:
(top) Tim Lengerich
(bottom) Hank Jorgenson



First, far to the west, a silent, bilious dust cloud appears, approaches. A breeze blowing it slowly northward doubles its size. A giant, angry, albino woolly worm. In minutes the strange sight is joined by a low, ominous roar growing into a grumbling, whining din. Like a slow moving freight train nearing.

Then into view comes leading this curious combination four 6,000 gallon water tankers trailed by one dozen concrete trucks, mixers whirring round and round over their axles, and six loads of steel in strange configurations borne by flatbed semis.

A couple carry weird, x-shaped I-beams welded together at their centers to a long, hollow 6x6 inch steel post sixteen feet long. Reminiscent of the tank repelling Normandy barriers of World War II. More flatbeds are stacked high with equally bizarre looking units made of four, ten feet long posts with an I-beam melted to their centers. Like sections of picket fence.

The site? A road construction project in Phoenix? An industrial complex? A movie set? No. Wilderness. Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge. El Camino del Diablo/The Devil's Highway. Rugged, stark, stunning, still. Till now.

In the course of several years a vehicle barrier is being built along the U.S. border with Mexico attempting to block drug runners and human traffickers from that country. For the last two years it's been Cabeza's turn; 56 miles of southern boundary with Mexico. The materials described above the essence of the barrier. Also attendant to the cause, coursing the Camino, 125 pieces of equipment from bulldozers and road graders to massive hole

drilling rigs and dump trucks the size of houses.

Man. Machines. Shaking, pounding, screeching, roaring, surging, groaning, sweating.

Giant, ancient saguaros bladed over. Palo verde, ironwood, mesquite trees, the same. Black lava rock dozed aside, asunder. Massive multi-headed barrel cacti, called cottontops—corpses. Denizens displaced or churned under. All windrowed to the north. Nothing left but a wide, tan swath of desert dirt.

In the beginning, a 45-60' wide border corridor of Cabeza's pristine Sonoran Desert permanently scraped from the planet. Over 300 acres gone. Forever. In the end, a steel fence extends, in some places, as far as the eye can see.

At times the barrier is lined with seagulls, cattle egrets or bluebirds. Pinacate beetles, butts arched high, sprint across busy roadways apace against monstrous equipment with incredible success. Tarantulas, sidewinders, coyotes and butterflies weave through this antithetical juxtaposition of nature and steel.

Flocks of goldfinches light randomly in the vertical wands of nearby ocotillos looking like notes on a page of sheet music. Desert bighorn sheep often spotted in the mountains. A golden eagle floats overhead like a baby's mobile.

Soon, man, machines, gone. Yet, the shrieking presence of the barrier storms every sense. Silently screaming in your ears. Palpable at any distance. Shattering the view. Taste of steel. Smell, foreign. Is foreign. Rugged, stark, stunning, still. Now.

T.L.