Attendance Numbers
by Ucaoimhu

Since this is a multi-purpose party, a few of the Across clues serve multiple purposes as well. Specifically:

(1) For a few Across clues (all of which also fit into category 2 or 3 below), one consonant of the answer must be entered on a thin line instead of in a square. In each case, if you thicken that line, a large number is formed.

(2) The answers to some Across clues (including one or more in category 1) fit entirely within the boundaries of the grid. If you cycle repeatedly through all of the large numbers in the grid (not just the ones produced in 1), left to right and top to bottom, the letters in the corresponding positions in the clues (in clue order) will spell out one reason for this party.

(3) The answers to some Across clues (including one or more in category 1) extend beyond the boundaries of the grid. The letters on the outside will spell out the modes of travel for two people (specified in two grid columns) who have come by this party; the numbers produced in 1 will (left to right and top to bottom) spell out a figure relevant to the earlier of these. Also, if you find each consonant from 1 outside the grid, and shift it ahead in the alphabet as many places as the corresponding large number, you will get the other reason for this party.

All Downs are normal.

ACROSS
1. Lived around the east end of many roads
2. About 2/5 of a hectare in South Dakota is holy
3. Stirred up anew, OK?!
4. A pig is carried in one’s ear
5. String instruments defaced by southwesterners
6. Writer Ambrose made Dotty be Eric
7. Quartet of really random stars in the shape of a harp
8. Changes the first three from 7:00 to 9:00?
9. After losing head, warns Earl and Kay about bird
10. Eris destroyed a biblical mountain
11. In Greek myth, a cowgirl thanks the leader of Ilion
12. Go west to ensnare Mr. Begley
13. One American claiming radium glows
14. Outspoken, colorful agent had to pay for a semiconductor device
15. Sonically removes the peels from fruit
16. Yahoo blasting nose after catching cold produces this!
17. shiploads of sailors reportedly sail
18. Corporate bigwig has left an Egyptian queen
19. Herb left in, say, 4- or 5-letter prefix meaning “of the nerves”
20. A land mass in the Pacific Ocean that feels nice and posh
21. Galley equipment started with real loud sound
22. Say, going around Belgian river’s natural hot spots
23. Ms. Winfrey eschews red fish

DOWN
1. Um . . . bread comes out of your mouth at an angle (4)
2. Attack without delay, seizing England’s capital (3 2)
3. Poles, in verse, eternally express disdain (5)
4. First of bugs in neato programming language (5)
5. Items on ties must be birds (5)
6. Jan's predecessor initially expected it to be a ruse (6)
7. Eve’s wild flocks of geese in flight, for example (4)
8. At first, Ethan Coen shot The End Of The Geological Epoch (6)
9. One American claiming radium glows (5)
10. Outspoken, colorful agent had to pay for a semiconductor device (5)
11. Sonically removes the peels from fruit (5)
12. Yahoo blasting nose after catching cold produces this! (5)
13. Are going up and hugging Zulu prophet (4)