The Rebuild SoCal Partnership (RSCP) consists of 2,750 contractors throughout Southern California that represent more than 90,000 union workers. RSCP is dedicated to working with elected officials and educating the public on the continued need for essential infrastructure funding, including airports, bridges, ports, rail, roads, and water projects.

Now you can keep updated on construction projects and learn how they impact your community and affect your daily life. Tune in to the new podcast, The Rebuild SoCal Zone Podcast.
LAPD INVESTIGATING SHARED MEME MOCKING GEORGE FLOYD

L.A. County also gets the OK to begin reopening at least “dozens” of elementary schools, while several recreational activities begin to reopen with COVID-19 measures in place.

ISAI ROCHA

The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) is conducting an internal investigation after employees allegedly created and shared a Valentine’s Day social media post depicting George Floyd with the words “You take my breath away.”

The post was reported by a person within the department, whose unit was not disclosed.

“The department has become aware of allegations that the post with the image was authored by a department employee.”

LAPD said it has not seen the Valentine post mocking Floyd, nor does it know who shared it, but department employees will be interviewed, including the person who reported it.

“The department will have zero tolerance for this type of behavior,” the statement added.

Los Angeles District Attorney George Gascón addressed the allegations, saying the D.A.’s office will be “looking into this matter to determine if the integrity of any of our cases may have been compromised by biased police work.”

Gascón added that if the allegations are true, those involved “have no place in law enforcement.”

Attorney Ben Crump, who is representing the Floyd family in the case against Minneapolis police, said on Twitter Sunday, “THIS is the type of policing culture that contributes to the disregard for Black life that we see so often! This is why we NEED change!”

Community activists from Project Islamic Hope and the San Pedro Good Trouble Brigade gave a press conference Monday, saying they would be meeting with LAPD Chief Michel Moore this week, and commended LAPD Harbor Patrol Division Capt. Jay Mastick for “speaking out against what happened.”

“I was stunned because George Floyd’s death at the hands of a police officer last May stunned the whole world,” activist Najee Ali said in the press conference. “So for an LAPD employee to suddenly make a mockery, to make a joke of this man’s murder, is outrageous, but is also painful.”

During the press conference, Ali added that they are not looking to attack LAPD, but want accountability.

“There’s no reason for any LAPD employee to mock the death of any man,” Ali said. “This is not a black or white issue, this is a right or wrong issue.”

L.A. COUNTY MAY BEGIN TO REOPEN ‘DOZENS’ OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Los Angeles Public Health informed county elementary schools that it reached the state threshold to reopen in-person instruction, Tuesday.

California required counties to reach a case rate lower than 25 positive COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents. With that threshold met this week, schools may send a waiver that shows they satisfy “a full range of safety measures” to be certified by L.A. Public Health.

Los Angeles County Supervisor Janice Hahn unofficially announced that schools would reopen for grades K-6, tweeting out Monday, “This is what we have been working towards. Now we can continue the work getting our kids and teachers safely back in classrooms where they belong.”

Before the announcement was made and schools were notified, LAUSD Superintendent Austin Beutner announced an array of changes that Los Angeles schools are making to comply with Public Health measures.

Among these were retrofitting 80,000 square feet of school buildings with MERV 13 air filters, which Beutner said are “akin to N-95 masks.”

Beutner also said the CDC showed vocal approval for the school district’s filtration systems.

The district also said it has adjusted desks to comply with social distancing regulations, will provide personal protective equipment such as face coverings and is working to create a school-based COVID-19 contact tracing and testing program.

Even with the measures being implemented, Beutner did not specify if any schools within the district would be petitioning to reopen.

CITY OF L.A. TO BEGIN PRIORITIZING SECOND DOSE VACCINATIONS

Mayor Eric Garcetti announced that starting this week, this city of Los Angeles will prioritize second doses of the COVID-19 vaccine at city-operated vaccination sites.

Those who already received their first doses at city-run sites from January 18-23 have had appointments scheduled for this week, and appointments for those who qualify can be made for the coming weeks.

“Our city has the tools, the infrastructure and the personnel to vaccinate Angelenos swiftly and safely — we simply need more doses,” Mayor Garcetti said. “Our density and demographics have made our region an epicenter of this crisis in recent months, and with a reliable, consistent supply of vaccines, we can get more shots into people’s arms, bring down rates of infection, hospitalization and death, and defeat this pandemic once and for all.”

The city-run sites include Dodger Stadium, Hansen Dam, San Fernando Park, Crenshaw Christian Center and Lincoln Park.

Those seeking first doses may still schedule appointments for the most recently built site at Los Angeles Pierce College, who will be distributing 4,600 of Los Angeles’ 58,000 doses this week.

As city officials have asked for more supply of vaccines, city vaccination sites were forced to shut down after Thursday last week, as they administered the entire supply given.

“I want to be clear, Los Angeles needs more doses,” Garcetti said on Feb. 10. “We learned that other cities with smaller populations are receiving more doses than our entire county with a larger population. When we look to cities with lower cases, we see 50% more doses going to other cities.”

L.A. County-run sites also began prioritizing second doses last week, but will not be administering first doses at any of its eight sites.

LEISURE ACTIVITIES REOPEN SUCH AS DISNEY EVENTS AND THE ZOO

Now that the Southern California regional health order has been lifted, local attractions such as the L.A. Zoo, Disneyland and Catalina Island have announced the reopening of certain events.

The L.A. Zoo opened its doors this week by appointment only and with limited capacity in accordance with the current Public Health order. After making the reservation for a time slot, an e-ticket may be scanned by phone or paper printout.

There will also be COVID-19 health measures in place, such as mandatory face coverings, 6-feet of social distancing, modified foot traffic flow, no cash payment accepted, dedicated hand sanitizer stations and additional cleaning procedures.

As is the case with all of L.A. County, indoor dining will not be permitted and guests will be asked to eat in place to avoid interactions without face coverings.

The zoo will also have certain exhibits closed and has temporarily done away with speaking presentations from staff.

Disneyland California Adventure park will be reopening in March, but will be replacing its usual attractions with food events.

The park announced a “limited time ticketed experience” for a food festival and “carefully crafted entertainment.”

Soon after the California health order was lifted, Disney returned about 350 employees to begin food operations at its Downtown Disney area just outside the parks.

Catalina Island has reopened its “Catalina Express” ferry services to get riders to its usual tourist attractions and shops.

The Catalina campgrounds have opened up at Avalon’s Hermit Gulch and Two Harbors, while its zip line, mini golf and Hummer tours are now operating for guests.

The L.A. County Fair announced that while it will not be operating at full capacity in the summer of 2021, it is planning a smaller scale event for fair lovers.

“The L.A. County Fair is our flagship event, the foundation on which we build our community engagement,” Fairplex Interim Chief Executive Walter M. Marquez said in a statement. “But we, in good conscience, could not move forward with plans for our big, campus-wide fair this year, not knowing where the pandemic would be, come summer.”

The Pomona Fairplex, where the county fair is typically held, has served as a mass vaccination site since January 19 and is also hosting a “Jurassic Quest” drive thru experience through the end of February.
GETTING BIZZY
Brooklyn Drill Rapper Drops “Bandemic”

BY BRETT CALLWOOD

Drill, a subgenre of trap, already a subgenre of rap, emerged out of Chicago’s South Side in the early 2010s. In the 12-ish years since its birth, drill has found an audience, and indeed eager artists, around the country and the world. The UK drill scene, for example, has been in the news in that country as a result of what its critics describe as extremely violent lyrics. Now, there are burgeoning drill scenes in Australia, Ireland, France, the Netherlands and New York.

Needless to say, New York, notably including Brooklyn, has a proud hip-hop history. It’s also important to note that scenes quickly stagnate if they aren’t freshened up if too much reliance is placed on legacy; no matter how great that legacy is. Names such as Fab Five Freddie, Biggie, Wu-Tang, MC Lyte, Beastie Boys, Busta Rhymes – this is rap royalty. But we all get old, and new generations need their own heroes.

Brooklyn isn’t short of fresh blood. But when it comes to new scenes, nothing has caused familiar levels of controversy like drill. It’s aggressive, raw, harsh and real. In many ways, it’s a natural evolution for the music that was commonly referred to as gangster rap.

Take rising local drill star Bizzy Banks. Speaking to us by phone, Banks said that he’s effectively been rapping for his entire life. But it wasn’t until 2019, and the “Don’t Start” single, that things got serious. Since then, he’s made it his mission to keep the quality of his output at a consistent level. Ironically, “Don’t Start” was a solid, hold-nothing-back, start:

“N***a think he hold weight until I burn them calories. Couple shooters be with me, Call up Black we go 50 for 50, N***a as spinnin’ all until we get dizzy, N***as politickin’ talkin’ bout Bizzy, Bitches callin’ me and sayin’ they miss me, I don’t got no time for no hickies, I just want the quickie, So slide off them vickies, Can’t fuck with a b**h if she friendly.”

Clearly Bizzy Banks, and drill rap in general, isn’t for everyone. But like all of the best songwriters, period, Banks is a storyteller. Sure, there are elements of bravado there, but Banks is essentially recounting what he sees and lives as a Trinidadian-American in East New York. The precise subject matter, he says, can vary.

“It really depends on the beat that I have,” he says. “When I hear a beat, I automatically start thinking of lyrics. I describe my sound as very swaggy. I’m very descriptive, without giving too much information, y’know?”

Banks says that he views drill as simply a sub-genre of rap, something real and legitimate.

“I believe it’s a legit genre of rap because of the years it’s been around since like 2012,” he says. “I feel like from then to now, it’s legit. It’s stuck around.”

It certainly has. From the early Chi-Town days involving the likes of King Louie & Bo$$ Woo, Shady, Chief Keef and Lil Durk, to what is going on in Brooklyn right now, drill is very much alive and it’s offered an undeniable shot of adrenaline to the East Coast scene that even a global pandemic couldn’t stunt.

“I feel like it’s a good time,” Banks says. “Even the pandemic gives us all this time to really connect with the fans and promote everything. See what’s going on.”

Banks’ new single, the follow-up to last year’s GMTO, Vol. 1 (Get Money Take Over) mixtape, is “Bandemic,” specifically about the pandemic.

“I just called it the ‘bandemic’ because it’s like even though we’re going through this crazy time, a lot of people are not able to make money because of their job or the situation they’re going through,” Banks says. “For me, my life that I’m going through, I call it a ‘bandemic’ because even though it’s a rough time I’m still able to make money and have fun, do the things I like to do.”

Banks holds nothing back on the new tune, telling us that it’s very representative of the material he’s currently working on. It’s always the case, he says, that his newest song is the best material he’s currently working on. It’s always the case, he says, that his newest song is the best song for a newcomer to listen to.

“This shit ain’t gon’ stop (Facts), Uh, fuck on any thot, They let my shooter out the box, Yeah, you know Molly on the rock (What? Uh), These n**as know we don’t play, This shit no rap money, This designer weed and a bunch of SBAs, This be that trap money, get you slapped money.”

Banks has been working on a new mixtape, Same Energy, having spent a lot of lockdown in the studio laying down new tracks. That’s due later in the spring. Meanwhile, the rapper has been finding other ways to stay busy during the pandemic.

“Lately I’ve been playing a lot of video games,” he says. “I can connect with my young fans a lot more.”

That’s true, so we put it to Banks that a virtual concert on a gaming platform such as Fortnite, much like the recent and incredible visual event featuring Travis Scott, would be perfect for him.

“That sound dope,” he says. “I used to play Fortnite – I kinda stopped and started playing other games. But I saw how Travis Scott did it and everybody connected with it.”

Still, that might be some way off. For now, we can just enjoy “Bandemic” and the GMTO, Vol. 1 mixtape, and look forward to whatever Banks does next. His plans for 2021 are simple.

“Really just staying consistent,” he says. “Keep dropping to keep people engaged. A lot is going on.”

Bizzy Banks’ “Bandemic” is out now.
TAKEOUT PICK OF THE WEEK: COBI’S CURRIES

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

New Zealand born chef Lance Mueller, formerly E.P & L.P. and Élephante, has teamed up with self-proclaimed curry addict and Aussie native Cobi Marsh for a new curry house in West Hollywood that features a menu specializing in traditional curries from various regions around the world.

The concept behind Cobi’s Curries is that the combination of antioxidant spices used are not just meant to be tasty, but also medicinal, comparing the health benefits in curry to Ayurvedic medicine, developed in India thousands of years ago.

Open for takeout and delivery, the menu offers detailed information on the health benefits of the ingredients in each curry. The African curry is a comforting combination of peanuts, blackened peppers, coconut cream paprika and peppers. All curries come with your choice of proteins (chicken, beef or shrimp).

The Indian butter chicken, a creamy mix of organic chicken, fenugreek, garlic, ginger, onions, turmeric, asafoetida, cumin and coriander seeds is a great pick and even better reheated the next day.

If you like it hot, try The Devil from Malaysia – organic chicken with dried and fresh chilis, galangal, lemongrass, shrimp paste, onions, vinegar and mustard seeds. The health benefits from this demon are said to include everything from preventing cancer and tumors to reducing muscle pain.

Definitely order the dal, a perfect accompaniment to the curries as well as a rice variety that includes brown, jasmine and royal basmati. There are also noodles and garlic naan that arrive warm as well as a variety of house-made sauces and fresh yogurt raita to cool things down.
KEN QUATTRO’S INVISIBLE MEN: THE TRAILBLAZING BLACK ARTISTS OF COMIC BOOKS

The Comics Detective illuminates hidden figures of illustrated history

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT

In the introduction to his essential new title, *Invisible Men: The Trailblazing Black Artists of Comic Books*, author Ken Quattro writes in part, “My goal with each person profiled in this book is to provide context for their lives, the environment that formed them. There is a tendency to reduce a life to what a person does for money. One of the first questions asked when meeting a stranger is, ‘So, what do you do for a living?’ as if the entirety of a person’s hopes and dreams, tragedies and triumphs, beliefs and experience, is contained in their answer.”

Quattro is correct of course, this convention afflicts social discourse at every level – but when it comes to the life and work of the 18 Black men whose biographies, challenges and accomplishments in the postwar American comics industry, making those distinctions and contexts clear is even more salient. In almost every case, these artists worked all but unsung, separate from their white colleagues and editors. Hired almost begrudgingly because of economic pressures and the need for cheap but talented labor, they created at the boundaries of representation – not only in terms of who was depicted in what race-based idioms within the comics themselves, but also in terms of who was tasked with creating them.

In almost every case, these artists by day executed the visions of perfect white heroics, sexy caucasian women as objects of desire, and villains and dupes whose caricatures landed on a spectrum from cringe-worthy to outright racist. On their own time, they created inclusive characters and storylines casting Black folks as heroes reaching back to elevate the mythologies of glory from the African continent, and looking to their present day surroundings to highlight the stories of contemporary public figures and neighborhood people of color. They were also frequently accomplished fine artists and graphic designers who created some of the most impactful and memorable visual depictions of activism from the Jim Crow-era civil rights movement.

The idea for *Invisible Men* started nearly two decades ago, when Quattro – a towering figure in comics lore and history, whose Comics Detective moniker and website is foundational to the genre – was writing an article about Matt Baker, the Black artist who in 1945 created *Voodah*, a character that is considered the first Black hero in a comic book aimed at white audiences.

In his Herculean research, Quattro read through what he describes as thousands of past issues of publications written by and for African Americans. “There was nothing in the white media, in newspapers or magazines at all, about Black comic book artists,” he has said. And that’s where the “detective” part came into play.

Black artists created heroes like Speed Jaxon, a character whom artist Jay Paul Jackson imagined visiting the hidden city of Lostoni, a kind of proto-Wakanda. Jackson also created *Home Folks*, an exuberant chronicle of
daily life in the Black community set in places like the neighborhood record store. But then, there was Blond Garth, a sort of Tarzan joint where a white kid who is shipwrecked on a remote island is treated as a god by the locals. Elton Clay Fax drew up NAACP posters, and at work, attended to U.S. military-inspired anti-Asian propaganda comics. Later, he worked on a George Dewey Lipscomb-penned series called Tales from the Land of Simba about “a boy whose courage and skill earned him the title Lion Master.” The book is filled with such stories of artists whose careers were bifurcated in this way, and aside from the excitement of discovering their stories at all, it is perhaps these juxtapositions that make the fraught parameters of their careers so clear.

E.C. Stoner, a descendant of one of George Washington’s slaves, was a fine artist of the Harlem Renaissance. His work included an illustrated biography of Rev. Ben Richardson – a beloved activist in the Black community who Stoner depicts literally getting beaten in the head by cops – alongside The Blue Beetle, the story of a white rookie cop who beats back alien invaders.

All-Negro Comics was a collective of about half a dozen of these men, which launched in 1947 and was a literal game-changer, though even with demonstrably robust sales, they still had trouble getting shelf space in some places. Not monolithic, this imprint published a combination of both wholesome and egregiously unjust scenes from modern American Black life, as well as something both more nostalgic and futuristic regarding the diasporic community – creating an alternate universe in more ways than one, as only the great comic books can.

Check out more about Invisible Men: The Trailblazing Black Artists of Comic Books at IDW Publishing and when you buy your copy, consider doing so at EsoWon.
STRAIGHT OUTTA MASONIC SEED CO

We sat down with the Masonic to get the full story of Compton landrace.

BY JIMI DEVINE

Love him or hate him, the legend of the Compton Landrace has permeated well beyond the borders of Los Angeles. We hit Masonic Seed Company’s San Francisco popup last week before getting to sit down and chat with Masonic himself to hear his take on the wild ride he’s been on the last few years.

Masonic is what they call a needle mover. After I posted from the popup, just the idea that I’d be writing about him flooded my inbox. It was a spread of admiration and accusation from message to message, and it only made me more excited to dive in.

I understood that Masonic was popular and on his way up over recent years. But when I saw the social-distanced line stretching through the industrial sector of South San Francisco on a Sunday at 9 a.m. it seemed like things were pretty hype. Some random person recognized me and walked up to me with a handful of Gelato #33 x Wilson – it was awesome whoever you are – then I waited with some friends for an hour, eventually getting to the front where they placed their seed and coffee order with Masonic. Hearing how many packs of what? Or do you want milk with that? Was certainly a thing.

Eventually, Masonic and I got our hellos in and planned out a chat for later in the week where we immediately jumped in on how he first got his hands in the dirt while growing up in the epicenter of cannabis.

“I grew up going to the dispensaries when some were shadier than others, for sure. There were no kiosks and somebody that looked preventable helping you out. That’s kind of how it was,” Masonic told L.A. Weekly. “Lord knows we could buy more than weed there but I stuck to the weed.”

He emphasized he didn’t want to claim to have seen it all because he didn’t want to sound like an asshole, but was confident he’d had eyes on a fair share of the evolution of the cannabis consumer and grower over the last decade.

But when did he decide he wanted to supply his habit?

“So I graduated high school, my dad buys me a pound of weed, and he’s like this, I graduated on good terms,” Masonic said, noting he’d been accepted to school and completed advanced placement classes. “I was a good kid but my only ‘problem’ was I just smoked all the fucking time.”

That pound a decade ago was meant to be
a post-high school toe-dip into providing for his habit. Unfortunately, Masonic and his now-wife found themselves at the mall a lot. “So he buys me this pound of weed, and I just fuck it all up. I just sell whatever, you know, go to the mall every weekend. buy freaking DVDs and comics,” he said.

Masonic’s dad would get him another shot after meeting a cultivator in his car club. “He met a guy named Ray, rest in peace. My dad knows firsthand how a person grows and what they can grow and the money that might come with it. So he kind of introduced me to him and he’s like, hey this guy is gonna teach you some stuff. And I’m like, okay, here goes nothing,” Masonic said. “And as far as before, cultivation started being introduced to me, before that I was just a jackass smoker just trying to find the best bag of weed.”

Masonic’s dad grabbed Ray and Masonic 15-gallon barrels for his boy to learn the craft, and he did. Ray helped Masonic add all the fundamentals of cultivation to his toolkit. As for the genetics he was working with at that moment?

“Ray? I’d be lying if I told you anything specifically,” Masonic replied, and as for adding to Ray’s lessons, “There wasn’t Instagram, or at least I wasn’t on it yet. Just kind of like whatever I found on the internet, whatever publication I could pick up that floated through my fingers. That’s what I had besides this guy.”

But this was all the foundation for what was to come like the breeding, the memes, the controversy that came with it. Read the full tale on the web at LAWeekly.com.