THE RAINBOW REVOLUTION CONTINUES

PRIDE 2021

Photographer Magnus Hastings captures the many colors and perspectives of queer culture figures in Los Angeles and beyond. By Lina Lecaro
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Photography by Magnus Hastings
THE ABBEY TURNS 30

David Cooley’s Establishment is Ground Zero for L.A.’s LGBTQ+ Movement

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

The AIDS epidemic, L.A. riots, Northridge earthquake, same-sex marriage celebrations, political campaign trail stops, and COVID – The Abbey has seen the best of times and the worst of times. What started out as a small coffee shop in an old dry cleaners in 1991, David Cooley has expanded his operation into one of the world’s most iconic and oldest LGBTQ establishments.

Cooley’s annual Academy Awards viewing party has raised about $2 million for AIDS Project Los Angeles. In 2012, Cooley was selected to join President Obama’s LGBT Advisory Committee and famously banned bachelorette parties from The Abbey until marriage was legal in California.

Over the past 30 years, the space has grown from 1,100 square feet to 14,000 and has gone from coffee and cake to drag brunches, go-go dancers, an elevated bar menu and world-class specialty cocktails.

“When I opened the little coffee shop back then, I never imagined that it would become the heart of the community,” says Cooley, who left his job as a banker to sell coffee. “The Abbey just became the town hall – for joy, marriage equality and politics – and a safe haven during times of crises. It was a place where people came in to watch the debates and be together when election results were coming in. Four years ago, we were there together in despair to comfort each other and for a special time last year when Biden and Harris won and the city erupted with joy.”

In 1991, ACT UP used The Abbey as their base for meetings to get the word out on AIDS. When the Northridge earthquake hit in 1994, being on the same electrical grid as the nearby Sheriff’s Department, The Abbey had electricity when the rest of the city was down and neighbors gathered in their pajamas over coffee.
to offer each other support. But living through the last 15 months may have been the toughest.

“There’s been more wonderful than bad,” says Cooley, who was surprised by Lady Gaga last week when she celebrated her 10th anniversary of “Born This Way” at The Abbey. “The difference between the two pandemics that we’ve been through is that in 1991, when we opened, our government was not being supportive and we had to fend for ourselves. We had to go out there, do the marches and speak out and see so many of our brothers and families in the community pass without our president at the time mentioning the words ‘AIDS.’ The difference with this president and these 15 months have been difficult for all of us. Now we have a government that is hands-on and our current president has moved quickly.

In the current pandemic, The Abbey
opened and closed four times and Cooley was close to not making it, but credits the city of WeHo and the Alcoholic Beverage Control for their support, making it possible to get margaritas to go with your cheeseburger and being able to legally drink martinis on Robertson Blvd.

Moving forward and anticipating much celebration for the month of June, Cooley’s message for Pride month is not to lose sight of what we’re celebrating.

“It’s taken generations of people dying and being discriminated against to get to where we are today,” says the crusader who is no stranger to a good time. “June is not only being able to go out there and drink, but to remember the decades and decades of what the older generations have gone through and what the history is of Pride. Years ago they stood up at Stonewall and said ‘we’ve had enough.’ Then a year later came the first gay pride march. It’s important to keep that in mind when you’re dancing your hearts out once the restrictions are finally lifted on June 15.”
In his new book, photographer Magnus Hastings captures the many colors and perspectives of queer culture figures in Los Angeles and beyond.

BY LINA LECARO • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MAGNUS HASTINGS
PRIDE 2021

THE RAINBOW REVOLUTION CONTINUES

In his new book, photographer Magnus Hastings captures the many colors and perspectives of queer culture figures in Los Angeles and beyond.

BY LINA LECARO • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MAGNUS HASTINGS
“The whole book project idea came because we’d had a year of Trump, basically. I wanted to do something that was very much standing up as a community and going, ‘fuck you,’ we’re here, we’re queer and we’re gorgeous,” U.K.-born, L.A.-based photographer Magnus Hastings tells L.A. Weekly about the motivation for his latest book Rainbow Revolution. The lensman, best known for his previous book Why Drag?, has basically been celebrating LGBTQ+ creators and entertainers for the entirety of his career, capturing the charismatic essence of his subjects for art galleries, the biggest gay mags across the globe and social media.

The perfect buy for Pride month, Hastings’ new book is a vibrant, defiant and joyful look at queer culture figures who’ve lived outside of the box, which interestingly, seeks to illuminate their personal perspectives and experiences by asking them to pose inside of one. Yes, there are rainbows, but the eye-popping portraits are also as unique as the individuals and groups featured, with a spectrum of sexual identities and backgrounds represented by subjects from all walks of life, each with
something different to express in the outfits, backdrops and poses they chose.

"The first image I did was of Alaska [Thunderf— Drag Race All-Star winner] so whenever I asked someone to be involved I sent that as an example," explained Hastings. "I built a white box; it was 6x5 by 6x5 feet deep. And I invited people to come in and they could decorate it, they could be naked in it, they could write on it, bring props, express themselves however they wanted to be seen. I said to people, 'show me how you’d like to be seen in five year's time.' Some people really went for it. Other people would just turn up in an outfit. When it was just the empty box with someone in it, it became about how they or I helped direct them into creating body positions and body shapes that were interesting with the negative space. Or people would come around and paint it completely. Then I’d have to paint it back and hope it'd dry in an hour. This box had so many layers of paint on it by the time I tore it down a year ago in L.A., it was losing its edges."

Hastings says the main thrust of the project was "no re-touching." He wanted his subjects to tell their stories and create everything in real life. Not surprising, considering his acting and theater background, which he gave up after taking on photography full time. The self-taught photographer was originally inspired by the British gay nightlife scene, where he started capturing colorful characters and creators, leading to high-profile exhibitions at hotspots like London's The Box. He’s honed his gift for highlighting the most interesting traits of his subjects, which he says got attention early on due to the bounty of "gay famous people" he was able to shoot.

"I did portraits of them, and it was kind of quite clever because it became like a celebrity portrait thing," he says. "And I did these huge PVC print blowups, and I didn't know if anyone would like them. But I put them up and overnight, everyone flipped out over them and I was featured in TIME OUT magazine. Then all the gay press started using me for their covers. So it happened very organically, very quickly once I decided to throw myself properly into photography."

Hastings' first book exploring the art of drag was created after a 2005 move to Australia (where queendom was thriving) followed by a relocation to L.A. in 2011. His career was busy, with an emphasis on celebrity and drag
work, which led to a popular drag photo show in New York and finally, a Chronicle Books release in 2015. After that book’s success, he appeared as a guest judge on both RuPaul’s Drag Race and Dragula – the horror drag competition from 2019. A Weekly cover subjects The Boulet Brothers. Soon after, he sought to expand his scope and cover all of the queer community with #Gayface, a 2018 photo project that eventually evolved into Rainbow Revolution.

“After Why Drag came out, I was employed to do drag stuff for the next couple of years and I was always thinking, ‘well, what is my next book, what is my next project?’” Hastings shares. “I thought, ‘what I need to do [now] that everyone and everything is on social media… is something that I can launch on social media that can then become a book, something that’s social media-friendly, and what’s the best shape for social media? It’s a square. So I [made] a box and then had each person create their own story within the box or by either using props or fabric or whatever. And I also very much wanted to be inclusive and to move on from drag and do something for the entire community, especially trans people, because there was very little trans drag in my previous book.”

After releasing 150 white box backdropped photos on the internet on the same day in 2018, many of the images went viral. Hastings was even commissioned by the West Hollywood Arts Council to make an in-real-life version of it for Pride in 2019, which manifested with three digital billboards on Sunset Blvd. Turning a social media idea into the Rainbow Revolution book the past three years and shooting almost 1,000 subjects across multiple cities was “exhausting,” Hastings admits, “sometimes I’d be shooting 30 people in a day and that was insane.” But the results are exultant, especially with the added essays from some subjects who talk candidly about their struggles and triumphs as LGBTQ+ people. The book is very much representative of the current cultural shifts on sexual and gender identity and how we express them publicly and proudly today. Not surprisingly, the cover (which also serves as the Weekly’s Pride cover this week) features an array of L.A.-based figures from entertainment and nightlife, where queer culture continues to thrive and inspire.

“It is part of the big wave of change as sexual identities and gender identities have been named and shifted and given importance and visibility,” Hastings adds. “It all happened as my book was coming together; this huge surge of that, and it came out right in the middle of it, so it feels like very much part of that movement and the understanding and acceptance of people’s right to express themselves however they see fit.”

Hastings hopes the book and his work in general will not only amplify queer voices and personalities but lead to more understanding and unity especially in parts of the country that still discriminate. “We live in an L.A. bubble, and we can forget the hell that people go through in less accepting places,” he reminds. “I feel like there’s a younger generation that generally are more accepting of sexual fluidity. I hope for a time when everyone can stop trying to get it right and it’s just a natural thing.”
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Masks Are Here To Stay In L.A.

As California prepares to “fully reopen” the economy on June 15, not all COVID-19 safety procedures will immediately disappear, as workers in California will still wear masks. L.A. County health officials detailed what that will look like, Monday, as the state awaits an official health officer order in the coming days.

BY ISAI ROCHA

California is less than a week away from a full reopening of the economy and while stores and sectors will rid their capacity limits, some social distancing and mask regulations will remain for workers, until at least July 31.

On Monday, L.A. County Public Health detailed new workplace mask regulations that will go into effect by June 15.

“The revised emergency standards are expected to go into effect no later than June 15 if approved by the state’s office of administrative law,” L.A. County Health Officer Dr. Muntu Davis said.

Davis also emphasized a move away from cloth and surgical masks and asked that employers provide N95 respirators for “better protection” of their employees, as an increase of interactions with others is likely to occur after the June 15 economic reopening.

The N95 respirators were also suggested for general public use by unvaccinated people who may be at risk of contracting COVID-19.

The CDC also lists approved N95 respirators for users who may be wary of counterfeit brands.

When working indoors, employees will still have to wear masks whether they are vaccinated or not. The exceptions to indoor mask-wearing will be if a worker is alone in a room, or in a room where everyone is vaccinated.

The regulations slightly loosen for workers outdoors. If workers are 6 feet away from each other, the masks can be removed, however that changes for what the state considers “mega events.” If an employee is working at an event that holds more than 10,000 people, masks should still be worn.

The social distancing measures are a little different than what they have been in the past. The onus will be on employers to provide unvaccinated workers with N95 masks.

If employers provide “voluntary” N95 masks, social distancing measures will be lifted in the workplace.

Another change to workplace regulations states that vaccinated individuals will be allowed to go to work, even if in close contact with a person who experienced COVID-19 symptoms. This differs from past guidance that suggested that workers quarantine at home, even if they were vaccinated.

“The underlying logic to all these regulations was to account for changes in circumstances, especially related to vaccine availability, the effectiveness of the vaccines and the low case rates that are being seen across the state,” Dr. Davis said.

L.A. County announced that it would need 1.1 million more people to receive the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine to cover 80% of adults 16 or older – a checkpoint the county has labeled in the past as “community immunity.” L.A. Public Health Director Dr. Barbara Ferrer believes the COVID-19 vaccination metric can be reached by late August if the county continues its pace of 100,000 daily vaccinations.

California Starts Its Money Giveaways To Vaccinated Residents

In a game-show-style setup, Gov. Gavin Newsom stood in front of a clear case full of numbered balls and chose 15 vaccinated Californians to win $50,000 each. Of those 15, three were selected from L.A. County.

According to the sweeps-style rules, all 21.5 million Californians who have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine are eligible to win in the “$50,000 Fridays,” or the grand prize of $1.5 million that will be given to 10 individuals on June 15, the date of California’s “full reopening.”

Using the state’s vaccine registry, the Department of Public Health used what the governor described as “unique numeric indicators,” which were sent to the California Lottery to whittle down to 200 unique numbers that were then reduced further and printed on 50 latte-style balls.

There were 15 winners chosen from those 50 balls Friday, with the remaining 35 balls to be used as backups in case one of the winners loses eligibility by either working in government, working with the Lottery, being family of someone who works in those sectors, or being incarcerated.

Aside from the three winners in L.A. County, there were three winners from San Diego, three from Santa Clara, two from San Francisco, and a winner from Mendocino, Alameda, Orange and San Luis Obispo counties.

“Over the course of the last few weeks, we saw that decline in those first doses, we realized we needed to do a little bit more than our original outreach efforts,” Gov. Newsom said of the sweeps’ intention. “And that’s when we decided to move forward with incentives.”

There will be another drawing for $50,000 winners next Friday, as the state continues to use $116.5 million toward incentives.

As the vaccination incentive program was announced on May 27, Gov. Newsom saw pushback from multiple Republican leaders, including gubernatorial candidate John Cox who accused Newsom of “bribing” California citizens for votes.

“Thousands of small businesses have closed. Thousands more are on the brink. Millions of Californians have lost their jobs. Kids are sitting at home instead of in the classroom,” Cox said in a statement. “Instead of addressing those issues, Gavin Newsom is spending more than $100 million to buy votes before the recall. This is 100 million more reasons that Gavin Newsom must be recalled.”

Newsom did receive support from the California Department of Health, as the state’s Public Health Officer, Dr. Tomas J. Aragón said, “With more than 70% of adults having already received at least one dose, the Vax for the Win program is the creative approach we need to make that final push for those who remain unvaccinated.”

Restaurants May Continue Using To-Go Alcohol Orders and Outdoor Seating

The closing of California restaurants and bars during the pandemic allowed certain dining rules to be bent – one being cocktails served to-go. Now that the state will be reopening, Gov. Gavin Newsom said the takeout cocktails will remain.

“The pandemic may be going away… but your to-go cocktails don’t have to!” Newsom wrote on Twitter. “CA will now allow to-go cocktails and outdoor dining expansions to stay after we fully reopen on June 15th.”

Newsom will also allow restaurants and bars to continue using sidewalks and parking lots, a measure that was taken after indoor dining was deemed a high risk of spreading COVID-19.

“California’s restaurants help create the vibrant and diverse communities that make California the envy of the world,” Newsom said Thursday. “As the state turns to post-pandemic life, we’ll continue to adapt best practices that have helped businesses transform customer experience for the better. With new opportunities and support for businesses large and small, the California can-do spirit that has carried us through the past year, we will come roaring back from this pandemic.”

When the economy officially reopens fully on June 15, restaurants and bars will be allowed to operate indoors at full capacity for the first time in over 14 months.

Even with the allowance of indoor operations, the “regulatory relief” provisions will be extended until December 31 to “slow the spread” of the COVID-19 virus while allowing these businesses to recover, according to the California Dept. of Alcoholic Beverage Control.

Suspect Caught After Beating A Woman At A Gardena Gas Station

A suspect has been arrested after a man attacked a woman at a gas station on the 500 block of Rosecrans Avenue in Gardena.

The suspect, who was identified as Antoine L. Rainey, 37, was caught in Long Beach over the weekend with law enforcement authorities saying he suffers from schizophrenia, according to a KABC report.

L.A. County Sheriffs responded to the assault call on May 30 at approximately 7:09 p.m., calling the assault a “vicious attack,” with surveillance footage to accompany it.

The footage allegedly showed Rainey park in front of the woman who was putting gas, walking up to her and hitting her until bystanders walked over. Rainey then walked back to his Ford Expedition and drove away.

Officials also said Rainey was on parole at the time of the attack and it is possible that there have been others.

The woman was hospitalized, suffering from head trauma and a black eye, but was discharged with pain medication.

Rainey was scheduled to appear in court Tuesday at 8:30 a.m., at the Compton Superior Courthouse.
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BY BRETT CALLWOOD

ARISE KING MALA

L.A. alt-soul star reclaims strength

BY BRETT CALLWOOD

L.A. alt-soul crooner KiNG MALA, aka Areli Castro, grew up with a passion for music and started taking it seriously when she hit high school.

“I honestly don’t remember ever choosing to go into it, because it was always something that I wanted to do,” she says. “It was always my plan, my goal, to just go into music and make it my career somehow. I always felt like the industry was really big and no matter what I did, I would find a place in it. So it was always my passion and I don’t have a lot of patience for doing things that I’m not really, really into. My parents bought me a piano when I was 15 and that was really when I started writing music and performing. That’s how it all started. Lots of sad girl piano ballads at the start.”

KiNG MALA describes her sound as a mix-

tures of all her influences, most notably soul but also alt-rock (“Arctic Monkeys, Cage the Elephant, Young the Giant, the Black Keys, Alabama Shakes, stuff like that”). Initially, she wanted to form a rock band in L.A. but quickly realized that she was more suited to the alt-pop sphere as it allows for more flexibility. As for her lyrics, she says that she’s a feelings-based person.

“I tend to write about situations that elicit big emotions for me,” she says. “Some of these deeper experiences are just like more meta-

phorical, feelings-based stuff. I tend to just write about the things that make me feel something. Whether it’s very specifically situational, or for example the song ‘Homebody’ is that feeling where leaving my house makes me anxious. Stuff like that. ‘Sugarblind’ is that lust for someone, I like to write about those feelings and try to put it into words. It feels like putting a puzzle together.”

The same strength that drives the new single also inspired her choice of name. The artist wanted to pick something that balanced masculinity and femininity.

“I’m really into taking tropes from both, and I feel that I fluctuate between feeling more masculine and more androgynous, into feminine,” she says. “I was in Disneyland with my little sister, and she was in a princess boutique thing where they all get dressed up as princesses. It’s all really cute and whatever. There was this little girl there and she was getting made up as a king. At that point, I realized it had never occurred to me that I could be a fucking king. I was reflecting on that experience, and using ‘King’ felt very empowering to me. Then ‘Mala’ means ‘bad bitch’ in Spanish, so a little nod to my Hispanic roots.”

We are, of course, right in the middle of Pride season and it’s a poignant one after the year we’ve all just had. For MALA, it’s particularly important as she felt, until recently, insecure about her place in the LGBTQ+ community.

“I’ve always identified as queer, bisexual, but I never felt like I had the right to claim it or to be a part of the community,” she says. “I don’t know why. I didn’t feel like I belonged necessarily, just because I was like, I don’t know if I’m queer enough. When I released the song, I realized how loving and supportive and welcoming this community actually is. I always knew that, I just never gave myself the opportunity to try. With this song, I was almost afraid that people would be like, ‘You don’t seem queer enough to be writing songs like this.’ But immediately, everyone just welcomed me and were so supportive. I feel like a whole community built itself around the song. I really have experienced just what this community really is and how loving, supportive and open it is.”

If KING MALA and her music helps other people open up and feel free to be themselves, then that’s priceless. Meanwhile, June is also her birthday month, so she’ll be going at Pride pretty hard.

“I want to go to the L.A. Pride,” she says. “It’s always amazing. I go with my friends and it’s awesome. In general, I think just celebrating with as many people as I can and I think also especially being an advocate for all the organizations I support and just for being open, accepting and loving of everyone. Try to have as many conversations about it as possible. That’s my goal, I think.”

For the rest of the year, MALA will be releasing more singles and then starting to think about a full lengthener in the fall. As for shows, who knows?

“I feel like there’s a lot of talk right now about shows and tours, all the good stuff,” she says. “I’ve been in rehearsals and it’s been so amazing to get back at it. The live show is definitely the most complete and exciting it’s ever been. I’m excited for people to see it.”

Ditto, your majesty.

KiNG MALA’s ‘She Calls Me Daddy’ single is out now.
FREDDIE MERCURY GETS THE SUPERHERO TREATMENT

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT

The universe of comic books and graphic novels expands far past the superhero genre, but the world-changing, life-givingly radiant genius of Freddie Mercury still qualifies. His voice, passion and charisma definitely count as superpowers – and Z2 Comics is about to give Mercury the royal fanfare he deserves, with Freddie Mercury: Lover of Life, Singer of Songs.

From his youth in Zanzibar and India, through his early life in England and his ascension to the rock pantheon, to the demons he faced down toward the end of his life, the book follows the classic hero’s journey narrative arc evocative of mythological origin stories. Its writer, Tres Dean, is careful to present the stories through Mercury’s words and perspective, recently thoroughly explored in both film and nonfiction anthology. With a personality as large as his and an intoxicating flair for fearless poetry and radical living out loud, Mercury’s own words are as rich a primary source as a storyteller could wish for, and the energy he brought to living comes through in an epic way.

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rougui, Tammy Wang and Amy Liu, with majestic cover painting by David Mack, and a further limited-edition print by Sarah Jones, the artistry takes its flights of fancy seriously. The visuals are grounded in the expressive rendering of salient actions and events but also exuberant in the freedom of interpretation and expression afforded the artists to bring their own visions to inform the fullness of the book’s vision. This is, in its own way, a heartfelt tribute to Mercury, who himself studied visual art and illustration in London before the gods of music found him in 1971 – 50 years ago this year.

The book not only paints moving biographical details with honesty and emotion and an eye for effective detail, but is in its own form also flush with Mercury’s own love of all creative expressions, from visual arts to opera, ballet, theater, cinema and fashion. Z2 Comics itself has pioneered the genre of graphic novels enshrining the lives of music legends from Elvis to Beethoven, the Doors to the Dead. Their softcover and hardcover editions are gorgeous and affordable; their deluxe editions include fine art prints and, in this case, a limited vinyl – touching on all the things that gave Mercury, Queen, and their legions of adoring fans such joy in their work.

Pre-order for November 2021 release at z2comics.com.
The cannabis industry loves to celebrate its intertwined history with LGBTQ activism, and 2021 has a lineup of products to fit the bill.

BY JIMI DEVINE

In honor of Pride, we're taking a look at a variety of cannabis products that celebrate and support the LGBTQ community's ongoing fight for wider equality.

The first fact you should always cover when talking about the gay community and cannabis is that it would not be legal without their efforts. The AIDS activists of San Francisco originally backboned the idea of medical cannabis and the eventual passage of Proposition 215.

West Hollywood progressives would later go on to introduce the idea locally before many followed suit.

Now, a quarter century removed from those efforts to pass Prop. 215, many in the cannabis industry still have a deep respect for its roots. Even for the straight people in the industry, Pride is an important nod to the community that helped get us to this wild point in cannabis history.

Here is a lineup of some of the many cannabis companies that will be celebrating Pride 2021.

**Bloom Farms**
The team at Bloom Farms recently celebrated the donation of over 3 million meals through their 1-to-1 Giveback program. In honor of Pride, they're...
Platinum
Platinum is another company that gives back year-round, and in honor of Pride, they will be donating a portion of their profits to Equality CA. Platinum’s React Foundation is a giveback program that focuses on six social causes and charities. Since 2018, the brand has highlighted a different charity each month. And they always have some special edition packaging to go with their cause of the moment. Pride 2021 is no different!

ReCreate
ReCreate is releasing a limited-edition collection of Pride gummies and beverages. It’ll include a lineup of new flavors that combine CBD, THC, and Yerba Mate to provide an energizing way to celebrate pride. ReCreate will be donating $1 per Pride product sold to One Colorado and Equality California, two local nonprofit partnership organizations dedicated to LGBTQ+ civil rights advocacy.

DO Drops
The low-dose edibles will be featuring a Flavors of Pride edition gummy. All of the proceeds from June will be donated to LGBTQ+ organizations, including the Transgender Law Center, Headcount’s Vote with Pride campaign, and Summer of Drag | SADBrunch, a series of driveway drag show brunches that will be ongoing throughout the summer.
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2. The address of the Trustee is: Donald James Dinsmore, 880 Apollo Street, Suite 334, El Segundo, CA 90245, (310)576-1382.
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4. You are entitled to receive a copy of the Trust
5. If you would like a true and complete copy of the terms of the Trust by requesting a copy from
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