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FRIDAY, JULY 14
MICROSOFT THEATER
Spring is here and the clouds have finally parted over SoCal. And with 4/20 right around the corner, the sky cleared just in time for you to blow some big, billowy clouds of your own. With our favorite holiday fast approaching, we’ve put together a list of the best deals on cannabis, glassware, vapes, dabs, accessories, CBD, Delta-based THC, cannabis-friendly events and much more. You’ll find everything you need to make sure this 4/20 is one you’ll never forget… and also one that’s really hard to remember, all at the same time.

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**Foos Gone Wild**

Foos Gone Wild (FGW) is coming to YouTube Theater in Inglewood on Saturday, June 24. The FGW media platform and production company is celebrating their 5-year anniversary with Lil Mr. E, the FGW Superstars + special guests.

See one of the most iconic IG accounts for the Chicano culture LIVE this June. Tickets on sale now at Ticketmaster.com!

www.ticketmaster.com/foos-gone-wild-inglewood-california-06-24-2023/event/0A005E63B41A23CE

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MUSHROOMS
FORAGING FOR

A Trip In The Santa Monica Mountains

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

A rmed with a treasure map, a Troop of mushroom lovers ventured out into the Santa Monica Mountains recently in between atmospheric rivers in search of Elfin Saddle, Golden Milk Caps, Russula, the Western Jack O’Lantern, Springtime Amanita, False Turkey Tail Mushrooms and the elusive California Golden Chanterelle. We even came across the rare Unicorn Dance Mushroom.

Led by mycologist and Topanga Canyon native Brando Farr, much of it was a lesson on what NOT to eat. Our trek in the mountains along flowing streams began with a fungal tutorial.

“The Santa Monica Mountains are actually home to a lot more wild mushrooms than people realize,” Farr told the group of novice and expert foragers alike. “It’s not quite caught on as much in this culture as it has in Northern California, the Pacific Northwest or Europe. They do exist, and it’s my job to bring you all a little bit deeper into that world. They’re very special in that they are stewards of the forest. Their first and foremost job on the planet is to take care of the trees and plants. They are here pulling nutrients and water to the roots of the trees helping them to absorb. They do this through the larger organ of the mushroom, the mycelium. The mycelium is the vast network underground which is the actual organism. The mushrooms themselves are really just the flower.

“The first is Mycorrhizal, which includes porcini, chanterelle, trumpets, and lobster which are big in fancy restaurants. They’re very special in that they are stewards of the forest. Their first and foremost job on the planet is to take care of the trees and plants. They are here pulling nutrients and water to the roots of the trees helping them to absorb. They do this through the larger organ of the mushroom, the mycelium. The mycelium is the vast network underground which is the actual organism. The mushrooms themselves are really just the flower.

“The second one is a straightforward parasite. Parasites evolve and find a way to get what they need to survive and they do that by finding a host that has been stressed out or has a compromised immune system. Cordyceps are an example. “If we’re not getting the rain that soaks the soil, then the mycelium of the mushrooms isn’t able to support the trees and they grow weak and susceptible to beetles and oak death. They fall over and die and we’re starting to see more medicinal mushrooms like the turkey tail and lion’s mane pop up because of it. Almost every medicinal mushroom starts off as a parasite.

“The third is the saprophytic decomposer, which breaks down tree stumps and wood debris, turning it back into earth. With those three roles, we have an amazing blueprint that fungi and mushrooms show us that they have learned to create food out of very little and become extremely nourishing to animals and humans. They’re a great role model for us to hone in on and learn more from.”

After a successful scavenger hunt, we headed back to basecamp for a meal of Farr’s sautéed California golden chanterelles with onions and thyme, mushroom broth and Cordyceps-infused tequila. We could just feel our blood pressure coming down, our immune systems getting boosted and a surge of antioxidants.

And as I live to tell the tale, it was not The Last of Us.

With the help of event organizer Stephanie Moyal, who founded the Agoura-based Troop mushroom supplement startup, chef Farr shared his recipe for mushroom broth with us:

Mushroom Broth
1 gallon of water (more or less could be used, depending on how concentrated or rich of a flavor is desired)

All the mushrooms I used were dried in advance (except for the fresh crimini mushrooms I bought from market) and broken down by hand, creating small nickel-sized pieces of each. This is done to create nice bite-size pieces of the mushrooms, as well as to get a more thorough nutritive infusion of the mushrooms in the broth.

1/4 c lobster mushrooms
1/2 c morels
1/4 black trumpet
1/2 c porcini
2 c dried shiitake + stems
2 c dried crimini
2-3 cups fresh crimini, boiled and evaporated 2-3x (creating the Maillard effect) get the mushrooms crispy each time when you evaporate about a half inch of the boiling water in the pan/ wok, which creates a nice crust and gets stuck to the pan each time... Each time, you will deglaze this crust with water and evaporate again... This is done 2-3x. Finish the mushrooms off by making them nice and crispy and then add them to the soup. What this does is build a big flavor bomb.

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THE 4/20 HYPE LIST

It's Time For Our Annual Hype List Where We Cover Some Of Our Favorite Cannabis Products Of The Moment.

BY JIMI DEVINE

Every year there is even cooler stuff available for cannabis consumers on 4/20. It will be no different in 2023. There is a wide array of new products and strains sure to take our breath away in the coming months. Here are our must-have products for 4/20/23 next week:

Puffco Wizard
While the Gandalf-style pipe is nothing new, Starfish Designs was famous for pumping them out back in the day, in the past, glass versions have generally been designed for flower. With Puffco’s new Wizard attachment to complement the Proxy, you’ll now be able to smoke hash Gandalf, too. While it looks cool, some people find that little bit of extra space compared to the stock Proxy attachment rips a little bit smoother. The Wizard is $99.99 and currently only available in the U.S. You can get it in black or desert.

Talking Terps Clothing
Few artists have been able to get the cannabis scene as excited at the concept of high-end art as talking terps. Their knack for limited edition and luxury now sees their products gracing the offices and homes of some of the coolest folks in the space. Some recent hits include the Terp Fetti sweatpants. They look like one of those delicious vanilla confetti cakes but are super comfy to match. We haven’t tried them out yet, but the new footholders they’re about to drop look pretty sick, too.

Globmaps Slurper Cleaner
Globmaps are nothing new, the company has long been one of the two main titans of cleaning your quartz after a dab with a lab-grade cotton swab that’s spun a lot tighter than a Q-tip, so you don’t have to worry about it breaking up and leaving behind anything on your quartz banger. But now, Glopmaps has a Slurper Cleaner design perfect for Terp Slurpers. They’re kind of a hassle to clean with the standard Globmaps so a lot of people would dunk them in iso after every dab; this will make it a bit quicker.

Wizard Trees Seeds
Wizard Trees is one of the most celebrated cannabis farms in California in recent years. While they had traditionally been known for making excellent selections in pheno hunts and then producing great flower, they’re now making an even deeper jump into genetics with their first seed drop ever. It was initially timed with the Spannabis festivities. The drop is available at WizardTreesGenetics.com and there are a lot of RS-11 crosses on the list that are easy to get hyped about.

Free Seed Day
With the timing of this year’s 4/20 issue, we’re thrilled to be able to let you know you can get out to Free Seed Day this Saturday, May 15, at Masonic’s on Fairfax. The day is a celebration of all things Los Angeles cannabis genetics. We dove into its three-year evolution with Masonic Smoker last week. As the name entails, there will be plenty of free seeds to go around with bags ready for the first 1,000 people that come out. But even if they run out of the official bags, you can expect to not leave empty-handed if you really love seeds.

Oni Flowers
The long-awaited first drop of flowers from the legendary Oni Seed Co hit California dispensary shelves in recent months. So far the flower is holding up, as more people around the state get access. The phenos were selected from a big pheno hunt, when you pop a lot of seeds, of Oni’s storied genetics collection. Two of our favorites so far have been the Zahihi Rainbow and Purple Something, the latter helping fill a bit of the purple void in the marketplace at the moment.

Brothers Broadleaf
Florida-based Brothers Broadleaf has exploded on to the blunt scene over the past couple years. We were originally put on to them by Adam III at Kushstock a few years ago. In the time since, it was like watching a snowball roll down the hill with all of their varieties becoming a massive hit. Even the discount Dudz line made up of imperfect leaves is considered among the top of the game. You can use discount code “JimiD15” to get 15% off on Dudz.

Preferred Gardens
As we highlighted in our explanation about what makes mixed-light cannabis awesome earlier this year, Preferred Gardens is among the most respected names in all of cannabis cultivation. This can be said for both indoor and mixed-light greenhouse operations. They’ve now taken the act on to Florida with more states on deck, but fear not, the weed here at home is still heat. It feels like it’s been a couple years since we’ve seen something competitive with Preferred in that $35 an eighth price bracket.

L.A. Family Farms
Known for both the quality of their flowers and concentrates, L.A. Family Farms continues to shine locally. The Rainbow Belts rosin the farm won transbay with was some of our favorite hash of 2022 for sure. In addition to all the great product, L.A. Family Farms’ logo is a common sight at cool events around town, its team in attendance or sponsoring stuff based in the more authentic wing of the Los Angeles cannabis industry.

Doja Pak Coffin Candy
Doja Pak continues to revolutionize the way Los Angeles looks at Thursday night, as the strain premiers continue to be a massive hit with L.A.’s headiest. Their latest big new strain is a doozie. Coffin Candy is technically (Runtz x (Z x (Gelato 33 x 18 Coffins)). With Doja going all in on supporting the new flavor, we have high school expectations, given their epic run of curating hitters over the last few years.

Runtz Wraps
Already Runtz up your life? No worries gang, now you can Runtz up your blunts, too. Runtz’ new line of Dominican leaves for rolling blunts is awesome. First off, you get six in a pack, most five packs of blunts I end up tossing one. Since you never have to toss out the loose leaves, it basically works out to two free blunts in every pack. They are also very stretchy compared to most blunts, and forgiving.
PUTTING PURPLE ON THE MAP
We Sat Down With Ken Estes To Get His Take On His Role In Putting Purple On The Map
BY JIMI DEVINE

Purple weed was already a thing when Ken Estes got his hands on Grand Daddy Purple in Mendocino County and brought it back to his grows in the bay area, but that journey south really put the winds in its sails. We ran into Estes during our recent travels to cover Spannabis and the wider Barcelona club scene. He noted he had spent much of the last decade dealing with his health — this is what originally forced him to take his foot off the gas back in the mid-2010s. But his impact to this day is undeniable. We'd catch back up in California to talk purple a few weeks later.

While not as prominent in the era of 40 new exotic flavors a month, GDP, as Grand Daddy Purple would be known to many, still dots menus up and down California. Prior to the rise of dessert weeds following Cookies hitting the scene, GDP was where people went for a combination of flavor and impact. Even Cookies' most famous sibling Cherry Pie was the Durban F1 used to make cookies paired to GDP.

But before all that came to be, GDP was the last stop for those looking for high-impact cannabis that wasn't OG Kush. Some would also argue the purple was a bit more couchlock-heavy than the OG Kush of the time. And while Ken Estes certainly didn't invent purple weed, he changed the demand level, all while living through the dark ages of cannabis.

And he was loud. Few pushed the limits like Estes. During an event in 2010, he opened a dispensary 20 yards from the steps of Oakland city hall. When he wasn't executing his business plans, he was hitting city council meetings, eventually opening one of America's first chains of dispensaries with his Grand Daddy Purple Collective shops in NorCal. His being so "out there" during that era led to frustrations for both his peers and city officials, but folks certainly had a knack for following Ken into town.

Estes's path to cannabis would start after a motorcycle accident at age 18 in the 1970s paralyzed him from the neck down. Prior to the accident, Estes had been playing soccer at an elite level in California. Pele, in town with the New York Cosmos at the time, gave him a call of support from the hospital's lobby so he wouldn't have to fight the crowd there to support Estes in the days following his injury.

Six months into his rehabilitation, he experienced cannabis for the first time with a group of Vietnam veterans who were in the same care facility. This began his lifelong connection to medical cannabis.

"I was a young kid. I was 18. My first personal experience with weed was pretty strong. But I went back to my room and I slept all night. It was the first night in six months I slept all night," Estes told L.A. Weekly.

He recalls how common the idea of marijuana being medicine was. All the nurses and doctors knew. And he certainly knew it was medicine from his first experience. After that first joint, Estes would end up having eyes on the scene for the next 45 years.

"I'm shocked and surprised where this movement went," Estes said. "I thought we were just in California getting it for patients. When I started, it was the gay world that came from fighting for gay rights to we have people dying in San Francisco of AIDS. Why can't they use marijuana? And then Brownie Mary got arrested and that changed the game."

Mary Jane Rathbun was a San Francisco General Hospital volunteer. She eventually became famous for baking hundreds of brownies a day as the AIDS epidemic hit San Francisco hard. Between 1981 and 1992, she was arrested three times for her famous brownies, but her activism helped push Prop 215 across the finish line. Now, Brownie Mary Day is Aug. 25, in San Francisco.
Produced through a solventless process with a combination of heat, pressure, and low temperature, liquid live rosin unlocks the full potential of the cannabis plant. It is one of the purest forms of cannabis concentrate without any additives. Dabwoods’ advanced vape hardware provides precise and consistent vaporization that releases the full flavor and aroma of the liquid live rosin without harshness on your throat, resulting in an elevated experience.
But we quickly turned back to that first rotation in Vallejo. Since he was still fully paralyzed, the orderly had to hold the joint to his lips for him. But over the next few years, he would work to the point that allowed him to gain some independence.

“It really took me years of intense exercise, but I was an athlete. It was three years, four years, before I really started being able to transfer onto my bed. I could transfer (to) the floor, put my knees together, leaned forward over my legs to transfer back to my chair,” Estes said of his rehabilitation.

That moment he was able to transfer on his own signaled to him he would be capable of living on his own. Marijuana was already his lifestyle well before that day. He was still fully paralyzed the first time his friends took him up to Arcata in Humboldt County.

“I found the Skunk. I found Thai Stick. I found people with Columbian Gold and Panama Red,” Estes said of that first trip at age 19. “I found marijuana so awesome that I wanted the good stuff."

He’d run into brick weed. The compressed nugs were far from medicine and he knew it. It further motivated him to search for the best options. That first trip north arose from a friend telling him he knew a guy with sensimilla.

“I said, what is sensimilla?” Estes noted with a laugh. “It’s a seedless weed? And it’s green, lime green? Let’s go there.”

The locals hooked him up, given his medical situation. He scored his first pounds of sensimilla for $100 bucks. That would be about $460 today.

As for the traditionally tight community up north, especially during the early era of enforcement, “My disability broke me in. People were very compassionate and they understood medicine,” Estes said.

Estes noted his original host in Humboldt understood the benefits of medical cannabis and he had too having recently lost his father to cancer at the time.

“He lost his dad. His dad had cancer. He got help from cannabis. They think it dragged his life another two years, but he swears he was happier. He saw other people who were on pharmaceuticals dying. They were miserable, moaning, and his dad (had) weed on the way out. He really is a compassionate man,” Estes said.

Estes pointed to the statement “all cannabis use is medical” he said he gets it, to different degrees. But in his case, it wasn’t really up for debate, and the farmers of The Emerald Triangle showed him a lot of love.

Part of it was because they knew in addition to being for his own medical use, he was paying top dollar. Some of the brown nugs was going for between $30-$50 a pound. Estes wanted nothing to do with it.

“When I got the first Skunk, which was fluffy, I had 24 bags. I sold it for $100 a bag and I would buy that. Next time I bought the Skunk it was $200, the next time it was $400 a pound and after that it was $500 a pound,” Estes said.

We asked Estes as he watched the pound price creep up, when did he know it was time to become his own supplier and get in on the cultivation side? He laughed and said it was right around the time he saw that first $500 pound. He’s already been collecting seeds in film containers and noting what they were.

In 1977, he would purchase his first hydroponic system. He said it took him about a decade to get to the point where he is comfortable looking back and saying he was dialed in. To help put that into perspective, the biggest movie of the year in 1987 when Estes started growing heat was Beverly Hills Cop 2.

The first grow went well, but he missed the part about changing the plants’ light cycle to get them to flower. By the time he did, they had been vegging for a couple of months. The plants exploded and he started selling grams for $5 after the harvest.

“I actually started catching a BART to the 51 bus on Market Street. The 51 bus took me over to Haight Street and Stanyan McDonald’s right there. I’d set up with little tiny bags in there. And I could sell down the street over there for 20 bucks,” Estes said.

This was around 1984 and 1985.

Estes would move his garden outside. That wasn’t a bad thing — in that era, the best outdoor was widely regarded as the best cannabis available, period. He said it took another decade for the best indoor to start beating out the sungrown.

He saw cannabis grown under High-Pressure Sodium lights for the first time when one of his buddies took a light from a baseball field. Eventually, the HPS lights got a bit more normalized, but there was only one place you could buy them at first.

Going in and grabbing more than one light was a red flag to anyone casing the store. Estes and others would send friends and family to grab a light each, until they eventually had enough for whatever size room they were trying to put together.

“If they saw you putting 10 lights in your car, they followed you home. You had a search warrant on your house a week later. So we were all nervous about that,” Estes said.

In the late ’80s, he moves back indoors and starts building out grow houses. The product would eventually end up in Dennis Peron’s San Francisco dispensary. He would go from a 10-light house to a 100-light operation in Oakland in 1992.

While it was a big jump doing 10 times as many lights, he was confident in his standard operating procedures. He also had a lot of faith in his nutrients and pest management ability, too.

When Peron shut down, Estes went on to work a stint at the Oakland Cannabis Buyers Club. Eventually, Estes decided to open up his first dispensary in Concord in 1997. As Estes went from city council to city council attempting to open more shops in places with no ordinances around medical cannabis, he faced a lot of opposition. Some of the very cities that he went to battle with are now booming cannabis commerce hubs.

But back then, he was attacked by 1990s and 2000s NIMBYs, terrified of the thought of cannabis in their town. They would call him things like a street dealer.

“I said you have never spent one time in my house and at my table having dinner with me. You don’t know who I am at all sir, or ma’am. But I was attacked all the time. That was the way they did it back in those days for sure,” Estes recalled.

He said San Mateo was the most vicious municipality of all back then. He estimates he probably opened 20 clubs over the years in different cities.

Estes credits his activism to meeting disabled activist Dan O’Hara. O’Hara rolled his wheelchair across America and the length of the Mississippi River. He was a vocal advocate in Sacramento and Washington D.C., for the disabled. He was even honored by President Jimmy Carter for his efforts, and the Vatican. Estes and O’Hara became friends.

“So I became very, very active, much more of an open activist. It was not a secret. I wasn’t behind the scenes.”

Estes has witnessed every level of cannabis regulation in California. We asked what it was like seeing things go from Prop 215 to the legal era. He thought it was all going to move a lot faster, given how fast he opened a shop in the wake of Prop 215 passing.

“Even though I wasn’t granted a license to have my facility, and I’ve always lasted about one year in these towns, it was enough to start the dialogue, to start the process where other people came behind me pushing, getting attorneys. And next thing you know, there are ordinances,” Estes said.

The conversation would turn toward the purple weed Estes helped turn iconic. Back when he was exposed to purple on his earliest trips to The Emerald Triangle, it didn’t denote some special quality. He’d see the haze Jimi Hendrix made famous in the late 1970s. He said it was good, but it wasn’t great.

But in the early 2000s, he started to notice some purple strains were bomb. The Purple Erkel was high on the list for quality, but it was a very finicky plant to deal with. Estes argues the Erkel is really just Lavender and everyone changed the name.

“I was finicky but when you smoked it, it was fire. It had that taste,” Estes noted.

In 2003, his relationship with purple would change forever. He was showing his
friends Charlie and Sarah, they were Blackfoot and Pomo Indians. The Pomo have a deep history in Mendocino.

The Pomo traditionally lived in what is now the area around Clear Lake, Alexander Valley, and the Russian River watersheds. The Pomo spoke seven different dialects while living in small independent communities that relied on hunting, fishing and gathering to meet their needs.

Estes showed the pair some Big Bud x Erkele from Bodhi. A lot of people thought that was the GDP, but it wasn’t. It did well though, taking home top honors at an early cup in L.A. at one point. This put the purple, and the affection Estes had for it, on Charlie and Sarah’s radar.

During a later trip to visit their home on the Eel River, Estes saw some suits as he was pulling up. He provided the pair with cash from a score he had made that day to keep their home. Charlie would go on to tell some other folks in the tribe about what Estes had done.

Eventually one of the members of the tribe showed Estes what they called Purple Medicine. It was phenomenal.

“He brought it to me. And I had a bright light shined on them. I was like, oh my god, this is amazing. The color was amazing, purple everywhere. But you could have rolled that pound out of the bag like a bowling ball. It all stuck together, “ Estes said, remembering how he came up with the name.

As he started making the trip more regularly, farmers would wait for him south of Garberville to try and catch him before he spent all his money on someone else’s weed. One time a utility truck flagged him down at night, the pounds were inside the bucket you would use to do maintenance on a telephone pole.

Estes said the best GDP came from all over. It wasn’t a particularly challenging plant to grow, so a lot of different people in various conditions were able to make the most of it.

On his way back from up north he would call his friends’ answering machines and just say Grand Daddy Purple and code word that it was on its way south. Eventually, he would open his shop in Oakland’s former Oaksterdam neighborhood. Oakland loved purple.

“People back then thought purple meant it was overdried or always moist or something. And then there was no purple on any menu,” Estes said.

In the earliest days of trying to convert Oakland to purple, Estes would hand out mugs to the people in line at his competitor and offer refunds to people who bought eights if they didn’t like it.

“Pretty soon, within six months, we got E40 and Keak Da Sneak are smoking it. It was on Weeds. It was in Pineapple Express. Snoop Dogg said on Howard Stern it was his favorite strain. It was just this crazy blow-up thing. I did kind of have the idea it could happen, but I didn’t know it would happen as fast as it did,” Estes said.

Estes began collecting seeds from the 200 lights. Every run there would be a dozen or so. When he decided it was time to hunt for a male, he had about 60.

“I backcrossed it to stabilize the genetics. I tried to focus on the traits that I like, the rock-hard buds, the nose, the nice branchings, the dark green waxy leaves, so that we came up with Ken’s GDP,” Estes explained. He argued some people liked Ken’s GDP better than the original. In the most technical terms, Ken’s GDP was essentially Grand Daddy Purple Bx1.

He also took that male and put it in a room with seven of the bomb strains out at the time. Estes said a lot of people won cups with the seeds that came out of the room. He believes a big chunk of what’s commercially viable in the market dates back to that breeding project.

Estes ended up dealing with a federal case for six years. Nobody wanted to touch him at the time.

“You have to almost like, stop doing what you’re doing to get them to leave you alone,” Estes said. “I remember being in their office in San Francisco and asking, why do I have this target on my back?”

One of the things that caused Estes some headaches was his choice to start declaring his cannabis income on his taxes early. He figured if he was paying his taxes, how could they say it was illegal? Well, they certainly took the money no problem.

“I want all my cases, but it took me six years. I had three federal cases. I got raided in 2005, 2008, and 2009,” Estes noted.

One of his shops was caught up in the massive San Diego sweep of 2009 that saw 13 stores shut down. People would tell Estes they weren’t growing the Purple anymore because he was too hot and he shouldn’t come around.

But the more cultivation in urban settings got normalized, the less he needed people up north to help, as GDP would prove to be an indoor strain. When you run it outside, it’s 80% leaves and 20% buds; thankfully it’s the exact opposite indoors. While it wouldn’t quench the thirsts of the eventual three-pound-a-light crowd on the hunt for maximum dollars, it was always heat.

These days Estes is doing his best to keep GDP alive. He recently had it tissue-cultured. While a popular long-term storage method, tissue culture is also a way to clean a plant of diseases. The freshest piece of the meristem is cut before it has a chance to be infected like the rest of the donor plant. Two people are currently running the clean version of GDP.

“I just want to be the brand ambassador,” Estes closed laughing.
What was once underground: vintage weed ads from the heyday

Here in California, a flourishing legal cannabis industry has for better and worse thoroughly mainstreamed what was once underground. But remember it was not always that way, even here—and there are plenty of parts of the country, not to mention the world, where getting caught with weed still spells trouble. In the heyday of counterculture that was the 1960’s, a casual consortium of intrepid culture publications resisted the oppressive squareness, regularly featuring the beauty and joy of cannabis in the magazines' stories, art, and illustrated annotations. The New Book Heads Together: Weed and the Underground Press Syndicate, 1965–73, drops on April 20.

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT

The UPS bloomed from an original circle of five papers in 1966 to over 500 across the world, including Kaleidoscope and the East Village Other. Their one-time director Tom Forcade went on to establish High Times. But it’s the wild, sometimes outright visionary, and frequently hilarious images by scores of artistic weed aficionados from the iconic to the anonymous that make this book a show. The contemporaneous social climate, and the ways in which it foreshadowed how future countercultural movements would leverage social media in the way they once relied on underground publications (action guides, political treatises, how-to instructions, art sales) is also salient. As is the echo of a civil rights movement spearheaded by Black and Latino populations who found themselves excluded from the eventual monetized fruits of their labors and criminalized beyond any proportion—a condition still in urgent need of redress in today’s post-legalization world of weed.

The book does however powerfully demonstrate the effectiveness of art to express the outsider voice, garner and galvanize far-flung communities, and advance and bolster the work of social justice and cultural progress. Hear more about all of this as MOCA celebrates the release of the book on Thursday, April 20, with an evening of documentary clips from the Underground Press introduced by Kramer. Also on display will be original grower’s guides from the era and a selection of Underground Press publications. Learn more at: arbook.com.
I t's fair to say that Carré Callaway, the enigmatic talent behind improvisational art rock project Queen Kwong, has had a rough few years. She was married to the guitarist from Limp Bizkit, Wes Borland, and then she wasn't (and who's to say which is worse?) There have been very public court cases involving her ex, and all of the awfulness that comes with that. And while all of the chaos was raining down, she had to face a life-altering cystic fibrosis diagnosis.

She could be forgiven for being a bit down. In conversation though, she's a fucking delight. Spritely, even. Awkward questions are met with grace and a dab of good humor. She's charming, eloquent, very sweet and hyper-intelligent.

Her new album, not exactly cryptically titled Couples Only, helped. She admits that she was in a difficult place when she entered the studio for the first time at the start of these sessions, but the work was therapeutic. That's not uncommon among musicians, among artists – that their art helps them work through various issues, including internal and external demons. So months later, with the album ready to drop, we ask Callaway a simple, "Are you OK?"

"I guess that's subjective," she says. "If you asked me if I was OK right before I recorded this or during or right after, I wouldn't have been able to confidently say yes. But there's been a lot of time. Even though it's a very raw, emotional record, mostly about the most difficult time in my life, I'm not in that time anymore. I think it's cool to be able to talk about it now because I do have hindsight and perspective, and I'm not as emotional and attached to it as I was going through it or making the record. So I'm OK."

Callaway references "jazz, hip-hop, Suicide and PJ Harvey" when discussing her influences; the dark poetry of the latter is the most overt, but it's the improvisational, feel-based nature of the music that makes it is I do on guitar. A lot of noise. Then the last thing in the day will be lyrics, which means just freestyling. Getting on the microphone and going for it."

As a result of that ultra-organic approach, the emotions that emerge are incredibly raw. Callaway says that she found herself sobbing uncontrollably during the sessions, but all of that deep honesty benefitted the record.

"I was really nervous to let myself feel anything," she says. "I got into day-to-day survival, and I didn't want to jeopardize that. Music has always been personal for me, and emotional. Joe made the point that I was compartmentalizing very well, but that all those feelings weren't just going to go away – they were in there somewhere. They would come back to bite me in the ass. In that way, it was the safest way to confront and process those feelings because it was in a space with somebody like Joe who had been through everything with me and knows me so well, and through art. So I did it, and it was really rough recording it. From the first song I recorded to the last song, there was a huge difference in emotion. There are some things that are really traumatizing and I may not ever get over. But there was a visceral, physical unloading and a weight lifted. Just that alone was huge."

Some have painted Couples Only as a "divorce record" but that's incredibly reductive. There are songs that touch on the relationship that just ended, because of course there are. Who wouldn't be feeling that? But it's not a one-dimensional album at all – it delves deep into Calloway's psyche. Some have accused her of sending messages to her ex on this record, but she says that this is a record written very much for herself.

"I honestly never, ever thought he would listen to it," she says. "His people, his camp, his fans are not mine. There has never been a crossover. So I could have very easily made this record without people even putting two and two together. Of course, it's about a breakup. People make breakup records. It's a lot more than a breakup record, because it's about mortality and myself, growing up and the music industry. Toxic masculinity within the music industry. Being self-aware enough to be accountable for my own stupid, petty shit. It's all encompassing. I think the record is mostly about me and going through what humans go through. The end of something, mortality or betrayal. Just what we face as humans."

Fair enough. The album certainly works as an examination of the human condition in that sense. Fortunately, Calloway has had other endeavors to keep her busy, too. And as we're celebrating 420 here, it's worth mentioning her Bathcult line of CBD products.

“My body was totally wrecked, and my best friend and partner [Christina Master- son] got me into CBD bath bombs, salves, etc. It really helped me. Just the inflammation and my skin – it really helped. We did a deep dive, just researching CBD, all natural full spectrum, non-THC CBD, and the benefits of it topically, as a skin and bath care product, and how we can incorporate other natural elements into those kinds of products. We built this brand from the ground up. Everything is responsibly sourced, organic, natural, all California, except some woods such as a Hinoki, which is a Japanese cedar. It’s our pet project that we’re really passionate about.”

Queen Kwong will release another single this year, and play a few shows without tying herself down to a full tour cycle. That doesn't make sense for her right now. But the healing that has resulted from this album certainly does.

Queen Kwong's Couples Only album is out now.
For Cannisseurs, 4:20 p.m. can be a daily celebration – a moment to take a break, exhale (and inhale!) while letting go of the stresses of the day. Beyond the clock and onto the calendar, April 20 has become a party hearty “holiday” akin to Cinco de Mayo/St. Patty’s Day, and it’s just as fun to celebrate, whether you’re a regular toker or a once-a-year partaker. For all the ups and downs the industry has faced (as covered weekly by our Cannabis Reporter Jimi Devine), weed brands continue to create and innovate. 4/20 is always a good time to explore what’s new and what’s still hot, especially here in California. Here are our 2023 Picks, divided into four 4-20 appropriate sections – 1) shops and experiences, 2) the bud itself, 3) accouterments and 4) lifestyle items – all of which promise to keep cannabis culture growing in more ways than one.

1. What’s in store
The Sunset Strip is known for eye-popping billboards, great live music and comedy venues, and high-end shopping, but it was missing a pot shop until Urbn Leaf came to town. With a significant cannabis history thanks to Cheech and Chong’s legendary Roxy and the city at large.

Speaking of streets that have needed some stoney goods… Hillhurst Avenue in Los Feliz has its share of sushi and coffee spots, but when it came to weed, one had to go toward Hollywood (Greenhouse) or head into Silver Lake (Mota) or Atwater (Green Wolf). Locals who get high need not venture any longer. The Set is here. Taking its name from its vicinity to movie-making, the decor references the film world with tiny Oscar statues and film art displayed about. It touts fair pricing, a multitude of strains and everything from flower and dabs to edibles and vapes, plus weekly BOGO deals and 25% off for first-time customers. weedmaps.com/dispensaries/the-set-hollywood

If you’re looking for something beyond a shopping experience for 4/20, check out Green Street and High Rise’s 420 Experience. Taking place at Two Bit Circus’ elevated arcade emporium in Downtown, it features food, art, games, live comedians and canna-friendly brands such as Beard Bros, Weed Feed, Respect my Region, Skunk magazine, Cannopolitan, Dabwoods and more, in a festival atmosphere. 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. 420experience.com

More Cali experiential excursions come via Green Tours, which offers a day of visiting cannabis “hotspots” in Los Angeles, from dispensaries to grow facilities, glass makers to edibles and coffee spots, but when it came to weed, one had to go toward Hollywood (Greenhouse) or head into Silver Lake

2. You Can Buy Yourself Flower(s)
OK, let’s get to the good, green, sticky pungent point of this darn holiday – the flower, baby. We’re digging Phases for a multitude of reasons. The mood-based brand is marketed by strain and desired level of focus and effect for mind and body. High Frequency (Sativa) promises an energizing and empowering high while Vagabond (Indica) aims for intense relaxation and renewal, while flavors like Super Berry Crush bring a stimulating headrush that’s helpful for procrastination and creative blockages. All the strains are based on overall well-being pursuits and can help target seasonal slumps, fatigue, and the aches and pains of life. 4/20 Deal: If you buy an eighth, you get an eighth + two 1g prerolls at retailers in select L.A. locations. There will also be personalized grinder gifts with purchase at some locations. instagram.com/phaseseffects

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Another brand that’s pure fuego, Humo, touts that it’s “by la raza, pa’ la raza.” Humo means “smoke” in Spanish and the brand is on a mission “to eliminate the stigma surrounding cannabis in the Latino community by celebrating its rich cultural history with the plant and normalizing its daily use.”

Muy Bueno. As a Mexican-American, female-owned California company, Humo makes craft cannabis sustainably grown in Smart Greenhouses powered by its parent company, POSIBL. More info at getHUMO.com.

HIGH POTENCY IS FINE IF YOU CAN HANDLE IT, BUT WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO PREFER SOMETHING A LITTLE MORE CHILL? PARANOIA AND OVERTHINKING ON ONE END, OR LETHARGY AND BURNOUT ON THE OTHER – EACH CAN MAKE FOR A BAD TRIP. FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO FEEL SUBLIME EFFECTS WITHOUT THE RISKS, LOW Dose BRANDS LIKE BOGART ARE FOR YOU.

BRING SPARKLE TO YOUR SMOKING EXCURSIONS WITH SEXY PACKAGING AND THCInfused DISCO JAYS. Bogart’s high-CBD, low-THC cigarettes are cool joint alternatives that satisfy oral and hand fixations and relaxation without the space-case high. Founder Jeff Gonick, who helped launch Seth Rogan’s cannabis company Houseplant, says the cigs are made to be “bogarted,” but the box itself (adorned with mid-century retro packaging) is a keeper.

Alive & Kicking low-dose smokes come in another stylized box with 14 micro slim CBD pre-rolls. They look and feel like filtered cigarettes but there’s no nicotine or tobacco, just organically grown hemp flower with no additives, sticks, stems or seeds. Bealiveandkicking.com

3. Suckers & Sippers

Go Easy brand makes low-dose items, too, all with the “easy, breezy, beautiful, stoner girl” and “no-hangover life” in mind. Check out their girly gummies, pre-rolls and our favorite – the work of art that is its iridescent Cloud 9 pipe – it gets white and puffy as you smoke.

goeasy-shop.com

Smoking out with friends is about community and connection, but post-COVID, we all should be more careful. Germaphobes will love Moose Labs’ MouthPeace. According to the brand, its products decrease bacteria by 5,924%. There’s also a filter that removes unwanted tar and resin for a sharp yet smooth hit. They’re colorful and cute, too.

Moose labs.us

Highness, known for its female-driven maryjane offerings and accessories, is teaming up with the Universal Pictures classic for a new collection of trippy tie-dyes and funky fonts on tees that reference its logos and popular stoner characters. yourhighnessclothing.com/collections/dazed-and-confused

Laganja Estranja remains the queen of cannabis-themed drag and RuPaul’s Drag Race fave and activist has a long list of collaborations. This year, she celebrates 4/20 with her pal Trixie Mattell via a collection of makeup with lots of vegan glam and Spring-y gloss— the Extravaganja line for Trixie Cosmetics, featuring a vibrant shadow palette alongside lip gloss and lipstick, that’ll make you pretty in pot.

trixiecosmetics.com

Laganja herself turned us onto Blunted Objects a few years ago (read her 4/20 picks from 2019 on LAWeekly.com). We’ve long loved their pot leaf-adorned accessories line. From nameplates (“420,” “stoner,” “lit”) to hand chains to earrings, these pieces make a statement. For 2023, the signature high holiday must-have is a sweet micro-pipe necklace hand blown in Hawaii by glass artist Dunhyden. Hanging from a 20-inch chain, the fully functional pendant is something pot lovers will want to rock proudly.

bluntedobjects.com