



The Gay Metropolis: The Landmark History of Gay Life in America

By Charles Kaiser

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A *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year and winner of a Lambda Literary Award, *The Gay Metropolis* is a landmark saga of struggle and triumph that was instantly recognized as the most authoritative and substantial work of its kind. Filled with astounding anecdotes and searing tales of heartbreak and transformation, it provides a decade-by-decade account of the rise and acceptance of gay life and identity since the 1940s. From the making of *West Side Story*, the modern Romeo and Juliet tale written and staged by four gay men, to the catastrophic era of AIDS, Charles Kaiser recounts the true history of the gay movement with many never-before-told stories. Filled with dazzling characters — including Leonard Bernstein, Montgomery Clift, Alfred Hitchcock, and John F. Kennedy, among many others — this is a vital telling of American history, exciting and uplifting.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Charles Kaiser's *The Gay Metropolis: 1940-1996*, a history of gay life centered in New York, is packed with tales of writers and literature. Kaiser provides a kaleidoscope of details and stories that create a vision of how gay people lived, and illuminates a culture that had enormous influence on both New York and American society. Kaiser writes about such luminaries as Gore Vidal, Edward Albee, Truman Capote, and James Baldwin, but the real drive of *The Gay Metropolis* is how gay art and writings transformed the lives of everyday gay people. By the end of the book it is clear that gay artistic influence has transformed the American metropolis for both heterosexuals and homosexuals.

From Library Journal

Journalist Kaiser (1968 in America, LJ 10/15/88) explores how postwar New York City "became the literal gay metropolis for hundreds of thousands of immigrants from within and without the United States" and the city's role in this panorama of American gay social history. Beginning on the eve of World War II, the book depicts each decade via a series of oral histories that present a penetrating portrait of gay life in New York and provide context to the historical events that shaped that life. Kaiser's focus omits some crucial events: the murder of Harvey Milk in San Francisco is barely mentioned; and although a few women are interviewed, lesbians get short shrift. But these are minor caveats to an otherwise superb chronicle of the forces that have molded queer lives, and American society in general, for six decades. Kaiser achieves remarkable coherence and comprehensiveness; highly recommended for all gay/lesbian studies and American history collections.

-?Richard Violette, *Social Law Lib., Boston*

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From Kirkus Reviews

This chronicle of gay life in New York City over the last half a century tells a story of progressive cultural, social, and political vindication. Seasoned journalist Kaiser's earlier book, *1968 in America: Music, Politics, Chaos, Counterculture, and the Shaping of a Generation* (1988), examined a seminal year of modern American experience. Here he takes on six decades, beginning with WW II and its aftermath of sexual openness. One interviewee described it as "a little distilled moment out of time," when the horrors of war sparked a tolerance of and even a zest for the varieties of sexual experience. But when ordinary life and older prejudices resumed in the 1950s, gay activists had to work all the harder to win both self-respect and social acceptance from often hostile parties. Kaiser recounts landmark events in the struggle--such as the Kinsey Report, Stonewall, the American Psychiatric Association's reclassification of homosexuality, the first descriptive use of "gay" (instead of "homosexual") in the New York Times--as well as offering the personal reflections of people then on the scene: mostly gay men (and several lesbians), many of them well-known artists or public figures. He shows a weakness for alluding to the rich and famous (Philip Johnson, Leonard Bernstein, Montgomery Clift, for example) and for stacking up sequences of anecdotes about their private lives. Amid all the glitter, at least one omission is conspicuous: the lack of any mention of Andrew Holleran's defining 1978 book, *Dancer from the Dance*, which ushered facts of New York's gay reality into a fictional work of beauty and pathos still cherished by readers. Nevertheless, Kaiser has done gay men (and others) a service with this brightly toned narrative--many will find a sense of themselves and their experiences in it, warmly affirmed. (33 b&w photos, not seen) (Author tour) -- Copyright ©1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Sarah Maddocks:

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Jim Martin:

The experience that you get from The Gay Metropolis: The Landmark History of Gay Life in America is a more deep you rooting the information that hide in the words the more you get enthusiastic about reading it. It does not mean that this book is hard to be aware of but The Gay Metropolis: The Landmark History of Gay Life in America giving you enjoyment feeling of reading. The author conveys their point in particular way that can be understood simply by anyone who read the idea because the author of this guide is well-known enough. This particular book also makes your personal vocabulary increase well. Making it easy to understand then can go along, both in printed or e-book style are available. We propose you for having this particular The Gay Metropolis: The Landmark History of Gay Life in America instantly.

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Donna Johnson:

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