

THE BIG PICTUREDavid LaChapelle: Artists
& Prostitutes 3247

Taschen, £1,200

★★★★☆

Love him or hate him, there's no denying the impact of photographer David LaChapelle's images. His kitsch, lurid, hyperstylised and highly sexualised photographs of celebrities are unmistakable; he celebrates both the trappings of fame and the kitsch glam of the trailer park with gleeful abandon.

The super-sized Artists & Prostitutes is a greatest-hits collection that presents LaChapelle's most celebrated images in all their colour-saturated glory (many recognisable from the Barbican's 2002 exhibition). It also reveals how often the darker side of LaChapelle's imagination is allowed to take hold: high-fashion



fabulousness is often presented in the face of death, disease and destruction; a Guy Bourdin-style sense of menace lurks in many of his fashion shoots.

Among the celeb images, media whores such as Paris Hilton and Courtney Love pop up with tiresome regularity; LaChapelle's scarily sculpted transsexual muse, Amanda Lepore, also features heavily. But when he catches the essence of his subject, LaChapelle's pictures become iconic.

The cartoonish images of Eminem (pictured) and Lolita-like photos of Britney Spears are perfect snapshots of those artists at the start of their careers; his depiction of Tupac Shakur as a plantation slave pulls you up short with its raw power. It's just a shame there are no caption details or written pieces to supplement this riotous visual assault.

SM