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**ON THE COVER** MEGAN JEAN MORRIS; PHOTO BY CHAD GRIFFITH  
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**editor-in-chief** ian sami hajar  
sami@inkedmag.com

**creative director** todd weinberger  
**associate editor** natasha k. van duser  
**contributing copy editor** autumn whitefield-madrano  
**contributing writer** yall quiñones  
**contributing designer** adam lowe

**publisher** kristine cummings  
kristine@quadramedia.com

**sales** melanie simmons  
melanie@inkedmag.com

**web editor** charlie connell  
**social media manager** rachael dillon  
**social media** kirsten birmingham  
jaime pietzsch  
randy trost  
jen warner

**media manager** stephanie collazo

**inkedshop brand manager** dylan c. houser  
**vendor support manager** steve pearlman  
**fulfillment assistant** joe sperlak  
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**inkedshop marketing** hervé charlot  
**inkedshop store managers** james delaney  
eric mcguire

**catalog manager** kate conaboy  
**office manager** kristen vetter

**international licensing** john cabell, 303-449-9194  
cabell@cueballdigital.com

**magazine office** inked magazine  
12 west 27th st., 10th floor  
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**website** inkedmag.com

**president** donald hellinger  
**chief financial officer** jami pearlman  
**accounts receivable** chris watson  
**newsstand consultants** ralph perricelli, irwin billman  
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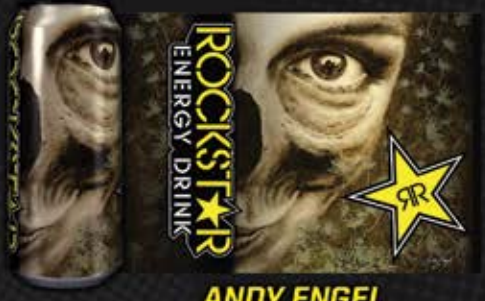
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## JOHN WAYNE

Beesting Tattoo  
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519-728-4824

**When did you start tattooing?** I did my first tattoo on myself with a sewing needle in 1989. It wasn't until 1995 when I got my first real professional setup that I really considered myself a tattoo artist—before that there was just a lot of experimentation. The real reason I got into being a tattoo artist was purely from pressure from someone who was to become a great friend, but at the time he was a total stranger to me. Chris Lauzon (RIP) approached me back in late 1991 to tattoo him. I had no real equipment and he had no tattoos, but he wanted a tattoo so we made up a crude setup to tattoo him with.

**You are a very well-rounded artist. How would you describe your work?**

I am not an artist that started out traditionally in this industry. I had no apprenticeship or real guidance; I just tried my hand at it. If a client showed up I just tattooed whatever I could. So, pretty much I tried just about everything; it's all I knew. I guess most people know me for my realism; it's what I do most. But I really love doing biomech, and especially my own style, which is a very bony-like skull mech.

**You've been tattooing for over 20 years. Your work speaks for itself and**

**there are a lot of great artists who are coming out of Canada. How do you find your style and your place in the tattoo world, especially in the Canadian scene?**

Yes, Canada definitely has made its impact on the tattoo scene. I'd like to say we have created our own little niche in the tattoo world. I guess I am not really sure as to where I find my style in the tattoo world; it's mainly just a feeling of what I do. I mean, I look at others and think, That is a really popular style with such impact. Sometimes I want to try those styles, but somehow when I start to lay down the ink it flows out a lot into my own style unintentionally. In Canada from coast to coast we have such a vast array of styles with artists that kill it every day, from the East Coast to the West Coast. The styles have changed so much. It used to be about flash, but now Canadian artists are showing the world that we have evolved, especially thanks to forums like Facebook and Instagram. It's showing the potential clients what's being done elsewhere—and yes, we can create just like the rest of the world.

**Where do you usually find inspiration?**

I find inspiration in nature, movies, music, and just about any artistic creation. The artists that inspired

me back when I started were Aaron Cain, Jack Rudy, H.R. Giger, Salvador Dali, and Hajime Sorayama. Today the artists that inspire me are Larry Brogan, Bob Tyrrell, Damian Robertson, Derek Turcotte, Steve Moore, Paco Dietz, Toxyc, Dmitriy Samohin, Josh Woods, Nick Baxter, and Evan Dowdell.

**Do you have any set goals on where you wish to take your tattoo work?**

Yes—I would love to learn more large-scale layouts, such as what James Tex and Steve Moore do. I really love that big, bold style where it's more based upon usually one or two images and so vast in size—it looks incredible. And I would love to take my work on the road. I have a goal for the next couple of years to be on the road a lot more and traveling the globe to tattoo and to learn more styles in the flesh.

**Do you practice any other art medium besides tattoo?**

I used to do a lot of airbrushing back in the day, but there is not a lot of time for that now. Nowadays it's a lot of tattooing mainly, but when I do get a chance I own a pretty extensive set of markers, which I really enjoy using to create concepts for future tattoo ideas I would like to do. ■



















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## TIMOTHY B. BOOR

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**What year did you start tattooing?**  
2007.

**How did you originally get into tattooing?** I got into tattooing when a friend of mine became a partner in a tattoo shop. He then asked his partner if he would be willing to teach me to tattoo and then proceeded to talk me into learning. He knew of me as an artist because we were in bands together and I used to draw up the album art.

**You were previously a full-time artist at Paul Booth's Last Rites Tattoo Theater. What was that experience like?** The whole thing was an amazing experience. I was incredibly honored when Paul called me and asked me to work at a shop such as Last Rites. The experience was incredible. Coming from Indiana I wasn't sure if I would end up liking New York, but it's one of my favorite cities on Earth now. The transition was fairly easy to get used to. All I had to do was learn how to tattoo in the dark and slowly evolve into a cave fish. It was very inspiring to work with the crew that I worked with while I was there. Of course Paul Booth is amazing—anyone could learn from him—but you also had Stefano Alcantara, who is one of my favorite people on earth. I also got to be around Little Dragon, Markus Blanchard, and Toxyc, all who are among my favorite artists

in the dark art realm. I still go back there frequently as a part-timer.

**You have now transitioned to shop owner of The Bohemian Tattoo Club and Gallery. What inspired you to open a shop?** When my wife, Kristin, and I originally had to return to Indiana, we were thinking of opening up a private studio. After thinking of it more I knew I'd really miss the collaborative atmosphere of tattoo shops. The only way I wanted to open the full-blown shop was if I could get a couple of guys locally to work for me. So I called up Matthew Davidson and Bradley Pearce and asked them if they would be interested in joining my shop. Fortunately for me, they both said yes and then the decision was put down in stone to open the shop.

**How would you describe your tattoo style?** The style I prefer personally is realism and surrealism, mainly dark surrealism. I'm known for doing a lot of straight-up realism and copy work, like portraits, but I have always been drawn to the more twisted, bent side of things.

**What inspires you as an artist?** I have always been enthralled by the idea of science and religion, and a lot of the ideas that I use in my artwork stem from the far reaches of space and time.

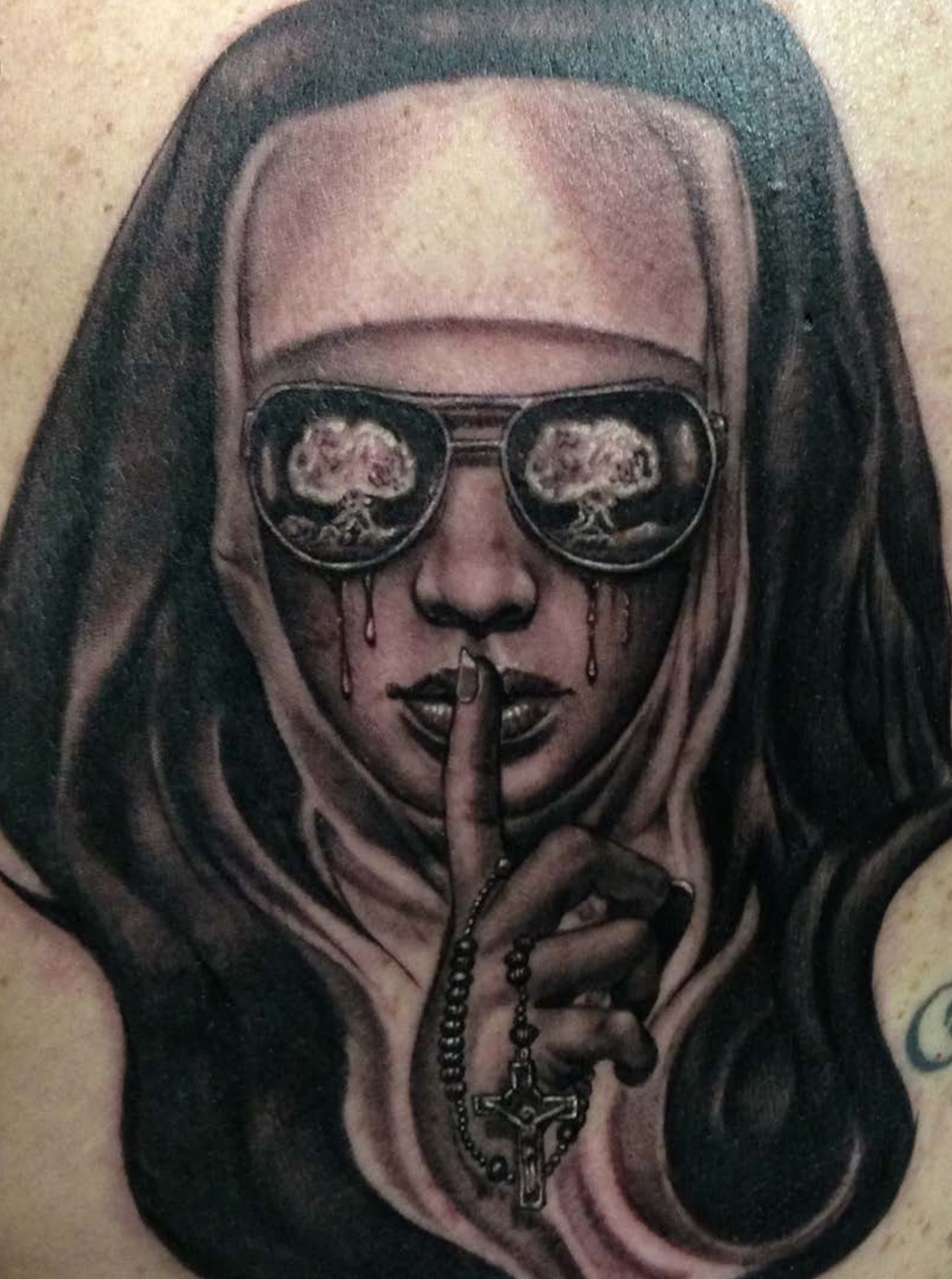
**What separates you from other artists?** The way that I see and interpret things—I feel like in another life I was a symbologist of sorts. The way that I interpret ideas involves a lot of research into different ways to portray a particular subject matter and set different moods.

**What tattoo artists do you admire most?** Robert Hernandez, Victor Portugal, Tommy Lee Wendtner, Toxyc, Little Dragon, Paul Booth, Nikko Hurtado, Carlos Torres, Carlos Rojas, Dmitriy Samohin, Dongkyu Lee, Timmy B., Tanane Whitfield, Jesse Smith, and Vince Villavazo.

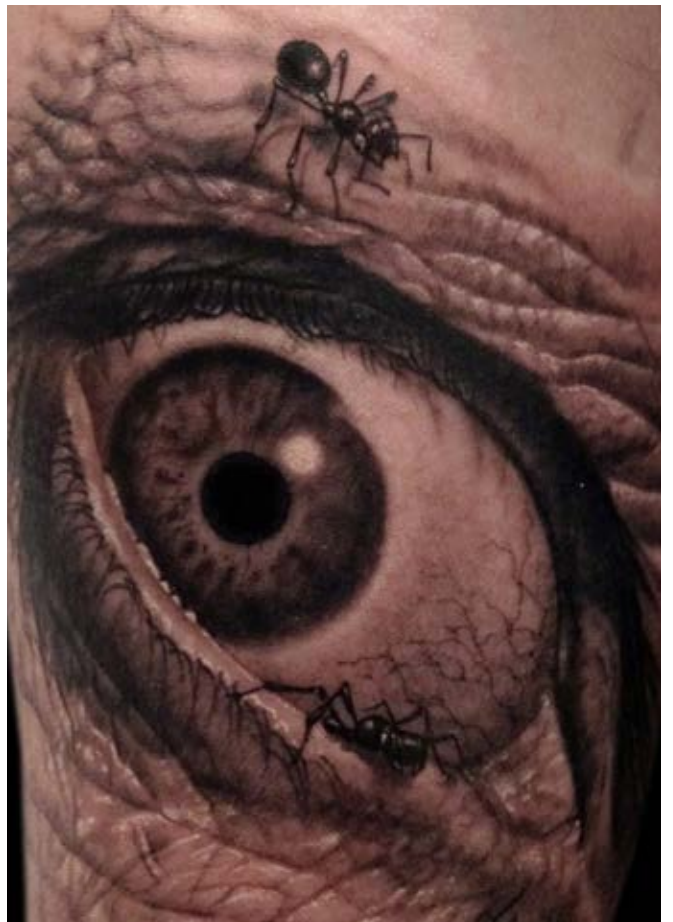
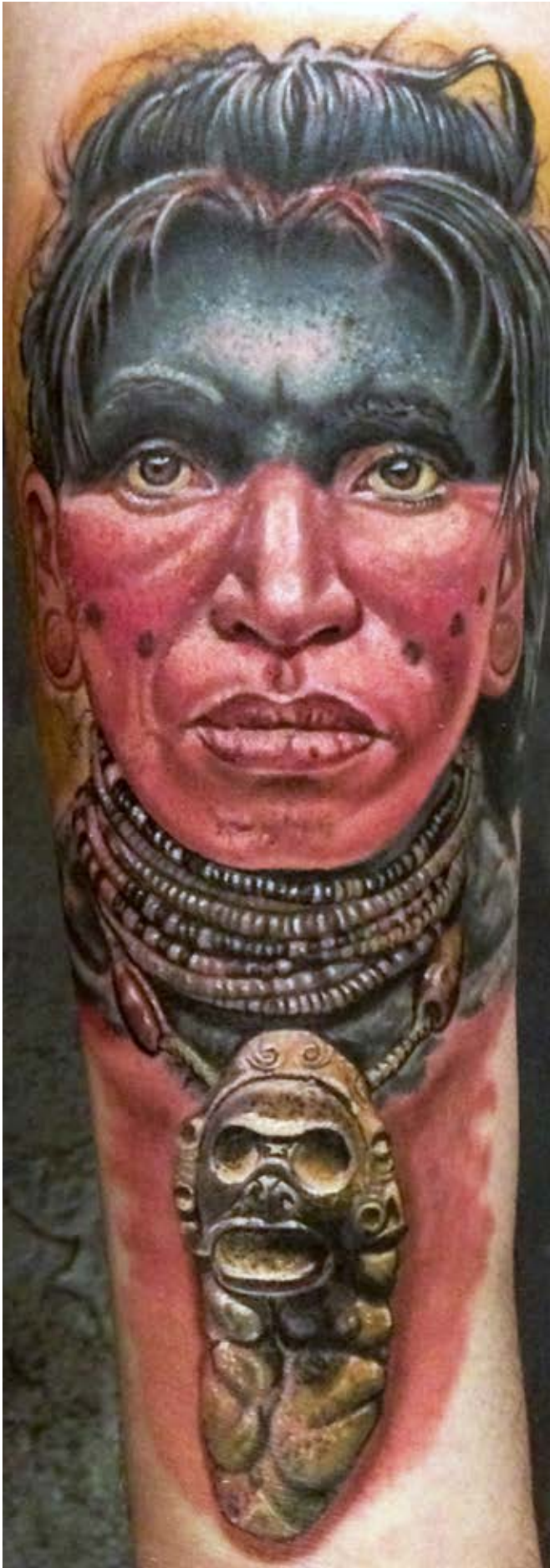
**Before someone gets a tattoo what advice do you give them?** To think deeper into what they want and tell them to think of ways to incorporate something meaningful. If it is not something meaningful, then it should be something that is just so amazing-looking that you will never get sick of it. Also, give your artist some freedom to help you and you will end up getting an amazing piece.

**What has been one of your favorite pieces to tattoo?** It is the sleeve that I am doing on my wife, and I am really liking where it is going. She told me she wanted a sleeve with the theme of love. I have incorporated a lot of Greek and Roman mythology mixed with all kinds of other symbols. ■



















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**How long ago did you start tattooing?**

I started tattooing in 2011 and drawing in 2010.

**How did you get into tattooing?** I was always encouraged to be creative when I was younger so I always doodled and drew. Then in my teens I was real heavy into the hardcore music scene, and all my friends and the bands I looked up to were covered in tattoos. I knew that's how I wanted to express my creativity so I got a job working as a piercer in a shop to get my foot in the door. I did that for five years, then started painting and followed that up by tattooing.

**What was your first shop experience like?** It was good; I worked at the standard "street shop" seven days a week, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. It was a positive place to work at and see how everything worked in the industry. It taught me how to treat and help clients and customers and also taught me what not to do. I would not go back and change anything about the first shop I worked at; it really showed me the ropes of things.

**What brought you to work at Art Junkies?** I always looked up to all the artists that came through and from there, especially Aric Taylor. He was

a main factor in me wanting to learn to tattoo, so when the opportunity showed itself to get tattooed by him, I was on it. I started getting tattooed there and developed great relationships with all the guys, and then the opportunity to start working arose and I jumped all over it.

**Your online bio says you live a straight edge lifestyle—what made you want to choose that path?** Well, growing up I never really was into the partying scene; of course I had friends who did, and I would hang out and just didn't feel it was right for me. Then I got into the hardcore and punk music scene and found the straight edge movement, so I started listening to straight edge bands and just felt like I could relate. I feel it's been the biggest factor in my life; being able to keep a clear head and positive outlook on life has allowed me to focus 100 percent on my art and tattooing. I'm grateful every day for it.

**You do a lot of work in black-and-gray. What drew you to that style?** It's funny, ever since I started tattooing or collecting tattoos I was always drawn to black-and-gray tattoos. I just love the way the shades translate to tattoos and how they age over time. I always get asked why I draw or paint in color

and not specialize in color tattoos. I do enjoy doing color tattoos, but just love black-and-gray tattoos.

**What inspires you as an artist?** As lame as it sounds, Instagram is where I get my inspirations. I follow tons of the world's best artists, and seeing what they do every day pushes me to be better at my art and tattoos. I also draw inspiration from life, music, books, movies, and my fellow tattooists whom I work with every day.

**What tattoo artists do you admire most?** The guys and girls overseas are taking it to a whole new level of tattooing. If I had to name a few of my favorites there would be Bob Tyrrell, Carlos Torres, Josh Duffy, Aric Taylor, Cory Norris, and the whole Art Junkies crew.

**What kind of tattoos do you look forward to doing?** Any tattoo. I just want to tattoo, but I love doing any realistic tattoos, especially portraits. They're my favorite.

**Is there a tattoo that you haven't done yet that you are dying to do?** I'm waiting to get to do one of my original drawings as a back piece, or anywhere. I just want to do some of my original art on someone's skin. 🙏

















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**What year did you start tattooing?** I started as an apprentice in 2011.

**How did you get into tattooing?** After I retired from the army I went back to school and looked up tattoo artists in Korea. I decided to approach Sanlee [of Tattoo Korea], a famous realism tattoo artist in [South] Korea. I just went to her shop and told her I wanted to learn. She was skeptical at first and made me draw and tested me. She tested me for one year. Every day for an entire year I had to bring her one drawing. After I graduated from school, I had more time to devote to tattooing, so she officially made me her apprentice.

**What was your first shop experience like?** I was at Tattoo Korea, one of the biggest shops in Korea. A lot of artists and apprentices with different styles worked there. I learned all sorts of tattoo styles because there were so many different artists who tattooed in so many different styles. My job at first was to clean up and look after all the artists in the shop. But I was very fortunate to have met Seunghyun Jo. He was the shop manager and an artist. He was also the one to help me come tattoo here at Forever Young Ink in Canada. Tattoos are illegal in Korea, so marketing and finding clients were

difficult. So that's why I left Korea. So I said good-bye and I left.

**What conventions have you done recently or are planning to do this year?** My first convention ever was at NIX [Northern Ink Xposure] in 2013. Fortunately for me, I won two awards—large color and most realistic. I feel really lucky and honored. I would really want to go to the London convention and Ink-N-Iron, though. It is my dream.

**How do you describe your style?** Realistic, hyperrealism, but I'm working on something more creative, but still within realism.

**What inspires you as an artist?** I get my inspiration from other artists like Robert Hernandez. His work is very special and unique. Nikko Hurtado is another artist that I respect. He is like a professor to me and has shown me the standard and technique I need to work with. Domantas Parvainis's work is very emotional. His color and style inspire me to think deeper about my own work. Grime has also had a great impression on my work even though he isn't a realism artist. The way he can make traditional and Asian work so creatively is amazing to me. I also have a lot of respect and appreciation for Boris, Jeff Gogue, Shige, Nick Bax-

ter, Bob Tyrrell, and Sabado.

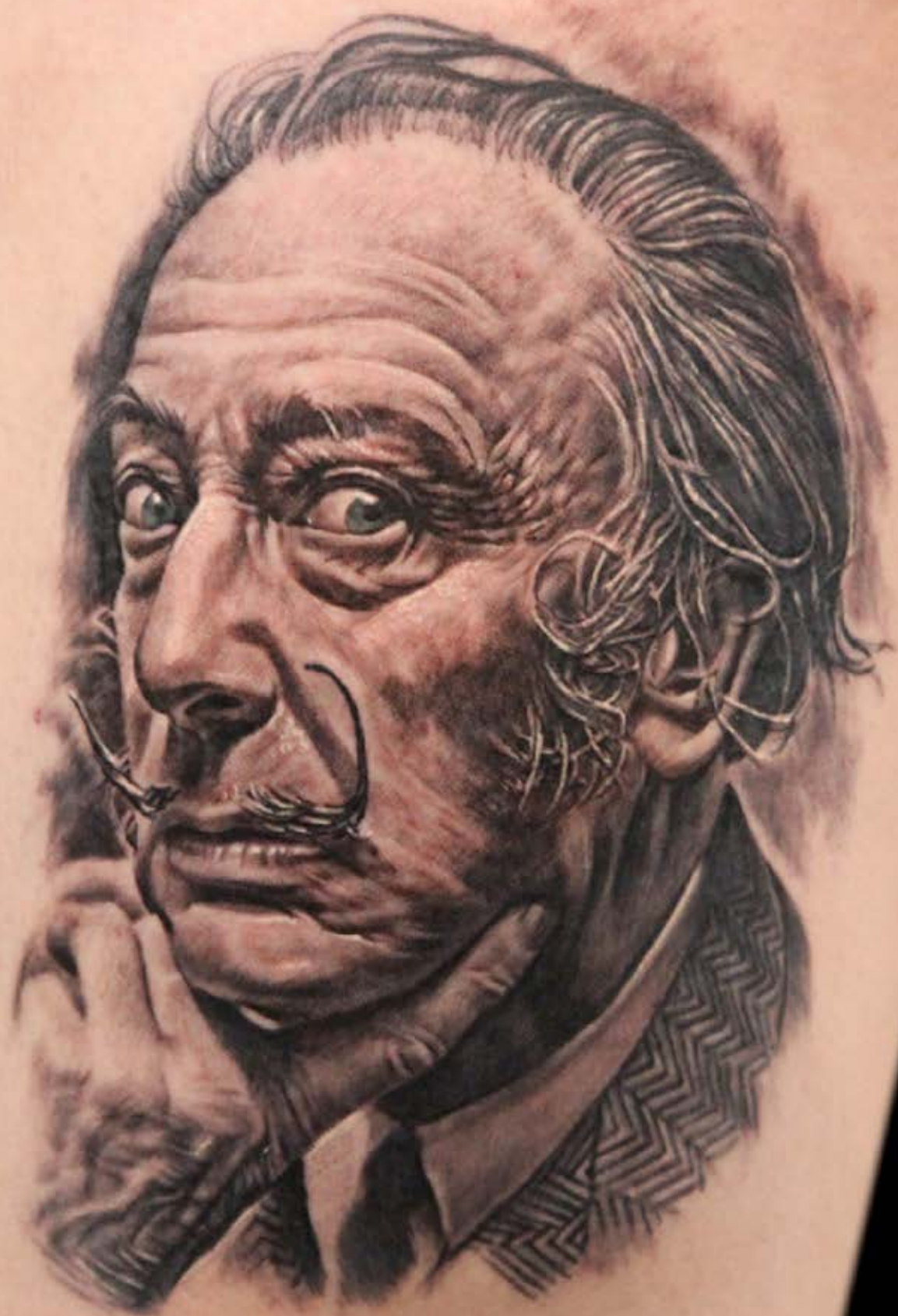
**What sets you apart from other artists?** I don't know.

**What other mediums do you work in?** I've learned a lot of different mediums in my fine arts education—sculpture, oil painting, acrylic painting, watercolor, Asian painting, and photography. But I've been so busy tattooing that I can't do much. But I still try to do some oil painting and photography when I can.

**How has the reputation of tattooing changed since you've been involved in the industry?** Tattooing was very limited; it was all just gangster, traditional, and Asian. I thought so, anyways. But I feel tattooing can be so much more. It can be a fine art. Everything is possible for tattooing. It's artistic; it's unique, special, and very cool. I love tattooing and I'm proud to be an artist.

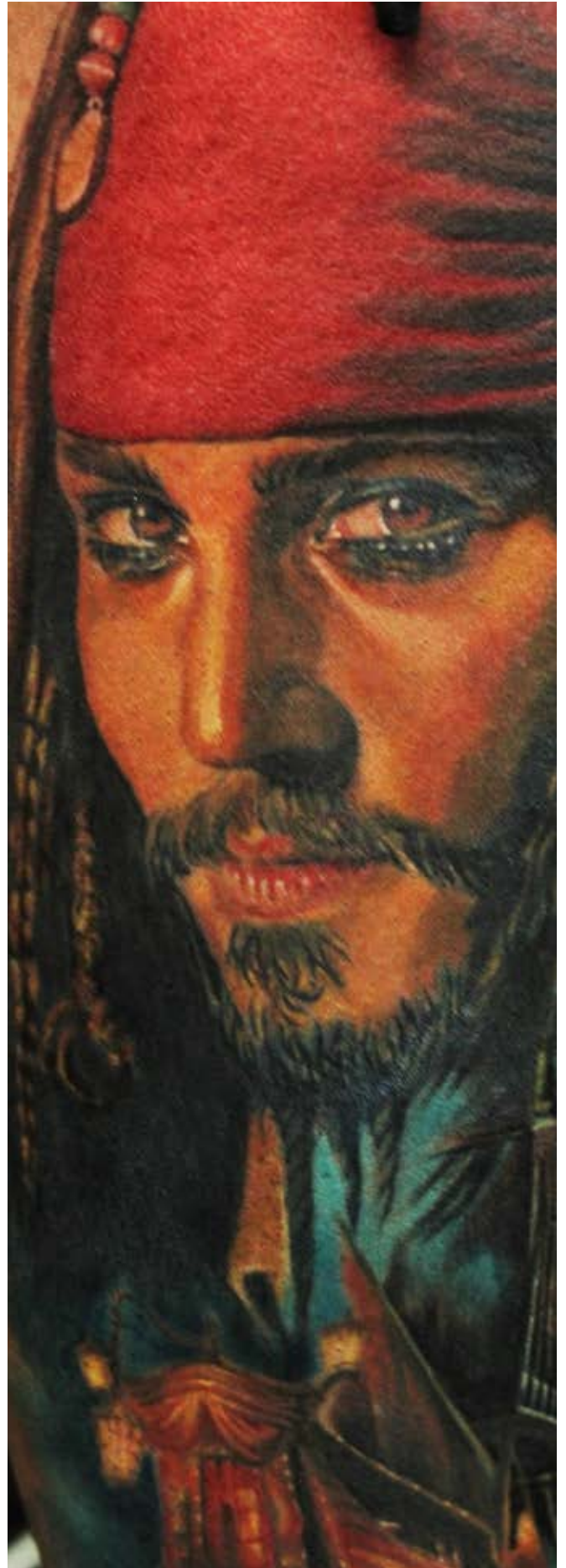
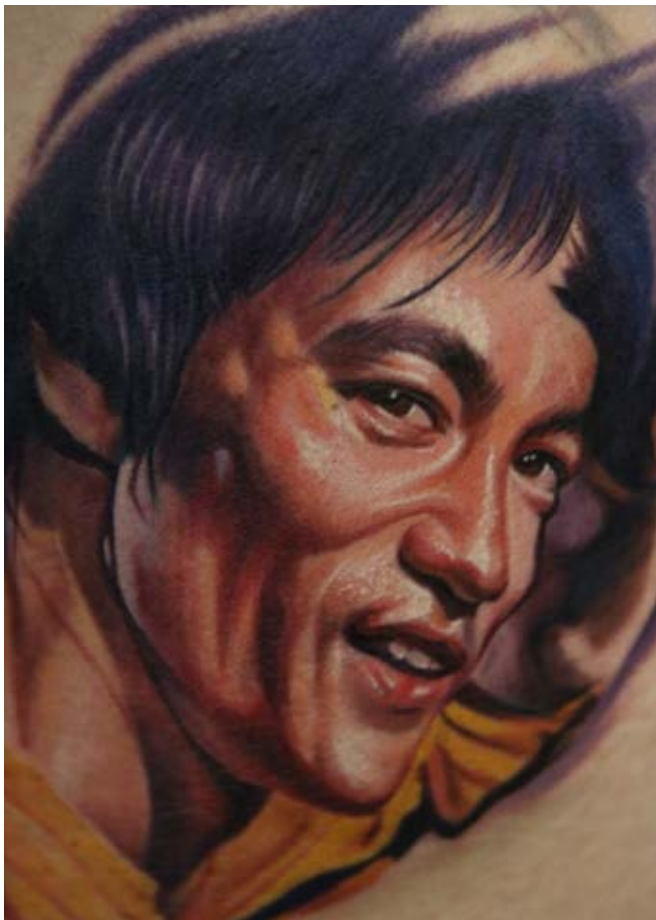
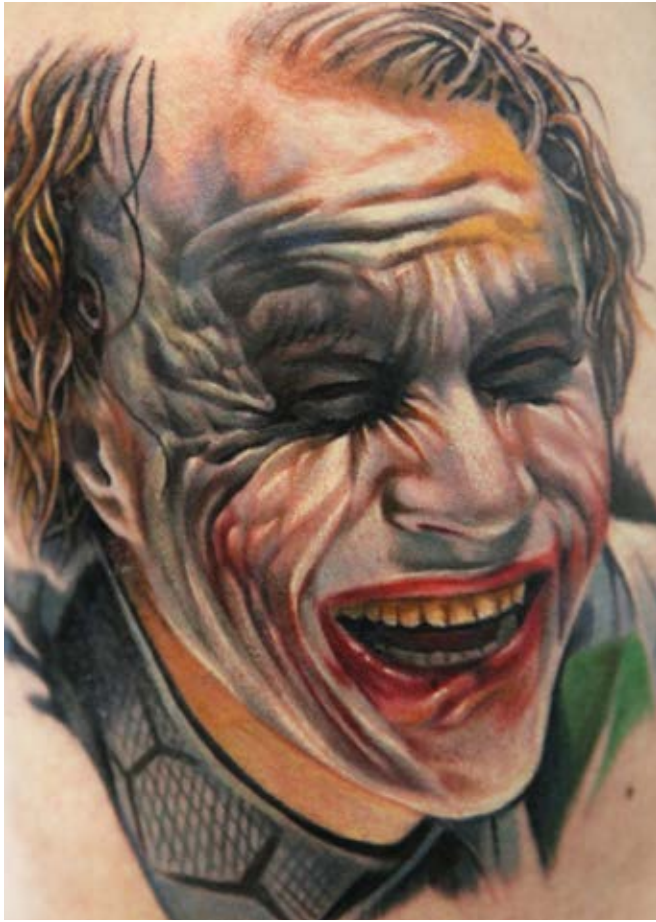
**What was one of your favorite pieces to tattoo?** The Roy Jones Jr. piece. That piece has a lot of meaning. It's tattooed on my boss at Forever Young Ink. I won two awards with it. Roy Jones Jr. reposted it on Instagram. And I feel like the piece was very vivid. I can see his expressions and the breath he was taking in the photo. It was a challenging piece that also paid off for me. ■



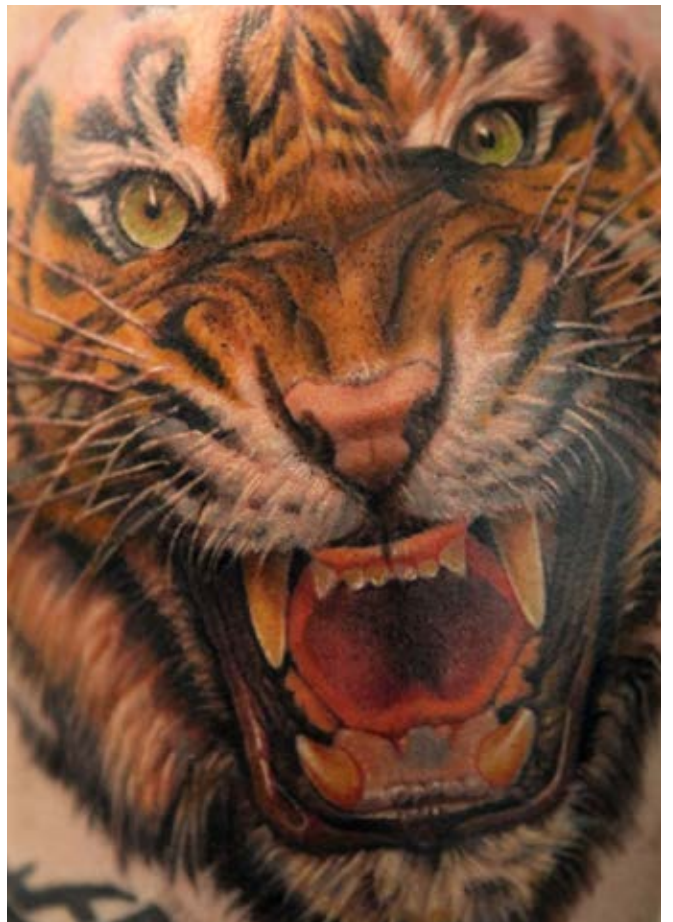
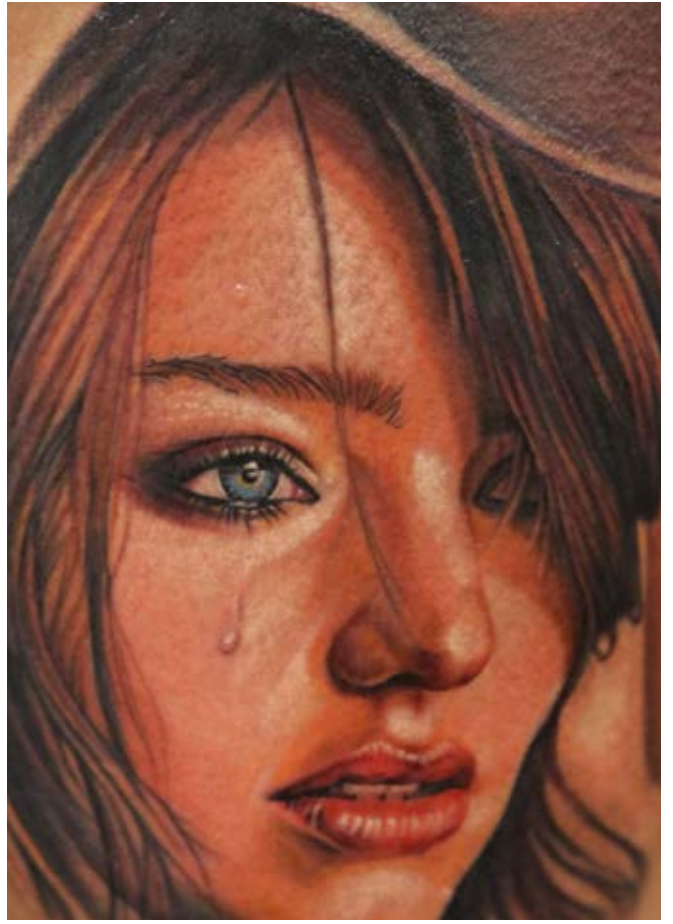














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**How did you first get into tattooing?** At 3 years old they gave me face paint at day care. I got naked and painted my entire body like a skunk. At 5 years old my best friend and I were stripped down and washed with a garden hose; I had gotten hold of a large black stamp and covered her entire body with the wonderful black Talens ink! In seventh grade I was drawing full sleeves and back pieces on my friends with Sharpies ... during class. In college I met a boy tattooing his friends out of his house. I paid attention and as soon as I graduated I moved home and got myself an apprenticeship. Mom cried. I've been coloring all over children and making mothers mad ever since I held my first marker.

**What was your first shop experience like?** Old school. I am so fortunate to have had the apprenticeship that I did. It was tough in every way. They didn't want me there at first, but I just kept coming around with coffee asking if I could clean the floor or bathroom. One day Adam Gordon, the owner and the artist who trained me, wanted to show me how to make needles and asked me to come back the next day! It was glorious. I lived for nothing but that shop; it was all I had. I lived in a single room and shared a bathroom with some other apartment; I ate leftovers that my friends gave me; and I showed up every day eager and excited to clean motorcycles, draw pictures, and study my Huck Spaulding tattooing book.

**What brought you to open your shop, Painted Soul Tattoo?** Opening my shop was not really a plan. I had moved to a new area and didn't know anyone. I just wanted a little hole in the wall where I could tattoo. The smallest place I could find to rent was too expensive for one person, so I found someone to share it with and it turned into a shop.

**What qualities do you look for in an artist to hire at your shop?** I need to see that someone is committed to their artwork and to growing and improving as an artist, and that they are interested in understanding what their client is looking for. Also, I am a straight shooter, so they can't be a crybaby or I will hurt their feelings—not a quality, just a fact.

**You work mainly in realism/surrealism. What led you in that direction?** Surrealism is simply an expression of how my mind

works. One thought or feeling is always twisted right into another. Realism ... I'm not sure why I'm a realist. When I picture things in my mind it's with real lighting and textures. When I am beginning to imagine a piece of work it's sort of like how my dreams are: real images but in an unrealistic setting or context.

**You work closely with Nikko Hurtado, the tattoo artist who did your back piece. What was the idea behind that?** Three years deep, I finally attended my first convention as a guest. It was Hell City Arizona. I saw Nikko Hurtado's work and my whole outlook on tattooing changed! I think his work sculpted an entire shift in thinking throughout our industry. So as you can imagine, it is beyond an honor to have him now as a friend, mentor, and artist working on my back! We've all seen Nikko do portraits, but I wanted to set him loose on a composition, something larger. When I told him my idea was a Little Red Riding Hood and Big Bad Wolf back piece, his eyes lit up! The idea behind the fairy tale is that we all have demons or a dark side. I think Little Red is facing a demon and she is trying not to be fooled by it. It's all a metaphor. Nikko puts his whole heart into his work. I tried painting him in my own heart in return to say thank you. My painting *The Apology* was a gift to him. It's the same subject as my back piece, just expressed by different subject matter. For example, in my back piece the wolf is wearing a costume and in my painting the jewelry box is full of costume jewelry. The only thing of value in that box is my heart. This is a lesson Nikko has actually taught me. He is one of the kindest, most humble and caring people I have known. So needless to say, working closely with Nikko to create this piece has been my honor and an experience of a lifetime.

**You were recently featured on *Tattoo Titans*. How was that experience?** It was crazy and fun. Kind of ridiculous circumstances to really do my best work, but I was relieved when I saw the show. My tattoos looked good, my clients were happy, and I felt the network did a great job presenting me the way I really am. I was nervous they would edit material to try and create a character. I guess I was character enough, though [*laughs*], 'cause they pretty much just let me be me.

**You went to school in Syracuse in order to study design and fine arts. How has that**

**particular background helped you in your current tattoo work?** My background in design plays a fundamental role in how I approach projects. Even the fact that I call every tattoo a project sets a different tone. Instead of "getting a tattoo" my clients experience creating art. It's a thoughtful process full of brainstorming. As a designer, I was trained to back up and play around a bit before deciding what product actually would meet a user's need. Usually people come to me and say what they'd like to have tattooed on them. I usually ask them to back up and start with what inspired them to get this tattoo. I try to listen to the things left unsaid, not just the part they know how to express. Then I ask them to allow me to brainstorm some subject matter that might express the picture as a whole for them. This process allows for originality, artwork that I am excited about making, and a product that is more uniquely theirs than anything they ever pictured.

**What artists do you admire in the current tattoo world?** Nikko Hurtado, Rember [Orellana], Dmitriy Samohin, Kelly Doty, Liz Cook, Christian Perez, Paul Acker, Carlos Torres, Josh Duffy, Stefano Alcantara, Jose Perez Jr., Bob Tyrrell, Paul Booth, Carl Grace, Tommy Lee Wendtner, Robert Hernandez, Toxyc, Jeff Gogue, Tofi, Teresa Sharpe, Sarah Miller, David Corden, and Benjamin Laukis. There is also a group of painters associated with our industry that I am influenced or inspired by: Michael Hussar, Kevin Llewellyn, Shawn Barber, Camila Rocha, and Sergio Sanchez.

**How do you think the reputation of tattooing has changed since you've been involved in the industry?** Well, I think one of the coolest things has been the emergence of the "collector," a client who is dedicated and intentionally collecting works of art by amazing artists. As the artwork that our industry is producing becomes more sophisticated, so do our clients. The reputation of tattooing continues to grow and expand, challenging the accepted rule that fine art hangs on museum walls.

**If you could tattoo anyone with any design, what would it be?** I'd like to tattoo a chest piece on the President of the United States, a piece that describes his job. Doesn't matter who the president is at the time—it just would be a really intense piece of art, and I'd love to see a president with a big old chest piece! 🇺🇸



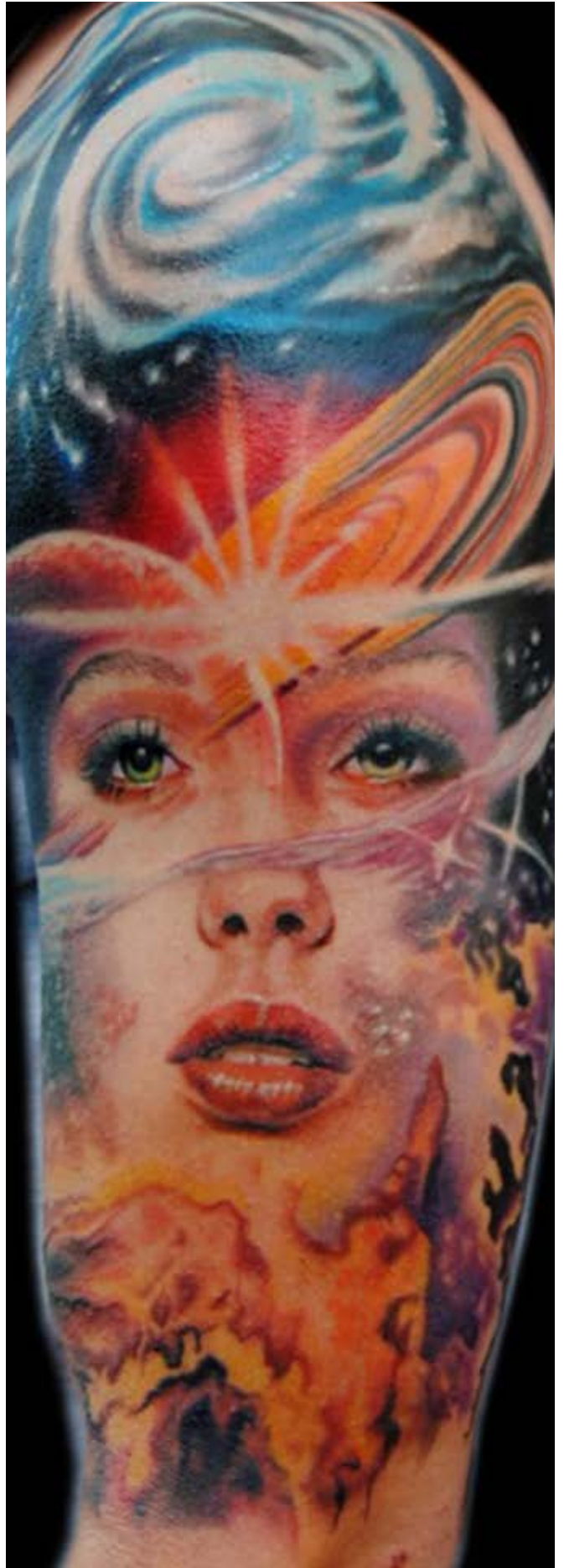




















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## PIOTR GIE

Rock 'n' Roll Tattoo Studios  
9 Victoria Rd.  
DD1 1EL  
Dundee, Scotland  
rocknroll.tattoo-scotland.com

**What year did you start tattooing?** I did my first tattoo about five years ago on my friend. We did quite a decent-sized koi fish on his thigh. It wasn't awfully bad; unfortunately—or luckily—we never finished it. After that tattoo I knew I had a long way ahead of me to get where I am now.

**How did you first get into tattooing?** I've liked tattoos ever since I was a wee boy. My brother had a few, done at home, and I decided that once I grew up and started earning money, I would get one too. I became good friends with the guys who I was getting tattooed by and they offered me the job to work reception. I spent all my time at the studio, taking photos and making videos of guys tattooing. After about two years behind the desk and doing a few small tattoos I thought to myself, Why not try to make a living out of it?

**What brought you to Rock 'n' Roll Tattoo Studios?** After leaving the studio where it all began, I opened a studio of my own with my pal in our hometown. It didn't work out the way I imagined it, though. So I made the decision to leave and try somewhere else. I went to guest spot in one small studio in England, and then luckily I got a message from the owner of Rock 'n' Roll Tattoo and Piercing Scotland, who asked me to work in one of his branches. I checked out

who was already working there and I knew I couldn't miss such a chance. I was very lucky.

**What is the tattoo scene like in Scotland?** The Scottish tattoo scene is a big part of the British scene. There are a lot of young and very talented artists working in a variety of different styles. The tattooers themselves seem very nice and friendly, and I didn't really come across jealousy or any negative competition. There are lots of conventions in the U.K.—some on lower, some on higher standards where you can meet worldwide-known artists. The customers are mad and really open to ideas proposed by the artists, and they aren't scared to cover big parts of their bodies in ink.

**How do you describe your style?** It's tough to briefly pinpoint the style I work in. It's mostly neo-traditional, illustration-inspired, even cartoony style. I try for my designs to be unusual, crazy. Mostly I care about getting the "sticker" effect and for the tattoos to be bright and colorful.

**What led you to work in a more color neo-traditional style?** I started from doing simple traditional tattoos. With time I started getting into the industry more and more. Everything changed when I got to Rock 'n' Roll; I met a bunch of really good artists and I saw what a good tattoo really looks like. I

would watch the guys work, as well as the guest artists who would visit our studio. I would analyze and practice new tricks. I fell in love with color work. Creating such colorful pieces is positively perceived by the customers who are open to my suggestions.

**What tattoo artists do you admire most?** I mostly admire the artists who have found their own path and then stick with it—Mark Halbstark, Davee Blows, Bam, Timmy B., Nathan Evans, and many, many more. I look up to everyone who creates something new and puts a lot of effort and passion into their work.

**What kind of tattoos do you look forward to doing?** I would like to focus on custom, colorful work. I really enjoy tattooing animals; they bring an unlimited source of ideas and suit pretty much everything. I hope that one day I will manage to create a big gallery of animals. To be honest I would be happy to just stick to tattooing them all the time.

**What has been one of the strangest pieces you've tattooed?** Ha, there is that one tattoo. When I heard what I was supposed to draw and tattoo I really got quite surprised. The customer asked me to tattoo a giraffe wearing a pink turtleneck and high heels! What a crazy idea! I love them. It was a challenge and I was really happy with the outcome. 🐘





















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## JOHAN FINNÉ

Evil Twins Heavenly Tattoo Studio  
Karlsgatan 10, Helsingborg  
Sweden  
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**What year did you start tattooing?** I started as an apprentice in 1995.

**How would you describe your style?**

I have always been interested in all styles. I love combining stuff. I think it was more than 10 years ago that I started to mix them. I tried to combine oriental, comic, and realistic, but every style needed to be changed a bit for it to work together. The oriental was not so oriental; the realistic was not so realistic; and the comic, not so comic. I was breaking a few rules and improvising to find new things. Then later introducing surrealism into it just felt natural.

**What kind of imagery do you mostly enjoy doing?**

I love to do everything because otherwise I get a bit bored. At the moment I have done a bit too much oriental and realistic so I'm really looking forward to going into some biomech again. I go into periods when I do more of one style and then I change to something else. I'm trying to always find new angles to approach a tattoo to make it different. But my heart goes out to realistic/surreal and oriental if I had to choose.

**Do you enjoy incorporating realism like portraits into your work or do you prefer to create your own characters?** I

love realism. I don't mind doing baby portraits, but of course the darker and more evil things are more fun. But I prefer working in black-and-gray because it just goes so much faster. I want to cover as much as I can in a session. My plans next will be to combine color traditional and black-and-gray realistic. That has been in my mind for a couple of years now, and it's time to go for it.

**Where do you find your muse?** Back when I started I had a lot of artists who influenced me, like Filip Leu, Guy Aitchison, and Robert Hernandez. But as time went by I took more and more influence from the real world. I take a lot of photos to find the reference I'm really looking for. Everything around us is inspiration. You just have to take one more look and think, Can I use this somewhere? My muse is also my customers, because they make me think in other directions than I normally do. It's easy to get caught in your same old tracks, so when a customer comes in asking for something that seems impossible it always creates a good challenge.

**Which would you say are your favorite conventions?** I really liked Hell City. Everyone was really nice. I think it has been my favorite show so far and would like to go again in the future.

But when it comes to conventions, I just don't know. At the moment I'm a single father of two small boys who are keeping me busy. They really need me and I always want to be there for them. I know that there will be a time in the future when they are going to be teenagers, hating me and just wanting my money. *[Laughs]* I'll start going to conventions again once they get bigger.

**Aside from tattooing, are there any other hobbies, talents, musical skills, or anything you enjoy doing when you are not tattooing?** When I don't have my kids I try to work out as much as I can. I'm trying to pick up boxing again, but mostly CrossFit. But at night I paint, do charcoals, and play around with different media. I'm playing around with Photoshop and cameras. I do everything I think is fun because if you are having fun when creating, everything will turn out great. Fun is the key for me.

**Are there any projects you are currently working on?** At the moment I'm working on a series of 10 paintings with men with tattoos and beards. It's a project I work on with a friend who is a photographer. He takes the photo and I interpret it as I see fit. I only have one painting done and many left to go. ■





















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## JOSE "MOTA" ORTEGA

Toa Alta, Puerto Rico;  
San Antonio, TX  
motastattoo.com

**What year did you start tattooing?** I started in 1995 for fun, but took it seriously by 1998.

**How would you describe your style?**

I would say that my style is versatile thanks to my ADD. Because I get bored doing the same work over and over again, it challenges me to be creative in many other levels. However, my preference is black-and-gray, and realistic new school.

**What type of tattoos were you doing back when you started?**

When I started, like any other newbie, I was stuck with lettering, tribals, butterflies, suns and moons, dolphins, etc. At work I had to make the quota for the boss, which meant commercial tattoos. So in order for me to grow as an artist I had to work long hours at home after work, giving tattoos away to convince my friends to lend me their skin to try new things that people most likely wouldn't do or even pay for.

**You are good with portraits and realism, but lately there has been more custom work coming from you. Is that the direction you are moving in?**

Definitively. I want to concentrate more on drawing and custom work. This way I don't have to follow any "rule" in particular but can let the imagination and art flow, making each one of them a unique piece.

**When do you decide to freehand versus sketch a design on paper?**

The difference is the freedom it provides. When creating or brainstorming the art I take many factors into consideration in order to choose which I will use. Amongst them: the area of the body where I'm going to work on, and the type of work I'll be doing. For example, stencil is something I use when I want to keep a correct symmetry and details, like when working with portraits. On the other hand, I work freehand when the idea is formed in my head and the client is willing and trusts my artistic judgment. Most of the time I sketch the idea for the client to have a sneak peek, but never so detailed like when drawing on the skin.

**What conventions do you regularly attend, and what countries do you usually guest spot in?**

Consistently I visit the Miami, New York, Oregon, and Panama tattoo conventions. My guest spots are Puerto Rico, Texas, New York, Panama, and Mexico, and I'm looking forward to adding more.

**Do you practice any other art media?**

Yes, I do practice a little bit of everything, but the ones I like the most are oil painting, carbon, and color pencils.

**Are there any sort of new projects we might expect to see from you soon?**

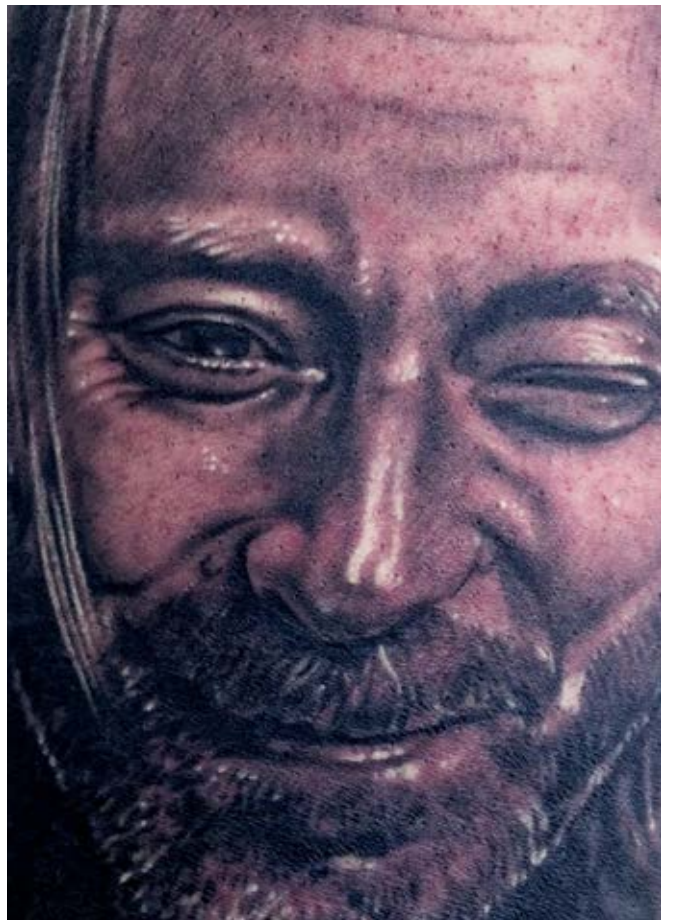
At the moment I'm concentrating on traveling to different shops for guest spots and conventions around the world. I'm sharing with different artists, gaining more knowledge, and expanding my horizons. In the near future I visualize opening a shop in San Antonio, where I currently live. Among other projects is The Out of Step Books, which I participate in with great artists from different parts of the world. ■■





















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ANDRÉS  
ACOSTA

Red Dagger Tattoo Studio  
16815 Royal Crest  
Houston, TX 77058  
andres@acostatattoo.com

**What year did you start tattooing?** I had a really rough start in late 2009 back in Venezuela.

**How did you get into tattooing?** One of my best friends, Marco Luzzagni, had this little shop called Inkdustry in Barquisimeto [Venezuela]. I went there to get my second tattoo, a black-and-gray portrait of my mom. After that, I started hanging out at the shop and really getting into the idea that tattoos were awesome! Since I was a kid I have always been interested in art, and all I did was draw. One day my brother said to me, “Why you don’t ask Marco and see if he can teach you how to tattoo?” and I thought that I had nothing to lose—so I went for it!

**What was your first shop experience like?** It was pretty rough. Every day was something new for me. I didn’t speak any English and it was really awkward. I was learning by mistakes and I was nervous all the time, thinking I was going to get fired sooner or later. Sure thing, I got fired after a couple of months—but the cool thing about it was that I had built my shitty portfolio, and that was my ticket to getting my next job.

**What brought you to Red Dagger Tattoo Studio in Houston?** I’d always looked up to Shawn Will’s work. So I got tattooed by him and at the same

time he asked me to cover his booth for a week in the shop he was working at before Red Dagger. There I met Abel Sanchez, Steven Compton, and Remo Grilli. They are all amazing artists and supercool dudes, and luckily for me we became friends. They opened this badass studio, and one day my buddy Aaron Springs and I were asked if we wanted to join the family.

**Your work features a lot of roses in a very unique style. What led you to do roses in this way?** I’ve always been interested in surrealism; this has been a real big influence on the rose morph ideas. Since the early stages of my career I’ve loved realism, but I wanted to be more creative with it, have a little bit more artistic freedom. So I was doing a lot of roses, and one day I was reading about a surrealism technique that works by mixing two or more random ideas, making a single concept. That’s when I thought it could be cool if I mixed random stuff with roses.

**What inspires you as an artist?** I guess what inspires me the most is nature. Also my wife is a huge influence in my work; she is like the other half of my brain.

**What tattoo artists do you admire most?** Nikko Hurtado, Mike DeVries, Phil Garcia, Nate Beavers, Shawn

Will, Rich Pineda, Nick Baxter, Jeff Ensminger, Jesus Sayalero, and Russ Abbott.

**Is there a tattoo that you haven’t done yet that you are dying to do?** I try to do something different with every tattoo that I do, but I would like to do an arepa rose morph for my country. If you don’t know what an arepa is, look it up; they are delicious.

**What has been one of the strangest pieces you’ve tattooed?** I’ve tattooed strange stuff, from a monkey with a revolver to a lip with a zipper morphing into a rose, but I think the weirdest one was a unicorn fetus inside Jell-O with a rainbow around it. 🍌



















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## PHIL GARCIA

Ink Philler Studios  
832 N. Ventura Rd.  
Port Hueneme, CA 93041  
info@inkphiller.com  
805-486-9500

**What year did you start tattooing?**  
I started tattooing April 2001.

**How did you get into tattooing?** My buddy felt that I had the potential to be a tattoo artist so he kept badgering me to start tattooing. I was so reluctant to give in to tattooing since I didn't even know where to start. So I did like any other scratcher would do back then and ordered a set of Kaplan machines off the back of a tattoo magazine and went at it. I was nervous as hell and never expected to reach the level of tattooing that I am at today.

**What was your first shop experience like?** My first shop experience was seriously scary as hell. My first shop was The Ink House in Ventura, CA. Big Bob had hired me. I asked him what I was to do when I showed up for my first day of work. He said, "Set up your station and start tattooing." I was confused and nervous as hell. I didn't know anybody that worked there and wasn't introduced to any of the other artists. I didn't even know what station I was going to work at. So I arrived for my first day at the shop, set up in the first station that looked available, and grabbed the first walk-in. I tattooed this angel on some dude who eventually tapped out on me and I never finished. I was way out of my league. Big Bob later that day told me that he was glad

I manned up and took the job.

**Do you have any special training?** I really have no special training as far as art goes. I do have military training that has helped guide me through all this time. Motivation, discipline, honor, courage, and commitment have helped me achieve this level of tattooing.

**How do you describe your style?** I guess I am in the realism category but I'm still not quite happy with how realistic my tattoos appear. Compared to the photo reference, it's still missing something. I will always try to get it as close to real as I can but sometimes real is a bit boring. I don't mind applying my artistic license to my tattoos. Every now and then I will dabble around with some new school tattooing.

**What sets you apart from other artists?** I think the biggest thing that sets me apart from other artists is my subject matter. I love nature and really enjoy tattooing nature-related things. My attention to detail is also what separates me. I try my hardest to put every ounce of detail and texture into my tattoos. I think that the references that I choose to use are also different. I try my hardest to find the perfect reference every time. My criteria for choosing a reference are rather strict. My color palette is also very different. I always try to apply my

artistic licensing to all my work.

**You served your country for just under nine years. How has that helped you get where you are today?** I think my time in the service has helped me take my life seriously and give me the strength to overcome all the obstacles in my life. Tattooing is easy compared to some of the things I had encountered in the Navy. As stated previously, motivation, discipline, honor, courage, and commitment. It also taught me attention to detail.

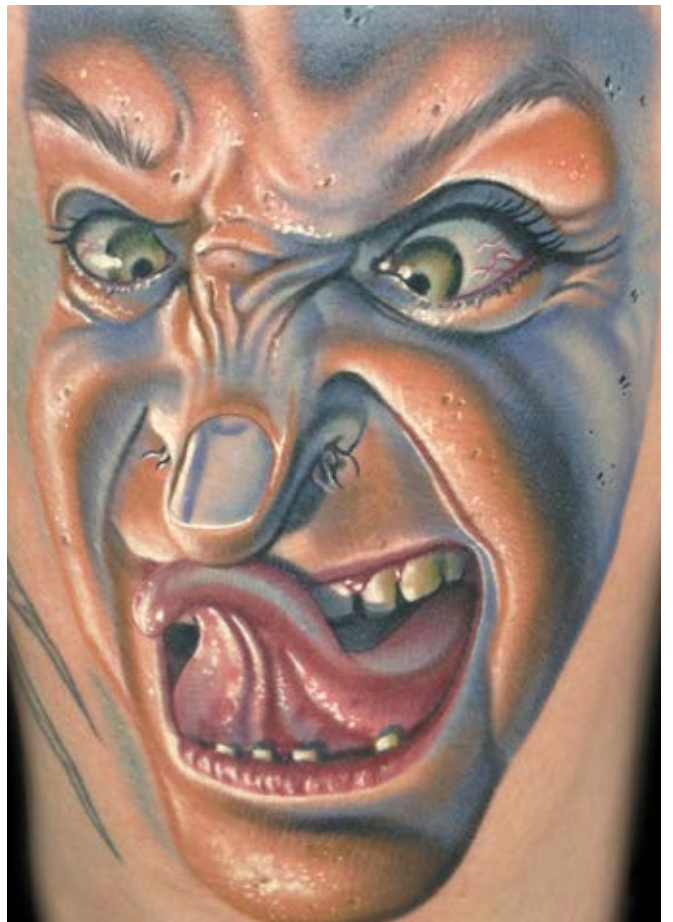
**What other media do you work in?** Prior to tattooing I liked to do graffiti art. As of late I'm trying to do more oil painting. Painting allows me much more flexibility. I have much more freedom with painting than I could ever have with tattooing.

**What tattoo artists do you admire most?** Guy Aitchison, Tom Renshaw, Paul Booth, Filip Leu, Shige, Nikko Hurtado, Frank La Natra, Rich Pineda, Mike DeVries, Ty McEwen, Dmitry Samohin, Boris, Domantas Parvainis, Timmy B., Emily Rose Murray, John Anderton, James Tex, James Kern, Cory Kruger, Paul Acker, Fernie Andrade, Chente Rios, Andrés Acosta, Paul Dobleman, Myke Chambers, Matt Jordan, Dongkyu Lee, Nicklas Westin, Tanane Whitfield, Dave Tevenal, and many more. ■





















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**Chad**



**Chris**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN TULLY



**The shop artists and crew (left to right):** Kelly Lehoux (shop manager), Matthew Brown, Chad Chase, Dan "Man Hands Dan" Kelley (artist and piercer), Chris Chubuck, Rebecca Coleman (massage therapist)

**What sets Venom Ink apart from the average tattoo shop?**

**Chris Chubuck:** I think our drive and determination really put us ahead of the game. Venom Ink is a custom tattoo studio. Everyone here is artistic as hell, so we thrive on creating original tattoos for our clients. I'd say that 85 to 90 percent of our customers are people who come in with just an idea. They tell us their thoughts and leave it up to us to work our magic and bring those ideas to life. It's a really cool feeling knowing that people have that much trust in you.

**Dan Kelley:** We pride ourselves in putting the utmost time and care into our work, whether it's an infinity symbol or a full-blown sleeve.

**What is the overall environment of the Venom shop?**

**Chad Chase:** Fun but hardworking! Seems like we are nonstop all the time. We all feed well off each other, and I believe the clients have a good time. The shop is huge—4,000 square feet—cozy and clean. We have four tattoo stations, a lobby, a piercing room, a guest artist room, a massage therapy room, a paint room, a drawing room, and a bar room with a pool table. It's supercool!

**Kelley:** Clean, relaxed, and professional. Everyone has their own individual tattoo room decorated how they please with the music that they please playing in the atmosphere. Not only do you get a piece of art from your artist, you also get a piece of their personality.

**Chad, what inspired you to open up Venom Ink?**

**Chase:** I have always been the type of person to create things in my own image. Venom Ink was no exception. I'm not into working for other people, and the studio gives me the opportunity to do things the way I would like to do them—to create an image that I've been looking for.

**What drew you to want to work at Venom Ink?**

**Chubuck:** Sometimes to get to that next level you need to surround yourself with like-minded people. I knew if I wanted to take that leap, then working with Chad at Venom was what I needed to do.

**Matthew Brown:** Venom Ink is one of those shops you always dream to work at when you first get into tattooing. The environment at Venom sparks creativity and provides resources that any tattooer would love to be a part of. I worked my ass off in hopes of joining the team—and I got lucky and it paid off!

**Kelley:** When I was an aspiring tattoo artist, the only person's work that really, truly impressed me in the sense that I just couldn't understand how it was even possible to do in skin was Chad Chase. After getting tattooed by both Chad and Chris I decided that my goal as an artist was to progress to the point where I could work with them at an equal level someday. I wanted the skill that Chad and Chris possessed, and the only way to get it from them was to work for them—and that is exactly what I did.

**What qualities should an artist have to be a part of Venom Ink?**

**Chubuck:** Don't be a dick, and tattoo your ass off!

**Chase:** Hardworking, self-promoter, clean and friendly, ego-free, and of course get along and fit in with our little family.

**What styles of tattooing can be found at Venom Ink?**

**Brown:** Everything. We can cover it all! Each of us has our own favorites but we are all willing to work in whatever style our client is looking for. You just never know when that color portrait client will want a tribal piece or an infinity symbol or vice versa. We have to be ready for it all!

**Kelley:** Anything and everything! Traditional, Japanese, biomech, realism, stylized art, tribal, lettering, you name it and one of us can do it. We are your one-stop shop for tattooing. I have no doubt in my mind that anything that walks in the door can be done inside of our shop.

**Does the shop currently have any apprentices?**

**Chubuck:** No—we used to have one not too long ago, and then he graduated into the artist we now know as Dan Kelley. Such a shame too, because we really miss him cleaning up all of our messes. *[Laughs]* But he's turned into a great young tattooer, so it's really nice to see our hard work pay off!

**Kelley:** We do not currently have any apprentices. I have been the only one that this shop has ever seen. It was the longest three years of my life.

**Venom Ink is one of the few prestigious shops to offer piercings. What is the importance of offering piercings in a tattoo studio?**

**Chase:** It has been integrated into the studio since the beginning. Like it or not, tattoos and piercings go hand in hand, and we like to be able to provide people with a place that they can count on to have their piercings done correctly and professionally every time.

**Chubuck:** I think it helps build clientele. It's another avenue to bring business to the shop. People come to get pierced, and while they wait maybe they check out portfolios or the artwork on the walls and it piques an interest.

**What have been some of the top events held by Venom Ink?**

**Chase:** Well, we have always wanted to do a huge customer appreciation bash and haven't been able to yet—maybe this summer. We also recently had the amazing Chris Dingwell teach his seminar at the studio with great success and hope to have him repeat that within the year.

**Chubuck:** We have had some really cool guest artists over the last couple years—killer tattooers like Kyle Cotterman, Rich Pineda, and Heather Maranda, to name a few.

**Brown:** We host a paint night every month for local artists as far as Massachusetts. Everything goes down, from charcoal to markers to colored pencil works to acrylic paint and oil paint. It's a great time for us local artists to get together and relax and enjoy what got us into tattooing in the first place! 🎨



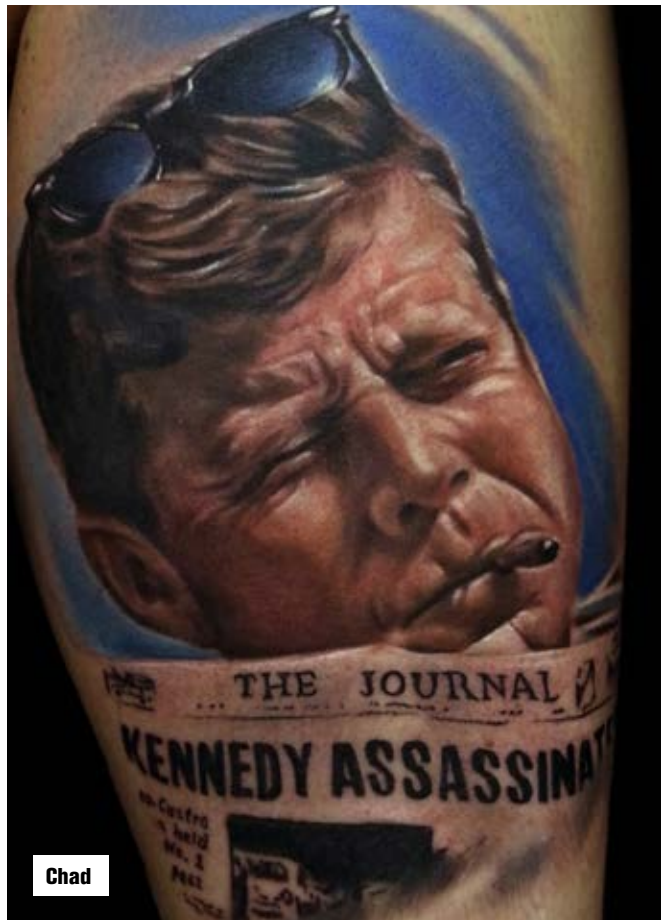
Dan



Matt



Chris



Chad





Matt



Dan



Chris

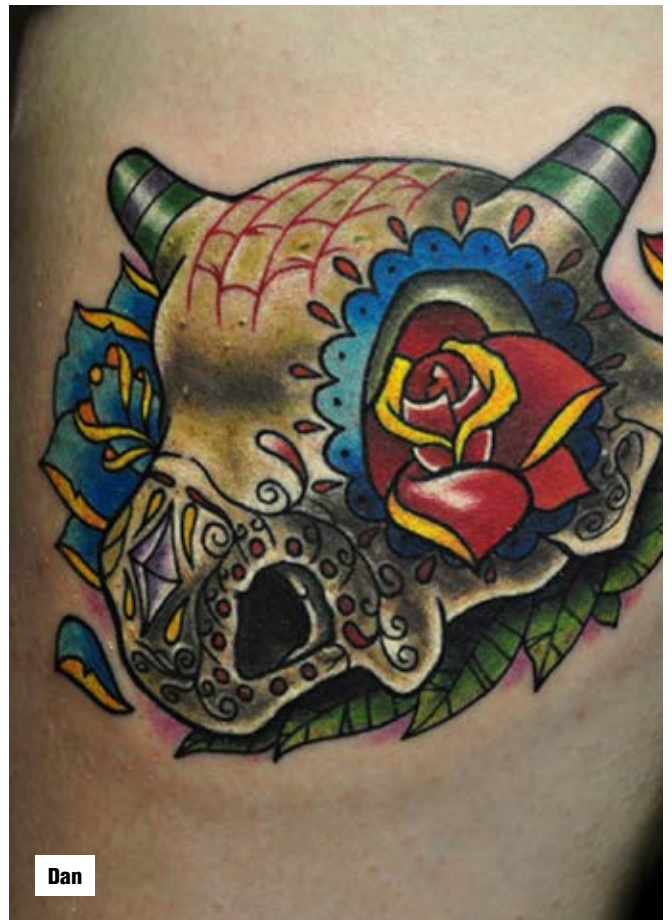




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# Villain Arts Inked

## TATTOO ARTS CONVENTION SERIES 2014

MINNEAPOLIS JAN 10 – JAN 12

PHILADELPHIA JAN 31 – FEB 2

CHICAGO MAR 21 – MAR 23

BALTIMORE APR 25 – APR 27

LOUISVILLE MAY 16 – MAY 18

WILDWOOD AUG 15 – AUG 17

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**TATTOO ARTS CONVENTION**  
**MAY 16TH - 18TH 2014**

**WILDWOOD**  
**TATTOO BEACH BASH**  
**AUGUST 15TH - 17TH 2014**



**PROVIDENCE**  
**TATTOO ARTS CONVENTION**  
**OCTOBER 17TH - 19TH 2014**

**MINNEAPOLIS**  
**TATTOO ARTS CONVENTION**  
**JANUARY 9TH - 11TH 2015**

**PHILADELPHIA**  
**TATTOO ARTS CONVENTION**  
**FEBRUARY 13TH - 15TH 2015**

**CHICAGO**  
**TATTOO ARTS CONVENTION**  
**MARCH 20TH - 22ND 2015**



**VILLAINARTS.COM**

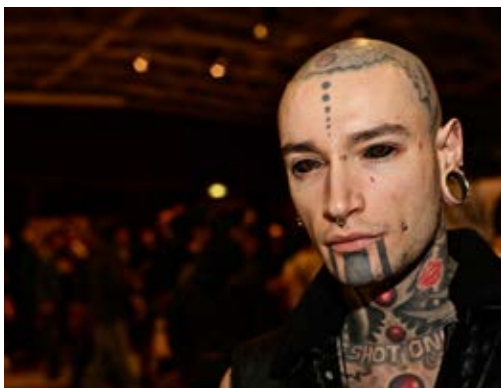
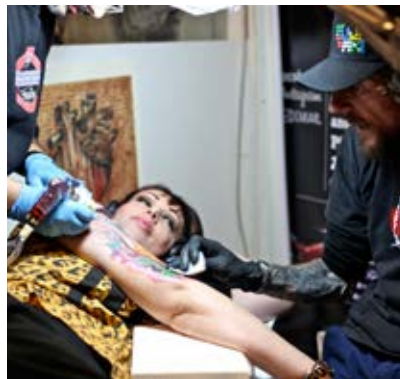






# MILANO TATTOO CONVENTION

International conventions are some of the most attended conventions and definitely offer some of the most impressive seminars and diverse lineups. And the 19th annual Milano Tattoo Convention was no exception. Featuring airbrush and Polynesian exhibitions alongside the Miss Milano 2014 and Medusa Project Hollywood Make-Up competitions, the events were numerous and sure to keep everyone waiting to get inked plenty entertained. The artists in attendance were some of the most skilled across the globe, ranging from Venezuelan native Yomico Moreno to realism specialist Cris Gherman to design-work extraordinaire NEO.



PHOTOGRAPHS, RICHE BULLDOG



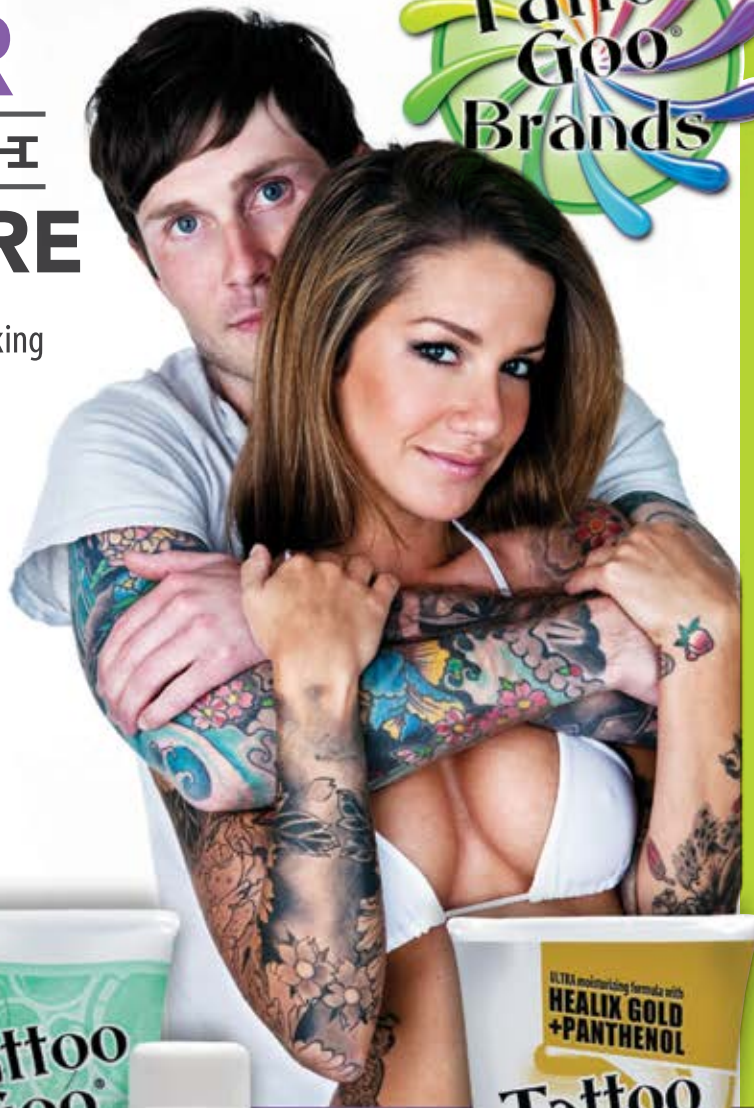
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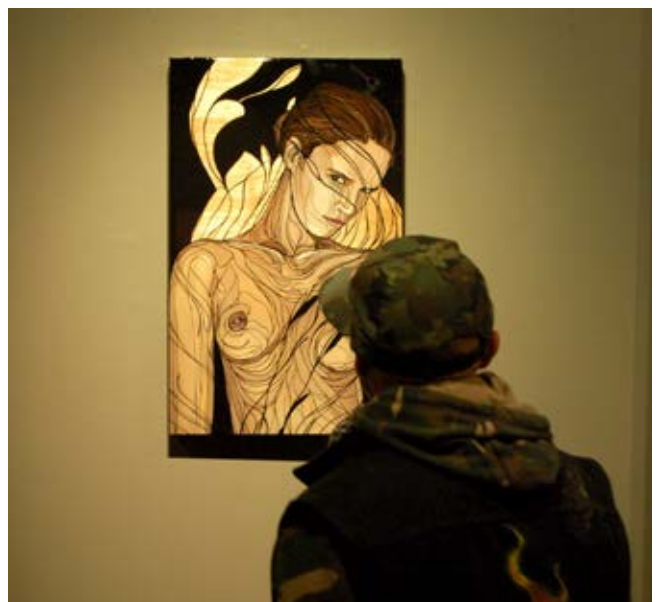
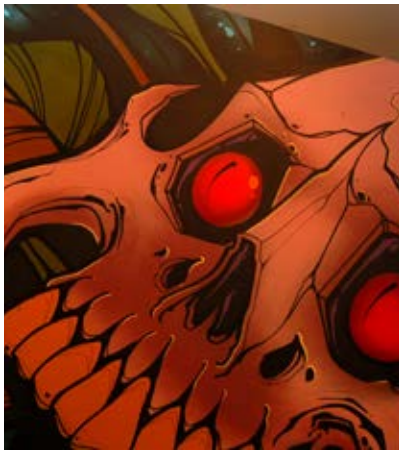
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## TAKE WHAT YOU WILL ART GALLERY

Tattooing is all about aesthetic nature and artistic skill, so it should come as no surprise that tattoo studio Sacred Tattoo NYC hosts an array of art galleries throughout the year. Earlier in 2014, tattooists Dave Tevenal and Scott Santee hosted the "Take What You Will" art exhibition at the Sacred Gallery, bringing in an array of talent with a fabulous display of creativity and attention to detail, coupled with a wide range of admiring (and admirable) guests.



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## CHICAGO TATTOO ARTS

We love going to the Villain Arts shows—they're always a blast. Troy Timpel's Chicago show was full of hot ladies and stunning entertainment. Did we mention that we love the pizza there too? I mean, duh. Even better: Some of our favorite tattooers were there alongside some of our favorite clothing companies. There were also burlesque dancers running around, so who can complain? We'll be at all of Troy's shows this year, so check out [villainarts.com](http://villainarts.com) for details, and come find our booth to get one of the T-shirts that he designed for us.



PHOTOGRAPHS: MELANIE SIMMONS



2014

# PAGODA CITY

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**JOE CAPOBIANCO** BEST INK **BLACK HEART TATTOO**  
**JIME LITWALK** INK MASTER **ROCK OF AGES TATTOO**  
**CHAD KOEPLINGER** • **BOB TYRRELL**  
**BJ BETTS** • **DAVE FOX**

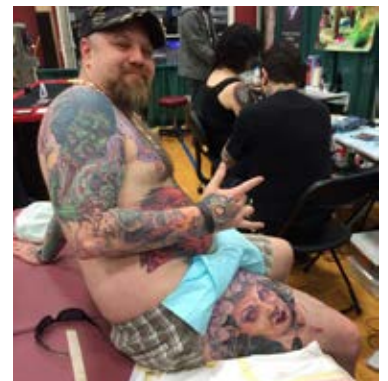
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# EVERGREEN TATTOO INVITATIONAL AND EXPO

Tattoos by great artists such as Chad Chase, Tye Harris, and Tim Kern demand pairing with top-quality seminars on "Light and Shadow" by Ian Robert McKown and four hours of painting with the man of monsters himself, Chet Zar. This year's Evergreen Tattoo Invitational and Expo was one not to be missed. Taking place in Springfield, OR, the invitational hosts three days of nonstop tattooing and workshops designed for the lifestyle of the artist and collector. So make sure to mark your calendars for next year and come hang out with some of the best of the best.





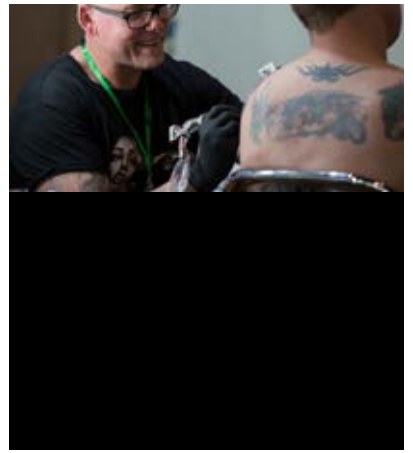


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## AUSTRALIAN TATTOO & BODY ART EXPO

The Australian Tattoo & Body Art Expo in Sydney is one of the best conventions from Down Under. Featuring an unending list of talent, it's also one of the most well-known international shows on the circuit. Over the weekend-long event, *Freshly Inked* alumni artists like Megan Massacre, Teneile Napoli, and Benjamin Laukis created some amazing, high-quality pieces. With guest appearances by *Inked Girl* cover model Sabina Kelley and Sydney's very own burlesque show, the convention just happened to be a stop on the *Inked Up World Tour* presented by Rockstar Energy.



PHOTOGRAPHS PROVIDED BY STEVEN GUZMAN



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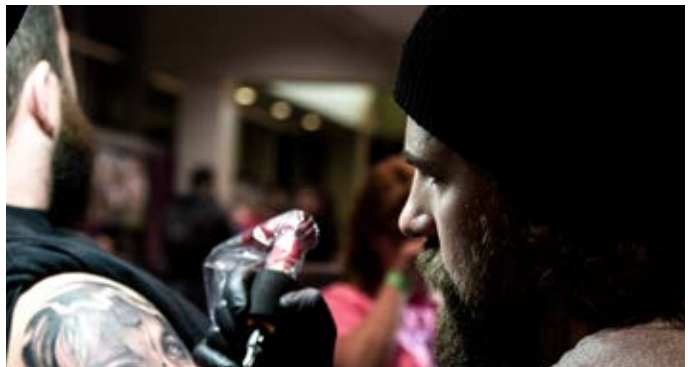


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## BEST IN THE MIDWEST

Shane O'Neill's third annual Best in the Midwest show was packed full of fun, entertainment, and known artists. There was even a mechanical bull—seriously. Big news on another one of Shane's productions: The next Chaudesaigues award will be given at the Pittsburgh show, Steel City, in September. We wouldn't miss it for anything. Check out [shaneoneillproductions.com](http://shaneoneillproductions.com) for info, and come see us at his next show.



PHOTOGRAPHS PROVIDED BY MARK FOUNTAIN



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## MUSINK

The seventh annual Musink, presented by Travis Barker, is the prime incarnation of the best of two worlds: It's a world-renowned tattoo convention, and it's also one of the first major music festivals to kick off festival season each year. Tattoo artists like icons Nikko Hurtado, Jack Rudy, and Bob Tyrrell were spotted tattooing all weekend while bands like Descendents, Judge, and Barker's own group, The Transplants, put on some die-hard performances. Keep an eye out for next year's lineup—you don't want to miss it!





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