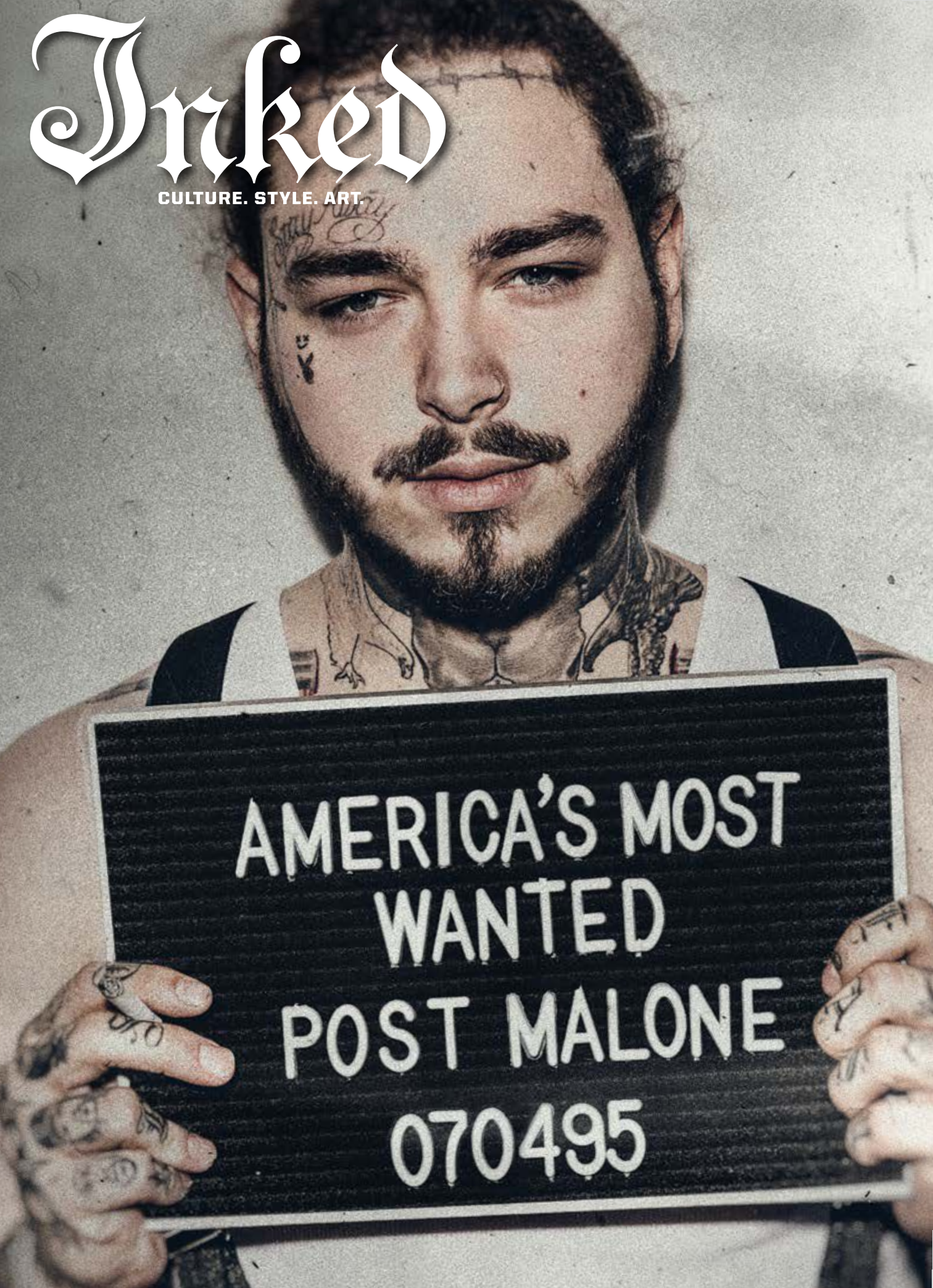


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CHELSEA GRIN

ETERNAL NIGHTMARE



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INKWELL

The staff here at INKED like to theme our issues. The Moto issue, the Sex issue, the Inked for a Cause issue, to name a few. When the meetings began to determine the theme of the issue you hold in your hands right now, the room was divided into three camps. We all believed we couldn't be farther apart in how to bring the group of people we wanted to showcase in this issue under one coherent title. As the meetings progressed and the arguments escalated—even a few pencils were tossed in anger, yes, working at INKED can be a dangerous experience—we realized we were actually all talking about the same type of issue: a Lifestyle issue.

So, please appreciate the blood, sweat and tears that were experienced in putting together INKED's first annual Lifestyle issue. Here you will find people from all facets of the creative world; actors, musicians, artists, models, YouTubers, porn stars, clothing designers, photographers and more all being showcased for their contributions to making our world just a bit more, well, beautiful!

Speaking of creative and fun, we couldn't have been graced with a better photo opportunity than having the super laid-back, super talented and completely lit Post Malone on this very special cover. However, that's just the beginning. As you make your way through these pages you'll have the pleasure of meeting Richard Cabral, Asa Akira, Belly, Monami Frost, Samii Ryan, Doug Schwartz, Josh Payne and QCKND, to name just a few.

We put this issue together in hopes that you will not only appreciate the work these people do and recognize their talent, but also to spark a desire in you to pursue your own creative dreams and realize that you too have the ability to make the world a bit more beautiful.

Enjoy life, it's too damn short.

Paul Gambino
Editor-in-Chief
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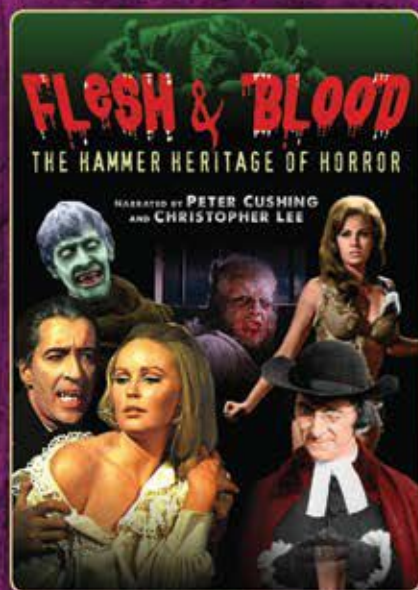


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THE MOTO ISSUE

The hottest issue, next to the Sex issue, would be the Moto issue. That's why we bring it out in the summer—you can feel the heat on the streets already. Hot rides with even hotter babes. Anything from a new cover girl, to a heavily tattooed motorcycle cop, to out-of-this-world artists from around the globe. An issue you didn't want to miss. According to our fan mail, we got the job done once again.

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MARK WOSGERAU

Melissa Gil Wow! Just wow. I guess I need to book a trip to Denmark now to come see this guy. His work is out of this world. Great photos! Where do you guys find all these incredible artists?

Sven Pikar Holy Cannoli! I had no idea this is possible. This dude is so talented.

Nick Wolt I gotta say this is some good sh*t. Gotta save up some dough for some ink from this dude.

JORDYN RYDER

Sarah Palmer Damn! This month's cover girl is on fire. I'm not even into girls...lol...but she's hot. Photos are beautiful and the interview is pretty interesting.

BECKY GOEBEL

Jenn Parlo Yes! Amen to this article. I'm a woman and I ride, and I'm glad a woman wrote this experience from the female perspective, because this culture is growing. #thefutureisfemale

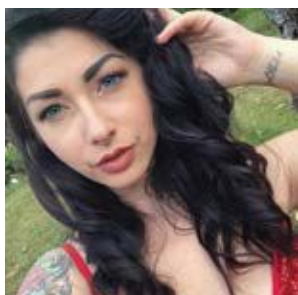
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TATTOO OF THE MONTH



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Inked
Spotlight
Becky Holt

photos by gavin thomas



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THE SHREDS PROJECT

Shooting from the hip with a Detroit artist who turns illegal firearms into works of art

For the last couple of decades—that's right, decades—the city of Detroit, Michigan, has been on the receiving end a lot of bad press, some of it deserved and some of it media hype. The Motor City, which it is still referred to by many, was America's hub for the auto industry, and although it may no longer be in its heyday after going through two huge auto industry downsizings, it still kicks out over 15 million automobiles each year.

Unfortunately, one other moniker the city has been shingled with is Murder City, and statistics have repeatedly deemed it the most violent city in America, with over 13,000 violent crimes last year, including 303 murders in 2016 and 267 in 2017.

We spoke to Doug Schwartz, an artist and Michigan native who was born and raised in the city of Detroit. He is determined to reclaim a small part of the city and make it safer through his art.

How would you describe Detroit? If I had to sum it up, I would have to say it's a city with a rich history and a future that will undoubtedly leave a legacy.

Have you been directly affected by the gun violence in Detroit? Personally, I have not, however, I strongly believe in and stand behind doing my part to help in reducing gun violence and giving back through art.

When did you begin pursuing art as a career? I've always been really good at uniquely connecting the dots. I stay curious about elevating a person's sensory experience and would humbly say that my "art" is being talented at just that.

What is DetroitWick? Our focus is based on uniquely joining company and customer through the most powerful of the five

senses — Smell. It's what we call scent branding: A collective approach with like-minded brands. Collaborate + product launch + brand activation + VIP gifting + private label. Expressed through scent, color and imprint. DWHQ equally serves as event space and a launch pad for creatives. A gallery experience that features unique concepts and gives young talent the opportunity to curate, show and sell. Our goal is to create an encounter that involves all five senses when you walk in the door.

Briefly explain the process of how you embed objects in Lucite. We hand make molds, embed the piece and pour the acrylic. Each piece is then baked in an oven for 8-10 hours, cooled, milled, buffed and polished.

What are some of the objects you embed? Everything! The most random piece was for a very dope artist out of Miami (Aho!SniffsGlue) who sent me his four wisdom teeth.

Please explain the SHREDS project. SHREDS are pieces of guns that remain after they've been voluntarily turned in through Detroit's gun buy back and amnesty programs or seized from crime scenes from across America. We transform SHREDS into something beautiful by encasing them in solid Lucite, to create a one-of-a-kind sculpture. A percentage of proceeds from each sale are donated to the Caliber Foundation to help victims, families and communities that have been devastated by illegal gun violence.





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MATT ZINGLER

Meet Matt Zingler, hip-hop's most misunderstood power player. At 29, Zingler owns the largest hip-hop festival in the world, hosting over 500,000 attendees annually and taking a local Miami concert to more than 10 international markets in less than four years.

Looking at his Instagram, @mattzingler you would assume that Matt lives the typical playboy live-fast-die-young lifestyle. We decided to dig a little deeper and ask him 21 questions to see if my assumptions were true.

Favorite location to have a meeting? Strip club

Favorite restaurant in the world? Popeyes. Their biscuits with some honey on them are on fire.

Favorite tattoo? The money sign on my balls

One celebrity you would let tattoo you? Post Malone

How old were you when you got your first tattoo? 15

One exotic animal you want to own in your lifetime? Snow leopard

Something you want to be known for? Creating an unforgettable experience while owning the biggest festival in the world.

Biggie or 2Pac and why? Biggie. I'll kick in your door and wave the 44.

Favorite musician of all time? It's not only about music but their style, personality and the impact they have on people. I'm a huge GG Allin fan.

Favorite business book? I hate books

Where you see yourself in 10 years? Taking a shit at the top of Mount Everest

What's your ideal night out? Home. Order Uber eats and watch Apple TV with my girl

If you could bring someone back from the dead who would it be and why? MJ, so he could teach me how to moonwalk.

Have you ever thought of being a musician? Yes, I think about it every day but I've realized my place in the music world is to platform talent and assist in their career growth. I'm a terrible singer and can't play an instrument for the life of me.

What's your daily routine? I wake up, piss excellent, hit the gym, and then try to take over the world.

Favorite food? Ice cream sandwiches.

Top three vices in order of relevance? Sex, money and tattoos.

What would describe your style as? Modern day rockstar. Just because I'm not a musician doesn't mean I'm not a rockstar.

Do you only listen to hip-hop? My favorite genre of music is R&B.

First concert you attended? Slightly Stoopid

How do you see the word ending? Every mythological creature coming to life and destroying what we call earth.





JULIUS ARRIOLA

My name is Julius Arriola. To most of the world, I'm known as Julius Cvesar, and @juliuscaesar on Instagram. I was born in Oakland, California and raised in the San Francisco Bay area. I come from a middle-class household, with my mom being the daughter of Filipino immigrants—my grandfather, Gerry Arriola, gained citizenship after fighting in the US Army during the Korean War.

I was born in the 1980s and spent much of my youth staying with my grandparents while my mom was at work. I idolized my grandfather and can vividly remember him walking around the house shirtless with all his gold chains and tattoos showing. My favorite was his Tropic Lightning Infantry hand tattoo he got during the war. From those moments, I knew that when I grew up I wanted to have a ton of tattoos, just like him.

Fast forward to the age 17. The moment I graduated high school, I decided to move out and one of the first things I did was get my first tattoo. My thought process

was the first had to be the worst so I went straight to getting my stomach blasted with my last name "ARRIOLA" arched out with the script "loyalty" right below. Growing up, West Coast rap played a big role in my life, and Tupac Shakur with his "THUG LIFE" tattoo, of course influenced my decision.

After that, the momentum built as my friends and I frequented the local tattoo shop. However, throughout this entire time, I had also worked to develop my craft as a barber. I began cutting hair as a household chore back when I was 13, and by the time I was 22, I was cutting hair professionally side by side with my childhood friend Junior Argente.

I remember deciding that I really wanted to get my throat tattooed, and he jokingly claimed that once I did, I'd end up hooking up with one of those famous Instagram tattooed models. That was all the impetus I needed and I proceeded to have one of my homies do the work. There I laid with my head hanging off the side of a pool

table for nine hours while LA tattoo artist Placaso (@placasotattoos) did his thing. And then, no lie, literally a couple months after getting it done, I was in LA getting my knuckles tattooed by Norm (@normloveletters), hanging out with a famous tattooed Instagram model who coincidentally was my iPhone screensaver!

I returned home but soon decided I wanted to bring my talents to Los Angeles. That was definitely one of the best decisions of my life. I've now been in LA for five years, and I've been able to use my platform in barbering to meet some of the dopest people and travel the world. I've definitely added to my tattoo collection along the way. The most pivotal tattoos would have to be my head tattoos, all done by Placaso, with over 40+ hours in sessions. Each one represents power symbols — from the Bernini lion sculpture to the Heart of Seven Sorrows. I believe barbering and tattooing have a very similar mindset. They are an expression of freedom, an homage to major moments in one's life and a very personal form of self-expression.

GREG YUNA

I was born and raised in Queens, New York, so naturally I grew up inspired by the streets, and the urban “scene” that came with being from NYC. With that street culture came the tattoo culture and so was the hustle. My entry into the working world was at a mortgage company, but I eventually found my calling in the jewelry business. After leaving the mortgage company, I ended up working for my family’s jewelry business, and that’s when I realized how far the jewelry game could eventually bring me.

I got to work, first creating diamond rosary necklaces with Jewish stars and Hamsa symbols. Everyone has their Jesus pieces, but I wanted to be able to do a piece with Moses and still stay true to Jewish beliefs. I was wearing two of the pieces the day Floyd Mayweather came by the booth. He bought them right off my neck. That was the ammo I needed. In the next few years things really took off. I grew the brand from an Instagram handle to 6th Avenue shoots with some of the biggest celebs in the

game to branded collaborations with Fila, Nike and brands that a kid from Queens could only dream of collaborating with.

In 2017, I moved to my own retail location at 36 West 47th Street and we entered Chapter Two of the Mr. Flawless empire, this time with me at the helm. My career has been an intentional journey, but my tattoos, on the other hand, while they’ve come throughout my career, they aren’t as calculated as my brand is. But like the “Mr.” brand, they are authentic to who I am.

My first tattoo was a spade when I was 15 years old. It didn’t mean much of anything, I pretty much got it to be cool. After that, my second tattoo was a big “MOM” on my arm. How could a mom get mad at her son for getting a tattoo if it was in tribute to her? My third tattoo was a dragon I picked off the wall at this place called the The Hut downstairs a barber shop on Jamaica Avenue in Queens.

I did all of this before I could even legally

get a tattoo, so by the time I was 18 and somewhat of an adult, I hated it all and wanted to cover it up. I went to Florida and met up with an artist named Memphis Mike and he free-handed a massive Japanese-themed mural. He worked it onto my back—no deep meaning there, but it solved the issue of a misspent tattoo youth.

And everything else after that was just small and random. I actually really love all my smaller tattoos. The 82 on my wrist is the year I was born and it is rendered in the handwriting of someone special to me, so I like that one. I have a Biggie tattoo. That is probably my favorite, it was done by Mr. K Tatts and I also have a Moses tattoo —another favorite—that was done by Pirate Pat in San Fran. The “FLAWLESS” in Russian font is a good one too done by Big Steve who also did my diamond logo tattoo.

So, that’s the story. Some of my tattoos mean nothing, and some of them mean everything.





DOMINIC CHAMBRONE

From a very young age, I've always had a desire to build things—from backyard forts to Lego sets. However, by the time I entered high school as an introverted freshman, I found a way to express myself by wearing sneakers.

It all started when I wore a pair of 1985 Chicago Air Jordan 1's that I borrowed from my cousin. My older brother and his friends were playing basketball when they spotted my footwear. They were hyped on them, saying I had the "dopest shoes" I immediately realized this was a way to be cool. I began networking and made friends with the people at Footlocker and they'd backdoor me new drops that I'd take to school before anyone else had them.

I'd wear them, and my friends would wear them, and I just thought, "We look like a bunch of idiots." We were all wearing the same things and I wanted to be an individual. So, one day, I went home and airbrushed a pair of all-white Air Force 1 mid's with camouflage and I got an even

better reaction. Well, it just took off from there.

Once I started painting and customizing my sneakers, it became a creative outlet that soon evolved into adding my own personal touch to all of my footwear and apparel. But fashion decoration wasn't enough.

As a young adult in search of a hidden talent, I turned my focus to learning the extensive techniques of shoe deconstruction and reconstruction. I worked odd jobs in the industry to help me learn and refine the production process. I worked for free at a local cobbler, sweeping floors, not even touching shoes or sewing machines, and eventually he realized I was serious and started giving me real training and real projects.

It went from airbrushing to painting, to gluing pieces, to patching pieces on with a sewing machine, and finally to fully deconstructing and reconstructing shoes. I found that designing footwear was a

way to express my individuality, and the exclusivity of each pair allowed me to focus on the quality and craft behind it.

As I began to offer made-to-order services to others, I further developed an immense passion for the experience of bringing a creative concept to life. Today, The Shoe Surgeon brand continues to push creative boundaries by combining old-school cobbling with new age approaches to design and manufacturing—creating unique, handcrafted pieces for our clients.

As a more hands-on learner myself, we decided to build The Shoe Surgeon Shoe School to inspire people to express their creativity, empower them to pursue their passions, and bring people together to learn the same skills that helped me get to where I am today. Nothing else like this exists in the world, where you can fully take apart and rebuild a shoe completely by hand. It is a huge passion project for me. There is a magic in every single class we host.

Sex Positive

Porn icon Asa Akira spills her secrets to sex stardom

photos by peter roessler text by devon preston

With 32 awards and two bestselling books under her garter belt, Asa Akira is far from an amateur in the porn industry. Back in 2013, she made history as the second Asian person to win the AVN Female Performer of the Year Award and she's starred in over 500 adult films since her debut in the industry. We sat down with the famous Japanese-American sex starlet to learn how she stumbled onto her first porn shoot, the secret to being an award-winning anal performer, and where she will fit in to the future of pornography.

What was your earliest introduction to pornography? My first experience with porn was when I was in the third grade. I lived in Japan and my friend had some American cable channel, probably Skinemax. I would sleep over at her house every weekend and around 2 a.m., this fairytale porn show would come on. Mother Goose was naked and telling a fairytale, then they would reenact the story in a porno-y way. Looking back, I think it was probably softcore, they didn't show penetration or anything. But it was very exciting and I thought it was the craziest, most awesome thing I'd ever seen.

Did this lead you to work in the adult industry? You know, how some kids say they want to be an astronaut or a scientist. I wanted to be a pornstar. But I never thought it was that realistic. One day, when I was 19, I was walking down the street and this guy asked me if I was interested in being in the adult entertainment industry.? And I was like, "yes" It felt like he was this angel who had fallen from the clouds and it was meant

to be. In reality, he was this super shady-looking guy with a missing tooth and a ponytail. I followed him up to his dungeon where he ran the night shift. The next day I started training as a dominatrix in the dungeon. And I did that for about a year. There I met a stripper and I started stripping. Then finally I met a real-life pornstar, a woman named Gina Lynn who is no longer in the industry. I took a bus out to her house in Pennsylvania, in Amish country, and I shot my very first scene.

What was your first shoot like? It's weird because, in retelling my first experience on a porn set, I wish it was like, "I was so nervous" and I had this moment where I realized that my whole life was about to change. But in reality it was the most normal, natural thing and it felt like this heightened sexual experience. It was comparable to having my first threesome or doing any sexual act for the first time. I didn't have this profound moment, it felt really normal. Coming out of it, I realized that this is what I wanted to do and that I wanted to do this again.

What's your favorite type of porno to shoot? My favorite is gonzo, meaning that there is no plot and not much acting. Just straight to sex. It kind of depends on the day. My favorite kind of sex is probably double penetration, I also really like gang bangs. But those are also really special and dear to my heart because I haven't done that many.

What's the secret to being an award-winning anal star? A lot of anal preparation. I always tell people that the secret to anal sex is having it a lot of times in a short period of time in the beginner.





Like 20 times in one month. Then you're set for the rest of your life. I really think that training your muscles is like learning to ride a bike, you just have to do it really hardcore in the beginning and then you're good. But it definitely hurts the first 20 or so times.

Were you already sexually experienced in your personal sex life?

I definitely tried new things as I went. I was pretty promiscuous before getting into porn, but I'd only done anal once and hated it, I'd never done a DP, never done a gang bang. Aside from the fact that I'd fucked a lot of people. I think there's definitely a high that I've been chasing since I've gotten into porn. When I first started, I would watch a lot of anal porn and think, "that's so hot, I can't wait to try it." Once I got that down, it was DP porn and then gang bang. It definitely progresses and I always see myself seeking the next big thing. I don't know if that will ever stop.

Is there anything in porn that you won't do? Oh yeah, I won't do children, animals or poo. Aside from that, I'm open.

How has your ethnicity played a role in your porn career? It's played a very big role. At any given time, there's only about five or so Asian pornstars—which is just enough to make one movie. So if you're Asian and in porn you're guaranteed a certain amount of work.

Do you think the industry should address racial stereotyping? I've become so jaded to it that it's hard to give a real opinion on it. It's normal to me that everyone is a search term. Not only in race, but a blonde is a blonde, a woman with big tits is big tits, an older woman is a MILF. Not that I objectify everyone, but I am able to objectify them. And I don't see anything wrong with it.

Do you think that porn should be keeping up with the PC trends found in mainstream media? I think a little bit of both. It's hard. On one hand, I don't think ethics have a place in sexual fantasies. I don't think we should have to be politically correct in our fantasies. For instance, if I want to be called a "chink" in my sexual fantasies, I'm entitled to that. I think you should be able to think about whatever you want when you masturbate. On

the other hand, I'm not going to call a black guy the n-word when we're fucking just because the director tells me to. I'm not comfortable doing that.

How do you balance being a feminist and being a porn star? To me, it's not really a balance. The fact that I'm a pornstar, despite what society may think of me, is a feminist move. That doesn't mean that I'm doing this in honor of feminism or anything. But I think that what I do is feminist. I am a feminist and I believe in equality. It's really sad to me that a lot of people don't identify as feminists these days because the extremists give it such a bad name. People think that to be a feminist you have to hate men or think women are better than men. Or that feminists can't be sex workers. I think that's bullshit. I take feminism as the original definition—the equality of the genders.

How do you combat the misconceptions people have about you as a pornstar? I think the more normalized we become, the better it is for us as people. I think we're so stigmatized because people know so little about us. But because of the internet and social media, people are starting to get to know sex workers as totally normal people. I guess visibility is how I combat that. I've written a couple of books and I want to be a good representation of my industry. I try to do that with everything I do publically. I don't always succeed, but I try.

Where do you see the future of pornography going?

If I had to guess, I would say that the performers will have a lot more power in the future. They already do, with sites like Pornhub and Only Fans. it's a lot easier for performers to make money for themselves without the middleman of a production company.

What's up next for Asa Akira?

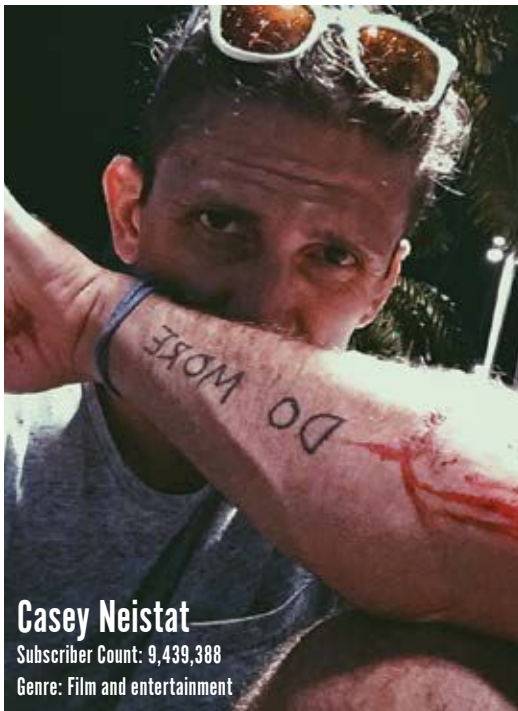
I just started a podcast called The Pornhub Podcast, where I interview porn and non-porn people. I'm trying to write another book. It's not going that smoothly, but I'm trying. I'm working really hard on my site, which is ThingsI WishICouldInstagram.com. I'm finding a lot of fun doing things with the name I've built and this has been such a different side of the industry that I'm starting to experience.



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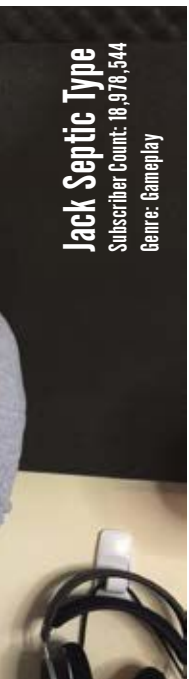
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QCKND

photo by peter roessler text by devon preston

What inspired you to start a YouTube channel? A couple of years ago I got scarification on my ribs and I was keeping track of it by filming every day on an iPod touch. When it ran out of memory, there was a button to send it to YouTube so my channel started completely by accident.

You're most known for Tattoo Talk Tuesday. What went into creating it? Tattoo Talk Tuesday turned into an open forum for discussions. I feel like as a tattooed person, I get a lot of questions from people on the street or from friends. Even if I were to post something on Instagram, I would generally get a question about tattoos. So I wanted to create an index of what I get asked every day.

What did you start the #tattoocollectors tag? The tag started on my channel because I call myself a tattoo collector so that no one thinks I'm a tattoo artist. I'm a tattoo collector and this is my experience. I thought it would be really cool to talk about

being a collector because I think that people are either familiar with that term or they're not. And then I think when I put it out there, a lot of people who tried it out thought "Yeah, I am a collector."

Has your YouTube channel inspired you to collect more tattoos? It definitely has, and I actually tried to tone that down. For awhile I would say to myself, "No tattoos for the sake of a video." I have a video about Friday the 13th tattoos and I got that tattoo for the video. Then, last year at a tattoo convention, I was invited to come and get tattoos there.

When did you officially start getting ink? I got my first tattoo when I was 16, without parental consent, but I've actually had it removed. So my first tattoo doesn't exist anymore.

What tattoo in your collection do you get recognized for the most? I think probably my Cry Baby tattoo.

This is something we haven't talked about. What does QCKND mean?

QCKND is an acronym. It stands for Quiet Cool Kid No Doubt. In high school, that was my Xanga screen name. When I was in high school, I wasn't really in a certain group of people but I liked being in school and going to class. I had perfect attendance in high school, I wasn't rebelling against knowledge, I just actively didn't fit in. So being a Quiet Cool Kid was this idea that I could be present and absorb everything, but didn't bring anything back to it. This year, I actually did get a "Q" tattoo for my YouTube channel. I always had this idea my channel was private and not something I really talked about. I was humbled to the point where I was handicapped by it. This summer, I went through a lot of growing and tried to embrace who I was, which I feel is one of the hardest things. So I decided to get a "Q" tattoo for self-growth, self-awareness, and also celebration of my channel. Now, when I can't talk about it, at least the tattoo can speak for me.

ALCHEMY



England · 1977

Model is wearing:

R221 Kraken Ring

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MODEL BEHAVIOR

Samii Ryan Catches Us Up on Modeling, YouTube and Designing Since Becoming an INKED Cover Girl.

When did you start your YouTube channel? I started my YouTube channel when I was around 15 or 16 years old. I was working for Buzznet at the time and would do videos on makeup, hair, fashion, hauls...pretty much exactly what I do now! I love sharing my words, stories and experiences with my followers—it gives them a look at the “real” side of me.

How has your channel evolved since you started? My channel has gone through a lot of changes. Today I'm able to collaborate with friends who have huge YouTube followings and I'm focusing more on tattoo videos because people have shown such an interest in them. I'm continuously growing my channel and finding new ways to create weekly content.

Tell us about your modeling career. I started modeling when I was 10 and got signed to an agency in New York when I was around 16. I did a lot of commercial modeling and once I got tattooed, I became more of an edgy model. However, I still model for high-end brands because I like to feature hype fashion, high fashion and editorial looks in my portfolio. I've also had the opportunity to be in music videos and billboard campaigns and even graced the cover of INKED!

How did you transition from being a model for Seventeen to a tattoo model? I wouldn't necessarily brand myself as a “tattoo model.” I'm a model with tattoos. I've been able to work with magazines like Seventeen, INKED, Marie Claire, Playboy and Maxim because of the way I shoot and my creative di-

rect. I've been really blessed to be able to have tattoos and still be considered a “model in the industry.” I try not to limit myself to one genre.

What's changed for you since you appeared on the cover INKED? That was back in 2016, so as you can imagine a lot can happen over the course of two years. First of all, I have more tattoos, and I also have a clothing line called By Samii Ryan, which is sold on my website as well as multiple e-commerce sites. We are also available in Zumiez stores nationwide.

How did designing become a part of your repertoire? I started designing accessories when I was just out of high school. I would vend at Warped Tour, Bonnaroo and other music festivals to get my gear in people's view. I started to send out pieces to publicists and my items have been worn by Ke\$ha, Miley Cyrus, Demi Lovato, Chloe Bridges, Victoria Justice, Lauren Jauregui and many other successful women in the music industry. From there, we transitioned to clothing and the rest is history.

What was it like launching your line with Zumiez? Zumiez has been one of the best experiences. We launched in December 2016 in 25 stores and we are now in over 700 stores internationally. I am grateful and blessed to be able to have them support By Samii Ryan.

How big of a role does social media play in your work? Social media plays a big role in everyone's life—it's how businesses expand, get new customers and market their products. I'm

always on social media—whether it be Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr or YouTube. Creating new and compelling content is important to staying relevant.

What made you decide to branch out into travel blogging? I love to travel and my boyfriend is a very talented photographer, so we just decided to team up and do it together. We created a travel blog called Him & Her Travel where we shoot photos of our trips, the hotels, and what we did while we were there. So far we've traveled to Paris, Amsterdam, Brussels, Bali, Chicago, New York, Boston, Philadelphia and many other places together. I can't wait for our next adventure.

What's the biggest life lesson you've learned as an influencer? I've learned that social media is only what the creator chooses to put out. People post their best moments to create a unique look at their life. Many, many people brand themselves to look like a different person than who they actually are in real life. Social media has helped me grow my brand and personal following, which I'm forever grateful for, however, whenever I can take a break and be offline it is really relaxing.

What are you working on right now?

Well, I'm always working toward progression. We have new items out online and in Zumiez—and we will be working with them to expand our brand with other retailers. For me, personally, I take modeling jobs, music videos and acting roles to move my personal brand forward, but it always ties back to By Samii Ryan.

photos by @evyoaptics text by devon preston

My INKED cover experience was amazing. I was so shocked and excited that I was chosen to be on the Pin-Up cover—it was one of my favorite shoots to date. I’m a feminist, so being able to take an iconic image such as “Rosie the Riveter” and make it my own was an honor.

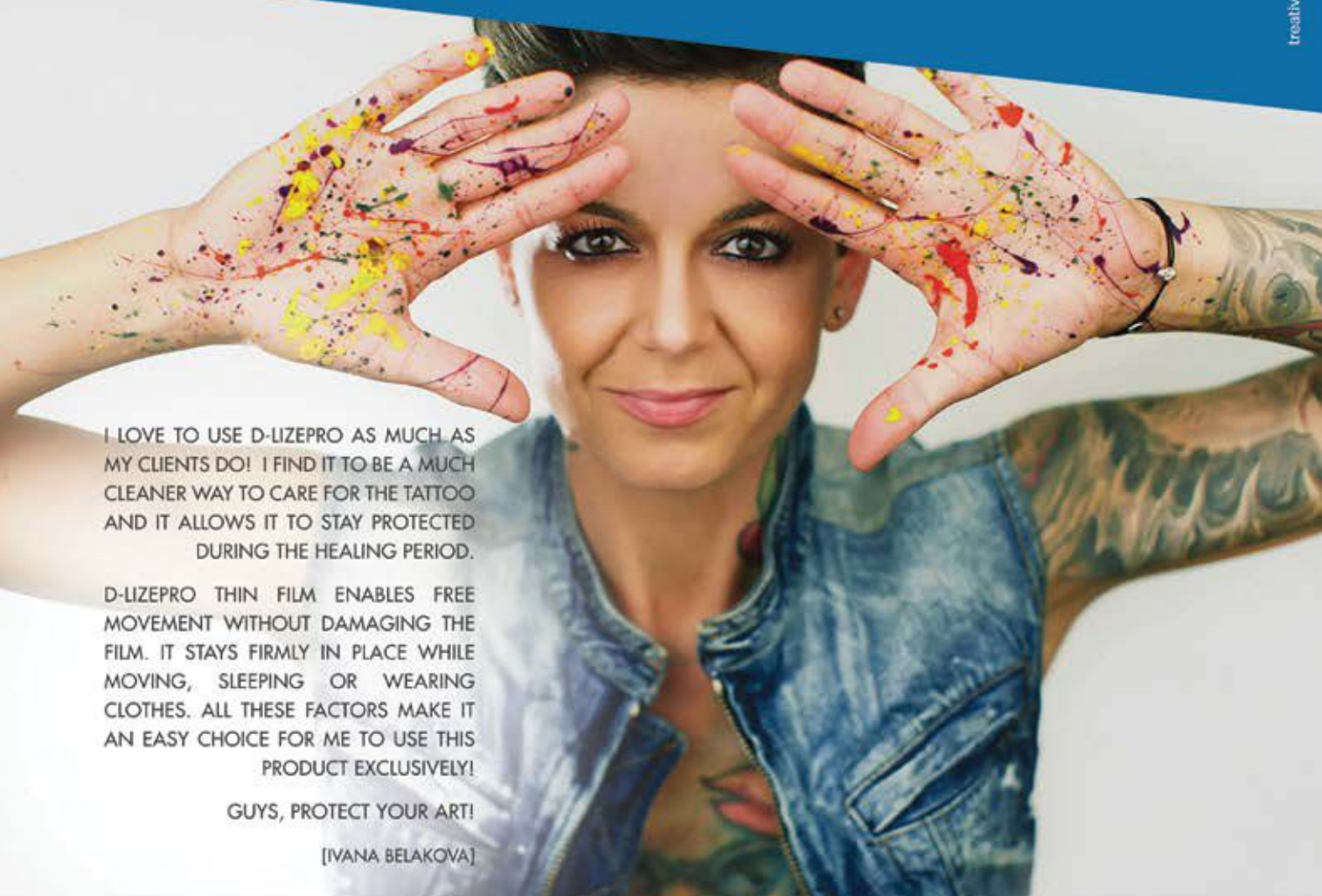


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SPACE CAKE

The Cali Rapper Turned Cannabis Influencer Spills the Tea on Collaborating with RiFF RaFF and Getting High with Bishop Don "Magic" Juan

In the summer of 2012, Lil Debbie entered the public eye after appearing in Kreayshawn's music video for "Gucci Gucci." Ever since, she's solidified her spot in hip-hop history as a solo artist. And while she continues to release music, she is recently being recognized as a pivotal figure in Instagram cannabis culture. Nominated as an influencer for the California Cannabis Awards, Debbie is changing the way social media and society at large view the marijuana industry. She's here to prove that not all potheads are lazy bros who sit around watching Rick and Morty—they're innovators, creators, activist and badass visionaries. We sat down with her to learn how she got her start in the music industry, how she fell in love with Mary Jane, and her all-time craziest stoner story.

How did you first break into the music scene and what led you to become a solo performer? My first break into the music scene was when I styled Kreayshawn's "Gucci Gucci" music video. That video changed our lives forever and many others—from the type of artist Kreayshawn was to what we were wearing. It was new for a lot of people and we kind of put that freedom of being whoever we wanted to be in the rap industry out there. The fallout of the White Girl Mob is what led to me become a solo performer

How did working with RiFF RaFF take your career to the next level? I feel like working with RiFF RaFF showed people how comfortable we were with being ourselves and how dope it is to genuinely express yourself.

How do you define your brand and how do you use social media to market yourself as a performer?

I started my branding so long ago. I was one of the first female artists tagging every company in my day-to-day outfits about five to six years ago on Instagram. I kind of paved the way for bloggers and other artists to find outfits. I've been doing this for a long time, especially within the weed industry. I would say my brand is for people who remain true to who they are and never give. My brand is for people who respect the individual self.

When did you become an influencer in the cannabis industry?

I became an influencer in the cannabis industry about nine years ago. Since I'm not signed to a label, I was always posting all the pounds I had, the type of weed I was smoking, tagging companies, introducing new products, and then decided to start my own brand called Cakes—which is inspired by cookies!



photo by 36NEEK text by devon preston

Has cannabis always been a passion of yours and how does it impact your music? I've been smoking weed since I was 13. I'm well over the age of 25 and weed has always been a huge part of my life—from THC to CBD. I even made CBD face masks when Cakes first dropped. A lot of my music is made for and about weed smokers, because I want to break that idea of stoners being lazy. There is nothing lazy about me, and I smoke at least 15 joints a day. It's all about knowing what you can or can't stand and working with it.

Do you prefer indicas, sativas or hybrids? I'm honestly an indica girl, but I also love hybrids. It really depends on my day, what I have going on, and my mood.

What are your top strains? This is a hard question, just because right now name branding on weed is so popular. I try a lot different named weeds per week, but one of my top favorites is Strawberry Banana .

If you could name a strain, what would it be? I can't give out names for free, somebody will definitely take it and run with it! But if anybody is looking for weed names, hit me up. I've got some really dope ones.

What is your preferred method of consuming cannabis? I smoke weed out of raw papers. I stopped smoking cigarettes about three years ago and decided to quit all tobacco—which meant swishers, backwoods, roll-ups, etc.

What are your favorite cannabis related memes? I just saw this meme “When your friend is crying but you're too high to console them.” That's me. What's your craziest stoner story? My craziest stoner story has to be smoking with Bishop Don Juan. He hit the joint through his nose and than passed it to me. I didn't know what to do.

What's your favorite thing to do when you're high? My favorite thing to do when I'm high is look at nail designs. I can look at nail designs for hours.

What's it like being nominated for a California Cannabis Award? It feels like DAMN, finally! Finally they give me the credit I deserve. Finally someone is acknowledging the work I've put in, and the different shit I've been doing within the weed industry. From being a rapper, to putting other companies on, to creating my own brand and being a woman.

What's up next for Lil Debbie? More music, more life, more water, more waves.



photos by jonathan weiner
text by Hayley Toth
grooming Sime for Exclusive Artists
using Skyn Iceland and Hanz De Fuko
styling Christina Bushner

FROM RAGS TO RICHES

Meet Richard Cabral The Emmy Nominated Ex-Convict. Cabral talks tattoos, his colorful past, and how it shaped him as the actor he is today.

You may know him from his role as Leprechaun, a gang member on the NBC/TNT television series *Southland*. That's where Cabral cut his acting teeth before going on to earn an Emmy nomination for his role as Hector Tonz in Season 1 of John Ridley's *American Crime*, and the whirlwind propulsion of Cabral's career shows no signs of slowing down as he recently landed a lead role on the *Sons of Anarchy* spinoff *Mayans MC*.

However, despite these impressive acting credentials, Cabral isn't your average actor...and his past can vouch for that. Born into a Mexican family involved in LA gangs since the 1970s, Richard followed in the foot steps of his *familia* and also entered the gang life. This decision ultimately led to him to incarceration until the age of 25. It was here that he met Father Greg of Homeboy Industries who changed his life by introducing him to art and acting. Here's how Cabral went from the streets to the screen.

Growing up in a family involved in gangs, what was the biggest struggle you faced? Not knowing that there is even a struggle is the challenge. Growing up in a community of brokenness, you have no idea you are even struggling.

There is no outlet to let you visualize anything different. In broken communities, this is the norm. I was stuck in a

whirlpool of destruction since my birth and so were my other siblings and neighborhood friends. The struggle never eases because our community's brokenness never ceases.

It was not until life spoke to me, giving me an ultimatum of life or death, was I able to see something different.

Growing up in such a difficult situation, along with being incarcerated at such a young age, did you ever believe that you would be where you are today? I was not just a broken child. I was a young man who delved into a 100 percent gang life in Los Angeles. Violence and incarceration were the deep-rooted gates I entered.

Coming from that type of past, never did I see myself as a successful man in the Hollywood industry. Not a single one of my peers or anyone from my neighborhood has ever walked this path. I never imagined I would be the one to travel this path. I was the only one in my community who took the leap of faith and manifested the Hollywood dreams.

How are you thankful for the challenges your past presented you? I have no fear in my life and career. There is just a stern dedication to make the right moves and let nothing stand in



my way. If I fought a life sentence and looked at my life hung in front of me, there is nothing I can't go through. I have seen the bottom, so everything else must be a blessing.

How do you believe your past helped shape you into the person you are today? We are the products of our experiences. Everything I went through must be credited to who I am today.

What is some advice you would give to kids who are growing up in a situation like your own? We have the power to manifest our future, no matter what challenges we went through. We come from greatness, the Power lies within us. Do not expect people to understand your passion in life, for we are all unique individuals. If you want it bad enough you must let nothing stand in your way. If you fill yourself with positivity, that is what you will receive. If you fill yourself with negativity, that is what you will receive.

What's one thing you would tell your childhood self today? All your pain and suffering will be worth it. Love your grandparents as much as you can, remember that their time in this world is shorter than you think. Forgive your mom and dad.

Why are tattoos so prominent in gangs and the culture? Our people have marked our bodies since our ancestors roamed these lands in Native America. Indigenous American. The sacrifice of the body was nothing new as tattoos emerged. It is a sign of pride and recognition within gang culture. We want everybody to know who we are and where we're from.

What better way than to state that, the only thing we truly own, our skin?

How did you go from an ex-convict to an Emmy-nominated actor? Evolution. Nothing stays the same. I chose to evolve in a positive way instead of a negative way.

An Emmy nomination did not make my life different. It was what I did in my life before and after that moment that made my life different.

As an ex-convict, I never knew what I was to be. I just knew I didn't want to be what my life was as an ex-convict.

What was your first tattoo? And at what age did you get it? My first tattoo was at 15 years old. It was my last name across my back in old English.

Do you have any tattoos from your past life? A large majority of my tattoos are from my past life. My whole chest plate and right sleeve were done in a California prison. My stomach and my headpieces are gang tattoos.

What is your favorite piece, and what is the special meaning or significance in your life? No favorite pieces, I feel they're all special. Everyone's tattoo was a memorable time in my life. My life is something I take as a whole, not as fragments. From prison tattoos to getting tattooed by some of the most prominent tattoo artists, they all have their special place in my heart.

What is the most interesting tattoo story you have? My childhood friend tattooed the city we grew up in Montebello in the center of my stomach. He tattooed me in his grandma's house as she slept in the next room. I sat there with him as he injected himself with methamphetamine and then began tattooing me. Little did I know that that would be the last time I hung out with him.

Are you looking to get more work done? I just decided to finish my entire back. My tattoo artist is Mario Dagget at Black Mirror Tattoo. We're creating my back piece together. I am not set on what exactly it will be, but it will be a masterpiece.

Do you feel like acting was always your calling? I feel like storytelling was my gift. Acting is just how it is expressed at this time.

You're also a poet. What style of poetry would you say you write? My style of poetry is *barrio* poetry. There is no box for my poetry, it is purely emotion-driven. A lot of it is representing the streets where I'm from in LA.

Do you feel like writing is a source of therapy for you? It's a huge source of therapy. It gives you the opportunity to release your emotions.

Do you have any books or publications in the making? My life is my story. True rags to riches. The *barrio* Cinderella. There is no set publication, but there are no if's, and's or but's about it, my life will be told in print.

What new projects will you be taking on this year? *Mayans FX*. Additionally, my one-man show will be up and running this October at Inner-City Arts Theater in Los Angeles.





AMERICA'S MOST WANTED

America's Most Wanted Loses His Cover Virginity With INKED

photos by jason goodrich text by devon preston
stylist catherine hahn groomer logan daviston

2 piece silk PJ - Vintage Robe - Vintage Shoes - Alexander McQueen
Jewelry - Barbwire bracelet - Custom made for Post Malone by Maiden Voyage Jewelry



Shirt - Custom-made for Post Malone by Catherine Hahn
Boot - Saint Laurent Belt - Vintage Jewelry - Custom-made for Post Malone by
Maiden Voyage Jewelry Barbwire diamond ring - Custom-made for Post Malone by
Catherine Hahn

At 11 a.m., on a gray and drizzling morning in December, a line has already begun to form around the block outside Pier 36 in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Doors won't open at the NYC venue for at least seven hours, however, that hasn't stopped fans from holding out for their favorite artist. I make my way toward the entrance, keeping an eye out for someone whose guise might disclose distinguished status. On the contrary, I find Bobby Greenleaf, Post Malone's assistant manager, smoking a joint next to a solitary hot dog cart. We head to a white van, which takes us to Post's penthouse suite at Central Park's Viceroy Hotel.

Upon entering the hotel room, we are greeted by two six-foot-something bodyguards that could likely pulverize grown men with the force of silverback gorillas. I glance over at the sleeping figure on a fawn-colored suede couch, a chaotic clump of hair protruding from the top of a gray blanket. The suite is decorated with empty Coke bottles and ransacked pizza boxes, inklings of the 22-year-old rockstar napping just 10 feet away. I assume my position at the table, careful not to disturb his slumber.

Roughly an hour after settling in, I am startled by a door opening behind me and suddenly I am face to face with a sleepy, shirtless Post. The platinum recording artist extends his hand to me and I stare down at it, momentarily paralyzed. After an exceptionally awkward pause, I take his hand and introduce myself. Post then goes around to every person in the room, reacquainting himself with each member of his entourage and meeting El-e Mags, his tattoo artist for the day. Lastly, he rouses the person sleeping on the couch, who turns out to be his younger brother and tour manager.

While the tattooer sets up a make-do station, the *Stoney* singer takes a seat with the group. His long hair, which is usually tied back in cornrows or a top knot, hangs loose around his shoulders and he's put on a Grateful Dead t-shirt over a pair of striped yellow Ralph Lauren boxers. "Do you want any pizza?" Post asks me, gesturing to the half-empty boxes on the table. I politely decline, explaining briefly that I don't eat cheese. A look of bewilderment washes over his tattooed face, the cogs turning behind a furrowed brow. "Are you a witch?" For two seconds, I consider staying in character, playing it safe. But, at the same time, how many opportunities will I have to read Post Malone's natal chart?

"When's your birthday?" I ask, summoning Cafe Astrology from my recent browser history. "July 4th," he says, taking a puff of a Camel Crush cigarette. "Your sun is in Cancer, which means that you're on the sensitive side." Post scrunches up his face and with a dramatic lift in pitch answers, "No, I'm not." The room laughs and an unabashed grin creeps onto his face. "But you also care a lot about your friends and family." He nods in agreement and makes his way toward the suede couch.

Mags presents a tablet, the words "Stay Away" copied over in slight variations of a graceful cursive font. For someone who has referred to himself as a porcupine in interviews, I'm surprised by the elegance of the typeface that Post has chosen to decorate his brow bone. However, the script's likeness to Lil Peep's own design fills in the blanks. Post selects the second largest design and Mags quickly whips up a stencil. I hold my camera at the ready, waiting for the cue to share this tattoo with the world. Once the stencil is affixed to his skull, Post lies down on the suede couch and Mags prepares his machines. The quiet whir of his rotary pen blends into the groove of Nirvana and I position my phone above Post's face. His fans have already locked into the live, with over a million and counting waiting patiently for the needle to touch skin. Post holds his breath as Mags drags his first line, starting at the temple and working his way in.

"What was your first tattoo?" I ask, careful not to shine the flash directly in his eyes. He paused for a minute, scrolling through a





Shirt - Custom made for Post Malone by Catherine Hahn Pant - Dolce and Gabbana Boot - Saint Laurent Belt - Tony Lama Belt Buckle - Buckleszone Jewelry - PM ring and barbwire bracelet - Custom made for Post Malone by Maiden Voyage Jewelry Earring - MARTINE ALI

Mental Rolodex of tattoo memories. “A lot of my tattoos are just spur of the moments. My first one was the Playboy Bunny which got fucked up while playing basketball with Justin Bieber.”

The live ignites with the ferocity of thousands of social media trolls, each one spewing venomous yet futile jabs toward the unkempt artist. Good luck getting a job. No one’s gonna hire you. Have fun being unemployed. However, as the comments continue to roll in and the needle curves into his brow, Post is unvexed by both, sinking deeper into the sleek sofa and hiding his slate blue eyes under tinted Gucci frames.

After 45 minutes of slow and unrelenting agony, Mags lifts his machine from Post’s brow and announces that the piece is complete. The two exchange gratitude and Post gets up to change for the show. “Can I take this, for the office?” I ask Mags, gesturing toward the smudged stencil paper on his station. He nods and I tuck the delicate souvenir into my pocket.

Post emerges from the bedroom, dressed in a navy crew neck and diamond hoop earrings. The fresh ink on his forehead is shiny with a thick coat of vaseline and his crew gathers to head out of the penthouse suite. Flanked by his bodyguards, we descend to the lobby and outside into the rain. We say our goodbyes, for now, with Post and his posse disappearing into the backseat of a 2018 Cadillac Escalade.

Five months after meeting Post at the Viceroy, I find myself in his presence once more. However, this time I am not alone. At 9 a.m. on May 23rd, I depart for Philadelphia from the Staten Island Ferry with the INKED mag office. Today, we are driving to Pennsylvania to shoot our August/September cover and are lucky to have Post Malone be a part of it. We arrive at the Warehouse on Watts, a gritty space that parallels Post’s grunge aesthetic. The first floor of W.o.W. is dimly lit by dirt-caked windows and the walls are covered with warped floor-to-ceiling mirrors—giving the impression of an abandoned funhouse. There are several arcade games nestled against thick polyester couches and a table already stocked with platters of chicken wings. The staircase leading to the second floor is covered in brightly colored murals and vibrant graffiti, a strong juxtaposition to the caliginous ground floor. The second floor is brightly illuminated by high noon, a cluster of potted ferns splaying their leaves to fat strips of light. Overstuffed velvet couches in muted sunset hues are scattered throughout the spacious ballroom and fraying cords suspend swings from the wood-beamed ceiling. The brick walls are a calico blend of flamingo pink and ivory anchored by incompleteness. The opposite wall hosts soiled Persian rugs, a fully stocked pool table, and a disharmonious white leather couch that would be better suited for

the set of *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

As the photo and video crew begins staging each shot of the layout, I return downstairs to assist the wardrobe team. Post Malone’s tour stylist, Catherine Hahn, has shipped in three racks of clothing from Los Angeles—including a half dozen silk suits, several spangled cowboy shirts, two mink coats and enough Gucci to go around. A pack of Camel Crush cigarettes hide in plain sight on the vanity and the fridge is fully stocked with frosty cans of Bud Light.

Several hours into production, Post and his crew arrives at the venue in North Philly. He’s immediately greeted at the door with a cold beer and he takes the time to meet everyone on staff before discussing concepts with the creative director. While guzzling down his signature drink, I approach Post with my own Bud Light in hand. “Do you have any tattoos for Bud Light?” I ask, half joking. He laughs and nods his head. “So we were on the bus on tour, I don’t remember what city we were in, but I was like, hey, let’s get tattooed. So some guy came on the bus and I was drinking a Bud Light and he said “What do you want?” and I told him I wanted the Anheuser-Busch logo so he did. Now it’s on my body forever and I couldn’t be happier.”

Although it has only been a few months since I last met with him, Post is in a completely different league than he was back in December. On April 27th, Republic Records released his second studio album, *beerbongs & bentleys*, and it reached 80 million Spotify streams in the first 24 hours. By May 12th, the album shattered the record for the most simultaneous Top 20 hits on the Billboard charts, which had been previously shared by The Beatles and J. Cole. Speaking of Billboard, on May 20th Post and 21 Savage each walked away with their first award for their song “Rockstar.”

For his first look, Post is decked out in a gray snakeskin suit and a brown mink coat. He leans against a weathered brick wall, soft panels of light warming the planes of his tattooed face. He puffs at a cigarette, taking long drags between shots and pushing the smoke toward the lens. Every eye in the room is locked on the monitor, however, the shoot has only just begun.

After a couple dozen frames, we move on to the second concept, which happened to be the cover. The inspiration behind the shot comes from old America’s Most Wanted posters, with wardrobe paying homage to vintage gangsters and mob bosses. Post is decorated in a pair of houndstooth trousers held up by suspenders over a plain wife beater. In one hand, he’s got his tried-and-true smoke, but in the other he flaunts a mugshot board to the camera. Despite this being his first cover,


he transitions confidently between poses while jamming along to a Megadeth riff.

Once we’ve wrapped up the cover, everyone makes their way to the second floor and gathers around an old ornate table. On the table, we’ve scattered at least 10 bands of hundred dollar bills next to a Gucci Mane-approved money counter. Post lounges next to the heaps of cash, playing a few chords on an acoustic guitar and lending the room a taste of his velvety pipes.

The final shot of the day is against the pool table, with Post wearing a yellow tulip shirt over a pair of black jeans. A rhinestone lucky die belt buckle gleams against the setting sun as he leans into the vulcanized rubber cushions. He’s ready to move on from shooting and is set to perform at Penn’s Landing’s Festival Pier. “What else do you have planned for your tour, besides performing?” I ask, trying to perk him up for the final stretch. “On this tour, outside of working on the new project, there’s been a lot of gaming, a lot of nice movies, you know, feature films.” he replies, rolling a fiberglass pool cue between his hands. “Music, drinking, singing, laughing—just kinda hanging out.” I nod and the photographer continues to capture the scene. “You know, I’m a normal guy and just like to hang out, get weird.”

Before we can wrap on set, there’s one more thing that has to happen. It wouldn’t be an INKED shoot without a few tattoos, but this time, instead of receiving the ink, Post is the one giving it. The god of modern American traditional, Myke Chambers, is his mentor for the day, guiding his first tattoo line by line. The client, or should we say victim, is Post’s manager Bobby Greenleaf, who has entrusted the artist with his skin. Chambers has already traced a drawing done by Greenleaf’s daughter on his skin; all Post has to do is color between the lines. He straps up in anticipation, snapping on a pair of black Nitrile gloves and dipping the machine into a small pot of ink. His hand hovers over Greenleaf’s untouched flesh, the needles bared like the fangs of a wolf. “Don’t worry about hurting him,” I encourage. “Tattoos are supposed to hurt.” Post makes his first mark on Greenleaf, slowly trailing his machine down the skin. With every stroke of ink, his movements become more confident and intentional. The final form begins to come together and by the end, the work isn’t half bad. Sure, I wouldn’t recommend that Post quit his day job, but for a tattoo virgin he slides through with a passing grade. Today, Post achieved two huge firsts—shooting his first cover and inking his first tattoo. And while he will likely cover more magazines in the coming years and will certainly get behind a tattoo machine again, he’ll always remember INKED as the one and true OG.





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photos by peter roessler

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The Ties That Bind

HOW DID THIS HIGH-PROFILE COUPLE SURVIVE THE “REALITY TV RELATIONSHIP CURSE?”

photos by mike ho text by dove clark

Multi-platinum recording artist Kid Ink and his wife Asiah Collins created a stir in the hip-hop community in 2017 when Asiah appeared on the E! TV reality series *The Platinum Life*. The vivacious beauty had always been a behind-the-scenes partner in her man's career, while Kid Ink created a slew of hits, including chart-busting collaborations with the likes of Chris Brown, Fetty Wap and Usher. Would reality TV and newfound fame for Asiah be the end of a love-filled decade for the duo?

Thankfully for the couple, who are married and parents to a young daughter, the “curse” of reality television didn't strike them down. Throughout the experience, Asiah actually maintained her dignity and took skills of co-managing Kid Ink's merchandising and the discipline of balancing family life to the next level as she completed culinary school. Meanwhile, Kid Ink began to slowly re-emerge with new music after a rather lengthy hiatus—a break he'd taken despite garnering those platinum-selling hits and hundreds of millions of plays on YouTube. **INKED** Mag sat down for a discussion with Kid Ink and Asiah to learn more about their journey and growth through fame, family and, of course, ink.







What inspires you to take your relationship to the next level?

Kid Ink: Me, personally, probably subconsciously I did not want to be in the same situation as my parents. My father was gone when I was five, but even before he went to jail he wasn't with my mom.

Asiah: Same here. My mom wasn't married until I was an adult and I didn't have a lot of examples of a two-parent household or marriage growing up. My mom was a single mom with four kids. We understand each other better than anyone else could because of that.

How did you manage the created drama and pressures of reality TV?

Asiah: I don't think that was an issue for us. Going into it, of course, I had reservations. You think about how everyone says there's a reality TV curse on relationships. We've never really ever hidden things from each other. So that wasn't something that really affected us.

Do you feel the show fast-tracked your career, or do you feel you had to work harder to show that you were legit?

Asiah: I don't think I had to fight harder to prove anything to anyone else. I had to fight harder to prove to myself how much I wanted it. I had to decide what was a priority to me: doing the show or finishing culinary school and balancing that with being away from my daughter because prior to that, it was only me and Aislin. I didn't really feel like I had to prove anything to anyone else.

What is it like raising kids in the social media age? And how do you intend to deal with things if they approach you about being in the entertainment business?

Kid Ink: Anything as far as entertainment or what she wants to do with her life... I say give everything a try. I don't pressure anything. You could go ahead and try, succeed and fail, learn your lessons, and see if you really have a love for it.

Ink, what's next for you?

Kid Ink: The team of people around me understands the new place we're going with the music and in general with the brand Kid Ink, and how we're gonna do the next wave around. Musically, I'm excited. I think I'm finally taking some steps in breaking through the TV and movie world with all these tattoos. It's definitely a struggle with that. I gotta get a lot of makeup done. I think at the end of the day that goes with the skill of acting, so I gotta really take that seriously if that's what I want to do too.

Ink, as far as your tattoos, is there anything that you haven't done yet that you want to do? If so, why and where?

Kid Ink: As much as people think I'm fully covered up, it's a lot of stuff that I haven't dived into. I'm at the point now where I look at the armpit area, back of the knees, front of the knees... I still have two thighs I have to get done. I don't think I'm ready to hit the feet.

Asiah: Babe, you have nice feet. You shouldn't hide them. *[laughs]*.

What do you say if your daughter says "I want to get a tattoo?"

Asiah: Oh my God. We still don't know what to do about that! *[laughs]*

Kid Ink: For me, personally, she's just gonna have to ask. It's never gonna be influenced on her. Growing up, I was the one in my family that had more than three tattoos. My mom had, like, three or four tattoos but they were all hidden.

Asiah: Same with me. On my 16th birthday my mom took me to get a matching tattoo with her. In her mind she thought by doing that I would just get it out of my system and over it *[laughs]* Little did she know that I would be sleeved up four years later, so it kind of backfired on her. I don't know. I guess we'll cross that bridge when we're there.

What do each of you want people to know most about you at this stage of your life?

Kid Ink: That we're still having fun but it's brand new. We always want something new, different and exciting to go on, and I think that's what keeps everything fresh.

Asiah: I want people to know that as young women you can do it all. You do have to do things at your own pace and that's okay. I think I felt a lot of pressure from people that I had to have it all figured out and be working toward goals so early in life, and maybe I wasn't ready at that time. But you can have everything you desire and want, and you could go after it when it's the right time for you.



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GETTER

Close your eyes and reminisce on the time where Vine was in its prime. Those were the good ol' days, am I right? None of this Musical.ly noise, but a time where people could create content gold in a tight six-second-loop. Alas, those days are long over and our favorite Vine stars have made their moves into other branches of social media celebrity—from the Paul brothers stirring up controversy on an international level to Lele Pons breaking the sound barrier on YouTube. But what about the stars of the iconic “Suh Dude” Vine? Well, as it turns out, one of its creators is also a legend in the world of EDM. Tanner Petulla, a.k.a. Getter, is a highly sought after DJ and has collaborated with the likes of Skrillex, Datsik, and Borgore. And with his debut full-length album dropping in mid-2018, we decided to meet up with him to learn what fans can expect from *Visceral*.

When did you decide to pursue your music career?

I always had been into music. Playing drums or guitar, shit like that. When I got to high school my homies were into similar music as me, so we would mess around and record ourselves playing our favorite songs. From there I discovered making music on a laptop with software synths. I got obsessed with making sounds. It was like a video game to me. Eventually I would go on to play small shows here and there—for not that much money. The day I got fired from my job at smoke shop was the day I decided to take it seriously and saved up money to move to L.A.

How did SoundCloud impact the early stages of your career?

Oh God I miss the days when SoundCloud was cool. No bull-shit, just music. It was such an important part of the come up. You would obsess over getting your song as many plays as possible, which meant making the craziest shit. After about a year, SoundCloud was full of so many sick producers trying to one up each other—it was so tight. I remember starting to get noticed by my heroes and they would repost my songs. When I first hit 100k, I was shitting my pants.

What made you transition from being a metalhead to an electronic producer?

I think it was really just commitment and wanting to do something different. I've always jumped from scene to scene because I get bored. But I got comfortable pretty quick after metal. The whole deal with having to rely on other people to make a show work or other people to learn songs got in the way for me. I'm an introvert, so I like being by myself, especially in the creative process.

Which DJs at the time influenced you to pursue this genre?

Man, the first were

Caspa and Rusko. The UK sound was so legendary. I remember hearing their Fabric live set back in the day and I needed to learn how they made it. Obviously, when Skrillex released his first few songs, it completely changed the game for everyone. I remember trying to make his sounds for years.

How did being a “Vine star” push your career forward?

I downloaded Vine just to watch funny stuff. I would post here and there, but never wanted to do something with it. I met Nick Colletti and he inspired me to start doing more. It was kind of similar to SoundCloud, someone popular seeing your stuff and reposting it. Then we did the “Suh Dude” thing and it got posted to Facebook. I like to say it haunts me but at the end of the day, it helped get me to where I am today so I'm thankful for it. As long as people know Getter, I'm happy.

How has your style and influence changed over the years?

Oh wow, it has changed so much. I used to do a lot of drugs, drink and just party. I feel like that's common for new musicians who start touring. You do a lot of dumb shit and then it catches up with you. That immediately affected my work and outlook on the whole music thing. When I would party a lot, I would always look for the next “sound” that would make everyone go crazy and party. Recently, I've calmed down and found myself again and that immediately affected my work. The music I make now is an exact mirrored image to what my brain is feeling at the time. I make hardcore and metal stuff when I'm angry. Screaming always helps me with that. The electronic music I make now is very calm, soothing and sometimes super sad. It's hard to describe it right now because it's not out yet. But I can't wait until people see the picture of my brain that I've painted with my music.

What led you to start Shred Collective?

My close friends and I make new music all the time, but the hard part is getting it out there for people to hear—not just the people right in front of you. So with Shred Collective, I wanted us to have the power to broadcast our shit on all of our platforms, so that everyone who follows everyone can experience it. That eventually turned into a dope clothing brand that I'm very proud of. I've hired my older brother, Dylan, to run everything with that. I found out through time that with all of these projects, if I'm going to have people help me with them, they have to be on the exact same page as me creatively. So I figured hiring my brother would help with that because we are pretty much twins.

What can fans expect from your first full-length album, *Visceral*?

The only thing to expect is the real me. It's been over two years since I started it and it's the most important project to me so far. I've been very open about my mental health state recently and showing people it's ok to wear your heart on your sleeve. We have all done shit or said shit that we're not proud of. Whether it was mean, fucked up or self-humiliating. I used to be such a prick on the internet, disrespect people, and just be a chode. I still am sometimes, but specifically to troll. *Visceral* isn't just an album, it's me starting to set an example to all my fellow musicians to break the box you're in and get out of your comfort zone. Change is essential to growth.

What does the future hold for Getter?

There's so much stuff coming up super soon. The album, tours, festivals, new clothing lines, skits, movies and way more. I've been streaming video games and interacting with more fans. It's fun for everyone. Just look out for my album and my stupid Twitter jokes.

photo by steven pahal text by devon preston



CHARACTER, NOT CHARACTERS

Classic portrait photographer, Cade Martin points his lens at heavily tattooed collectors, and the results are mesmerizing.

How did the "Character, Not Characters" project come to be? This series of portraits started on a break during a project. When a client and I somehow got to talking about tattoos. She mentioned a tattoo festival nearby—the DC Tattoo Arts Expo—and asked if I was going. I don't have any tattoos myself, but I was intrigued. The thought of all those people with their stories essentially written on their bodies at one location was something I wanted to experience. From there I hustled to rent a space at the tattoo expo and set up a photo booth.

This particular project is unique because it also ended up being my first photography art exhibition. Another chance conversation—this one with H, the iconic proprietor of the O Street Museum in DC—and these portraits became 12 very large prints – 41" wide on 49" x 62" paper are hanging in the O as "Character, Not Characters."

Were these subjects all shot at one convention? No. I followed the DC shoot with another tattoo event south of LA and it was an equally amazing experience. As is always the case with my portrait projects, I feel truly honored to be let in and given permission to share what I capture.

Did you know any of these people before shooting them? I did not know anyone I photographed. The people I gravitated to had complete coverage and amazingly detailed tattoo work—it was such a clear commitment and passion on their part.

We see a LOT of tattoo portraits, but your incorporation of their tattoos as part of the background sets them apart. Why do you think it does? The portraits alone were striking, but yeah, the background is the special sauce, if you will. I give a ton of credit to the relationship and professional trust I have with the post-production house I worked with, Sugar Digital, it was a really collaborative effort. In addition to capturing this in the portraits, the background helped showcase and amplify that investment in expression. This technique was nothing I'd tried before—and nothing I've attempted since—but it was truly right for these portraits. It felt as though these backgrounds allowed their stories to travel beyond their bodies.

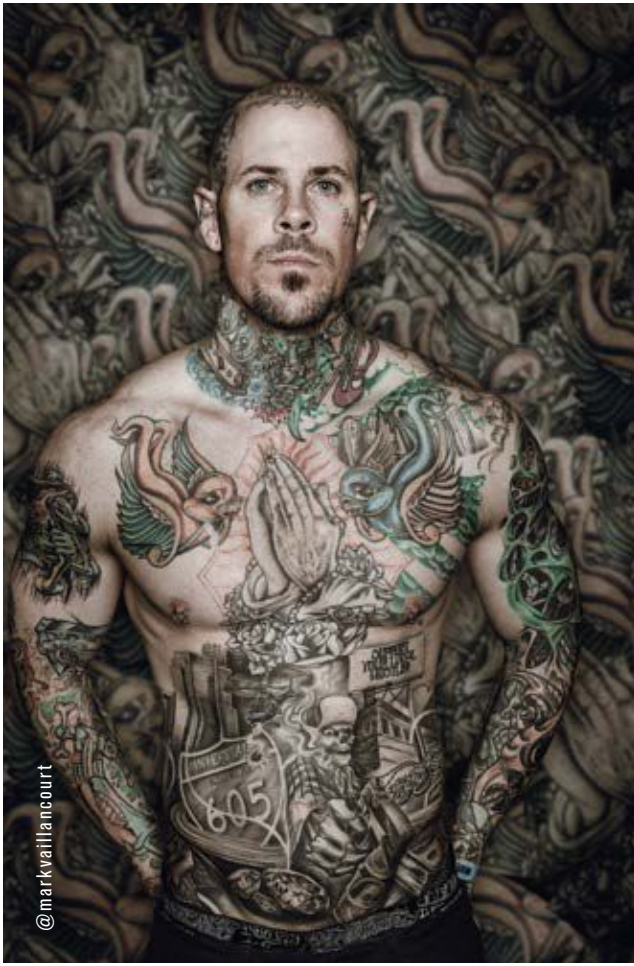
Did you make any revelations about tattooed people after the project was complete? The first thing I'd say is that I certainly can't make any generalizations. I saw and photographed such a wide range of people: women and men, all ages, all ethnicities, from diverse backgrounds, with diverse ink. Something I really appreciated as I made the portraits was the juxtaposition of personal and public – the tattoos are so intimate and personal, but yet they are such a strong and permanent outward statement. It's a true investment of expression. That was something that really rolled around in my brain and has stuck with me from this project.

Do you have any intention of doing another tattoo series? The series of images has gotten a great response, for which I'm very appreciative. I don't have any immediate plans for another shoot, but I would definitely continue with this approach and perhaps add to the series.

Technique-wise were there any difficulties you encountered or lighting nuisances you had to finesse because of the heavy ink coverage of the subjects? Everyone was lit classically and we didn't have any challenges in photographing any of the subjects. Technique-wise, everything was captured correctly in-camera. That left us free in post-production to really explore and experiment with our background technique.

How would you sum up your love for and approach to photography? I think the title of this project, "Character, Not Characters", is a good insight into my photography. I grew up surrounded by really creative and eclectic people whose dinner table musings on art and culture and philosophy were a constant reinforcement of the idea that pursuing creative work was valuable and valid. Those creative influences formed my eye for the candid beauty to be found in people from all walks of life. And once I settled on pursuing photography (after some flirtation with computer programming), I've pretty much been chasing characters and their stories ever since. I'm looking for their stories told through the architecture of their faces or the costumes they wear. I seek their stories in every picture I take. Storytelling is everything in a photograph.

photos by cade martin text by paul gambino



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MANDEE BENCE



Move over Victoria, it's time for a new lingerie brand to steal the spotlight. We're sick of seeing the same impractical designs and unattainable beauty standards duplicated a dozen times over on the catwalk. Now there's finally a brand that showcases styles that are as comfortable as they are trendy. Chonies proves that a girl doesn't need a padded bra or a lace garter to be hot—but that she can define her sex appeal on her own terms. Take a look at how L.A. designer, Mande Bence, created every tattooed girls' favorite panties and what made her decide to take a stand against society's' standard of beauty.

Why did you create Chonies? I created Chonies because I dreamed of an underwear line that promoted body positivity for young girls, with fun designs that were different from the other brands out there.

Was there something lacking in the lingerie world at the time? Definitely. I was looking for something different—with cool graphics instead of lace, padding and underwire. Also, as a curvy, tattooed woman, I found it hard to compare myself to the typical “lingerie model” I saw in catalogs. So with my brand I vowed to use a variety of customer photos as advertising—including tattooed, plus-size and multiracial people.

How did you take Chonies from an idea to a successful brand? When I had the original idea, I ran it past my friend and mentor, Dom DeLuca of Brooklyn Projects Skateboarding in Los Angeles. He was one of the first people to put Chonies in his store on Melrose. I also turned to my business partner Victoria Velasquez, who helped me get started with a manufacturer and open up more accounts. It started growing quickly from there.

What does Chonies mean? “Chonies” is a Spanglish word that stems from the Spanish word for “underwear.” Growing up in Los Angeles with a diverse group of friends, it was a normal thing to refer to your undies as “chonies.”

Describe the ideal Chonies girl. Anyone can be the ideal Chonies girl. I don't like to limit Chonies to a specific category of people—I want everyone to be able to wear Chonies and feel comfortable and confident in their own bodies. That's the ideal customer, someone who wears Chonies because it makes them feel good. And it's not limited to just girls.

What inspires your designs? I shop and travel often so that I can pull inspiration from anywhere, but I also pull inspiration from popular fashion trends and translate it into underwear with my own personal twist on it.

How does popular culture impact your designs? Popular culture plays a huge part in the inspiration for my designs— many of the graphics come from song

lyrics or parodies of different trends.

What goes into designing a pair of underwear or a bra?

Everything starts with an idea and a sketch, but there is an entire other side of the design aspect where specifications are created and we translate all the necessary information to the manufacturer—including specific measurements, materials and colors. Often there can be a few rounds of samples created until it's perfect. For example, I had a collection made in stretch velvet, which seems like it would be a simple thing but actually took lots of developing to make sure the fit was right. That's the time-consuming part of my job, but it takes time because the quality of my brand is really important to me.

How does social media impact your brand? Social media has been an amazing tool for the brand because girls love to take photos wearing Chonies. Our motto is “Show your Chonies,” so the most gratifying thing has been when people tell me that Chonies give them the confidence to post photos in their underwear. We've had an overwhelming response from all around the world, shared through social media, and it's the best feeling.

Why do you gravitate toward using tattoo models? I'm a tattooed woman myself, so I'm drawn to images of tattooed models wearing my brand. Also, if you look at the majority of other lingerie brands out there, they don't use any tattooed models. But people with tattoos are just as beautiful in lingerie. If anything, they're even more interesting to look at.

What are some new styles and concepts you plan to introduce soon? I'm working on developing tons of new styles including bodysuits, halter bras, cross-back styles and high-waisted briefs.

What's up next for Chonies? It's going to take some time, but I'm hoping to be able to launch Chonies for men soon. As the brand grows, I'm working on getting Chonies to an international level. I want Chonies to be a worldwide name, and I know I'm competing with some big dogs out there, but they're going to have to make room for me.



MONAMI
FROST



If you were to look up the word 'inkfluencer' in the dictionary, you'd automatically be directed to Monami Frost's Instagram. With an impressive 1.5 million followers on Instagram and 630K subscribers on YouTube, Frost has changed the way the world thinks about tattoo culture. But the Frost empire doesn't stop with social media—she's also the CEO of a successful streetwear line. We got the skinny on how this media maven does it all, while also raising her eight-year-old

We have to ask, when did you get your first tattoo?

I got my first when I was 15. It was after getting a tattoo kit and I started tattooing my own arms and legs. I got tattooed properly when I met my husband, and maybe in a year or two we got most of the stuff done that I have now.

What is it like having so many tattoos by your husband?

I love it. I like being kind of his painting in progress and having artwork only by him. I still love so many artists, but I'm lucky that my husband is my favorite artist.

Did your social media career happen on purpose or by accident?

In some sort of way, it happened by accident. I've always loved taking pictures and selfies, even though it sounds so ridiculous. Looking back to when I was like 12 or 13, I would have my friends come over and take pictures of them. I never thought it would actually turn into something. Then my husband and I got our first iPhones. We were broke, but he needed to build his portfolio and get on Instagram. Which made me decide to get one and start taking photos of my tattoos. Somehow, it just happened and spiraled really fast in a couple of weeks.

What made you decide to start a YouTube channel?

When I first started Instagram, I was so self-conscious about my angles. I was also self-conscious to be talking, filming and interacting with people online, but I wanted people to understand who I am. People constantly assume that I'm this badass chick when they look at me in pictures, but I wanted them to know that I'm not. Whenever I would go to a convention, people would tell me that I'm not what they expected me to be. I wanted people to see [my personality] and interact with me through videos. My first videos were ridiculous, but I still keep them because they're a part of the process and the journey to where I am now. I love filming more every day.

How do positive and negative comments on social media affect you?

Positive comments are great, they keep me going every single day. Especially people who say that I turned them vegan or helped them in some sort of way. That is everything for me. If one

person says that, everything I do is worth it. Bad comments don't get to me as much, because I don't think that any happy person would say mean things to anyone. It's sad that they have to put their energy out and seek attention in a negative way. But if there is something that I feel self-conscious about and someone points it out, it does kind of get to me. Especially when people say things about me being a mom or about my daughter. At the end of the day, I know that it doesn't matter and no one who is worth attention would say something like that to me.

What does your daughter think about your job and your tattoos?

She loves being a part of it and filming videos. She has classmates tell her that they watch our videos and Gabby says that everyone knows us because we film videos together. She also loves my tattoos. Sometimes when we walk down the streets and people stare at me she will say, "Oh mom, people are looking at you, I love how cool you are." It's usually the other way around with kids. But she wants tattoos as well.

Why did you create a clothing brand?

I started social media by showing the clothing I wear and a lot of people started liking my style. I've always been passionate about streetwear and guys clothes. I realized that streetwear isn't just for guys' and I wanted to make my own thing that I would want to wear or my followers would wear.

What's it like seeing people on social media or in person wearing your clothes?

Every time I see someone, especially at a convention, wearing my clothes it just brings me joy. I can't believe people wear my clothes in so many different places. And it's not just tattooed girls, like you might assume, but all different types of people.

What is your long-term goal for Frost Streetwear?

I take it one step at a time and I never look too far ahead. I love the way it is going and if I am able to continue to move forward, that is my main goal. Being able to create more and collaborate with artists is super exciting.



WHAT LED YOU TO BECOME A TATTOO ARTIST? I started watching the TV show *Miami Ink* when I was in high school. This was the first time I really noticed tattooing. I fell in love instantly and became obsessed. I started telling all my friends in school that I was going to tattoo, so they all asked me to design theirs. I started getting tattoo magazines from bookstores and couldn't keep my face out of them. I finally went and found an apprenticeship at a local tattoo shop and this is where my career began—at age 17.

Have you always been interested in sacred geometry or did your style evolve over time? I was living in Florida during my teenage years when I first started tattooing. I never noticed or knew about sacred geometry until I moved to California at 21. My life brought me to San Francisco, which made a huge impact on my art. I started noticing ancient symbols, such as Metatron's Cube, the Sri Yantra and the Flower of Life, at different music festivals like Burning Man and Symbiosis. I started adapting this style into my tattooing and then one day I completely switched from new school color work to geometric blackwork.

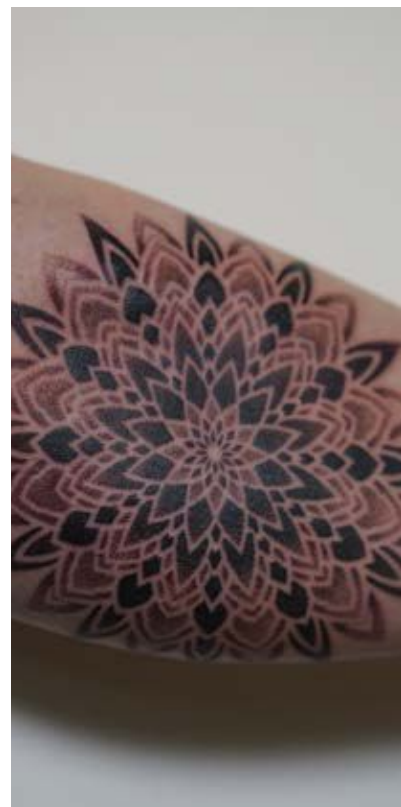
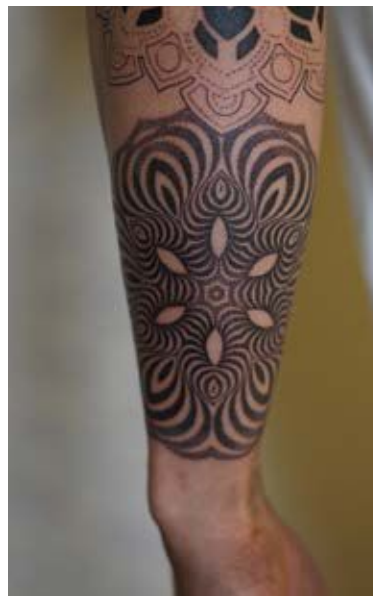
COREY DIVINE

FOLLOW: @COREYDIVINE

How does the process of tattooing dotwork differ from other styles? Dotwork can take me a long time compared to solid fill or regular shading. Lately I do less dots and more linework.

What is the process of creating a bodysuit for someone with no ink? A bodysuit is the ultimate tattoo. If someone with no tattoos chooses one artist to do their entire suit, that is a huge honor. The process includes mapping out the body, discussing the concept and layout, designing, stenciling and tattooing in many sessions. I'm currently in the process of getting my bodysuit done by Adrian Lee and it's been a great experience.

TO SEE MORE TATTOOS, VISIT INKEDMAG.COM





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WHAT FIRST GOT YOU INTO TATTOOING? Since I was a kid, I've always been interested in art. At 17 I got my first tattoo, and by the age of 18 I had a half sleeve. It was then I knew started to feel interest for tattoos. At the age of 18, I tattooed half a sleeve, and it was at that point I knew I wanted to get into this business.

However, it wasn't until a few years later when a friend who was a graffiti artist bought a tattoo machine. We tried it and so that's where I started my career.

HOW DID YOUR EARLY TATTOOING EXPERIENCE SHAPE YOUR STYLE? I never thought about starting with realism. I was always an old school fan, but my clients kept requesting realism.

YOUR BIGGEST INFLUENCERS? The artist who's influenced me the most has got to be Ganga. I'm still learning from him. He's had faith in me since the beginning, offering me a job in his studio giving me the chance to develop as an artist.

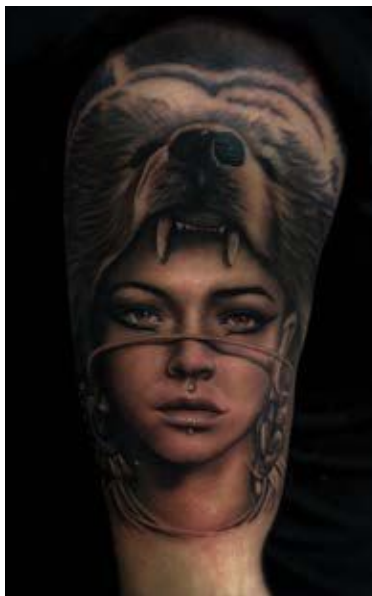
WHAT WAS YOUR STYLE LIKE WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED TATTOOING? I started with letters, sentences, easy drawings. What everyone starts with but, my idea was working in old school because those type of drawings were my favorite.

WHAT DO YOU THINK SETS YOU APART FROM OTHER ARTISTS? I think it's a combination of my shading style and the images I chose to tattoo. I concentrate on imagery that has lots of contrast.

WHAT OTHER TATTOO STYLES HAVE YOU WORKED EXPERIMENTED WITH? I've tried new school and neo-traditional but in the end I liked black and grey realism the most. Maybe in the future I'll try to combine it with color or something more conceptual.

WHAT ARE TWO THINGS YOU WANT TO DO WITH TATTOOING IN THE FUTURE? Every I work on defining my style. Also I work on my patience, having patience is very important tool for a tattoo artist.

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CRISTIAN MARIN

FOLLOW: @_HONART_

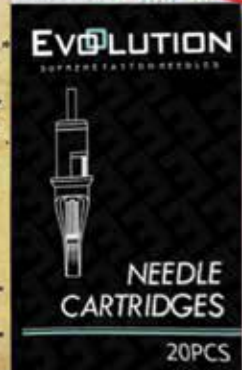


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WERE YOU AN ARTIST BEFORE YOU BECAME A TATTOOER? I graduated from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago with a BFA degree, so I guess you can say I was an artist.

WHAT MEDIUMS DID YOU WORK IN BESIDES TATTOOING? I mostly used ink and paper, but I've experimented with a lot of other mediums as well.

DID YOU HAVE TATTOOS PRIOR TO GETTING INTO TATTOOING? Yes. Pretty awful ones when I was a teenager. They are all covered up now.

DESCRIBE WHAT YOUR APPRENTICESHIP WAS LIKE. It wasn't easy. However no apprenticeship should be easy. Important thing is, I got through it.

WHAT ARE THREE OF THE BIGGEST TAKEAWAYS YOU LEARNED IN YOUR APPRENTICESHIP? Keep practicing to make better tattoos, stay humble, and learn from other artists.

HOW HAS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR MENTOR CHANGED SINCE YOUR APPRENTICESHIP? Well, I guess you can say it has changed a lot. He was my mentor, then after the apprenticeship we remained close friends for years, and it developed into something else. He is my lover and my partner now. He is amazing.

HOW HAS YOUR TATTOO STYLE CHANGED SINCE THEN? I've been trying to simplify my tattoos. I used to pack so much detail in my work but I've learned that simple tattoos hold up better. Sometimes less is more.

WHAT LED YOU TO WORK IN BLACK-AND-GRAY? I've always loved black-and-gray. I mostly have black-and-gray tattoos on my body. However, I love all tattoos of all style.

DO YOU THINK AS THE FEMALE DEMAND FOR TATTOOS GO UP THE DEMAND FOR FEMALE ARTISTS WILL AS WELL? Absolutely. A lot of my female clients tell me they preferred to get tattooed by a female artist.

TO SEE MORE TATTOOS, VISIT INKEDMAG.COM



ALISHA GORY

FOLLOW: @ALISHAGORY



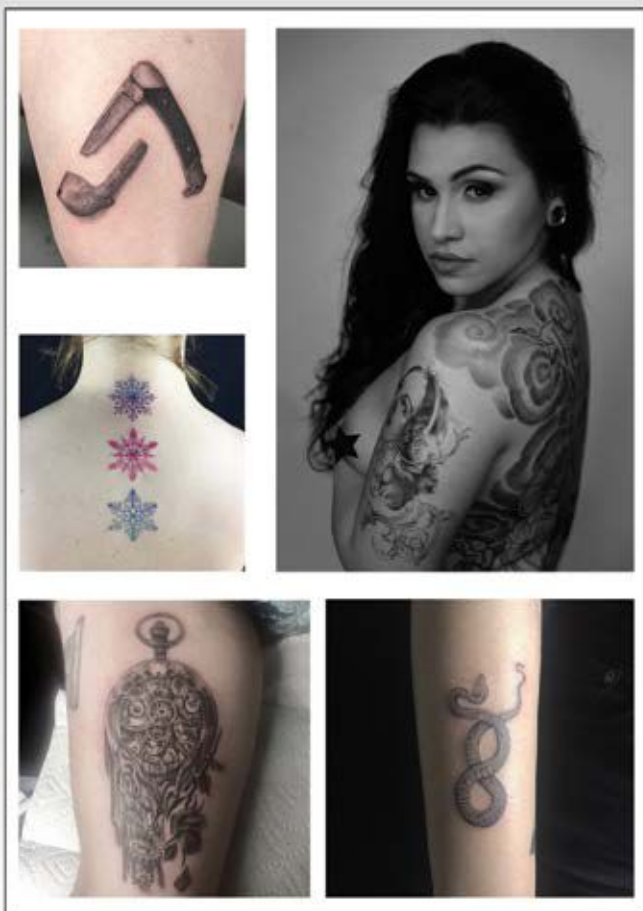
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Jayinky

"draw on a bar napkin with a ball point pen"

Toronto's very own tattoo artist, Jayinky, has been trained and worked in traditional tattoo parlours for the last six years.

Honing her craft, she has come into her own set of skills with single needle tattooing. Respecting its history to where it's at in the industry today. Taking influence from "Tattoo Gods" such as, Mark Mahoney.

She continues to learn and have passion for the technique at, Black Cloud Tattoos. Where her growing obsession for intricate and delicate fine line work can be put forth into every tattoo.



photo by dale schenck text by devon preston

JOSH PAYNE

Fresh off winning Season 10 of *Ink Master* alongside his coach DJ Tambe, Josh Payne is finally here to set the record straight. You may have already formed an opinion of the upfront and unabashed tattooer from upstate New York, but there's more to him than what appears onscreen. Although he may have been portrayed as the ruthless competitor of the season, Payne went in with a game plan and did what he could to secure the title of *Ink Master*. And along the way, he learned a lot about himself as a tattoo artist and as a man. We caught up with the victor of *Ink Master: Return of the Masters* to learn how he successfully claimed the grand prize and how the fans at home can get a Josh Payne original for themselves.

What made you decide to go out for *Ink Master*? Oh man, I've done a lot of amazing things with my career and it kind of seemed like a fun opportunity more than anything. Just to be a validation of everything that I've worked for in my career so far, to put myself out there on television, and see if I could pull this off.

Did you have any reservations about going on television? I had been hesitant about doing the show for a very long time. It was less about being on TV, more about the fact that I'd built an incredible career and if I'd gone on there and failed it could have been detrimental. I had those nerves of whether I was going to pull this off or go out there and look like an idiot.

When you were in Coney Island and you saw Steve Tefft, Anthony Michaels and DJ Tambe walk around the corner, what were your first thoughts? Then what did you think when you found out they'd be your mentors? I was so stoked when I saw DJ around the corner because he and I have been friends for a very long time. I was unfamiliar with Anthony and Steve for the most part, so right out of the gate DJ was someone I knew I respected in this industry and we'd already had the pleasure of working together. If I was lucky enough to get with him, I knew that I would be in good hands and it would make things a lot easier.

Once you were decided as the number two slot in this first challenge, what made you decide to choose Team DJ as your mentor? DJ and I are very similar in the way we work, our passion for this industry, and in our drive. I know that I can be a big person and kind of in your face sometimes, but I knew DJ was similar in those regards and he'd have no problem with saying, "Josh shut up," and putting me in my place.

What about DJ made him an effective leader throughout the season? It's funny, because what was shown and what was real were two different things. DJ was incredible, he helped our team out from artistic decisions to behind-the-scenes stuff. He would even help the other teams out. He's a great leader. A lot of times it looked like he was only trying to help me. But times out of 10 he'd look over what I was doing, give his feedback, and then help everyone else. He knows so much about

this industry and can look at anyone knowing what will push them and inspire them.

What advantages as an artist and a competitor did you bring to *Ink Master*? I feel like I'm one of the more well-rounded artists that have been on the show. I've never been one to pick a style, and on the other side, I grew up in a very competitive family. I went in there treating it no differently than playing sports—there's one prize at the end and I did everything I could to secure that. Between tattooing and flash, and the way that I interacted with people on the day-to-day.

What were some of your biggest challenges during the competition? I think one of the hardest things was being there for that long, away from your friends and family. And being the guy who was recognized by all of the other artists meant that I was getting hit by hard challenges. I think what really broke me down was that all of the other contestants were coming at me and critiquing me at such a different level than everybody else. Slowly it started to get to me because I didn't feel like other people were getting beat down the same way I was. I don't have any ill will toward them, because they were just trying to take out a top competitor. It definitely gets hard in there because you feel like you're alone, but that's where the teamwork and the camaradery worked well for me. I didn't think that I wanted to be on a team but it ended up being the best thing that ever happened.

What did you learn as an artist and an individual from this experience? A lot of it is holding yourself to that scrutiny and demand. It's really easy in your day-to-day to become complacent, but putting yourself out there in the competition setting forces you to look at yourself under a much deeper microscope. You're being judged by the nation now and it really opens your eyes to the way you come across.

Speaking of being judged by the nation, what do you think are some of the biggest misconceptions people have about you after watching the show? [Laughs] All of them. Everybody thinks I'm this big asshole and fighter who loves confrontation. But I was put in this scenario to be a part of a show and win a competition. Outside of *Ink Master*, I've never been in a fight in my life and don't think that I've ever raised my voice at

someone. I hate confrontation more than anything. I tattooed and my tattooing was honest and true to me, but I also made a character that would be displayed. That's kind of all that was shown and it's not necessarily the real me.

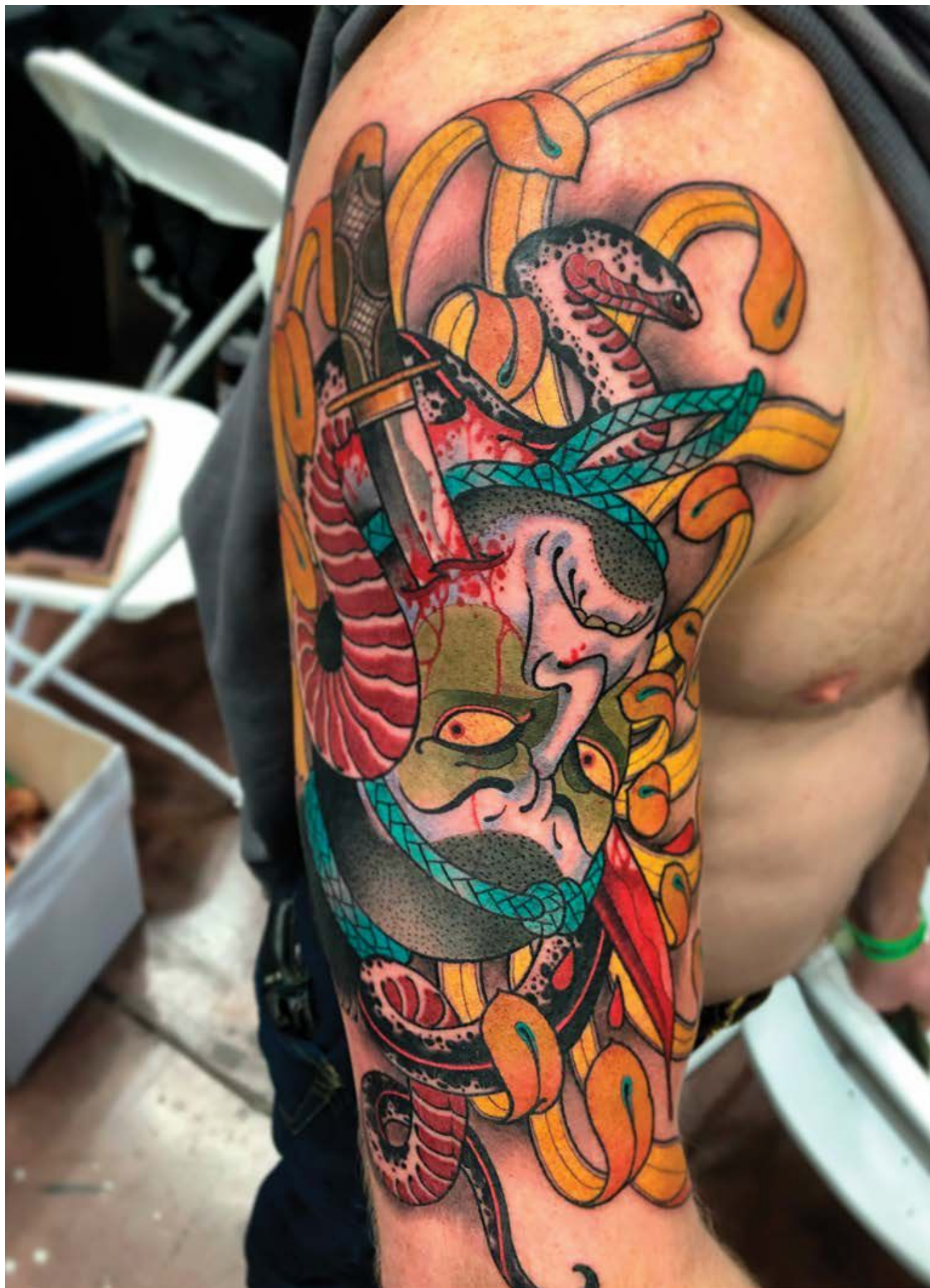
What strategies did you use throughout the competition and bring into the finale? One of the biggest ones was just to have fun, try to be upbeat, and stay positive. It's crazy how having an outgoing attitude and not being scared became a really good tool against the other people who were nervous—they'd look over at me laughing, dancing and having a good time. Also, if someone showed me a little bit of a weakness I was going to exploit it by poking and prodding. If mentally you start to crack, then your work is going to suffer. Not that my goal was to make someone do a bad tattoo, but if they didn't do their best tattoo that was good for me. A lot of people think it should be this happy art camp and in all honesty, we wish it was. But it's a competition and at the end of the road, there's \$100,000 and only one check. I did what I needed to do to secure that.

What was your favorite tattoo that you did throughout the whole competition? I would have to say the portrait of Oliver. It was so funny and it was such a good picture. Knowing the person you're doing a tattoo of makes it easier, especially if they're a walking cartoon character like Oliver. And the canvas was rad and we just had so much fun with that piece.

What preparation went into creating your finale tattoo? It was hard. I was excited when I heard what it was, but when we got down to the logistics that were going to make it work, there was so much information that had to go into the tattoo. I probably drew that thing 15 to 20 times trying to find the best way to make it read. I went through so many different mental hurdles trying to figure out how to do it and it was really stressful. I stood on that stage nervous that I wasn't going to pull it off.

What was your initial response on winning *Ink Master* and how has it changed your career? I was standing on that stage and it felt like an eternity before it set in that my name had been called. It was so surreal. Other than that, to be completely honest, my life is pretty much the same. I didn't go into this show wanting this to be





the staple of my career and it won't be the most defining thing I'll do. Really, I just kept my head down and stayed focus while I got back to work. I'm not trying to say that I tried to forget that I won, but I didn't want it to consume me. I want to keep excelling.

Something that people may not have picked up on was that there was no guarantee that DJ would also win the competition. How did you feel when your coach was victorious alongside you? I'll tell you, that was a big debate among everyone in the house and we pretty unanimously all decided that there was no way two people from the same team would win. When they announced that I had won, I was on cloud nine but then it came to judging DJ against Anthony. Anthony's piece was so good and I was really nervous that maybe DJ wouldn't pull the win off. In all honesty, I think that I wanted him to win more than I wanted myself to win. When his name got called, that's what made it.

Will you guys be working together again any time soon? We really want to. We want to do some collabs and we're going to Puerto Rico to do a convention down there. It'll be really awesome to get back in touch with Juan. Other than that, I think DJ's in the same place I am where this isn't the end all, do all. I think you're going to see him sit down and work harder than ever before, and myself do the same. When you have two guys who have that ethic, it can be hard to get us together.

What advice would you give to other artists going on *Ink Master*? Man, go in there with an open mind and an open idea. In another sense, be very true to yourself and be very honest. I never understood the internet troll world and I never knew the degree that it existed. I'm an emotionally very strong person and some of what I had to read over that four-month span, it sucked. If you're not upfront about this scenario and who you are, it will be hard. But otherwise, it's one of the best experiences you could ever go through. As someone that was very apprehensive when looking at it from the outside, I'm beyond happy that I went. I came out a considerably better artist than I was before.

What are your plans for the rest of 2018 and how can your fans get tattooed by you? Like I said before, I've had such an incredible career and I've got an amazing client base. I have a few conventions, but that's about it. I know that I'm going to Europe in a couple of weeks. I'm going to be in Arizona at Hell City at the end of August. Otherwise, I am going to be tattooing out of my own homebase. And if anyone wants to get tattooed, send an email with a cool idea and let's have some fun.





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BELLY

Meet The Weeknd's Right-Hand Man

When you're in the middle of an international tour and you have a few days in New York City where you just put out a killer performance a few nights earlier at the Governor's Ball, what do you do to relax? Well, if you're Belly you smoke a little weed (maybe a lot of weed), grant an interview to *INKED* magazine, go live on Facebook and get tattooed by Victor Modafferi... all in the same afternoon.

Belly and "international" go hand-in-hand. Born in Jenin, Palestine, Belly (born Ahmad Balshe) moved with his family to Ottawa at a young age to escape the violence and poverty of his home country. Things were moving sure and steady as Belly carved out a niche for himself as a songwriter, but that all changed when he landed a RIAA Platinum-certified smash with "Might Not" [feat. The Weeknd] from his 2015 project *Up for Days*.

That pairing up with the weekend proved to be influential and the two have gone on to work together right up to present day. Belly has also collaborated with heavy hitters such as Young Thug, Jadakiss and Ty Dolla Sign to name just a few. Oh, yeah and let's not forget that he co-penned Beyoncé's "6 Inch" featuring The Weeknd, which is taken from the acclaimed visual album *Lemonade*.

However, Belly also has a politically active side that has been around since he first starting writing back in Canada. In fact, during the 2016 promo tour for the album entitled *Another Day in Paradise*, Belly and The Weeknd cancelled their appearance on Jimmy Kimmel Live to protest the appearance of Donald Trump while he was campaigning for his presidential seat.

Time to read what Belly had to say in between tokes and tats.

Would you be able to talk about your new single "What You Want" featuring The Weeknd? I just dropped a song that's special to me. It's with me and my brother, The Weeknd, and it's been a great experience so far. It's been a great experience to create something that people love with my brother. And the video was such a good vibe, shooting was some of the most fun I've ever had. I feel like the stars aligned for this to happen.

You're best known collaboration was "Earned It" for *Fifty Shades of Grey*, what went into creating that track? Ah man, all credit to The Weeknd on that one. Abel is very meticulous when it comes to his own music and I was

just blessed to be a part of it.

What does being a Palestinian-Canadian singer, songwriter and recording producer mean to you? It means the world to me. It taught me that there's a certain uniqueness that I can have, but at the same time it taught me how much the same we are. We all have these unique little differences, but for the most part we're the same. I've gotten to travel the world and be around so many cultures. I got to see that from a young age. It shaped my music.

What are some of the most interesting places that you've traveled to? I think that Egypt would take the cake. That's a different feeling. You almost feel the vibration in the ground. For some reason I've always been struck by Egyptian art, even the myths and the stories. I've always been enamored by it and almost all of my tattoos are based on it.

What was your first tattoo? 'Rebellious,' on my neck.

You went all the way to the neck for your first tattoo? Yeah, but it was good though because after that, nothing matched up to the pain. When I got my first tattoos, my Pops was locked up. So when I showed him my tattoos, he was behind glass and couldn't do anything.

What does your family think now about your music and your tattoos? I think they're starting to realize that it's all just different versions of art. My family has always been really supportive of me. I didn't have any apprehensions when it came to leaving school behind and focusing on my craft. They were mad at first but they supported it.

What's up next for Belly? My fourth album, *Midnight Zone*, will be dropping later this summer. Stay tuned for that release.

photo by silas lee/bludshot text by devon preston



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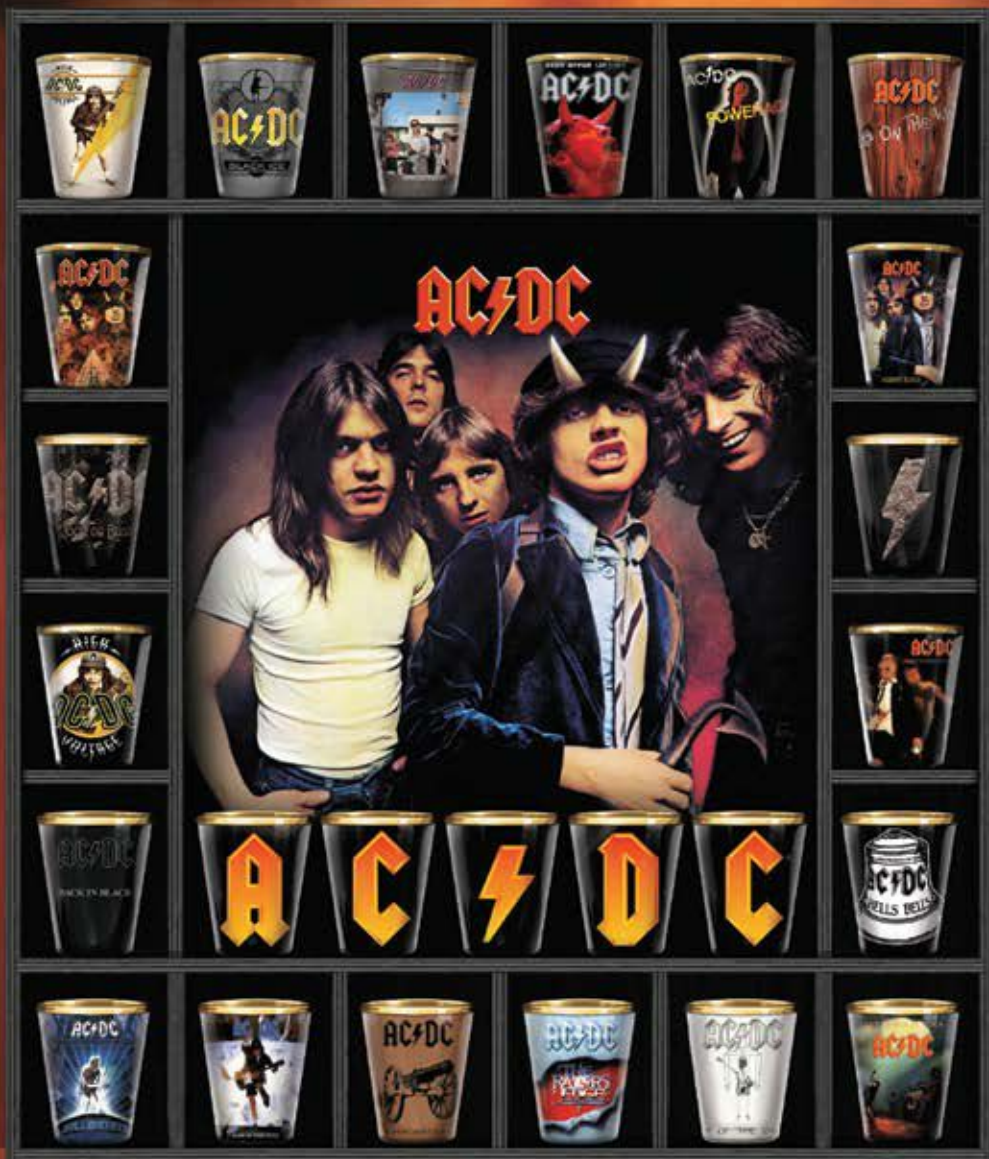
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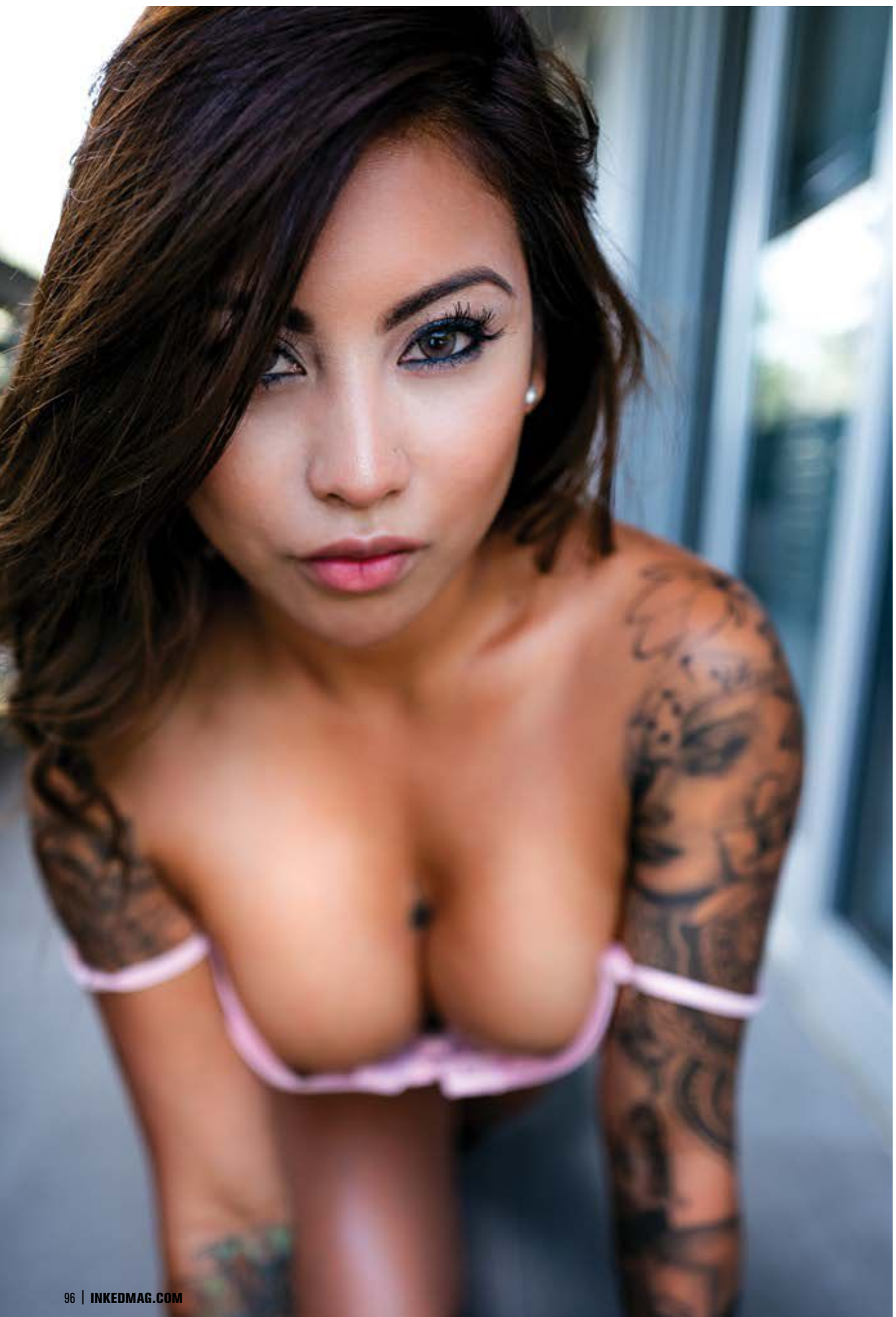




Tropical Tease

Paola Shea Heats up Miami

photos by peter roessler









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