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LOLO

Instagram's most mysterious tattooed beauty, makes her Inked Magazine debut.

PLUS:

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**EDDIE
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MICK ROCK

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MICK ROCK

Legendary rock photographer Mick Rock is often referred to as 'The Man Who Shot the Seventies', for his iconic images of Rock n' Roll icons such as David Bowie, Lou Reed, Iggy Pop, Blondie, The Rocky Horror Picture Show (Tim Curry) and more.

Rock was instrumental in creating many of the most famous rock 'n' roll images and album covers of all time, including such as album covers for Lou Reed's Transformer and Corey Island Baby, Iggy Pop's Raw Power, Joan Jett's I Love Rock 'n' Roll, The Ramones End of the Century, Queen's Sheer Hear Attack and Queen II, which was recreated for their classic music video Bohemian Rhapsody. He also produced and directed the seminal music videos for Bowie: 'John, I'm Only Dancing', 'Jean Genie', 'Space Oddity', and 'Life on Mars'.



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INKWELL

Hey there,

We did it. We made it to the last issue of 2020. Normally, I've always thought that New Years celebrations are a little silly. Making it one more time 'round the sun never impressed me much. Until now. When I think about everything that has gone down in 2020, I can't help but paraphrase a throwaway line from "Armageddon." 2020 is a vicious life-sucking bitch from which there is no escape.

Well, guess what? Much like the scrappy team of oil-drillers-turned-astronauts, we found a way to survive. So, pop the bubbly and let's end this year with a bang!

On the cover you'll find Lolo, one of the most ravishing beauties we've laid our eyes upon. This is the very first magazine cover for the comely Canadian and we couldn't be more thrilled.

We have the one-and-only Ty Dolla \$ign appearing on a digital cover. Ty is on the precipice of releasing his most impressive project to date, "Featuring Ty Dolla \$ign." The artist dug deep for this one, tapping into the spirit of the moment. "No matter how much money you have, who you were or what your situation was, there was no way to escape the pandemic," Ty told us. "It was full ego death—for everyone."

Teddy Swims, the teddy bear of a man with an angelic voice, is in the process of watching all his hard work pay off. He told us about how he's using his newfound fame to take care of his people as well doing what he can to fight systemic racial injustice.

We want to end the year focusing on our health and wellness. To help us on our journey we spoke to a couple of trainers (Mike Chabot and Melissa Alcantara) who are kicking our asses into shape, an amazing man who completely transformed his body (John David Glaude) and a modern-day gladiator pushing his body to the extreme in the UFC (Lyman Good).

Let's put this hectic year behind us by reveling in the bright spots that came out of it. Do a little something nice for yourself, maybe get that tattoo you've been fixating on. We made it. Let's take a breath before we buckle back up and attack 2021 with a vengeance.

-Charlie Connell, Editor in Chief
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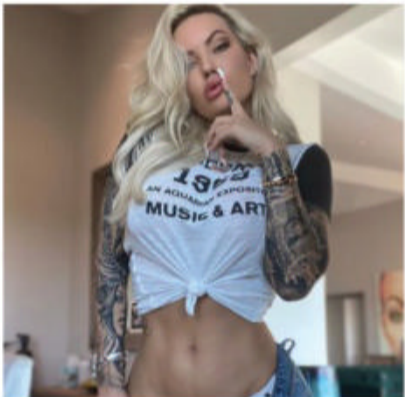
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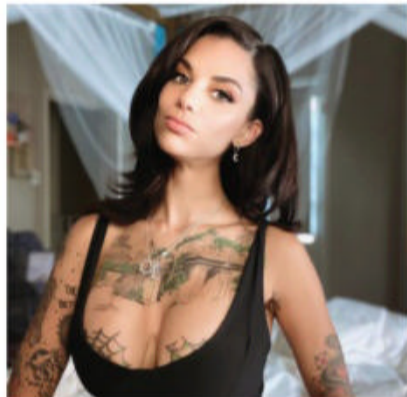
MARILYN MANSON

"Leave it to Marilyn Manson to release an album called 'We Are Chaos' in 2020. But, eleven albums later he's still a damn legend. I listen to 'Don't Chase the Dead' pretty much every single day. I loved learning about what went into making this album, as a true Manson fan knows it's not easy to get inside his head. Plus, he's got some totally rockin' ink." — Lawrence Gordon— Portland, OR

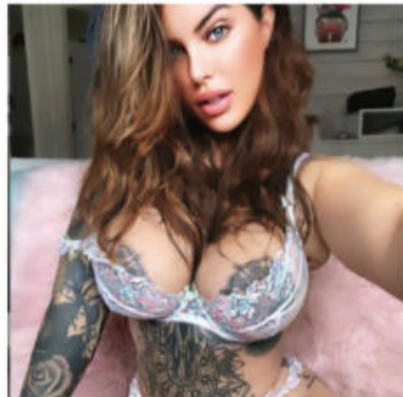
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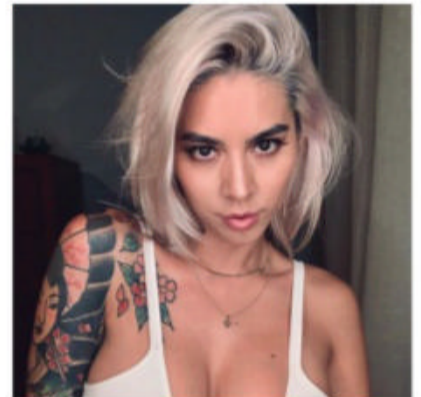
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TATTOO OF THE MONTH



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ZHAVIA WARD

Jill Tuck— "Zhavia has accomplished so much for someone so young. Plus that throat tattoo is stunning!"

ANUEL AA

Mark Hoffman— "Latin music is thriving and I'm vibing to everything that Anuel drops."

LEXY PANTERRA

Amanda Young— "I'm so obsessed with Lexy and credit her with my twerking skills."

WRITE US. GOT SOMETHING TO SAY? SEND ALL PRAISE, COMPLAINTS, STORY SUGGESTIONS AND OTHER COMMENTS TO LETTERS@INKEDMAG.COM. ALL SUBMISSIONS SHOULD INCLUDE THE WRITER'S NAME AND ADDRESS. LETTERS MAY BE EDITED FOR CLARITY, LENGTH AND CONTENT. **ALSO JOIN THE PARTY AT FACEBOOK.COM/INKEDMAG AND ACROSS PLATFORMS @INKEDMAG.**

A woman with long brown hair and numerous tattoos is the central figure. She is wearing a black tank top with the word 'Irked' printed in white gothic script. Her tattoos include a large eagle on her right shoulder, a rose on her left forearm, and a large angel on her left thigh. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is a wooden lattice structure.

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AMANDA
Richard
PHOTOGRAPHY BY @MAKEAWISHSTAR

End 2020 on a high note with the beautiful, bold and badass Amanda Banana. Amanda is no stranger to life under the needle and when it comes to her favorite tattoo, she worked hard to get the sleeve of her dreams. "It was a coverup that so many tattoo artists didn't want to tackle," she explains. "I was self conscious about it for years, because it was such trashy work. But thanks to Marek Pawlik, now it's my best tattoo!"



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DYSTOPIAN PRESENT

Mike Winkelmann—known to the Instagram world as Beeple—tells us what he's learned from 13 years of creating new art every single day.

by devon preston

Psychologists say it takes approximately 21 days to form a habit. With that in mind, Mike Winkelmann's ritual of creating a piece of art every day has been a certified habit for almost 5,000 days. Over the last 13-and-a-half years, Winkelmann—better known as Beeple—has grown an empire of followers by churning out one 3D work of art per day. Beeple's fans come for the creative allusions to timely political and pop culture news, but they stay for the incredible art. After all, Beeple isn't merely creating a piece a day—he's writing the story of our time through beautifully jarring visual commentaries designed to open our eyes to the circus of chaos our world has become.

Take us through your upbringing and when you developed your love for art. I was raised in a very normal, boring middle-class family in rural Wisconsin, USA. My parents are really amazing and super supportive, so I definitely feel they helped give me the space to speak my mind. As far as art goes, it's always been something I've been interested in for as long as I can remember.

How did your everyday begin and what was your art like back then? The everyday began as an exercise to get better at drawing. After drawing for a year, I started doing a render a day using 3D software. My art was much more abstract back then, and over the years it has gone through a number of pretty distinct phases.

What made you decide to commit to creating art every day and did you imagine you'd last 13 years? I saw an illustrator named Tom Judd in the U.K. who did a sketch a day and thought it was a great idea. In the beginning, it was all about desperately wanting to get better and not being happy with my work. While I didn't think it would last this long, I can tell you that throughout this entire time, [improving] always has been the driving motivation, even to this day. I'm nowhere near satisfied with my abilities and still desperately want to get better.

How have you stayed committed to art and what have you sacrificed for it? I think the drive to get better has kept me committed. I don't want to be good enough that people are inspired to create their own artwork, I want to be so good they don't even try at all. I want it to be like when you hear Beethoven. You're not like, "Wow, I think I'm gonna go learn that." You're like, "Fuck, I'll never be that good." I can assure you, I am NOWHERE close to that level. Yet.

I guess you could say that I spend hours each day [on art] and that time with family, friends, other hobbies, paid work, etc. has been sacrificed. But I don't really see it as that, as this is what I love to do. Anytime you agree to anything, you're saying no to everything else, and to me, this doesn't really feel like a sacrifice.

How has your art evolved over time and what have you learned from this? It's gotten fucking weird and nippy. Honestly, I don't know what I've learned. I'm trying more

and more to listen to my inner voice, but it's really hard because there's a lot of noise out there. Especially these days, it's often hard to even know what I want to say. It's a work in progress.

What made you lean into the post-apocalyptic and political subject matter? This is honestly just where my mind naturally went over time. I never think too much about where things are going with this project, I'm always just focused on today. I do watch and read a lot of news though, so I guess it's not super surprising that this interest of mine eventually made its way into my work.

In your opinion, what's your most controversial piece and how was it received? I feel like I've had some real doozies in the last year. I guess probably the most controversial was this one I did around Christmas of Santa holding Donald Trump's severed head. It got taken down on a bunch of sites for violating community standards. A few days before that, I did one with Kim Jong Un that showed his pubes and that was also flagged by Facebook.

Honestly, I rarely read the comments, especially when I know something is gonna be super controversial. I know it's going to piss some people off and while that's never my goal, I'm very much OK with that because I'm not trying to make something for everyone. All art is not for all people, which I feel like some people have lost track of.

What are your favorite themes to express in your art? I feel like there are a lot of themes of power imbalances between technology companies, political leaders and society. But then, there's also a lot of fucking weird-ass, dumb pop culture that's more like, "Fuck it, I'm just gonna do exactly what I want."

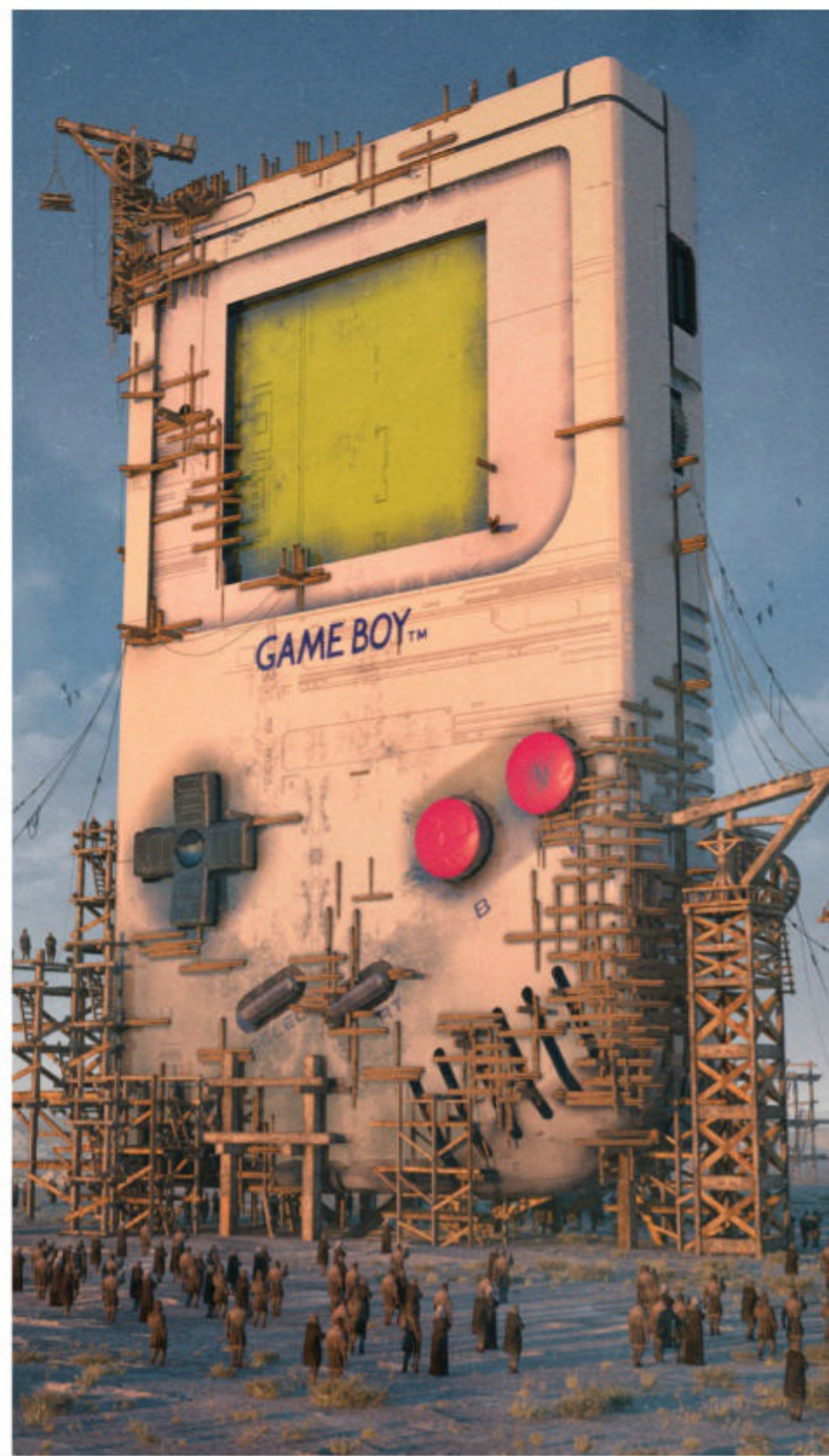
Is there anything that's too taboo to be portrayed in one of your everyday? I think there are definitely things I can't do or I'd get kicked off of these social platforms, so that sort of keeps me in check. It kind of creates a nice boundary and it's fun finding ways to try to peek over the wall and slip something through that is fairly objectionable.

What does your process look like for creating your everyday and how long do they typically take to make? They usually take around two hours or so and the process is the exact same every day. I usually spend a bit of time coming up with a concept and then just start right from there. I don't create sketches or anything like that, I just dive in and start working. Along the way, the idea will usually deviate from the original—sometimes wildly. I would say I'm quite open to happy accidents or wandering off course.

When you're not creating art, what do you enjoy spending your time doing?

I honestly feel like I'm not super well-rounded. I don't really have any other hobbies per se, beside creating art. I pretty much work and spend time with my family. I did enjoy travelling and speaking at art conferences, but obviously that's been shot in the nuts by COVID.





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photo by evan kaucher

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2020 in a Nutshell

This year has been a goddamn dumpster fire. So here's your trophy for making it through this absolute hellscape of a year! Kidrobot channeled all of our innermost thoughts and turned it into an adorable vinyl figurine. Throw it up on the mantle as a constant reminder that you were strong enough to kick this year's ass.



Treat Yo Muscles

It's going to take a ton of work to get rid of all the flab we've accumulated over the last—checks calendar—487 months of quarantine. After you bust your ass working out your muscles are going to be aching, they deserve a little respite. That's where the Theragun Elite comes in. The ultra-quiet smart percussive therapy device with advanced sound insulation delivers the relaxation needed to recover from even the most intense workout. Sit back and pamper yourself, you've earned it.



Bring the Museum Home

The worst thing about buying art is finding something you want to hang on your wall forever. Now, you can ditch the commitment of buying art by purchasing the Meural Canvas II from Netgear. The digital frame comes stocked with more than 30,000 works of art to choose from. You can have Monet Mondays, Warhol Wednesdays, Seurat Saturdays and Dali whenever it feels like time is melting into oblivion.



Santa's Naughty Helper

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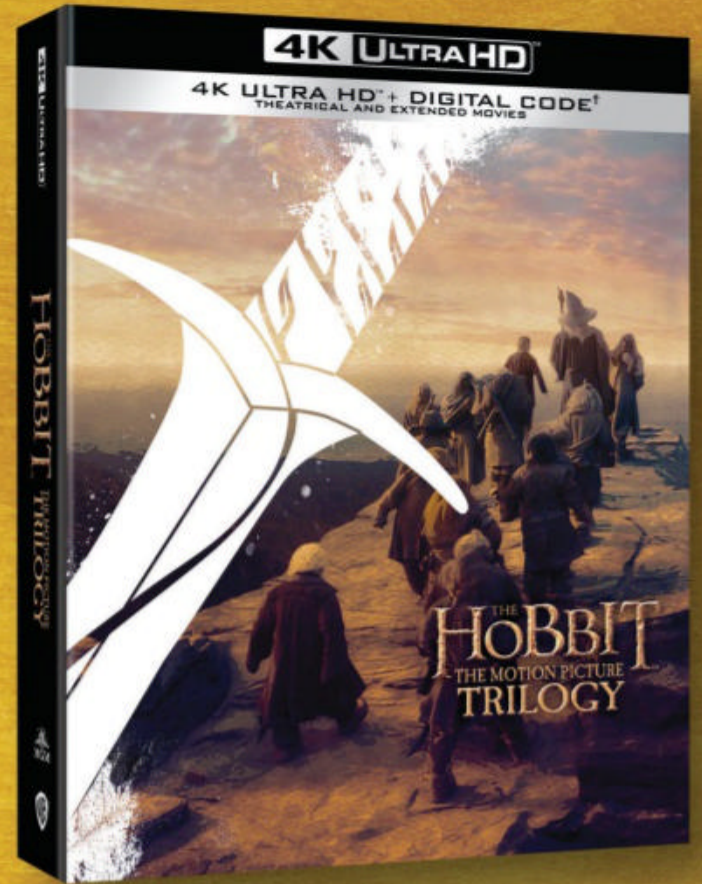
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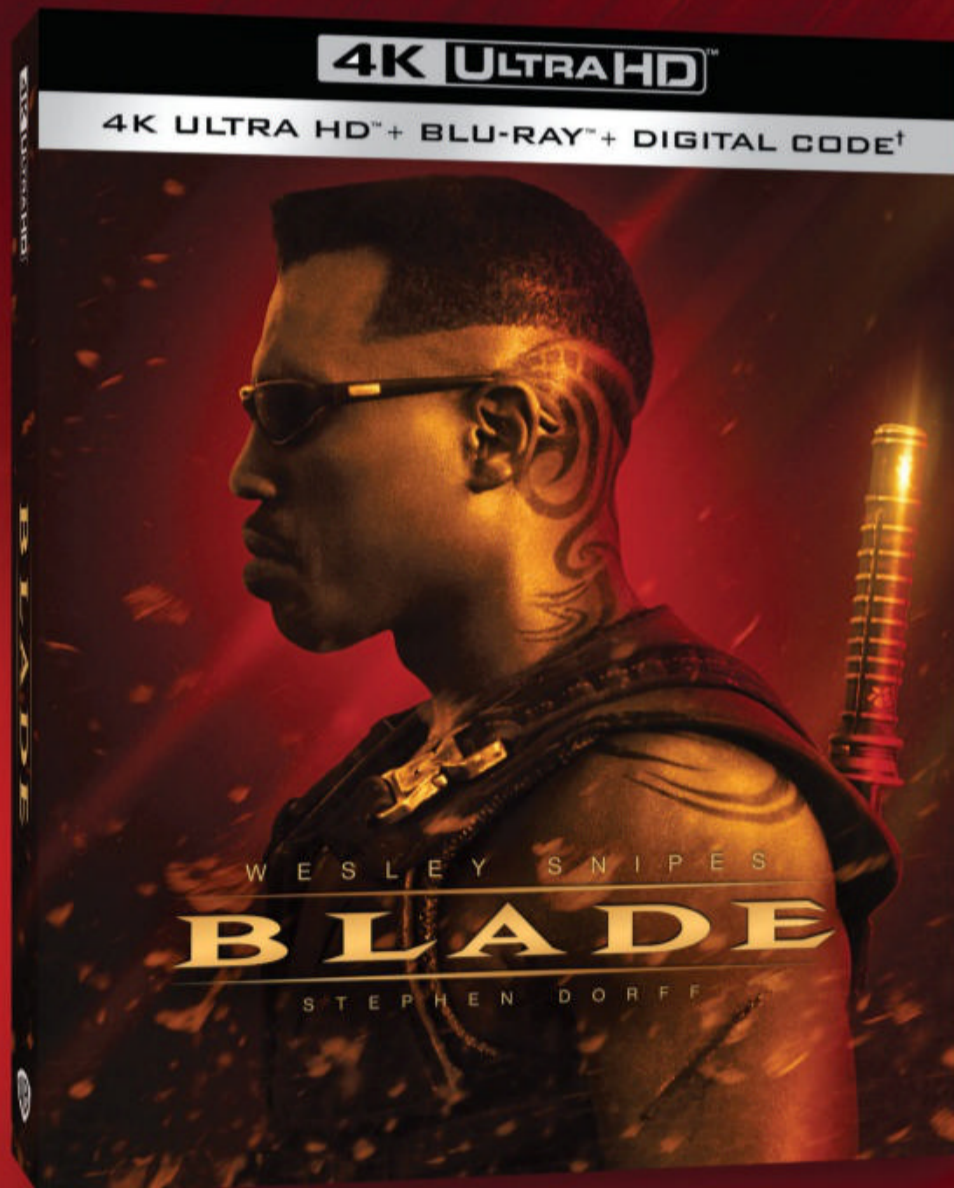


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Dangerous Glamour

Jewelry doesn't need to be all prim and proper, you can still have a little edge. The folks at Souvenir Jewelry make gorgeous handmade pieces inspired by daggers, barbed wire, bones, devils, battle axes and oh so much more.



When Worlds Collide

Everyone loves snapping Polaroids but they lack the bells and whistles available on even the most simple camera phone... until now. The Polaroid OneStep+ iType Instant Camera connects to the Polaroid app via Bluetooth allowing you to go from automatic to full manual control, double exposure to light painting and so much more. The camera uses iType film, which is both easier on your budget and customizable in countless fun ways.



Kickin' It Old School

Gaming has come a long way since the days when Mario ruled the world. While we love the fully immersive multi-player worlds of today's games, we also still find great joy stacking pills to defeat viruses and trying to knock out King Hippo. The NES is a tiny version of the console you grew up on, packed with 30 of your favorite titles including Super Mario Bros. 3, Metroid, The Legend of Zelda, Excitebike, Super C, Tecmo Bowl and more. And you thought it was foolish to remember the Konami code for over 25 years.



I Need the Fifth

One could consider including the Sony Playstation 5 in here as an act of cruelty given the scarcity of the console, but there's no way we could leave it out. Simply put, this is going to be the next generation of gaming. You may have to act like the former governor of California trying to obtain a Turbo-Man doll to get your hands on one, but trust us, it'll be worth it.

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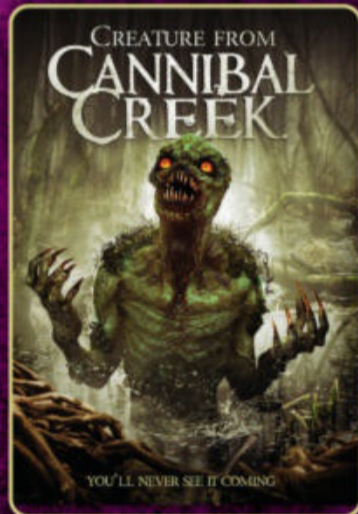
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Turning the Tables

Vinyl is back, baby! Streaming your favorite tunes may be more convenient, but vinyl sounds so much better. Damn near every band on Earth is putting their stuff out on vinyl, with many releasing special edition pressings. What's the point of a beautiful record if you can't watch it spin. The Pro-Ject Audio Systems VT-E verticle turntable is simply stunning to behold. It's not only simple to set up, but the minimalist design will fit well no matter your decor.



Daughters of Darkness

Throughout his life, photographer Jeremy Saffer has been intrigued by the duality of beautiful and evil. You can see the fruits of his obsession in the new coffee table book "Daughters of Darkness." The tome is filled with stunning photos of gorgeous (often tattooed) women wearing corpse paint inspired by black/death/doom bands. A preorder includes a soundtrack featuring Abbath, Mayhem, Watain and many others.



Embrace the Suck

This year has been an unmitigated shitshow, why not lean into it all the way? The Welcome to the Shitshow terry cloth bar towel is nihilistic in the most cheerful way imaginable. It's available as a potholder too! Available at Inkedshop.com.

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BABY GOTH

by devon preston
photos by chelsea christensen



Rappers find their personas in a variety of ways. Childish Gambino came up with his name using a randomized Wu-Tang Clan name generator. Waka Flocka Flame drew from Fozzie Bear's iconic catchphrase. Baby Goth based her brand on the duality of light and dark, finding inspiration from one of Rob Zombie's most legendary characters. "I named myself Baby because I love horror," the diminutive rapper says. "Rob Zombie's wife plays this character Baby Firefly in his movie 'House of 1000 Corpses,' and I related to her. She's like Harley Quinn—she's super light and sweet—but she's also really dark, cynical and evil."

Baby fleshed out a brand that's one part horror villain and one part Disney princess, a reflection of the ups and downs she experiences with anxiety and depression. She learned to deal with her mental illnesses early in her teenage years and used music to find stability, express herself and connect with others. However, it wasn't hip-hop that initially caught Baby's attention. "I had some friends in high school and we had a bluegrass band," Baby says. "I would do keys and backing vocals. I started recording myself on GarageBand and I would post a lot of covers onto my Instagram." After trying to make it on various vocal competition shows, Baby attracted attention on social media and flew out to Los Angeles to make her first EP, "Babyface."

L.A. sculpted Baby into the rapper we know today, inspiring her to adorn her face with tattoos that tell her story. Baby tattooed her name onto her face prior to finding her persona, and from there, the Baby Goth brand came together. Then came her famous pink butterfly (which sits just above her eyebrow) which represents her affinity for the dark and light. "My anxiety feels like having butterflies in my stomach and it's a constant feeling. So I link that feeling to butterflies," Baby explains. "But I also think it's beautiful because I feel more than your average person. I'm more sensitive to emotions—which helps my music."

Like many rappers today, after getting her face tattooed, Baby soon found success. Her big debut came after she linked up with Trippie Redd shortly after moving to L.A. "I first linked up with him on maybe my third week in L.A., and my engineer was also Trippie's," Baby says. "I had come straight off the airplane and had no makeup on because I didn't think I was going anywhere. But we started hanging out together and since I was there so often, he asked me to be on a song." That song was Redd's 2019 single "A.L.L.T.Y.3" and he'd go on to make an appearance on Baby's breakout track, "Swimming," alongside Lil Xan. The success of these singles helped to push Baby into the spotlight and before long, she had her first body of work— "Baby Goth," the album.

The success of these two singles and her debut album made Baby a force to be reckoned with in hip-hop. With these accomplishments under her belt, she went on to chase her dream project—a spot on the "Birds of Prey (and the Fantabulous Emancipation of One Harley Quinn)" soundtrack. "I met with my label and I told them there was a Harley Quinn movie coming out that I wanted to be a part of," Baby shares. "I was begging my team to get me on it and they were like, 'It doesn't happen like that, you can't just ask to be on a soundtrack.' But it ended up happening because I linked up with this girl WHIPPED CREAM. She's an amazing producer who was on Atlantic Records, and they were controlling the soundtrack. I feel like that's a prime example of positive manifestation."

Baby's next project showcases a fully realized version of her brand—filled with pink clouds, allusions to Greek mythology and cherubs. But, it wouldn't be a Baby Goth project without an equal amount of darkness. "It's called 'The Pink Apocalypse,'" Baby explains. "I pull [inspiration] from my six-year relationship with my ex, which was pretty toxic. I share my experience being stuck and the feeling where you don't want to let go but you have to. Then there are a few songs that are more uplifting and about letting go, moving on and doing your own thing."

Baby's brand of light and dark isn't only a visual aesthetic, it's an all-encompassing world view. It's about embracing the parts of life that are grim and seeing through the darkness to find beauty and light. After all, without the darkness, how else would stars be able to shine?

This story begins with a skateboard. Not any skateboard, a very specific skateboard. No one knew it at the time, but when Bryan Arii's parents bought their 5-year-old son this skateboard, they were laying the foundation for his entire life.

"Powell Peralta, Mike McGill, Skull and Snake, that fucking did it for me," Arii says. "That was it. That thing hooked me. I don't know what it was, but snakes and skulls, that Mike McGill board, it just blew me away. That was the moment."

The metaphorical snake wrapped around Arii's young brain and it never left. As a kid just discovering his love of creating art, Arii would end up doodling the snake and skull hundreds of times. Then, as art director for Element Skateboards, Arii designed a deck paying tribute to the iconic board. After so many hours spent drawing various riffs on the design, Arii eventually had a take on the motif tattooed onto him.

The design on the board wasn't the only thing that resonated with Arii, as he also fell in love with the sport. He dreamed of eventually becoming a pro. But like 99 percent of kids with aspirations of being a pro athlete, Arii realized he wasn't quite good enough. "I wanted to be a part of skateboarding any way that I possibly could," he explains. "But if you do board graphics for the pros, then you get to meet the pros. You get to work with the pros. You get everything that you ever wanted."

"For me, the biggest part of skateboarding is the board itself," Arii continues. "It's cool that everyone is going to see that graphic underneath the board."

The life of a skateboard graphic is notoriously short. Not only do boards get broken on the regular, but the graphics get scratched and defaced constantly. Unless it's hanging on a wall, a clean board is never what you want to see. "It's disposable art," Arii says. "You know it's going to happen, but you willingly do it anyway."

Throughout his career, Arii has been guided by his passions. The old cliché may be, "Do what you love and you'll never work a day in your life," but that's not true in his case. Doing what he loves is the very thing motivating Arii to work all the time. His passion for skateboarding led him to walk into an interview at Element with more than 20 pieces of art already created—basically putting in the work well before anybody expected him to.

Now, Arii's passion for sneakers led him to launch Moondust Studio. Arii works alongside his wife Lindsay to create custom sneaker boxes for serious sneaker heads. When a collector is throwing down four figures for a pair of Chunky Dunkys, they're not going to be content keeping them in the cardboard Nike box and throwing them on the shelf.

"What it really, really comes down to is [the box] is the first thing you see," Arii explains. "You know there's something interesting inside of it, you know there's something cool, but there is always a mystery to the box. For the collector, it lets you put your limited shoe on a pedestal. In a reseller's world, if I can have a themed box for my themed shoe, it adds an extra \$500 to \$1,000 to the value."

Arii made the first box for himself, showed it off on Instagram, and in no time everything exploded. Collectors started hitting him up for boxes of their own and brands reached out to collaborate.

It's interesting to ponder the two very different mediums Arii has used for his art—one designed to be destroyed, the other designed to not only be preserved but to preserve the art it holds within. Then, of course, there is the permanent art on his skin.

"It's so crazy," Arii says with a laugh. "One part of me is totally in love with this permanency of having these tattoos. And the other part of me is like, well, I'm making skateboards, they're just gonna get broken."

Not all skateboards are going to get broken. The Powell Peralta Mike McGill Skull and Snake board that launched Arii's entire passion will endure, as it is tucked away safely in his closet.



inked people



BRYAN ARII


by jonny watson
photos by brian arii

inked people



MELISSA ALCANTARA

by devon preston
photos by tyler sawyer



Three years ago, Melissa Alcantara transformed her body after pregnancy and posted a before and after shot on Instagram. As one of the billion active Instagram users, the odds of getting noticed by Kim Kardashian West, who boasts 190 million followers, are pretty much impossible. However, while exploring the platform at 4 a.m., Kardashian West stumbled on the photo and just like that, Alcantara's life was forever changed. "My intention never was to be a personal trainer," Alcantara explains. "My intention, even to this day, is just to be a better version of myself. And I think that if more people did that, they would actually reach their goals more often."

After catching Kardashian West's attention, Alcantara moved her family to California and began her life as a trainer to Kardashian West. Prior to her social media discovery, Alcantara was a normal woman who woke up one day and decided to turn her life around. "I gained 70 pounds when I had my daughter," Alcantara says. "I was 200 pounds and I decided to do a fitness program called Insanity, which I'd seen in an infomercial. I was willing to give it a real chance, because I didn't want to look at myself in the mirror anymore."

Alcantara committed to the high-intensity exercise program, and about six weeks in, she began seeing results. The change, although subtle at first, sparked something in Alcantara and made her fall in love with wellness. "I started losing weight and feeling better overall," Alcantara shares. "Making a decision for yourself makes you feel better above anything else—more than the workouts or eating right. It took a few weeks to lose those first few pounds and almost immediately after that, it really started coming off and I lost 40 pounds with Insanity."

After months of tireless work, Alcantara became hooked on bettering her physique and started entering local bodybuilding competitions. It didn't take long for the people in her life to get curious about the secrets to her success. "I started training a couple of people in between jobs," Alcantara says. "I knew that a better way of learning was through teaching. If you can teach something, that's how you know you really know something." Alcantara had only been training others for a few months when Kardashian West found her, and for the past three years, she's been the media mogul's go-to trainer.

Although working with Kardashian West has made Alcantara one of the most coveted fitness figures in the country, she doesn't consider herself to be a "personal trainer." "My main focus isn't to personally train, but to inspire people to make decisions for themselves," Alcantara explains. "When you put more focus into being a better person, saying yes to yourself and doing good things for yourself, the other things in your life will follow. In the beginning of my journey, I wanted abs, but I didn't realize saying yes to myself [was what] helped me with so many other things. That helped me to choose the job that I wanted, to see my worth and be the person I want to be every single day. That's what I want to give to people—more than just a nice butt."

Alcantara helps her clients see their own potential and reach their goals by leading through example. She works out alongside her clients and motivates them through her own actions. "I don't just drill them into doing things, I work out with them so they can see my struggle," Alcantara says. "If they're picking up 15 pounds and say, 'This is light, I suck. I'm not strong,' I pick up the same weight and struggle just as much. I try to show people that a lot of the fitness world is a fantasy and that the real-deal things happen behind the camera. It takes a lot of work and mental breakthroughs to make this happen."

Over the years, Alcantara has come to realize she's a fighter. She fought hard to get the body she has and, more so, to change the path life was leading her down. After taking control of her life and becoming the person she'd always wanted to be, Alcantara ornamented her body in flower tattoos. "I grew up with no self-esteem," Alcantara shares. "I was always this girl who kept her head down and didn't feel like I was worth anything. These flowers on my arm say I'm powerful and resilient. That I don't give up, I keep moving and I have control."

Alcantara is living proof that anyone can take control of their life and make an impactful change. She started her journey as someone without an athletic background, but through plenty of blood, sweat and tears, she became an inspiration to anyone who wants to get in shape. At the end of the day, no matter where you start or what your goal is, everyone has the potential to be a better version of themselves.

Stunna Girl began recording rhymes in her father's closet when she was only 8. Her passion for music continued to grow as she entered adolescence and before long, her freestyles started gaining attention online. Stunna had her eye on the prize and didn't let anything keep her from her dream, even time behind bars. "I was incarcerated when I was 14 until I was 17, basically three years," Stunna says. "During that time, I was in lockdown and I would freestyle to myself to make the time go by. I already had a viral video of me rapping in my city, so I knew I could do it and when I got out. I started taking it seriously."

Spending time behind bars not only motivated Stunna to dive headfirst into the music industry, it gave her a sense of purpose. Incarceration allowed her to be the voice of an entire demographic of kids who'd experienced the same struggles while growing up in the 'hood. Upon her release, Stunna made a beeline to the studio. "When I got out of jail, I didn't even know how to book a studio session or how to find a beat," Stunna explains. "But someone from a studio had seen one of my videos on Facebook and hit me up to come record. The first thing I did was record a song and put it out, and it started doing numbers. Then I found a videographer, did my first [official] video, and after that, I pretty much got the hang of it."

Once she found her groove and got acclimated to the industry, Stunna was quick to release her first mixtape, "You Know What the Fuck Goin' On," in March 2019. From that tape came her biggest hit to date, "Runway," a high-energy and punchy tune that speaks of her freestyle roots. "I made 'Runway' while I was learning about the music business," Stunna says. "I was traveling everywhere and over a period of time, I had a bunch of songs. I eventually made a tape and I freestyled 'Runway.' Nobody liked the song, but I liked it so I put it on my tape. I knew it was going to be dope."

Stunna's intuition was spot-on, as the single soon took off on TikTok. It became an anthem for TikTokers strutting their stuff, and through her younger sister, Stunna learned it was being enjoyed by people all around the world. "[Fans] started sending me a lot of videos of them dressing up and doing runway stuff," Stunna shares. "That's how I knew my song was big."

Stunna may be new to the industry, but she knows one thing: Now that she's got some momentum, she must build on it. So she's launching her most ambitious project to date. "The process was very different because I'm actually working with producers," Stunna says. "They've been bringing out different sounds for me that I'm not normally used to, so that's been great. Also, once they hear my music, a lot of artists want to be on it."

Stunna has taken her time to make this project the best it can be and to give her fans a peek at every side of her. There's more to her than just "Runway," and this project will provide something for every type of fan. "I'm already, like, five different people in one," Stunna says. "There's the R&B Stunna, there's freestyle Stunna, there's ratched Stunna. You've got all of that on the project and all of the songs are different. My first project was pretty much all over the place because I was experimenting. This project is where I found my sound, and it's more straight to the point."

Stunna has come a long way, and her tattoos show her evolution. Stunna got her first tattoo at the age of 12 in somebody's garage. Today, she's using her work to reflect on where she's come from and what she aspires to become. "I got a rose and a clock on my neck to cover up a name," Stunna explains. "I was done with the past and I've served my time already. I'm a rose that grew up from the concrete."

Just like the verse from Tupac suggests, Stunna has defied nature's laws by overcoming adversity. We're ready to watch her bloom.



inked people



STUNNA GIRL

by ariana west
photos by makeawishstar

MIKE CHABOT

by ariana west photos by alfie cinematic

When the pandemic hit, personal trainer Mike Chabot watched as gyms were forced to close their doors. While many in his industry were forlorn by the news, Chabot saw an opportunity to meet the demands of millions. “For months, people were stuck at home, gaining weight, losing shape, and they had time to think about getting healthy,” he explains. “They started to exercise at home and realized they need help for it. I noticed a big change, as more people were contacting me and I benefited [from becoming] an online coach.”

Chabot adapted to the pandemic by moving his in-person clients to online and tailoring his coaching to our new normal. Unable to put in those hours at the gym training people face-to-face, he’s catered his approach to the online world. He’s been leading free workouts on YouTube and offering one-on-one sessions through Zoom. He’s also replaced machine-focused workouts with exercises anyone with a body can perform at home. “All of the workouts I recommend are body weight workouts,” Chabot says. “I would suggest that everyone invest at least \$50 into bands, a yoga mat and a jump rope. These minimal materials can get you into good shape and make you lose fat.”

Many people say they’re going to get in shape and may even financially commit to the process through a gym membership, workout gear and equipment, without realizing the key to getting in shape is a diligent mind. “People think there’s a secret formula to getting in shape, but it’s a lot like creating a business,” Chabot shares. “You can say you want to make a million in the first year, but is that reasonable? People focus on the goal instead of the journey. If you’re not 100 percent in, you’ll lose motivation because you don’t appreciate the journey.”

If you want to get in shape and stay in shape, you need to find a workout

that doesn’t feel like work. “All workouts have their own benefits,” Chabot says. It’s all about being healthy, moving your body and treating your body like it’s your temple.”

Regular exercise is only one of the commitments you need to make in order to get in shape. In addition to working out regularly, Chabot takes a holistic approach to wellness that has transformed his way of life. “I practice health in everything around me,” Chabot says. “I meditate every day, invest in quality organic food and try to only give my body raw food. I don’t eat anything processed—no sugar and no dairy.” It took time for Chabot to build his lifestyle, and he cautions clients that it isn’t wise to transform your entire life overnight. By making incremental changes it won’t feel like an extreme change and you’re more likely to stick with it.

Treating your body like a temple through fitness, nutrition and wellness is paramount—but every temple deserves some art on the walls. Chabot believes in taking care of his body through everything it endures, and that includes sitting through a grueling tattoo session. “I preach learning [from] and listening to your body,” Chabot says. “I always bring some good food and water before getting a big tattoo. I want to supply my body with as much water as possible and eat carbs before my appointment because it will make me sleepy. After a big tattoo, my body is really exhausted and I don’t work out after the session. You need to relax, because you’ve been very rough with your body.”

If you learn one thing from Mike Chabot, it’s that we can all benefit from looking inward and making wellness a priority. Taking care of your body is one of the best decisions you can make in life, and we’ve all learned this year we cannot take our health for granted.



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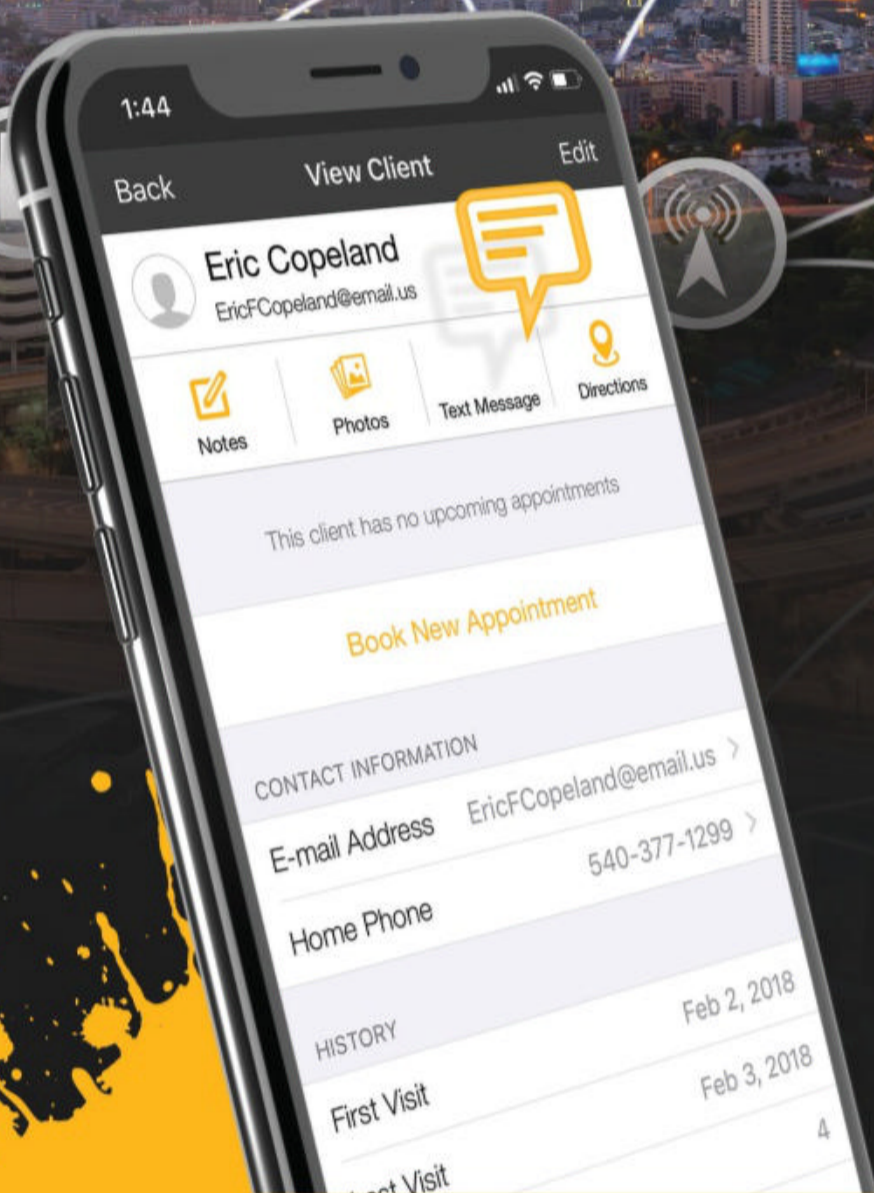
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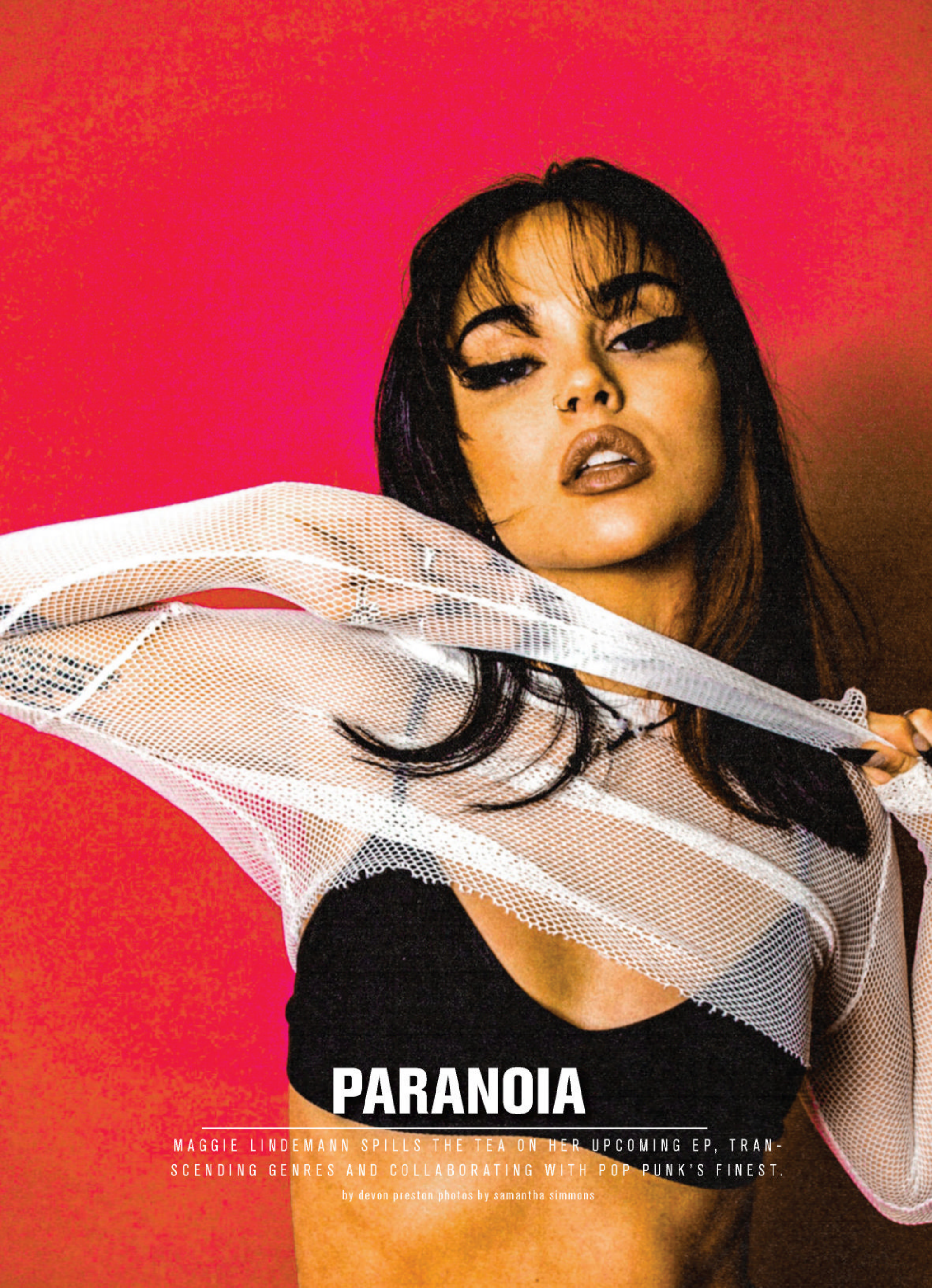
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PARANOIA

MAGGIE LINDEMANN SPILLS THE TEA ON HER UPCOMING EP, TRANSCENDING GENRES AND COLLABORATING WITH POP PUNK'S FINEST.

by devon preston photos by samantha simmons

It took spending a night in a Malaysian jail cell for Maggie Lindemann to find her purpose as an artist. "I was performing and someone tried telling me to get off stage in the middle of a song," Lindemann says. "I got off and people from immigration told us I didn't have the right papers to perform there. I was really scared and we ended up getting taken to the immigration center and got booked. I was in a jail cell for over 24 hours and then we were on house arrest in the hotel for five days until they finally let us go back to the U.S."

Lindemann continues to experience anxiety to this day from the harrowing ordeal, but the experience left a positive mark on her as well. "Coming home from Malaysia really sparked something in me," Lindemann shares. "It made me realize that if I'm not doing exactly what I want to be doing, then it's not worth it. If crazy shit is going to happen to me, I want to at least be having a great time and doing exactly what I want to do."

Long before she found herself in a prison cell thousands of miles from home, Lindemann was a teenage pop singer posting cover songs to social media. "Before Instagram had video, there was an app called Keek and I would make singing videos on there," Lindemann says. "My manager actually saw a video of me singing on there and got in touch with my parents."

Lindemann's parents were understandably resistant to allowing their teenage daughter to meet a stranger from the music industry, but eventually they gave in and accompanied her from their home in Dallas to Los Angeles. Lindemann went on to relocate to L.A. at just 17 in order to put her all into making it in music. "I knew pretty early on that this is what I wanted to do," Lindemann says. "I didn't want to go to college and when 'Pretty Girl' started taking off, I knew that music could actually happen for me."

"Pretty Girl" was Lindemann's first single after signing to 300 Entertainment and it put her on the map as a pop artist. It was her first single to make it on a major U.S. chart and was soon heard on radio stations worldwide. "That song was formed through a tweet," Lindemann explains. "I tweeted something about how I hate how everyone thinks that because I'm pretty, I'm not talented or smart. Then Cheat Codes hopped on and it blew up. I don't think anyone thought that it was going to go that crazy."

The track opened many doors for Lindemann and allowed her to build a loyal fanbase. But creatively, the bubblegum track only scratched the surface of who Lindemann is. "I felt that, at the time, this song was who I was and what I wanted to say," Lindemann explains. "I'm older now and there's so much that's happened within the span of a couple of years. I've grown so much, I've found myself, and I'm not doing things for other people. The music I'm doing now truly comes from me and it's exactly what I want to be

doing."

After returning home from Malaysia, Lindemann was inspired to start writing for herself. She recounts her nightmarish encounter with immigration in her song "Different." From there, Lindemann continued to express her vulnerability through her writing, as she realized that if she could write about spending the night in a Malaysian jail, writing about anything else would be easy. This gave rise to what would become the first single from her upcoming "Paranoia" EP, "Knife Under My Pillow." "I'm completely paranoid of being home alone," Lindemann says. "I used to live in this big house and whenever my roommate wasn't home, I would be so scared and sleep with a knife under my pillow. I would hide in the bathroom if I heard any noises and would call my friends because I thought there was someone in my house trying to kill me. I realized I needed to write about this because it was literally driving me insane."

This revelation not only shifted Lindemann's approach to more honest writing, it gave her the courage to pursue a genre that's a pretty significant departure from what her audience is used to. Over the last year, Lindemann has leaned into alternative music and has taken inspiration from some of the bands she connected with as a kid. "Growing up, I just wanted to be heard and I felt heard listening to bands like Sleeping with Sirens," Lindemann says. "That's the band that got me through my hardest times. I would scream the lyrics and cry—and I hope people feel that with my music, whether that's pain, sadness or happiness. I want my music to be there for people and show them they're never alone, no matter what they're going through."

You can trace Lindemann's evolution from an unsure teenager to a more experienced 22-year-old through her music. It's hard to believe the same person wrote the uplifting pop hit "Pretty Girl" and the darkly emotional EP "Paranoia." Yet Lindemann has grown a lot in five years and this change shows clearly through her approach to tattoos. "I got my first tattoo when I was 17 and it's a broken heart on my wrist," Lindemann says. "I wanted a broken heart because I thought that one day, when I got married, I would color it in because then I'd be full. But that's stupid and I'm not doing that because I'll never be full from someone else. I think it's just going to stay broken forever."

On the precipice of her upcoming EP, Lindemann is ready to show the world that she's not the girl she used to be. She's left her "Pretty Girl" roots in the past and now there's nothing holding her back from showcasing her authentic sound. Get ready, Maggie, it's your time.

Like many kids who grew up in lower-income families, John David Glaude and his family ate what they could afford. Even if nutrition was a priority, healthy food wasn't always economically feasible. As he grew up he kept gaining weight, going from a husky child to the biggest kid in his high school. "Gaining weight throughout the years, it starts to become pretty normal," Glaude says. "You just accept that a new school year means wearing a bigger size shirt and pants. It all came to a head when I hit 20 years old and I was close to 400 pounds." Being this heavy made Glaude cognizant of his own mortality and he knew that at this size, it wasn't if his body would kill him but when.

Growing up, Glaude had many experiences where his body forced him to confront this reality, but his epiphany came through watching an episode of "Miami Ink." Glaude saw a client who was getting a hamburger tattoo to commemorate his weight loss success and he realized that it was time to make a change and earn a celebratory tattoo of his own. "I was 20 years old and watching 'Miami Ink,' eating a double entree of orange chicken and drinking a large soda," Glaude explains. "I realized that if this was something I wanted to change, I had to put in the work to make it happen. Before, I tried to lose weight for other people, but this time I wanted to do it for myself and that was the start."

Glaude embarked on his weight loss journey knowing little about nutrition, instead establishing what he calls the common sense diet. He began by cutting out foods he knew were unhealthy—soda, fast food and junk food. Unlike the other times he'd tried to lose weight, his biggest priority was maintaining a positive mental attitude and keeping his spirits high by visualizing the new life ahead of him. Glaude's positivity not only helped him make healthy choices, it kept him going as he waited to witness long-term results.

"I was so big that it took losing 50 pounds for it to be super noticeable," Glaude shares. "That's when clothes started to fit differently and it was this milestone I never thought I would get to." Losing that first 50 pounds was the motivation Glaude needed to kick his journey into high gear. In the end, he wound up shedding 180 pounds, and the physical transformation was extreme. He went from being the biggest guy in school to one of the fittest guys in the gym, which gave him a new outlook on life and a sense of purpose. However, there was one major consequence to Glaude's drastic weight loss, and that was his loose skin.

When you lose a considerable amount of weight, loose

skin is inevitable. Glaude's loose skin is noticeable when he takes off his shirt and for many years, it was his biggest insecurity. Instead of hiding his transformed body, however, he embraced the way he looked and created a viral YouTube video for the whole world to see. "When I posted the video, it completely changed my life," Glaude says. "It made me realize that being vulnerable and real about insecurities is so much more helpful to people than trying to act perfect."

The video led Glaude to discover a passion for aiding others as they undergo their own weight loss journeys. The more he posted on social media, the more often people reached out with questions of their own. "As things progressed, I realized I could help people who were in the position I was in when I started losing weight," Glaude says. "I was the guy who truly didn't think he could lose weight. But I was able to do it and, truly, I don't think there's anything special about me."

In addition to building a personal brand around his success story, Glaude has been able to help motivate hundreds of people to lose weight. In a fitness industry where many of the influencers you see have been fit their entire lives, Glaude's background makes him relatable. "It's very natural to seek out advice from people who have been through the same thing," Glaude explains. "That's obviously something that's been a big part of why people are interested in hearing my story." Glaude now shares his experiences and opinions about how to lose weight safely and effectively with over a million combined fans on YouTube and Instagram. Another profound way he's shared his weight loss journey with the world is through his tattoo collection.

Prior to losing weight, Glaude admired many of the tattoos he'd seen on "Miami Ink," but he thought he was too big to get a sleeve. Then, once he lost the weight, he wanted to reflect his transformation through a piece he could finally wear with pride. "My first tattoo after losing weight was a koi dragon on my shoulder," Glaude says. "It's a story of transformation where koi start at the bottom of the river. As they try to swim up the river, some of them die or get eaten, but the ones who make it to the pond at the top transform into dragons." Despite the folklore behind Glaude's tattoo including elements of fantasy, the message of transformation couldn't be more grounded in reality. There's no magic pill that can make you lose weight. Lasting results are created through perseverance, strength and positivity. And when you think about relenting to the current and giving up, just remember what you're swimming toward.



OBESE TO BEAST

JOHN DAVID GLAUDE LOST 180 POUNDS, BUT
GAINED HIS LIFE PURPOSE.

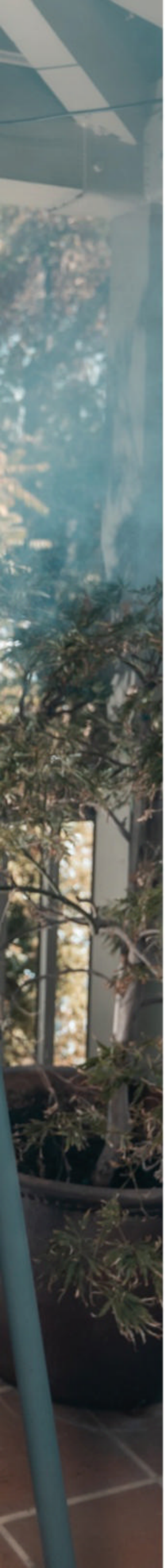
by devon preston photos by john david glaude

A man with short dark hair, smiling, stands on a balcony. He has extensive tattoos on both arms, including a Buddha figure and floral designs. He is wearing a black t-shirt with a graphic that says "DO IT RIGHT". He has his arms crossed. Behind him is a large black grill hanging from a metal frame. The balcony has a white railing and a tiled floor. The background shows trees and a clear sky.

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AFTER GROWING UP IN THE KITCHEN THAT BROUGHT PAD THAI TO AMERICA, JET TILA WANTS TO BROADEN YOUR CULINARY HORIZONS ONE MEAL AT A TIME.

by jonny watson photos by troy conrad



These days the word “fusion” can be a loaded term, particularly in culinary circles. For years the term has been thrown around as a backhanded description for Americanized Asian dishes. Somewhere along the way the word seemed to lose its actual meaning—the combination of separate things to create a single entity. And there simply is no better word to describe chef Jet Tila's culinary journey.

It all began with a young Tila stocking shelves in the grocery store his parents owned. After immigrating to the United States in the '60s, Tila's parents opened Bangkok Market in 1972. “It was the first Thai grocery store in the history of America,” Tila explains. “We existed in a time where fusion cuisine was gaining popularity. Every single famous restaurant and chef in Los Angeles, from Puck to Joachim at Patina, everyone shopped at our grocery store. It was the only place to get all of these things that were exotic back then—Thai curry paste, coconut milk, etc.

“I was stocking the shelves and I got to do all the deliveries to those restaurants,” Tila continues. “So I formed a very early relationship with so many of what became my peers. I was the kid that helped them with their Asian groceries.”

With his family running a series of restaurants in addition to the grocery store, Tila found himself working in a kitchen at a very young age. But his career didn't follow a straight line—he needed to go out and have some adventures before finding his way. After dropping out of high school and taking some classes at community college, Tila was a typical 22-year-old desperately trying to find a way to pay the bills without working in his family's restaurants. Then he came up with a novel idea.

“I started teaching cooking classes out of my backyard because I needed cash,” Tila says. “I would put on the white coat, have people over, and I'd teach them Thai food. There was no Food Network at the time, there weren't any recreational cooking classes. I was on the ground floor of that. The L.A. Times got a hold of it and wrote a full-page article about it. The demand that article created was the spark I needed to push me into formalizing my education.”

Given the simple fact that he was already teaching very popular cooking classes, on the surface level it seems odd that culinary school would even be a consideration. While he was at an age when we tend to be more than a little headstrong, Tila was wise enough to not only know what he knew, but to recognize all of the things that he didn't know. “Culinary languages are unique, and every culture evolves differently depending on their influences,” Tila explains. “Ironically, I had never baked a cake from scratch but I had made hundreds of Chinese and Thai dishes. I'd never made a turkey. I'd never made the mother sauces.

“Yes, I had a leg up because I touched food and cooked food from a very young age,” Tila continues. “I started my 10,000 hours early, but it wasn't focused and it wasn't formal.”

Tila wanted to be thorough, so he attended both French

and Japanese culinary schools, then went to work in fine dining. His education helped him become a metaphorical Swiss Army knife in the kitchen—he has the perfect tool for any situation. For example, by learning French techniques and terms, Tila gave himself a common language he is able to share with chefs from all different specialities.

With all of his training and his impressive resume, not to mention his ability to rise to the challenge in the televised pressure cooker that is competitive cooking shows, Tila has proven his breadth of cooking knowledge. While he is capable of making some of the most complex dishes in the world, when given his druthers, Tila's likely to make something far more humble.

“I'm simple—the five-spice, braised pork trotters,” Tila says. “That's the dish my grandma made cause we were poor as shit. You could buy pigs feet for 25 cents a pound cause no one wanted them. She braised them up and we ate them over white rice. Ginger, five spice, the gelatin... it's incredible.”

Grandma's trotters, and many of the foods he was raised on, take up a lot of real estate in Tila's mental cookbook. Los Angeles is one of the great melting pots of this nation and it left its mark on the chef. “I grew up in this awesome little strip between Chinatown, Little Tokyo, Little Armenia and Little El Salvador,” Tila explains. “I'm really that five flavor kinda dude. Hot sour, salty, sweet and savory have to exist in everything I'm eating. I need to have the balance of all those flavors all the time. Every day I need to have big flavors in combination.”

Tila started getting tattooed when he was 18. Like so many 18-year-olds, he had an idea that seemed perfect at the time, but instead of aging like a fine wine, that first tattoo has aged more like the lager beer it depicts. “I got a Singh, which in Thai means ‘tiger,’” Tila says of the beer company's logo tattooed on his arm. “It makes no sense. When I walk around Asia people laugh at me because it's basically like having a Coca Cola or Pepsi logo on you. I just thought it was cool and I was rushing, I was dying to get my first tattoo. It's still there on my right upper arm and I'm not going to cover it over. It just reminds me we're all young and dumb and whatever [laughs].”

“When I'm hanging out in America people are like, ‘Cool tattoo, that thing's dope,’” Tila continues. “And then when you're in Thailand they're like, ‘What the fuck are you thinking, dude? They better be paying you.’”

While Tila has refused to get any of the stereotypical “chef tattoos”—we're talking to you, chef's knife forearm tattoo—he does believe that one of his tattoos embodies his profession. On Tila's left arm is a depiction of the traditional koi folk tale. “The koi is very representative of most chefs,” he explains. “I would say the majority of us are vagabonds, rebels and nonconformists. We all know the story of the koi—a stubborn animal that pushes its way upstream to, hopefully, become the dragon.”

It took a lot of hard work and determination, but Tila has made it, just like the koi turning into a dragon on his arm.

inked profile

Relationships are the key to success in any business, and maintaining bonds through the often rocky terrain of hip-hop's landscape can be a challenge. Rapper and entrepreneur Problem is living proof that doing right by people will always bring great rewards, both personally and professionally. He has been a mainstay on the scene since he emerged as a songwriter and collaborator for Snoop Dogg, a partnership that includes a spot on the track "Upside Down" alongside Nipsey Hussle on Snoop's 2009 "Malice In Wonderland" project. In 2012, the German-born, Compton-raised lyricist made a definitive mark on the game as a guest on E-40's hit single "Function," along with Iamsu! and YG. Since his first official solo release in 2013, Problem has worked with a formidable array of talent, including Chris Brown, Pharrell Williams, Jamie Foxx, Jim Jones, Childish Gambino, Too \$hort and Kendrick Lamar, just to name a few.

Problem started 2020 as many of us did, with high hopes for his latest work to reach as far as it could go. Ultimately, he had his way, and no pandemic could stop him. Soon after the release of his short film "A Compton Story," Problem delivered the 10-track Terrace Martin-produced mixtape "Coffee & Kush, Vol. 1" in May. Fans and media alike welcomed the project with open arms as summer kicked off. And just like that, Problem was on to round two with "Coffee & Kush, Vol. 2," which released in September with a whirlwind of impressive features from Snoop Dogg, Jay Rock, Jack Harlow, Tyrese and Freddie Gibbs. Martin also popped in for a cameo, and was joined in production on the project by Don Cannon, Mike & Keys and more.

Booking so many guest artists for an album could have been a complete nightmare in 2020, but the process came together organically as the year progressed. "To be perfectly honest with you, these guys are just my friends and these are the people who always talked to me," Problem explains. "If I'm hot or cold, they are always there. It was always bigger than music, and just through the grace of God, all of them happened to grow and become huge or stay huge.

"When it comes to Snoop Dogg, or Freddie [Gibbs], who's reemerged as a star... or Jack Harlow, who I met maybe three years ago... or Jay Rock, I started with him..." Problem continues, "they are huge stars who have accomplished amazing things, but these are my friends. I'd rather just fuck with the people who fuck with me than go around anywhere else. My friends are cool as shit."

Problem's music career has developed in a time where the internet and social media have been pushed to the forefront of an artist's promotional path, and he has made use of these tools. The nature of the internet can sometimes force an artist to rush releases, but Problem has kept the pace consistent. "I just think with the internet it makes everything more visible," Problem says. "I've dropped two [this year], three projects in the year before, it's just that this is a little more planned out. As far as TikTok and Triller, I know that's not really a space for me. If something goes crazy over there, that's dope and I'm appreciative, but I kinda know where I can play and I know my lane. So I really focus on that. We went in with a game plan, we did all the work and it was like, 'Let's lay it out. Let's have a 52-week plan and just run it and I guarantee everything will go correctly.'"

Although East Coast versus West Coast feels like a thing of the past to many fans, Problem asserts West Coast artists

still feel on the outs with some East Coast media. "When I'm [on the East Coast], from the people it's love," he explains. "The people and artists, it's love. The media not so much. East Coast media will tap into the southern artists early, the New York artists early, even the Chicago artists early. We need that same love out here. I've actually been trying to fix that."

Problem is a man with stories to tell. His music is a conduit for his tales, as are his many tattoos. The first tattoo he ever got was of his daughter when he was 20 years old, while his most recent was of his sixth child. In a moment filled with sentimentality, he laughingly details how his first tattoo was poorly done, even if out of love. "It's just what it is, and what it represents is the real reason for it," he says. "But the look of it... I let my friend play, I was high, but I was really in this emotional state being a father trying to figure out why I can't see my child, and all these weird emotions like, 'I HAVE to have her next to me.' I didn't give a damn what it looked like, but I want to get this one fixed soon."

Of all his work, Problem's favorite tattoo is the statement piece on his neck: Dream big, live bigger. "I feel like it's very important to not just dream big, but wake up, get up, and make that shit larger than life," he explains. "For me, it's a huge reminder of how my mindset has to always stay. Everybody has big ideas, but nobody has execution. To live bigger you have to execute those dreams."

Problem acknowledges the difficulty of realizing this concept in a second tattoo. Across his chest he has his entire philosophy encompassed in one word—perseverance. "I think it's very important to understand that you need perseverance to do anything in life," he explains. "A great man, a great father, a great rapper, or whatever, you have to go through the growing pains of learning how to do it, and that takes perseverance because it gets rough. Sometimes it doesn't go the way we want it, but that doesn't mean you stop."

With over a decade of creative work under his belt, it's been a natural progression for Problem to take on more unique endeavors. His partnership in Green Hour Coffee is currently paying off, as the brand is growing by leaps and bounds. "I want to turn it into a Fortune 500 company," he says. "Coffee and kush is the new chicken and waffles. I realize that coffee and weed go together because I do it every morning, and so many successful people tell me they do it, so turning this coffee and kush culture into something bigger than these albums is my goal. I hope for certain we'll be worth at least 2 billion dollars in the next two years."

With inspiration in his heart and clear focus on the future, Problem has the solution for every obstacle. "I want people to know that change is good. I'm not the same man I was, and that's OK," Problem enthusiastically states. "I love the fact that I'm not the same person I was when you first heard my music. I feel like if you're the same person 10 years later, you should just jump off a bridge. I know people who don't keep cars for 10 years, so I don't see how you would think you're supposed to be the same way."

"I want people to know that I've changed tremendously, and I'm still the same in a lot of other ways," he continues. "I'm far more focused, far more aware of my surroundings, who I am, what I can bring to the table in all situations. I fucking just want to see everybody else win. I want to help you to be better."



ALL THE ANSWERS

PROBLEM HAS THE PERSEVERANCE AND DRIVE TO MAKE HIS DREAMS COME TRUE. WE SPOKE WITH THE RAPPER ABOUT HIS LATEST MIXTAPE, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND HOW HIS TATTOOS REMIND HIM OF WHAT'S IMPORTANT IN LIFE.

by dove clark photos by laetitia rumford





GOING STRONG

Eddie Hall breaks down his journey to become World's Strongest Man and his ongoing beef with "The Mountain" from "Game of Thrones."

by devon preston photos by joe schofield

Can you even have a sport without a great rivalry? Tyson vs. Holyfield. Red Sox vs. Yankees. Duke vs. North Carolina. When it comes to the World's Strongest Man, no rivalry is as savage as the beef between Eddie Hall and Hafþór Júlíus Björnsson (You know him as The Mountain from "Game of Thrones"). Now, after years of throwing verbal punches online, they'll be throwing punches for real in The Heaviest Boxing Match in History. "At the end of the day, we're both 350-plus pounds of body weight and we fucking hate each other," Hall says. "So there's only one way this is going to end—knockout."

Hall and Björnsson's dispute began in 2017 when Hall won the title of World's Strongest Man. Hall's victory came after years of diligent work in the strongman circuit, culminating in his biggest career success so far. "I became obsessed," Hall shares. "For 365 days, I never missed a training session, never missed a meal, and always got my 10 hours of sleep. There were no days off. Even if you're feeling ill you still have to turn up and put the work in. If there was one thing I could have said at World's Strongest Man 2017, it was that I didn't have a single excuse."

But it wasn't just the year of non-stop training that led Hall to the title, he worked his entire life to reach that point. As the youngest of three brothers, everything was a competition—from racing to school to scarfing down pizza. Believe it or not, the first sport Hall succeeded in was swimming, making it to nationals four years in a row. Then at 19, he decided to give competitive bodybuilding a shot. "I realized I was never going to be Mr. Olympia like Arnold Schwarzenegger," Hall says. "So I transferred my talent to lifting heavy things and I set myself a target to become the strongest man in the world. Pretty much 10 years later to the day, I did just that."

Unlike bodybuilding, which focuses on physique and glamour muscles, a strongman competition entails lifting different weights in a variety of ways to determine who's the strongest. Strongman competitions are known for their numerous creative and unusual events, which include pulling planes down a runway, lifting cars off of the ground and throwing kegs over a high bar. "It's more about functional strength," Hall explains. "You can see it, rather than putting weight on a bar and pulling it. Nobody understands that, but everyone knows how big and heavy a truck is."

Hall quickly realized the only way to

progress in the sport was to enter competitions. He excelled at the amateur level and went on to win England's Strongest Man at 22, then took the title of U.K.'s Strongest Man at 23 and finally qualified to compete in World's Strongest Man at 24. "You get better at it by just doing it," Hall says. "There's no other way to train pulling a truck than by finding a truck, strapping yourself to it and pulling it. If you want to learn how to do something, you have to copy them and just keep plugging away at the technique."

A strongman must be proficient in all events, but many have their favorite. Hall excels in static lifting, which is comparable to powerlifting, setting world records in the deadlift in July 2016. "Lifting 500 kilos was deemed impossible," Hall explains. "The whole strength world thought it was a joke and would never be done. I never lifted anywhere near a half-ton, but I made sure the training I did had super good technique, was really powerful and fast off of the floor. On that day, I bunched up all that training, anger, frustration and the naysayers, putting it all in a pot and just letting it loose."

Although Hall achieved his goal and proved to the world that it could be done, he put his health at risk to do so. Lifting can have extremely dangerous consequences and in competitions, Hall has seen people break their backs, snap their knees or collapse and have heart attacks. "I must admit, the lift did take a toll on my body," Hall shares. "I blew blood vessels in my head, lost my vision for a couple hours and had very bad memory loss for a couple of weeks after. I put my health on the line, but any lesser of a man probably would have died."

Less than a year after performing the world record deadlift, Hall became 2017's World's Strongest Man. He reached his ultimate goal and came to terms with an experience that can be a hard pill to swallow for many professional athletes. "Winning the World's Strongest Man was the best thing I've ever done in my life," Hall says. "You've got to come back down to reality. I won the World's Strongest Man on a Friday, then on Saturday I flew home and was wiping my kid's ass after a birthday party. It doesn't make you more special than anybody else."

Following his win, Hall struggled to adapt to his new lifestyle, but eventually, he found his footing. One of the ways he moved on was by marking this experience on his body forever through a tattoo. "My most meaningful tattoo is of Atlas on my left forearm," Hall shares. "That's the full

logo for World's Strongest Man, which represents the strongest man ever. On the globe, I put the trophy over Africa, which is where I won the title. It's a reminder of what I've achieved in my life."

In addition to indulging in tattoo therapy, Hall has kept the momentum from his win going through a number of media appearances. He's grown an audience of followers by giving the world an inside look into his daily life. "I started my YouTube channel in August 2019," Hall says. "I got into it because a few of my friends had good YouTube channels. I had a good vision for the production, hired a full-time videographer and spent about 20 grand on a camera kit." In the year and change Hall has created content for his YouTube channel, he's racked up an impressive 1.5 million subscribers. Through his channel, he's introduced millions to the life of a former strongman, revisiting his 8,000 calories a day strongman diet and going head-to-head with other elite athletes in the sports of gymnastics, bodybuilding and powerlifting. He's also used his platform to keep his fans up to date with his upcoming fight against Björnsson, which will take place in September 2021.

For the past several months, Hall has been preparing for his big boxing debut. In the past, he's boxed for charity, but against his rival, he's going for glory. "He called me a cheat after an event and after he was called out, it turned out he was the one trying to cheat," Hall explains. "There's a lot of bad blood there and the idea of us fighting has been flying around for a couple of years. Then a promoter from Dubai offered us a deal to have it out, man-to-man. I was like, 'Yeah, that sounds like a great idea,' and after the contract was signed, I was training like a madman. I want to teach that mother-fucker a lesson for calling me a cheat."

Hall may lack years of boxing experience, but he's an expert at training and knows what it takes to be the best in the world. Hall's daily preparation consists of two hours of weight training, a 1.5-mile run, and then about 5 to 6 hours of boxing technique work. "I must be training well over 20 hours a week at the moment," Hall says. "I've been solely focused on getting as strong, powerful and fit as possible for this boxing match."

Hall still has many months ahead of his world fighting debut and in that time, he'll be training to settle the score, once and for all. There's a lot of ego riding on this match and if he comes out victorious, Hall can finally say he conquered The Mountain.







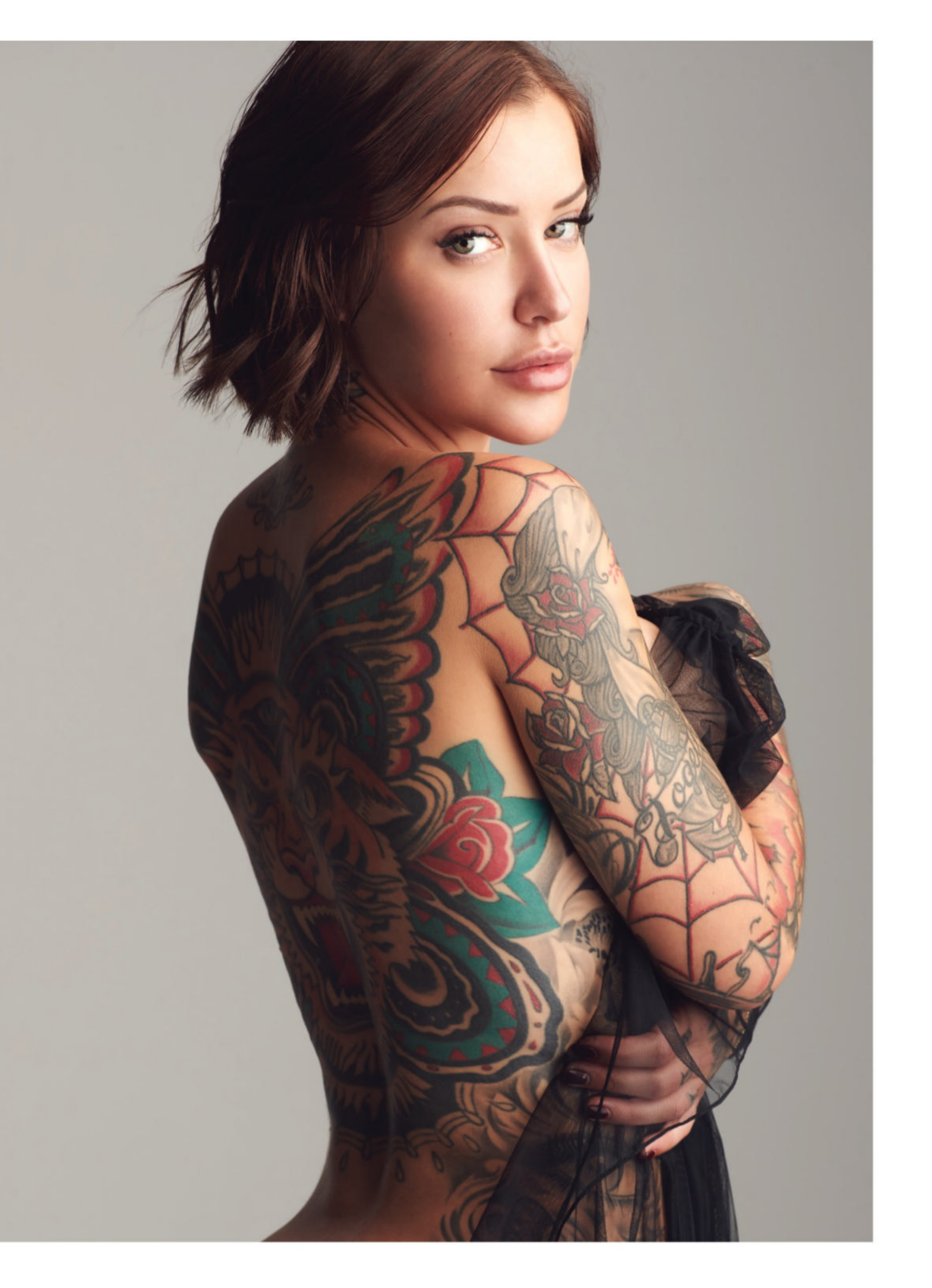
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Lolo

Instagram's most mysterious tattooed beauty, Lolo, makes her Inked Magazine debut.

photos by donat







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FEATURING

TY DOLLA \$IGN

Ty Dolla \$ign gave us the inside scoop on his highly anticipated third album, collaborating with Kanye West and keeping the nation's spirits high.

by devon preston photos by travis shinn

In one word, Ty Dolla \$ign is versatile. Not only has he shown different sides of his sound through his own chart-topping singles, his vocals have complemented hits by Fifth Harmony, Post Malone and Megan Thee Stallion. “I saw a tweet where someone said, ‘Ty’s voice is like fucking hot sauce, it’s good on anything,’” Ty explains. “I was like, ‘What am I doing on these other songs that I haven’t been doing on my albums?’ With my new album, I made sure to include all the frequencies of my voice and whatever I was giving away to Kanye or Mustard, I made sure to have it covered.”

Ty has been working on his follow-up to “MihTy” for two years, during which time he has been mulling over a plan to make this his biggest success to date. Initially, he’d announced it would be titled “Dream House,” to correspond with his “Beach House” trio. Yet, just a few weeks before the album’s release, Ty changed the name to “Featuring Ty Dolla \$ign,” breaking the cycle and leaning into the success of his feature work.

“Featuring Ty Dolla \$ign” began as a rough concept and Ty admits there were roughly 700 songs on the cutting room floor. Being locked down because of the pandemic pushed him to narrow in on his vision. Personal tragedy struck Ty in April, but within his sorrow, he found inspiration. “I lost my grandmother in the pandemic,” Ty shares. “When my parents broke up and my mom and I weren’t seeing eye-to-eye, they sent me to live with my grandmother. She was the cool grandmother that let me smoke weed in the house, invite whoever I wanted over, and have my studio in the back room. She’s the reason I was able to fully find myself as an artist and you can definitely feel the pain in the album.”

Ty not only got real about the passing of his grandmother in this project, he also shed light on the loss of one’s sense of self in the album’s lead single “Ego Death.” This song came together piece-by-piece over two years. “I was at a little house party and this DJ played the bass line, which comes from a song called ‘Da Soul Track’ by Methodology,” Ty says. “I’d never heard of it and I looked on Apple Music, Spotify—but it wasn’t there.” He eventually found the song on YouTube and after sampling it, he recorded his vocals, added some vocals by Brooklyn’s Serpenthwithfeet, and let it be so he could head to Chicago to help Kanye West on his 2019 album “Jesus Is King.”

In the studio, between takes recording their track “Everything We Need,” he showed the first draft of “Ego Death” to West. “He jumped out of his chair and went crazy,” Ty explains. “As soon as the part of the song was like, ‘Hold up, there’s a train going by,’ everyone in the room was dying laughing. Right after that, he grabbed the little stage mic and he laid some little ad lib parts, as well as his verse.” Getting West on the track wasn’t the end of Ty’s work, there were still two major features to add—the genre-ambiguous FKA twigs and the biggest DJ on the planet, Skrillex. “I started it in 2018, and leaked some of it in 2019 when I did Coachella,” Ty says. “I didn’t feel like it was complete until recently and the subject matter was great for everything that was going on. No matter how much money you have, who you were or what your situation was, there was no way to escape the pandemic.

It was full ego death—for everyone.”

Not every song on Ty’s album has deep meaning, some just want you to get down and have a good time. “Expensive,” his collaboration with engineer James Royo, is a perfect example. “We came up with this beat and as soon as I had the vocals on it, I was like, ‘Yo, I need Nicki Minaj,’” Ty shares. “I look at Nicki Minaj’s voice and what it means to the 2000s the same way I look at what Kenny G’s saxophone did for the ’90s. You had to have that in order for your record to have the frequency. So I DMed her, she got right back to me, and we made the song happen—it was literally a three-day thing.”

In Ty’s time on the scene, he’s worked with everyone and made connections that will last a lifetime, all of which is seen throughout “Featuring Ty Dolla \$ign.” Many of the people he’s been working alongside for years have found success in their own right and Ty is all about lifting up the people around him. “It’s been dope seeing everyone around me level up, like Mustard, James Royo—it’s a beautiful thing,” Ty says. “One of my songs features Jhené Aiko, she’s from L.A. and I’ve known her whole family since I was a kid—I was happy to see that come full circle.”

Back in December 2017, we spoke to Ty Dolla \$ign shortly after he had released “Beach House 3” and asked him who he’d like to work with in the future. He said Kid Cudi and in 2020, that dream became a reality. “I made a couple of songs with Kid Cudi,” Ty says. “One of the songs made the album and we’ve got some other stuff cooking. Shout-out to Cudi, he’s one of my favorite artists and shout-out to Ye for linking us up.”

Ty has put his heart and soul into this project, bringing in music’s finest to make this album the best it can be for his fans. He recognizes that his fanbase is more diverse than most artists on the charts, as he’s branched out across pop, R&B and rap over the years, but hopes that anyone can find their song from the track list. “I covered all bases,” Ty explains. “I gave the original Ty Dolla fans what they wanted, all the way into who I am now. I listened to it in front of my girl, my mom, my daughter—so I’m truly sure of every line on this album and, hopefully, it gives people something uplifting.”

Ty’s career has thrived thanks to his collaborations in the recording studio. Recently, he delved into uncharted waters for a totally different type of collab. “I tattooed Nene, my tattoo artist,” Ty says. “I gave him the ‘THMVMNT’ logo (Ty’s imprint label under Atlantic Records) and I only fucked up on the nose—but for the most part it looks good. It was definitely hectic, because it’s permanent and there were seven people standing over my head trying to coach me. But it was fun and I’ll definitely do it again.”

With his fourth album, “Featuring Ty Dolla \$ign,” out and available to the masses, now Ty is on to the next big thing. He’s someone who’s always 12 steps ahead of the trends, and who knows? By this time next year we may be talking to him about starring in a major motion picture or launching a fashion empire. Whatever the future holds, we’re betting our money on the Almighty Dolla.





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YOUR SITUATION WAS, THERE WAS
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THE
GOOD
FIGHT

UFC fighter Lyman Good discusses the mental and physical strength required to succeed in the octagon

by charlie connell photos by jesse korman





Mike Tyson once said, "Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the face." It's a maxim that has stuck with many in the fight game, as it speaks to how the countless hours of preparation a fighter puts in before a fight can all go out the window in the blink of an eye.

In only his second professional fight, Lyman Good experienced a more brutal version of this life lesson—what the hell do you do when your dominant hand is broken and one of your bones is poking through the skin?

Easy. Just keep using it until you knock that motherfucker out.

"It broke on the very first punch I threw," Good says. "I aimed for the face, but he shot in and I ended up hitting the top of the head. As it landed, I felt and heard the sound, and I knew it was fractured. I just didn't think it was actually sticking out of the skin.

"I fought the whole fight like that," Good continues. "You'll be surprised to know what adrenaline will get you through. Sure enough, I kept hitting with it and sure enough I ended up knocking the guy out with the same hand. As they were pulling off my glove I felt this current, this shock of electricity going up my arm. They peeked through the glove and saw there was a bone sticking out."

That scar is a trophy that Good carries with him to this day, an always-present reminder of how he was able to overcome adversity and persevere. From the comfort of your recliner, with a cold brew in your hand, it's pretty easy to watch a UFC fight and think that you're capable of holding your own in the octagon. You'll be sitting there thinking about how if you hit the gym just a couple more times a month... but you're dreadfully wrong.

Training for a fight isn't a thing that can be done in a few weeks. It's not even a job, something you only do 40 hours a week. "It's your whole life," Good says. "Every day. Even on your days off, it's still your life because what you do on your time off still plays a factor in your conditioning."

In a sport with no off-season, Good focuses on three very important factors to aid him as he prepares to do battle. First, he focuses on his diet—making sure to cut out the things detrimental to his fitness (junk food, booze, etc.) while still getting enough sustenance to endure three training sessions a day. The second factor is the ability to recover from the workouts. Last, and perhaps most important, is getting proper and regular sleep.

"You have to be able to sustain the amount of brutality on your body without injuries," Good says. "There's such a high likelihood of an injury because you're training so often, you have to be able to know when you're pushing your body too hard. That takes the experience of a fighter. It takes doing it for a long time to know how to ride the wave and listen to your body."

It should be obvious that being in peak physical shape is required to compete with the best of the best in the UFC. What might be a surprise is the extensive amount of mental preparation that goes into a fight. Meditating and visualizing every possible thing that could happen in the octagon is a key component in Good's preparation.

"As soon as I know who my opponent is I put them on the wallpaper of my phone, so I'm looking at him at all times," Good says. "He's the only thing I'm thinking about. I commit everything to a fight, every drop of who I am and my being is for that fight."

Good's dedication to the sport is about much more than his record and the paycheck. Every fiber of his being is tied into what happens in the cage. As such, fighting affects him in ways that transcend sport. Fighting dominates his diet. It dominates how he spends his free time. It dominates everything.

"I always say that fighting is a selfish act, as it should be," Good explains. "It's about putting all distractions aside. You don't hang out, you don't socialize. Everything is for your fight. Each fight is a transformative thing. It changes you as a man. It carves you out."

Born and raised in Spanish Harlem, Good's life could have gone a lot of

different ways. Good bounced around a couple of schools when he was younger. His mother saw a lot of anger in young Lyman and she was afraid that she would lose her son to the streets if she didn't find somewhere he could channel that rage. "I grew up around a lot of anger," Good says. "I guess that's the product of living in a gun-toting, gangbanging, drug-dealing kind of neighborhood."

His mom thought having her son throw himself into a hobby would help, something active and dynamic that would occupy his attention and get out all of that energy and anger within. They asked around, did some research, and soon Good was at a gym learning mixed martial arts.

As he fell in love with the sport, Good threw his entire body and soul into getting ready for that first fight. As he stepped into the ring for the first time, he felt a rush unlike any other, an unmistakable energy that manifests when you know every mistake you make could lead to you laying on the canvas. It was at that moment Good knew this was not just a hobby, but something he wanted to spend the rest of his life doing.

It may feel like a cliché by now, but when Good steps into that ring he feels like he's going into battle. You don't want to go into battle empty handed, so Good had his armor attached to him permanently in the form of some sick black-and-grey tattoos.

His sleeve tells his life story. From the chain mail that protects him to the raven that symbolizes his transformation, each piece reveals more about his personality. "There's this wolf on my forearm that symbolizes loyalty," Good explains. "I'm loyal to everything that my heart has been poured into, without fail. I have Latin here as well, which says, 'Through the gates of fire, I rise from the ashes.' Which means, all those things in life that were meant to burn me have only made me stronger."

Those words sum up Lyman Good's entire life. Every trial and tribulation that he has faced, he's reached deep and found a way to overcome it. For as long as his body will allow him, he'll keep on fighting the good fight.



ZOMG GAMING

@camoz



In America, we take for granted our ability to openly get tattoos and show off our work to the world. In South Korea, tattooing is illegal and artists need to ply their trade very carefully, keeping the business underground. Even with the added challenges he faces in his homeland, Camoz is one of the industry's rising stars. We sat down with the thriving artist to understand how he came up in South Korea's secret tattoo community and how he plans to take the world by storm.

Take us through your experience getting your first tattoo and how it led you to become a tattoo artist. It was a small tribal tattoo on my ankle and I only had two things in mind. One, "Oh, this is gonna hurt," and two, "I'm gonna be so cool after this." After that I thought tattoos were pretty cool. There's something special about making the client feel good after getting it.

What is the tattoo community like in Seoul and how does it compare to other cities you've visited? Doing anything with a needle on skin is illegal in South Korea. There are numerous talented tattoo artists here and we see each other through social media, just like the rest of the world. Since it's still considered very taboo and the industry isn't protected from the law, one big difference from other places is that we're a lot more cautious within the tattoo community. We definitely have our guards up with each other compared to other countries.

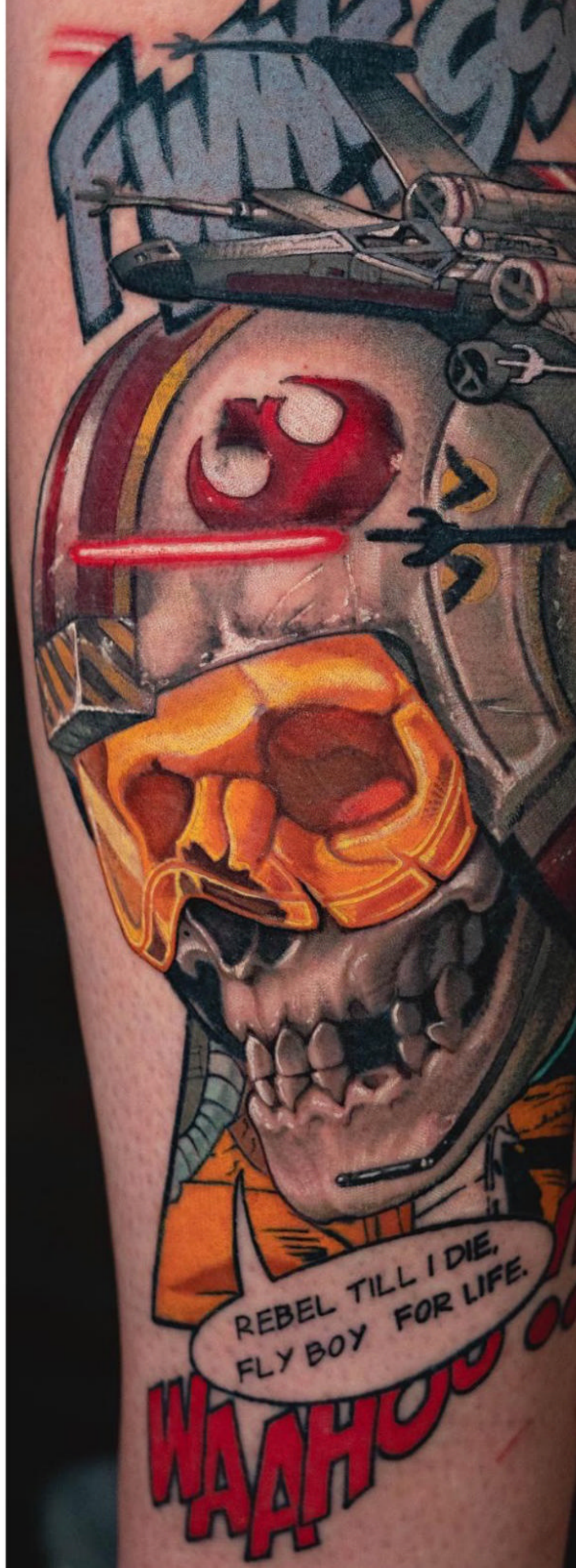
Once we're able to safely travel again, where do you plan to tattoo? Since tattooing is illegal in my own country, living here as a tattoo artist is quite difficult. It's also hard to be respected in this profession. If I do get the chance I would like to work in America. With the trips I've taken, I've felt a big difference in tattoo culture and the tattoo artists also have a very different vibe. I would like to work in an environment where I can be respected and keep my head up with pride.

What's your favorite tattoo style to create in and why? I'm a fan of new school tattoos. I liked that there are no rules to this style. The colors, creativity and breaking of the rules was very appealing to me. But at one point, I felt that my work was looking a lot like other new school artists and I felt confined to a new set of rules. These days, I try to abandon the rules in all forms. I love color and I'm having fun coming up with pieces that express unconventional things with full freedom.

Do you think you'll stick to one style or continue to create tattoos in a variety of styles? I think I will continue to create tattoos in a variety of styles. I limited my creativity and ability by defining myself as a new school tattoo artist. My inspirations are continuously changing and if changing up my style means I can express myself more and have fun, then I will keep on doing that.

Many of your tattoos combine realism with children's drawings. How did you come up with this idea? I've been drawing all my life and I was an art major at uni, so even when I was learning to tattoo there was this imperative obsession to strive for perfection. However, I just wanted to let loose all of a sudden and get away from the idea of perfection. I also wanted to go back to my roots, to a time when I felt innocent and liberated while drawing. These tattoos are a mix of Camoz as a kid and Camoz as a tattoo artist.

When you're not tattooing, we see that you enjoy making caricatures of your fellow tattooers. How did you start doing this? I was never a very social kid. My way of making friends was through art. I would always draw my friends, and making them laugh through my drawings made me happy. I don't think I started drawing caricatures wanting something in return, it was just my form of communicating and making friends.





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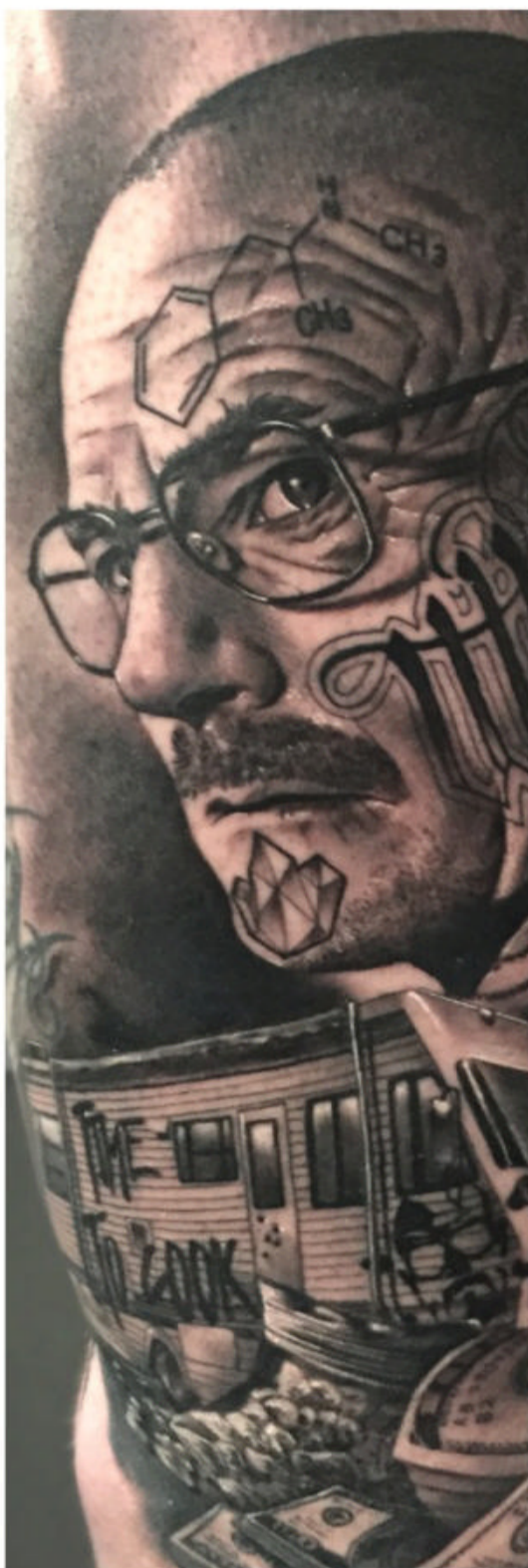
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CARLOS

FABRA

FOLLOW: @CARLOSFABRA.COSAFINA



Whoever said you can't learn anything while glued to the television? Carlos Fabra developed his love for art by recreating his favorite cartoon characters, particularly those found in "Dragon Ball Z." The hours spent drawing his anime heroes helped propel him into the world of tattooing, and his passion fast-tracked his success in the industry. We caught up with Fabra to learn why he favors black-and-greyscale and how he continues to create original designs using the same characters.

How did you start your career as a tattoo artist? When I was growing up, I was fascinated by people who had tattoos and started drawing things that related to tattoos. I got my first tattoo at 15 and since then I haven't stopped tattooing myself. When I was 20, I was given my first tattoo machine and I started to practice. Two years later, I quit all my jobs to focus solely on tattooing.

What attracted you to black-and-greyscale, and who are some of your favorite black-and-greyscale artists? Black-and-greyscale is easier for my brain to understand than color. To make a color tattoo you need a lot of patience that I don't have. I also consider color to be more painful and I'm very concerned about pain when tattooing. I think black-and-greyscale tattoos are more elegant and last better over the years.

There are so many artists I admire in this style, many are friends of mine that I've had the great luck of being able to tattoo with and be tattooed by. The list could be very long, but these are some of the ones I like the most and have liked for a long time: Miguel Bohigues, Robert Hernandez, Sergio Fernandez, Fred Thomas and Matteo Pasqualin.

Do you follow any of the black-and-greyscale rules? Why or why not? For me, the most important thing is that a tattoo is impressive and attracts attention. That's the main rule. The tattoo should draw attention at long, medium and short distances. I make my tattoos the maximum possible size to achieve this. I also like to make tattoos with a lot of contrast to make them look impressive. I'm not as concerned with technique, but more with the visual impact.

We see that you frequently tattoo characters from "Dragon Ball Z." What do you love about this anime and who are some of your favorite characters to tattoo? When I was little, I loved to draw the characters in this series and it helped me perfect my way of drawing. It has been my favorite cartoon series for all of my life and I even have Goku tattooed on my skin. When I started to tattoo "Dragon Ball Z" characters, it was very special for me because I'd spent my whole life drawing them. I think my love for this anime has helped me to succeed in this tattooing.

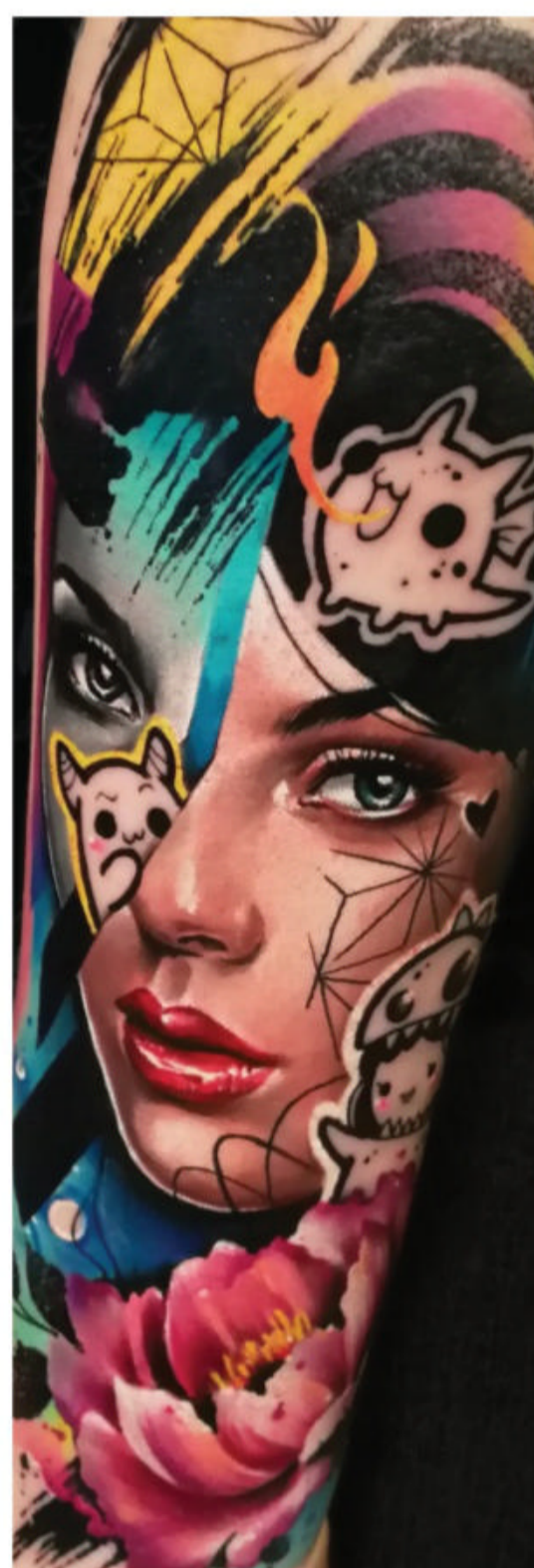
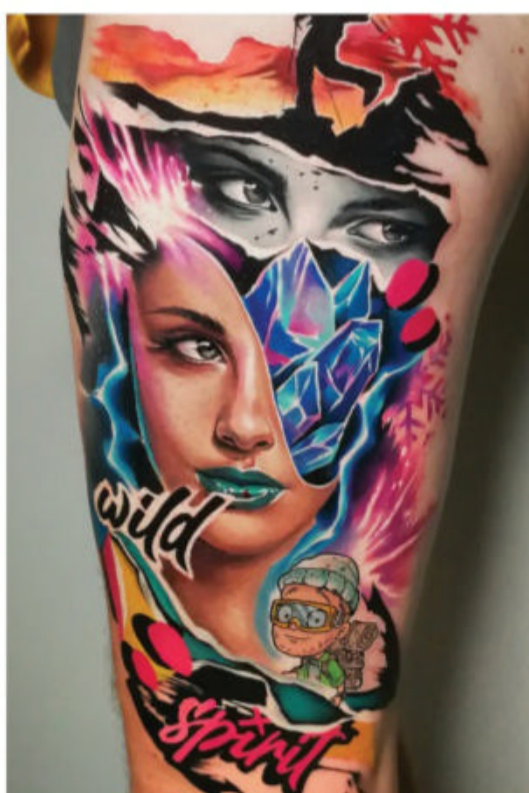
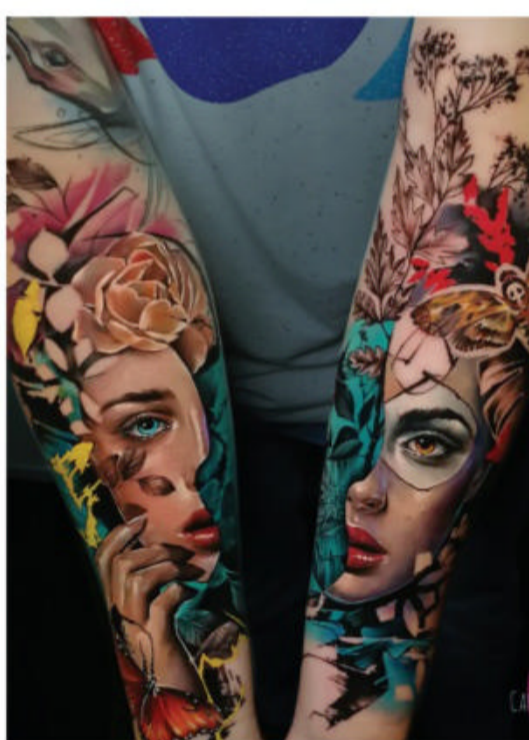
How do you keep creating new designs while tattooing the same characters multiple times? This is the most complicated part of my job. Many customers ask for the same characters, but I never repeat the same scene or the same perspective. It's at this moment where my imagination and creativity come in. It's definitely a challenge, but for now it's working for me.



CAROLINA

CAOS AVALLE

FOLLOW: @CAROLINACAOSAVALLE



You'll find Carolina Caos Avalle right at the intersection of pop-art collage and skin. Avalle crafts stunning designs combining elements of realism, abstract textures and allusions to children's cartoons, giving each client a truly unique work of art. We caught up with Avalle to learn about her approach to design, how she incorporates texture into a tattoo and what advice she'd give to her younger self.

When did you fall in love with art? I've loved drawing and painting since I was a child. It became a physical need for me, like sleeping or eating. During school, I would sometimes lock myself in my room for days and all I did was draw. In drawing and painting, I convey my often tormented state of mind, because I'm never satisfied with what I'm doing.

What were the first years of your tattooing career like? Eight years ago, I met my work and life partner Stefano Galati. For the first few years I tried to learn more, try different styles, draw and study various tattoo artists. From Japanese to cartoon, realistic to old school, color to black-and-grey, I tried to learn as much as possible from different tattooers.

How would you describe your current style and how has it evolved over time? Today I call my style Realism Avant-Garde and it's the result of my studies plus my approach to different techniques. I combine illustration, realism, graphics and painting harmoniously. I developed this style over the years, but I'm constantly changing. I live in a state of perennial anxiety where I'm never fully satisfied and am constantly looking to improve my technique and style. I have a lot to learn and there's always something to improve. Being very self-critical, I always hope to do better in the next tattoo.

How do you decide which elements to combine into one tattoo? In my projects, I build the parts of realism, painting, abstract and graphics so that the colors are in contrast with each other and make the main subject stand out. I love to approach the complexity of realism with the simplicity and sweetness of illustration. The main subjects on which I build the whole composition are almost always feminine. The woman is a predilection that I've always had, even before I started to tattoo. Behind a female face, there's a different beauty and delicacy that I would dare to say is profound.

What role does texture play in your work? Texture is fundamental in my work. The graphic, abstract and design elements are what give life to the composition, which unite the tattoo by making the realism stand out even more.

What advice would you give to your younger self? Everything can always change, for the better or for the worse. Usually in life things don't happen by chance, but with commitment and perseverance I think many results can be achieved. Above all, you must feel satisfied knowing that you have done your best to achieve your goals.



BLACK PRADA

FOLLOW: @BLACK.PRADA



To the untrained eye, big and solid blackwork looks incredibly simple. In reality, it takes a true artist to create designs that work with the body's anatomy and an impeccable craftsman to fully saturate the black within the skin. One of the hottest blackwork artists of the moment is Black Prada, who creates stunning abstract designs out of Madrid. We caught up with this mover and shaker of tattooing to learn how he found blackwork and why bigger is ALWAYS better.

Why did you decide to become an artist? I was always addicted to creating and I was lucky to connect with tattooing the way I did. When I discovered tattooing, I gave up everything else to focus on it. I had many other projects going on in the music industry but realized I can only do one thing properly.

Did you have a traditional apprenticeship? What advice would you give to someone starting out? I was cleaning tubes and answering the phone for a long time. Nothing would be possible without my masters, and I'm very thankful to have started with a big artist in the Japanese style.

I created my style and I believe in being an autodidact, but if I could give advice to a beginner, it would be to get tattooed by someone who's a master in the technique you want to learn. What made me learn the most was getting tattooed by many people with different techniques to build my own.

What drew you to blackwork and who are some of your favorite artists in this style? I've been doing geometric work for many years and I've changed my style a lot. From an artistic aspect, my biggest influence and favorite artist is Roxx. By using less information to create more impact and enhance the body's shape, she changed my view of composition.

From a technical aspect, I learned a lot from Dekalcomanu, who's doing part of my bodysuit and has mastered me over the years. He has been doing blackwork for over 20 years and really knows what he is doing. For me, covering a big area with black without damaging the skin is one of the most technical aspects of tattooing.

What's your process for designing a piece for a client? It's always a team effort and a collaboration between me and the customer. I take some pictures of the area and do a digital mockup to make the composition. Together, we choose some textures or patterns that express what we want for the project.

Why are you drawn to large-scale work? The effort and discipline that's required for a large-scale tattoo is what makes tattooing special and unique. For me, the whole body is a single canvas and, in my opinion, a small tattoo doesn't compliment the anatomy the right way. One body, one tattoo.

Does your style of tattooing attract a lot of customers looking for cover-ups? I do a lot of cover-ups, but what would surprise many people is that I also cover up very well done tattoos from big artists. Many people like me get overwhelmed by colors or an excess of information over time. When you get very minimal, solid black, you look completely different with clothing or jewelry. That's why many people like blackwork in general, not just for covering up badly executed tattoos.

How do you think your tattoos will age over time? My focal point when I do a big area of black is to avoid scarring. You can saturate a lot of the skin, but the less the skin suffers, the less scarring. Damaged skin can be pigmented, but it ages worse over time. This can be seen through lines that expand over time. I really trust in what we call dry healing, which basically consists of not using moisturiser and keeping the skin clean for the first three days after the session.

Take us through your dream canvas and what you'd create on a blank slate. I love minimalism and human anatomy. For me, the human body is beautiful in itself, so I would use very simple shapes to maximize its natural shapes. Every different body dictates its own shapes. Depending on what we want to express, we could choose aggressive-looking patterns or more wavy, organic textures. It's the personality of the subject that dictates what fits best.







SWIMMING IN *Riches*

Teddy Swims and his amazing singing voice forced the world to do a double-take. Now he's ready to put it all out there and never be "Broke" again.

by charlie connell photos by aaron marsh

Normally when a singer writes a song about their financial status it is filled with braggadocio. It's second nature to hear artists rotely recount how many Bentleys they own, the vintage of champagne they prefer and the copious stacks of hundreds they sleep on at night. Teddy Swims—a tattooed teddy-bear-come-to-life with a voice that will make your jaw drop to the floor—goes the opposite direction, marveling at his newfound deliverance from the bottom.

“When we wrote ‘Broke,’ it was right before the pandemic,” Swims says. “We had just gotten off our tour and it was our first time out in L.A. It was coming from that place of ‘I just came up on money.’ Finally, we had made it.”

As he was sitting in L.A. and waiting for the rest of his team to drive out from Atlanta, he started to fully grasp how different things were going to be from here on out. The band was getting ready to record and the label wanted to put them up in an AirBnB in the hills for a month. The cost? \$30,000.

“I broke down at the time because I was so angry,” Swims recalls. “No, absolutely we’re not going to spend that kind of money, I refuse to spend that kind of money. That’s my little brother’s college tuition coming up this year, I can’t spend that kind of money on an AirBnB.”

“They told me, it’s in the label budget, they’ll take care of it,” Swims continues. “They had to break it down and be like, ‘It is important because this is the way we get the word out, make you bigger and make the change that you want to change, to be what you want to be.’”

Swims is getting his first taste of how things are when you’re signed to a major label. How could he not be experiencing some sort of culture shock when the recording process goes from finding time when the whole band can get together between jobs to hanging out in the Hollywood Hills for a month putting together an album?

While the video for “Broke” plays to his childhood fantasies about how to spend the money—who doesn’t want their own ice cream truck?—the real-life Swims has his priorities straight. “Most importantly, the song talks about the comradery of spending it together,” Swims says of his sudden largesse, “knowing it’s not going to last forever. Ultimately if we make the wrong decisions now... you only get one shot at this. If you don’t have your family with you to enjoy it, at least blow it and fuck it up together. Then when you ruined it together, you still got each other.”

For his entire life, Swims has been surrounded by interesting people who had an enormous effect on his musical taste. His grandfather was Pentecostal preacher, so gospel music influenced him from the start. While he would later gravitate more toward soul, R&B and rap, the music he found in church always stayed close to his heart. “All of our band is very into gospel and grew up playing in church,” Swims says. “There are no better musicians in the world than musicians who start out at church. That voice... it isn’t about singing, the performance you’re trying to give is for that person. It’s making that person feel and believe. There’s something about the conviction that’s powerful.”

Singing in church is the obvious ingredient in Swims’ musical background, but the other source of inspiration is far less common. After his parents divorced, Swims was angling to live with his dad so he could attend fourth grade alongside his cousin. After finessing things, the two ended up in a classroom together with a teacher who would change his life.

“We had this teacher, her name was Ms. Berry,” Swims explains. “She was a really sweet lady, but also mean as hell. She was a sergeant in the Army and really strict. But I remember she would always tell us if we came back from recess, shut up and did our work, she would put on the greatest hits of Al Green.”

“For me, that was it,” Swims continues. “I was asking my cousin, ‘Who’s Al Green? Why are you guys so excited?’ They’re a bunch of fourth graders, they shouldn’t have known, understood or been excited to hear Al Green. I just remember hearing, [sings] ‘I I I, I’m so in loooove...’”

His life was forever changed by the romantic stylings of Al Green. He ran home and had 50 different questions for his father about Green and the entire world of music he had just been introduced to. Where many parents would raise an eyebrow and wonder just what exactly was going on in Ms. Berry’s classroom, Swims’ father took the opportunity to introduce his son to Marvin Gaye, Boys II Men and Keith Sweat.

“He was like, ‘Soul, baby? I got you a little soul,’” Swims says. “He started buying me CDs, showing me Keith Sweat, and showing me 2 Live Crew and all this cool-ass hip-hop and shit. I had no clue that this stuff really existed. It took Ms. Berry playing Al Green in the fourth grade and I’ve never been the same since.”

A lot of things have changed since fourth grade for Swims, but his love for soul music never faded. As a budding musician, he found himself singing in bars for \$100 a night, drawing inspiration from Al, Otis, Sam. All the legends.

Swims understands that as a white man he has a fine line to walk when covering the work of Black artists, particularly when you’re singing for more than tips and beer money at a local bar. This was at the front of his mind when he made the bold decision to release a cover version of Marvin Gaye’s iconic “What’s Going On.”

“There’s always a fear that somebody that looks like I do and sounds like I do may be appropriating a culture,” Swims says. “As long as I make sure I do a song like that justice and I make sure to put the money back into the hands of the people it belongs to. All of the money went into the Black Lives Matter movement and the NAACP.”

“I am so blessed and honored and grateful that I did grow up on Black culture and Black music,” Swims continues. “I just always pay it forward, show love and respect, and always thank the Black community for where I am.”

The United States was at a crossroads when Gaye recorded the original. The concept for the song sprung





from an act of police violence witnessed by Renaldo Benson, a member of the Four Tops, at an anti-war protest in Berkeley. The parallels couldn't be any clearer.

"That song means more now than ever," Swims says. "Something has happened to make people finally wake up and realize Black lives really are at stake here. We really have to stand up and speak out."

Swims was horrified to realize that an especially egregious case of police brutality happened to Shali Tilson in his hometown. Tilson suffered from bipolar disorder and was arrested on a misdemeanor charge. Nine days later he was found dead in his cell. Autopsies revealed that he had injuries to his skull and bleeding in his brain, and the cause of death was blood clots resulting from dehydration.

"Nobody's been arrested or held accountable for it, and this happened in my hometown, Conyers, two years ago and I had no clue about it," Swims says. "We've reached out to his family and tried to put a little bit of highlight on that situation. I say all the time, we hear about the George Floyds and the Breonna Taylors, but how many times in small, little towns are things getting brushed under the rug? Especially small, little Southern towns where stuff like this is happening and nobody's hearing about it. It has shaken me to my whole core."

As Swims discusses the subject you can hear the pain and frustration in his voice, but it is in that voice that there is also power. He jokes about how people are often shocked to hear his voice coming out of a big, tattooed white guy, but at the same time recognizes what he can do with it.

"Music is the only place, especially with your voice, where you have a thing that's truly yours, that's different from anybody else," Swims says. "It's bound by what's around you—your weather, your climate, what's happening in your life. You can speak something and say it in a way that can lead people together and still ring true for years and years. Music is like scripture, it's food for the soul."

His voice has brought Swims to a place in life that he never thought he would be. Now that he's here he won't be wasting any time bragging about his riches, he's too busy sharing his good fortune with his nearest and dearest. Swims is hoping that someday in the future a fourth grader is going to run home to their father, wanting to know who Teddy Swims is after a teacher opened their ears to a brand-new musical world.

"I just want to bring people together," Swims says. "If I could have anything come out of my music, it's that."

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