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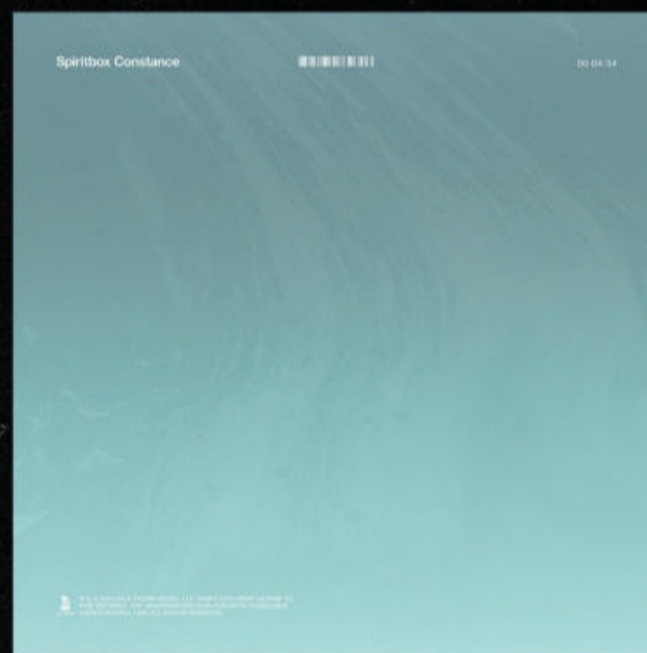
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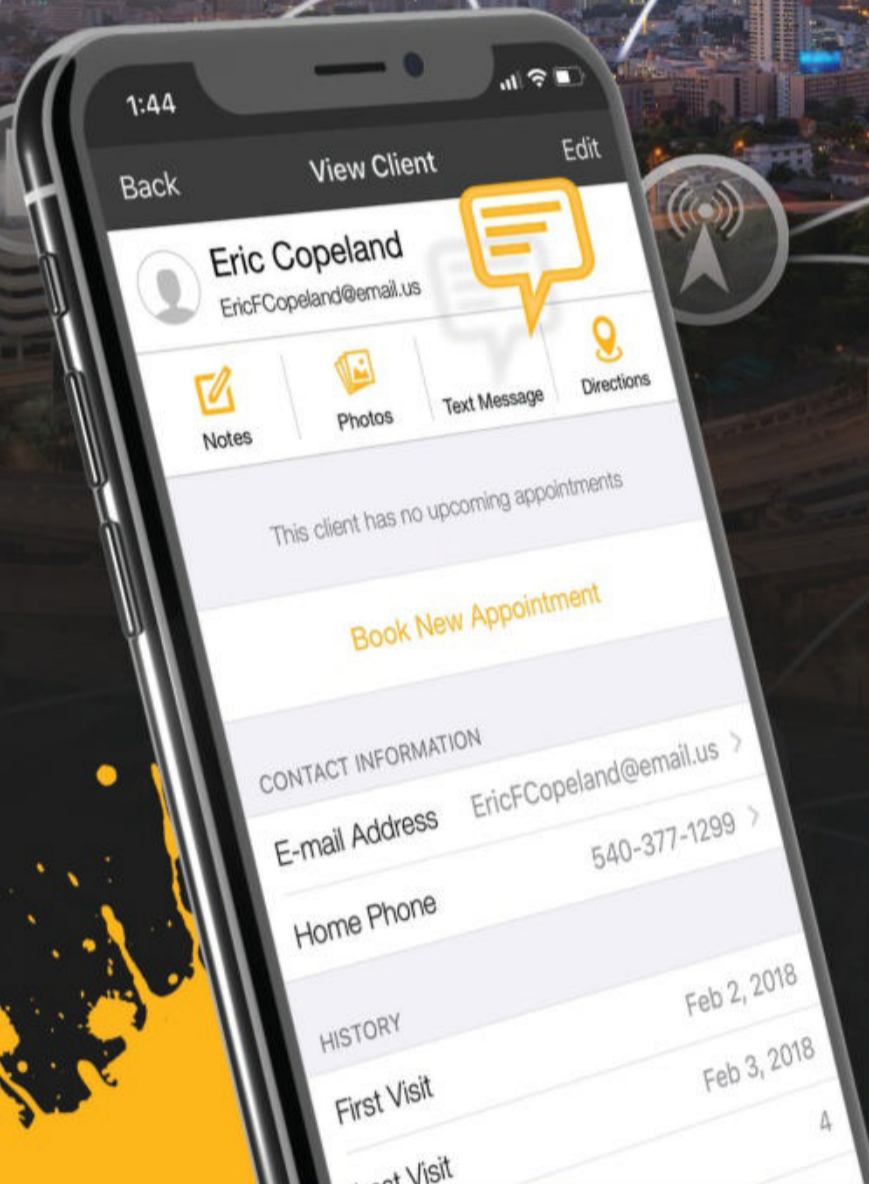
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INKWELL



Hey there,

Welcome to the 2021 Inked Lifestyle Issue. I'll let you in on a little editorial secret here, this is my favorite issue of the year. As we put this issue together there is a freedom that just doesn't exist with the other themed issues of the year. The topic of lifestyle is all-encompassing. It doesn't matter what you do or where you're from, if you've got ink under your skin you're one of us.

The issue you're holding in your hands right now is a grab bag. In the following pages you'll find athletes, musicians, influencers, actors, breathing gurus and even a bonafide forensic pathologist. Each with a fascinating story to tell and tattoos to share.

On the cover you'll find the undefeated UFC Middleweight Champion Israel Adesanya. Chuck Mindenhall sat down with the fighter known as "The Last Stylebender" to discuss his upcoming fight with Jan B. Achowicz, his surprisingly nerdy tattoos and more. The brash champion doesn't mince words when talking about his dominance of the middleweight division—"That's my division, I run that shit."

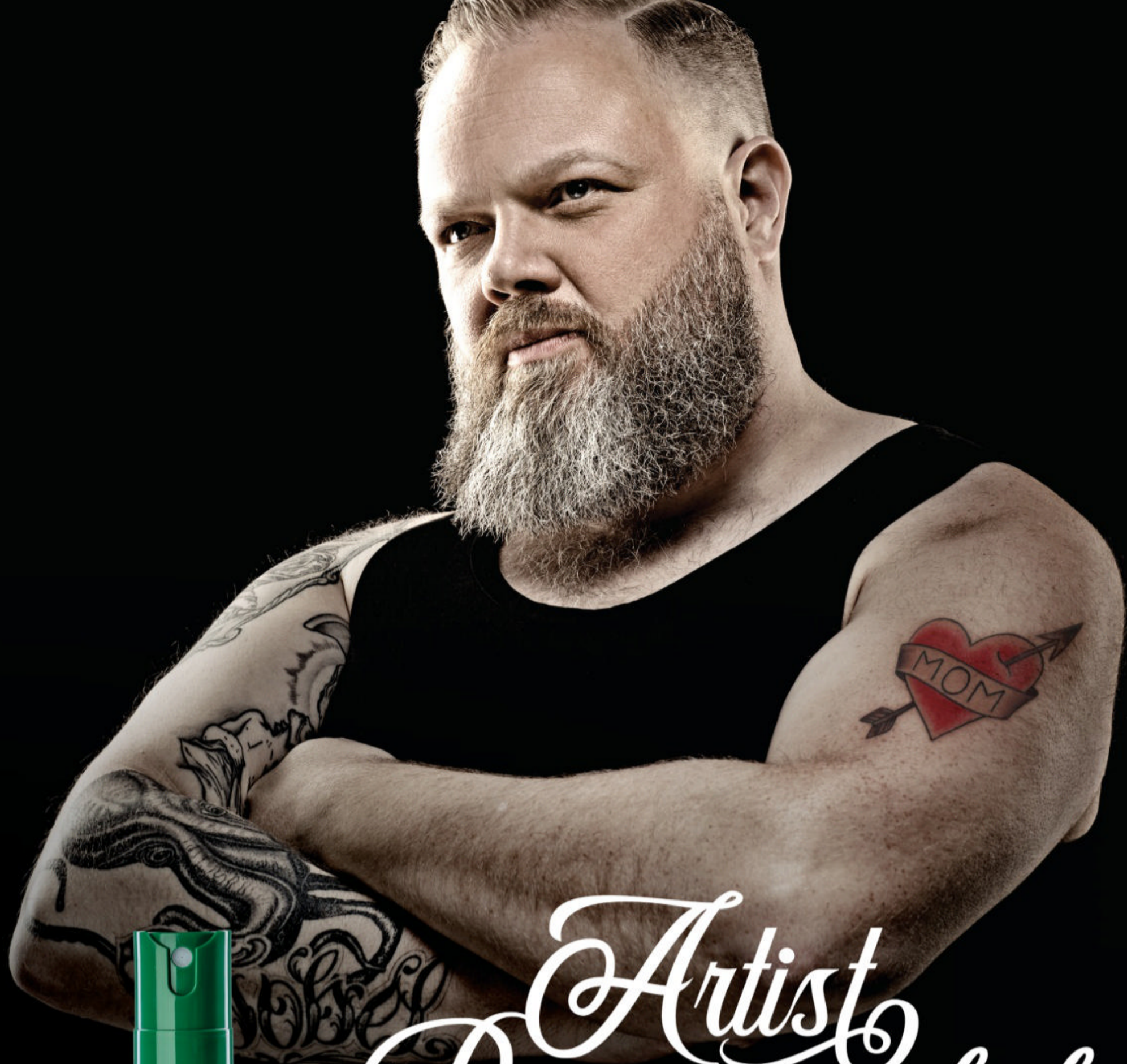
In early December I had the chance to spend a day with former USMNT goalkeeper and American soccer legend Tim Howard. We talked all things footie, his new role as an analyst for NBCSN and how his life was forever changed by Everton Football Club.

At this point it may be hard to remember, but there was once a time when tattoo artists were never on TV. Tatu Baby may have fallen short of the title during her season of "Ink Master," but a star was born. We spoke to the hardworking artist about all of her many hustles, both inside and outside the tattoo shop.

We turned to Nick Fierro, our favorite chronicler of the strange and unusual, to have a conversation with forensic pathologist Nicole Angemi. The two discussed how Angemi has taken her morbid fascination with how people meet their end into one of the most popular, and most censored, Instagram accounts.

This is just a small preview of what's inside this issue. Turn the page and start exploring the rest of our 2021 Lifestyle Issue.

- Charlie Connell, Editor in chief
editor@inkedmag.com



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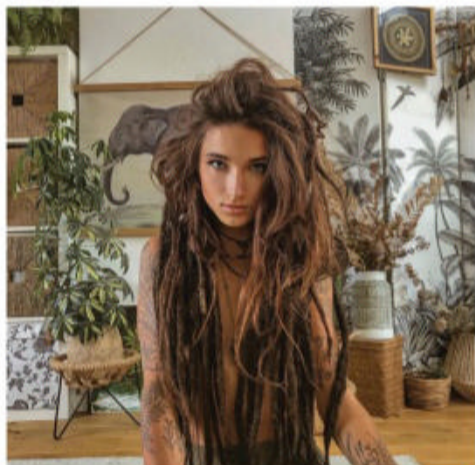
MAII



LOLO

"I've been following Lolo on Instagram forever. She is one of the most stunningly beautiful women I've ever seen, so I was incredibly psyched to see that she finally got her first magazine cover. You guys get to photograph so many gorgeous women, I wish I had your job!" —Chip Dove—Boise, Idaho

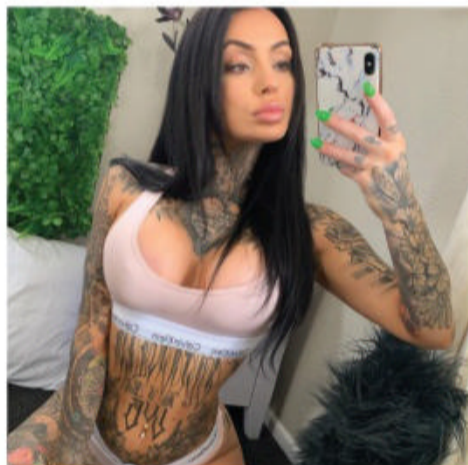
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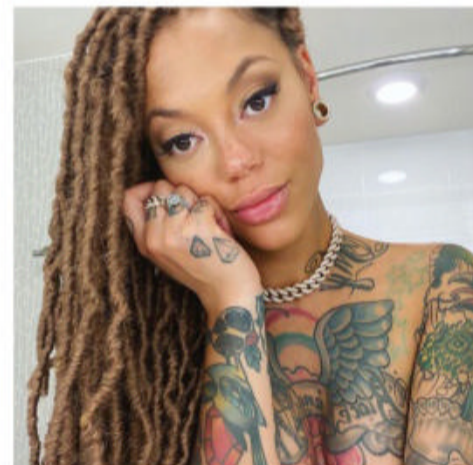
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TATTOO BY @LUKEAASHLEY Want to be a Tattoo of the Month? E-mail your ink to editor@inkedmag.com

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TY DOLLA \$IGN

Nikolai Wolf— "Ty Dolla \$ign's new album is everything. Can't wait to see what Ty comes out with in 2021!" »

TEDDY SWIMS

Colin Gray— «I could not believe the voice that comes out of this guy. 2021 is going to be his for the taking.»

EDDIE HALL

Roman Duda— "Can't wait to watch Hall take down the Mountain once and for all.»

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EXCLUSIVE ART



CANVASES

TIGER BY MEGAN MASSACRE

Bold and fierce. Here, Megan pulls from her tattoo style strengths with a canvas piece that ties bold strokes and a balanced aesthetic, making an instant art classic.



ART PRINTS

WOLF BY MIKHAIL ANDERSON

Mikhail uses light and shadow to create a collection of polygons that become a masterpiece. In this design, Anderson uses photographs to outline how these colorful shapes will erupt with life and transform into a remarkable piece of art.



MERCHANDISE

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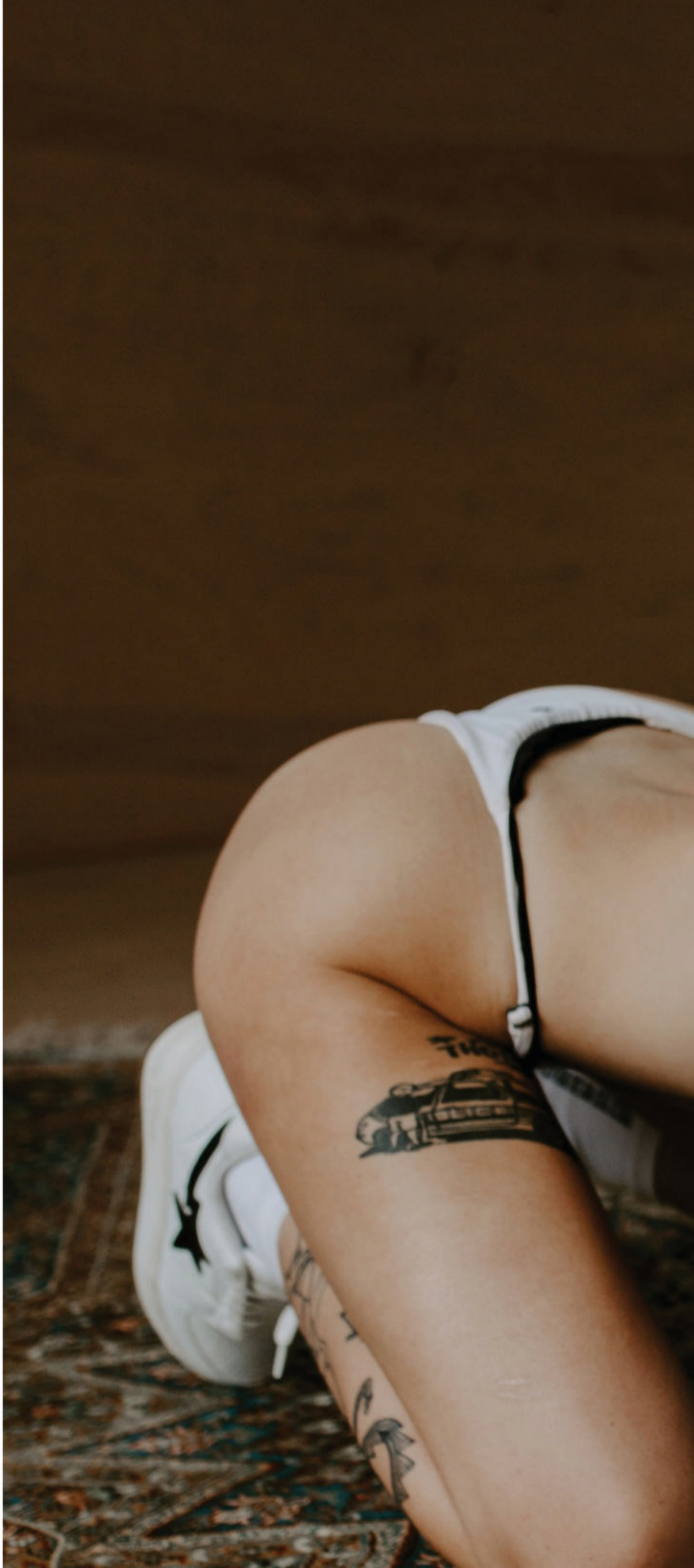
Exclusive designed T-shirt by DJ Tambe. This bold print will transform your look into a true piece of art.

Inked **SPOTLIGHT** *Keaton* *belle*

With 1.8 million followers and counting, Keaton Belle is one of TikTok's biggest rising stars. And if there's anything you should know about this social butterfly, it's her love for meaningful ink.

photos by matthew stark

Instagram: @supersick3 TikTok @aintsick3









“MY FAVOURITE TATTOOS ARE PROBABLY MY PORTALS. ON MY HAND, A DRAGONFLY FLIES INTO A PORTAL AND ON MY ARM A BUTTERFLY FLIES OUT OF A PORTAL,” SAYS BELLE. “IT’S A HELPFUL REMINDER THAT THIS COULD ALL JUST BE A SIMULATION, AS NOTHING REALLY MAKES SENSE. SO JUST HAVE THE MOST FUN YOU CAN WHILE YOU’RE HERE AND DON’T STRESS ABOUT THINGS TOO MUCH.”





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BAD TO THE BONE

Will Blood is giving your favorite cartoons an artistic X-ray—no insurance required.

by devon preston

While our genders, religions, sexual orientations, politics and tattoo preferences may separate us, one thing remains the same—we all have a skeleton. Brighton-based artist Will Blood has used this concept as the driving force for his art by transforming popular cartoon characters into bone-ified masterpieces. From treasured Disney characters to Nickelodeon's finest to the always-entertaining Simpsons gang, Blood has left no stone in the toon world unturned. His work invites the child within to come alive and makes us excited to see who he's going to put into an illustrative x-ray next. We caught up with Blood between sketch sessions to uncover the origins of his Bare Bones series and reveal what's going on beneath the surface of this internationally recognized illustrator.

When did you develop your love for art?

I've been obsessed with art since an early age. As a child, I collected tropical insects and arachnids—which gave me my first subject matter. I always loved classification illustrations in my books.

Did you go to art school? I didn't study art. I spent the ages of 15 through 25 pursuing music and I wanted to be a rockstar. I found that I enjoyed creating the merchandise and artwork more than the music, so I slowly moved my focus back to art.

How did you develop your signature style and how has it evolved over time? I find old work every now and then, and I have a good giggle. It's important to want to be better. My art has evolved pretty organically





over time, as my tastes and inspirations have changed.

What inspired your “Book of Bare Bones” series? I originally started the series in 2013 for a local art show. The first skeletons I did were the two main characters from “Adventure Time.” It was very popular, so I kept on doing them. Then, when I hit 50, I released “The Book of Bare Bones,” and that’s where the name for the series came from.

Who are some of your favorite characters to paint and why? Any of the older, weirder ones—like Ren and Stimpy or Rat Fink. I guess they speak to me more and are closer to my generation.

What’s your favorite design that you’ve created for a band or company? I did an album cover for This Is Hell many years ago for their album “Black Mass.” It was the Statue of Liberty wrapped in snakes with loads of fun little details. That was cool and my first big record design that went on vinyl. I miss doing stuff for bands, but I don’t miss what a pain in the ass most of them are.

If you animated an episode of “The Simpsons” in your style, what would it be about? It would probably be about death or something else suitably dark. It would probably end up being a cross between “The League of Gentlemen” and “Ren & Stimpy.”

What are your favorite bones in the human body to illustrate and why? I’m a big fan of illustrating hands, ribs and skulls. Spines can fuck off, because they’re a pain in the ass.

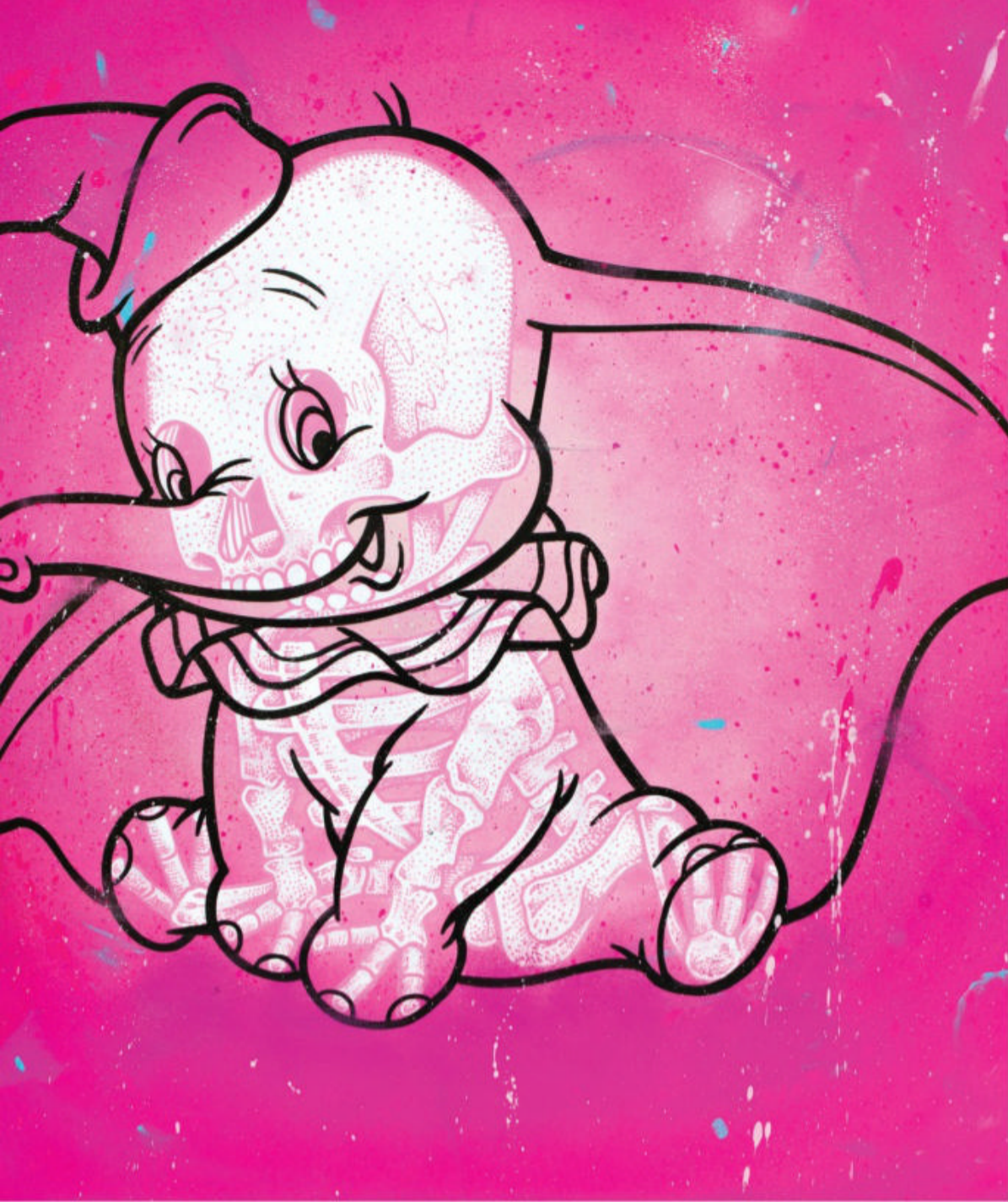
Many of your pieces allude to Keith Haring. What about his style inspires you? I think he was the first artist I encountered who could make huge statements with the simplest of drawings. His bold lines and use of body language could speak a thousand words. I went to his “The Political Line” show in Paris and it blew me away.

What art mediums work best for your style? Spray paint and acrylic markers. I love getting that contrast of wild uncontrolled splatter and then perfect lines over the top. Chaos and order in balance!

When you’re not creating art, what are you doing? Looking after my son, spending time with my girlfriend, reading books, drinking beer, learning how to handstand, walking in the woods and laughing at humans.

How has the pandemic impacted your creativity and productivity? It’s been fine, if I’m being honest. I think most artists are trained in the art of isolation and prefer it. I’ve never had an issue with productivity or creative blocks (touches wood).

What’s up next? World domination! Hopefully, I’ll get to pick back up everything that Corona cancelled. I was meant to have several shows worldwide this year that fell through with travel bans. I want to make it over to Asia, Australia, Canada and the USA. Also, I hope to reschedule my show “Dead Nostalgic,” which was due to open the week after lockdown was announced in London.







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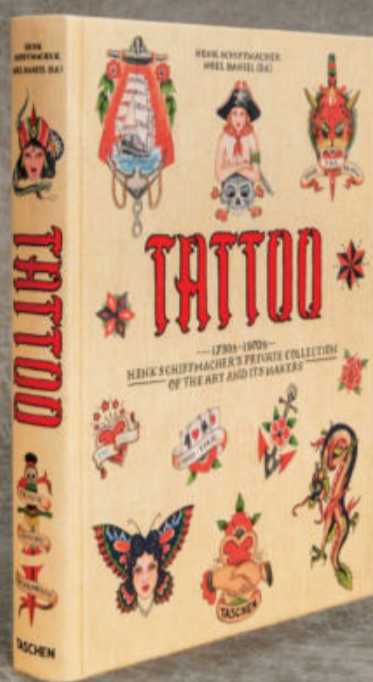


Time After Time

The classic game is back with an updated design and controls to handle today's latest video game consoles. One of the most highly anticipated releases of 2021, "Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time Remake" is sure to ignite fans' passion for the beloved franchise along with introducing the action-adventure game to a new generation of gamers when the title drops on the Playstation 4 and the Xbox One this January.



History Lesson



Henk Schiffmacher and Taschen have combined forces for "Tattoo 1730s-1970s," a gorgeous oversized book tracing over 200 years of tattoo history, drawing extensively from the legendary tattooer's personal collection. Hear it from the man himself: "This book is so badass, loaded with fantastic shit from the history of tattooing that I've collected over 40 years. There's a lot of stuff in it that's never been seen before. This has been a serious labor of love."

Start 'Em Young

If you want to indulge your kid's need for speed without getting a visit from Child Protective Services, you're in luck. Indian's eFTR Jr. is an approachable way to teach kids how to ride, not to mention a hell of a lot of fun to ride. [Editor's Note: We've been riding it around the office. It rules]

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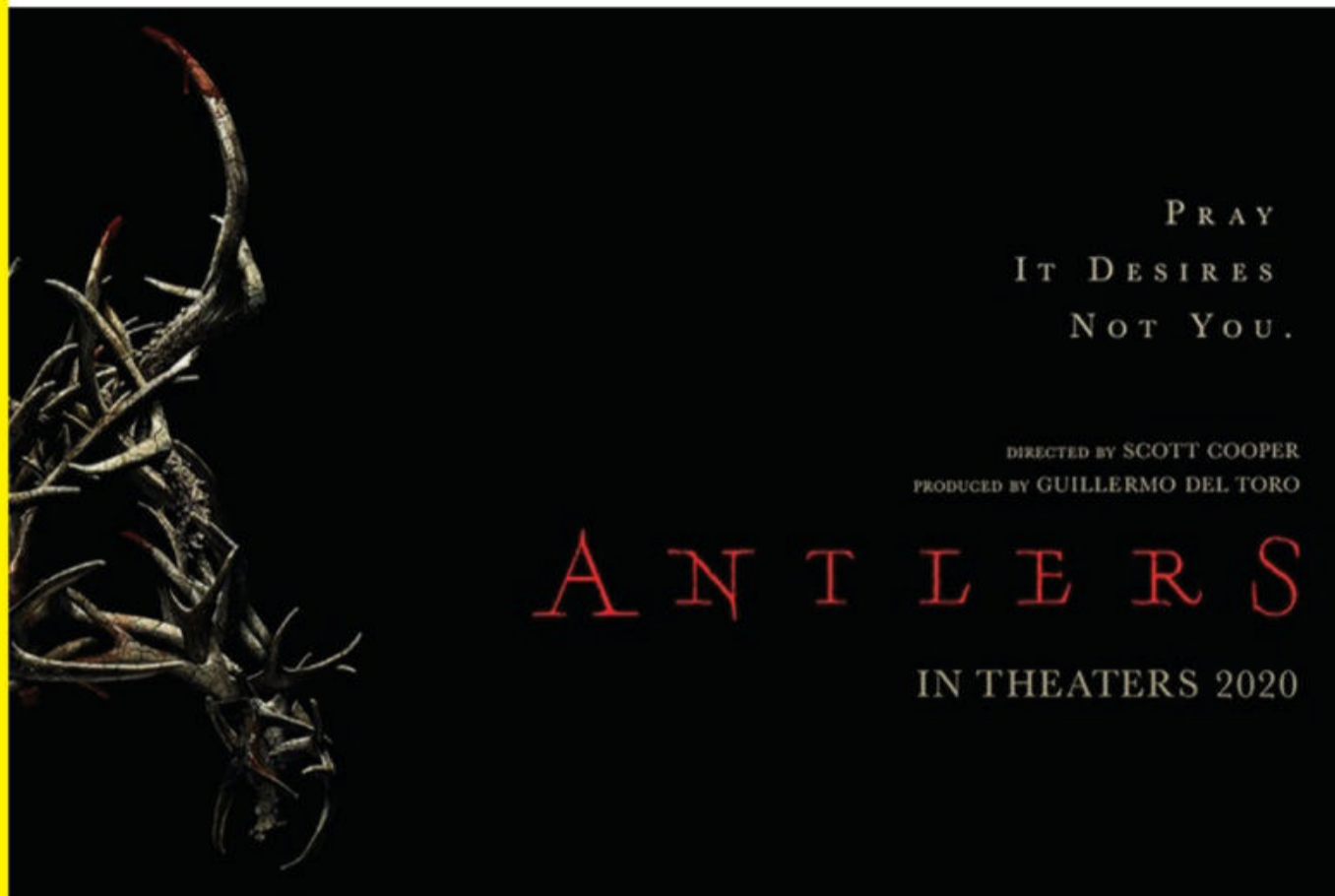
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No Bucks Given

After a long anticipated wait, it finally time for Wendigos to have a shot at the spotlight in this new horror film produced by legendary director Guillermo del Toro. "Antlers" follows a middle school teacher and her sheriff

brother as they discover one of her students is keeping the supernatural creature in his house. When the creature escapes it up to them to end the havoc it causes in their small town before it's too late.



Going Cuckoo for Lolo

Magazines aren't designed to last, not matter how enamored with the cover model you may be. When we were lucky enough to feature the beautiful Lolo on our latest cover, we wanted to celebrate the occasion properly—with a gorgeous t-shirt! Get ready to turn some heads when you walk around town wearing this. But don't get too flattered, they're not checking you out, they're gazing at the stunning Lolo. Available at Inkedshop.com



THE INKED PLAYLIST BY COURTNEY RAIMONDI

This issue, our playlist is presented by tattoo artist Courtney Raimondi. Her tastes skew a little bit angsty, a little bit hip-hop with a whole lot of emo thrown in.

My Chemical Romance
"Thank You for The Venom"

Panic! At the Disco
"Time to Dance"

Fall Out Boy
"Grand Theft Autumn/Where Is Your Boy"

Paramore
"Fences"

Lil Peep
"Beamer Boy"

Lil Uzi Vert
"Sauce It Up"

A\$AP Ferg
"Value"

Night Lovell
"I LIKE BLOOD"

Crystal Castles
"Vietnam"

Grimes
"Vowels = Space and Time"

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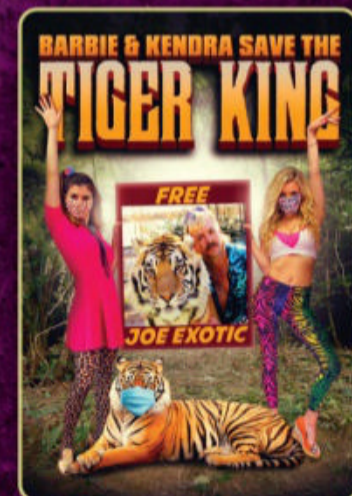
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Suburbia's Super Couple

First teased during Super Bowl LIV, the highly anticipated "WandaVision" finally makes its long awaited debut on Disney+ in January. Following the events of "Avengers: Endgame," the show explores Wanda and Vision's relationship while they conceal their powers from their new neighbors as they give suburban living a go. However, despite engaging in classic sitcom tropes of the past, the couple's idyllic suburban life isn't what it seems.



Take Your Medicine

2020 was not the best year for, well anything, but concert venues and live performances took a particularly hard hit this past year with the cancelation of tours and festivals to combat the spread of the Coronavirus. After postponing the release of their tenth studio album, due to the pandemic, Foo Fighters is finally ready to release the highly anticipated "Medicine at Midnight" on February 5. The album is bound to show a new side of the band fans have yet to see in the band's 25 years of rocking.



Given their unnatural aversion to the sun, home decor is essential for keeping vampires happy. It comes as no surprise that they have impeccable taste. This Nosferatu Frame by Alchemy of England will give your room the gothic ambiance any good bloodsucker desires. You can grab this as either a picture frame or a mirror, but we all know the latter might not do you much good.



Level Up

Ernest Cline's sequel to the widely successful "Ready Player One" follows Wade Watts on a quest as he puts his life at stake to defeat a new evil that puts the future of humanity at stake. Cline's thrilling and nostalgic future is bound to become an instant classic and a must have in any science fiction collection.

Prison Art Contest – EXTENDED

Are you or someone you love an artist who is currently incarcerated or has been? Art For Redemption is working on a coffee table book showcasing the fantastic talent that is "behind the wall" and are looking for submissions!

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JINJER

by jonny watson

photos by javier bragado

Parents go to great lengths to support their children's dreams. They'll sit through dance recitals, attend concerts they have no interest in and watch junior high school kids butcher Shakespeare just to encourage progeny's ambitions.

None of those sacrifices are permanent. Tatiana Shmayluk's mom took things above and beyond when she offered up her skin to her daughter's budding artistic aspirations. "My parents gave me a tattoo gun as a birthday present," Shmayluk recalls. "I tattooed my leg, then I tattooed my second leg, then I tattooed my third leg... just kidding. I was pretty bored and I was really into tattooing but I didn't have money to go to a real teacher and get lessons, so I did it myself.

"My mom was one of my clients," she continues. "She said, 'I sacrifice my body to you, I invest in you, and maybe one day you'll become a real tattoo artist.' And I never did. I never made it. She lost. Sorry, Mom (laughs)."

As the lead singer of Jinjer, one of the biggest metal bands to ever come out of Ukraine, Shmayluk has given her mother a lot to be proud of, even if her parents were hesitant to embrace their daughter's career path. "This rebellious taste that I had in punk rock music made me go against my parents' will," Shmayluk says. "Of course they didn't see me becoming a musician. Of course they wanted me to be a decent citizen of my country living a normal ordinary life—working, having a family and then dying. I don't know why, but I said, 'Fuck it. I don't want to live the same life as you do.'"

Shmayluk's rebellious streak began when her older brother exposed her to a plethora of music—starting with Russian rock and moving to Nirvana, then punk, then metal. The more she discovered, the more focused she became on achieving her dreams of stardom. "I went to university, but I really was a shitty student," Shmayluk laughs, "because I spent a lot of time going to practice, rehearsing, discovering new bands and daydreaming about my future success. There was always a type of knowledge inside, I just knew that it would be like this. It's a strange feeling. I didn't hope. I just didn't see myself being anything besides a musician."

Before joining Jinjer, Shmayluk played in a variety of bands. From jazz to punk to funk to reggae, she tried it all before getting into the heavy stuff. There was something very visceral about hard music that was calling to her. "For me, it's the vibrations," Shmayluk says. "I mean actual vibrations, I'm not talking about some esoteric shit. The louder the better, it's the best type of music to listen to at full volume. It just brings out something you never realized you had hidden inside. I'm a really shy person, but when I listen to metal the shyness goes away and something absolutely infernal wakes up and starts to party."

The metal scene is divided into countless subgenres, which has led to a great deal of gatekeeping among metal purists who tend to be conservative about what exactly they consider to be "metal." When viewed from this perspective, Jinjer is the genre's black sheep.

"Just playing old school metal, that's not us," Shmayluk says. "Let's just go against the stream, again, and mix any possible genre in the world so we can be different from other bands. When people say that Jinjer is not metal, I used to disagree and be very offended by that. But now I just take it as a compliment, I say, 'Yes, we're not.'"

It doesn't matter what box you want to place her into, the strong-willed Shmayluk is going to be doing her own thing. We wouldn't have it any other way.





FORCE
BRAZILIAN
JIU JITSU



WILLIWHEY

by ariana west
photos by williwhey

TikTok hit app stores for the first time in 2016 and over the last few years, it's steadily grown in popularity among young users. Then, the app hit a major growth spurt at the start of 2020, when millions flocked to TikTok while social distancing. Williwhey was one of many creators carried to social media stardom by this almost overnight influx of users. "I created my account in March of this year," Williwhey says. "My first upload was a video from a vacation in Los Angeles with a family fighting in the background."

Once Williwhey got his initial taste of online notoriety, he was hooked. Not content to let happenstance play out as it had previously, Williwhey took a truly scientific approach to the platform. Each time he created a post it was a test to see what people would respond to. Ideas that flopped were discarded never to be seen again. But each time a post did well, he took the elements that worked and applied them moving forward, figuring out his style as time went on.

"My page has changed a lot in terms of content in the short time I've been on the app," Williwhey says. "I started filming videos on my cell phone, but I was one of the first to switch to a professional camera." The scientific tweaking of his style, along with the production quality of his videos, is certainly working

out for Williwhey—he has over 3.6 million followers and it's a rarity when one of his posts receives less than one million views.

After being fed a steady diet of increasingly professional-looking videos from TikTok stars like Williwhey, fans are starting to expect studio-level quality from their favorites. "In the past, [TikTok] used to be laughed at and it was embarrassing to upload content to it," he says. "Today, I'm proud of it and I have an incentive to shoot more high quality and elaborate videos."

Despite his dedication and success, one of Williwhey's biggest struggles as a creator has been opening up to his loyal following. "The bond I have to my community isn't as strong as others yet," Williwhey says. "I'm not someone who gives away too much of myself, but I think that comes with time."

One way Williwhey has connected with the community, and part of the reason he gained notoriety in the first place, comes from his impressive tattoo collection. He is pretty covered when compared to other creators on the app. His most eye-catching tattoo is a large black-and-grey skull that represents more than just a simple piece of art to him. "The skull on my back means the most to me because it's helped me to process the death of my father," he

says. "It's my most polarizing tattoo and it also gets the most attention on TikTok. I paid by far the most money for it and suffered the longest compared to any other tattoo."

There's another tattoo of his that stands out both to the TikToker and to his fans. "This tattoo reminds me to not let my head hang," he says of the laurel wreath on his throat. "And it drives me to be successful with my videos."

Though Williwhey is still a comparably new creator on TikTok, the app turned his life upside down in a short span of time. However, he is along for the ride and, luckily, he has people in his corner. "My family and friends support me by helping me shoot my videos," Williwhey shares. "They're eager to see where this journey takes me."

While none of the creators who've made a name for themselves on TikTok could have predicted where the app has taken them, it's undeniable that the sky's the limit for TikTok's finest. Before March, Williwhey was just a normal 20-something with a love for tattoos, but now, he has a platform that can be used as a springboard for God knows what. "I'm still a long way from where I want to go," Williwhey says. "But that's why I think I'll continue to have success. My creativity is far from over."

SINCERE ENGINEER

by charlie connell
photos by katie hovland

Deanna Belos is the punk rock version of Benjamin Button.

Traditionally, when an artist enters their “acoustic period” it signifies one thing above all else—they’re getting old. This is particularly true in the punk rock world, where a number of musicians who spent their youth screaming onstage in front of swirling circle pits transition into playing folkish tunes that may follow the spirit of their earlier work, but lack the aggression and volume.

Belos is following the career progression of many of her musical heroes, she’s just doing it backwards. She started out taking the stage alone with her acoustic guitar playing under the moniker Sincere Engineer, essentially becoming a band before she had a band.

“When I was in high school I would try to jam... I hate that word,” Belos laughs. “But I would try to jam with people and it was just never clicking. So I thought, I’m just gonna do this myself. That was the thing that showed the most success at the time.”

Growing up in the suburbs of Chicago, Belos was greatly influenced by the city’s punk scene of the ’90s. She wasn’t a part of this scene during its heyday—she was around 4 years old when her favorite bands were playing the Fireside Bowl most nights—but once she discovered a pathway, she worked her way back in time. “I found Alkaline Trio when I was in seventh grade and The Lawrence Arms quickly thereafter,” Belos explains. “And then I went and found everything I could get my hands on with Brendan [Kelly] and Chris [McCaughan] on it.”

Belos was writing songs and posting them on Instagram in college, which led to an opportunity to play her first show opening for the aforementioned

Kelly. From the very beginning, fans connected with Belos over her lyrics, which are not only detailed and personal, but often hilariously self-deprecating. It takes serious skill to write a truly beautiful song about lying drunk on a bathroom floor (“Ceramic Tile”) or a real fist-pumping singalong anthem about the mundane routine of the depressed (“Corn Dog Sonnet No. 7”).

Too often songwriters become convinced their art has to be serious to be taken seriously, but the naturally fun-loving Belos coats her lyrics with her self-effacing sense of humor. “I love acting even stupider than I am just for the jokes,” Belos says. “It’s my favorite thing. I love when people don’t know if I’m joking. I’ve built my personality around this (laughs).”

It wasn’t until Belos got in the studio to record her debut album, “Rhombithian,” that Sincere Engineer went from her personal moniker to an actual band. “My friend Matt [Jordan], he was the one who said, ‘I’ve got some friends, you should make this a full band,’” Belos explains. “He introduced me to them and that was the end of that. Now they’re my best friends too. The first show we played as a band was the release show for that record.”

Once they got that first show behind them, Sincere Engineer was moving at warp speed, as they wasted no time in taking part in the time-honored tradition of getting matching tattoos during their first weekend mini-tour. The tattoo, a rhombus with the words “make sure” inside of it, has all the elements of the perfect tattoo for bandmates. Its shape is an allusion to the album they had just finished recording, while the text comes from an inside joke they all share. “There’s a sign at our practice space that says, ‘Do not leave valuables in car,’” Belos says. “Then at the bottom it says, ‘Make sure.’ We were

laughing at how it sounds like our dads wrote it.”

In high school, Belos was living two very different lives—she was both a punk and a nerd. When hanging out with her punk friends she’d play it cool and pretend like she didn’t care about school. It was the punk side of her that wanted to get her first tattoo, but she needed to tap into the nerd side to make it happen. “In order to convince my parents to let me get one, I explained that this Golden Rectangle was a math thing,” Belos says. “I said, ‘If I get into the National Honor Society, will you let me get it? I have a 4.0, just let me get it, I’m a good kid.’”

The rest of her tattoo collection is delightfully nerdy as well. There’s a portrait of Norm Macdonald, a virus cell, and her newest addition, a seagull chowing down on a French fry. “I’m obsessed with seagulls,” Belos explains. “Every time we go to San Francisco, I need a couple hours to myself to just take pictures of seagulls at the pier. They’re charming!”

Sincere Engineer recorded a followup to “Rhombithian” that will be coming out on Hopeless Records at some point in 2021. They made the album during the pandemic so each band member went in one at a time to play their parts, eliminating all of the fun parts of the recording process like hanging out, not to mention potentially not being able to tour once it comes out. “The best part of putting out a record is touring on it,” Belos says. “It’s crazy, it feels like a waste of a year. And it feels like it went by so fast and I’m like, ‘Oh God, I want a refund.’”

Belos may have a tough time getting that refund, but the light at the end of the tunnel is in sight. One thing we can count on is that once it’s safe, Sincere Engineer will find a way to persevere, even if the way they do it is a little backwards from what everybody expects.





LUKIS MAC

by ariana west
photos by helle weston

For as long as people have been wandering this Earth, we've been searching for a way to expand our minds to achieve spiritual revelations. Many believe these heights can only be reached by consuming psychedelics, but Lukis Mac thinks the answer can be found within ourselves. All we need to do is harness our breathing.

"I've sat through a lot of ceremonies with ayahuasca and other plant medicines, which are extremely powerful," Mac says. "But breathwork accesses those states naturally because your body is like a pharmacy. Through breathwork, you're really opening up and releasing different neurochemicals which take you on a powerful journey."

Breathwork has gained attention in recent years as celebrities like Gwyneth Paltrow and Jake Paul have embraced it, but the techniques go back thousands of years. Today, there are many different styles of breathwork, each helping to open the mind and body in different ways. "The breathwork I focus on is a conscious, connected breath and people do more journeying work," Mac explains. "You're lying down and doing a certain breathing technique, then after about 15 minutes you start to tap into your limbic brain—which is associated with memory and emotion. Things just bubble up to the surface to be felt, processed and released."

Through his work, Mac has realized that breathwork allows people to detach from their analytical minds by coming into a more relaxed state. This allows them to process the emotions they've been holding on to—both conscious and unconscious. This release has made a tremendous impact on not only the lives of Mac's clients, but also his own. "In my childhood, I went through a lot of trauma from seeing my friends join gangs, go to prison and com-

mit suicide," Mac shares. "I wanted to find a way to help people and myself, which eventually led me to breathwork."

Mac's path to healing others has been a journey with unexpected diversions, including a 20-year stint as a tattoo artist. Leading people to reach inside their soul to achieve their true purpose may seem worlds away from adding some art to a person's skin, but it was his experience as an artist that pushed him towards breathwork. "I was tattooing people and they were having breakthroughs," Mac says. "They started telling me about their lives and their realizations while they're getting tattooed. It made me want to go deeper with people."

In order to go deeper with people, to achieve more than the simple empathy that comes from conversation during a tattoo session, Mac needed to get educated. Not only did he have to become well-versed in different breathwork techniques, he had to recognize that leading people through these powerful journeys carried profound risks. "Breathwork is just the doorway into the subconscious mind," Mac says. "We're really dealing with people's traumas, [people] who suffer with PTSD, depression and anxiety. The training you go through is centered on working with people with trauma and breathwork is just a way to access that."

After discovering breathwork on his own and learning how to heal people with trauma, Mac established Owaken Breathwork alongside fellow breathwork gurus Victoria Bauman and Helle Weston. Since its inception, Owaken Breathwork has brought breathwork techniques to clients around the world—often introducing the power of breathwork to hundreds of people at a time under one roof. "The live experiences are a four-hour

workshop and they're really powerful because they usually bring together a room full of people, 100 to 200 people, who have never experienced these types of journeys before," Mac shares. "They come in, scared and nervous because they're stepping into the unknown. But it's so powerful to have a room full of people who are willing to feel and process whatever's coming up to be felt."

Considering the nature of these workshops, the pandemic has put them on hold for the time being, leaving Mac to focus on his one-on-one sessions. These sessions, which are tailored to the individual, allow for many different types of exploration and Mac has developed techniques that specifically appeal to athletes—most recently aiding Jake Paul in his boxing training. And judging by how quickly Paul dispatched Nate Robinson in his most recent match, Mac's techniques are working. "For athletes, it's really about getting them into a slow state and using breathwork to help them perform at their best," Mac says. "I'll use breathwork before they train and I'll use different techniques for their recovery by helping them to tap into their nervous system." Mac has also curated specific techniques for artists, helping them to access their intuition and believe in themselves in order to create without inhibitions.

When Mac is working with a client, whether it's for trauma or career enhancement, he believes in giving people tools that they can take outside the session and apply to their daily lives. The benefits of breathwork extend far beyond a four-hour workshop. "[Breathwork] is a rewiring of old patterns that no longer serve people," Mac explains. "It's about people feeling like they have more power in their daily life and they're putting energy into things that make them live life to the fullest."

I HAVE BRAINS
AND A VAGINA.
I USE BOTH!



BAD GIRL





here Kitty, Kitty...

The gorgeous Coconut Kitty first grabbed our attention with her shapely curves, but under the surface is a budding artist, poet and business woman.

by jonny watson - photos by coconut kitty



It's easy to rag on social media for its role in polluting our national discourse and taking away the sort of cultural empathy we used to have as a society, but the ongoing technological revolution has done some pretty amazing things too. For far too long, models were only a peg in the media industry instead of being actual stakeholders in what they created. Now sites like OnlyFans allow women to do more than just cash in—they have full control over their own destiny. They create the content they want to create and reap all the rewards.

To that end, few have taken advantage of this new reality more than Coconut Kitty. The striking model brought her massive Instagram audience over to the more adult-oriented OnlyFans, where she runs one of the most popular accounts. We spoke with Coconut about her various artistic endeavors, building her own brand and where exactly her moniker came from.

When did you first become interested in modeling? Ever since I was a child I loved being in front of the camera.

You've been very savvy about using social media to grow your brand. What's one tip you would give others looking to do what you're doing? Since social media is mostly picture-based, I direct all my energy toward creating the best content I can. I continue to learn about lighting, photography, editing and working on my craft.

Tell us a little about how you came to set up an OnlyFans account. What do you love about the platform? When I first began trying to grow my social media I would take my own pics and hours would go by. It was then that I realized how much I actually enjoyed creating content. As time went by I invested in my business with better equipment and lights and my work continues to evolve.

You've built your entire brand yourself with little outside help. Does this feel empowering to you? Do you like being fully in control of what you choose to do (and not do)? I love being a mostly one woman show. I do have two amazing assistants who help with other stuff outside my creative process. But when it comes to creating my content, I love being in complete control. I never liked relying on anyone for anything.

Where did the name Coconut Kitty come from?

I'm a huge fan of organic, so when it comes to putting anything on my body, I like to go natural, so coconut oil was always my go-to body lotion. One day I got out of the shower and did my usual coconut oil body rub down while I contemplated a good name for my business. I reached in the coconut oil jar and thought "coconut." I brought my hand to my stomach and began rubbing the oil down toward my... when I got there, I thought "kitty." Ding ding ding COCONUT KITTY.

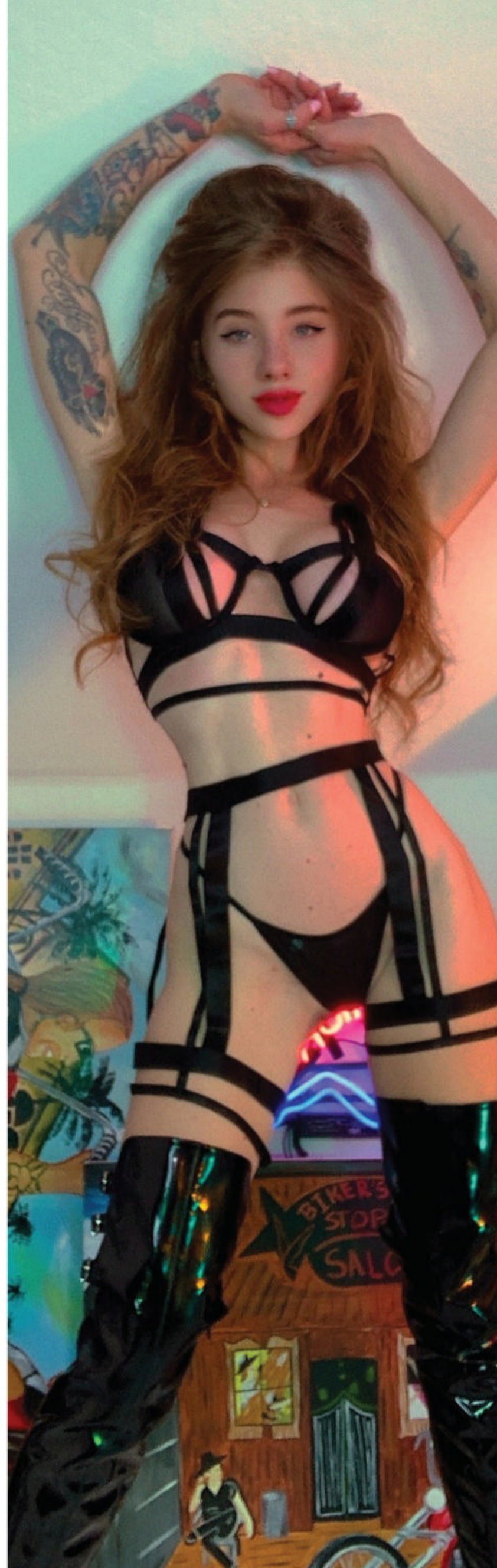
When did you get your first tattoo and what's the story behind it? My first tattoo was a pair of lips on my ass. I was underage when I got the tattoo so I wanted a good place to hide it from my parents but also a place where if they found out about it, I could say, "Kiss my ass."

Do you have a favorite tattoo or one that has a particularly fun story behind it? I would say my most well-recognized tattoo is my "Andy" tattoo on my arm. I love making people wonder who Andy is... is it my ex-husband's name or am I a huge fan of "Toy Story?"

You're clearly an art aficionado. When did you find your love of painting? Who are some of your influences? Where do you find inspiration? I started painting 11 years ago when my ex brought home a huge chest full of paints. I came across some of David Mann's paintings and the attitude and humor in his paintings really inspired me and made me feel good. Some made me chuckle, laugh and remember good times. I wanted to create paintings that would evoke the same feelings in others. So I began painting my own life by learning and being inspired by Mann's style.

You also write poetry. I started writing poetry 12 years ago after I hit rock bottom. It was a way to express how I was feeling. It was when I started writing poems that I was able to transmute the pain from the trauma of my past into something positive. It was my way of taking my pain and creating something that could inspire others.

Where do you see this all taking you? I'm publishing my first book "Coconut Kitty Volume 1," which is a coffee table book comprising a compilation of all my work (poetry and paintings) in chronological order, which in itself tells a story.






Keeping It **REAL**

GOING STRAIGHT FROM THE PITCH TO THE TELEVISION STUDIO, TIM HOWARD IS
SMOOTHLY MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM WORLD CLASS GOALKEEPER TO ASTUTE
ANALYST

by charlie connell - photos by peter roessler





**"OUTSIDE OF MY
TWO CHILDREN,
EVERTON
FOOTBALL CLUB
IS THE GREATEST
THING THAT EVER
HAPPENED TO ME."**

Fate can be a very funny thing.

Whether or not you even believe in fate or destiny, it's undeniable that there are millions of little instances that must happen in an exact manner to get a person to where they end up. Even the slightest alteration in one's path can determine entire decades of the future. It can be as banal as taking a left instead of a right, taking drama instead of band in high school or, in the case of Tim Howard, experiencing his first overdose of youthful exuberance in fall, not spring.

"I was a rambunctious 6-year-old and my mom said, 'You gotta get out of the house. You've got to do something, pick a sport,'" Howard says. "It was fall, so the first one was soccer, so soccer was it. I went out there and the love affair began. It was everything—I got to run around and be with my friends, yell, scream, slide on the ground, get muddy, kick the ball. It was brilliant."

At the time, his mother likely thought she was simply buying herself a couple of hours of relaxation while a young Howard ran off some steam. There's no way she could have predicted it would alter the entire future of soccer in the United States.

Howard found so much more than an outlet for the well of activity bubbling inside of him; he found a passion that will consume him for the rest of his days. After spending two decades as a goalkeeper in Major League Soccer (MLS), the Premier League and for the United States Men's National Team, Howard has traded in his kit for a suit.

Splitting his time between serving as sporting director for Memphis 901 FC of the USL Championship and appearing as an analyst for NBCSN's coverage of the Premier League, Howard found a way to keep the beautiful game in his life even with his playing days behind him.

Howard wasn't the first American to find success playing in England, but unlike many of his predecessors, his success was sustained over a period of more than a decade. An entire generation of Everton supporters knew only of a team with Howard between the sticks. But when he first made the jump from the MetroStars of the MLS to a tiny little club named Manchester United back in 2003, English fans were very skeptical of the American goalkeeper.

The papers took aim at Howard, not because of his playing style or his youth, but because of the affliction he has been dealing with since he was 10—Tourette syndrome. "I signed for Man United and in the press, one of the tabloid papers, and they're all tabloids over there, it said, 'Man United Signs Disabled Goalkeeper,'" Howard recalls. "If I'm being honest, I've always been a pretty bold and confident person, even as a young kid. Really, if I'm being brutally honest, I had just signed for Manchester United. I became a millionaire overnight, nothing was going to take the wind out of my sails."

English football supporters are often noted for their chants, which vary from the mundane to the profane. And much like the tabloids, Howard's disorder found its way into chants from supporters of his club and from

rival clubs. "Manchester United fans had a song that I probably can't repeat, but it was endearing," Howard says. "Opposing fans would also chant about it. You'd hear thousands and thousands of people chanting about my Tourette syndrome. In a really odd way, it was somewhat loving. I never really took it seriously. Someone once told me that when they stop talking about you is when you need to worry, so good or bad, I'll take it."

People were certainly talking about Howard when he made his debut at one of the most hallowed grounds in the sport, Old Trafford. Being the goalkeeper for Manchester United can be an overwhelming burden, particularly for a kid from New Jersey whose entire professional career had been played in the United States.

"It was scary as hell," Howard remembers about the first time he walked onto the Old Trafford pitch. "It was cool, as I was this kid who came from nowhere, but I was also realizing that wasn't going to pay the bills. I needed to figure this thing out very quickly, I was getting thrown into the deep end. It was one of the scariest moments of my life."

And figure it out he did. During his time at United, Howard played a key role in many memorable games, including stopping the decisive penalty against Arsenal to win the Community Shield. Despite this, his time in Manchester would be brief, as he was soon loaned out to Everton. It was in Liverpool where Howard would find his place.

"I spent three years at Man United and then 10 glorious years at Everton Football Club," Howard says. "Outside of my two children, Everton Football Club is the greatest thing that ever happened to me. Being able to play 400 times for that club, becoming an Evertonian myself, loving the fans and having them love me, feeling like that's home... there's nothing like it in the world."

"Playing at the Gwladys Street End [at Everton's home, Goodison Park] with all those Blues behind you, just willing you on, having this togetherness," he continues, "yeah, I'm on the field playing, but they're there. It's just one family, one team, it's really special. Like I've said, I played for Manchester United, which is the biggest football club in the world, and I've played for Everton, which is the greatest football club in the world."

In Europe, it was Howard's play at Everton that captivated football fans, but in the United States he cemented his reputation by playing for his country. For decades the sport would enjoy a brief time in the spotlight every four years during the World Cup. More often than not the door would close on the popularity when the US Men's National Team was eliminated, usually during the group stage.

This changed a little in 1994 when the United States hosted the tournament, but even that boost was fleeting. In the 2000s things started to change thanks to a trio of stars who carried the USMNT to new heights. With forwards Landon Donovan and Clint Dempsey pouring in goals and Howard keeping the ball out of the net, the USMNT became a force to be reckoned with.

"Any soccer player who grows up with a ball at their feet dreams about playing for their country," How-

ard says. "Then once you dream about playing for your country, you very quickly dream about playing in a World Cup. When you know that's the highest representation you can have as a player it drives you. It drives you to eat, sleep and breathe the game, to do everything in your power to get selected to play in the World Cup. To hear the national anthem being played before going out to play against the best teams in the world, I dedicated my life to [achieving] that."

Given the importance Howard placed on the honor of playing for the USMNT, it's no surprise that some of his greatest performances came while wearing the national shirt. He bookended his World Cup career with two performances for the ages. His debut came against England at the 2010 World Cup, where he earned Man of the Match honors in a 1-1 draw against a heavily favored opponent. But it was his performance against Belgium in 2014 that he will be remembered for.

The United States was facing a Belgium team that was stacked with talent on both ends of the pitch. Howard faced an absolute barrage of shots without letting one past for 90 minutes. Belgium broke through in extra time, eventually winning the match 2-1. Even in defeat, Howard walked away with Man of the Match honors as he made 15 saves, a World Cup record.

An opportunity to move on to face Argentina and Messi slipped through the team's fingers, but that is mostly forgotten by USMNT fans who remember the joy of watching one of the world's best keepers give the performance of his career. "Ultimately, when all is said and done, people remember my career for a lot of things, but mostly for that," Howard shares. "It's really nice now that I'm an old washed-up soccer player and people have vivid memories about where they were and they want to talk about it. It's a really special thing to have a signature moment people care to remember fondly."

Being a soccer star in this country carries a bit more responsibility than it does in other places where the sport is more popular. Stars like Howard are expected to do more than just compete on the pitch; they are also expected to have a hand in growing the game in the sporting culture at large.

"I realized that after we went to the World Cup in South Africa and we went to the World Cup in Brazil, there was a crossover taking place during our generation," Howard says. "People on Wall Street leaving their jobs early to go into the park, drink a beer and watch on the big screen. NBA and NFL players wearing soccer jerseys and tweeting about the World Cup—now you know you're part of a generation that helped the sport cross over into a whole other realm."

After doing so much for the game from the pitch, Howard is now doing his part from the analyst's chair. NBCSN's extensive coverage of the Premier League has been pivotal in creating a new generation of soccer fans. Twenty years ago it was rare to find an American capable of naming more than two or three English teams; now it's not out of the ordinary to see somebody sitting on the bus wearing a Wolverhampton scarf.

After spending 22 years on the other side being criticized by commentators, the boot is now on the



other foot. This doesn't mean that Howard is taking personal grievances into the studio with him—it means he's offering up a viewpoint that can only be held by a goalkeeper who has spent a lifetime watching the game take shape from the back. "You're oftentimes not right in the thick of it, so you see this broad perspective of the field in terms of tactical awareness and spacing," Howard explains. "You end up seeing the game differently than other people. Not a better perspective, but a different perspective. I try my best to offer insight in regards to what a defender is thinking in a moment because of what attackers are trying to do to defenders, how an attacking team will try to overload one side to make defenders uncomfortable."

You might not be able to tell while watching Howard on TV, but underneath his business suit he's sporting a massive collection of tattoos. It's obvious that he is a fan of black-and-grey with great taste, particularly in the portraiture he has collected.

Howard started collecting tattoos in the '90s, so just like practically everybody else who was tattooed in the '90s he has some tribal. But it's his first tattoo, a Superman symbol, that truly stands out as a time capsule. "I was 16 years old and I went down to this place in Jersey with my brother's fake ID," Howard laughs. "It was 1996 and I think Superman was a thing. I think Shaquille O'Neal

had a Superman, so I was like, 'I'm gonna get a Superman.' It wasn't the smartest idea, but I was cool the next day in school. At least I thought I was cool, everybody else probably thought I was an idiot (laughs)."

His own coolness may have been up for debate, but there is no denying the cool factor of a certain portrait Howard had tattooed by Emma Kierzek. "I've got some really cool portraits that are just special, they capture a moment," he says. "JFK was the personification of coolness and here he is just smoking a heater, in a tuxedo, chilling somewhere."

While he adores his many portrait tattoos—in addition to the 35th president he also has portraits of his children, his grandfather and others—the tattoo with the best story behind it is the piece of script on his hand. "I'm a product of the golden era of hip-hop and Nas is the greatest MC of all time," Howard says. "I'm not a 'wanna meet you' type of person, but I had to meet Nas. I pulled out all the stops, talked to a bunch of friends, and I ended up going backstage and meeting him.

"I was like, 'Yo, this might be a little weird, but if you sign my hand I would love to get it tattooed,'" he continues. "So he signs my hand. It's midnight,

I'm calling all over Denver trying to find one of my tattoo artists but no one is open. So I had to sleep with my hand off the bed to make sure it wouldn't smudge. So that's my favorite. For sure. Easily."

A lot of athletes have a hard time when their career is over. For some, it's tough to know when exactly is the right time to hang it up. Others have trouble transitioning into the new phase of their lives. Not Howard.

"Quite honestly, I have no desire to play the game of soccer," he says. "My body is beat up after 22 long years. I'm very thankful for what the game has given me, it's given me everything. But the time was right."

What if a 6-year-old Tim Howard had never stepped foot on that muddy field so many years ago? Would people still be ducking out of their offices to watch the USMNT play in the World Cup? Would thousands of blue-clad Americans head out to the bar at 7 a.m. to watch Everton Football Club take on their hated rivals, Liverpool?

We'll never know the answers to these questions simply because fate placed Tim Howard exactly where he was supposed to be.

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Nicole Angemi is one tough mother, end of story.

Wait, scratch that, it's actually just the beginning of the story. This South Jersey mom of three has reached celebrity status for her gruesomely informative and unapologetic accounts of the field of human pathology, or (double-checks Wikipedia) the causes and effects of disease or injury. Basically, if it can go wrong with you, she's the one to hold it up to the light and explain why, how, if and when it could happen to you. This pathologist assistant from Camden County, New Jersey, doesn't skip a single gag-inducing detail, and as any of her 2 million followers can tell you, it is virtually impossible to look away.

Through her Instagram account (@Mrs_Angemi), Angemi tries to capture the grisly wonder of the human machine when it's at its worst. Often decayed, ruptured, inflamed, cancerous and broken, she shines a light on the comforting notion that we are indestructible and shows us that we are all, completely and totally...not.

"I feel like when people look at my page they want to know what's going on. They want the same answers I do," Angemi says as she analyzes her own macabre magnetism. "I always think to myself, 'What led to this? How did this happen? Is this gonna happen to me? How can I prevent this from happening to me? I try not to post pictures unless I have real answers."

"The whole thing is super organic," she continues. "I just do what I want to do. I sort of base it around what I hate about other people's accounts. People follow my page mostly because they're interested in pathology and what I'm showing. It's not really about me, it's about me teaching."

Those "real answers" that Angemi is in search of often come with an exorbitant price. This is not the first incarnation of her Instagram account, as she has been booted from the platform a number of times for violating the strict community guidelines.

"There's a lot of censorship on Instagram," she explains. "There's a lot of pathology that I can't show because I can't show boobs, I can't show a penis, I can't show a vagina or a butthole—that is super juicy pathology to me. It's like, 'Oh, did you get cancer on your penis and have to get it amputated? I can't show that on Instagram.'"

This small and mildly unsettling setback has only inspired Angemi to seek out other avenues of education for her eager fans, resulting in the resounding success of *The Gross Room*—a members-only peek behind the curtain to the world of a human dissector available through her website *TheDuraMater.com*, an in-depth, uncensored and extensive look at some of history's most shocking and often misunderstood misfortunes.

From Kurt Cobain to Princess Diana, Angemi engages in a pathological dissection of history's most horrendous anomalies.

"I don't have any limitations there," Angemi explains, reflecting on the freedom afforded to her through her members-only "Gross Room." "I can write five pages worth of text, put as many pictures as I want, I can do whatever. Every week I do a celebrity or a high-profile case. Right now I'm doing this one on a woman named Dawn Branchaeu, [who] was killed by an orca whale while working at Seaworld. What I do is, I get ahold of her autopsy reports and then dissect the autopsy. I try to rewrite it in my own words to explain, and then I show pictures of what it looked like at her autopsy."

The Gross Room isn't gore for the sake of gore. Angemi has a genuine admiration and curiosity for the inner workings of the body and all of the maladies that can complicate it. She seems to view anything that can go wrong physiologically as an opportunity to learn, and she has found an audience with like-minded rubberneckers who want to stare at the car crash a little longer, hoping to unearth something new and strange.

Nicole is our favorite type of person—an expert in her field, an aficionado of the bizarre, and a true iconoclast that just happens to be tattooed knuckles to neck, toes to temples, a decision that has lent itself to a host of hurdles along her journey.

"I got my first tattoo when I was 15 and started working on my sleeves when I was 18 or 19," Angemi recalls. "I knew I was going to be working in a lab, so I started with the intention of going right below the elbow, but even my mom was like, 'What's the point? If you wear a short-sleeve shirt you can't cover it anyway.' When I got hired at the hospital, I had full sleeves. Everyone knew, but I wore a lab coat all the time. When I got my hands done I took off for a while because I was going to a conference for pathology. I was able to not wear gloves for two weeks so I got them done right before I went away."

"I've had some issues in my career over tattoos," she continues. "I worked in Philly for 13 years, but then as soon as I worked in the suburbs, you'd think they'd never seen a tattoo in their life. A lot of hospitals have really strict rules about them and people don't want to risk affecting their job. I had to wear gloves when I went to the cafeteria. It's like, do you think it'll look better if I go into the cafeteria right now wearing gloves? People are going to think I have a disease. I don't have anything offensive tattooed on me. It's just hearts and butterflies. It ended up working out because eventually I went to another location at the same hospital which was a little more low key."

Angemi has successfully staked her claim as the inter-

net's premier pathologist. Her body of work incorporates not only her devotion to pathology and the inner workings of the human machine, but her devotion to the artwork that she has covered herself in, decorating the vessel that she is fully aware will one day expire and decay. "I was very scared of death as a child and teenager, just constantly worried about it," she shares. "I think it was good for me to learn about it because it makes it less scary." Which begs the question at this point, after everything that she's seen, does she find anything unsettling?

"Maggots are really a thing for me," she says. "The very first autopsy I cut by myself was a person who was extremely decomposed, but that didn't bother me so much. When I work in the hospital, I work on amputated legs that have maggots on them and it makes my skin crawl. I feel like with dead people, you just expect them to be gross, but that leg just came off of a person that was alive. I can't deal with maggots on living people. I just feel like I want to go home and take a shower."

WELCOME TO THE GROSS ROOM

NICOLE ANGEMI
TAKES US BEHIND
THE SCENES OF ONE
OF THE WORLD'S
MOST MORBIDLY
FASCINATING PRO-
FESSIONAL FIELDS—
HUMAN PATHOLOGY.

by nick fierro photos by maria aponte

DANCING ON OUR OWN

IN AN ERA WITHOUT MUSIC FESTIVALS, DILLON FRANCIS IS ADAPTING TO EDM'S NEW NORMAL.

by ariana west
photos by shane mccauley

"The only tattoo on my body that means anything is this Grim Reaper with a feather sickle," Dillon Francis says, pointing to a tattoo on his left arm. "When I was around seven, I watched 'E.T.' and had nightmares for two years that E.T. was going to tickle me to death."

Francis is one of the most heavily tattooed DJs you'll find on the charts and, for the most part, aside from a rogue tickle Reaper, he's avoided attaching meanings to his tattoos. "All of the tattoos that I've gotten have just been because I really liked the art itself," Francis says. "I've always gone to tattoo artists and said, 'Look, pitch me on what you want to put on my body,' because it's a representation of that artist." This approach may seem strange to those who spend years deciding on the perfect piece to fit a significant event, but when you consider who Francis is as an artist, it makes perfect sense.

Francis knows that he will get the best possible work from a tattooer by letting them do what they're passionate about, and when it comes to his music, he relies on the same trust from his fans. "I'm making whatever I want to make and I don't care about anybody else but myself right now," he says. "I've been making music for so long and I'm just servicing what makes me happy. I've always done that, but now I'm fully being the selfish producer that I want to be."

For years, Francis was in the mindset to make festival music, the kind of tunes designed for people who wanted to get weird in a large, sweaty heap in a random field. However, when the pandemic hit and those social gatherings were canceled, Francis realigned his focus entirely. "I've really started getting into fun and happy house music," he says. "I've made a song called 'Hey Look Ma, I Made It' with Panic! at the Disco and then a single this year called 'Be Somebody' with Evie Irie. My upcoming releases are the new iteration of those, a mix of uplifting indie pop and fun, euphoric house." Positivity is the central theme in both of these singles and considering the whirlwind that 2020 has been across the board, Francis is making the kind of music that we can all use right now.

"I don't want to put out a sad song or something depressing," Francis says. "Anything that would be helpful right now would be happy stuff that I can produce myself." With optimism on the brain, Francis wanted to keep the good vibes going when it came to his collaboration with one of TikTok's biggest influencers. "I just did a remix with Dixie D'Amelio for her song 'Be Happy,'" Francis says. "I got to be on her YouTube show and at the end of the episode, she challenged me to remix her song in one week."

"I love remixing music and I'm always up for an inspiring challenge in quarantine, so I was like, 'Yeah, let's do it,'" he continues. "I remixed it in a week and was able to surprise her with my whole DJ setup at her house. That surprise was

turned into the music video for the song and it was really fun."

Since collaborating with D'Amelio, Francis has been looking at TikTok and its talented creators in a whole new light, becoming one of the first mainstream musicians to hop onto the platform. Well before TikTok was churning out pop stars faster than "American Idol" in its heyday, he saw its potential. "I got on there two years ago and the music part of the app really interested me," he explains. "The kids on there are so funny and it's such an inspiring app for being creative, which is great for music. The next guy on there I'm trying to work with is a melodic rapper named Johnny 2 Phones who has a song named 'Rescue' that I'm going to work on remixing."

When Francis takes on a remix, whether it's for a TikTok creator or otherwise, he approaches it with the same level of care he'd bring to one of his own songs. Creating a remix is a delicate act. A skilled DJ needs to create a track worthy of the original, without being too similar. "I need to give people a reason to listen to it," Francis explains. The trick is finding the right formula for the task. Sometimes this means taking the track in an entirely new direction, other times the work is far more subtle. "For instance, I did a remix for Cardi B's 'I Like It; and the only thing I really did was push the BPM, add some drums and put in a drop that would make it a good play at a club," he explains. "Usually, my process will be listening to the song and I'll tell them then and there if I have an idea. Whether that's keeping it to the original or adding vocals to make it my own, complete version."

Francis has kept busy creating new music throughout the pandemic, but what he really looks forward to is sharing those tracks with a live audience. There's only so much feedback you can get from a screen, and he's chomping at the bit to be surrounded by like-minded folks going off in a pit to his latest jams in the not-too-distant future. "When we go back, I think it's going to be absolutely insane and the energy levels will be bonkers," Francis says. "People are really ready to get back out there and hopefully we'll soon be able to stand less than six feet away from each other. I think this year has been a total bummer, in many ways, but the silver lining is that the energy level for shows is going to be at an all-time high."

The day when we can safely convene under one roof and dance until the sun comes up is coming. We may not know exactly when, but you can be damn sure that it's coming. And when it does, we know Dillon Francis will be right there with us, ready to drop the beat.





On November 13, a Friday, we sat down for our Zoom call with Rebecca Black. The woman sitting across from us shows remnants of the 13-year-old we all remember from her viral video, such as her wide smile and large dark eyes. But 10 years have passed and Black has evolved, adopting bright blue locks, a peppering of tiny tattoos and an e-girl aesthetic. That's right, 2021 will be the 10-year anniversary of "Friday," and boy, I bet you feel pretty old, don't you? Now, Black is back with brand new music and ready to go viral once more. "In a way, I'm relaunching myself," Black says. "This project is very honest to myself and my goal with all of this is to enjoy every moment of what I'm doing. It was created with a lot of risks, but they're risks that I enjoy getting as a fan to other artists and I want to have that experience for my own."

Fans have been eagerly awaiting new music for years, and Black is on the precipice of making that dream come true. They're ready to see Black for the woman she's become, who is first and foremost an artist. "I wasn't an artist 10 years ago," Black says. "I was 13 and I had no idea what I was doing. I've grown a lot as a person from 13 to 23 and I have a lot more confidence."

Black was thrust into the spotlight when her song "Friday" became a viral sensation as the music video was watched by hundreds of millions of people around the world. At the time, everyone on the internet knew who Rebecca Black was, but few were singing her praises. The video would go on to surpass Justin Bieber's "Baby" as the most disliked video on YouTube and Black was subjected to a barrage of hate-filled comments online.

Of course, not all the attention Black experienced from "Friday" was objectively negative, as she gained a fan in Katy Perry who performed her song on a number of tour dates and invited her to be a part of the "Katy Perry: Part of Me" documentary. However, there were also a few fans who took things to a place that would make most adults uncomfortable, let alone a teenager. "I remember very early on someone got a tattoo of my name and it was terrifying," Black says. "At that point, I was so afraid of tattoos myself and as a 13-year-old, it was a lot to digest." Black's aversion to tattoos didn't stick, but it did take some time for Black to get used to her fame and pluck up the confidence to make music again. Then, when she decided to make her initial comeback, the best way to do so was by confronting "Friday" head on.

"I was able to feel OK about making 'Friday' with my song 'Saturday,'" Black says. "I was still only 16, and when I did that, my biggest goal was to take back ownership of myself—which at 13 I really didn't have the ability to do. With 'Saturday,' I was able to say that it was representative of my sense of humor at the time and it was legitimately fun." After a few years of social media silence, fans were surprised Black was back to making music and were especially astonished to get a sequel to her debut hit. But Black knew she could either be the 13-year-old girl who made "Friday" for

the rest of her life or face the music.

"One of the biggest lessons I've learned is that the farther and the faster I've tried to run away from 'Friday,' the faster it chased me," Black says. "Nobody could even say 'Happy Friday' without me thinking, 'Oh my God, they know.' So the more that I said, 'This is part of my story and it's integral to why I am the person that I am,' the more confident I felt. I didn't want to let it make me a caricature for the rest of my life."

"Saturday" was only the beginning of Black's comeback, as she'd go on to release a handful of singles independently in the coming years and compete on "The Four: Battle to Stardom." However, getting on top for the right reasons can take time, especially when you're still in your early 20s and only starting to figure out your sound. "[For most artists,] you get to play shows at all the local bars and venues for a few years to work out your kinks, whereas my first attempt was what everybody got to see," Black says. "There's been a lot of pressure on me, but at this point, I'm not so afraid of everything anymore."

As time has passed, Black has leaned into non-traditional ways to get back into the public eye as a musician, but this time, for the right reasons. As someone who first made it big on YouTube, what better way to rebuild her brand than through social media's rising music platform—TikTok. "I think what had gotten lost prior to TikTok was a celebration of people being weird and different on the internet," Black says. "That's what made me and so many of my friends fall in love with the internet. Now TikTok is the one place where I can speak to my people who I know get my stupid jokes and understand the things I care about." And she has certainly found her people. After years spent feeling like the internet's outsider, Black is finally producing content directly for a growing legion of supporters ready to watch her blossom.

With fans in her corner and the 10th anniversary of "Friday" approaching, Black knew it was time to show the world how far she's come as an artist and release some new music. And after a decade of being told by social media and the music industry who Rebecca Black is, there's never been a project that speaks more to her true identity. "After I came out as queer, I had this collection of songs and ideas for songs that were living in the basement because I didn't know when I'd be able to talk about them," Black shares. "Now that it's done it's allowed me to reach a whole new audience of people who are queer themselves. I'm really excited about the honesty I'm able to have in speaking about my experiences with love and figuring out who I am, which changes every day."

Rebecca Black's career has certainly been a wild ride so far, taking her to places she couldn't have anticipated as a precocious teen who couldn't decide between the front seat or the back seat. But, against the odds, she's emerged from the ashes of online infamy and is looking forward to the future, as well as the weekend.

BLACK IS BACK

TEN YEARS AFTER
"FRIDAY," REBECCA
BLACK IS MAKING A
COMEBACK.

by devon preston photos by troy conrad

SHINNICHI

ON A WHIM, ACTOR MIKE CASTLE TOOK A TRIP TO A PLACE HE NEVER THOUGHT HE'D VISIT AND ENDED UP FALLING COMPLETELY IN LOVE WITH JAPAN. WE JOINED HIM AS HE GOT HIS FIRST TASTE OF TRADITIONAL IREZUMI TO DISCUSS THE PIECE AND THE PATH HE TOOK TO GET THERE.





by charlie connell photos by troy conrad

Mike Castle grew up on the far southwest side of Chicago in a neighborhood called Beverly. The predominantly Irish neighborhood is known throughout the city as the home of the South Side Irish Parade, the raucous ne'er-do-well cousin of the city's official St. Patrick's Day Parade. The geography may not back this up, but there is no place on Earth farther from Beverly than Tokyo, Japan. Yet it wasn't until Castle traveled to that distant locale that he found his true passion.

Castle is an unabashed shinnichi. Or, as we would call him in English, a Japanophile. Shortly after Castle started dating his wife, actress Lauren Lapkus, they talked about traveling to somewhere they had never dreamed of going. Almost instantly the two agreed on Japan.

"I've traveled to a lot of different places where I'll go, 'Oh yeah, this is basically America,'" Castle says. "You go to the U.K. and you look around and you're like, 'Yeah, I kind of grew up like this.' I'll always remember when I first landed in Tokyo and everything was unlike anything I'd ever experienced.

"It was so cool to feel so outside of the know," he continues. "You just feel like a dumbass when you're there. I kept saying to Lauren, 'I feel more lost here than I ever have before.' When we left I was immediately missing it. I started learning Japanese, in earnest."

Learning the language was key for him; he wanted to be able to show the respect of at least attempting to communicate the next time he visited. Castle isn't quite fluent in the language yet—"I can speak what I call 'Taxi Japanese'"—but he continues to immerse himself in Japanese culture. He's a little obsessed with a reality show called "Terrace House" and he even has a favorite chain of ramen spots despite calling Los Angeles home.

Japan has clearly stolen Castle's heart, so it seemed fitting when he chose to wear his heart on his sleeve. The actor already had a smattering of tattoos, but it wasn't until this fall that he made the decision to add some traditional Japanese irezumi to his collection.

To get the work done, Castle turned to Ken Sakamoto (@shingken), an artist from Tokyo who currently lives in California and works out of Black Diamond Tattoo. As the two started to collaborate on the sleeve, Ken made sure Castle had done his homework before diving into a lifelong commitment.

"I was trying to tell [Ken] I wanted to get one of those dolls with the red shawl," Castle says of the Daruma doll he'd been thinking about. "He insisted that I not get it until I did a lot of reading about it. I read about it, and it's this very cool aspect of Japanese culture. It's a very symbolic character. It's about setting an intention for yourself where you keep one eye all white until you finish that intention and you color it in. It's this whole layered thing.

"To have the artist say, 'No, not until I know you really know what this is will I do it,'" he continues, "I had to prove to him I knew what it was, that it was what I wanted. It was a very cool feeling. He vetted it or else I wouldn't be allowed to get what I was getting."

Together, Castle and Ken came up with a design that fit the actor perfectly. Castle has a special relationship with his 17-year-old cat, so Ken was able to work the cat's face into the face of the Daruma. But the part of the tattoo that is most

impressive isn't anything Ken added himself, it's the way he was able to organically work around one of Castle's existing tattoos—a cartoon portrait of his late father.

"My dad died, and he hated tattoos, so he would have hated this," Castle says of the tattoo on his chest. "Basically, my dad died very suddenly. And one of my close high school friends, his dad also died suddenly, so when we were hanging out around the funeral I did a doodle of my dad.

"I was talking about how he was such a hardass for my whole life," he continues. "Very regimented, very serious and very humorless. Then in the last three or four years of his life he was suddenly really nice and easygoing. I was very skeptical of it because it was so strange to me."

The two friends went back and forth for a while, each drawing caricatures of Castle's dad. One of the caricatures drawn by his friend ended up becoming a tattoo, sitting on his chest, with the phrase "I'm bored of being mad." It is a perfect tribute, encapsulating different aspects of his father, so it makes sense Castle wanted to work around the piece. "When I was getting this new tattoo and they started to do it over that tattoo, or sort of incorporating that tattoo," Castle explains, "I hadn't really told Lauren about it yet. She said she always felt like that spot wasn't done. Which was an interesting thing, cause I was like, 'I thought it was done.' But then this happened."

Prior to getting this piece, Castle had never had to sit for multiple tattoo sessions. So while he has grown accustomed to the pain from getting tattooed—his first tattoo was on his knee cap—the endurance required for long sessions was new to him. Add in to this the fact that his tattooer doesn't speak a ton of English and Castle doesn't speak a ton of Japanese, and some things got lost in translation.

"We were doing this one part on my clavicle and it really hurt," he says. "I really wanted to keep taking breaks, but I didn't know how to say, 'I want to take a break.' I knew how to say, 'I want to take a drink of water' or 'I want to have lunch.' It was this funny, kind of embarrassing thing where I kept thinking, 'What's something you know how to say that's valid right now?' I would fake drinking water because I kept saying I wanted water. I grabbed my water bottle and I'm shaking, in pain, but I'm like, 'Sip the water, man. It's what you wanted, it's what you said.'"

In the end, Castle stayed hydrated and got the tattoo he'd been dreaming about. He has a permanent reminder of not just his love of Japanese culture, but the first trip he took to Tokyo, the reading and learning he did in order to "earn" the Daruma doll, and the many hours he spent with his artist getting the piece. Saying Castle is enthused about how things came out would be an understatement.

"It immediately became my favorite tattoo," he says. "It is the first time with a tattoo where I can't stop staring at it. While I'm doing my nighttime routine, winding down for bed, I'll just go, 'Oh yeah, I should look at that. Japan and Japanese culture is something I can't believe I love

RICO NASTY

RICO NASTY, THE LOVE CHILD OF PUNK AND HIP-HOP, TAKES US
ON A "NIGHTMARE VACATION."

by devon preston photos by guy the photographer





From Grammy wins to Top 100 chart records, we're living in an era where more women are succeeding in rap than ever before. Not only are women flourishing in the genre, they no longer need a male cosign to make it big. This new generation of women brought new perspectives to rap and, as one of the fastest rising women in the game, Rico Nasty is using her rhymes to shed light on a topic that's seldom discussed in society, let alone in hip-hop. "Growing up as a woman, when you get mad people either take advantage of or take pity on you," Nasty says. "They try to victimize you or say that something's wrong with you, you're crazy and you're doing too much. It's OK for men to lash out and break shit if they want to. But if a woman does it, it's always been unlady-like."

"Girls need an artist to express whatever emotions they want to express," she continues. "I hate when people expect women to be the perfect role model, the perfect mother or the perfect wife. Nobody puts that fucking stigma on men, men can be assholes who don't do anything for anyone but themselves. And in most cases, they get praised. It's time to get our power back. We don't give a fuck if you see us as mad, us being mad doesn't mean that we care differently."

Nasty has used her music as a vehicle to express all of her emotions, not just anger. She touches on sadness, happiness and everything in between, connecting to listeners through the authenticity of her mixtapes. She began her career releasing singles to SoundCloud, quickly picking up steam within the underground scene, before transitioning to releasing mixtapes under her label, Sugar Trap. In that time, Nasty racked up an impressive seven mixtapes in only five years. This method of releasing music in quick succession helped build Nasty's repertoire and reputation within the industry, but now that she's a known figure in hip-hop, she's taking a different approach for her debut studio album, "Nightmare Vacation."

"[With 'Nightmare Vacation'] I didn't rush myself," Nasty says. "I paced myself, tried to improve and tried new things. It was honestly an adventure from start to finish." Nasty found that as she began creating more melodic music, those singles needed time to build intricate layers and required extra listening to find harmonies that might not have jumped out in the first take. "Before, I would just make a song, put it out and never hear it again because I thought it was finished," Nasty says. "I would never go back to the studio and try to re-record a song if it was more than a month old. But I did that and I finished a lot of

songs I thought I couldn't finish, even if they didn't end up on the album."

In giving herself more time per single, Nasty had the opportunity to explore and experiment with her style. Nowhere on "Nightmare Vacation" does this show more than with the album's lead single, "iPhone," which was produced by Dylan Brady of the experimental music duo 100 Geecs. "The whole process of recording that song was different and that song wasn't made in one day, we produced it in a span of three months," Nasty says. "I learned a bunch of new things about recording in general, like how to pitch your voice up, slow it down to make it a better fit, and then speed it back up so it sounds crazy."

The experimenting didn't end with "iPhone," as she'd go on to have another big first as an artist with the album's second promotional track, "Own It." "I worked with a writer on 'Own It,' and that was different because I've never worked with writers," Nasty says. "I chose to work with her because she didn't have the song ready for me when we got to the studio and we built it from the ground up together. I've never gotten to collaborate with a writer the way you would with a producer, which was really fun."

"Nightmare Vacation" allowed many opportunities for Nasty to improve and try new things, but one thing stayed the same, and that's the presence of her alternative personas. Alternative personas have been a long-standing tradition in hip-hop, with Beyoncé unveiling Sasha Fierce and Nicki Minaj constantly pulling new characters out of her bag of tricks. Throughout Nasty's career, she's revealed personas on different tracks, with Tacobella taking over for Nasty's more sensitive and vulnerable songs, Trap Lavigne (an homage to Avril Lavigne) coming out for her aggressive, punk-inspired pieces, and Rico filling in the gaps. For "Nightmare Vacation," Nasty stuck with these three primary personas when developing the singles, but through the process, she was able to give fans a glimpse of an emerging fourth side of herself.

"I have a song called 'Pussy Poppin' on there and that's definitely a new perspective that I don't think my fans have heard from me," Nasty says. "It's more sexual and more feminine. A lot of my music is really hard and in your face, so this is more bouncy and fun. I guess she is a different persona, but I've only made one song like that so we'll see what she turns into."

In addition to showing off the different sides of her personality through her music, Nasty is known for

expressing herself through her personal style. In her music videos, on the red carpet and in photoshoots, Nasty leans toward extravagant, maximalist fashions. Which can vary between a spiky mohawk to a baby-doll nighty to a haute couture gown depending on her mood. Nasty's personal expression has helped to set her apart from the pack and she's been coloring outside the lines since childhood. "I remember I used to get in trouble all the time at school for not wearing my uniform," Nasty says. "I would actually draw on my uniform, just so I could be different from everyone else."

It didn't take long for Nasty's uniform doodles to transform into a passion for collecting tattoos, as she got her first two tattoos when she was just 17. As she started developing her brand as a rapper, she fell more in love with tattoos and her personas quickly made their way onto her skin. "I became obsessed with getting drawings of me tattooed," Nasty shares. "I'm obsessed with remembering certain phases in my life and moments that I thought would make or break me. Oftentimes, I get tattoos to remember super fucked-up shit or super good shit—it's a way of healing. When you lose somebody, you get them tattooed and the pain of the tattoo almost outweighs how much it hurts when you lose them."

Through her music, her style and her tattoo collection, Rico Nasty has shown the world she doesn't fit into a predetermined category. She's always changing and, at 23, there's plenty more of her story yet to be written. One thing we do know is that the charts are about to get a whole lot nastier thanks to "Nightmare Vacation."

**GIRLS NEED
AN ARTIST
TO EXPRESS
WHATEVER
EMOTIONS THEY
WANT TO EXPRESS.**



THE IZZY SHOW

HE'S A SUPERSTAR IN MMA AND A CHAMPION IN THE UFC—YET THAT'S ONLY HALF OF ISRAEL ADESANYA'S STORY. THE OTHER HALF CAN BE TOLD THROUGH HIS INCREDIBLE BODY OF WORK

by chuck mindenhall - photos by eric williams - styling by ugo mozie
grooming judith stevens - projectmanager lfeanyi nwune - assistant collins chukwubueze



At 6-foot-4, Israel Adesanya is built like a hallucination—like a long shadow come to life off the wall. He is an angular uprush of energy and power, made up of sharp angles and eye tricks. He can snipe people from great distances and kick a tea saucer off a forehead in one rapid movement. His fight IQ might be the highest in mixed martial arts, as he anticipates (and counters) tendencies better than any other fighter going. In other words, he's a natural for the cage.

And if you didn't know any better, you'd swear that everything that's happened to Izzy in the three years he's dominated the UFC has been carefully premeditated. It started in his first fight with Rob Wilkinson in Perth, Australia, in early 2018, when Adesanya lifted a leg and (symbolically) marked his territory all over the UFC's Octagon before and after the fight.

What the hell was he doing? He was getting in front of the temptation at the time, that's what. Having already been an outspoken kickboxing champion before his MMA career, people wanted to compare him to fighters like Anderson Silva or Conor McGregor, UFC superstars who could properly orient the senses to the kind of transcendent talent he was. Adesanya wasn't having it. Everything he was could be found within the 80-inch wingspan that stretched between the first Izzy Adesanya and the "Last Stylebender."

So he hiked up his leg to announce his arrival and off he went. Nine straight victories in the UFC in just two-and-a-half years. A middleweight title. Pound-for-pound rankings takeovers. Global superstardom. Sponsorship deals and stacks of cash. As a current resident of New Zealand, he has emerged as the king of Oceania. As a native of Nigeria, he is the firebrand of Africa. As a star in the States, he was pegged to do color commentary for the Mike Tyson-Roy Jones pay-per-view. Izzy's UFC run has been equal parts meteoric and historic, and he has taken every step in stride, as if he knew how things would play out all along.

In fact, when MMA journalist Ariel Helwani first reached out to Adesanya for an interview, Izzy responded like a man 10 steps ahead of the game. "I've been expecting your call," he deadpanned. As a former professional dancer in his younger days in New Zealand, choreography isn't just a series of bodily moves for Adesanya—it's also anticipation of how others dance when they truly hear your music.

Yet in discussing his next step, which is to move up a weight class to take on the much bigger Jan B. achowicz for the light heavyweight title in early 2021, Adesanya says nothing about it was premeditated. Or maybe there was a little subconscious table setting. Sometimes he's not sure where the cosmos meet up with fate, which is OK so long as he knows he can kick the other guy's ass.

"I don't know if fighting Jan was part of the plan, but I think maybe it was?" Adesanya says. "Yeah, it was. It wasn't part of the plan to take the [205-pound] belt, but I was going to do like Anderson [Silva] and just showcase as a light heavyweight. But you know, now destiny awaits."

Destiny is a word Adesanya likes, because he truly believes in it. That's why he never hesitates to fight a guy like Silva, whom he beat just a year after his UFC debut. He's not afraid to fight a Cuban juggernaut like Yoel Romero, even when the danger-to-upside ratio in facing a beast like that

was working severely against him. It's why he couldn't wait to fight Paulo Costa, his Brazilian rival who is built like a bodybuilder on Venice Beach. He believes whoever is put in front of him is destined to fail. Including the Polish champion B. achowicz, who will outweigh Adesanya by a good 20 pounds come fight night.

"The universe just threw me the ultimate alley-oop with Jan," Adesanya says, just as casual as ever. "So I just had to run with it and dunk it. For me, what gets me up in the morning, I need to do things that are dangerous. I just need to do something that's dangerous, and right now that's going up to 205 and taking the light heavyweight strap."

Danger is part of life as a UFC champion, as around every corner there's a fighter gunning to take you down. From Adesanya's perspective, even as a champion, it's been a two-way street. Many times it's Izzy himself who antagonizes a challenger to egg him on for a fight. He did that with Romero, and he did that with Costa. But one of the reasons people love him so much is that he's not afraid to poke up, either. Over the last few months Adesanya and former light heavyweight champion Jon Jones have been going at it on Twitter, potentially setting up—at some not-so-distant point in the future—one of the biggest fights in UFC history.

The spindly Adesanya taking on the indomitable Jon Jones? That's the kind of reckless audacity that made Conor McGregor into such a big deal a few years ago. It also demonstrates the unflinching nature of Adesanya's self-belief.

"That feud is overrated, to be honest," he says. "My focus is on Jan right now. Everyone wants to tell me, 'Jon this, Jon that.' Jon can focus on what he's doing. Let him go up to heavyweight. After fucking 11 years in the company, he's finally doing what I'm doing in three years in the company [by moving up and challenging for a second belt]."

Adesanya grew up a fan of the cult classic Muay Thai film "Ong-Bak." That's a fairly expressive place to start, yet the fact that he incorporates cinematic spinning kicks and punches into the literal realm of fighting gives him the vintage feel of a 1970s kung fu film. It helps that he looks the part—a cross between Grace Jones in "Conan the Barbarian" and The Iron Fist.

It's Adesanya's depth as a champion that gives him the "it" factor, and over the last few years he has emerged as one of the game's great storytellers. He speaks his mind succinctly and has a way of curating his own experience on social media. For instance, when a ranking comes out naming him the top pound-for-pound MMA practitioner going, he captions it by saying, "It's provocative, gets people going..." He speaks of elevation in a grounded way. He is both active participant and observer.

As much as Adesanya loves to poke the bear on social media, his preferred canvas for telling his story is on his own skin. He has tattoos all over his body, from the back of his neck coursing down his legs, across his chest and through his arms, and each one goes into what he refers to as a kind of open biography. "I remember the feeling of getting each one, the feeling of what I was going through in life at the time when I got my tattoos," he says. "It's like my own diary in a way, my own storybook. It's just my story to tell, I guess."

The stories are varied. Adesanya got his first tattoo when he was around 21, right as he was just getting started as a kickboxer. As his career has grown, so have the murals on his body—some of them done impulsively, others which he got trusting that the meanings would reveal themselves over time. He refers to his first tattoo as his “secret,” as personal “memorabilia for my body.” Really, he says, it was just to “feel the pain” of getting a tattoo and see if tattoos were for him. Turns out they were. He’s been adding art to his body for the last decade, going back to the popular Rod Dawson at Stained Skin Tattoo in Auckland whenever the urge strikes.

There’s the dragon/crocodile figure he got the first half of just before his fight with Derek Brunson at Madison Square Garden. He calls that figure “Kunta Kinte,” based on the figure from Alex Haley’s “Roots: The Saga of an American Family.” He has a tattoo of Toph, his favorite character from “Avatar: The Last Airbender,” which inspired his “Last Stylebender” nickname. As a big fan of anime, he has the Naruto reaper death seal around his navel. He even has an amazing tattoo of Deadpool going down the length of his rib cage on the side of his body.

“That’s just a cool image,” he says. “If you even look at my character when I fight, if you were to pick someone in the UFC who was a badass, kicks ass and expresses himself unapologetically, Deadpool does that. But honestly, it just looks cool as fuck. It’ll look cool as fuck when I’m 85 or when I’m 102. It’ll always be cool as fuck.”

Most noticeably, though, are the tattoos on his chest. Swinging down his shoulders off his neckline are the words “Broken Native,” which is, paradoxically, a big connection to his past.

“Broken Native, that was the name of a crew of mine from back in the day,” Adesanya says. “I coined the name, and I realized that it embodied my life. Everything I’ve done, you know? I’ve never done things like everyone else that came from where I come from, or even in class in school—I never adhered to whatever everyone else was doing if it didn’t feel right to me. I was always the odd one out. The broken native was just a way of stamping my chest, saying ‘this is the bat amongst doves,’ you know?”

“And the tattoo of Africa right underneath, they’re not mutually exclusive,” he continues. “They just happen to juxtapose well together.”

Inside the tattoo of Africa you’ll see a silhouetted lion, along with the country of Nigeria outlined on the west coast.

“The map with the lion inside it and Nigeria outline, that was just a stamp on my chest,” he says. “You know, I have

it to represent my people no matter that I live and call New Zealand home. My skin already says that enough, because I’m Black, but I stamp it on my chest and my people, my heritage, my ancestry, my bloodline, the warrior race that I come from is stamped on my chest. So people recognize a king when they see one.”

There’s not a single drop of ink that Adesanya says he regrets, though instinctively some of the tattoos he got for one reason or another have begun to report back with bigger meanings. Just as he suspected they would.

“I’ll give you an example of that,” he says. “I’m born on the 22nd of July, on the cusp of Cancer and Leo. I’ve got the Naruto reaper death seal on my navel. Inside that I have two of the characters from ‘Avatar: The Last Airbender,’ the Ocean and Moon spirits—two koi fish that swim around each other in a circle, kind of like the yin and yang. I had an epiphany three weeks ago where I realized, ‘Holy shit—I had my star signs tattooed on me without even realizing I did it.’”

“I have the lion on my chest,” Adesanya continues. “That’s me when you see me fight. That’s the Leo coming forth, the guy who takes charge, who’s sure of himself. And then you look at my navel, and I have the two koi fish which look like the Cancer symbol, the star sign. They’re just chasing each other’s tail. It looks like an expression of the Cancer symbol. I realized that while I was stoned and I was going super deep on myself. I was like, ‘Whoa, I actually did this before I realized what it was.’”

The tattoos reveal themselves along with the man, and right now Adesanya is The Man. Should he win the light heavy-weight title from B. Achowicz, he will join the rare group of dual-division champions in the UFC. After that he doesn’t have a plan. Or, maybe he has an inkling of what happens next, just as he’s had an inkling all along. Maybe it’ll be that fight with Jon Jones. Or maybe it’ll be to defend the middle-weight title, the weight class he doesn’t have any intention of straying too far from.

**“THAT’S MY
DIVISION,” HE SAYS.
“I RUN THAT SHIT.”**

In any case, it’s all unfolding as it should for a man who can genuinely be called a fight game original.







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EIGHT *Spirit* THING

Tatu Baby began her self-taught tattoo career at 19 and today, she has the industry in the palm of her hand.

by devon preston photos ronald wayne







A little over eight years ago, Katherine 'Tatu Baby' Flores sashayed onto our television screens as a contestant and eventual finalist on "Ink Master." In doing so, she helped to open doors for thousands of women pursuing careers in tattooing. "When I first started tattooing, so many people told me no," Flores says, "that I couldn't do it because I'm a girl and I'm Hispanic. When I first started tattooing, there were clients who wouldn't even talk to me about what they wanted to get tattooed because they didn't feel that I would do a good job. All of those nos and doors closed in my face made me grow. And all of the artists now who just do their thing, I say good for them because they didn't let anyone tell them no either."

Flores learned early on in her career that she would need to work twice as hard to make it, but that didn't stop her from going for her dream. After doing her first tattoo at 14 and taking it up as a hobby, she decided she was going to be the best tattooer she could be—by any means necessary. "When I first started tattooing, it was more like a secret club," Flores explains. "It was so much harder to get an apprenticeship and a license to tattoo. I went to a couple of spots to try to find an apprenticeship, but I couldn't get one, so I kept practicing on my friends until I got better and made a name for myself."

Although Flores initially enrolled in college to pursue computer animation, she ultimately returned to tattooing. She quickly fell in love with the challenges that becoming a world-class tattooer presented. For the next few years, she put in the hours to become a standout in the Miami scene, building her personal brand from the ground up. "Since I didn't have an apprenticeship or anyone teaching me, I just knew I had to work twice as hard if I wanted to grow and be better," Flores says. "Because I didn't have a mentor, I figured that if I worked hard and practiced, it would come to me."

Her struggles paid off when "Ink Master" came knocking at her door. At that time, the show had only been on the air for one season and no one knew the potential

it had to change the tattoo industry. "The show was definitely a big growing experience for me," Flores recalls. "When I went on 'Ink Master,' my idea of a great artist was someone who specializes in one style, but the show is about being great overall. Once I got there, it opened my mind to a lot of other styles of tattooing and there was still so much I needed to learn."

Anyone who's watched "Ink Master" for more than an episode knows it can be a tough experience for the competitors, as they're put into an unfamiliar environment and their work is torn apart by world-renowned artists in front of an international audience. However, Flores soaked up the criticism like a sponge and made the most out of her experience on the show.

"I think because I'm self-taught, a big thing in my career has been paying attention to little details," Flores says. "So when I was on the show, I paid attention to what everyone was doing and [for the first time] I had someone telling me what I was doing wrong. Instead of feeling bad about getting my work torn apart, I listened. When it worked, I realized that I could really learn and grow from being there. Seeing great artists be challenged was also motivating because it wasn't just me, it was an experience I was sharing with everyone else."

"Ink Master" not only made an impression on Flores, she made an impression on the growing franchise, becoming the very first artist to be invited back into the competition. Her two seasons on "Ink Master" made her a fan favorite, both in the eyes of the judges and with America. "I'd already built a name for myself in Miami; before the show I was booked a year in advance," Flores says. "But then when I went on the show, I gained worldwide recognition and now I have people flying out from California, Hawaii and all over the world just to get tattooed. Even though I didn't win either of my seasons, I felt like I won and the support I've gained for my art is my prize."

After the show, Flores's career only continued to grow and she used the support

to expand her brand in all directions. First, there was opening her shop, Till the End Tattoos, and enlisting some of the best-known artists in the business to work by her side. Then came exploring her identity as an artist, both inside and outside of the tattoo studio. "I started painting three years ago," Flores says. "I'm happy where I'm at as a tattooer and I hope to be known as much for my painting as I am for tattooing."

Flores, like many artists, uses painting as an escape from the constraints of tattooing. Because tattooing is done on a thinking, breathing and moving person, it has many constraints and requires a great deal of precision. "When I paint, I want to feel free," Flores says. "I tattoo what clients want all day, but my painting process has no rules. Instead of doing lines, I start by splashing colors onto the canvas until a shape starts to form. I just go by the feeling, sometimes I'll work on a painting for four or five sessions until I'm happy with the colors."

Although Flores has plenty on her plate as a full-time tattooer, a mother, a painter and a cast member on VH1's "Cartel Crew," she still makes the time to mentor the next generation. While she had to hustle on her own to make it in tattooing, she's all about setting up the next class of tattooers for success. "When I first started with apprentices, I was teaching them the basics of tattooing—holding a machine, throwing a line and putting in some shading," Flores says. "Now I can spot what they're doing wrong in the first four or five seconds. I have the ability to teach my artists how to be great, not just how to make a career out of tattooing. I teach them how to strive to be an award-winning tattooer."

Flores has fought hard to prove not only that she belongs, but that she has what it takes to stand among the greats. That type of tenacity can't be taught and it's been the driving force in all facets of her life—as an artist, a businesswoman and a mother. There's no stopping Tatu Baby and it's only a matter of time before she surprises us with her next big venture.

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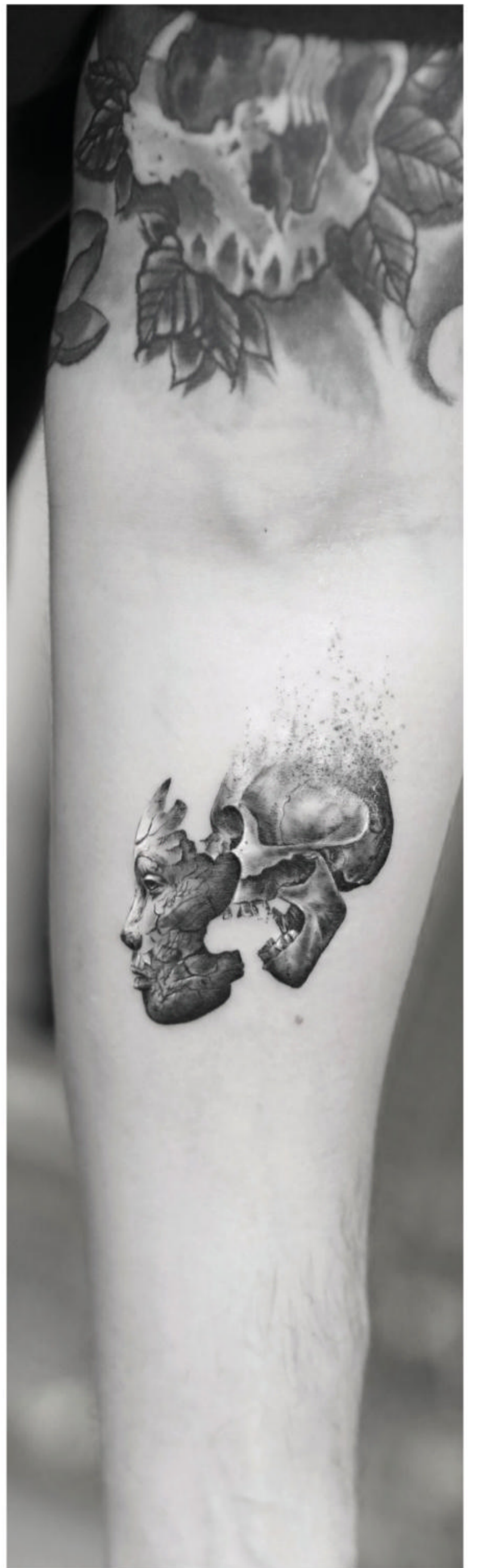
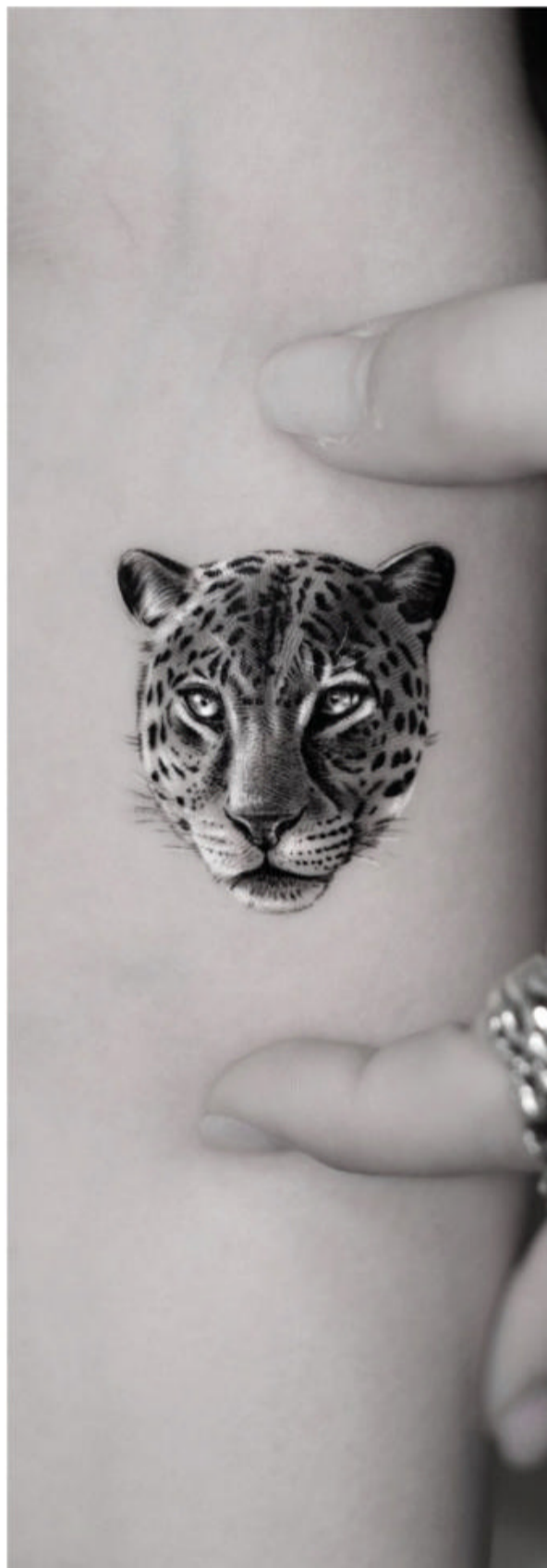
ALESSANDRO CAPOZZI

@alessandro_capozzi

Italy has given us many great artists—Michelangelo, Raphael, Caravaggio, Botticelli and Da Vinci, just to name a few. Following in their footsteps is tattoo artist Alessandro Capozzi. Instead of painting the ceilings of chapels or sculpting with fine marble, Capozzi prefers to apply his artwork onto skin. Capozzi is a celebrated black-and-grey micro artist whose work is not only appreciated within the tattoo industry, but by celebrity clientele such as Demi Lovato. We caught up with Capozzi to understand why he loves black-and-grey, where he finds inspiration and what went into designing Lovato's custom tattoo.

What do you love about black-and-grey? Compared to color tattoos, black-and-grey tattoos tend to be more cohesive due to the negative space, which is determined by the client's skin color and characteristics. It's beautiful knowing that everyone's unique coloring can make their artwork personal and different from everyone else. Black-and-grey tattoos can suit anyone's style, as they can be as visible and striking or as concealed and dainty as the individual wants them to be.

How do you tell an average black-and-grey tattoo apart from an amazing one? The way you can distinguish an exceptional black-and-grey tattoo





from an average one is by the amount of thin layers that the artist has added to the artwork. An amazing black-and-grey piece will also contain a wide spectrum of grey shades, use a fine-line technique and showcase intricate details. An average black-and-grey tattoo is often flat, lacks a sense of dimension and has a limited grey scale.

When did you start doing micro tattoos? I've only ever done micro tattoos. I was often critiqued by my peers for trying to concentrate so much detail on such a small scale but I feel like now, as a movement, micro tattoos are starting to gain their well-deserved recognition. I continually try to push the envelope by creating smaller and more complex works of art. As for what inspired me to create micro tattoos, I've always been under the impression that tattoos should be for everyone. Tattoos should not just be seen as something rebellious or alternative, but as a refined and elegant work of art—almost like precious jewels. I want tattoos to be a refined accessory and I would like to elevate the aesthetic of tattoos in society.

What role does contrast play in your work and how do you achieve good contrast in your tattoos? I would say contrast plays a significant role in the way I achieve a sense of realism in my artwork. Given that I tattoo primarily in black-and-grey, having a wide variety of shades allows me to create a life-like effect and distinction between the subjects. Contrast is a very lengthy process that requires several thin layers in order to create an illusion of three dimensionality. This type of depth is much more simple to attain when tattooing in color.

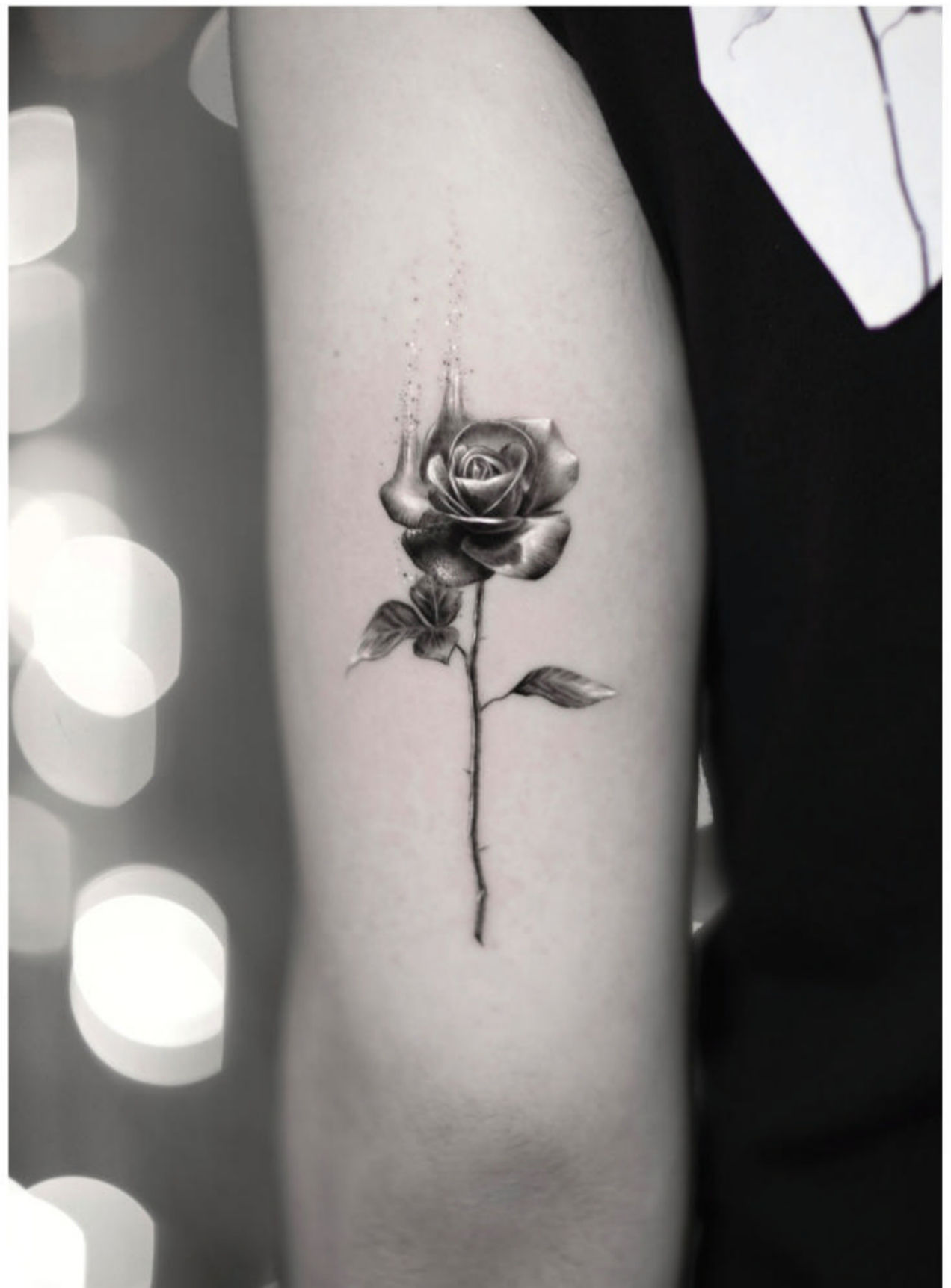
How did you meet Demi Lovato and what was your process designing that tattoo?

I met her in the VIP lounge at an Ariana Grande concert. I was invited to this event by Scooter Braun, who I had recently tattooed, and he introduced me to Demi. There was an instant connection from the start when she confided in me about how she would like to memorialize the triumphs she's made and how she's overcome many obstacles. By intently listening to her open up about her life I was able to visualize the main characteristics of the tattoo I would create for her. I view this step of the tattooing process as a collaboration between the artist and client, so that each becomes emotionally invested in the artwork.

How do you think your tattoos will age over time? The aging of tattoos depends on the client and how well they take care of their skin. Someone who is disciplined at moisturizing and protecting their tattoos using sunscreen will have a gorgeous piece for the rest of their life. I'm actually in the process of developing a product that will address these concerns. That being said, after several years it could be worth coming back to do an occasional touch up.

Where do you find inspiration for your designs? On an artistic level, I absorb the rich imagery all over my hometown (Rome, Italy), particularly the ancient times as well as the baroque period that is then translated in my art. I also find inspiration through my travels and I love incorporating these two vastly different worlds into my designs. Looking at New York as an example of the perfect architectural contrast to Rome, I try to juxtapose hyper-modern attributes like geometric shapes and patterns seen in New York to the classic and organic flow of the antiquity present in Rome. I believe it is imperative to study all forms of art in order to have a well-rounded perspective.

If you weren't tattooing, what would you be doing with your life? If I wasn't a tattoo artist I would most likely have studied medicine to become a plastic surgeon because of my love for "sezione aurea," (The Golden Ratio). It's essentially the aesthetic perfection of beauty within the art world but it's also the definition of instinctual human attraction to symmetry. Hence one of my inspirations for the name of my studio in Rome, "Aureo." (Aureo/a is Latin for golden.)



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SERGEY SHANKO

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When an old school tattooer (you know the type: big grisly beard, biker jacket, permanent scowl and a collection of blurry traditional tattoos) says that a tattoo looks like a sticker, you know it's quality work. It takes artists decades of practice to make their work crisp, clean and near perfect enough to earn the word sticker—even so, only a fraction of the most talented ever make it to that level. Sergey Shanko took the idea of a sticker tattoo and kicked it into high gear, creating pieces that look like they could peel right off the skin. However, unlike that super-tough Grim Reaper sticker you spent your tooth fairy money on at the grocery store, these babies are in it for the long haul.

How did you get started tattooing? It all started in 2010, when I found out my friend had gotten a tattoo machine. A few days later, I asked him to give it to me for a couple of days. After so many years of drawing, I was interested in trying to tattoo and I practiced on my own skin. At the time, I wanted to get a tattoo on my entire leg, no matter what it was. I just wanted to be super tatted up, just like cool BMX riders. Now I understand that was stupid, but this is how my journey began.

When did you start experimenting with your signature style? It all started after I saw the quality of my work improve. I saw no point in doing strictly realism. This led me to want to create something entirely new.

How has your style changed over time? Everything has changed. Over the past few years, I have almost completely eliminated the ideas and themes found in my past work. I began to notice that skulls, angels, roses and other classic tattoos bored me, even though I tried to add something fresh to them between 2004-2007. If your art ceases to evoke genuine emotions, you need to come up with something new and fresh.

What goes into designing one of your tattoos? I have no boundaries, I create intuitively. If I like it, the client should like it. Typically, the design takes 15 to 30 minutes based on the client's idea. The first thoughts that come to my mind usually work best.

What role does color theory play in your work? This question made me smile. I don't know the rules of color or the color wheel. I'm ashamed of this, but I create intuitively. Everything happens for a reason in my process, which means I can't rely on the rules of colors and styles. But as an artist if you create art your own way, others will catch on.

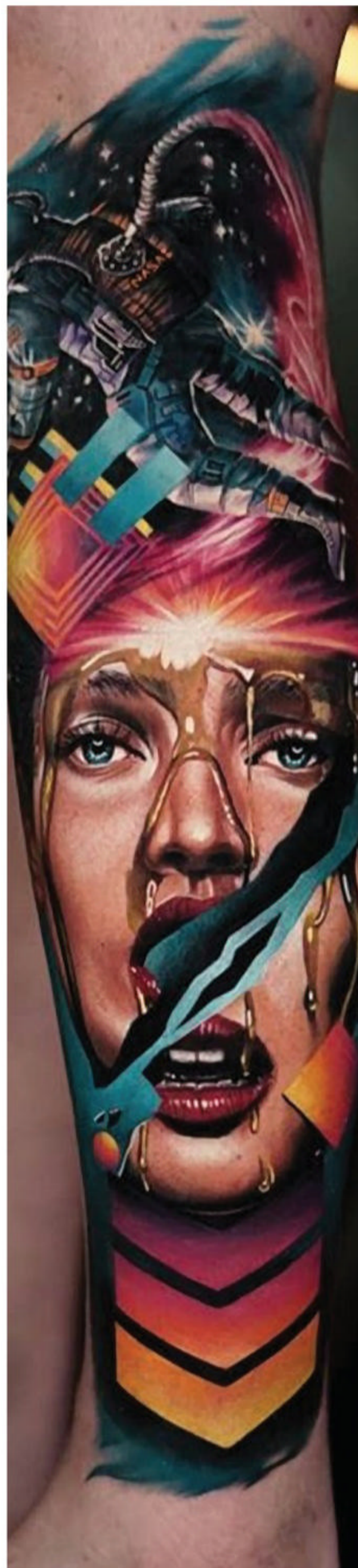
Where do you find inspiration for your designs? I've been thinking about this a lot over the last year. I'm inspired by an unexpected turn of the composition and the attempt to grasp meaning with two to three sources. Banksy influenced me this way—in his works everything is simple but also meaningful. In the tattoo industry, the quality of work never ceases to amaze me. This is because you can find a new master every day on Instagram who does incredibly high quality realism. As for style inspiration, mine is just beginning to emerge and it's too soon to discover someone.

When did you start doing sticker tattoos? At some point, tattoos with a background began to annoy me. Many tattoo artists thought out elements in the background and tried to add as much originality as possible. But up close, it all looked like a mess and was not a readable object. I thought about how to start doing everything without a background like the old school guys do. I went back to my hometown to visit my parents and my friends started asking me for tattoos. I made a portrait of Harley Quinn without a background, but then I decided to make a white outline around it, as if it were a sticker.



ATA INK

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For centuries, tattooing has been a part of many distinct cultures and civilizations across the world, from the Americas to Africa, Asia and the Pacific Islands. Over the years, these tattoo communities have evolved and today they're united as a global culture through the power of social media and online commerce. Akbar Tawakkal, also known as Ata Ink, has flourished through the globalization of tattooing and attracts clients from around the world to his studio in Jakarta, Indonesia. We sat down with Akbar to learn more about his humble beginnings as a tattooer and to understand what his prospective clients can expect out of his tattoo experience.

Take us through your upbringing and how you discovered your love for art.

I studied visual communication design at a University in West Java. While I studied, I discovered so many different kinds of art—such as music, painting, drawing and design.

How did you get into tattooing? I got my first tattoo when I was 20. A year after I got my first tattoo, I bought my first machine. It was very cheap. A couple of months after I started tattooing, one of my friends who owned a tattoo shop asked me to work at his shop. There, I discovered more about tattooing and he taught me a lot.

How would you describe your signature style and where do you find your inspirations? My signature style is color realism. I get inspiration from many other good artists and I'm always looking to explore more inspirations. I'm particularly inspired by women, space and futuristic imagery.

Do you prefer tattooing in black-and-grey or color? I prefer color. I love when I play with many different colors within one tattoo.

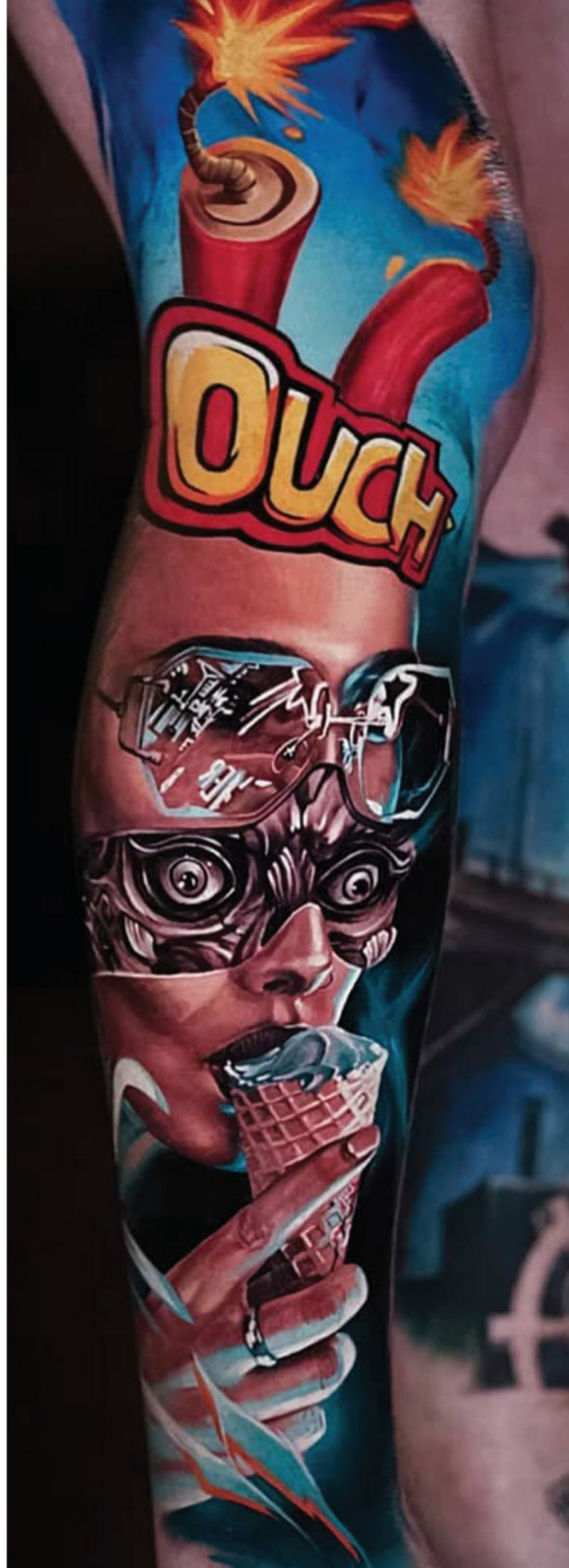
What does your design process look like and how do you work with your clients' ideas? I make the design very close to the deadline. If I get free time, then I'll prepare the design first. But for the most part, I do the design the day before the appointment date or on the appointment date. It typically takes two to seven [hours] for each design, depending on the size and difficulty. I need all of my clients to trust me, that's why they shouldn't worry if I do the design on the day of tattoo.

Aside from tattooing, do you work in any other mediums? Yes, I designed the logo of my shop, our t-shirts and other merchandise. I also designed the interior of my shop all by myself.

What is the tattoo community like in Indonesia? There are so many tattoo communities in Indonesia, every city has their own community. But we are all still one and we support each other.

What are some of your favorite pieces you've tattooed? One of my favorite pieces is the one that won Best Tattoo of the Day at the Australia Tattoo Expo in 2018. It healed very well and I still can't believe it's my own work. My client takes very good care of his tattoos.

What do you hope to tattoo more of in 2021? I hope that I will be able to do more colorful and free-rein designs in the future.



JON

LEIGHTON

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The '80s and '90s were an epic time to be a kid. Not only did you avoid the dramas of being a teenager with social media, you had plenty of amazing television shows and movies to enjoy. Tattoo artist Jon Leighton certainly attributes this to fueling his artistic passion and he continues to reference the good ol' days with homages to "The Simpsons," "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" and "Ghostbusters." We met up with Jon virtually (it's still a pandemic, after all) to learn more about his favorite toons, how he achieves ultra-neon colors and his silliest tattoo of all time.

When you were a kid, which cartoons made the biggest artistic impact on you?

Definitely cartoons from the '90s. Shows like "Spider-Man," "X-Men" and "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" have all made a big impression on my tattoo style. Although, if I had to pick one, it would be "The Simpsons." Some of my earliest memories from childhood are drawing mashups of Bart Simpson and X-Men, coloring those drawings with highlighters on the bus to school, and giving them to other kids to put in their binders.

Who are some of your favorite cartoon characters to tattoo and why?

My personal favorite cartoon is "The Simpsons," because there are just so many episodes you can pull inspiration from. It's always fun to see all the different episodes your clients are connected with. I love nerding out with my clients about old movies and cartoons. I also love "Adventure Time," "Invader Zim" and late '90s/2000s Disney movies.

If you could only tattoo characters from one movie or show for the rest of your career, what would it be and why?

That's a tough one, but I want to say Star Wars because of the diversity among all the awesome characters and the endless possibility for designs.

Who are some of the most difficult characters to tattoo?

Some of the most difficult characters for me are from anime, solely because I didn't grow up watching a lot of anime. I'm not able to put all of my fandom passion into the design like I usually do. But, with some help from friends, I've been trying to change that. I've gotten really into Studio Ghibli lately and I have a long list I have to get through.

Who could you tattoo with your eyes closed?

I could tattoo anyone from "The Simpsons" straight out of my head.

What are some of the weirdest or silliest tattoos you've done?

The silliest tattoos I've ever done have to go to my cousin and her best friend. One day, I get a text from them, and they want best friend tattoos. So of course I ask, "What do you two want to get?" and I get this photo of what seems to be a stick figure of an avocado holding a cheeseburger, drawn on a napkin. My reaction was "What in the hell is that?!" and I just started laughing. I drew my version of a cartoon avocado with a drooling face thinking of a cheeseburger. Still one of my favorites I've done to this day, it makes me laugh every time I see it.

How do you make your tattoos look so vibrant and bright?

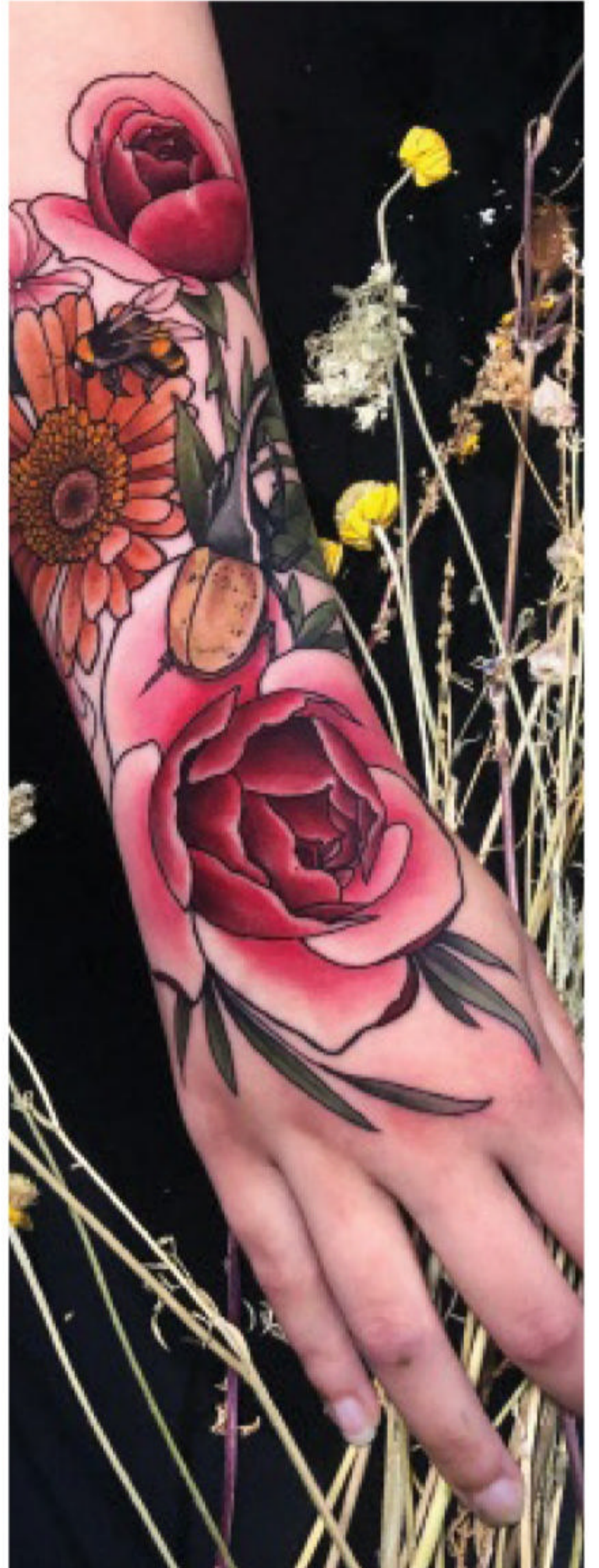
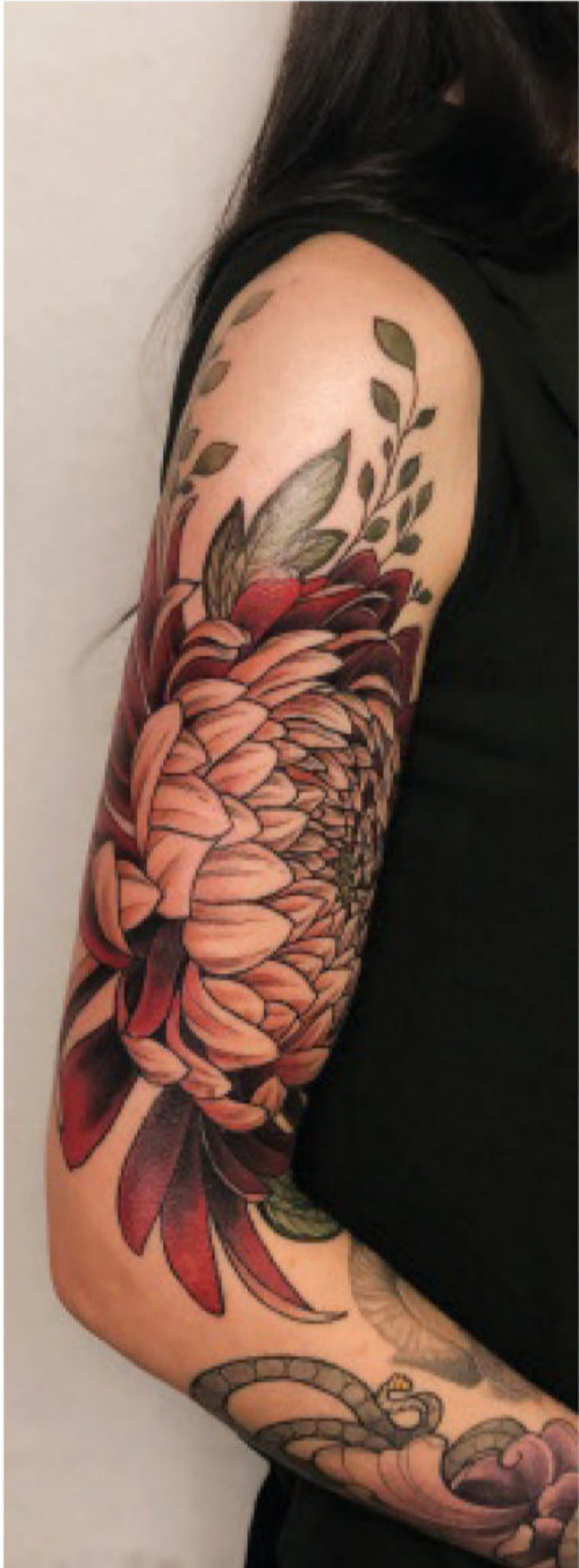
I've always been naturally drawn to bright, neon colors, you can blame that on growing up as a kid in the '80s and '90s. I've always wanted to be able to mimic that in my artwork. It's been a lot of trial and error trying to find what color combos work well together consistently with different skin types. Making sure the tattoo heals well is also incredibly important to me. It's a lot about balance, contrasting colors, depth and the overall design aesthetic. I like to see how far I can take the subject matter, but still allow you to immediately recognize which characters you are looking at. I think the use of black and muted tones are just as important to my design as the bright colors are, because those bright colors wouldn't pop without them.



JEN

TONIC

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For decades, flowers have been featured prominently throughout many distinctive styles of tattooing—from the peonies of Japanese Irezumi to the roses of American traditional. Flowers are universally beloved, and some artists, including Jen Tonic, have such an affinity for drawing them that their entire portfolio resembles a garden. Tonic crafts enchanting neo-traditional blooms for her flourishing clientele. We took some time to stop and smell the roses alongside Tonic, where she shared her evolution story, her tricks for tattooing chests and the status of her “Animal Crossing” island.

When did you decide to become a tattoo artist? I was around 15 when I wanted to become a tattoo artist. That’s when I started to go to concerts and met people with tattoos. After finishing school I started working “normal” jobs and was looking for an apprenticeship as an interior designer because everyone told me to be safe and learn something before I started tattooing. Long story short, I quit my apprenticeship after six weeks and started at a tattoo studio. And I’ve never regretted my decision.

What drew you to neo-traditional? I’ve always found neo-traditional beautiful; I had some pieces on me done before I even started doing neo-traditional myself. I started off doing linework and dotwork tattoos, because I was afraid that my sense for colors wouldn’t be good enough.

What is your favorite part about designing and tattooing flowers? To dig deeper into a topic that I love. Speaking through the language of flowers and finding new ways to arrange them in my style is what I love to do. I have plenty of books about the symbolism of flowers and considering them for my designs gives the tattoos even more depth.

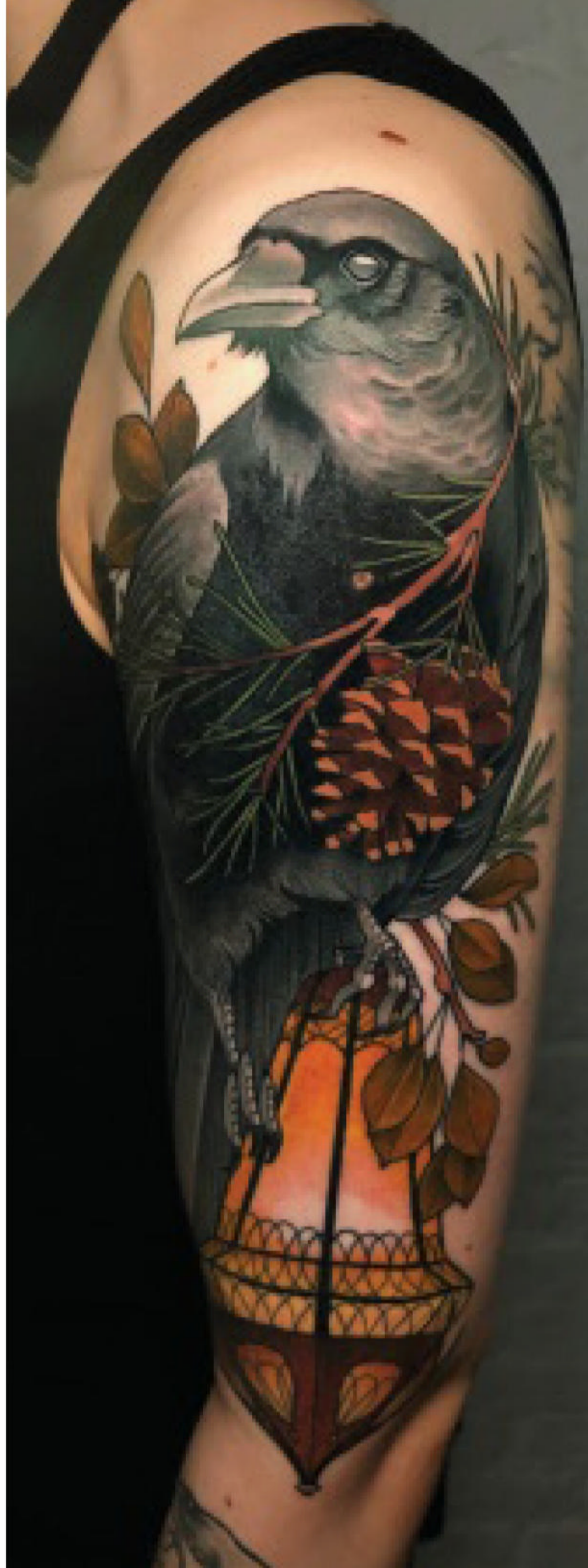
What are some of your favorite flowers to tattoo? Magnolias, cosmeas, chrysanthemums, peonies, bellflowers and many more.

We’ve noticed that you tattoo a lot of chests. How do you design for this part of the body and why is placement important? The funny thing is, I used to dislike chest tattoos on women. I always thought they’re too much for such a delicate and feminine area. I guess, for me, the most important thing is picking colors that are closer to the skin tone—like beige, brown, yellow, rose or even red. I rarely use blue, green or purple on a chest. In my designs, I usually leave some open area so it’s not too heavy and try to play up the natural curves of the shoulders, breasts and collarbones so it goes with the body and not against it.

You love painting in your spare time. Can you tell us some more about this and where you find inspiration? I have quite the variation in my paintings. In the past few months, I did another gouache painting of my whales series. I’ve also started an oil painting of a woman holding an apple basket. Another thing I really enjoy is acrylic pouring and drawing flower designs on them. My inspiration comes from literally everything I see throughout the day—animes, classical art, other artists and illustrators, nature, video games, photography, etc.

What role does color saturation play in your work and what advice would you give to other artists about achieving solid color? I work with a mixture of saturated parts and parts with color fading out. For me, it works best to achieve solid color if I don’t hurry and keep a slow, steady movement to fill the color in. I know this feeling of impatience when you’re coloring in a large area, but keeping the same speed is essential. Also, smaller magnums work better to pack in solid color.

We saw you’re an “Animal Crossing” player. What’s your island like? At the moment, it’s abandoned. I haven’t been playing for a while now, unfortunately. I put in around 300 hours and most of my island is done. I have some parks with rare flowers, a cafe, a plant store and two different villager areas. One is a friendly neighborhood and one is urban-inspired with a dodgy hidden black market.



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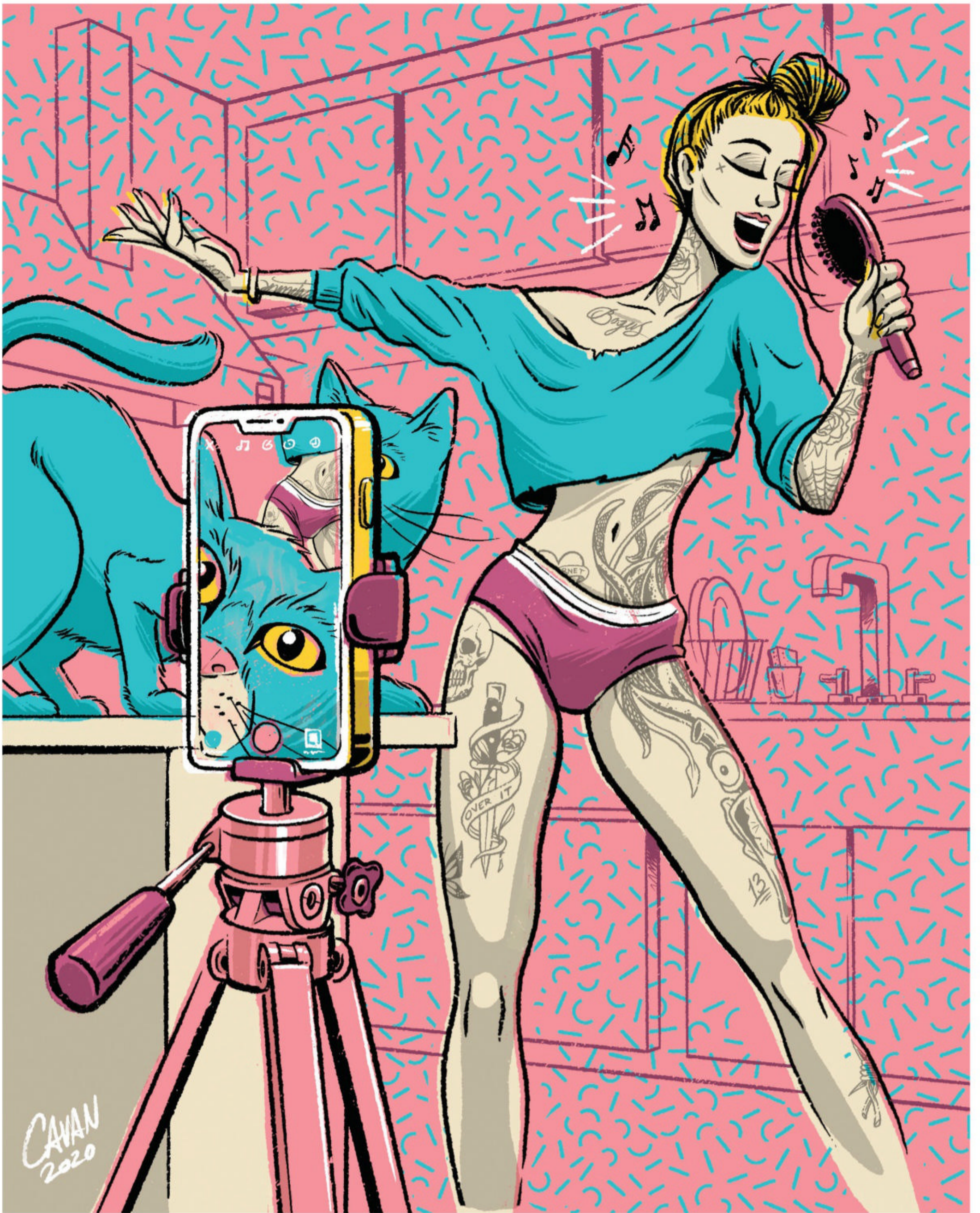
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