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# skin Deep

## ON THE GOOD SHIP THIS MONTH

We have breakfast on deck with the inimitable **CECIL PORTER**... only good things can come of this.

From the crow's nest, we look to the east and find **AEL LIM** mastering realism like no other.

In the captain's quarters we throw a big 'n' dirty banquet and wonder what we had gotten ourselves into with the crew at **THE GILDED CAGE**.

# TATTOO GOLD

## CHAD CHASE?

He's chilling on the deck throwing great art around like there's no tomorrow.



There was also a rather cool trip to **NICARAGUA** somewhere along the line.

We salute those at **INK FOR HEROES** on both sides of the needles.

We listen to tales from **HELL'S KITCHEN** from the inked chef that is **JESSE SCHENKER**.

After hours, we hang out with **PIEW CHOQUETTE**.

And we've even got a dude called **BAD BUDDHA** kicking about in here... come see.

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# The needle has landed

Rik Van Boeckel

## ONE FOR SORROW, TWO FOR JOY...

So I was watching one of my favourite American cop show dramas a few nights ago (hey, we all have our vices), and one of the cops asks the pathologist – who they seem to keep in a room slightly to the side of where everybody does regular work (it would never have happened when Starsky and Hutch ruled the streets) – for the results on one of the three bodies the path-dude has got lying on the slab. The doc asks, “which one is that?” The cop shrugs and says, “the one with the tattoo”, to which the doc replies, “that’s not very helpful... everybody’s got a tattoo these days!”

I thought it was pretty funny that this is what people in the outside world think, because try as I might to verify that statement, and I don’t think it’s actually true. When they do those surveys that ask how many people in the UK have a tattoo, even I find myself quoting something that I heard somewhere at some point in time. Current stats have it pegged at one in 12 people being tattooed, but nobody has really done

a reliable survey to find out, so I’ve come to learn that these statistics are totally fabricated, probably to give people jobs who have done ‘statistics’ at university.

I think that when they do the street surveys on tattoos (as they must) – and we’ve all been approached by those people who get paid 8p an hour to work for the company that charges a crisp company £50 gazillion to find out which

### DOES THE ‘LITTLE DEVIL WEARING A NAPPY’ TATTOO OR THE ‘WINNIE THE POOH WITH THE HONEY POT’ TATTOO REALLY COUNT AS A TATTOO?

crisps are the curliest when they’d be better off selling lucky heather to cats – that they only stop people they can see actually see have tattoos. Nobody wants to go back to the office and say “nope, I didn’t see any tattoos”, because honestly, you won’t have a job tomorrow if you hand nuggets like that over.

Yes an awful lot of people have tattoos, but when I went out for a meal with my extended family last week, there were 18 of us and only one had tattoos – that was me by the way. Take any given day


at the swimming pool, and a snapshot of that will show you that there really are a lot of people with ink, but there’s no way it’s one in 12.

Furthermore, we could get picky about it. Like if we asked “how many of you have a car?” Can we really count the people who have a Reliant Robin? That’s not a car. How about a Rolls Royce? That’s not a car either, it’s a status symbol. So that in mind, does

the ‘little devil wearing a nappy’ tattoo or the ‘Winnie the Pooh with the honey pot’ tattoo really count as a tattoo? Serious question. Did you get a tattoo or did you get a fashion statement? Can you put the devil in the nappy tattoo up against a backpiece that was done as part of a lifelong yearning to hit Japan and find a master that cost you the best part of your annual salary? I don’t think so, but both of those people would quite honestly be able to tell that shameless street observer, “yes, I have a tattoo”.

We can be quite scornful of those little pieces, but they are all part of what got us to where we are today. No tattooist turned those people away and you can still find them on flash racks even now if you want them... and people do. In fact to some tattooists, this is the bread and butter stuff that keeps their doors open every day of the week.

I don’t have a point this week (do I ever?), but it’s enough to accept that even the small things have their part to play in the genesis of something much bigger. We shouldn’t diss it, so long as it’s done as well as it possibly can be.

Anyway, back to my cop show... 



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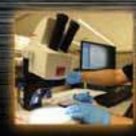


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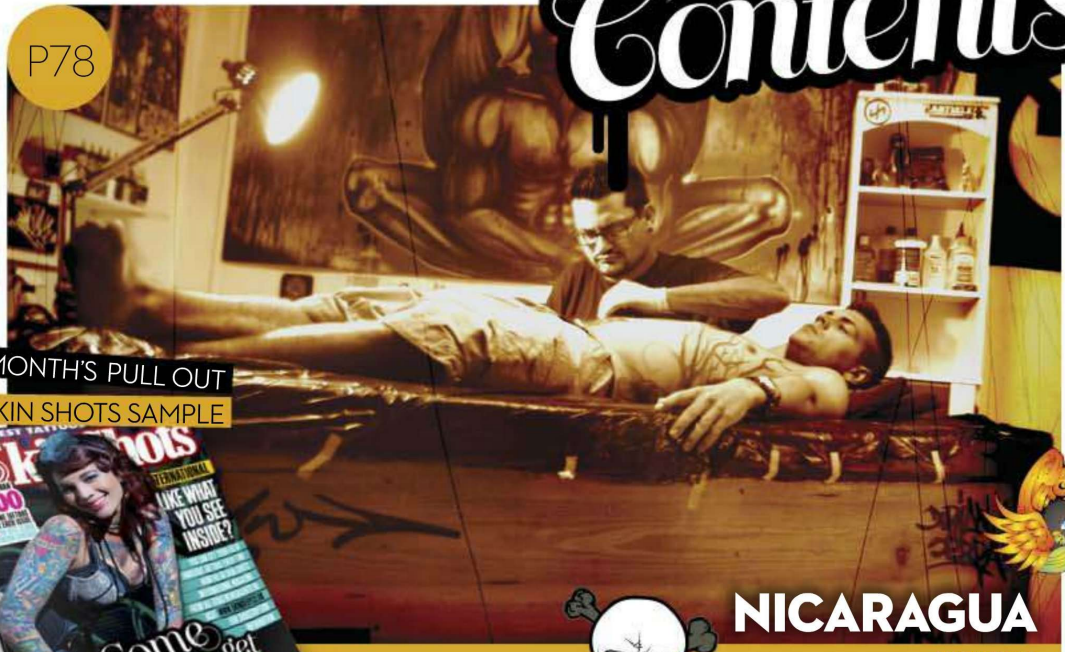
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THIS MONTH'S PULL OUT  
SKIN SHOTS SAMPLE



## ARTIST PROFILES

**24 AEL LIM**  
Imagine Tattoo, a little tattoo studio tucked away in the old police headquarters in a remote part of Singapore's Chinatown, is home to tattoo artist, Ael Lim. We felt it was time to throw some questions at him and see what he came back with.

**32 CECIL PORTER**  
Asked to describe himself in one word, California-based artist, Cecil Porter, chooses 'lucky' without skipping a beat. But tracing hundreds of comics in his youth didn't hurt his career either. A talented yet humble tattooer and art nerd, you know he's got to be something special.

**56 THE GILDED CAGE**  
Sometimes, the underground throws up a name that gets consistently bandied around as someone that's seriously going places. In the case of James Robinson, we didn't have long to wait...

**70 CHAD CHASE**  
Maine-based tattooist, Chad Chase, was flying low under my radar before I was introduced to him by the guys at Formula 51. But at soon as I saw his work, I knew we had to get him on board big time.

## NICARAGUA

ON THE ROAD

## PIEW CHOQUETTE

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

## ARTIST PROFILES

**78 ON THE ROAD: NICARAGUA**  
OK, so Nicaragua might not be the first country that springs to mind when you mention the phrase 'call centre', but as AK47 owner, Chuck Serpa, takes us for

a stroll around the streets, it appears that it's big news...

**84 INK FOR HEROES**  
The two-day event that is Ink For Heroes is one of the favourites on the circuit, never failing to supply amazement somewhere along the line!



## CELEBRITY SKIN

**64 JESSE SCHENKER**  
Start among the grease and burgers in the back of a McDonald's, take a detour through Gordon Ramsay's kitchen and finish at a restaurant in New York City's trendy West Village and you've got 29-year-old Chef Jesse Schenker's career path in a nutshell. Suffice it to say, he's all kinds of interesting.



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# Sleeve Notes

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## SHORT SLEEVES

### GILDED CAGE

If you keep your ear to the ground, you'll already know that the very awesome James Robinson's new studio, Gilded Cage, is open and ready to roll all over you with his top drawer work. For the full hit, check out the feature later in the mag. Meantime, you can find them at 106 St James St, Brighton or give them a call on 01273 933420.



### SMOKIN' ACE

Kneill X from Smokin' Ace Tattoo Studio/Woody's Tattoo Studio will be doing a rare guest spot at Self-made Tattoo Studio, Regent Road, Great Yarmouth over August Bank Holiday weekend (Aug 26-27). If anyone in the area would like to take the opportunity to book an appointment, then please get in touch through the Smokin' Ace website: [www.smokinacetattooostudio.co.uk](http://www.smokinacetattooostudio.co.uk).

### CRAZY MONKEY

Crazy Monkey is a new Modern Tattoo Studio based in Aston Fields, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. The Studio is the home of accredited artist, Dazza, and European artist, Lukasz. If you are considering a tattoo then you can either have your own custom design or choose from one of thousands of tattoo designs. The studio has a friendly and welcoming atmosphere and prides itself on its hygiene and cleanliness. Large LCD TVs, free tea and coffee, and free WiFi. Visit [www.planettattoo.co.uk](http://www.planettattoo.co.uk) or contact 07928 501536.

## PAUL NAYLOR ON THE ROAD

At the end of August, Paul Naylor will be leaving Powerhouse Tattoo, Northwich, and will be 'on the road'. Over to you sir: "It's something I've been thinking about for a long time, and am excited to be passing the reins of the studio over to Lisa Toye. I shall be working between a number of studios, including Oddboy's Real Art Studio in Leicester, Bez's Triple Six Studio in Sunderland, and Mel Mellors Wildstyle Tattoo in Knaresborough. I shall still be guesting in Northwich regularly too. For bookings and more information, please contact me at [paulnaylorstatoos@gmail.com](mailto:paulnaylorstatoos@gmail.com) or on 07752 273305. Please check out my new website at [www.paulnaylorstatoos.co.uk](http://www.paulnaylorstatoos.co.uk).

**SHORT SLEEVES****LIVING COLOUR**

Living Colour has expanded! The beautiful south Wales studio is now spread over two floors and boasts a larger waiting/ reception room, a spacious workroom, two private studios, a private piercing room, a laser removals clinic, reprographics area, and a dedicated sterilization department. They also have private parking on the doorstep. Due to this vast expansion, a position has now come available for a new artist to join the Living Colour team. Any portfolios must be sent to [livingcolourtattoos@hotmail.com](mailto:livingcolourtattoos@hotmail.com) or dropped in at the studio!

**MAVERICK'S TATTOO & PIERCING**

Maverick's Tattoo and Piercing Studio is proud to announce the opening of its new studio. Relaxed open plan studio with a 1950s vibe offering custom pieces from three artists. Private room also available. You can find them at Maverick's Tattoo and Piercing Studio, Unit 3, East Devon Business Park, Wilmington, Honiton, Devon, EX14 9RL, or visit at [www.maverickstattooandpiercingstudio.co.uk](http://www.maverickstattooandpiercingstudio.co.uk).

**SOMETHING FOR THE DIARY**

Here's a nice little outing for y'all: Ouch! Tattoo and Kustom Culture Expo September 15-16 at Las Palmeras Resort, Crevillente (Alicante, Spain). International artists, custom car & bike show, pin-up contest, graffiti contest, fashion show, live music, and more. Camping, hotel, bars and restaurant onsite. Weekend tickets €10 advance, €15 on the day. [www.ouchexpo.com](http://www.ouchexpo.com)  
[ouchtattoo@live.co.uk](mailto:ouchtattoo@live.co.uk)

**RANDOM READER****CAKE PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MONTH**

Man, you just cannot say no to a great cake photo. There's not even any need to actually get married just to get a nice cake you know? All you need to do is hand over some cash... it's cheaper in the long run! Only teasing. Kinda. Anyway, the guys over at Restoration Cake can fulfill just about any cake need you might have. Take a look at this tattoo-inspired design, nice... mmm. Now design something yourself, pick up the phone (dial this number: 07794 469689 and ask for Charlotte), hand over the bucks, wait just a little longer, and pretty soon the cake will be all yours. If you'd like to think about it a little though, go here: [restorationcake.co.uk](http://restorationcake.co.uk) to begin planning your next day off. Sorry. We get a little carried away around cake pictures.

**NEW STUDIO IN LIVERPOOL**

GOLD INK is now open for business in the Cavern Quarter of Liverpool. Because of its unique location they have a custom painted room done by Paul McCartney's nephew Max. Looks swell – check it out...

**SHUB ZERO TH COMETH**

Our buddy Brian Ewing and his pal, Justin Jewett, have given us a little sneak peak at a Japanese Kaiju toy that they're launching at the New York Comic Con in October. Absolutely nothing to do with tattooing whatsoever, but some things are so damn cool, they bypass all regular convention. Stay tuned!



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## TATTOO JAM ON THE HORIZON

Now taking place on October 12-14 2012, Tattoo Jam is the most exciting, most anticipated, and most talked about tattoo event of the year. Once again Tattoo Jam is taking place at the Doncaster Racecourse, UK. With its recent £34 million development, this venue provides the perfect, state-of-the-art location for our three-day event.

With 300-plus working artists, a day devoted specifically to those in the industry (ARTIST friDAY), seminars, workshops, the Tattoo Masters' Ball, trade stands, vendors, and lots of live entertainment, Tattoo Jam is an unmissable event for anyone with an interest in ink. The Tattoo Master's Ball this year has a 'horror' theme – the efforts made for our infamous fancy dress competitions are something to behold! We are now still confirming artists, vendors, traders and entertainment for this year's great event in October and we look forward to welcoming you all there for another memorable weekend! Bring it on!



### SHORT SLEEVES

## ANTI = ART DEALER + TATTOO

A fine mix of an exhibition space for art and a tattoo studio – if you're interested taking up some space or playing nicely together, here's the details:

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## 50 SHADES

Shades of Gray tattoo studio originally started in 1988 in Cambridge and also had successful studios in Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, and Hitchin, Hertfordshire. Now situated in Letchworth Garden City, the owner, Mick Gray, specialises in all types/styles of work and has won many awards for doing so.

Kitty has worked alongside Mick for four years and can also help you with any piercing requirements.

They're now open Monday-Friday 12-7 and Saturday 10-5. To see examples of Mick and Kitty's work – [facebook.com/shadesofgraytattoo](http://facebook.com/shadesofgraytattoo), Shades of Gray, Garden Square Shopping Centre, Letchworth, SG6 3DL.

## EXTREME NEEDLE

As promised, Extreme Needle have opened another quality studio right in the heart of London. You can find the new studio in Covent Garden (36 Martins Court to be exact – 02072 406177). Pawel Strinski can be found there right now too. Bonus! You can also find them in Leicester Square and in Chinatown. Check them out at [extremeneedle.co.uk](http://extremeneedle.co.uk).



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## THE BLOGOSPHERE

# HERO WORSHIP

This is Tim MacLean. In keeping with the zeitgeist of the moment – and because we unashamedly adore superhero flicks as much as the next guy – we figured it was pretty damned essential to flaunt some of his latest work under your nose

Why? Because we know that superhero tats are cool as hell, but you guys out there seem to be content to roll with the way it's always been done – pinching things from the people who stole them before you. We'd like to see some different slants on the theme, so, by foisting the imagination of Tim MacLean on you, we'd be absolutely knocked out to see you embracing some of his madness and coming up with something new.

Anyway, these firecrackers – and more variations which can be found at [timmacleanart.co.uk](http://timmacleanart.co.uk) – are currently on show (until August 31) at the Subtext Gallery in San Diego allowing for/ following the mega-influx of people to the Comic Con no doubt. There are 13 paintings and seven drawings in this series as well as prints. As I write this, if you're looking for original pieces, most have been sold now, but there are plenty of prints still on sale which you order online at [subtextgallery.com/shows/tim-maclean](http://subtextgallery.com/shows/tim-maclean).

A final word on Tim...

he's a home-grown hero for a change. Yep, normally when we dive into the realms of art in the big wide world, it always seems to come from somewhere else, but Tim hails from the highlands of Scotland. His official bio says it better than we ever could and looks a little like this:

*"He creates surreal paintings which explore the mystery of consciousness and how it is shaped by language and culture. Focus is placed upon our everyday conceptions of the mind, along with past and present discoveries in psychology and neuroscience and how*



*we engage with these to better understand ourselves. The otherworldly environments of Tim's paintings are populated with characters and figures inspired by the ages of history, pop culture and myth, among others and his own unique imagination supplies the rest."*

Personally, I think his work more than speaks for itself. Get with the programme and check the guy out. Be inspired, buy something, get some ink... do something!



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PAUL SWEENEY



## GAME FOR A LAUGH

### UK SHOWS

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#### MAIDEN CITY INK TATTOO CONVENTION

St Columb's Hall, Orchard Street, Derry City Northern Ireland  
Info: Zac at Skin Art Tattoo, 02871 363076  
maidencityink@aol.com



October 12-14

#### TATTOO JAM

Doncaster Racecourse, Doncaster South Yorkshire  
www.tattoojam.com

October 27-28

#### HALLOWEEN TATTOO BASH

The Coal Exchange, Cardiff  
www.facebook.com/halloweentattoobash



January 13, 2013

#### TATTOO FREEZE

Telford International Centre Telford, Shropshire  
www.tattoofreeze.com

### INTERNATIONAL

August 31-Sept 2

#### ROSKILDE VIKING TATTOO EXPO

Rabalderstraede 1, 4000 Roskilde Denmark  
www.inkexpo.dk

September 7-9

#### CASTELLON TATTOO CONVENTION

Recinto Pergola, Pseo Ribalta, Spain  
www.castellontattooconvention.com

September 13-16

#### PARADISE TATTOO GATHERING

Keystone Resort, Keystone, CO 80435, USA  
www.tattooathering.com  
gabe@tattoonow.com

September 14-16

#### ASSEN TATTOO EXPO

De Bonte Wever, Assen, Netherlands  
www.tattooexpo.eu

October 6-7

#### ST GALLEN INTERNATIONAL TATTOO CONVENTION

Fürstenlandsaal, 9200 Gossau, Switzerland  
www.tattoo-convention-sg.ch

November 23-25

#### BRUSSELS TATTOO CONVENTION

Tours & Taxis, Brussels, Belgium  
Website: www.brusselstattooconvention.be

While all eyes are firmly fixated on the lycra-clad Olympians currently flexing and stretching in and around our great capital, there's another fine example of British ambition being displayed throughout August

Across the cobbled streets of Edinburgh the tension rises as the entertainment industry embarks upon another year of stress, desperation and crippling financial commitment, all courtesy of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival; an unyielding beast hell-bent on consuming every morsel of dignity from all who so choose to partake in the month-long gauntlet, where only the bravest enter, the strongest survive and the stupidest return.

For those of you 'athletic types' grimacing at the sheer barefaced cheek of my comparison between "Grrr sports grrr" and [raised eyebrows, puckered lips] "mmm the arts darling!" consider this your chance to unclench your teeth and smooth your furrowed brows, press your lips together and raise an eyebrow... or two. The Edinburgh Fringe truly

is the most demanding month in any performer's calendar, yet year after year we return, performing at all hours of the day and night, on the streets, in the back rooms of pubs and inside giant upside-down purple cow tents, running from venue to venue through steep cobbled inclines, come rain or shine, hell or high water, whilst all the time desperately trying to maintain a firm grip on reality. This is the real cost of 'fame' where real

entertainers learn their trade, these tradesmen that build their foundations out of pure ambition to succeed are athletes in their chosen fields.

Much like the world of body modification, the arts and their enthusiasts have often suffered from misrepresentation, obvious stereotyping, and varying degrees of discrimination. But despite the condescending looks and murmurs of disapproval, the tradition of

our chosen fields live on. It takes far more than the odd wince or snide comment to distract us from continuing the fine history of what we love. Because despite not having the approval of the person sat opposite us on the train or walking past us down the street, we know we have the support of those who stood before us and those who still stand around us. It may feel as

though at times we are only one, but we are one of many, many

successful individuals who've suffered the same hardships, completed the same challenges, received the same criticisms, and lived to tell the tale.

I feel like I've just given you all a pre-battle motivational talk. If you have the chance to re-read this article, may I suggest you do so whilst listening to the 1812 Overture, Op.49 Finale by Tchaikovsky... I think you'll find it gives the piece a certain patriotic revelry.



THE EDINBURGH FRINGE TRULY IS THE MOST DEMANDING MONTH IN ANY PERFORMER'S CALENDAR. YET YEAR AFTER YEAR WE RETURN...

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"Some sins don't wash away..."



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# BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

In keeping with our rummaging in the drawers for stockpiles of great art, here's some after hours magic from our buddy, Piew Choquette, from *Tatouage-Royal* in Montreal – complete with colour commentary from the man himself

**B**onjour, je m'appelle Piew. I'm a tattoo artist and a painter. I am most passionate about American traditional tattooing, though I collect and appreciate a wide variety of styles. I work at *Tatouage-Royal* in Montreal, Quebec. You can find me tattooing at many conventions in North America, and maybe over in Europe soon too.

When I'm not tattooing, my passion is painting. I spend seven to eight hours a week painting and working on traditional designs – though like everybody else, I'd like to dedicate more time to my personal art.

I prefer to work in acrylics; having worked with almost all mediums, I must say this one suits my style the best. I want to achieve a very realistic approach with my paintings, which is the opposite of my work as a tattooer. I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to work as a tattooer and a painter as it's the best of both worlds! I'm looking forward to sharing with you, many traditional tattoos for fans of bold, black lines and solid colour work, as well as many more realistic paintings that I hope will help you appreciate how art and tattooing can live in harmony... 🐾





# the bad guy

Passivity can sometimes be the main tactic in battle, like silence in a discussion, and no one knows and masters that art better than Bad Buddha...

You can almost cut the tension inside the Tango Palace in Malmö, Sweden, with a knife.

It's time for the third clash of the Wrestling South Federation and the combatants are preparing for the fight, all in their own manner. Some are wandering up and down the hallway, others warm up in the ring, while on an old plush sofa in one of the corners sits what is one of the more mythical, mystical, and yes, even legendary, wrestlers ever to have entered a ring in the south of Sweden, meditating.

Simon Lundh



IT'S SAID THAT HE'S BEEN SOME SORT OF WARRIOR MONK IN A MOUNTAIN MONASTERY IN TIBET... THEY USED TO SAY HE WAS THE SIXTH ELEMENT

Bad Buddha was discovered by his manager, Reijo the Knife, sometime in the beginning of what the Christians call the third century, but nobody knows where he really originates from.

"It's said that he's been some sort of warrior monk in a mountain monastery in Tibet, but some people claim that he comes from the Mekong Delta and that one day he just came walking out of there. They used to say he was the sixth element," says one of his biggest fans, Photogenic Phil.

Normally Reijo the Knife does all the talking since Bad Buddha himself has taken a vow of silence (if you're the sixth element there's no need to talk, Phil says), but his manager has temporarily

disappeared under mysterious circumstances and will probably continue to be missing for the next six to eight years. Incidentally he was one of those who started GBG Wrestling, the Gothenburg predecessor to Wrestling South, before he even found his bellicose jewel from the east.

"Reijo used to get drunk with Marko the Balkan, a member of the Yugoslavian mafia, around Kortedala Square in Gothenburg," Photogenic Phil continues. "Together they started to organize fights – the first one was held in a Greek restaurant on just sleeping pads. It was always sold out."

This was 2003. A year later, after continuous hard training since his arrival in Sweden in the middle 🙏





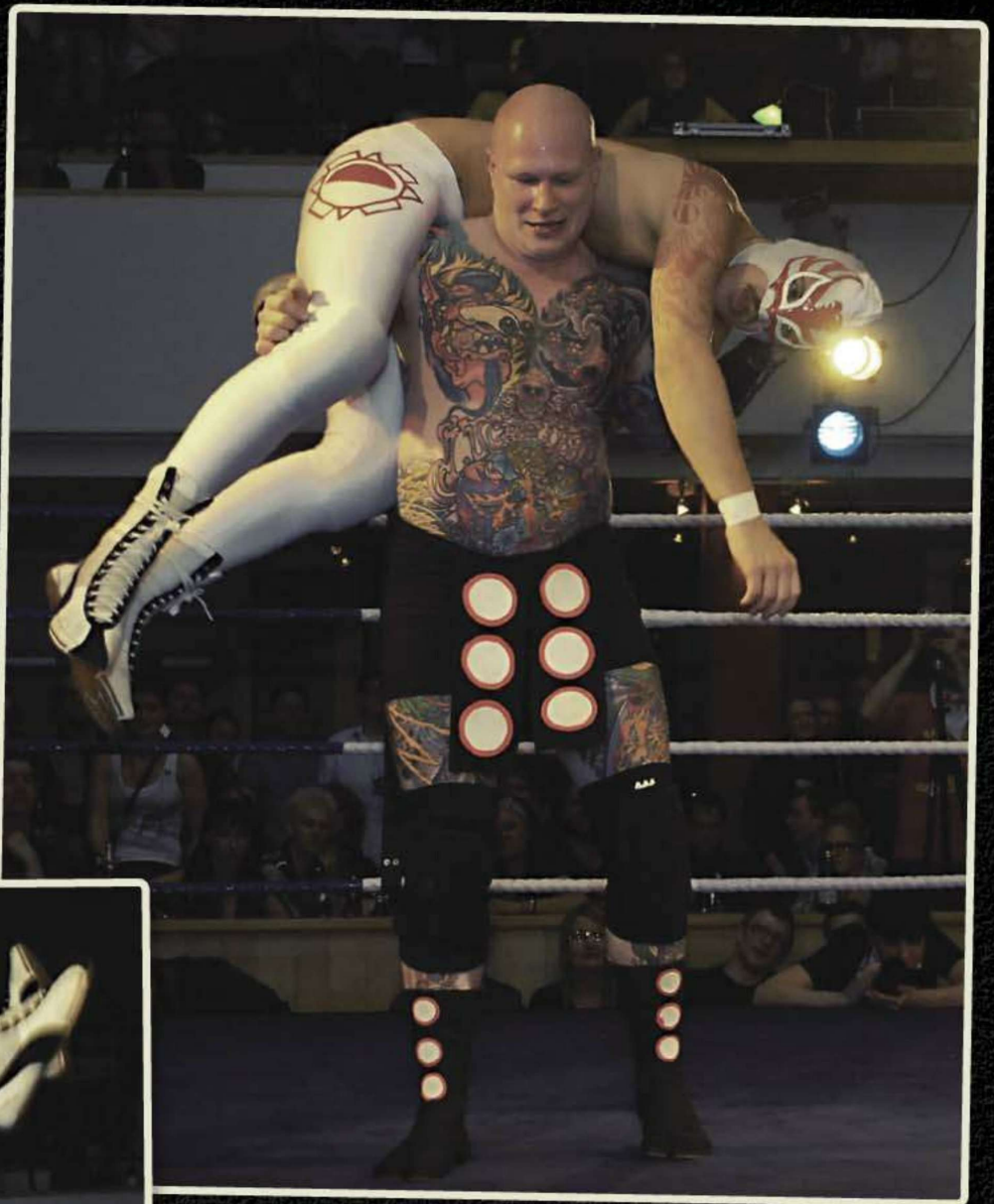


of the '90s, Bad Buddha joined the community, upon which he partook in bringing Swedish wrestling outside of its stronghold in Gothenburg.

A gala was arranged in Stockholm, but nowadays most of the action takes place in the Tango Palace in Malmö. This was also the site of Bad Buddha's biggest triumph of his career, as he brought the notorious Killer Karlsson to his knees.

"It was by far the most difficult battle of all, but he came out stronger than ever. His goal with every fight is to achieve inner peace. That's what you're after; to just be and live with every breath, like Bushidō (the way of the warrior) says."

Bad Buddha's body is adorned with various ink-based art, and even that has, of course, a deeper



HE WILL ENTER ANY RING AT ANY TIME, WHEREVER IT'S NEEDED. SOMETIMES TO FIGHT INJUSTICE, SOMETIMES JUST TO HUMBLE PEOPLE

layer to it: "It's to decorate your temple and protect it from evil spirits." Some have been collected in the Orient, but some have also been procured on Swedish grounds. "He wants to collect as much constructive power as possible from as many artists as possible – it has been said that Kalle Södergren at Rebel Tattoo, Tony Skate at City Tattoo, and Erik at Buzzstop 28 (all in Gothenburg) have contributed, but no one really knows for sure."

In the third fight of the evening, Bad Buddha enters the ring. This night he faces Aguila Roja, and the Mexican never stands a chance. The audience is ecstatic and Buddha himself almost sweats his philosophies of life after using

both of his trademark moves, The Farmer's Toss and The Buddha Bomb. Left on the floor, Roja lies defeated and humiliated long after the warrior monk has left the ring and returned to his inner tranquility.

"The much feared Buddha Bomb means that you take a hold of the top ropes of the ring and land with your ass on the opponent's chest. In The Farmer's Toss he lifts the adversary up onto his shoulders and throws him over himself."

When he will battle the next time, no one knows. Not even him. "He will enter any ring at any time, wherever it's needed. Sometimes to fight injustice, sometimes just to humble people." 🐼

The Charles Bridge in Prague.

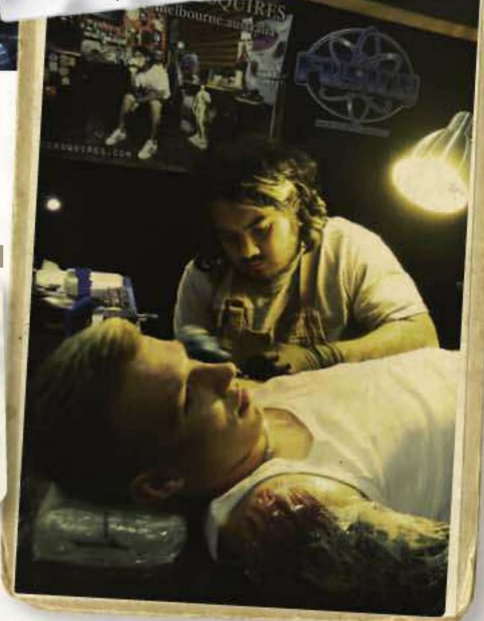


EVERY DAY IS A

# WINDING ROAD...

Time flies when you're having fun, and it goes supersonic when you are travelling. As we hurtle towards the second half of 2012 I stop to ponder the places we have been so far this year, I look in my diary and realise my travel plans are now booked and sorted until March

Mick Squires at rock 'n' ink.



For now though I am making a rare stop and setting my sleeping roll down in the town of Stolberg near Aachen, 6km from the Belgian border, where I will be spending the week at Bodyscript Tattoo. The studio has been around for a little over ten years and has a great vibe, friendly, and relaxed with a nice sized reception area adorned with framed, hand-painted flash, and artwork, taxidermy deer heads and cuckoo clocks. It's just the right amount of modern with a touch of classical German heritage.

Artist/ owner, Carina, works full-time along with Jason who is originally from the UK, and apprentice, Sabastian. The shop 'family' have been at so many

conventions this year that after arriving, settling in is easy and I feel like I'm visiting old friends. Carina is a good all-round artist and has built a strong reputation for the shop over the last decade. Jason specialises in Japanese tattoos splitting the time in his working month between Munich, Aachen and England. The shop caters for most styles of tattooing, customising whatever their customers bring in, creating something they will be happy with. There are no egos, no cool kids, just good tattoos and happy customers, and that is probably why it has done so well in a relatively small town. The week is extremely busy delivering me a bit of everything and working on random artwork and ideas, which

is why I love working in walk-in street shops.

"When I first opened the shop I couldn't have dreamt it would be busy enough for three full-time artists," Carina tells me "I went to visit the other tattoo shops in Aachen before I opened and talked to them because that's respectful, they told me it was no problem as we're in the next town over, but that respect has gone from tattooing now." With so many shops popping up in almost every town, its nice to see somewhere like Bodyscript doing well by sticking to what they do best, consistent work in a great environment where customers



**I WENT TO VISIT THE OTHER TATTOO SHOPS IN AACHEN BEFORE I OPENED AND TALKED TO THEM BECAUSE THAT'S RESPECTFUL, THEY TOLD ME IT WAS NO PROBLEM AS WE'RE IN THE NEXT TOWN OVER, BUT THAT RESPECT HAS GONE FROM TATTOOING NOW**

*With Jason and Carina at Bodyscript*



can feel comfortable.

Music and tattoos have always seemed to go hand-in-hand, so what do you get when you mix a three-day music festival with a tattoo convention? Well you get Rock 'n' Ink the aptly named three-day extravaganza in Chemnitz, East Germany. I have spent a fair bit of time in East Germany, but as the weather is improving, green trees and colour are replacing the grey harshness that greeted us on previous visits.

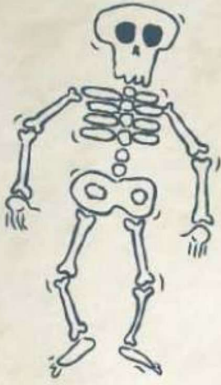
The show is organised by the very talented and well-respected German artist, Randy Englehard, who works at Heaven of Colour. An artist of his calibre has some equally talented friends, many of which turn up and work on a 'mega-booth' together. Among them, Paul Acker, Roman Abrego, Mick Squires, Crispy Lennox and Tommy Lee, who between them clean up a lot of

awards over the weekend.

The music sure is loud; artists get given earplugs thankfully, and at one point during the headline band's set, I'm sure the walls of the booth were vibrating! Germans are very hospitable people and working a convention organised by a tattoo artist is always particularly great – they truly understand what makes a show enjoyable for the artists. The food over the weekend was exceptionally good, and its great being able to nip backstage and grab something to eat on a real plate with a real knife and fork without having to queue up. It was nice catching up with Mick 🍷



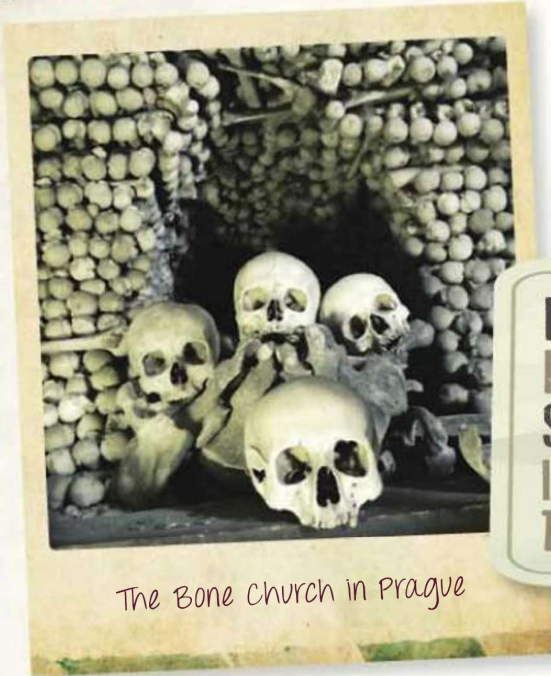
*Rock 'n' Ink Chemnitz*



as I hadn't seen him since I was out in Australia, and I also got to have a few beers with Mr. Halbstark, who is quickly becoming one of my favourite German friends... the guy really cracks me up!

After the convention we head even further east to Prague, which is a short two-hour drive from Chemnitz into the bordering country of the Czech Republic. Before reaching Prague we take

Prague



The Bone Church in Prague

**HUMAN BONES HANG FROM EVERY ARCH, DOORWAY AND CEILING SPACE, TOWERS OF SKULLS RISE FROM THE FLOOR WHILE AN IMPRESSIVE BONE CHANDELIER HANGS FROM THE CENTRE OF THE ROOM**

a slight detour to the town of Kutna Hora to visit a place I have always wanted to see, the Sedlec Ossuary, or better known as the Bone Church. It is a bit of a pain to find (especially without a satnav) but when we arrive we are not disappointed. It contains the remains of 40,000 people which decorate the inside of the building – human bones hang from every arch, doorway and ceiling space, towers of skulls rise from the floor while an impressive bone chandelier hangs from the centre of the room, it all makes for great reference material for tattooing and I leave with a full memory card!

One of my favourite painters, the great master of Art Nouveau, Alphonse Mucha, is from the Czech Republic, which was known in his time as Moravia. Prague is full of his art and design so it is a treat for any fan of his work that his influence can be found

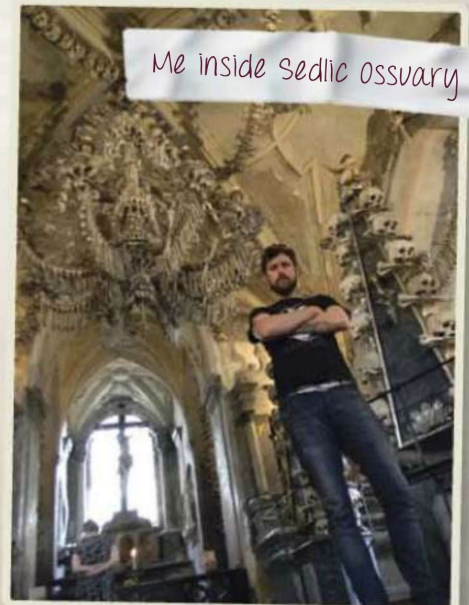
everywhere. The municipal building is decorated both inside and out by the artist – viewing the inside in all its art deco glory is like stepping back in time.

There is a brilliant museum in the city, looked after by the Mucha foundation, which exhibits all of his famous Art Nouveau posters and some interesting preparative sketches and photographs. His last great works celebrating Slavic history, 'The Slav Epic', are on display at the Veletržní Palác just ten minutes from Prague centre. Most of the city's architecture is very grand and decorative; the Charles Bridge, which crosses the Vltava River joining the old town to main part of the city, is a great walk on a nice day.

There are 30 Baroque-style statues along the bridge depicting saints and patron saints, all of which look very cool and impressive perched along the old gothic structure. Prague is a beautiful city made even more

special by the fact we were gifted with glorious sunshine and near 30°C heat. Our two days went past in the blink of an eye and I think I shall try and return to work the convention here next year so I can experience some more of this beautiful city, and more importantly, its beer! 🍺

Me inside Sedlec ossuary



**JOHN CAPON  
CELEBRATING 35yrs  
TATTOOING**

*John Capon's*  
**Art Attack**  
**TATTOO STUDIO**



*John Capon's Art Attack* 

**My heartfelt thanks go out to all the Tattooists dead and alive, who have influenced me over the last 35yrs, all the guys who have worked with me in Haverhill, Bury St Edmunds, Clacton and Great Yarmouth and especially the crew at Art Attack who have spurred me on with their enthusiasm and skill. And of course a big thank you to all my customers old and new who have made it all possible**

**John Capon**

**84a Regent Road, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk**

# IMAGINE ALL THE PEOPLE...

Imagine Tattoo, a little tattoo studio tucked away in the old police headquarters in a remote part of Singapore's Chinatown, is home to tattoo artist, Ael Lim. Known for his amazing realism work, Ael has been tattooing since 2007... and we felt it was time to throw some questions at him and see what he came back with







**SO AEL, WHAT FIRST GOT YOU INTERESTED IN TATTOOING?**

It was many years back, a good friend of mine once showed me a tattoo that he had recently gotten done. My curiosity and interest started from there and it eventually led to me designing and then getting my first tattoo done. It was a very painful experience, but it definitely sparked a new interest in me.

**HOW DID YOU GO ABOUT GETTING YOUR FOOT IN THE DOOR; DID YOU DO AN APPRENTICESHIP OR DID**

**YOU LEARN OFF YOUR OWN BACK?**

I started by asking around my friends to see if they knew anyone working as a tattoo artist, or who worked in a tattoo shop. Eventually I got lucky and I was accepted by my mentor, Wang, of Skin Design Tattoo. I had to do everything from studio maintenance like cleaning the tubes and sweeping the floor, to running errands. But I was definitely rewarded as he tirelessly taught me everything I needed to know. This set down the foundation for a full one-and-

a-half years, which helped me greatly throughout my journey to today.

**WHAT OR WHO INFLUENCED YOU IN BEING A TATTOOIST AND ARTIST?**

The whole tattoo community and great artists like Boris, Robert Hernandez, Bob Tyrell, Jeff Gogue, Nikko Hurtado, Guy Architson. I have been following their work over the years and they still influence and motivate me now.

Are tattoos and tattooing popular in Singapore?

Being born and raised in 🇸🇬



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195 Pearl's Hill Terrace  
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168976

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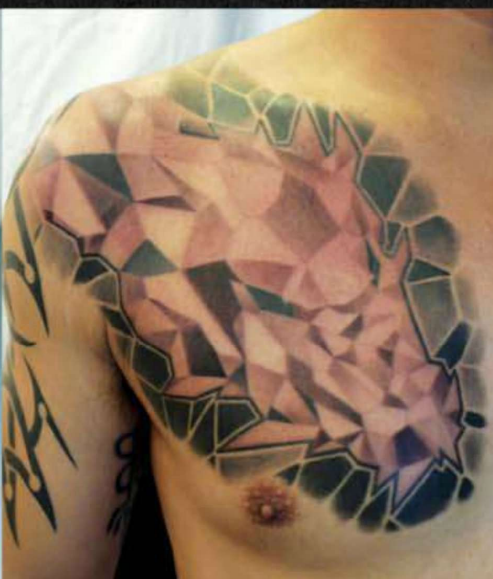
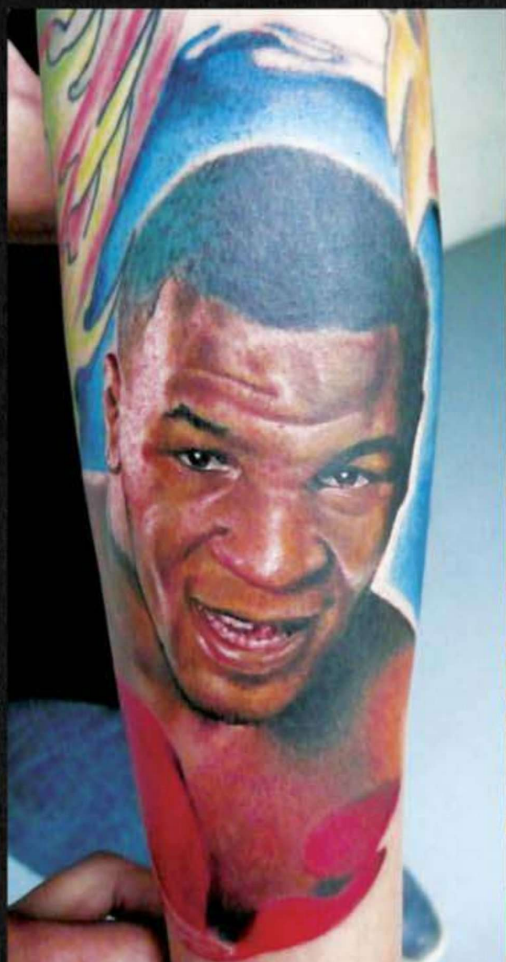
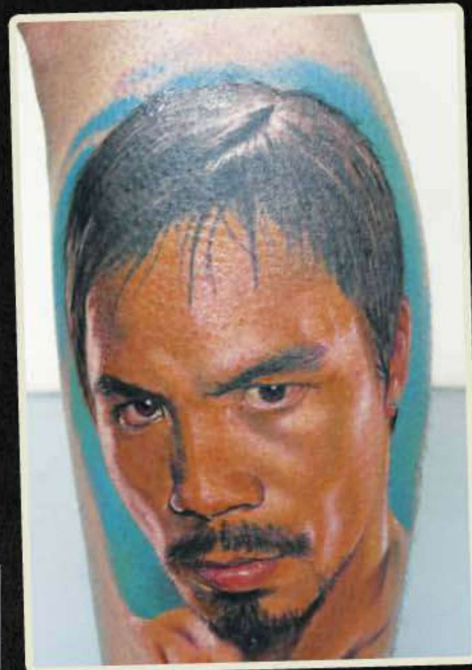
Singapore, tattooing along the years has become increasingly popular amongst people of many age groups. These days, due to the influence of social media and the internet, I get more clients from other countries, on top of my pool of local clients. I find this amazing, especially as I haven't travelled much to overseas tattoo conventions. It is always more refreshing to have new waves of tattoo requests from overseas. It is really moving when customers arrange to fly in, to make getting a

tattoo from me a major priority in their travel plans.

In Singapore, are there any traditions or customs in tattooing that you follow that are different from other parts of the world?

I think we are pretty much the same here as any other developed countries. You'll get people learning tattooing by buying stuff from the internet and practising on friends and others, like myself, learning by being an apprentice. Because Singapore is a relatively young country in terms of tattoo

THESE DAYS, DUE TO THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE INTERNET, I GET MORE CLIENTS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES, ON TOP OF MY POOL OF LOCAL CLIENTS



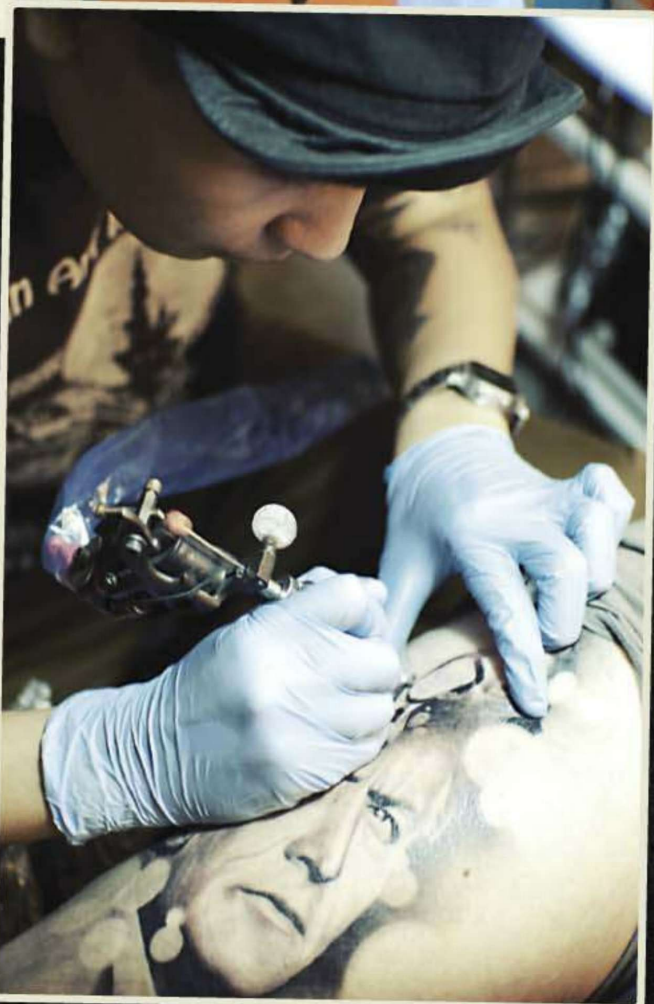
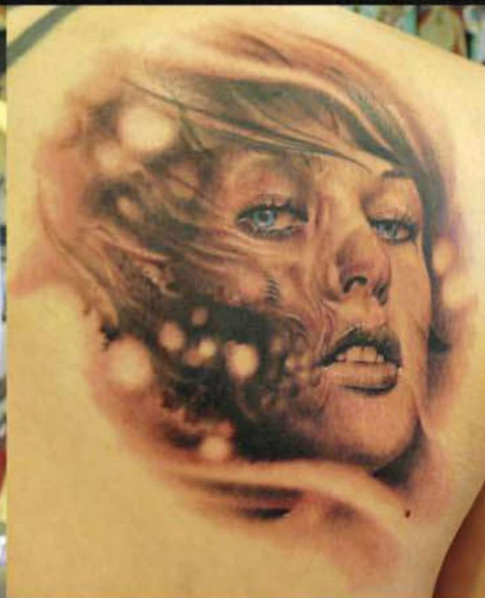
culture, we do not have rich history of tattoo practices as with places like Japan, New Zealand, or Borneo. In Singapore, it is still a fairly new industry to develop any special traditions. But I must say it isn't holding anything back, and with the influx of new graphic trained individuals turned tattoo artists entering the scene, I feel the future holds a lot of excitement. The only hold back is that the industry here still needs to go through a lot of maturing, education and exposure for upcoming tattoo artists.

**I BELIEVE THERE IS NO LEGAL MINIMUM AGE TO GET TATTOOED IN SINGAPORE... WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THIS?**

I definitely think that it is important to set an age limit for anyone that is too young to decide for themselves. As such, a young age only proves them to be too vulnerable and therefore make poor decisions. And with everything, with time and maturity, usually many things would have changed with their thinking and attitudes.

**TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOUR STUDIO AND THE NAME YOU CHOSE - IMAGINE:ENIGAMI.**

I work out of a small private studio that I own. It is situated quietly away from the bustle of the Chinatown district, in an old building. I prefer to work alone



SINGAPORE ISN'T HOLDING ANYTHING BACK AND WITH THE INFLUX OF NEW GRAPHIC TRAINED INDIVIDUALS TURNED TATTOO ARTISTS ENTERING THE SCENE, I FEEL THE FUTURE HOLDS A LOT OF EXCITEMENT

as I am totally absorbed when I work. 'Enigami', the reverse spelling of Imagine was inspired and then broken down into two different definitions put together – 'eni' means endless flowing stream, and 'gami' partially forms the word origami, which is the art of Japanese paper folding. Together it is meant to deliver the endless manifestations that a simple piece of paper could take form. Just like tattooing or any media, it's about approaching the same with different ways.

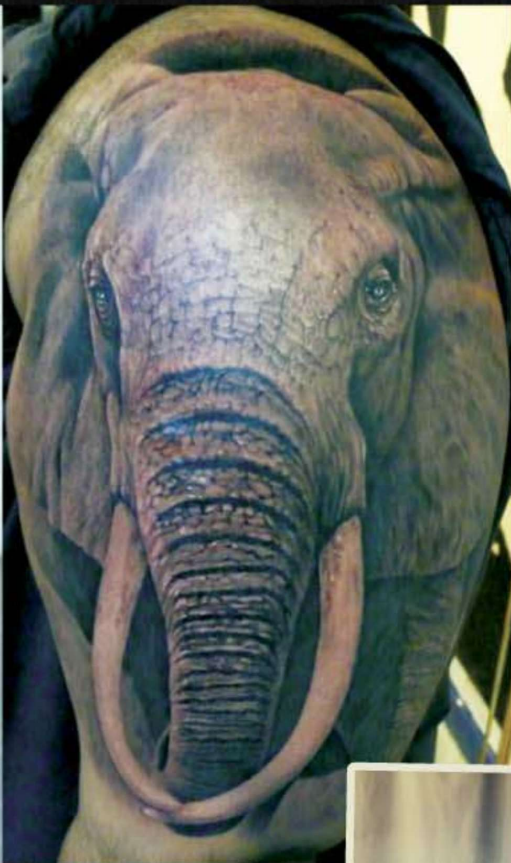
**YOUR FAVOURED STYLE OBVIOUSLY LEANS TOWARDS REALISTIC, WAS THIS STYLE YOUR CHOICE FROM THE BEGINNING OR DID YOU DIP**

**INTO DIFFERENT ONES FIRST?**

I was very attracted to realistic tattooing from the beginning, as it always amazes me how an artist can capture so much life in a tattoo. It feels as though it is magical to even see something so realistic, as a tattoo. So since the beginning I have always strived to perfect this. I started off doing easy stuff like stencil-styled portraits and then gradually I moved on to spiders and animals, and then human faces.

**DO YOU THINK THAT TATTOOING IS BECOMING AN ART FORM IN ITSELF?**

It has evolved, slowly shedding its past, from people who are covered 🌸



I WAS VERY ATTRACTED TO REALISTIC TATTOOING FROM THE BEGINNING, AS IT ALWAYS AMAZES ME HOW AN ARTIST CAN CAPTURE SO MUCH LIFE IN A TATTOO

(or even have one or two tattoos) being outcasts or outlaws, to now where it is an evident form of self-expression and individualism.

**DO YOU CARRY ON YOUR ART OUTSIDE OF TATTOOING, OR DO YOU HAVE OTHER INTERESTS?**

I do a bit of mixed mediums like charcoal drawings, crayons, airbrush, and oil/ acrylic paintings. In my free time I enjoy reading and collecting old stuff like watches, clothes, and vintage furniture.

**PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?**

I might think of opening another studio in the future, but currently one studio works out just fine for me. What I really would like to do is to start participating in conventions outside of Singapore and at the same time make new friends, learn more about other cultures, and enrich myself through travel and knowledge. I would also like to get myself some guest spots around the world... that would be awesome! 🤖



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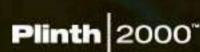
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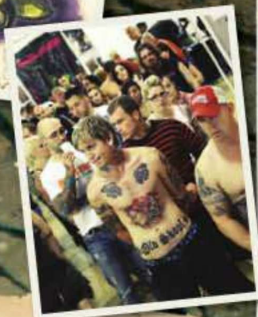
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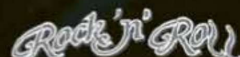
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# LUCKY STRIKE

CECIL PORTER

Asked to describe himself in one word, California-based artist, Cecil Porter, chooses 'lucky' without skipping a beat. Tracing hundreds of comics in his youth didn't hurt his career either. A talented, yet humble tattooer and art nerd, you know he's got to be something special



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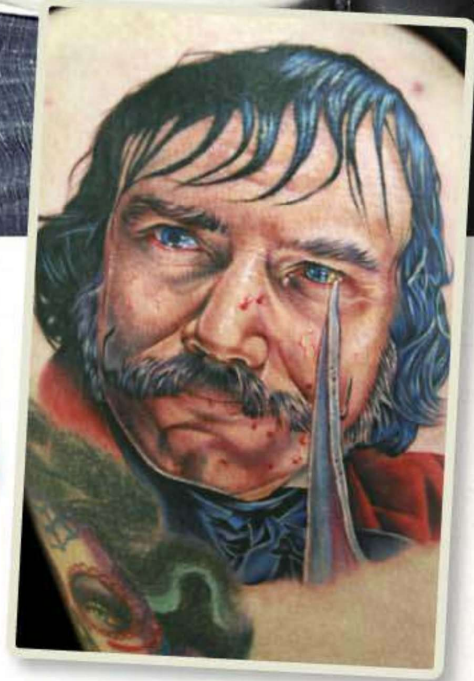
Barbara Pavone  
Cecil Porter

"I'd have to say it was a result of my dad's death," says Porter of how he first became interested in art. "See, when he died my mother moved us up to where her side of the family lived, and of course this meant a new school and no friends. Now, when my dad was alive, I was only interested in sports, so when we moved I tried to go out for the football team, but I just didn't fit in there, so I quit.

"There was this group of kids that would put up with me hanging around them and they would be drawing all the time, so in order to further fit in, I started to do the same. I had never really done any art before and I don't

remember what the first piece I had drawn was, but what I do remember was how I started... tracing. I would trace non-stop out of comics – I'll tell you something, after you have traced an arm 100 times, guess what? You remember how to draw an arm without tracing."

With his hopes set on attending art school as his hobby turned into his number one passion, Porter even had his college of choice picked out when unfortunately finances meant his scholastic dream never came to fruition. That's when books began to fill the void and it seems they have never stopped, and remain

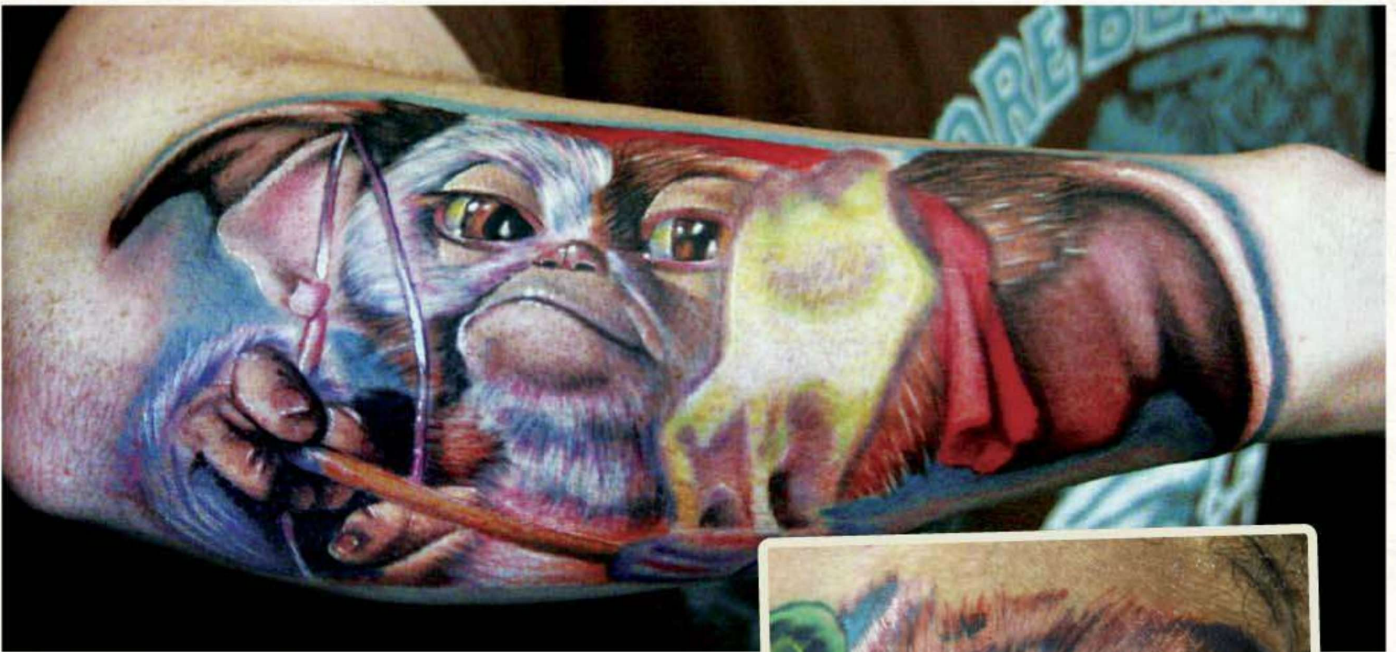


a favorite destination of his for artistic knowledge to this day.

"The most beneficial to me was a book by Betty Edwards, *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*, great book," he says. Slowly but surely he realised, as the smart ones do, that tattooing was a real and legitimate type of art, so he decided to widen his horizons, devoting everything he had to mastering the art of ink on skin.

"I literally stopped doing everything that wasn't tattoo-related. I only drew tattoo images,



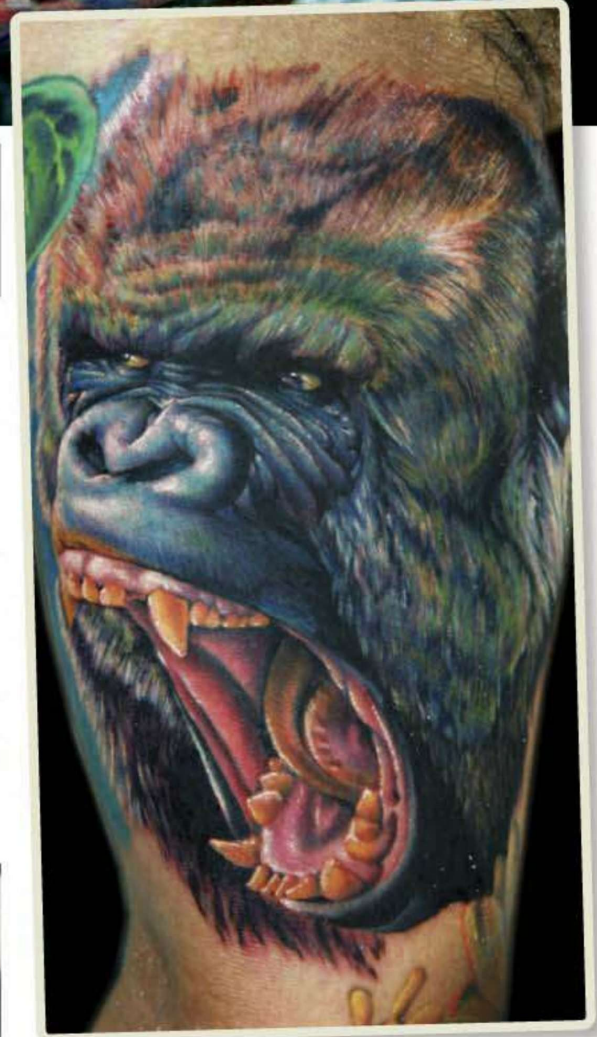


I'LL TELL YOU SOMETHING, AFTER YOU HAVE TRACED AN ARM A HUNDRED TIMES, GUESS WHAT, YOU REMEMBER HOW TO DRAW AN ARM WITHOUT TRACING

I stopped hanging out with friends, I would only tattoo and draw basically, but I don't feel this was negative. I once read that to become good at something you need to put in 10,000 hours. I'm very impatient, so I just did what I felt I had to in order to chisel that down quickly!

"I remember some of the first ones, but I'm not exactly positive which came first, probably because they were all horrible experiences! Of course they all led to doubts, but I felt I was a good enough artist that I could

be a decent tattooist if I could just learn the medium. Which it is. People don't usually think of it like that, but tattooing is just another art medium; the fundamentals don't change from one medium to the next, just the techniques you have to put forth to make the tools do what you want. I didn't apprentice, though I wanted to. Once I got into a shop, I developed a relationship with the owner, that of a friend and mentor, and I pretty much owe everything to him. Without Rodney's guidance and critiques, I



would have had no direction."

Learning from books, his mentor, and sheer determination, Cecil Porter has come a long way. He now owns his own private studio, which affords him the opportunity to strike the perfect balance between work and play and do everything by his own rules.

"I have no employees, I work at my pace on people I enjoy being around, I watch cartoons and read comics – it's just like having a clubhouse, so it's no stress at all," 🍌

he says, before admitting, "I don't play well with others. I know, that sounds horrible doesn't it? But I work hard at what I do and thank God that I have what I have because of it.

"This isn't a job. I'm blessed to wake up everyday and draw on people for a living. So when

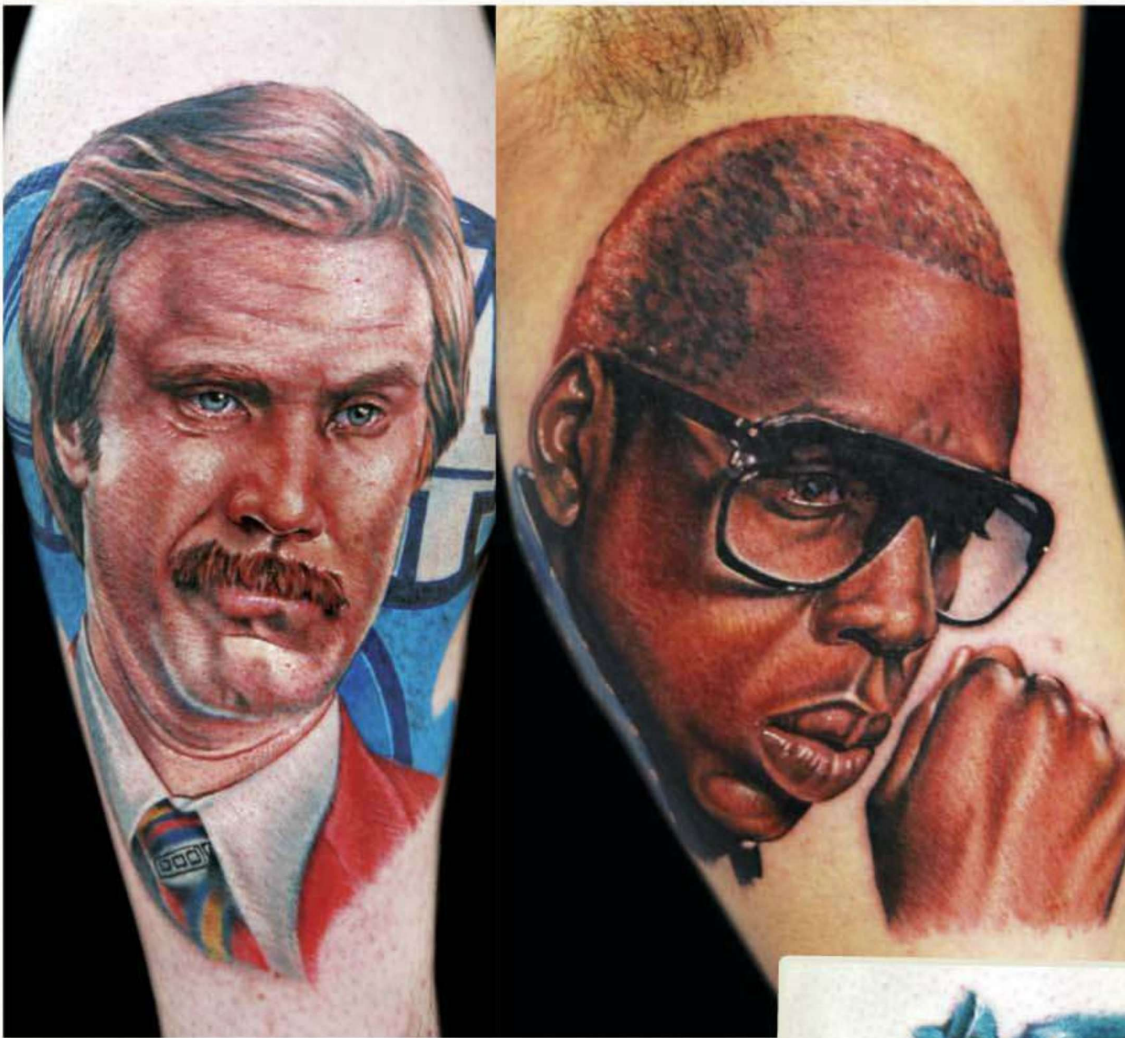
I work with assholes who bitch about how hard it is or how 'over it' they are, I get rubbed up the wrong way and I have no problem with expressing that. I can't stand the attitude of 'You're lucky I'm willing to tattoo you, kiss my ass and tell me how great I am'. I mean, I'm lucky someone

I ONCE READ THAT TO BECOME GOOD AT SOMETHING YOU NEED TO PUT IN 10,000 HOURS. I'M VERY IMPATIENT, SO I JUST DID WHAT I FELT I HAD TO IN ORDER TO CHISEL THAT DOWN QUICKLY!



walks into my studio and lets me permanently mark their body because they feel my art is worth wearing for the rest of their lives. I still can't get over it and I get paid to do it – this is great! So yeah, working alone just works for me." Although, admittedly, being isolated often acts as both a perk





### ON THE ROAD AGAIN

I work out of environments I'm used to and comfortable with. I have been very lucky to make friends – like Gump and Jimmy – all around the world, and when I travel, that's where I go. I've been to some of these places so much, Thou Art, for example, that they feel more like home than home to me. Convention-wise, I'm pretty much done with that, I only do the ones I feel are fun otherwise I don't bother.

WHAT MAKES IT HARD FOR ME IS IF I DO A PIECE I PERSONALLY LOVE, I CAN'T KEEP IT. IF YOU PAINT A PAINTING YOU CAN KEEP IT, SHOW IT OFF, HANG IT IN A MUSEUM, BUT MY TATTOO WALKS AWAY AND USUALLY I DON'T SEE IT AGAIN, SO THAT PART SUCKS A BIT

and downside...

"The biggest perk is I can be spoiled. I do what I want and there's no one to tell me it's wrong, that's a pretty fun place to be, if you ask me. The biggest downside is being alone. Sometimes it is nice to be able to just look over and see another artist there to talk to and feed off of, you know?" But don't expect Porter to have a new artist or apprentice roaming around his studio anytime soon, interesting customers are all he really needs. "I have no problem helping anyone who is willing to listen. I'll answer any intelligent questions anyone has, I think it's rude not to, but as far as having an apprentice, nah, too much hassle. The only way I'll do it is when

I'm ready to stop tattooing I may find a kid, teach him what I can, give him my clientele and walk away. Then I don't contribute to the overpopulation of the industry that's so prevalent nowadays.

"I'm very lucky that my work seems to invite like-minded individuals to me, so I enjoy the people, plus the majority of my clients fly in from other places, which is always good for conversation."

Inspired by tattooists, fine artists and comic book artists alike, his work is a mix of inspirations smoothly blended together, resulting in a style that is Porter's alone. But ingenuity can have its downsides, including separation anxiety every once in a while. 🌻

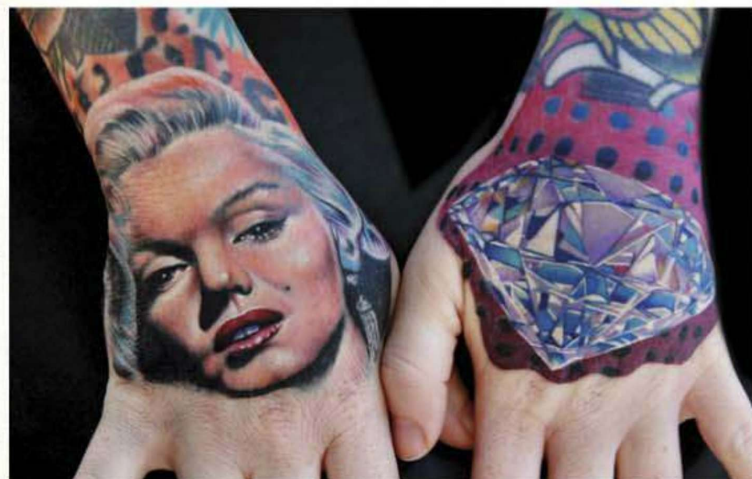




I DO WHAT I WANT AND THERE'S NO ONE TO TELL ME IT'S WRONG, THAT'S A PRETTY FUN PLACE TO BE, IF YOU ASK ME

"What makes it hard for me is if I do a piece I personally love, I can't keep it. If you paint a painting you can keep it, show it off, hang it in a museum, but my tattoo walks away and usually I don't see it again, so that part sucks a bit." A noticeable and unique approach to tattooing is also often cause for copycats, somewhat of a growing epidemic in the industry. Porter does his best to avoid and discourage imitations, but there is only so much an artist can do, so it happens.

"Oh yeah, all the time. This is why I rarely post custom work online. It's never done well, so usually I laugh and shake my head, but to the client it's a huge deal and they become pretty upset over it. I feel bad for them, but at least they can rest assured theirs is the best version." But no matter how good his work, there is always one concern that reigns supreme, and that is, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, skin. "Great skin is in short supply here in Southern California," says Porter, proving



that maybe starting tattoo-loving colonies in freezing, rainy climates isn't such a bad idea.

Working on his own comic book in his spare time, comics are what Porter would turn to if this whole tattooing thing ever stops being cool. "And you sure as hell wouldn't have to force me to do it, either, just tease me with the opportunity." But before that day comes, there's only one thing Porter hopes to achieve in his career as a top-notch tattoo artist... "do a few good tattoos and have fun." 🐼

**THANK YOU, THANK YOU**

I would like to ask you to let me say thanks to a few important people out there: Rodney Rose, thanks for being a great friend, I wouldn't have what I have if it weren't for you; Stevil, your support has been invaluable; the guys that keep me running smooth every day, Fusion Ink, the Dragonfly tattoo machine, and The Glove for the Artist; and, of course, my fiancé, Ashley, you were the piece I was missing.

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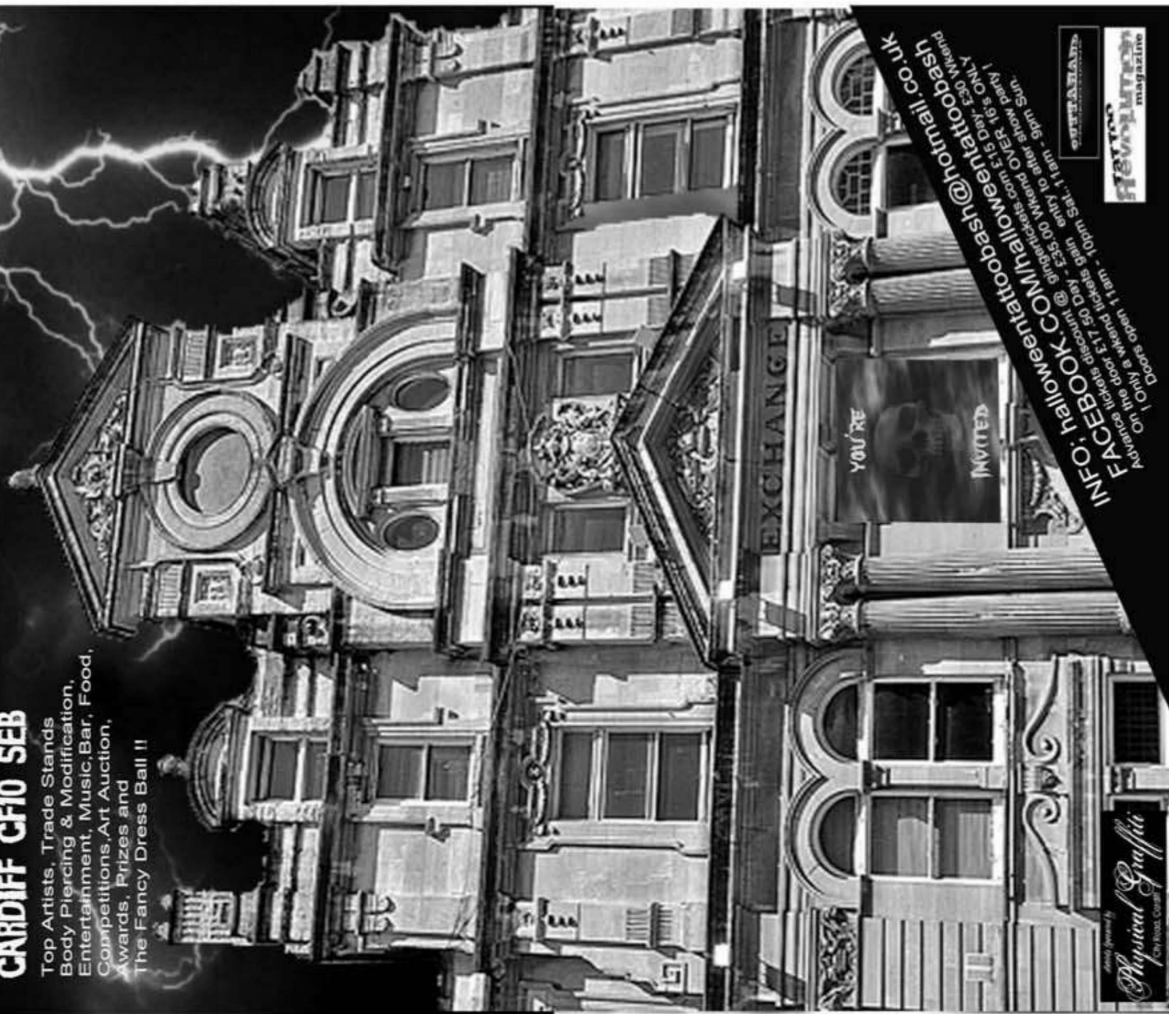
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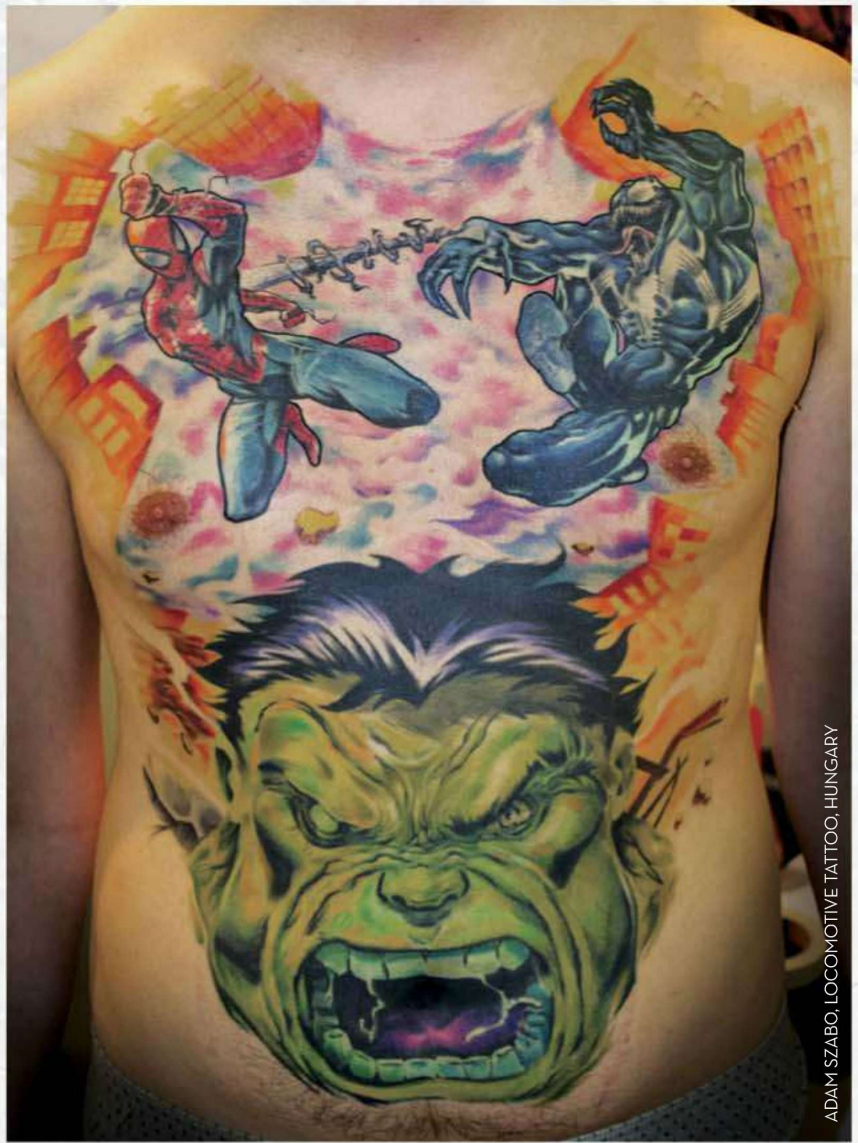
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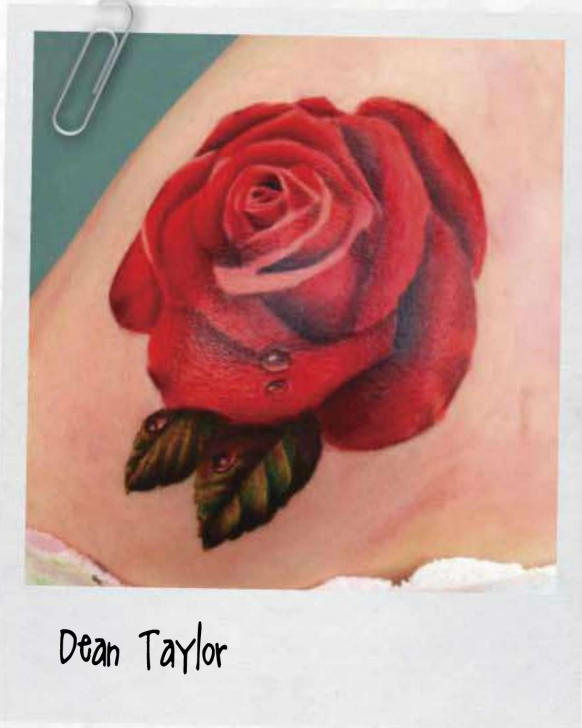
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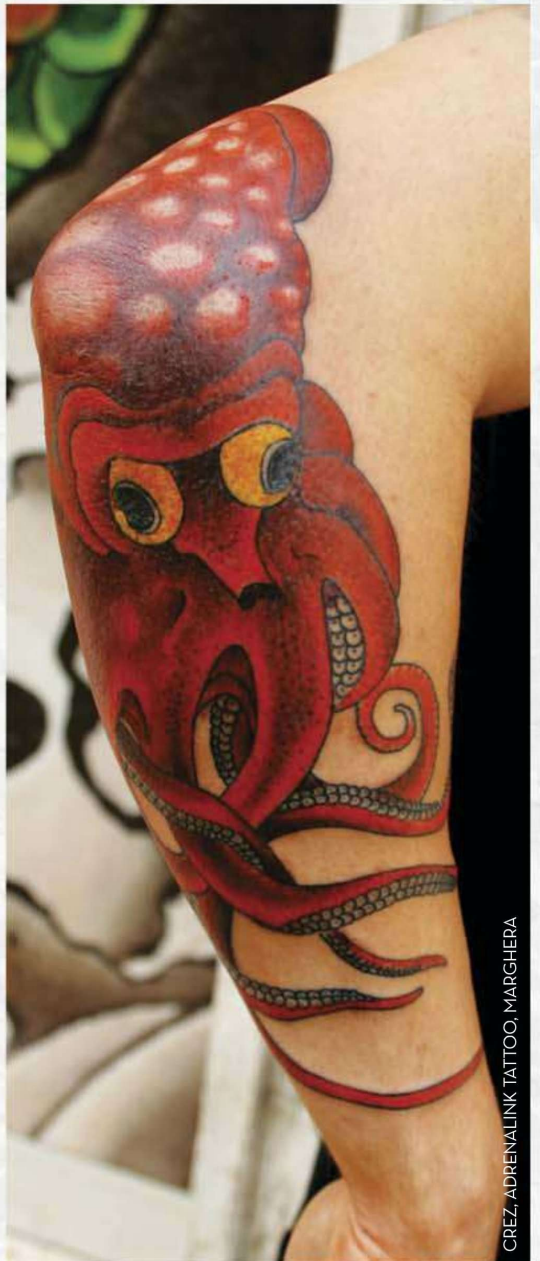
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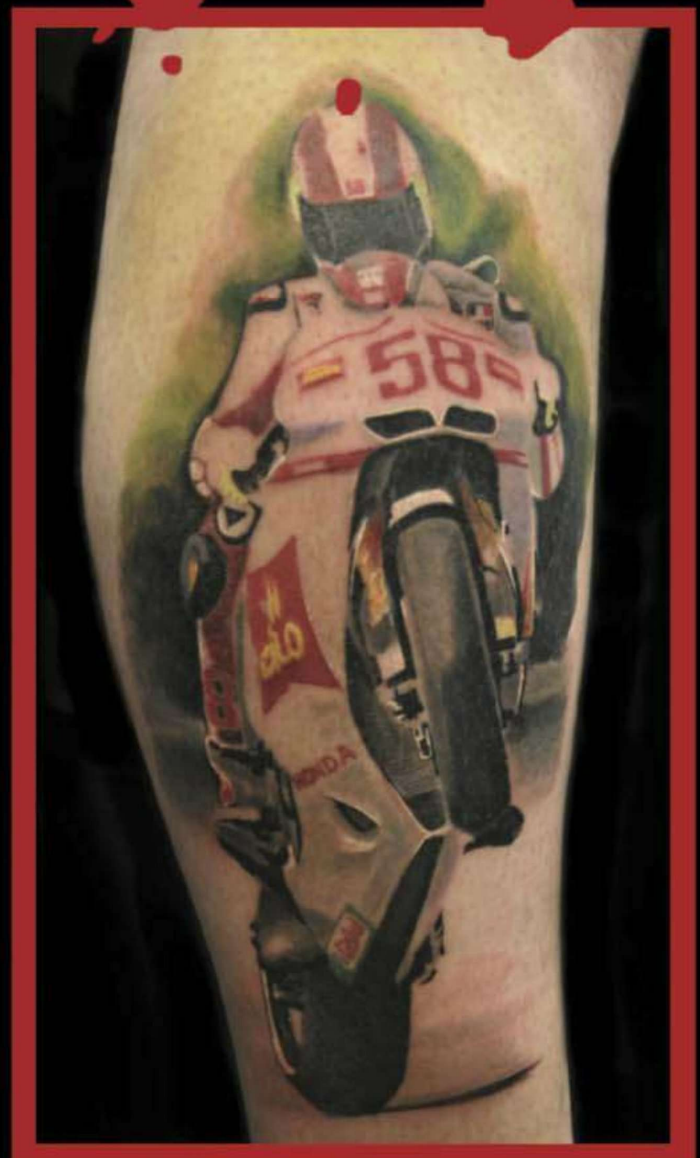
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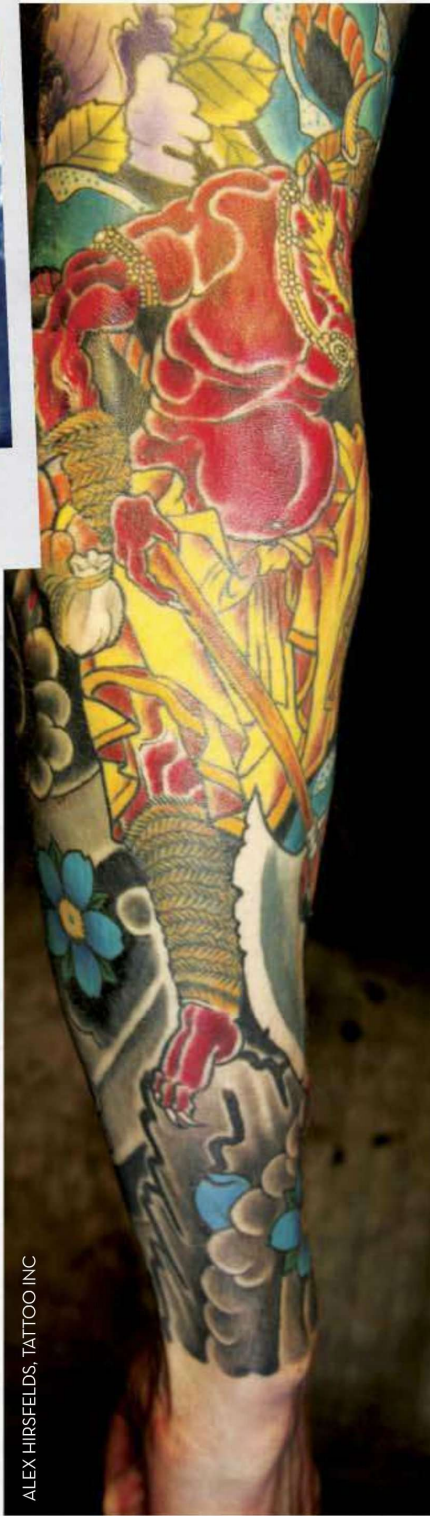
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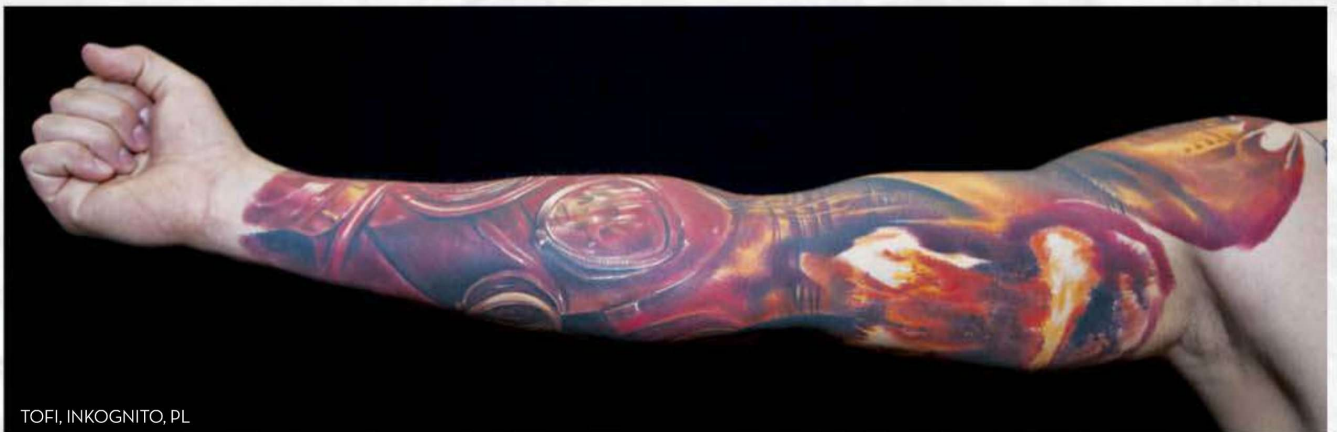
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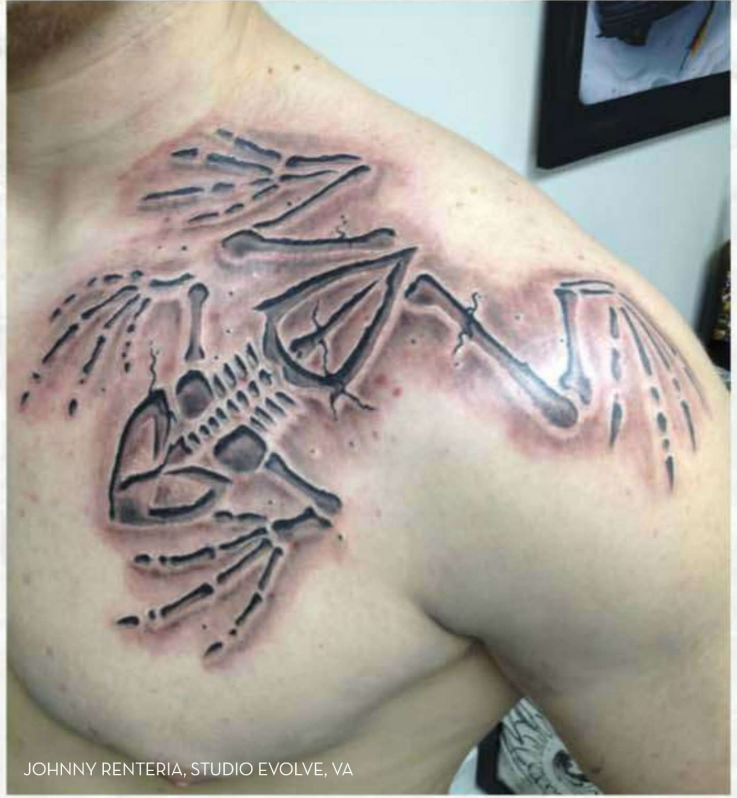


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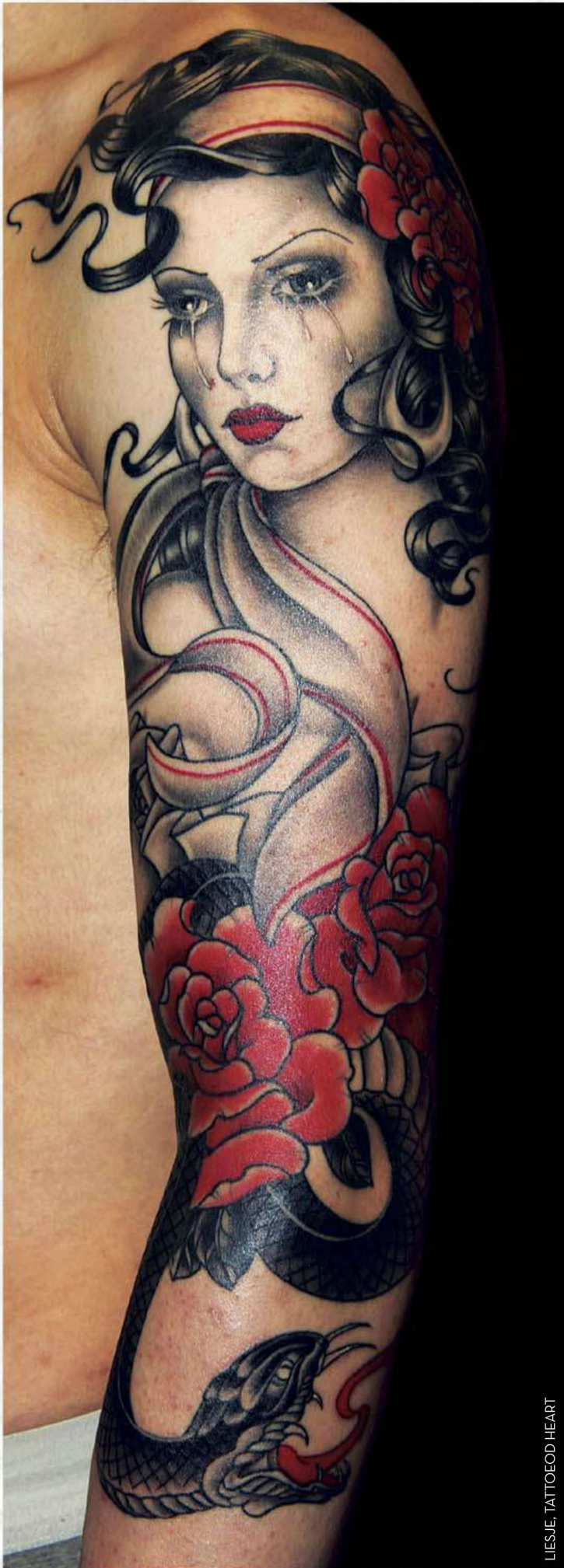
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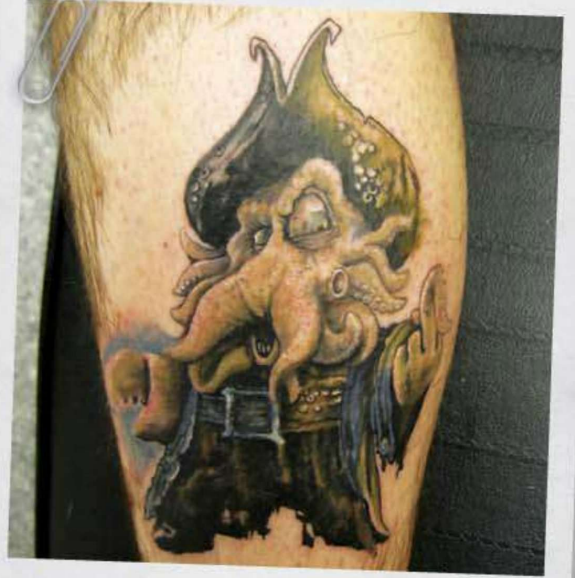
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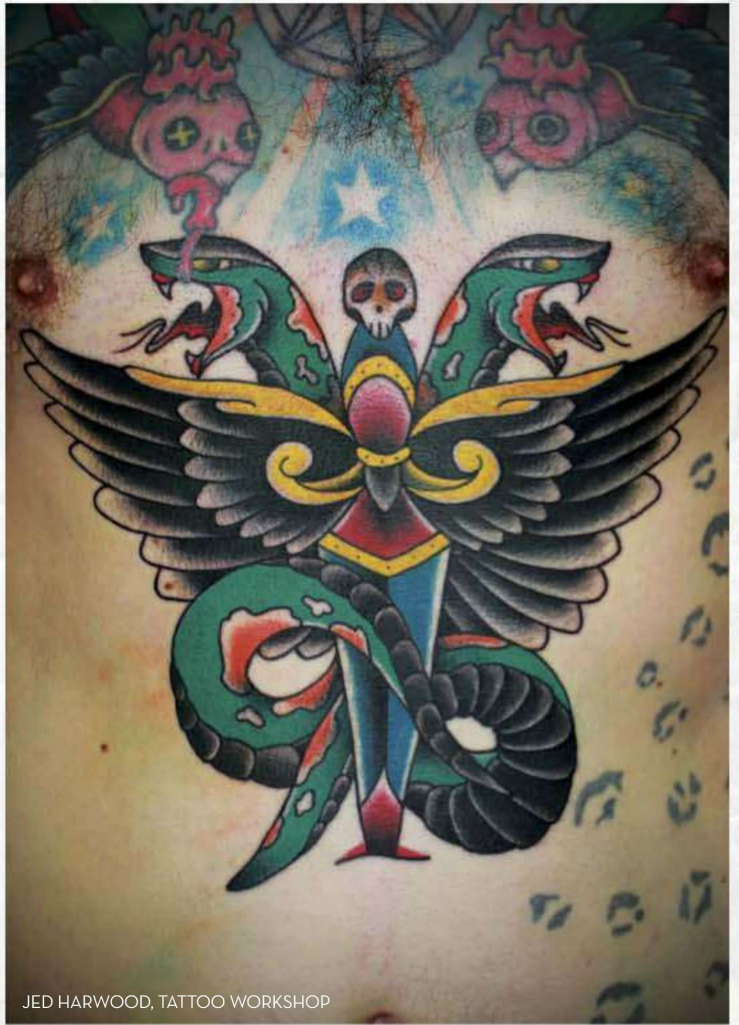


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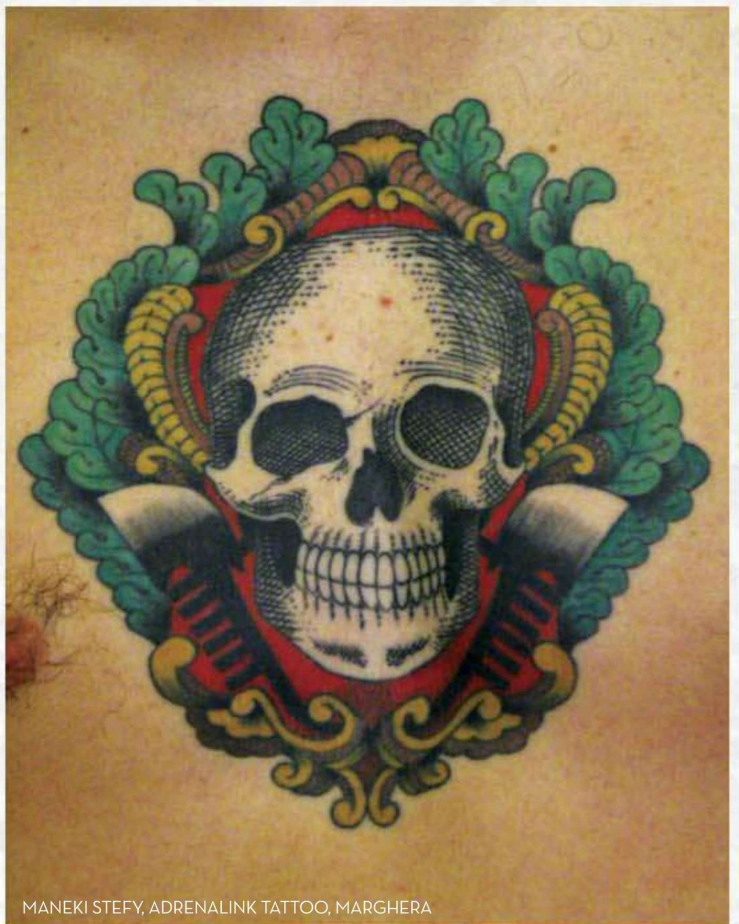
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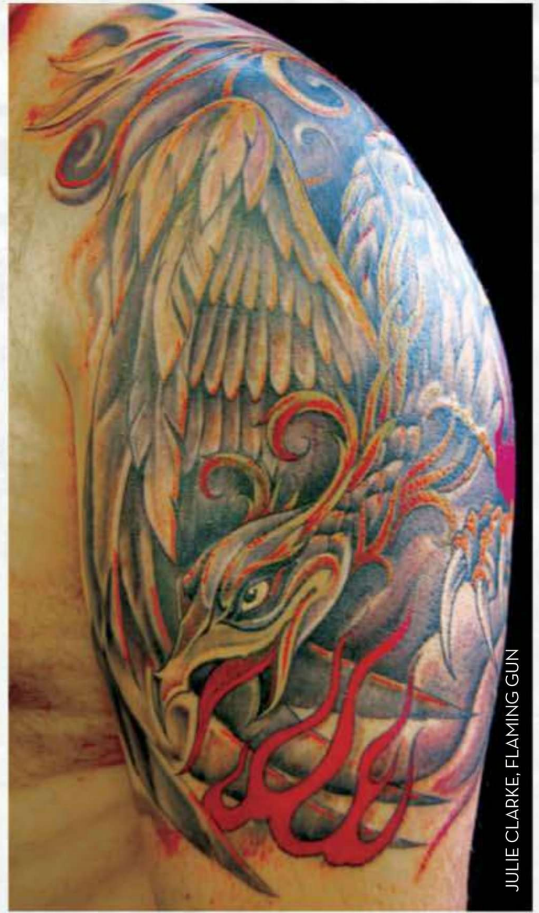
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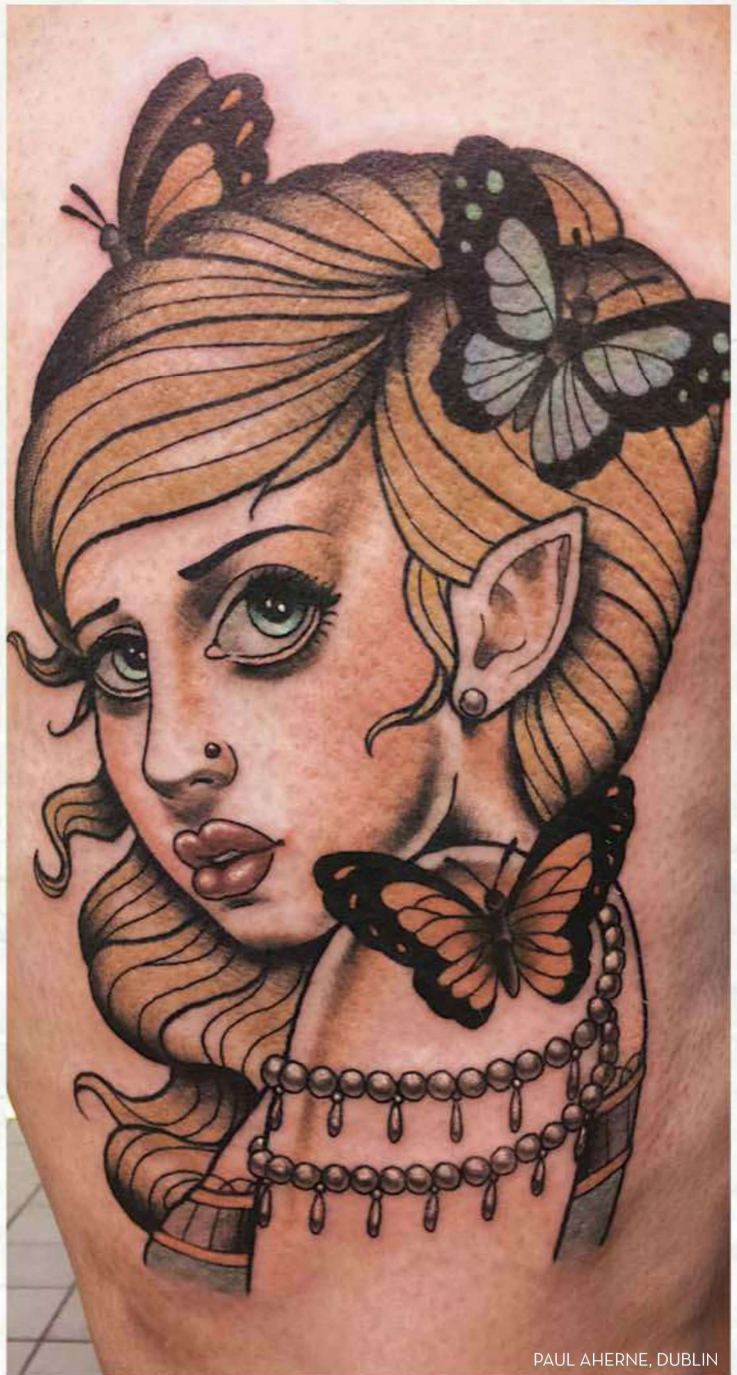
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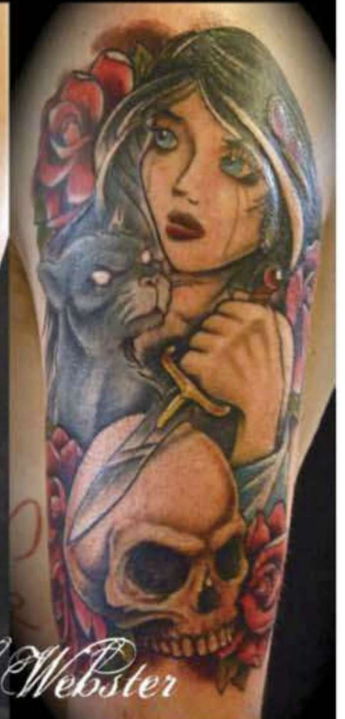
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# BIRDS ON A WIRE

Sometimes, the underground throws up a name that gets consistently bandied around as someone that's seriously going places. It makes sense to make sure that these rumours are true, because nobody wants to go on record touting a flash in the pan. In the case of James Robinson, I should have trusted my instincts...

Then, a few months ago, James let the cat out of the bag. He was leaving Nine Tattoo and opening a place of his own where he and Hannah Keuls would work alongside each other creating something 'really special'. Anyone who had seen his art before this point knew it was going to be exactly that, and he didn't disappoint. In fact, once the new name was announced, The Gilded Cage, it was all over bar the shouting.

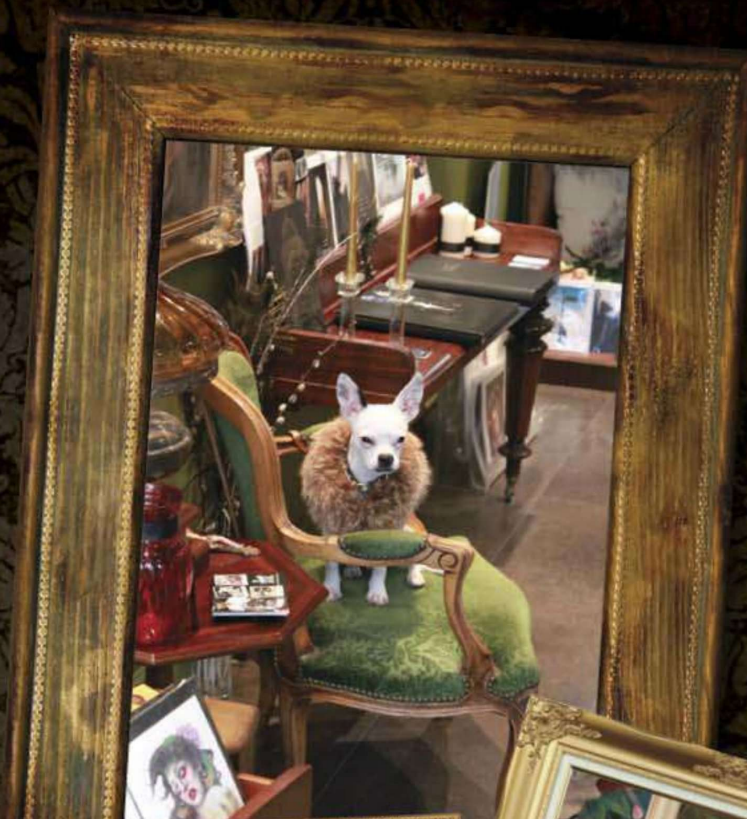
"Everything was amicable when I made the decision to leave Nine Tattoo to open my own studio. I had to jump through so many hoops and red tape once I began though; there were petitions against me to get planning permission to open the space as a studio... those months were definitely not easy, extremely stressful, but I would go through it all again because I got what I set out to achieve. I'd never opened a studio before so it was a big learning curve for me.

However, I was really focused and we finally opened on June 2.

"There was a lot of preparation, I became one of 'those people' who make lists all the time in order to get things done, alongside still working full-time, then painting and decorating in any other free time. This

usually meant me working through the night as well. I hadn't booked any time off work as I was booked up in advance, so I couldn't move months worth of clients. There were a lot of sleepless nights!

"Hannah came to the studio shortly after. We have been good 🐾



## GORGEOUS GEORGE (II)

He might be a peacock now, but George Wagner is best known to the rest of us as an American wrestler going by the name Gorgeous George (natch). In the United States, during the golden age of professional wrestling in the 1940s-1950s, Gorgeous George gained mainstream popularity and became one of the biggest stars of this period, getting media attention for his outrageous character, which was described as 'flamboyant' and 'charismatic'.

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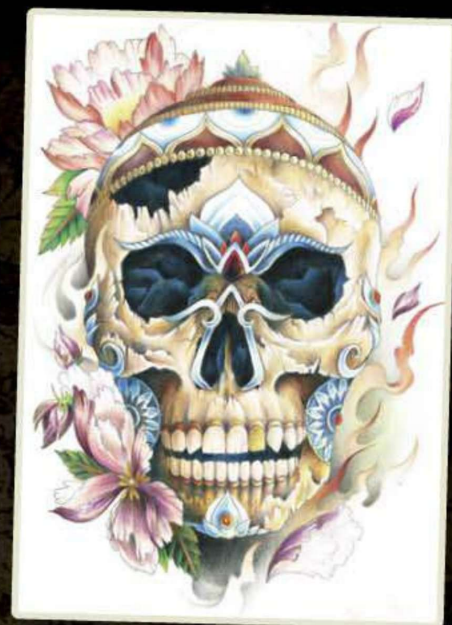
friends for a long time and it's great that I get to work with her. I have also just taken on Paco, a Spanish art graduate as an apprentice, who has great potential. Every day I smile and I'm so glad that I finally got the shop open and have a great team

so work alongside."

Which is a good time to introduce Hannah to the conversation – she has many words of wisdom that look like they'll keep James's feet on the ground: "I became bosom buddies with James after he'd been warned to 'be nice to the lesbian' knowing what the gays can be like!"

While everybody knows a studio can be thrown together out of MDF in less than a day if that's a road you want to go down, it was obvious from the invitations to the opening night alone that this wasn't go to be one those affairs. I wonder if the concept for The Gilded Cage came to James as a fully formed idea in a split second of inspiration. Apparently not...

"You know, I thought the concept would be the easiest thing, but it turns out it was the hardest. It was one of the last things I thought about, as I had three ideas. I set out for it to be a private studio so my ideas were firstly, to work under my own



name, James Robinson Tattoos, but from asking lost of tattooists, I know many of them said it would put people off working for me, as they would want to promote themselves under a shop name and not an individual person.

"My second idea was the location name, and as I'm on Saint James street... Saint James Tattoos. But an acquaintance

**I HAD A STUFFED PEACOCK FLOWN OVER FROM AMERICA. HIS NAME IS GORGEOUS GEORGE AND HE PROUDLY SITS IN THE SHOP WINDOW LOOKING OUT AT PEOPLE**



**JAMES ON INFLUENCES**

My influences come from everywhere when I am doing a new project; I usually source designs from my own photography. I just went to Bruges and Paris and spent day after day drawing and photographing statues and spending a great deal of time in cathedrals and galleries.

I enjoy working from reference so a lot of my designs are drawn from stills of my friends. I then design them into a theme such as zombies, mermaids and vampire girls. I love doing things from nature and if a client asks for a specific thing like a flower, I like to source it and draw from that.

emailed me saying he had worked in retail for 30 years and said 'you should never put a pun in the shop name as it cheapens it. Think Mary Queen of Shops, not Toys R us!' It made me laugh so hard, but I did know what he meant. With those on the sidelines, I was on to the next idea – Gilded Cage Tattoo Studio. I'm well known for tattooing birds so it had a good link to what I do. I also wanted to create an exciting, inviting, homely, but classy studio with good customer care skills. I wanted it to feel like more of a boutique than a tattoo studio. It's great that people come in to look around and appreciate the art and things for sale, regardless of whether they want a tattoo.

"It's a very camp shop; over-the-top artwork in frames, a piano made into a desk, and glitter and Swarovski crystals everywhere! We also sell taxidermy by Eaton Nott who sell exclusively in the shop, alongside Sacred Stitches who make my designs into clothing and cushions."

Just how camp is perhaps better expressed by Hannah though: "Gilded Cage would work as a tattoo studio anywhere, but it belongs in the heart of Kemp Town in Brighton; it suits all the nutters and gays that mince around town. We are definitely nuts and gay so you hit the nail on the head when you suggest we are products of our environment. Visitors are often accidentally greeted by a song and dance as we come into reception. At least once a day, James will announce, 'oh my god Hannah, I've got it!' and will be performing a new bum wiggle along to Cheryl Cole or whatever trash is being played."

Importantly, Gilded Cage is not clinical like an ink show studio, and it's certainly not put together out of a box either – it has a style all of its own – it's like they moved into a bizarre movie set left over from the '50s and given it a lick of paint...

"It's so funny you should say that, as I just had to move house into the flat above the shop, so



**THE DEFINITION OF A GILDED CAGE IS A 'KEPT' WOMAN WHO HAS EVERYTHING SHE EVER WANTED. SHE IS FABULOUS BUT LOCKS HERSELF AWAY IN HER PENTHOUSE AWAY FROM SOCIETY IN HER 'GILDED CAGE'. THE NAME ALSO RELATES TO THE GAY MUSICAL, LES CAGE AUX FOLLES, SO I KNEW STRAIGHT AWAY IT WAS THE RIGHT NAME FOR THE SHOP AND FOR ME**

most of everything I own is at the studio. The shop persona is me, so it's great you thing its got good taste!

"The shop was previously a sweet shop and needed so much work. There were caved in ceilings, no electrics or plumbing; it all had to be done as well as the decorating. My partner and friends all got involved with fabric swatches and mood boards though, so it was a lot of fun!

"My Gran passed away last year and her belongings were to be sold. This really upset me so I took all the furniture for the shop, which is probably why it's reminiscent of an old movie set. My granddad was a carpenter by trade. Everything in the shop was made by him; I think it's great that I can keep it in the family. 🥰"

## GORGEOUS GEORGE (II)

Muhammad Ali and James Brown acknowledged that their own approach to flamboyant self-promotion was influenced by George. A 19-year-old Ali met a 46-year-old George at a Las Vegas radio station. During George's radio interview, the wrestler's promo caught the attention of the future heavyweight champion. If George lost to Classy Freddie Blassie, George exclaimed, "I'll crawl across the ring and cut my hair off! But that's not gonna happen because I'm the greatest wrestler in the world!" Ali, who later echoed that very promo when taunting opponent Sonny Liston, recalled, "I saw 15,000 people comin' to see this man get beat. And his talking did it. I said, 'This is a goooood idea!'" In the locker room afterward, the seasoned wrestler gave the future legend some invaluable advice: "A lot of people will pay to see someone shut your mouth. So keep on bragging, keep on sassing and always be outrageous."





# HANNAH

## HANNAH ON INFLUENCES

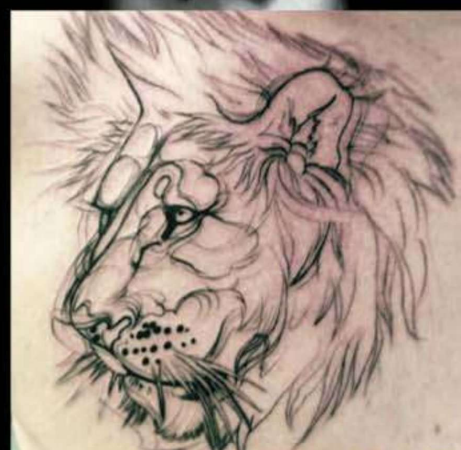
My Dad was my first inspiration. From a young age I was aware of his paintings and drawings, it was something I always did and was interested in growing up. He always let me watch scary films really young like *The Exorcist* and *The Shining*, so that's always at the back of my mind. My work tends to be influenced by the weird, the funny, sexy or rank. Sinister stuff, dead stuff, porn, horror films. I get excited just talking about it, there's so much I need to do!

I know they would love the shop if they could see it.

"I had a stuffed peacock flown over from America. His name is Gorgeous George and he proudly sits in the shop window looking out at people. I have many real human skulls, bones, grandmother clocks, old vintage china sets dotted around the place. There is also a lot of artwork done by myself, Hannah, and Paco, which relates to everything that goes on tattoo-wise in the studio; our art complements each other, so it's great to have it all alongside each other in the shop."

With Brighton being renowned as one of the major hotspots in the UK for tattooing, I wonder if that's because... well let's face it, many view it as some kind of San Francisco spin-off – it's creative, it's vibrant, tolerant of being 'who you are' more than any other town in the country. Would Gilded Cage even work as a concept in any other place?

"I never wanted to be a part of a clique in the tattoo scene. Instead I wanted to be part of a community in my own life and that's what Brighton is to me. Everybody in Kemp Town



says hello to each other in the morning and being in the heart of the gay village means the studio has a great atmosphere.

"There are a lot of new shops popping up in Brighton, but I don't think this is necessarily a bad thing. Competition is healthy and more people are doing their research when it comes to getting a tattoo, so are finding an artist with the specific style they want. People are also becoming more aware that you get what you pay for when it comes to tattooing."

"We both started as artists, studying illustration at uni and then falling in love with tattooing, but it was always that way round," Hannah rounds off. If you're thinking this is a travesty for the art, you're way off mark. It works that way round for Buena Vista out in Germany too. When you see the end results, there's no arguing with the statement.

As the coffee flows, it becomes increasingly obvious that these guys actually operate as a team

– as opposed to a bunch of people who just happen to work together. More than that, it looks like they've been here forever. Is that how it feels? That's got to be a good thing for client's right?

"Definitely! I went to uni with Anna from Sacred Stitches who prints T-shirts for the shop; taxidermist and fashion designer, Jess Eaton, is a great friend and we have known each other for many years; our shop manager, Fi, worked together in a bar many years ago; and Hannah I and I are very similar. We all love having a laugh but she works so hard it keeps me on my toes to keep doing new artwork and exhibition material. We all bounce off each other and we hang out in the shop as if it were our home, so yes, we are very much all a big family.

"I have a loyal client list, and it's great that I can book up for a long time in advance to know I have secured work coming in – especially being self-employed.

The only downside is that I have to close my diary on occasions and only do larger pieces. Many of my clients travel specifically to me, which is so humbling. This month alone I had a guy from Jersey, Dubai, a couple from Ibiza, and even someone from Australia, which is great. I don't like working off the cuff, I like to plan out and research a design, but saying that, I am doing Tattoo Jam which we are all looking forward to. I will be doing smaller pieces there and ones I can finish on the day, so come say hi!"

The same ethics come from Hannah too – they broke the mould when they had finished with these two, believe me. "My waiting list is reassuring, but not off-putting. As it grows I gradually define the genres of work I take on; I'd rather recommend walk-in work to the real walk-in tattooists, in fact any work that seems better suited to other people we always advise accordingly.

"Me and James constantly have a massive back log of ideas, drawings, projects and paintings we want to get on with, it's just finding the time in a busy schedule! Hopefully the exhibitions we plan to do every three months or so and the conventions will keep us tied to the drawing board and sticking to the deadlines! I find putting down the ideas in my head on paper just as exciting as on skin and I think it's really important as a tattooist to actually have that burning desire to constantly create and have a continuous stream of interest in visual ideas and stimulus. We bounce off each other actually, it's perfect; I'll do a flash sheet, James will do a T-shirt, he'll do a painting and I'll be like, damn it! And do some biro sketches..."

With time running short on us, the one over-riding feeling I get from James and Hannah is that these guys cannot be contained here. There appears to be the kind of ethos the dictates that art must be out in the world living and



WHAT MAKES IT HARD FOR ME IS IF I DO A PIECE I PERSONALLY LOVE, I CAN'T KEEP IT. IF YOU PAINT A PAINTING YOU CAN KEEP IT, SHOW IT OFF, HANG IT IN A MUSEUM, BUT MY TATTOO WALKS AWAY AND USUALLY I DON'T SEE IT AGAIN, SO THAT PART SUCKS A BIT

breathing for itself, rather than gathering dust on the walls. Is that a fair assumption? One thing I would love to see in this country is a place like Scared Gallery out in NYC pop up. Could you ever see yourselves working on a much bigger canvas within the art?

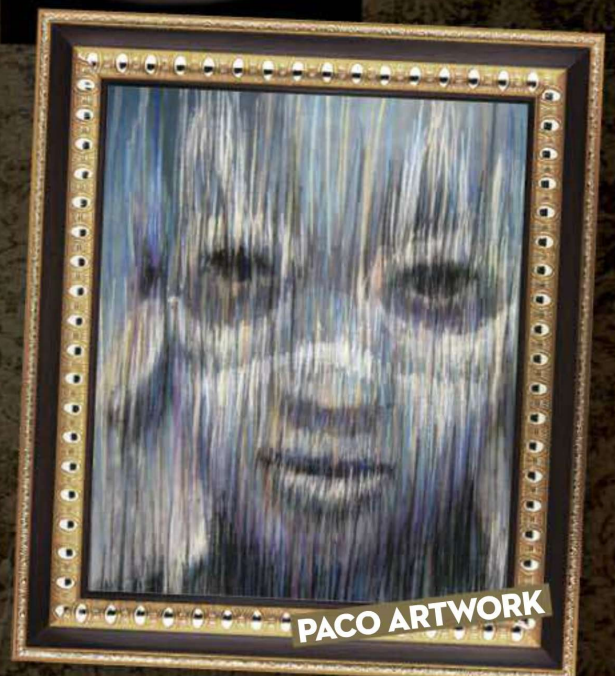
"Yes! It's a big thing we all believe in here. We are doing regular exhibitions in which we are involved with the Underground Open House Movement, also with the charity gallery show for World Aids Day. I am involved in a book collaboration with another tattoo artist's book... I get great pleasure in creating art pieces so I want other people to enjoy them too. I hope people like what they see on paper as well as skin."

"I get involved with friends and local exhibitions whenever the opportunity arises," adds Hannah. "I think it's great to see other people's work and for them to see what you're interested in too. You can catch a glimpse of something really special in someone's painting or drawing that you might miss in their tattooing, the prospect of discovering something new and different is exciting."



#### GORGEOUS GEORGE (III)

Bob Dylan said meeting George changed his life. In Dylan's book *The Chronicles: Volume One*, Dylan recounts a story of meeting Gorgeous George in person, writing, "He winked and seemed to mouth the phrase, 'You're making it come alive'. I never forgot it. It was all the recognition and encouragement I would need for years."



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# The Kitchens

# INK

Barbara Pavone

Start among the grease and burgers in the back of a McDonald's, take a detour through Gordon Ramsay's kitchen, and finish at a restaurant in New York City's trendy West Village, and you've got 29-year-old chef, Jesse Schenker's, career path in a nutshell. Suffice it to say, he's all kinds of interesting...



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When I was super little, I would come home from school and watch Great Chefs, Great Cities on PBS – before The Food Network – while all the other kids were out building forts or riding dirt bikes,” says Schenker when asked about the roots of his love affair with food. “It was completely instinctual, it was beyond my control.

“When my family used to go

to fast, casual restaurants like T.G.I. Friday's, I liked watching the flames flare up in the kitchen and seeing the dudes with burns on their arms. I wanted that. During holiday time, most little boys wanted action figures – I wanted kitchen knives. I would marinate hot dogs with teriyaki sauce and make crazy concoctions with duck sauce, soy sauce and mustard at Chinese restaurants... I just knew.” And then there was his great

grandmother, perhaps the one who's to blame for helping spark Schenker's uncanny passion for and dedication to food that, years down the line, have resulted in him getting inked with everything from a knife to caul fat.

“When I was very young, my Nana Mae would babysit me, and I remember being intrigued by how she would hold a paring knife to cut slices out of an apple. I also remember this plastic placemat 🍌



\*  
Gordon Ramsay obviously has a huge \* \*  
empire, so it's not like I saw him all the time.  
\* I don't think he's as mean as people \*  
say he is, but he is a perfectionist.  
\* I learned a lot there \* \*





\* Opening the restaurant was the hardest thing I ever did,  
 \* hands down. The time and dedication could destroy  
 a person. I'm lucky I had my father and my \*  
 \* wife who were as dedicated as I was \*

**FAILED FOOD EXPERIMENT**

"This one seaweed dish I tried... I wanted to do different textures of seaweed with an oyster cream. Conceptually, it was good, but in reality, it looked like baby vomit. It was awkward and didn't work."

I had as a kid that I was given to help chop vegetables for stews and soups that my grandmother would be making."

**From Big Macs to French cuisine**

Taking his first ever job in a kitchen (aged 15 at the local McDonald's), Schenker was quite the kitchen superstar, even in a fast food environment.

"I didn't have a [driver's] license, my parents used to drop me off to work. Even then I tried to be the fastest and the best at making burgers. I remember this one time, a regional manager came through and told us we had the fastest drive-through in the county!"

Attending culinary school was all part of the natural progression, but admittedly, that's not where most of Schenker's knowledge came from. "Most of what I learned was from

Oliver Saucey at Café Maxx," he admits. "At the time, it was the highest rated Zagat restaurant in Broward County, Florida. During that time I was attending culinary school in the morning, had an hour break, then had to be at high school for two hours, then to Maxx's by 3pm. When I was 17, they officially hired me to the hotline – it took me two months of busting my ass."

But Florida wasn't meant to be long-term for Schenker, so he moved to New York, landing a sweet gig with one of the world's most infamous chefs, rising steadily ever since. Restaurant Gordon Ramsay at The London, a boutique hotel in the heart of NYC, "was the first job I took when I moved to New York... it was great. Gordon Ramsay obviously has a huge empire, so it's not like I

saw him all the time. I don't think he's as mean as people say he is, but he is a perfectionist. I learned a lot there: discipline, consistency, cleanliness, organization and the importance of all that."

When it came to making his childhood dream come true, Schenker decided to stay in New York, choosing the West Village as the home for his first restaurant, Recette, because of his love for the area. "When I visited as a kid and experienced the neighborhood – the brownstones, the tree-lined streets – I just loved it there. My goal growing up was to learn, eat, read a million cookbooks, and take in all the knowledge I could to develop my own style. I'm still the same way. I'm always trying to figure out what everyone's doing. Not necessarily reinventing, but creating a hybrid style – Modern American."

Although, pursuing one's dreams is never without hardship. "Opening the restaurant was the hardest thing I ever did, hands down. The time and dedication could destroy a person. I'm lucky



I had my father and my wife who were as dedicated as I was. I did my research and happened to raise money in the middle of an economic downfall. I thought of every angle, everything I ever experienced in a restaurant – lighting, bathrooms, storage, bev naps – every detail. The one aspect that was completely foreign to me was all of the back office work. “As far as the name goes, a close friend of mine, Andre, had studied in Paris and spoke fluent French.

I called him asking for one word in French, because that’s the techniques we employ, that was related to food. He came back with ‘recette’ [recipe]. I was sold.”

**Permanent Food**

“On my left forearm, I have a crêpinette, a French dish which is meat wrapped in caul fat,” Schenker shows, starting the official tour of his ink. “I like the look of the caul fat, it’s like netting, so as a chef loving food

**SMART ADVICE**  
“The best advice I received early on was when I was told by a chef I worked for to shut my mouth, keep my head down, work as hard as I could, and one day I would be running my own restaurant.”

and loving fat, I just went there. And I got a Japanese chef’s knife – a Japanese slicer, my favorite knife, it represents my dedication to the craft – also on my left arm, and on my right shoulder I have a T-bone steak with a skewered olive and tomato.

“I also have a demon and a skull and some Pearl Jam lyrics and their logo... I’m a big fan. On the inside of my forearm, I have the ‘I’m Still Alive’ logo from Pearl Jam; my favourite song from my favourite band. I have the song ‘Indifference’ on my whole left thigh; also really love that song. Oh, and on my wrist I have ‘All or None’, another Pearl Jam title as well as how I live my life. I have some random stuff on my chest and left arm. They are creatures I got when I was a kid, and there’s also fire and ice going on around my elbow.” 🍷



The one closest to his heart, however, is one of the smallest and can be found on his right arm: “Eddie’, my son’s name. He’s named after Eddie Vedder, the lead singer of Pearl Jam. [Why are we not surprised?!] My son is my world. He is everything to me.”

As a firm believer in the idea that a tattoo collection cannot be stopped after just one, Schenker says, “anyone will tell you they are addictive. Once you get one, you think you are done, then you just get another. I’m always itching for more, but I can’t find the time. I have no idea what I would get.”

Perhaps the ingredients he claims he wouldn’t be able to live without – “salt and lemon; white

truffles are so overrated” – would make for the perfect addition. Or maybe his favorite Recette dish to date – cod fritters – would be the logical way to go. “They are crispy outside and then you get the spice of the lamb ragout that comes with them... when you hear about it you don’t think it would be good, but when you eat it, the umami, the richness – just delicious. Every time I take a bite, I think ‘Damn, that was a good idea!’”

Something that doesn’t happen very easily or too often, as Schenker admits that all the accolades and successes only serve to add pressure to his perfectionist tendencies. “I’m my own biggest critic, I can always find something wrong, no matter how much praise I get.” Which is not helped by the fact that Schenker likes to continuously experiment and is always pushing

himself to get more creative, always striving to be better and better. Case in point, adding a menu item that is just as delicious as it is frightening.

“We do a spaghetti dish, which is made with our house made pasta – it causes me anxiety because when it is right and all the components come together, it is one of the best dishes on the menu, but with season changes like the humidity, the dough can go wrong... it can be finicky.”

A lover of food and music – “[If I had to stop cooking] I’d be a drummer in a rock band because I love music and I play the drums” – Jesse Schenker’s response to the question of who he’d love to spend the day cooking with is both perfect and indicative of why this young chef really is rather brilliant: “Bob Dylan. We’d make grilled cheese and espressos.” 🍷



**NOT SO SMART ADVICE**

“For me, the worst advice I was given, because I was so young when I got into the industry, was to get out while I still could, that it’s not all it’s cracked up to be. That was the worst thing I could hear because I knew I wanted it.”



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# CHASE THE DRAGON

Maine based tattooist, Chad Chase, was flying low under my radar before being introduced to him by the guys at Formula 51. But at soon as I saw his work, I knew we had to get him on board big time...



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Chad's realistic work is in a different league, a pure pleasure to look at, and his portfolio is packed full of solid tattoos, many of which so perfectly rendered you begin to doubt whether it's a tattoo or a computer generated image you're looking at. And then we get onto his portrait work, which is absolutely some of the best I have ever seen.

Chad grew up in Sanford, Maine, where his love of heavy metal and an old flash book belonging to his father, sparked a lifetime interest in all things ink. "I have

always been into drawing. I loved heavy metal and was completely amazed at album cover art from bands like Iron Maiden and Megadeth. I knew badass art was possible. It piqued my interest and I would often redraw stuff like that as a kid. I can't even count all the times I redrew Eddie from Iron Maiden... or the Motorhead skull! As far as my interest in tattooing, that was started by my father. He had a bunch of ink (and an old Spaulding & Rogers flash book to be precise) and even had a bunch of random tattoo designs laying around, so drawing and redrawing



THE ONLY REAL SEMINAR THEN WAS ON MACHINE BUILDING AND TUNING. GUY (AITCHISON) HAD COME OUT WITH SOME THIN LITTLE 'HOW TO BOOKS' THAT WERE GOSPEL TO ME. I WORKED MY ASS OFF AND SUCKED

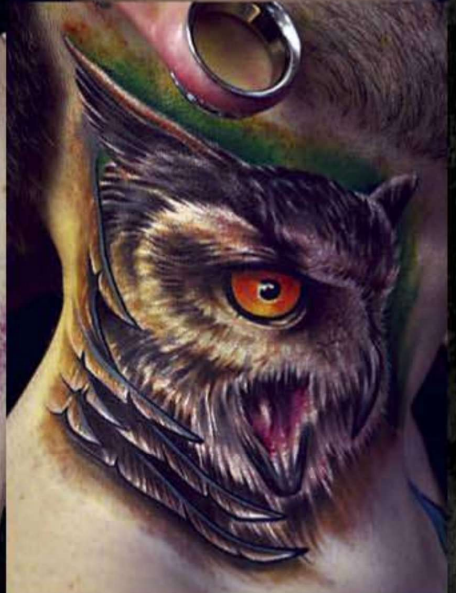
that stuff as well was inevitable. As I got old enough to enter the workforce, I realised that tattooing was what I wanted to do."

A few minor troubles in his teenage years aside and Chad opened up his first studio in 1996. This move was due more to his struggle to get an apprenticeship than being young, headstrong and determined to succeed, yet it was these same qualities that helped Chad turn his first venture in tattooing, into a successful shop.

"I started tattooing in 1995 and then opened up a studio in 1996. Young, dumb, and unable to find an apprenticeship, I took it all on. On my own. I shadowed a tattoo artist friend of my Dad's for a while and haunted the Mad Hatter's convention in Portland, Maine, every year. I watched all the great tattooists, like Paul Booth, Jack Rudy, Guy Aitchison,



Trent Aitken-Smith Chad Chase



Brian Everett and a bunch of others. I took seminars, took blood-borne pathogens courses and learned how to make my own needles. The only real seminar then was on machine building and tuning. Guy had come out with some thin little 'how-to books' that were gospel to me. I worked my ass off and sucked.

"I think not having an apprenticeship hindered my progress greatly. Figuring things out on your own is a huge waste of time, especially when I started. The internet was not used on a daily basis then, there were no

educational dvds and those who knew how to tattoo, guarded those secrets with their life. It was tough. I think everyone, even to this day, should seek out an apprenticeship with a good artist. And getting one with a bad artist is just as bad as not having one at all. You're gonna have to unlearn all those bad habits you were taught."

Eight years later, 2004, Chad decided a change was due. Wanting to focus his talent more on the custom side of tattooing, he opened a new shop, Venom Ink.

"It was a long hard road, but eventually I started to get better. 🌸

PEOPLE IN MY AREA DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO MAKE OF A STUDIO WHERE YOU COULDN'T GO IN AND PICK A DESIGN OFF THE WALL. THE SHOCK VALUE HAS GONE FROM, 'OH MY, HE'S TATTOOED!', TO, 'OH MY, LOOK AT THE QUALITY OF THOSE TATTOOS!'. IT ALL HAS ITS PROS AND CONS

For years all I did was flash off the walls, although it was all hand-drawn flash, drawn by me and my buddy, Dave. After about seven or eight years I got sick of doing the flash thing. I started over with a new studio and went all custom. There were no designs on the wall. It went over like a lead balloon

at first. People in my area didn't know what to make of a studio where you couldn't go in and pick a design off the wall. Slowly, I was able to show people that their ideas could be drawn for them and they'd get something original. Now that seems to be normal.

"The studio is thriving. I'm booked

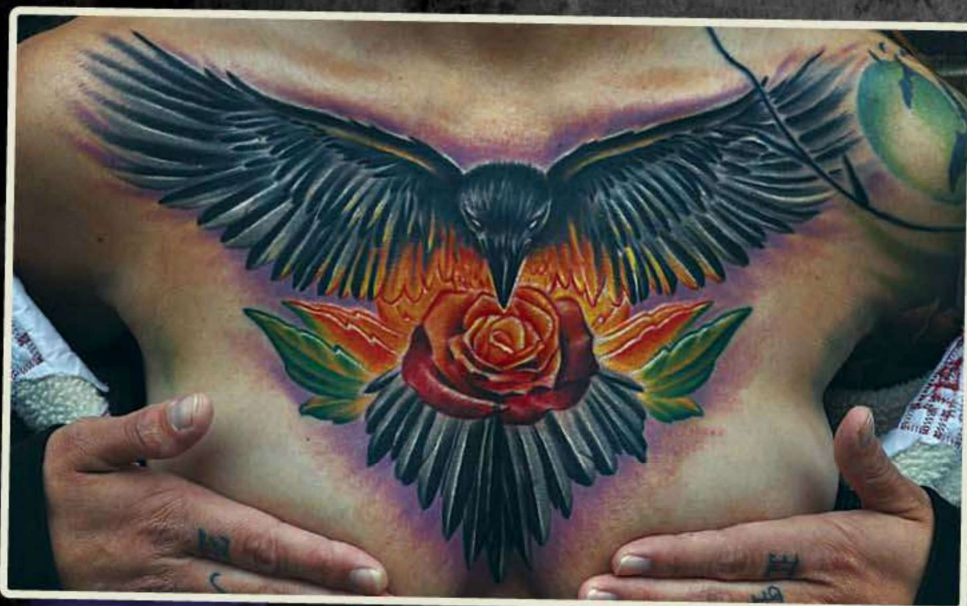
six to eight weeks out. I have another great artist working with me, Chris Chubbuck, and a great apprentice and piercer, Dan Kelley."

Helping to steer the Venom Ink ship is Kelly, Chad's wife, who helps make sure everything runs smoothly. And with two daughters, maintaining a healthy balance between work and home is very important to Chad.

"Working with Kelly is awesome. Most couples couldn't pull it off, but I wouldn't have it any other way. She makes everything run smoothly; when she can't be there, or has to take time off, it is complete chaos. She handles everything from finances, cleaning, booking and running the front all day. I don't know if one enhances the other, but we are a team and together the shop remains a well-oiled machine.

"Being with my family is so important to me, but it can be very frustrating at times. It seems like the one thing I cannot obtain. Owning a studio and tattooing full-time consumes all. I have two beautiful little girls and I try to make as much time for them as I can. Sometimes I feel as though

ABOUT HALF OF OUR CLIENTS WANT PIECES TO MEMORIALIZE A PERSON LOST OR A PERIOD IN LIFE OF IMPORTANCE TO THEM. THE OTHER HALF ARE, 'DO WHATEVER YOU WANT' CLIENTS - AND WE LOVE 'EM ALL."

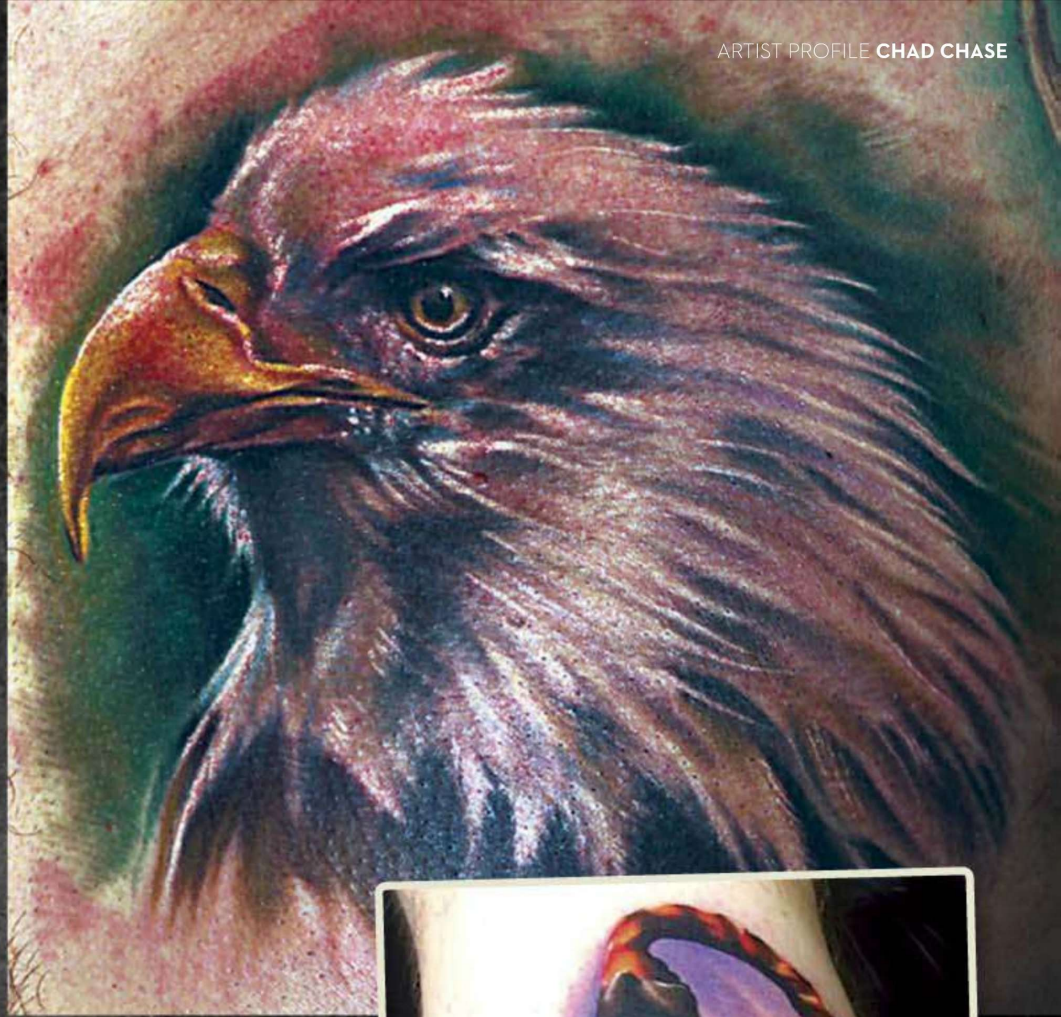




the business takes away from them, but they handle it well and seem to understand. This is one of the reasons that I don't work very many conventions. Between the shop and my two little girls, I just don't have the time. I'm not willing to sacrifice the time it takes to do a bunch of shows. Life is too short and my family needs me. I do attend three or four a year though, just to get out there and meet new faces and such."

So no getting away to a convention for a 'little break' then?

"I don't attend conventions for the party. Nothing worse than tattooing hungover! I'm actually not a huge fan of conventions at this point. There are so many now Stateside that you can't even tell which will be good and which will be bad. People who have nothing to do with tattooing putting them on and lining their pockets off the backs of working tattoo artists. I don't support that. Don't get me



wrong, there are plenty of good shows put on by righteous people, and that's fine. I do work some shows, but I'm very selective about it."

Though by no means the only style he can turn his machine to, Chad's realistic work is what really jumps out at you. But it would be a long haul before he had the confidence, or the advancement in tattoo technology, to really turn up the heat and show what could be done with the right equipment and raw talent.

"I slowly started to break into

realism and started refining that style. That seems to be where I am comfortable. I really enjoy taking a realistic image and putting my own twist on it. Changing colour, shape or contrast. Making it my own. I was ten years in before I even attempted my first colour portrait. I was so nervous, I didn't want to screw it up.

"I think that the 'realist' style is evidence of advancements in machines, needles and technique. This kind of work was not being done when I started. It's crazy what is possible and what is being

done now. The envelope never seems to stop being pushed. I don't see tattoo artists being put in the same class as fine artists though, there will always be those that snub their noses at tattooing and that's fine with me. Tattooing used to seem dangerous and edgy. Now it's so mainstream 🍌



ABOUT HALF OUR CLIENTS WANT PIECES TO MEMORIALISE A PERSON LOST OR A PERIOD IN LIFE OF IMPORTANCE TO THEM. THE OTHER HALF ARE 'DO WHAT YOU WANT' CLIENTS... AND WE LOVE 'EM ALL

and acceptable. I think it's slowly losing that magic that sucked us all in in the first place. The shock value has gone from, 'oh my, he's tattooed!', to, 'oh my, look at the quality of those tattoos!' It all has its pros and cons... it's changing. Seems as though you need to change with it or get left behind."

And with the increase in the calibre of tattooing, with some tattoos being literally 'works of art' are we going to see a different breed of collectors emerging... collectors of skin art rather than collectors of tattoos?

"For sure, people are getting tattooed just to collect art but I find that the balance between them and the people getting personal, meaningful work are about equal. About half of our clients want pieces to memorialise a person lost or a period in life of importance to them. The other half are 'do whatever you want' clients...and we love 'em all."

There has been some talk about realistic tattoos not lasting the long haul, that they tend to

fade over time, is this something that artists have to keep in mind when tattooing in this style?

"I think realistic tattoos will fade if they aren't done right. But there's no reason, if the contrast and edges in a piece are sharp enough, that the tattoo won't last. Everything ages; line work, black work, colour work. It doesn't matter which style, but if done properly the pieces will last. It should always be a conscious effort, as a realistic artist, to make sure the piece will last as long as any other. The client deserves that."

So it seems that the future is bright for tattooing in Chad's world. And it is getting brighter. With Formula 51 Ink, who Chad describes as "amazing ink and amazing people" now sponsoring him, and a few more conventions in the pipeline, I think we will be seeing a lot more of Chad Chase and Venom Ink.

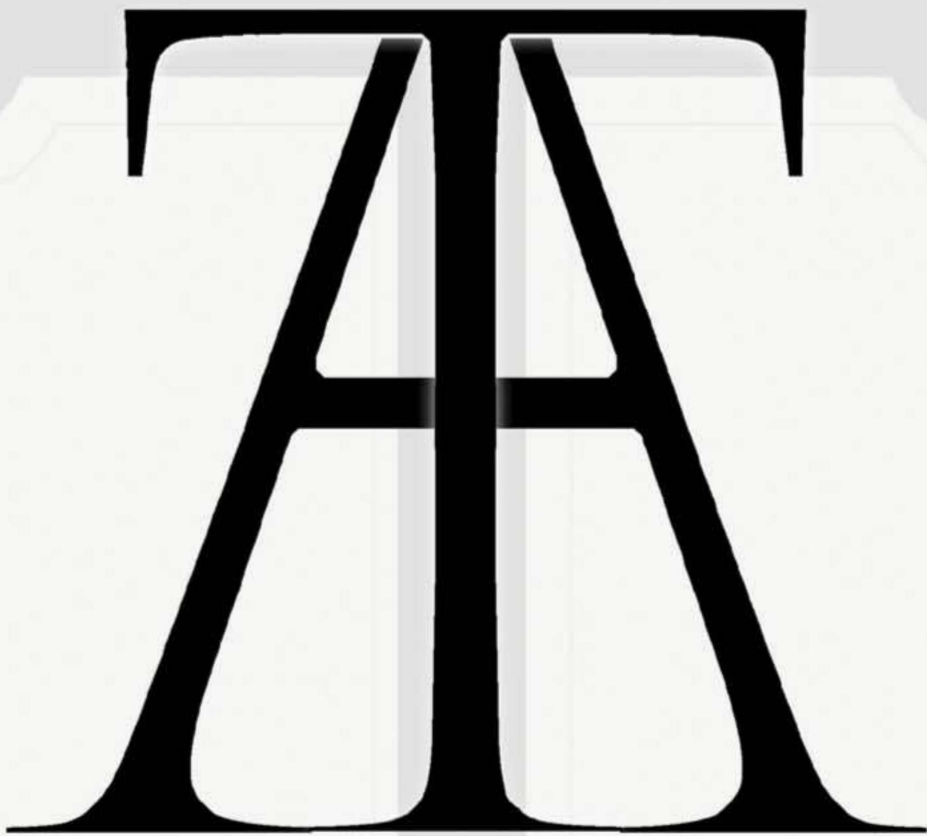
Or as Chad puts it, "I couldn't be happier with my shop and the people around me. Life is good." 🐛

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# LIFE OUTSIDE THE CALL CENTRE

OK, so Nicaragua might not be the first country that springs to mind when you mention the phrase 'call centre', but as AK47 owner, Chuck Serpa, takes us for a stroll around the streets, it appears that it's big news...



Simon Lundh

Tattooing in Nicaragua has somewhat followed its own path. It's not really connected to gangs like it is in its neighbouring countries of El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico. Nor has it evolved from a sailor or biker culture as it has in Europe. The civil war of the '80s put the culture into a sort

of hiatus and when it started up again it, there wasn't that much culture left – not until Dorian 'Chuck' Serpa opened up his shop, AK47 Tattoos, in Managua, ten years ago.

Bikers, sailors and criminals – it's been said before and it will be said again – these were the main groups of people once

associated with tattoos. While rockabillys and metalheads have taking over in the western world (well, somewhat anyway) in many places less developed,



the former is still the case. In Nicaragua however, due to the civil war and being one of the poorest countries in the world, it's not quite so clear. The bikers had nothing to do with it, for instance.

"The bikers in Nicaragua are mostly rich bikers who go for Sunday trips. They'd get like a butterfly tattoo at some touristy

Chillin' in the hood



#### AND YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE SKINT!

During the war between the US-backed Contras and the government of the Sandinistas in the 1980s, much of the country's infrastructure was damaged or destroyed. Inflation averaged 30% throughout the 1980s. After the US imposed a trade embargo in 1985, which lasted five years, Nicaragua's inflation rate rose dramatically. The 1985 annual rate of 220% tripled the following year, rising to more than 13,000% in 1988, the highest rate for any country in the western hemisphere in that year. Which basically means that one day a loaf of bread was (for example) 50p, and a few years later, it was £65.50. That's one mean mother of a loaf!

place or wear fake tattoos, which is just ridiculous, but that's it. There is a biker gang I call MC McDonald, who might be a little bit more interested in tattoos, but there's not really a bike-related tattoo culture," explains Dorian. And he doesn't see much of a connection to gangs either – except for the use of slang – similar to some of Nicaragua's neighbouring countries.

"For the perception of tattoos to change, we need to get people

related to MS18 and MS13 (two of the most dangerous gangs in the world, who both originated in Los Angeles but now can be found in many countries in Central America) are very popular among teenagers, but it's not like in El Salvador or Guatemala.

"We don't have those gangs here, but in some of the worst neighbourhoods in Nicaragua, like Dimitrov and Reparto Schick in Managua, there are gangs with their own tattoo style. At the same

## WE DO HAVE GANG TATTOOS, EVEN MORE WITH THIS SORT OF INFLUENCE FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

to stop saying 'placa' or 'placaso', which are the words for gang-related tattoos in Mexico and California, and say tattoos instead. We do have gang tattoos, even more with this sort of influence from other countries. Tattoos

time, it's very mixed, so you can't say that one tattoo belongs to just one group."

However, if you want to be sure to see people with gang-related tattoos, according to Dorian, there is a place to visit. 🇳🇮





S'cool bus!

**SOME CULTURE FOR YOU (I)**

Nicaraguan culture has strong folklore, music and religious traditions, deeply influenced by European culture, but enriched with Amerindian sounds and flavors. Nicaraguan culture can further be defined in several distinct strands. The Pacific coast folklore, music and religious traditions, are deeply influenced by Europeans. It was colonized by Spain and has a similar culture to other Spanish-speaking Latin American countries. The indigenous groups that historically inhabited the Pacific coast have largely been assimilated into the mestizo culture.

“A lot of people who work in call centres are heavily tattooed. It’s often people who come back to Nicaragua after having served a sentence in the States and almost the only place they can get a job is at a call centre,” he says with a big laugh.

This former graffiti artist was the first to establish himself as a proper ‘art tattooist’ in the country where tattoos are still frowned upon.

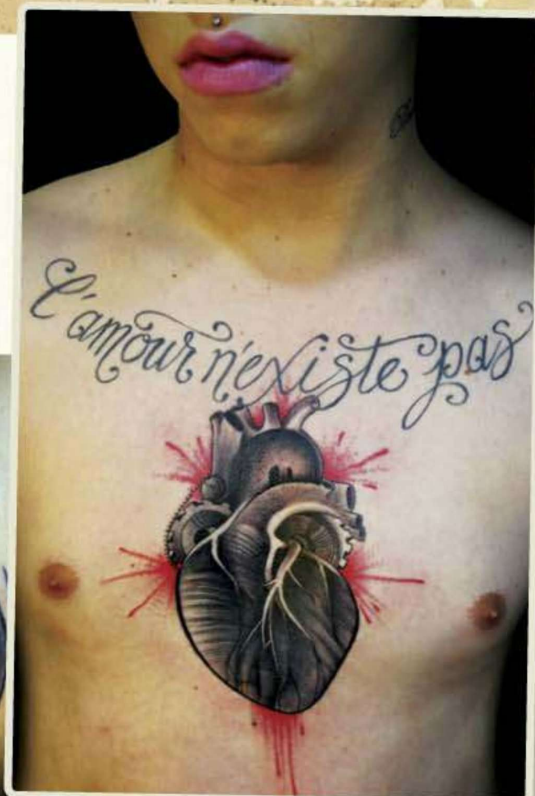
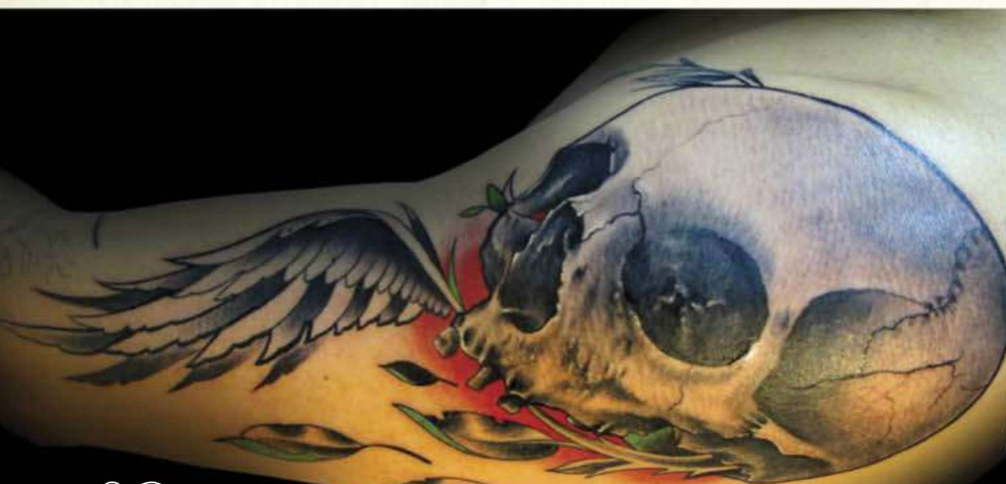
“All sorts of people in Nicaragua have tattoos today, but they have them where they can conceal them. You’re still not able to get a job in, for example, a supermarket if you’re tattooed.” But a change is in progress. The origin of this change however, is not to Dorian’s liking.

“My clients today aren’t the same as they were ten years ago. People are more open because of the ‘Miami Ink’ syndrome, but at the same time, they think that



fucking shop is the only tattoo shop in the world. In South Beach in Miami alone, there are so many better shops.”

Contrary to skin art, the culture of street art is very strong in Nicaragua. As in many countries suffering





And this is why people stay. Beautiful



**ALL SORTS OF PEOPLE IN NICARAGUA HAVE TATTOOS TODAY, BUT THEY HAVE THEM WHERE THEY CAN CONCEAL THEM. YOU'RE STILL NOT ABLE TO GET A JOB IN, FOR EXAMPLE, A SUPERMARKET IF YOU'RE TATTOOED.**

from war or injustice, murals and graffiti grew into a popular mode of getting your message across. Nicaraguan city walls are filled with political, religious and humanistic messages.

"As soon as you paint or do something in the street here it has political content, but there's not really a particular style, like in Berlin or New York. Here graffiti is

sort of socially accepted because we walk up and ask the owners of the house before we start painting. You can't just walk into a neighbourhood and start painting unless you know someone there – we only have small spaces here in Nicaragua, small houses and small streets. We don't have a subway system and the structure of a big city, so here graffiti has had

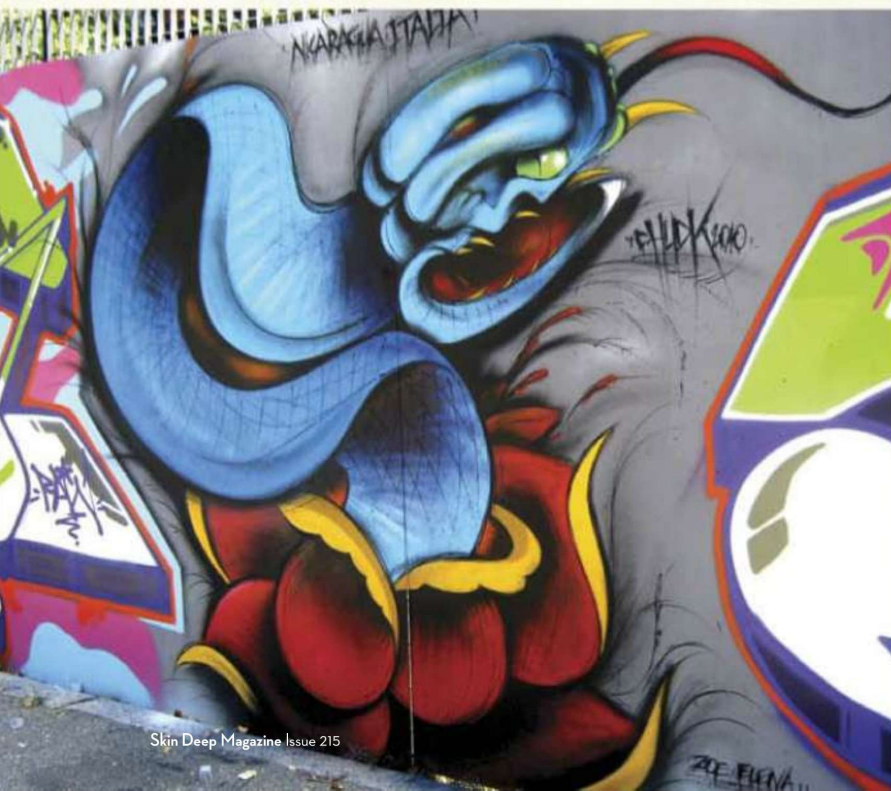


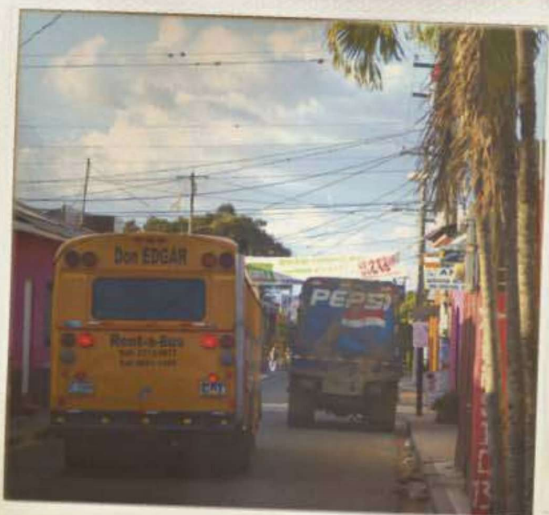
Real parrot. Not realistic tattoo of parrot.

a more social perspective. There was a time when graffiti artists became idols, famous within their community. It became street fashion and they were interviewed and so on, but there has always been a political message behind it."

Which is easily explained considering all of the political commotion the country has experienced in the last 40-50 years. Before the civil war there were some murals around, but the phenomena really took off in the '90s at the end of the Sandinista era.

"In the '70s, murals existed, and then in the '80s, nothing much happened. But starting in 1989, our history underwent a reconstruction. There were many projects launched, a lot of financing and therefore a lot of opportunities to paint. Also people 🍷"





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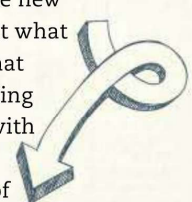
wanted to tell stories of what happened,” explains Osiris Dolores Castilblanco Briones, a 28-year-old artist and art teacher who was one of many kids at the time taking the chance to learn how to draw and paint murals.

Sadly, the liberal attitude didn't last long. In 1990 the Sandinistas lost the first democratic election since they had taken down former dictator, Antonio Somoza, in 1979, and the new government wasn't too happy about the street art covering schools all over Nicaragua.

“They were of the opinion that all murals were Sandinista-

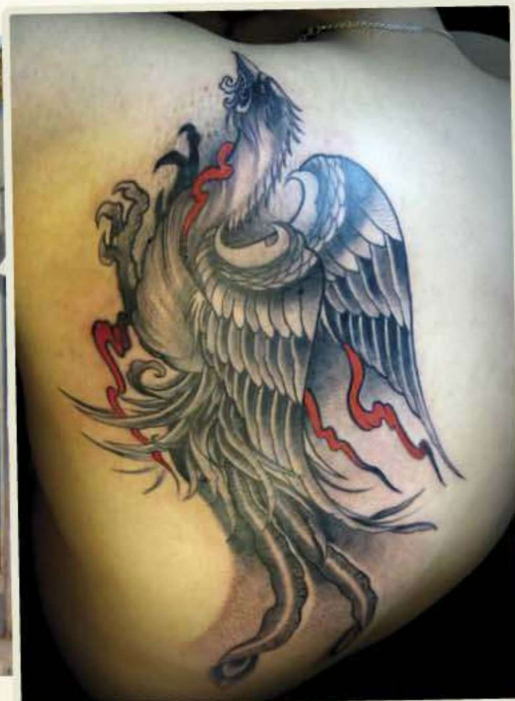
murals, which they definitely weren't. We had started out painting school walls and the murals on them were all removed. They even destroyed the Sandinistas books and wrote new ones, completely leaving out what happened in the '80s. But that just meant we started painting on private walls instead... with permission of course.”

Today you see hundreds of murals in almost every city in Nicaragua, but the political factor isn't as high. “It's not necessary in the same way. Today there's a need for other messages – messages of hope and confidence.”



**SOME CULTURE FOR YOU (II)**

The Caribbean coast of the country, on the other hand, was once a British protectorate. English is still predominant in this region and spoken domestically along with Spanish and indigenous languages. Its culture is similar to that of Caribbean nations that were or are British possessions, such as Jamaica, Belize, the Cayman Islands, etc. Unlike on the west coast, the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean coast have maintained distinct identities, and some still speak their native languages as first languages.



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# (We can be) HEROES...

... and for more than one day too. The two-day event that is Ink For Heroes is one of the favourites on the circuit and never fails to supply amazement somewhere along the line

The weekend of June 23-24 saw one of our favourite conventions on the circuit, Ink For Heroes, take place.

For the first time, the show was held at its new location at York Racecourse... and with ticket sales already way up by mid-afternoon on Saturday, it seems that the organisers had made the right decision in switching locations, though I am sure that this year's amazing artist line-up and usual family-friendly feel had a lot to do with those high numbers as well.

Straight up, two of the main reasons I love Ink For Heroes, is because of its support of our soldiers (it is after all a charity bash with all proceeds going to Help for Heroes & British Legion), and its children-friendly attitude. On the family side, this year was no exception with a children's club set up on the second floor with one of the coolest events for



ANOTHER IMPRESSIVE THING ABOUT INK FOR HEROES, WAS THE AMOUNT OF HOMETOWN TALENT THAT WAS AT THE SHOW



Trent Aitken-Smith Martin Dean

the kids, being the Design a Tattoo Competition where the winner got their design tattooed on the show's web designer. So, it's hats off to Molly Butcher, aged six, who won first place to now see her design being used.

And swiftly on to the tattoo artists in attendance over the weekend. Once again, Pam and the crew made sure they got some of the best artists to support this charity convention. If you were lucky enough to get to the show, you would have seen the likes of Lal Hardy, Mick Tomo, and Remis Cizauskas... and while we are on the subject of Remis, not only was he tattooing at the show, but on both days he gave a seminar on portrait tattoos as well.

The holy trinity to one side for a moment, there were loads of amazing artists slinging ink. Two

who really grabbed my attention over the weekend were Alex Williamson, Apostle Tattoo Studio, and Gareth Unwin, Talisman Tattoo. Both artists seemed to spend the weekend banging out amazing ink.

Another impressive thing about Ink For Heroes, was the amount of hometown talent that was at the show. One of the most annoying things when a show is hosted in a city is when none of the studios in the area are represented, which might be cool for visitors, but not punters who live in the area. So a big shout out to Pam Green and the crew for making sure York's artists were so well covered. And ultimately, it seems this was a wise choice as three of the overall trophies were claimed by York-based artists; both Small Colour and Large Colour went to Dan Rooke of Rookstar Tattoo, while 🏆



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CHRISTINE BY JAMES LAIDLAW JJS TATTOO



ALAN BY RICH PEEL SCORPIO TATTOO

JAN BY SONNY MITCHELL BLACK LOTUS



BY REMIS



IT WILL TAKE SOMETHING SPECIAL TO BEAT THIS YEAR'S, BUT WITH THE PASSION THESE GUYS HAVE FOR INK FOR HEROES, I DON'T DOUBT FOR A SECOND THAT THIS WILL HAPPEN

Best Back Piece went to Polish Dan of True Colour Trinity. The other competition winners were; Pauly LaVey from Doc Black Ink for Small Black & Grey; Large Black & Grey went to Johnny D. Matthews from Conisbrough Tattoo Studio; Best Oriental Tattoo was taken home by Pete Oz from Seven Star Tattooing; and the special Ink For Heroes category, Best Military, was claimed by Ian Thompson from Tattoo Time.

And for those of you who aren't squeamish and like to see a little bit

of blood and gore, you weren't to be disappointed given the presence of the one and only body modification expert, Dr. Evil. What looked like a quiet-ish Saturday for Dr. Evil saw that all change when he performed a scarification which looked close enough to surgery to use the word 'perform'. I have to admit, I watched for about ten minutes before I decided a breath of fresh air might be better than passing out in front of a bunch of my fellow convention-goers. And if that wasn't enough for Dr. Evil, Sunday saw him performing a tongue split body mod. This time I didn't even attempt to watch the man at work as I knew I would be face down on the floor in seconds. I'm not sure how the tongue split went, but no

paramedics were called so I assume the person involved survived to show off their snake tongue.

There was so much more to the show that space and time won't allow us to cover, like those two guys on the stilts breathing fire... another great addition to the show. When they weren't doing tricks out the front (some they hadn't tried in public before) they were to be found entertaining everyone inside with their crazy, madcap goings on.

With the move, we have been promised an even bigger and better show next year. It will take something special to beat this year's, but with the passion these guys have for Ink For Heroes, I don't doubt for a second that this will happen. 🤘

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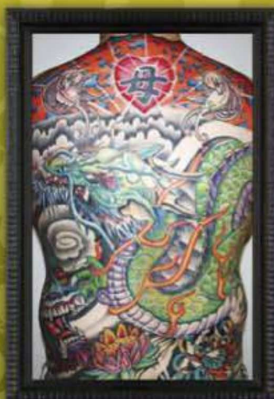
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**I am looking for a tattoo artist** who would be willing for me to watch and learn tattooing. I design tattoos for people and I'm very interested in learning how it goes from paper to skin. Due to childcare, I can only do evenings and Saturdays, unpaid of course. The information and experience is all I want. If there's anyone in the Folkestone or Ashford area – as I live in New Romney – that can help me, please contact Aileen on 07966 739257. Thank you.

**Tattooist wanted** in The Broadway, Haywards Heath, Sussex, looking for a full-time experienced artist. Minimum three years studio experience. [thebarbershopbroadway@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:thebarbershopbroadway@hotmail.co.uk).

**NEEDLE FX – CHIOKO** (body modification studio) owned by Manu and Dominique have moved away from Camden High Street, but not far... down the road in Chalk Farm. Our studio is unique with nothing like it in NW1. We

have tons of space for our artists and customers to feel at home. We have late opening hours, and our talented and dedicated team offer a relaxed, feel good atmosphere. Open from 10-10 every day, 7/9 Ferdinand Street, Chalk farm, NW1 8ES. 02074 248851 or 07724 552080 – [info@needlefx-chioko.com](mailto:info@needlefx-chioko.com) – [www.needlefx-chioko.com](http://www.needlefx-chioko.com)/[facebook.com/needlefx](https://www.facebook.com/needlefx).

**Tattoo artist wanted:** Brighton's INKA TATTOOS are looking for a full-time tattoo artist to start in February 2013. Applicants must have a minimum of three years experience, a positive attitude, a pleasant personality, and a strong portfolio of custom work which demonstrates their own unique flair. No drug, alcohol or ego problems please! The position is permanent and available February 2013. Please send your CV and links to your portfolio to Marc at [inkatattoosbrighton@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:inkatattoosbrighton@yahoo.co.uk).

**Artist Wanted** - male or female to run small studio in rossendale, lancs (near Manchester). Studio set within a class barber shop. Great opportunity for someone who wants their own studio without paying thousands to set up. Good weekly turnover and with plenty of trade. Call Jody 07775210000

**inkskin tattoo studio** is looking for an experienced piercer to work in our shop. Either full time of part time. if interested contact Hayley or Jay 01215206979 or email us at [inkskintattoostudio@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:inkskintattoostudio@hotmail.co.uk)

**"Skin Inc Tattoo Braintree** are looking for a versatile tattooist to join our busy team. You must have a minimum of 3 years studio experience with an up to date portfolio and be happy to take on custom and flash work. The shop is part of a large tattoo family and you will have the opportunity to work at the Brighton and London International conventions. Please email your CV and a selection of pics to [skinintattoo@btconnect.com](mailto:skinintattoo@btconnect.com) or call 01376 560484 for more info."

## DEAR MR PARSONS

I read your recent Mirror article, 'making my skin crawl – tattoos scream for attention' with interest. You see, when I was a teenager, the NME, the weekly music paper you started out writing for, was my lifeline



Paula Hardy Kangelos

It wasn't on sale in the village shop, I had to order it specially and the best day of my week was the day I could collect it.

I'd take it to the village bus shelter and read it carefully from cover to cover, pausing only to smoke a single Embassy Filter bought for 20p in the school playground. The band interviews, the gig reviews and the lists of that week's new seven-inch releases transported me far from the gentle tedium of life in the sticks. Reading the NME taught me that there was something and somewhere else, a future where I would be able to define myself on my own terms. A few years later I moved into my first house-share, in London, found through a

NME classified ad. My room wasn't much bigger than the bus shelter but it didn't matter, my new life had begun. And I didn't need much anyway, not now that my rock and roll fantasies were becoming reality.

These days I'm in my mid-30s, married with two kids, two cats and two university degrees, and the music journalists that inspired me have grown up too. Your stint at the NME was before my years of faithful readership, but I've still paid attention to your writing career and how you've progressed from punk roots to go on to write for The Telegraph and more recently The Mirror. You've gone from the fringe to the establishment, and that's OK Tony, it happens to the best of us. I don't even smoke anymore, let alone spend hours in bus shelters.

Yet in relation to the alternative

community, I still expected better from an old punk like yourself.

You don't like tattoos and that's cool Tony, you don't have to, tattooed folk don't seek nor need your approval. And although you may well 'feel like the last man left alive whose skin crawls at the sight of these crass daubings', let me assure you, Mr Parsons, that you are far from the only tattoo hater out there, many others are equally resolute in their belief that permanent body art is not for them. Fortunately, most people have

### WE'RE SO USED TO THE PRINTED ASSASSINATION OF THE APPEARANCE OF THE FAMOUS, WE BARELY NOTICE IT, BUT WHAT HAVE DAVID AND CHERYL ACTUALLY DONE TO YOU?

enough polite decency to keep their personal views to themselves.

But not you Tony, you took to a national news title, and as if it's not easy enough to abuse the tattooed in general, you start by mocking David Beckham and Cheryl Cole, soft, celebrity targets. We're so used to the printed assassination of the appearance of the famous, we barely notice it, but what have David and Cheryl actually done to you? What have they done to any of us? Decorative, harmless, yet able to polarise opinion... do they remind you of anything?

Sure, you may not like them, but again, if you can't say anything nice, does anything need to be said at all?

You go on to stoop even lower, hurling abuse at Samantha Stevenson, charity fundraising singer with Military Wives,

and tattooed race-goer, Joanna Southgate. Samantha and Joanna have not entered into the 'all publicity is good publicity' agreement that exists between celebrities and the media that made them. They are simply two women who happened to capture the public's imagination whilst going about their day-to-day business. They are clearly not the 'fair game' that we rightly or wrongly consider the famous to be.

So I ask you Tony, what gives you the right to pass judgment on the bodies of ordinary women? How can you think it's acceptable to publicly ridicule the physical appearance of a talented singer and a successful

administrator? Their choosing to live a lifestyle that isn't your cup of tea doesn't warrant vilification, yet you accuse them of 'screaming for attention' and opine that Southgate has 'ravaged her natural good looks'. To you, tattoos are 'self mutilation, voluntary disfigurement, a tragedy', and you know what? It's ok, because tattoos not being unanimously popular actually make this ancient and enduring artform more appealing.

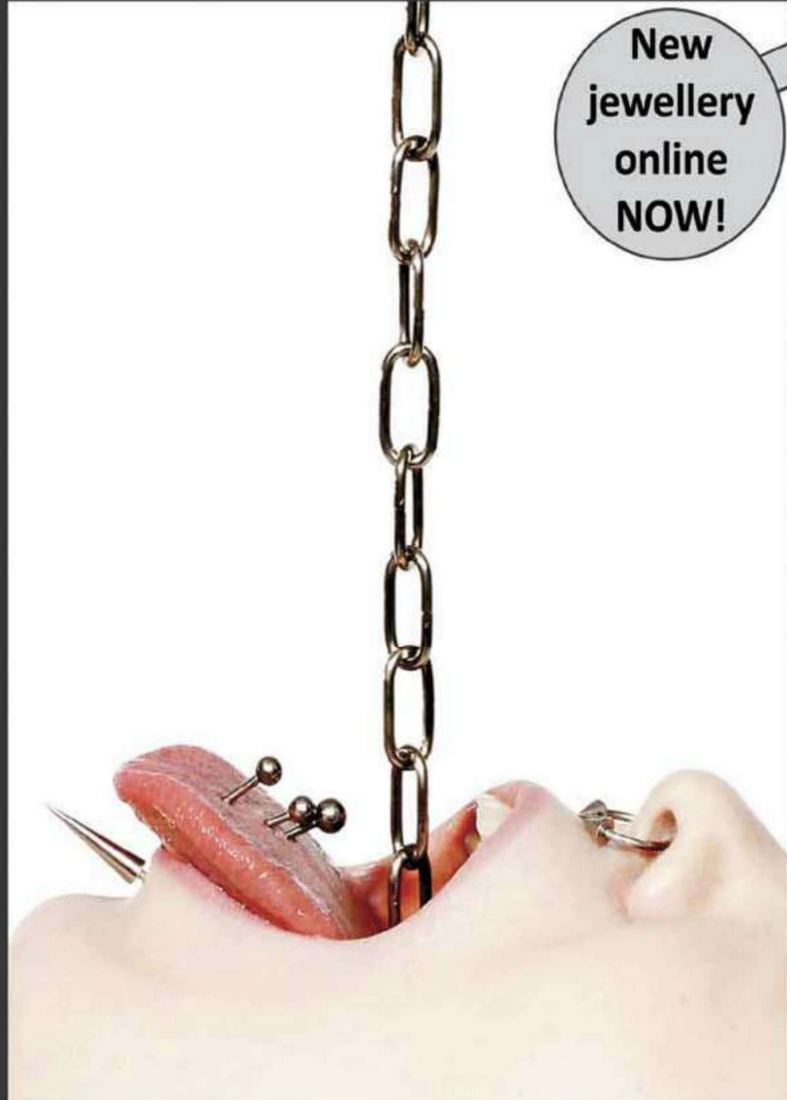
So Tony, I don't mind that you don't like tattoos, I don't mind that you believe me to be 'a thicko' and that you think I'll 'look silly when I'm 60'. When I'm 60, my skin will tell everyone exactly who I am, who I was and who I will always be – a smalltown girl whose dreams of rock and roll became a reality.

You'll just look old. 🐼

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