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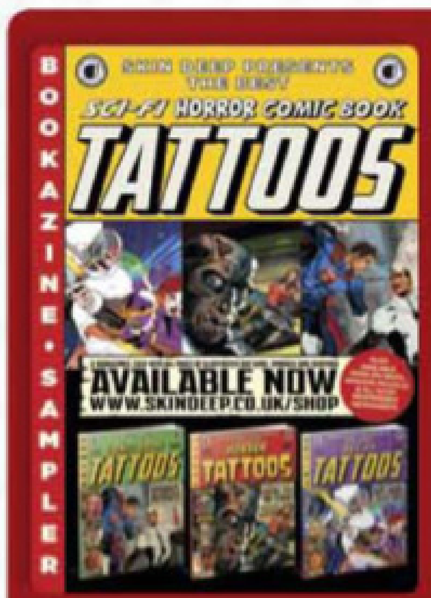

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AGA HAIRESIS

WHAT LIES BENEATH

My love/hate relationship with the mainstream media continues to go downhill.

Last week I was asked to provide a 'Top Ten' list of most popular tattoos for a certain respectable newspapers end of year supplement. There was a part of me that wanted to say no - that's not really the sort of thing any of us can log. It's not like I could realistically say: "This year, there were a lot of tattoos of skulls" because there always are, or "There was a massive influx of grizzly bears wearing baseball caps because of the er.. bears with baseball caps invasion from March."

The part of me that would have said no, also knows that if I had, they would have gone somewhere else to ask until eventually somebody would have said yes and I would end up sitting in my Christmas pants on Boxing Day wondering how they had managed to decide on these popular items. When those are your options, you buckle up and do what you think is right for the sake of the bigger picture.

I must admit, it did cross my mind to make it up off the top of my head and be responsible for the whole of next year's "very popular" list - that would be funny. "Unbelievably popular this year have been owls with clocks for eyes" - then, all I would need to do is sit back and wait for them to be submitted - or a BBC news item perhaps:

"And finally, here's a report on David Attenborough getting his first tattoo - a traditional Barn Owl with clocks for eyes. Joe Murphy reports..."

I didn't though. What I did was make a proper list based on what I've seen coming through for Skin Shots. Then the email came through asking specifically for a top ten for men and top ten for women.

Really? Like some fashion accessory list? Number three: Blue crocodile skin bag from Prada. Number two: Black and Decker false nails. And at number one: Charity shop hats in the colour of teal.

I began to think I was missing something, which would be an awful position for the editor of Skin Deep to be in, but I considered it again and decided that no, what they were asking for was just stupid. Tattoos are not cars. There is no central database where all artists must submit what they've done this week.

I decided to dish out popular themes instead and came up with a solid list of honest themes that have been popular this year. It's not uber-interesting because of that, but at least it's honest.

All of that aside, this request was made late on a Friday evening with a 'very urgent deadline of the following Monday - could I do it across the weekend?" I like to help out, so of course I could. Right in the middle of wrapping it up on Monday morning and sourcing the best pictures I could find, came what's known in the business as 'The Chase'.

"Where is my stuff, I have a deadline." or words to that effect. It was actually reasonably polite.

> I AM KIND TO EVERYONE. BUT IF YOU TREAT ME LIKE A FOOL, KIND IS NOT WHAT YOU WILL REMEMBER ABOUT ME

"It's right here - here are the links you need. All the files are credited with the artists names." etc.

And then, despite the fact that I'd spent a good couple of hours making sure it looked like a good list, was not a million miles away from the truth and sourced the best images I could from top artists to go with them so as it would look good - do you know the response I got in return?

Nothing. Nothing at all. Not "Thanks, that's very helpful", nor "That's not really what we were looking for", not even "This list is shit, we're going to ask somebody else for a better honest opinion".

Zilch. I didn't expect a dozen red roses, a crisp fiver stuffed in my pocket or even half a Twix that she found under the seat of her car but a simple "Thanks" would have been good enough.

I came very close to pulling the plug, but I shall let it stand - and it had better be exactly as I wrote it down and they had better spell my name right too. Next year, please, don't think of me because having read your blog containing pimps for just four books that do nothing other than recycle the back cover blurb, the little respect I had exists no longer.

Don't mistake my kindness for being weak dear journalist. I am kind to everyone. But if you treat me like a fool, kind is not what you will remember about me.

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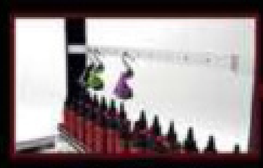

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You see Gabriela Lastra's art coming. The lady behind them is a little more reserved and frets throughout our interview about how she's coming across...

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Joey Hamilton is by no means a stranger to tattoo TV nor to hard work, having spent 10 years in the United States Air Force. But even he couldn't have foreseen the outcome of Ink Master's third season.

80 **LIORCIFER**
The last time we sat down and had a chat with Liorcifer was back in 2009. Since then he has opened his own place, Infernum Tattoos, a private studio in East Village New York, where he shares space with a crew of amazing artists.

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Do tattoos really lower your chances of getting into a high paid job? We don't have all the answers but it's an interesting look all the same.

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More from our crazy Frenchman let loose in California. We're all just waiting for Hollywood to come calling now.

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Sleeve Notes

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ALL SUBMISSIONS TO SLEEVE NOTES GRATEFULLY RECEIVED. BE IT NEWS, AN EVENT, NEW MERCH, A STUDIO MOVE... WE'LL DO OUR VERY BEST TO LET EVERYBODY ELSE KNOW ABOUT IT TOO. EMAIL: **EDITOR@SKINDEEP.CO.UK** OR IF YOU WANT TO BE ARCHAIC ABOUT THE WHOLE AFFAIR: SKIN DEEP, 1 MARCHER COURT, SEALAND ROAD, CHESTER CH1 6BS. BRING IT.

DIAMONDS & DUSTERS

WIN

Diamonds & Dusters are a new Huddersfield based independent clothing label with designs inspired by those who love their ink and metal... With a wide range of clothing for both ladies and gents, including tees, sweaters, hoodies, beanies, dresses, cutomised shoes and so on we thought we'd 'obtain' a few to give away to you classy readers who - as we all know - like free swag wherever you can get it.

We've got a selection of a grey Down Anchor sweater, a Swords and Diamonds black sweater, a Gents Large white signature tee and a ladies Medium Black signature tee. Simply send a blank email with the subject line of DUSTERS to: editor@skindeep.co.uk and we'll pluck some of you from relative obscurity to be the chosen ones. *facebook.com/diamondsanddusters instagram: #diamondsanddusters*

SHORT SLEEVES

INKA

inka have recently had a refit and they now have a new art gallery in their reception area. If you're passing by (or not... make an effort!) you can find them at: 80C St James's St, Brighton BN2 1PA Phone:01273 708844 • *inkatattoos.co.uk*

AITCHISON'S APPRENTICE?

In what's possibly the most interesting news item of the last 12 months, Guy Aitchison and Michele Wortman are currently (or at least as I write this) looking for an apprentice at Hyperspace. If you're ready, willing and (very) able - the link with everything you need to know is here: *hyperspacestudios.com/apprentice* Quite possibly, the opportunity of a lifetime.

KINTARO

Kintaro - publishers of fine tattoo books the world over - including the excellent Art of Claudia Hek - have just relaunched their new site which you can find here: *kintaro-publishing.com*.

SACRED SKIN

There's currently a crowd-funding campaign on Indiegogo to fund the first episode of a documentary series called Sacred Skin - Maellyn Macintosh is in charge with assistance from Lars Krutak so you know it's going to be a top notch project before it even starts. There's not long to go, so here's the link for you to do your thing: *http://igg.me/at/sacredskindoc*

BLUE CARDINAL

Beau Redman has opened a new studio called Blue Cardinal. She can now be found at 92 New Rd, Littleborough, Rochdale, Gtr Manchester, OL15 8NL along with James, Jack, Dom and apprentice Lucy

Storemags.com

SHORT SLEEVES

FLAMING GUN

Olly Jerrold has recently joined the crew at Flaming Gun. Olly's tattoo career started on the road, he has tattooed for over 18 years, owning, running studios all over the country, he is also a motorbike enthusiast and builder, but travelling the world and being on the open road is when he is at his happiest. You can find Olly and the rest of the guys at: 16 Church Walk, Town Centre, Colchester CO1 1NS • 01206 575705 • *flamingguntattoo.com*

BELLS & WHISTLES

American tattoo artist Lou Morales is opening his own studio in Exmouth, Devon. Having tattooed in Chile, Australia, Las Vegas and Miami, Lou brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the South West tattoo scene. Lou specialises in custom designed traditional tattoos, and wants to create a studio with all the "Bells & Whistles" and none of the attitude. Appointments are now being taken and Lou hopes to take on a second artist in the New Year, welcoming any interest from talented artists.

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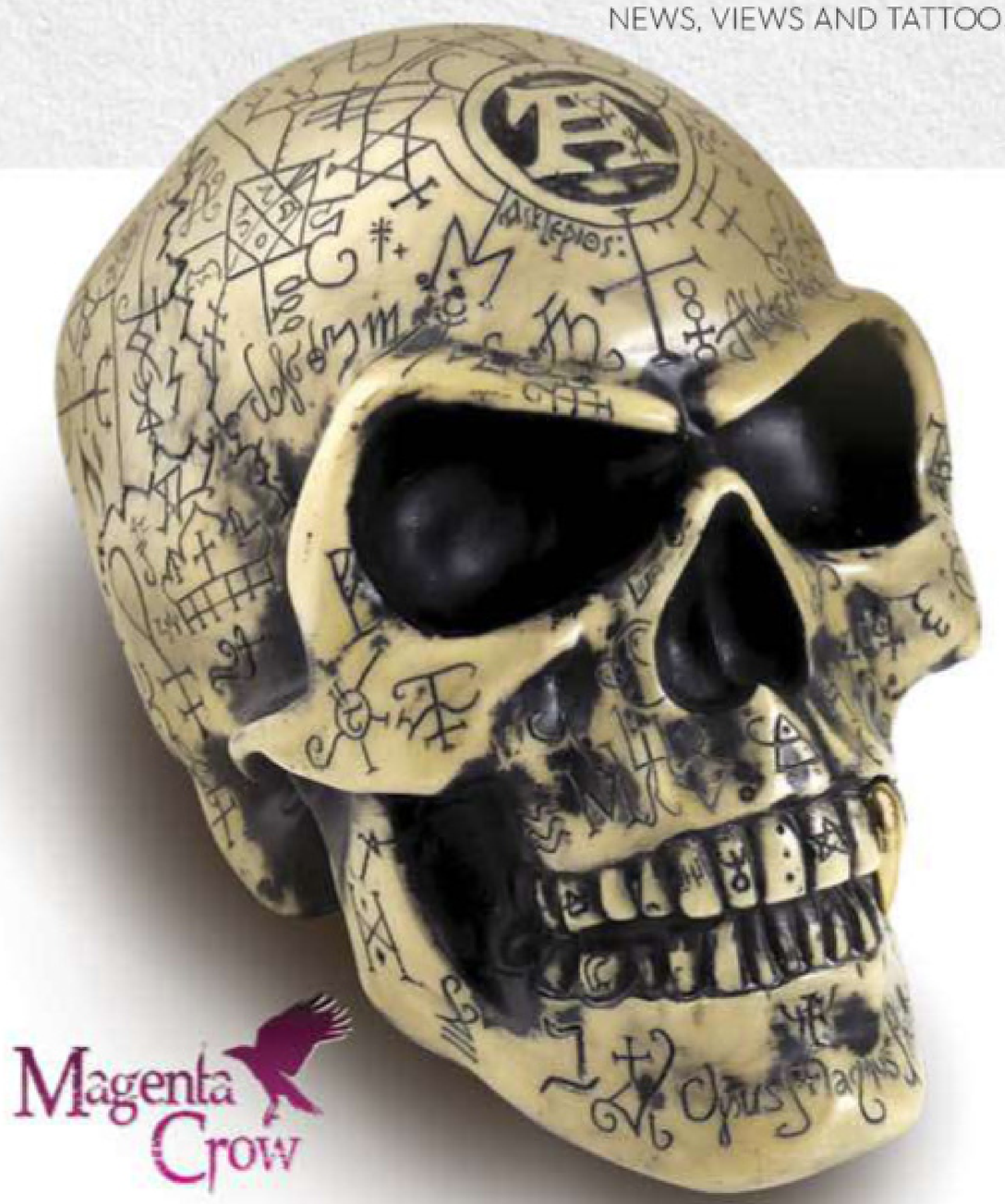

Magenta Crow

NEW FROM ALCHEMY

The Omega Skull is part of the new Vault Range by Alchemy Gothic and is proving very popular. The Omega is a life sized skull (depending on how big YOUR head is) and measures approximately 20cm x 15cm x 15cm.

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Other items in Alchemy's Vault Range include Candle Holders, Boxes, Mirrors and much more - why not take a look *magentacrow.co.uk*

TATTOO: THE EXHIBITION

In what amounts to an almost 18 month span, a new exhibition in musée du quai Branly, Paris will be open from 6th May 2014 to 18 October 2015. It will feature tattoo art from around the world and consists of (among many others) work from the likes of Tin-Tin (France), Horiyoshi III (Japan), Filip Leu (Switzerland), Jack Rudy (USA), Xed Ledhead (UK) and Chimé (Polynesia).

The exhibition itself is being curated by the incredibly talented Anne and Julien who are the founders of the outsider art review HEY! Modern art & pop culture with background being provided by occasional Skin Deep contributor Pascal Bagot and also Sébastien Galliot.

Stay tuned for more on this project as we go along - it sounds like a monster of a show that will be more than worth your time and attention.

BOOKAZINE BUNDLE

With it being a generous time of year and all that, we've put together a sweet pop-culture bundle of our latest collection of bookazines for you.

Pictured here are Best Sci-Fi Tattoos, Best Horror Tattoos and Best Comic Book Tattoos - normally retailing at £7.99 each, for a limited period, you can pick up all three for £19.99 at Big Tattoo Planet. More than just a simple collection of tattoos, each book features interviews and features with your favourite artists and tattooed people who play with these subjects for a living…

Head over to *bigtattooplanet.com* and type 'bundle' in the search box.

Soapbox

CRAIGY LEE

Craigy Lee Ash Springle

Most of you guys reading this know a bit about tattoos, you follow your favourite artists, and take the time to travel and get tattooed by specific artists, getting the right artist for the right job, is an important step in making sure you have an awesome tattoo you are going to love.

Many times over the years I have had emails or people come up to me at tattoo conventions and say "Hey I checked out your portfolio and really like your work, can you do me a photo realistic dog portrait" - just to clarify here: I have no photo realistic animals in my portfolio.

My first thought is did you actually look at my portfolio? Then I remind myself that a lot of people think as long as your tattoos look good, you must be a good tattoo artist capable of doing anything. So my next step is to point out there are many artists who specialise in this type of work and that I would be more then happy to suggest a few to them. Unfortunately not every studio or artist has this respect for their craft and this is ultimately why you see so many bad tattoos on the internet. "Well if they didn't do their research they deserve it" might be what you're thinking right about now, however educating people is a big part of our job (and getting bigger. Ed).

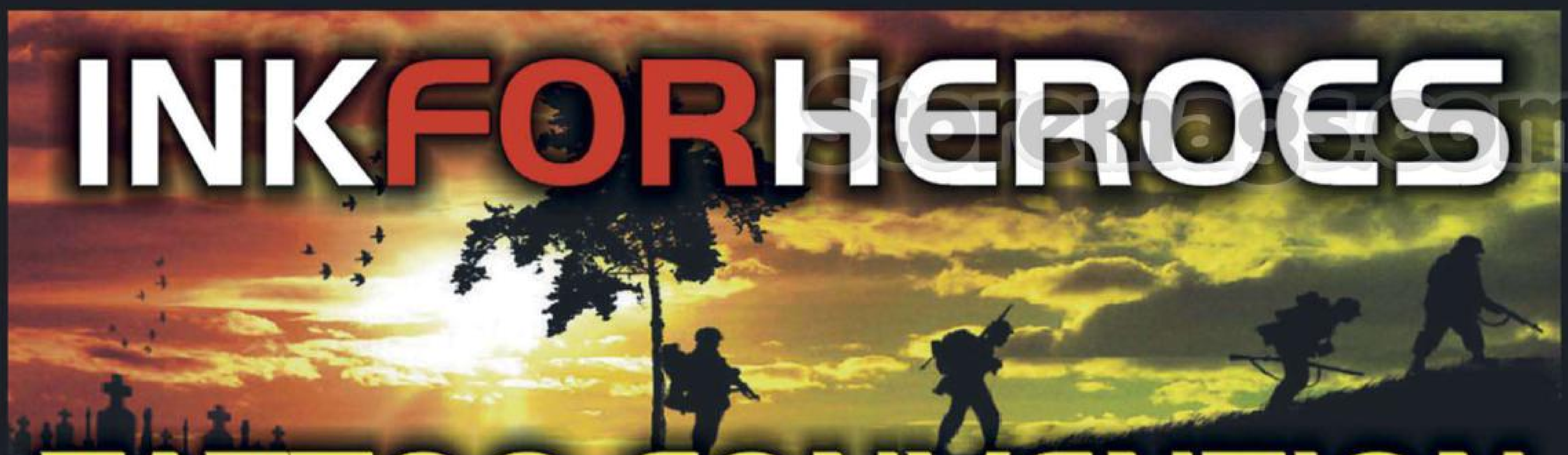
By passing on the right work to the right artist, tattooing will flourish and will be one big happy family. One of the dumbest things I hear people say is "Oh that's a cool design I'll take it to my tattooist" - what is this phrase "my tattooist"? It's ridiculous, it's laughable - we are not hairdressers, we all specialise in different styles so here are the simple basic facts:

Not every car is the same, you can spend a little and get something basic and economical or you can spend a lot and get something flash with lots of gadgets, having a driving licence doesn't mean you can fly a plane and similarly not every tattoo artist is of the same skill. A tattoo is something that is on you forever - laser is around but it is expensive and takes a long time to remove the whole tattoo - so you need to make sure you get the right artist for the right tattoo, you wouldn't buy a car without a test drive.

Not every artist may be suited to your tattoo design, many artists specialise in different styles, you may be loyal to that same hairdresser but most decent artists wouldn't feel cheated if you went to someone else who specialised in the style of artwork you want. For example someone who specialises in photo realism is more than likely not going to be good at pulling the heavy straight lines in a traditional tattoo and vice versa. I actively encourage my customers to collect tattoos from different artists in different styles; after all, you don't eat at the same restaurant every time you go out.

Getting a good tattoo shouldn't be hard - step up and be that knowledgeable person and help your friends out, simple tattoo education should mean we start seeing less and less poorly executed tattoos around.

Join in the discussion is there an important issue on your mind you would like me to discuss in an upcoming issue? Drop me a line at *craigylee@skindeep.co.uk*



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Halo

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

Black Lotus Tattoo Gallery 2620-H Annapolis Road, Severn MD 21144
www.tattoosbyhalo.com www.blacklotustattoos.com

This month, we received an avalanche of excellence from Halo who works out BLack Lotus Tattoo Gallery in Maryland. Not only a damn good tattooist, he also spends any time he has left putting art on just about anything else he can find - believe me, what you see here is the very tip of the iceberg.

It all depends on me. How willing am I to improve?

Tattooing had always been a big enigma to me. I had always seen crappy tattoos that my friends had and I thought they were OK... but I was never interested in getting many. EVERY shop in my area was just "pick it off the wall, get it here or there" I had seen the same exact tattoos on friends of mine, but there were never tattoos that blew my mind.

Until I saw tattoos from the likes of Nick Baxter and Bob Tyrrell. Seeing those in person made me go,"Who did that!" I had only seen bad tattoos, but this? This was before the TV show hype of course, so I had never even been around someone with a good tattoo. That was the turning point that made me feel as though tattooing was an art form that was worth being involved in. I wanted to apprentice so bad it was palpable and almost painful.

I did my year long apprenticeship under Eric Caves in Baltimore MD. The apprenticeship was rough, very rough. I made no money, cleaned floors, cars, tubes, needles, stations, for months with no pay or tip or even a thank you. I understood though, that all things that were worth having must be earned.

I am so grateful for this because I feel as though the younger generation of people, not just tattooers, are ungrateful for most things. They want instant fame, instant gratification, instant recognition. I wish more people were given the apprenticeship I had, I feel the craft would have more respect.

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I used to think I wanted to be famous - nowadays, I just wanna be a good tattooer and a good artist.

I like people. I love working on projects and making things come to life. I like seeing progress in myself. The ability to look back and see the fruits of my hard work. I love to listen to people and give my advice. I love to be expressive and use art to cope with life in general. I hate doing tedious work and enjoy spontaneity. Tattooing couldn't be a better career for me. I think it chose me more than I chose it. My favorite things to tattoo is what I draw. Since most of what I do is all freehanded on the skin, its safe to say that I like to tattoo in the moment. I haven't committed myself to a style as I'd like to learn and grow into an artist, not box myself into an artist. I tend to like realism. I like looking at things and analyzing colors, trying to match them and trying to understand contrast shifts, muting and activating colors, and tonal differences. However, on the COMPLETE opposite side I LOVE doing fun, bold line cartoony stuff. The real holy crap in your face color popping madness! Mixing styles is a lot of fun between the two and very challenging. I think its safe to say that I just love to tattoo. Any style.

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Tattoo Vixens

Katie

This month, we get to grips with the feisty one known as Katie. Honestly, it's like trying to have a conversation while she's wired into the national grid - and we wouldn't have it any other way...

I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER DONE AN INTERVIEW WITH ANYBODY WHO WANTED TO BE A FIGHTER PILOT BEFORE. HOW DO YOU THINK THAT WOULD HAVE PANNED OUT FOR YOU? I'VE ALWAYS WONDERED WHAT FIGHTER PILOTS DID WHEN THEY WEREN'T BEING ONE - DO YOU JUST SIT AROUND PLAYING VIDEO-GAMES UNTIL SOMETHING REALLY IMPORTANT HAPPENS AND THEN YOU HAVE TO GET YOUR HELMET AND SUN-GLASSES ON?

I'm actually a little disappointed for you that I'm not a fighter pilot and for myself really! It would make one hell of a dating profile... I mean, it's like being president or something. It just gives you

Mr Smith • Scott Cole • **Model:** Katie • **Makeup:** Eve-Marie Parry **Shoes:** Hades

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It would make one hell of a dating profile... I mean, its like being president or something. It just gives you an edge dont you think?

an edge don't you think? So as for how I think that would have panned out for me.....I like to see it in a kind of movie montage - landing at sunset and walking slow motion towards the aircraft hanger taking off your helmet and swishing your hair out and somehow looking fabulous with a well timed gentle breeze doing that l'oreal advert thing... Seriously, I think I would have passed out if I had got the job. I have to say I was looking forward to doing basic training. I love a good military style training session. I work well under pressure. I shot my first gun out in Vegas, I was terrified inside but as the swathes of men lined up to do it, I thought right - step up, and to this day its the most exhilarating thing that I have ever done. The RAF would probably have been good for me.

YOU'RE CURRENTLY DOING THE MENTAL HEALTH NURSING THING FOR THE NHS - I ALSO FIND IT STRANGE THAT TATTOOS ARE SO LOOKED DOWN UPON, PARTICULARLY IN HEALTHCARE WHERE THEY PROVIDE A PRETTY DAMN GOOD PORT OF CALL FOR CONNECTING - SURELY IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE TATTOOED PEOPLE RISE THROUGH THE MANAGEMENT RANKS AND BEGIN TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE ON THAT FRONT.

THOUGHTS? (JEEPERS - A SERIOUS QUESTION!)

Gosh this could all get a bit intense! I am currently studying for a diploma in mental health - I am a health care assistant on an elderly care ward where I work with a high level of dementia patients. It is a huge passion of mine as I'm a very caring, professional, and an empathetic person who goes in everyday and works very hard, so as such, I don't see how tattoos would ever make a difference to my work ethic or to those who receive my care. I think in some way, tattoos are still seen very much as a stereotype of a

certain type of person that maybe is unsuitable for a professional environment.
It does tend to be 'senior figures' that express their dislike for tattoos, maybe due to outdated preconceptions? I find that they are actually a huge asset, they are great for breaking down barriers between patients and their relatives, it is usually a great talking point and I think it makes you a little bit more human as instantly a bit of your personality is shinning through the very institutionalised exterior of a uniform. It's only a matter of time before tattooed people rise up through the ranks so it won't be a point of judgement or sole influence on someones suitability for a role.

YOU SAY YOU WORKED AT BURGER KING FOR QUITE SOME TIME AND "NEVER HANDED OUT SO MANY PHONE NUMBERS AS YOU DID THEN" - ANY PARTICULAR REASON? YOUR OWN PHONE NUMBER? WHERE YOU ACTUALLY ASKED FOR THEM OR DID YOU JUST SCRAWL IT ON THE POLYSTYRENE LID ON THE OFF CHANCE? ACTUALLY, IS IT ONLY MCDONALDS THAT DOES THE POLYSTYRENE BOX THING?
I take you don't eat in MacDonald's restaurants that often. I hate to be the one to tell you that polystyrene boxes are a thing of the past - like being able to supersize your meal (unless perhaps you're in America). So just to put the record straight it was indeed numbers scrawled on napkins coming my way. I wasn't like a one woman phone number vending machine or anything and being as I smelled like a greasy meaty morsel most of the time, I felt it was quite an achievement. I thought you would ask the time honoured question everyone asks me: did people spit in the burgers? Noooooo never! I did put a good handful jalapeños in an ex boyfriend's burger once though. Dont judge me.
(Ed's note: Katie used the word 'restaurant' here, not me. I much prefer the term 'skip')

YOU ALSO SAYS THAT PUTTING DOLLAR BILLS IN STRIPPERS KNICKERS IN VEGAS IS A TICK ON YOUR BUCKET LIST. I THINK WE'D ALL LIKE TO KNOW WHAT OTHER GOLDEN NUGGETS YOU'VE GOT ON THAT LIST... A SMALL SAMPLING OF YOUR VERY BEST PLEASE!
It's quite a list!
I've always wanted to learn the dance to MC Hammer's 'Cant Touch This' and bust it out perfectly on a dance floor. I imagine this moment in my head every time I hear this song. I always get applause. I would like to replace the lock on my door with an old church lock and key and have the biggest front door key for it. I have a fascination with old keys and doors.

'Its only a matter of time before tattooed people rise up through the ranks so it wont be a point of judgement or sole influence on someones suitability for a role

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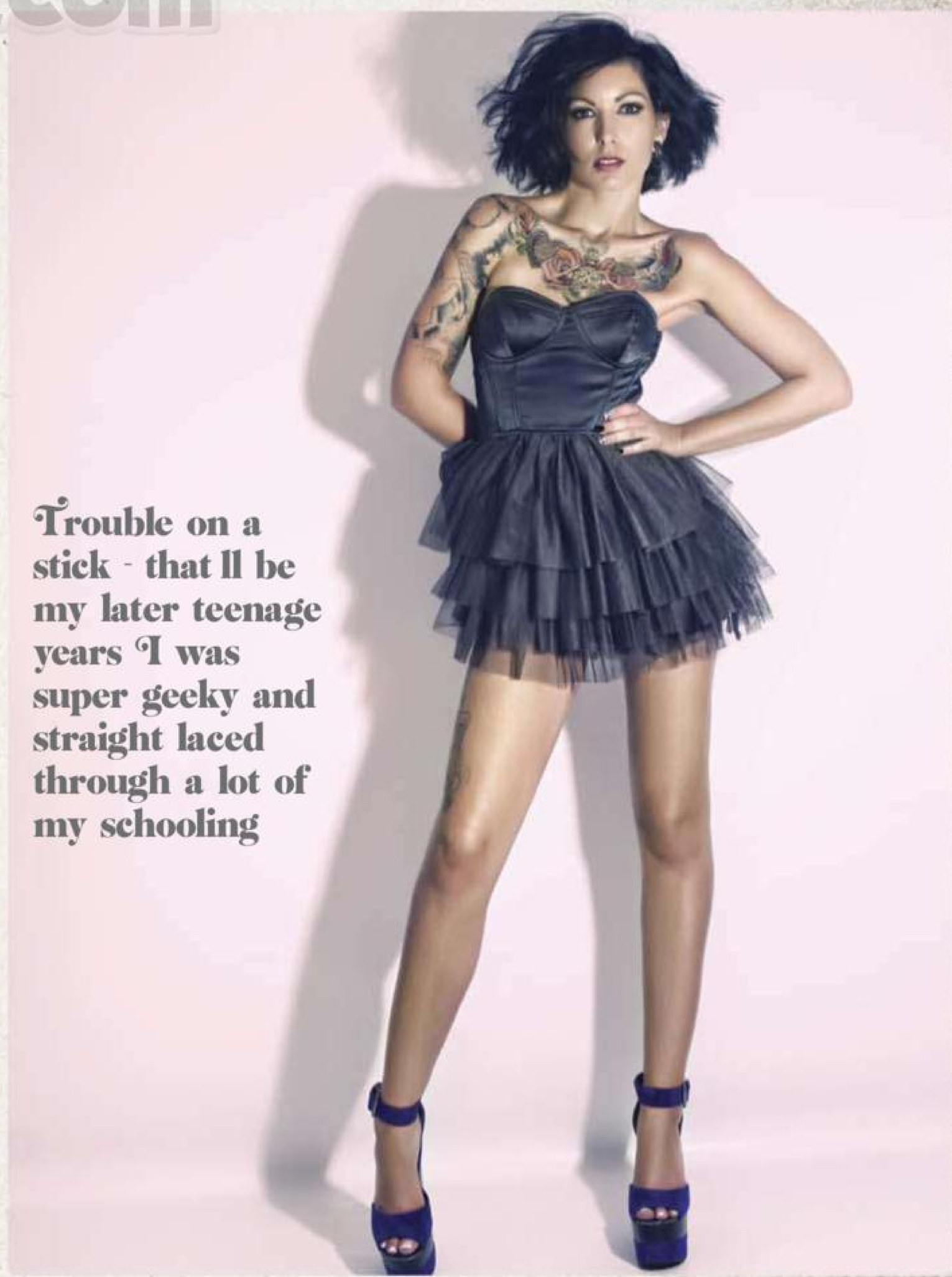
I would love to look after fairy penguins for a day - are they not the cutest creatures? Master a circus artistry. I'm a frustrated performer inside, I dance like no one is watching. Get my own fondue pot. Cheese fondue is food of the Gods. I'm surprised it's not part of my kitchen arsenal

YOU CONFESS TO NOT KNOWING YOUR LEFT HAND FROM YOUR RIGHT - MIGHT THAT NOT HAVE BEEN A LITTLE BIT OF A HINDERANCE IN THE SEAT OF A FIGHTER PLANE?
I don't think its like driving a car. You see an enemy plane coming towards you, get confused which way to bank - play chicken? Maybe I would have become the daredevil of the skies - either that or I would have it written on my flight gloves. Yeah I would do that. Bit safer perhaps

I'M HITTING THE REWIND BUTTON AND TAKING YOU BACK TO SCHOOL - WHICH YOU DID IN GERMANY AT A BOARDING SCHOOL. GIRLS ONLY? ENGLISH SPEAKING ONLY? OR SIMPLY THE BIGGEST MELTING POT OF DIFFERENT PEOPLE YOU COULD EVER HOPE TO FIND? EITHER WAY, IT SOUNDS LIKE TROUBLE ON A STICK TO ME!
Trouble on a stick - that'll be my later teenage years I was super geeky and straight laced through a lot of my schooling. Then suddenly hit the rebellious button. I liked it. I digress. It was an English only, all girls, Forces school. I had such a laugh there. You can only imagine what it was like when the boys from the other boarding school came over. I still talk to a lot of the girls from there, who will remember the only film we seemed to have between us there was Hairspray. I can't count on my fingers how many times we watched that. Other than that it was all Ouija boards on the beds and plaiting each others hair... you know, standard stuff!
(Dear readers - at this point, I would like to point out that the list of things Katie's into leads me to think a list of what she's not into would be a lot shorter. Typical bloody Scorpio...



Trouble on a stick - that ll be my later teenage years I was super geeky and straight laced through a lot of my schooling

FINALLY - YOU'VE BRANDED YOURSELF A MOVIE BUFF. I SUSPECT THAT YOUR TOP THREE WILL TELL US A LOT ABOUT YOU... LET ME GUESS AT WHAT I THINK THEY ARE FIRST: 1. TOP GUN, 2. TRANSFORMERS AND 3. PROZAC NATION. HOW DID I DO?
Ha! I do enjoy Transformers. I haven't seen Prozac Nation but I just found it on netflix - now I know what I'm going to be watching tonight. Picking a top 3 is so hard! Top Gun? I'm not a fan of Tom Cruise but it is a classic and would have probably been a staple of mine had I become that fighter pilot. So ..... top three films? I am going to go with three films that in recent years have blown me away with their originality 1) Girl With The Dragon Tattoo (original Swedish version), 2. Pans Labyrinth and 3. Sinister - I just did not see that ending coming! Hmm. I feel Inception needs to be there too. Damn, I love way too many films!

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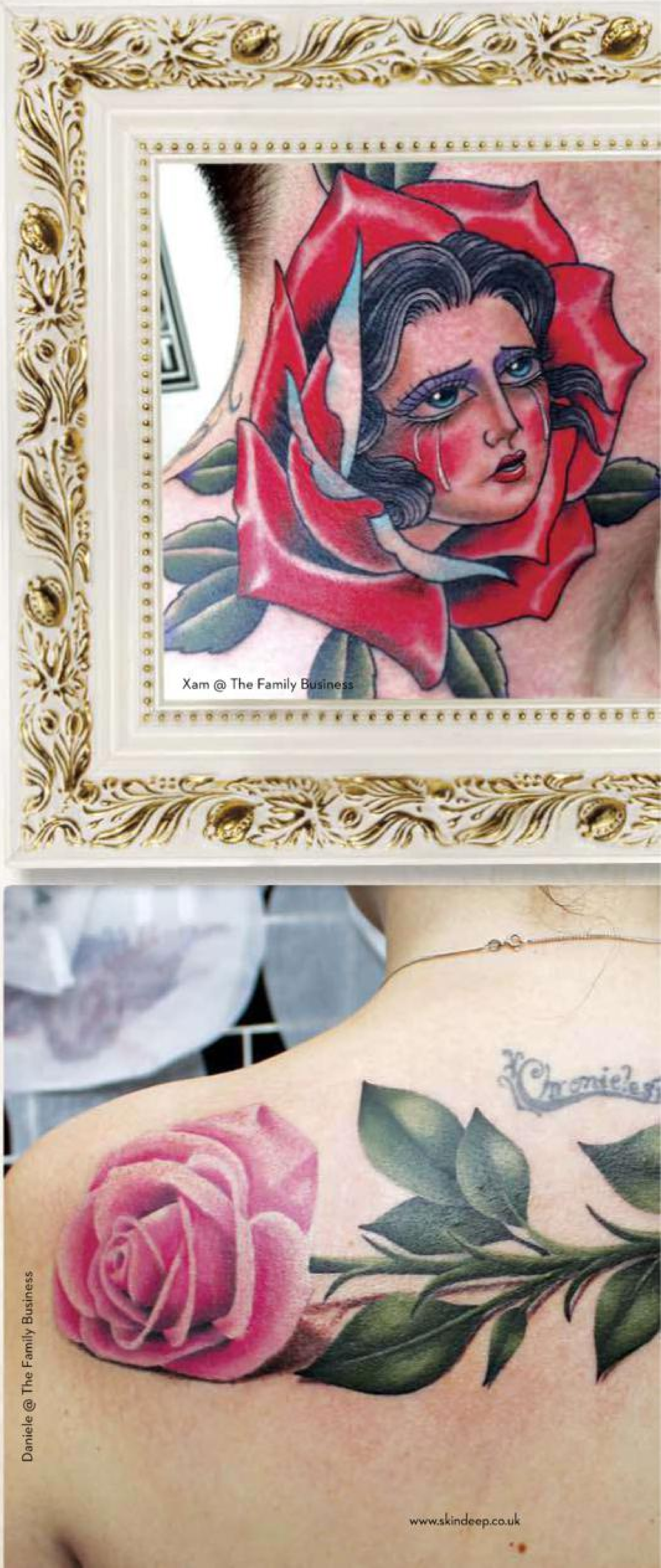
WORKING FOR THE MAN

Now here's an interesting piece - written by a reader no less. We shall call him Paddy Vipond (because that's his name) and his article raises such good points that I feel it only right to publish it here with the hope that other readers will respond in kind. Images here are from the inimitable crew at The Family Business.

A conversation with my girlfriend has inspired me to write this. What began as an off-the-cuff remark soon turned into a full blown debate. Those that know me would say that this is an inevitability. The topic of discussion was tattoos and whether they hinder ones chances of getting a highly paid job. My argument was that a heavily tattooed person would struggle to find a position that paid highly; my girlfriend disagreed. Heavily tattooed, in this case, was defined as one or more full sleeves, highly visible work and/or ink on the neck and/or hands and knuckles. Highly paid was defined as £65,000 a year, which is currently, just over double the UK national average salary for males. The figures for these have come from a Payscale report dated the 3rd of December this year.

It would be foolish to say that tattoos, and being tattooed, are not becoming more common and more accepted within society, and the workplace. On the 20th of July 2010, the Guardian ran an article entitled "The Rise and Rise of the Tattoo", which I will quote from here. Within this article it was stated that "a fifth of all British adults have now been inked". The choice to get tattooed is even more popular across the pond in America where one tattooist says they are "about a decade ahead in terms of popularity". There are many examples given of people who have tattoos and are well known, and highly paid, Angelina Jolie, Wayne Rooney, Robbie Williams and David Beckham are all mentioned, but I feel these represent a minority within their chosen fields. Lets take actresses for example, and though Angelina Jolie is tattooed and is also, currently, the highest paid actress (according to Forbes), she is not heavily tattooed. She is an actress with tattoos. Number two on Forbes' list is Sarah Jessica Parker, she has no tattoos. Jennifer Aniston is third and only has a minor tattoo on her foot. The list goes on. None of Forbes' highest paid actresses are heavily tattooed. Lets then look at football, which appears to be a more accepted sphere for tattoos. Once again we turn to Forbes and their top ten earners. David Beckham is noted as the highest earner and its fair to say that he is heavily tattooed. He has two full sleeves and more artwork on his chest and back. Cristiano Ronaldo is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MY ARGUMENT WAS THAT A HEAVILY TATTOOED PERSON WOULD STRUGGLE TO FIND A POSITION THAT PAID HIGHLY; MY GIRLFRIEND DISAGREED

Chisaki @ The Family Business

at two and he is not heavily tattooed, nor is Lionel Messi at three, or Wayne Rooney at four, though he does have a handful of tattoos. Indeed, outside of David Beckham nobody in the top ten is heavily tattooed.

What we can conclude from this is that heavily tattooed individuals in the top pay bracket of their chosen professions represent a minority. Of course getting a tattoo is an individual choice, and to become heavily tattooed is a major commitment. In the arena of sports and music, and perhaps even modelling, I would not

anticipate that it would be too detrimental, but what about more mundane, everyday jobs? What about a heavily tattooed banker? or lawyer? or politician?

One case which immediately jumps out is that of Vladimir Franz. He came to worldwide attention earlier this year when he ran for Presidency in the Czech Republic. Vladimir finished fifth overall but the result was never the major media story. What caught everyones eye was that fact that Vladimir was not only

WHAT ABOUT MORE MUNDANE, EVERYDAY JOBS? WHAT ABOUT A HEAVILY TATTOOED BANKER? OR LAWYER? OR POLITICIAN?

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IF HAVING A TATTOO PLACES YOU WITHIN THE MINORITY, BEING HEAVILY TATTOOED PLACES YOU WITHIN AN EVEN SMALLER MINORITY

heavily tattooed, he was almost completely covered. His arms, his hands, back, chest and even his face have artwork upon them. In fact he has achieved 90% body coverage. But once again Vladimir is the exception to the rule, despite extensive online searching I was not able to find any other example of a politician with large amounts of tattoos.

A quick google search brought to my attention another article that featured on the Guardian, this one entitled "Stamping Out the Persistent Myths and Misconceptions About Tattoos". It was here that I found a passage that gave links to "heavily tattooed scientists at NASA" and "heavily tattooed heart surgeons". I thought that these may well be strong evidence to support my Girlfriends theory. However, after following these links I was disappointed to find that the heavily tattooed NASA scientist was in fact not tattooed at all, but instead had a number of facial piercings. The heavily tattooed heart surgeon had only one tattoo, a heart on his back.

To return to the former Guardian article, statistics were given stating that "14% of teachers are now tattooed" and "9% of servicemen and women". It is highly unlikely though that these figures represent what we consider as heavily tattooed. If having a tattoo places you within the minority, being heavily tattooed places you within an even smaller minority.

Giulimondi

Perhaps being heavily tattooed and being in a highly paid job has no relationship, but judging how society views those with even a handful of tattoos, I feel it does. Though prejudices are changing and people are becoming more accepting, there are still many areas where having tattoos is not deemed as acceptable or appropriate. My own personal experience has told me that my tattoos will prevent me

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HAVE FOUND LITTLE EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT HEAVILY TATTOOED PEOPLE OCCUPY THE HIGHER PAID JOBS. THIS IS NOT TO SAY HOWEVER THAT THEY DO NOT, OR THAT IT IS NOT POSSIBLE

becoming a banker (not that I would want to), I would have trouble getting a recruitment consultancy job, and even working in a certain American coffee shop chain, the tattoos had to be covered up. A study in America with worrying findings has even suggested that being heavily tattooed, rather than getting you a good job, is more likely to mean time in prison. Jerome Koch, a sociology professor concluded that his study saw "a correlation between multiple tattoos and... socially unacceptable behaviour". His study, "Body Art, Deviance and American College Students" found that those with four or more tattoos "are ten times more likely to have an arrest history [and] a four-fold increase in drug use".

From researching and writing this article I have found little evidence to suggest that heavily tattooed people occupy the higher paid jobs. This is not to say however that they do not, or that it is not possible. The resources I have available to me may hamper my ability to find relevant information and statistics. Ideally I would like to have access to questionnaires that have been located in tattoo parlours, these questionnaires would ask how much each of the clients earn, and how many tattoos they have. It would only be after this was conducted at many parlours within the UK that we would be able to get a more accurate story. I don't doubt that highly paid, heavily tattooed individuals exist, and with the ever growing popularity, more will appear in the years to come. For the time being, however, our society is in a place whereby those with an abundance of tattoos either cannot find highly paid employment due to prejudices against their appearance, or due to the generation gap, those who are heavily tattooed are not experienced or old enough to be in the positions of high pay.

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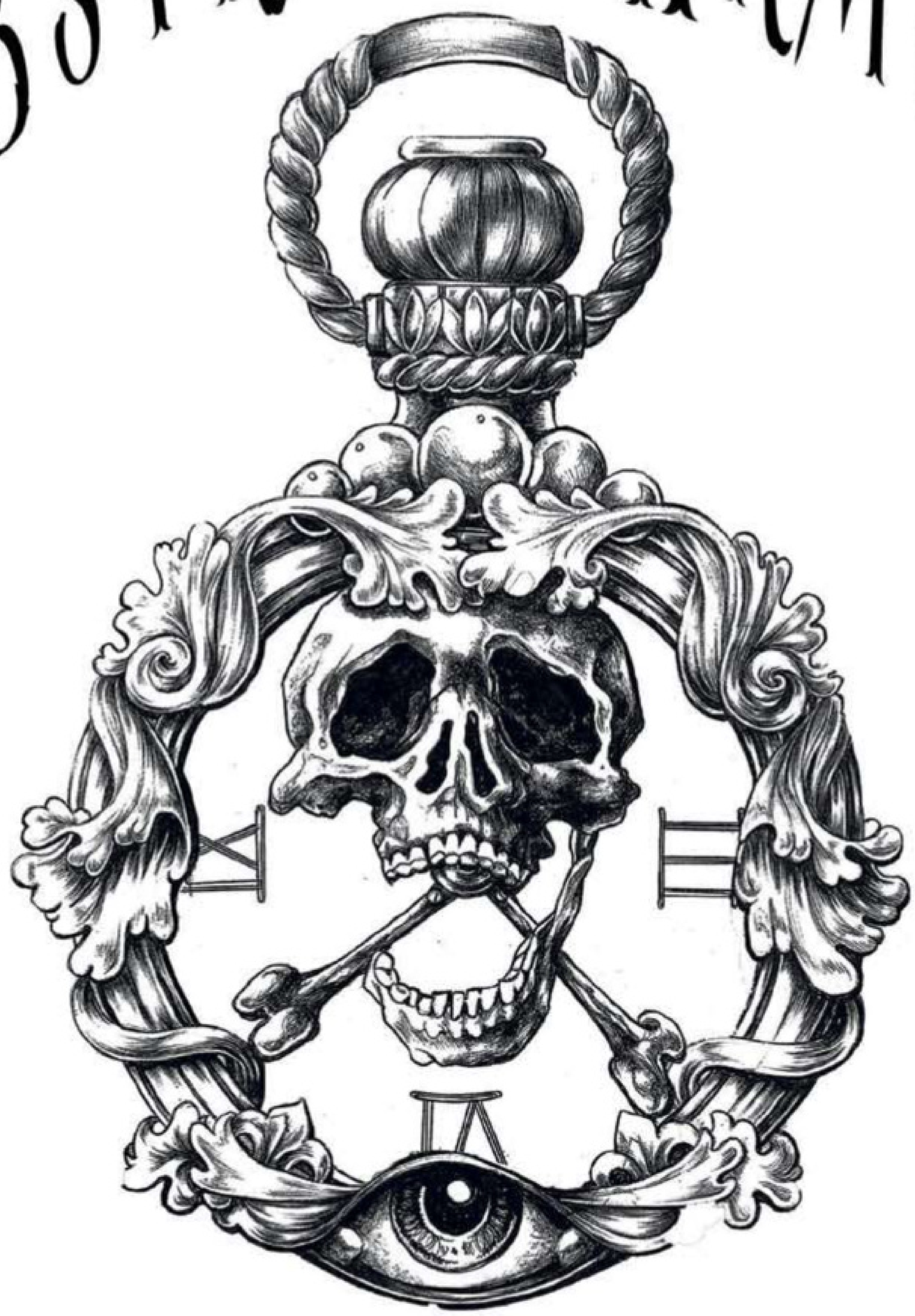

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BACK TO BLACK

I've said it many times over the last few years, there are hundreds of tattoo books on the market, but for my money, still sitting high at the top of the tree for production values and content are those produced by Edition Reuss. Here, we take a look at their latest releases:

BLACK TATTOO ART 2

Rather obviously, the second volume in the Black Tattoo Art sequence, we once again take a heavy (448 pages of heavy) look at those who like to work with this one single magnificent colour - and let's all agree up front, technically, it may not be a colour but we won't get very in the tattoo world if we're going to stay up all night fighting about it.

Working with black is an artform in its own right - the most obvious port of call with it, is to immediately think of tribal work. In the UK, this area of the art is much misunderstood both by the public and far too many tattoo artists for its own good but when approached with research and no small amount of heart and soul, it can transform its owner into something rather special. Maybe it takes a certain kind of person to pull off authentic tribal. Maybe it depends on who you are, what you do and how you present yourself to the world. An interesting train of thought and definitely one for some place other than a book review but it does throw a revealing spotlight on what can be achieved if you take the time and patience to get your skin to the right artist.

In Black Tattoo Art 2, we're treated to some of the most authentic players in the game. Pictured here is a wonderful piece of symmetry from Tomas Tomas (IN2U) - a genuine work of art put that's a lot more difficult than it probably appears at first glance. Every piece of his work is as body enhancing as this.

At the other end of the scale, we see that Simone Pfaff is still eerily out on the edge and smashing her work out of the ballpark. When she works with her partner Volko and their minds begin to work in that unique and beautiful way they do over at Buena Vista, you'll have to look extremely hard indeed to find a better representation of what this magical single colour is capable of.

I met Colin Dale briefly last year. Having more than a little affinity with the Celtic world, my heart totally appreciated what he's got going on in the world. The piece pictured here is one of his best in my opinion - if you think it's nothing more than a tree, you're not looking properly.

Kai Uwe Faust

Mr Smith As credited/copyright edition Reuss

Cammy Stewart

Simone Pfaff and Volko Merschky

Colin Dale

All of Colin's work plays to the strengths of a couple of thousand years worth of knowing that the designs work and how they work, but again, you need to be a certain type to carry it properly. This isn't simply art that you pull down off a shelf for the sake of having a tattoo - this is so much more.

The same can be said of Kai Uwe Faust whose work can also be seen here. Simply stunning - these tattoos are so much more than body adornments.

If you were ever interested in tribal as a concept but have been put off by the connotations it still carries around with it, do yourself and favour and spend some hours focussing on what's going on in these tribal sections of the book. It will change your perspective forever.

WORKING WITH BLACK IS AN ARTFORM IN ITS OWN RIGHT - THE MOST OBVIOUS PORT OF CALL WITH IT, IS TO IMMEDIATELY THINK OF TRIBAL WORK

Gerhard Wiesbeck

Loic Lavenu

Tomas Tomas

THIS NEED TO CATEGORISE THINGS IS A BAD THING THE WHOLE WORLD OVER BUT IF THAT'S HOW YOU WANT TO LABEL YOUR ART SO THAT YOU CAN FIND IT, SO BE IT

Meanwhile, at the other end of the book, we have my other favourite - those that are saddled with the lazy term of Art Brut. I say 'lazily' but must confess I don't have any better descriptions for you. This need to categorise things is a bad thing the whole world over but if that's how you want to label your art so that you can find it, so be it.

What we find is the usual suspects at play here - usual suspects perhaps but my, how they're pushing at the boundaries of what they can do. Noon seemingly gets better with every single tattoo he does. The man is an unbelievable talent. Let's face it, you book an appointment with Noon because you want exactly what he does and nothing else. I can't imagine anybody coming away from that experience with anything less than the biggest smile on their face.

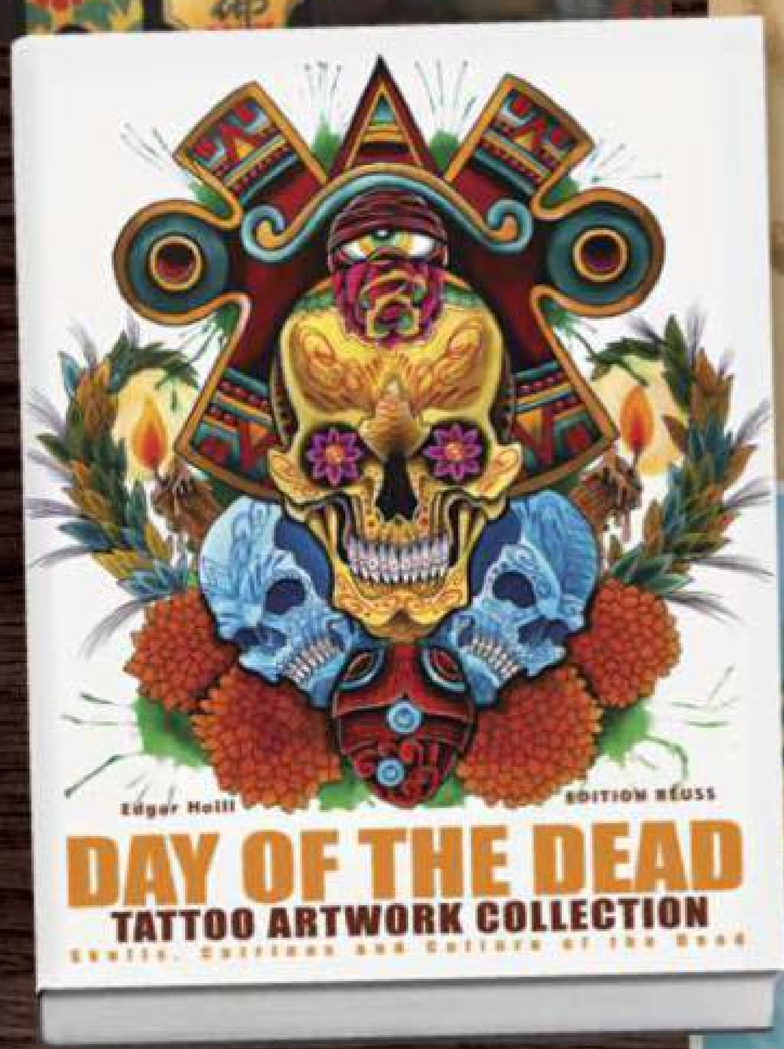
Same goes for Xoil - for a slightly different reason. You make an appointment with this man because you want to see how much he can mess with what you had in your head - and the wonderful thing about him is that he's guaranteed never to let you down.

We're starting to introduce some other colours into the blackwork now, but the fact remains, the foundations of all these tattoos sit in the black. Not so much a new name to me but certainly one that - judging by his work here - I'll be digging into as soon as I've finished writing this - is Cammy Stewart. Gorgeous straight lines form a formidable backdrop to this art. Never have straight lines been so dramatic - and every small dot that appears serves a purpose. Again - another artist that you could glance over and say "nice tattoo" but you'd only be cheating yourself if you're not going to look at it properly.

There's a big list of artists here who need a mention - Jef, Yann Black, Pat Fish, it's a long, long list - but next to being there in the flesh, nothing beats seeing all of these guys work in this huge and heavy format. Ultimately, that's what these big tomes from Edition Reuss do best.

Shige Eternal

Pedro Alvarez



Rask Opticon

DAY OF THE DEAD

Tattoo Artwork Collection: Skulls, Catrinas and Culture of the Dead

This is a little departure from the normal format book from Reuss and it looks great. I like this 'designed' cover - it really stands apart from the heavy art of their other publications.

Authored by Edgar Hoill (One Shot One Kill), Day of the Dead features some serious work from the likes of Rask Opticon, Shige, Derek Noble, Jack Rudy and takes the exact format that suits Hoill best - one shot, one kill i.e: one page, one image - give it your best shot and move on.

What this book succeeds at (where many others have possibly missed the point) is gathering together the many different cultures of the dead - a first glance may lead you to think it was nothing more than a collection of sugar skulls but - as can be seen here with the example of art from Shige - that would be wrong. From east to west, culturally we have all treated the dead differently, all have differing opinions of how to hand out the respect and digging through this inspired collection of artwork, that comes across brilliantly.

There's frighteningly good material in here - check out the pictured bold colour work from Heidi Scheck, the attention to detail of the piece from Derek Noble and the subtle tones coming from Pedro Alvarez. With close on 150 pages of material and all of it at this level of greatness, if you're a fan of skulls, skeletons and (as it says) the culture of the dead, you won't go far wrong with this.

WITH CLOSE ON 150 PAGES OF MATERIAL IF YOU'RE A FAN OF SKULLS, SKELETONS AND (AS IT SAYS) THE CULTURE OF THE DEAD, YOU WON'T GO FAR WRONG WITH THIS

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Both are available to buy via mail-order or at selected conventions around the world - but take my advice and do the mail order thing. You don't want to be carrying one of these around a show for a couple of days. You can get them at editionreuss.de

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PART TWO

P.INK DAY 10.21.13

EMOTIONAL RESCUE

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In the second (and final) part of this article, we continue our look at mastectomy scar coverage - in particular here, with one of the women who took part in the P.INK day session in New York: Mari Ruddy who tells her story shooting straight from the hip:

As you might have gathered from the article last issue, I was not so much unprepared for talking to women who have battled and survived breast cancer, but rather was taken aback at how available they made themselves to me and how open they were to reliving a past they would probably rather forget. It was a revelation. A good one but a revelation all the same - and why? In the name of awareness I guess.

Be aware that nobody ever thinks it can happen to them, be aware that there are things you can do to help yourself and be aware that life will go on afterwards. This big old world stops turning for nobody that's for sure.

As part of the bigger picture, Noel Franus (P.INK day organisation in case you missed it) set up an interview for me with Mari who lives in Minnesota. My original intention was to do this only once and that was before the tattoo session, but we got on so well that curiosity got the better of me and I decided to see how she appeared after the tattoo.

It was the best choice I could have made. I suspected there might have been a different person in front of me afterwards but was mightily surprised at exactly how positively different.

Let's do this:

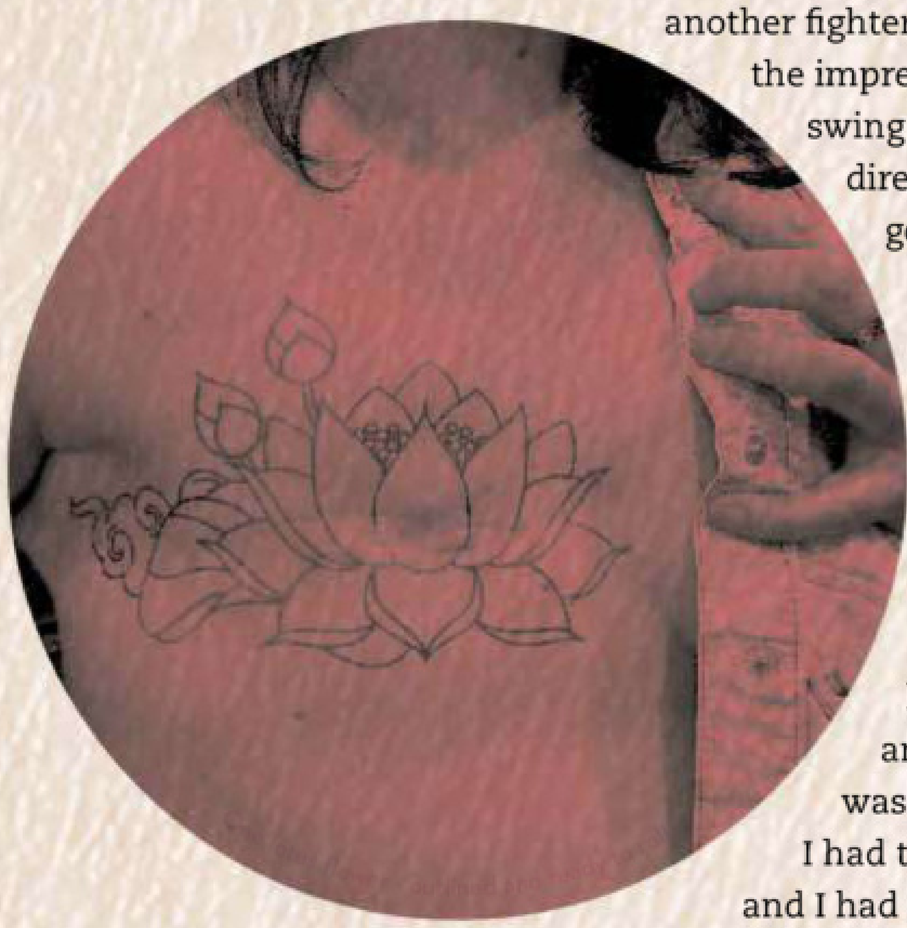
Mari goes under the needle

IT MADE ME LIVE DIFFERENTLY. I DON'T HAVE ANY TIME FOR PEOPLE WHO TRY TO SUCK MY ENERGY. I AM MUCH MORE DISCERNING ABOUT HOW PEOPLE INTERACT WITH ME AND HOW MUCH TIME I'LL SPEND WITH PEOPLE AS A RESULT. I HAVE TO STAY REALLY POSITIVE, SO WHEN IT COMES TO PEOPLE WHO COMPLAIN A LOT - I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THAT. BEFORE, I DIDN'T SO MUCH CUT PEOPLE OFF THE WAY THAT I DO NOW AND BY THAT I MEAN NOT ACTUALLY HAVING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEM.

BEFORE

"First of all - I don't have any tattoos except for the five dots that they tattooed me with when I got radiation. They hurt! I was very angry when they did that, I negotiated very strongly for magic marker but they weren't listening!"

So begins out story with Mari - I like her a lot. She's another fighter. Upbeat, vibrant and I get the impression that if life were to swing its heavy hammer in her direction again, she'd simply go to the gym to get ready to kick its ass right back.



"My basic backstory in terms of my health is that I have had Type 1 Diabetes for 32 years and I have survived breast cancer - twice. Nobody in my family has had breast cancer - or any cancer actually - so it was a surprise. The first time I had to have a lumpectomy and I had chemo, radiation and took some drugs. I was fine for six years until I found another lump in the same breast. A different part of the breast but still.. what they told me was that it was a second primary cancer, so it was like I grew cancer from scratch - twice.

"The second time, they said I had to have a mastectomy because they couldn't do any of the things that they did to me the first time. Now, because of my diabetes and because I had radiation already, the reconstruction would be very complicated and take over eight to ten hours of surgery. So I said no to that and I now have a nine inch scar across my chest which has healed really well and I don't have cancer anymore."

Mari then drops a curveball on me. Turns out she's an endurance athlete. A Type 1 Diabetic endurance athlete? That's something worth talking about. That's no small thing and I draw attention to it as part of the big picture because being fit and healthy might help your immediate lifestyle but as I said previously, it doesn't give you a get out of jail free card by any means.

"It doesn't. I'm also a vegan now and I started a programme in the US specifically for cyclists with diabetes and I did that because people need to

understand diabetes as well as we understand cancer. People say ' you're fat' or 'you don't eat well' but it's way more complicated than that. So for me - my health issues are intertwined and I view them as an opportunity to help people develop more empathy."

Food for thought if you think you've got it rough in your life…

I NEVER REALLY SAW MYSELF DELVING INTO THE TATTOOED WORLD. I LOOKED AT YOUR WEBSITE AND I WAS PRETTY SHOCKED AT HOW DARK SOME OF THE STUFF PEOPLE PUT ON THEIR BODIES IS!

"But now, I have these huge scars across my chest, so when this opportunity with P.INK came up, I figured that this would really feel like a healing badge of honour instead of this massive scar and that's basically why I decided to do it."

I throw into the arena that a lot of people consider a tattoo to be too big a commitment for them, but once something like cancer is introduced into the equation, that immediately propels everything into a whole different league when it comes to perspective.

"You know, somebody posted something on my Facebook page today. It said 'Once you're a cancer survivor, you're always a cancer survivor' and that's so true because it exists in your psyche forever. Getting it the second time actually caused post traumatic stress syndrome for me. It was such a shock - I was something like an 8% risk that I would even get it the first time and I'm super healthy!

"I never really saw myself delving into the tattooed world you know. I looked at your website and I was pretty shocked at how dark some of the stuff people put on their bodies is! My family is a little bit stunned that I'm doing this, but they're OK really.

"When I exercise, I don't wear a fake boob. You can tell that there's a space on my chest that is empty. People have seen those photos and know I'm constantly dealing with this part of my body that's not there so I'm picking an image that I've always related to that I know I'm going to be happy with when I'm older."

I point out that part of the regular state of affairs when it comes to tattooing is that a lot of negative comments are pointless anyway. Particularly the ones that run: 'what are you going to look like when you're 90?' As I think I rightly point out here, most of us would be quite happy to get to 90 tattooed or not. Most importantly, people have tattoos for all kinds of reasons - it's not always as cut and dried as the media make out. Mostly though, when it comes to healing, a tattoo can quite often over-ride the damage in ways you never thought possible - we've all seen it happen.

"I'm excited now. I'm going to be working with Ashley Love (New York Adorned). P.INK found her

and she's committed to the project. I really like her style and when she gets back in a few days, she and I will start planning the design. I go to New York on the 19th ready for the 21st which is when we're all getting our tattoos - there are eight of us in total and we'll all be in the same place at the same time for this. My hope is that she can do it all in one session. I want to have the ability to cover it up if I want to as well - we'll figure all this stuff out in the next few days. The skin is right over my ribs and I've regained all the sensitivity so I know that potentially, this is going to hurt a little!"

No kidding...

AFTER

The person that sits in front of me today, is happy. Despite it being some ungodly hour of the morning in Mid West America, Mari is definitely different. Maybe she's still asleep. I know I am and it's after lunch here. She's in good spirits... we talk about Edgar Allen Poe, cats and jetlag.

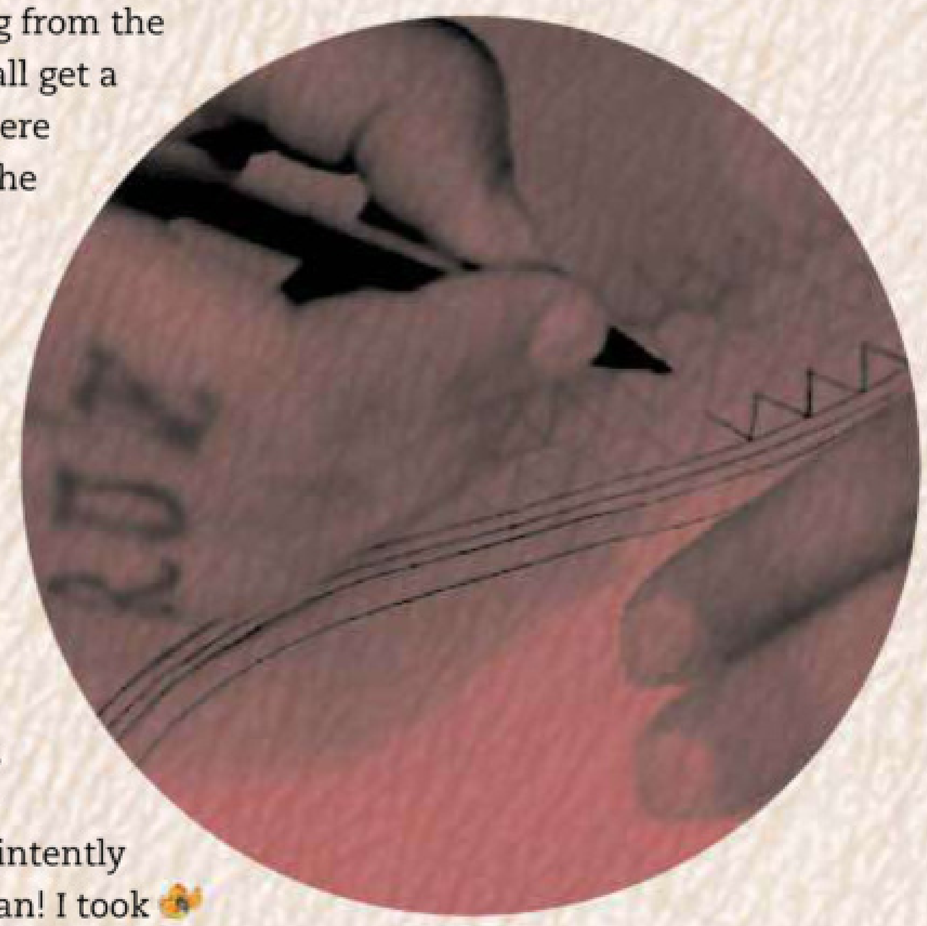
Let's kick it in at the relevant place here:

"It was an amazing experience to be honest. There were eight of us and we didn't know what to expect from it really. At first, I thought Ashely was a little bit flaky because she hadn't communicated very much with me but it turns out that she was amazing. Totally on point. Once I was physically in her presence, she was never distracted, she was focussed, she had a vision of what we were going to do. She beautifully incorporated my scar without touching it - she knew exactly what she was doing. She was great - it was at that point when I was actually there that I stopped worrying. Email was obviously not her thing..."

THERE WERE ACTUALLY VERY FEW MEN IN THE ROOM - THOSE THAT WERE, ONE OR TWO BOYFRIENDS - WERE HUMOROUSLY VERY INTENTLY FOCUSSED ON THEIR WOMAN!

Most tattoo artists get this a lot - what can you say about working on a person without them being there? You can prep for everything, but until you actually see what you're going to be playing with, there will always be that unfinished percentage at the end that really does need to be done in person. This is good though - it's great to hear perceptions of tattooing from the outside world. We can all get a little bit blasé around here sometimes. Where all the tattoo artists female?

"Yes - but I don't think it will have to be like that in the future. They wanted to create an environment that was an incredibly supportive feeling. There were actually very few men in the room - those that were, one or two boyfriends - were humorously very intently focussed on their woman! I took



AND FOR THE RECORD - YES, IT HURT! I WAS THERE FOR ABOUT FOUR AND HALF HOURS. I HAVE SOME NERVE DAMAGE SO THERE WERE PLACES I COULDN'T FEEL IT AT ALL BUT OTHER PLACES... I KNEW ABOUT THOSE.

a friend with me for support and she made friends with everybody. She held the hands of several women. There were actually three women who came together and they were so nervous - one of them was 60 and this was her first tattoo. They were all African American and consequently their designs were very elaborate. One of the sessions was seven hours and one of them screamed more than a few times..."

I think it's probably right and correct at this juncture for it to be women working with women - there's something kind of... 'sisters are doing it for themselves' about it.

"I've had several male doctors though and they were amazing - I think that there's a way that men can be incredibly supportive in this arena. Out of interest, men do get breast cancer too - it's not talked about much and those that do admit to getting it are real heroes for doing so. The men that were in the room though, where incredibly respectful,

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didn't take up a lot of space..."

I think if I had been there, I would have felt like I shouldn't be...

"That's what Noel did! We hardly saw him at all but as breast cancer survivors, we've had our shirts off more than on. I was one of the few who draped my shirt, but the others just got it on. Noel interviewed us when we were done and I was amazed by his insight. I was very touched by how he has organised this project and his caring for us."

"And for the record - yes, it hurt! I was there for about four and half hours. I have some nerve damage so there were places I couldn't feel it at all but other places... I knew about those. It's a different kind of pain though. After my surgery, my entire body was in extreme pain and I had to kind of work with it for about eight hours. This pain is a much lower grade comparatively - and it moves too. One of the things that made me really laugh (afterwards) is that the part that hurt the most was one of the tips of the lotus flower, it felt like it was exploding everywhere but when I looked it was like this teeny tiny area!"

"There was some screaming though - one of the women was having some hearts coloured in and a blue jay. It was noisy but her artist talked her through it - knew she didn't want to give up on it and walked her through the pain to get it finished. Again, I was really quite surprised at the wealth of skills these guys have. She really did want to give up... but then when she was done, she was so, so proud of it."

So, the upshot of the whole experience? Positive?

"Well, previously to getting the tattoo, every time I would catch myself in the mirror, inside there would be a cringing response whenever I would see that I had an ugly scar instead of a breast.

I WAS TALKING TO A BARISTA IN THE COFFEE SHOP AND SHE REALLY WANTED TO SEE IT, SO I SHOWED IT TO HER (SHE GAVE ME A FREE COFFEE FOR MY TROUBLE) BUT I NEVER, EVER SHOWED MY SCAR TO ANYBODY

It's been a week now since the tattoo and, some of us have stayed in touch and we now have a significantly different relationship with the mirror.

"I was talking to a barista in the coffee shop and she really wanted to see it, so I showed it to her (she gave me a free coffee for my trouble) but I never, ever showed my scar to anybody. Now, everybody wants to see this tattoo and I can hardly wait to show it. Even when I'm home by myself and I have a chance to look at it - I feel so different about how my body looks. The lotus flower is right where my breast used to be. I look and can say to myself; 'On this side I have a breast and on this side, I have a lotus flower.' It's incredible and delicately balanced. Somehow it feels like I did something that created harmony for myself."

Is that the best line in the world to end this on? I think it may be...

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Skin Deep READER SURVEY

It's been a while since we've asked what you thought about our magazine, so it's about time we ran a reader survey. Here's your chance to tell us exactly what you think, and would improve, about Skin Deep... and if you could tell us a little about yourself at the same time, it would really help us get to know our readers better. You can also fill this out online at: **www.skindeep.co.uk/survey**.

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EMAIL

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WHAT IS YOUR AGE? (TICK BOX)

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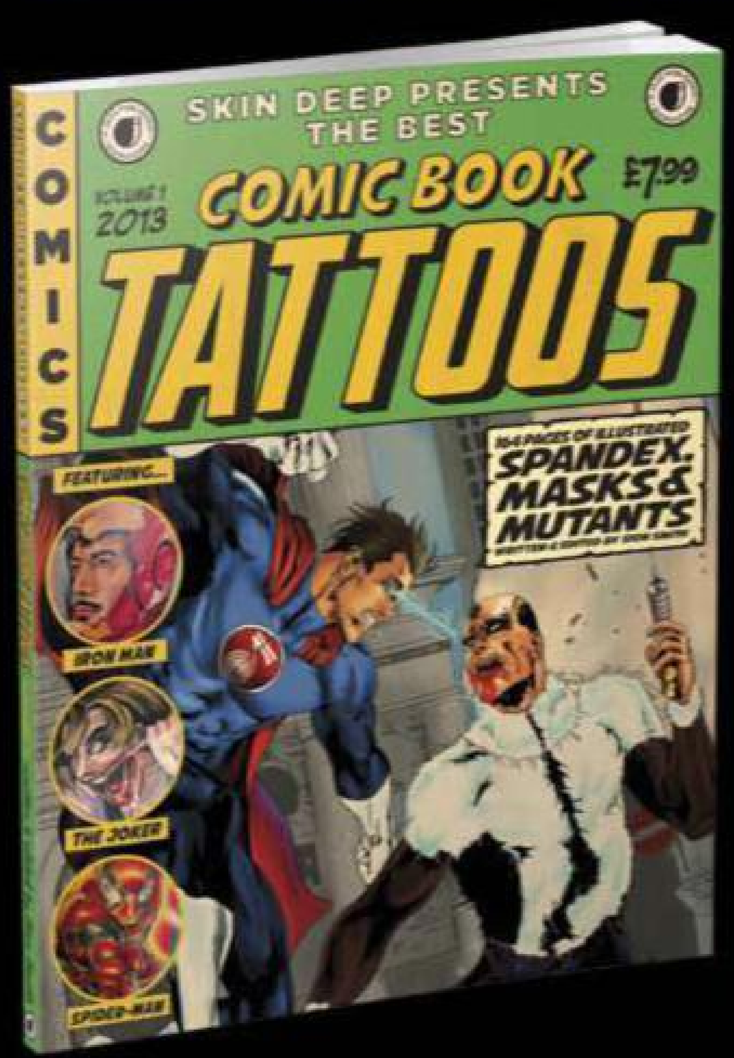

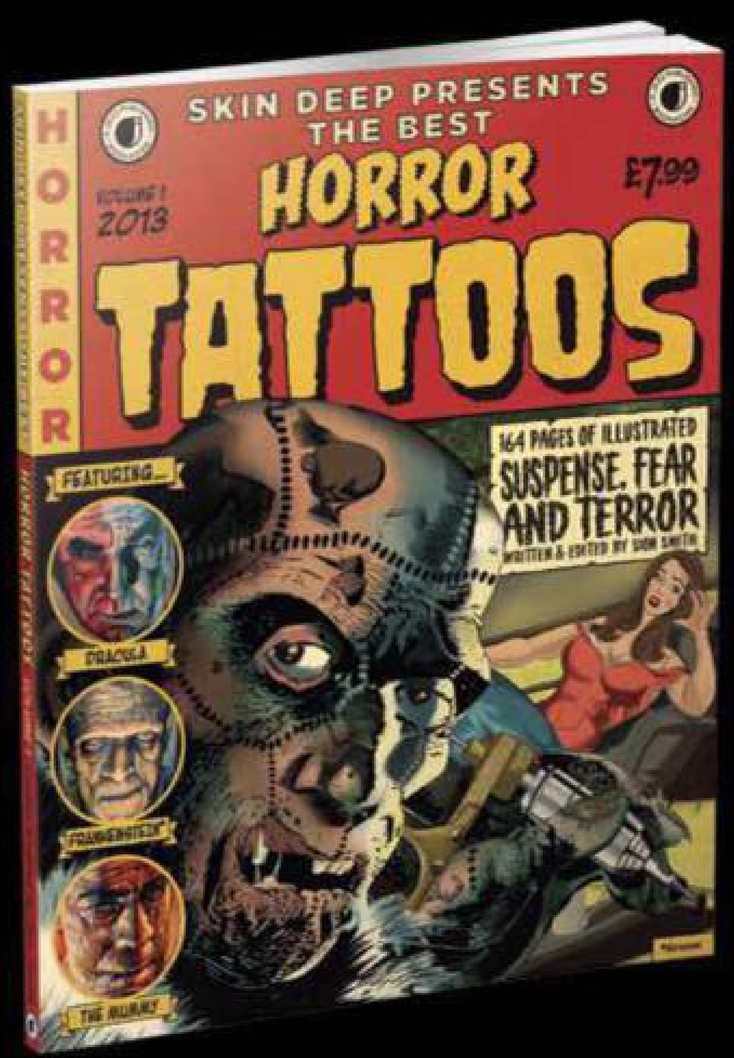

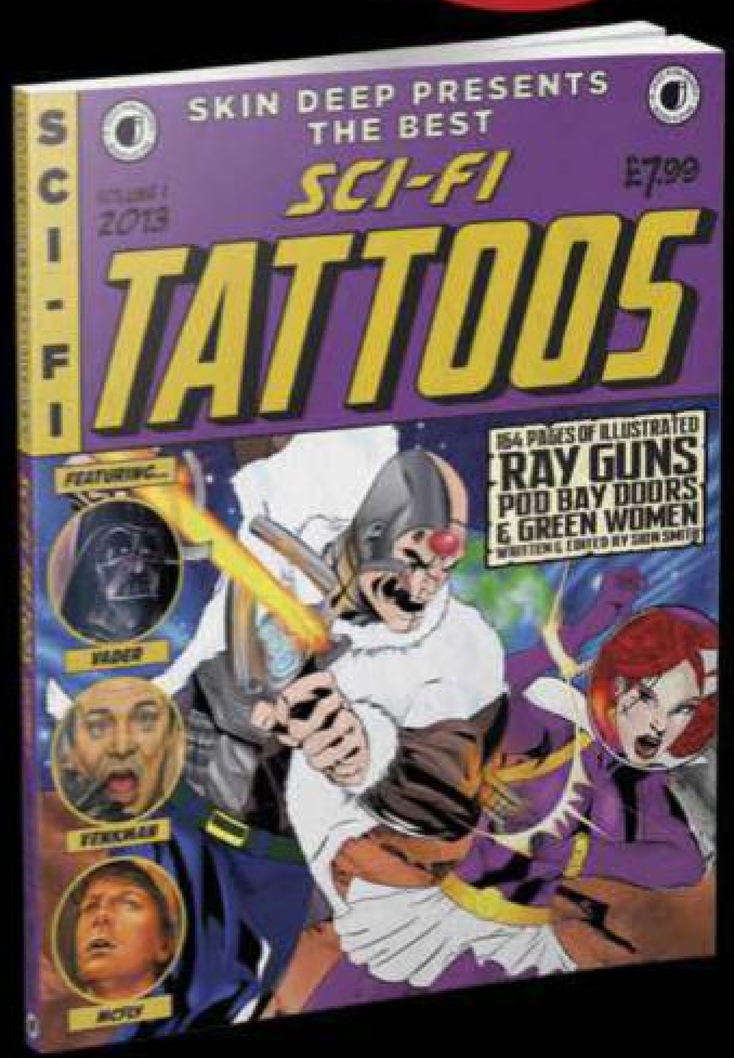

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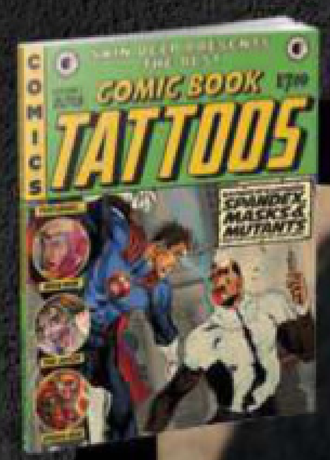

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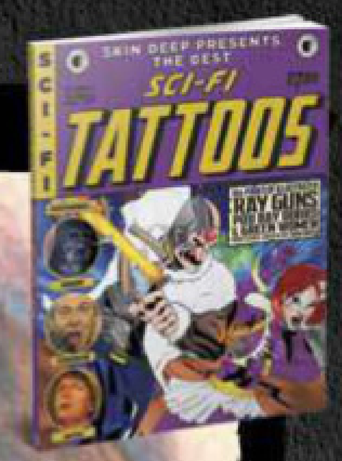

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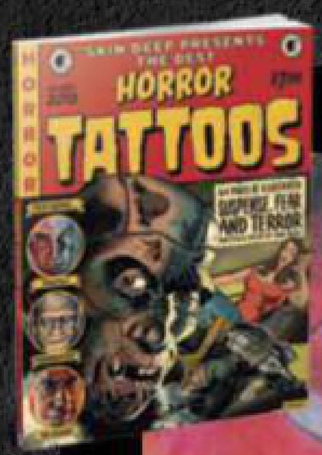

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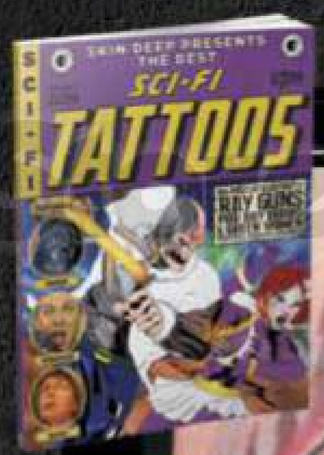

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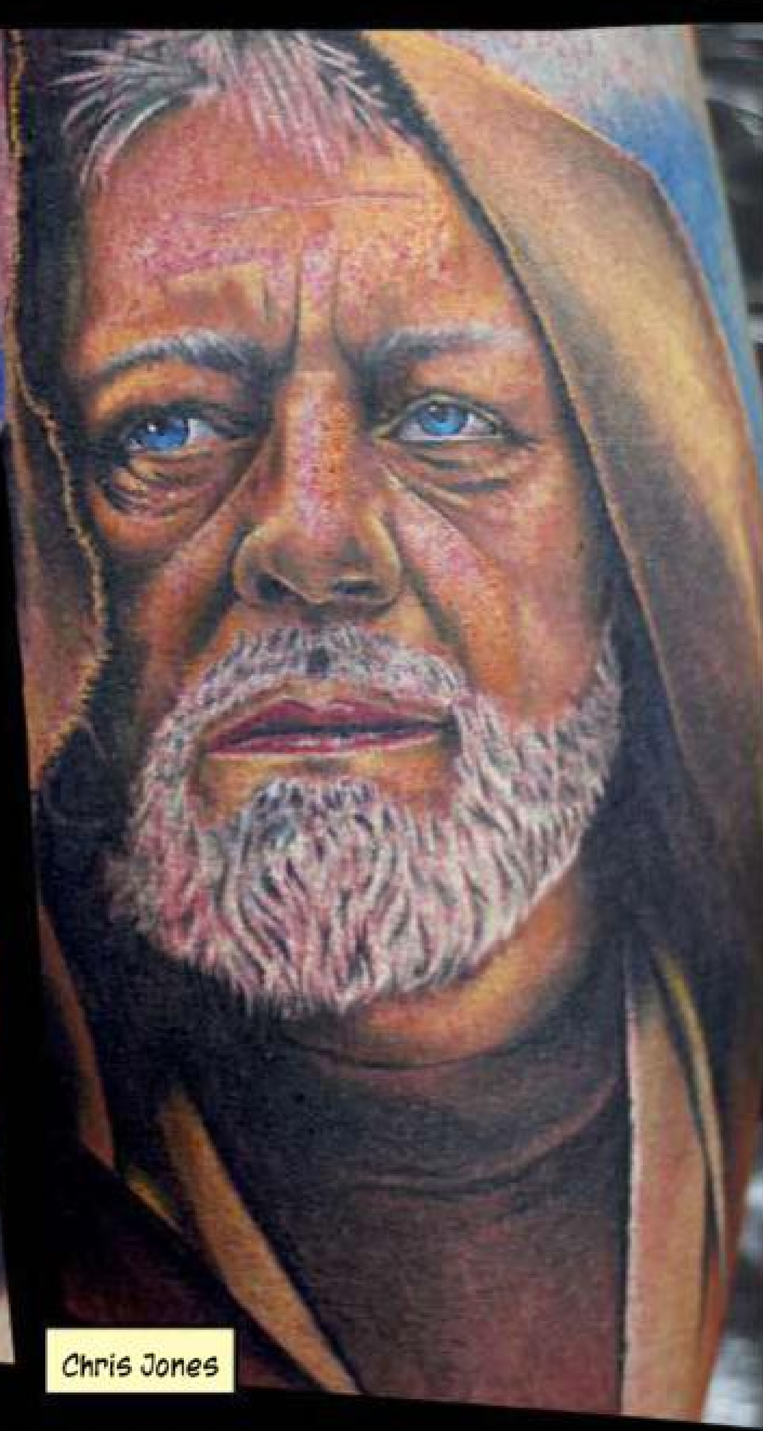
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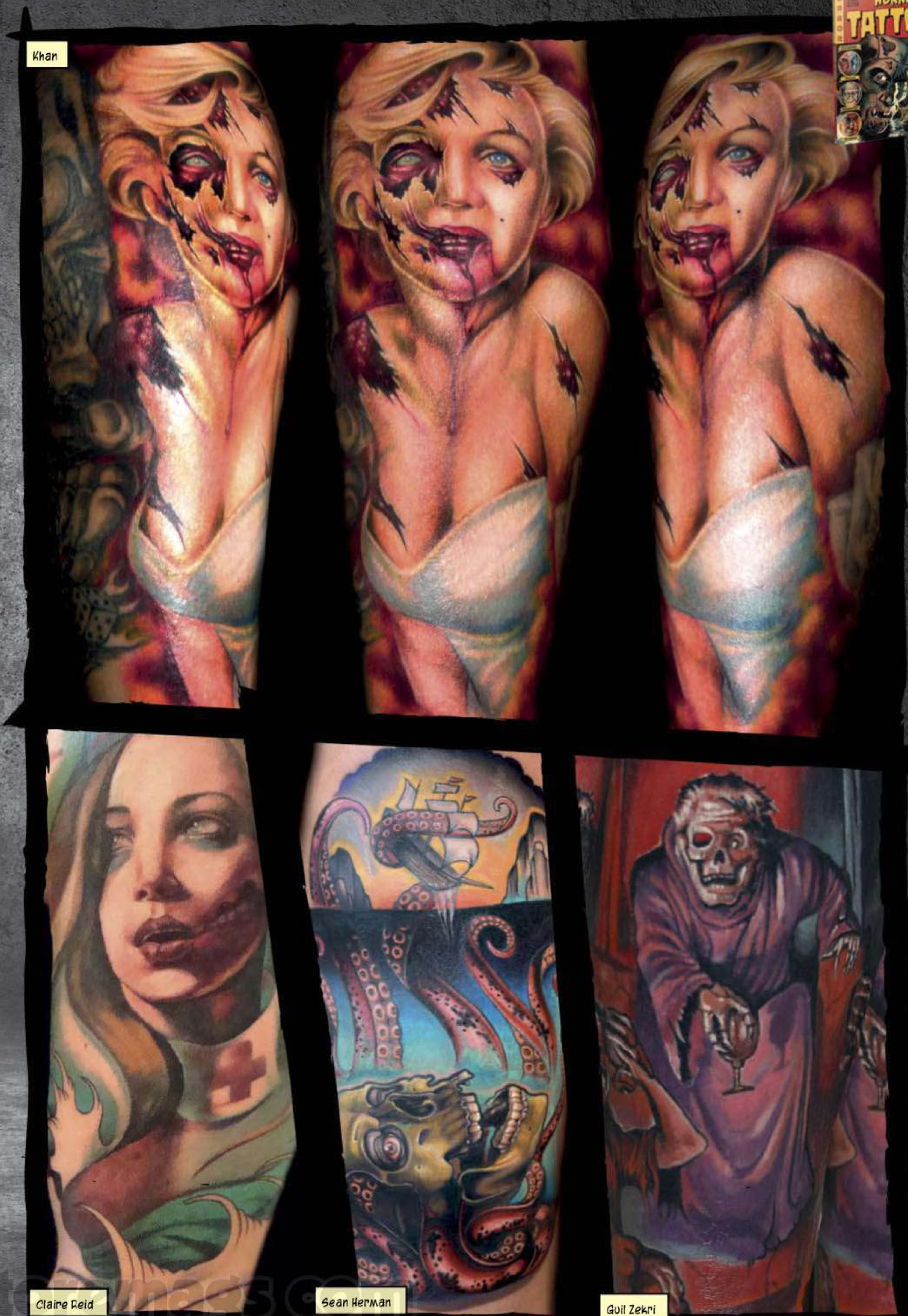

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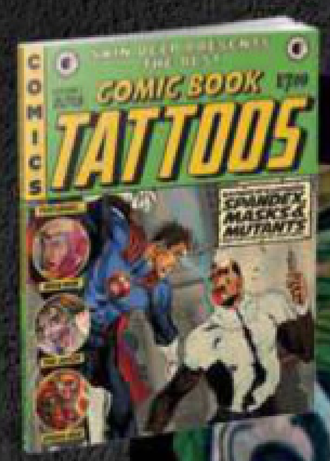

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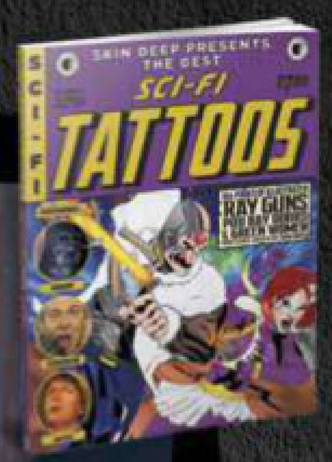

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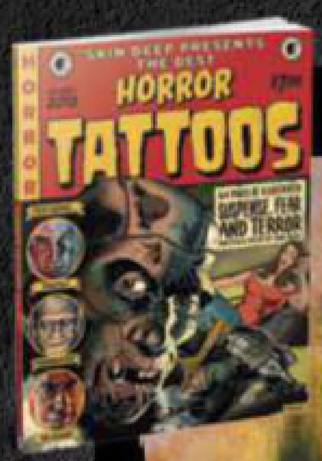

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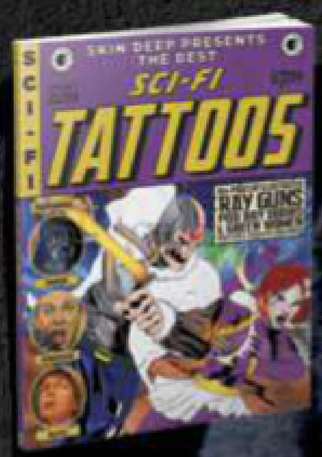

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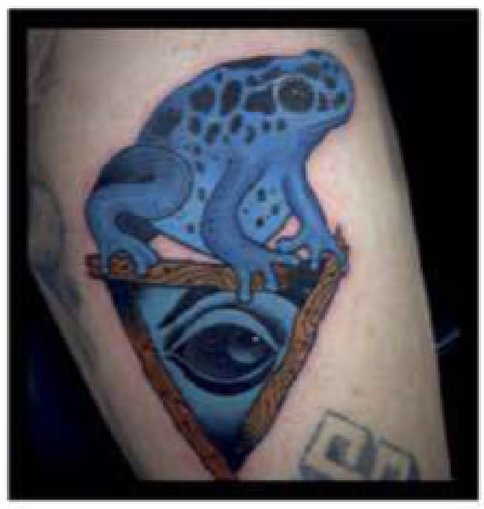

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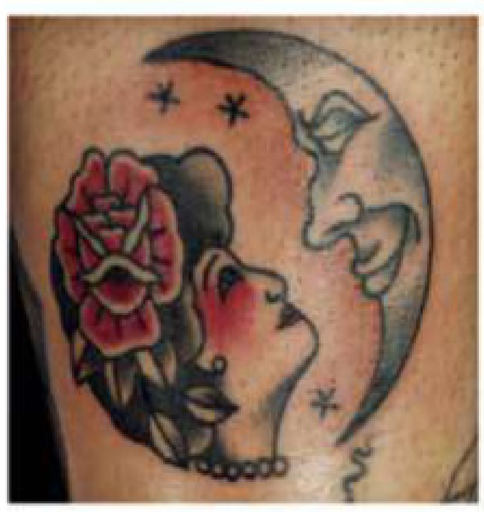

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CUE:

FADE IN

Fade FX's introduction to the world of tattooing was early on in her life… and quite unconventional. Her first meeting with a tattooist was when she was young child travelling around Europe in a vintage 1959 Bedford coach.

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Fade's family lived in the coach and being the bohemian minds that they were, had personalised it by painting 'Bollocks' over the old 'Braybrooks' sign and 'Further 'as their destination.

"I suppose this was symbolic of the middle finger to the UK and the government at the time, seeing as my parents had lost their house and more during the reign of Margret Thatcher. We had set out for Europe with the intention of not coming back. It was a big adventure for me at that age. It was while on the road that we met a couple in Lagos Portugal, one of which was a tattooist. He had a studio in a trailer that they towed around working all over Europe. I remember wanting this lifestyle for myself even then."

When Fade was 13 she got talking to a woman at a radio station beach party in Spain. The woman had some cool tattoos and after listening to her talking about her tattooist, Fade knew there was nothing else she wanted to do; this was the only profession she knew she would look forward to doing every single day. With her mind set on being a tattoo artist, Fade started looking at tattoos, building a portfolio of drawings and taking it to local tattooists to ask advice in an attempt to secure an apprenticeship for when she left school.

Trent Aitken-Smith ✿ Fade FX

"From then on I drew frantically and took my portfolio to our local tattooist in Bury St Edmunds, my home town. I was always on the hunt for an apprenticeship from this early age but it seemed impossible."

But Fade had to wait another four years before opportunity would come knocking again. At seventeen, she met a friend who could tattoo, and Fade watched her working on her customers, sometimes talking Fade through her process while tattooing. It was also at this time that Fade's parents bought her her first tattoo equipment.

"That afternoon I was tattooing my uncle. I am still tattooing him to

YOU THINK WHEN THEY NAMED ME FADE THAT THEY WANTED ME TO END UP DOING ADMIN OR SOME OTHER MAINSTREAM SOLE DESTROYING JOB?

this day! My apprentice, Rosie, has even tattooed him recently. I have mainly taught myself to tattoo. I had some help at the start by being able to watch a friend tattoo and being taken on by a studio without having to do a lengthy unpaid apprenticeship; I had some self-taught experience so was put to work right away. Rabbit gave me an introduction to the industry which I am very grateful for. I did pick up some knowledge and little tricks at other studios along the way but, funnily enough, I learnt the most when I stopped working with other tattooists. I think this is because I wasn't taking influence or trying to be like anyone else. Independence helped me find my own way. Even though I learnt things about machine building, maintenance, soldering, hygiene, mixing up new inks and much more, the techniques and methods I use today I have developed myself through experience."

A year later and after a stint travelling, where she spent some time with bamboo tattooists in Thailand, Fade got a job tattooing at a local studio. Spending the week doing architectural drawings to pay the bills, Fade would tattoo on the weekends to gain experience. She then moved onto a small shop in Lewes where she based herself while travelling, but soon Fade was setting her sights on her own place.

"While in Lewes I built up a local

FAMILY VALUES
My parents are very proud of me. I tattooed my mother after Xmas dinner last year and she even came to the London Tattoo Convention once. Once, I went to borrow their sat nav and my Mum said my day sounded more fun than the laundry she had planned, so she came too. I have tattooed my parent's wedding rings and my mother has had some flowers too. My father is a fantastic sculptor and engineer and they are both very bohemic so to see my artistic drive taking me places, it makes them happy.

stormagz.com

customer base and did another trip over to Borneo tattooing at Monkey Tattoo Studio, a beach party and the world famous Rainforest world music festival in Kuching. The trip was great and I met some really fun artists who were also travelling a lot. I got offered various guest spots worldwide. At this time, I wasn't sure if I wanted my own shop right away, I was seriously considering jacking in sitting in one place and just take a bag with my kit and run around the planet doing guest spots in one county and then the next. But I realised that I would want to come back regularly and I didn't want to throw away a year's hard work building up a name. So I decided I would have to open my own shop and just work hard for a few years before I could take leave to travel again...though it turned out, with help from my apprentice Rosie Komorowski, that I was on the road again within months of opening"

This was all only just over a year ago and already Fade is looking for a bigger shop. But before those plans are laid, there is still a guest spot in Frankfurt, Thailand in Dec/Jan and 5 States in America in April to get through. Not bad going for a

I WAS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING JACKING IN SITTING IN ONE PLACE AND JUST TAKE A BAG WITH MY KIT AND RUN AROUND THE PLANET DOING GUEST SPOTS IN ONE COUNTY AND THEN THE NEXT

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YOU HAVE NO ROOM FOR ERROR WITH GEOMETRY. ONCE IT'S OUT, THE WHOLE THING IS OUT. YOU HAVE TO WORK WITH ZERO TOLERANCE

twenty-three year old, but with an outlook like Fade's, it is not hard to see why her popularity has risen so quickly. As she says, "'I didn't get this far, this young, by being given it or things made easy. I was given my first machine and a few pens along the way but that is all. My friends would describe me as a workaholic but I say, if you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life."

Another mark Fade is making in the tattoo world is her style. A mix of geometric patterns and 'technical' drawings, her style is bold, clean and has layers that add depth to her designs that is easy to get lost in.

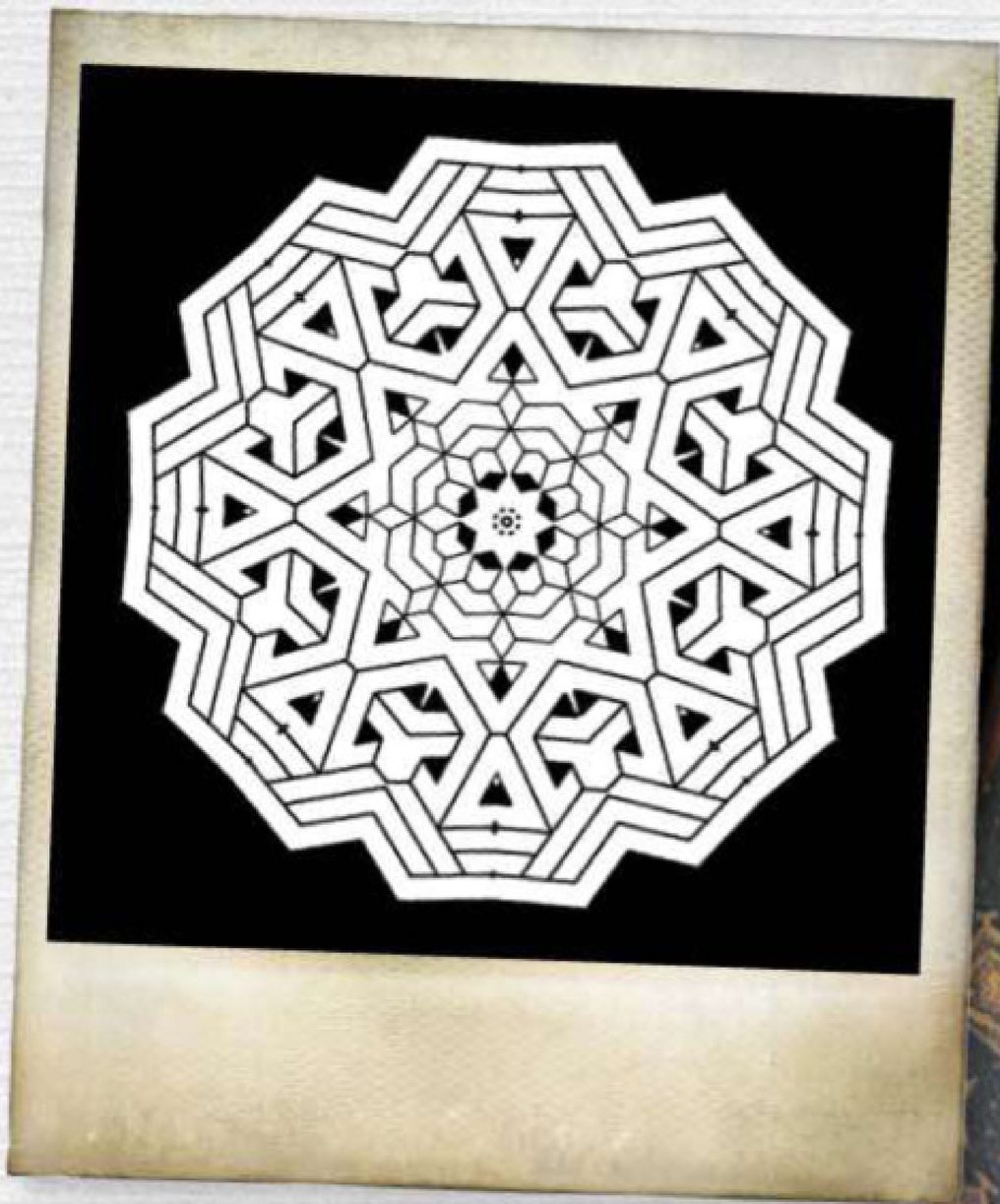
"I like to draw patterns so complicated that when you look at them it makes your eyes go weird, then I like the challenge of tattooing them. I think the complicated stuff is like a challenge to me. Also you have no room for error with geometry. Once it's out, the whole thing is out. You have to work with zero tolerance and I enjoy this challenging discipline in symmetry and geometric drawings. People always ask me how can I draw and tattoo this complicated geometry? I reply, it's just called obsessive compulsive disorder! There is truth in this joke though.

I like the discipline of this kind of technical drawing.

You really have to use your brain as apposed to just sketching or shading away. Although after a day session I am usually cross eyed and my brain hurts! I do love doing long sessions regardless, as you can really get a lot done and its very fun. I love the effect of dotwork with the patterns and mandalas I produce. I think it gives

DIFFERENT STROKES

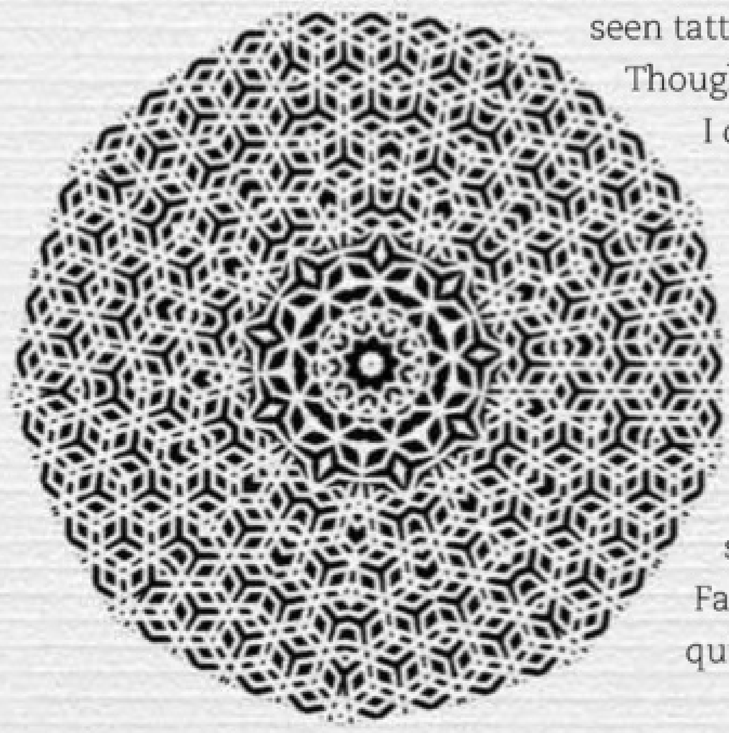
My ethos has always been to do things differently, in a more modern way. In every shop I worked in before, I was made fun of because I am not a Goth or into metal music. My customers always comment how nice it is to hear some good tunes pumping out in the shop and to be around happy, helpful staff who don't fit the usual mold. We do things very much our way and if people like it, that's great, and if they don't then we are not the tattooists for them.



a lot more depth than regular shading and it is far more detailed.

This is still a minority group of tattooing which I am very comfortable with as people come to me because I do work that is not common or mainstream like all the stuff you get familiar with seeing and that go in trends. Dotwork is getting more popular but I think it still looks more modern than thick lined block colour tattoos. With patterns you can't go wrong because it is decorative as apposed to having images on your limbs that you could become less fond of."

To top it off, Fade is fond of the customers her style brings in. She finds she gets less "goth metal heads wanting skulls, hipsters wanting bird cages, old skool style stuff or moustaches on their fingers and more people that want something unusual and are often graphic artists themselves and don't want commonly seen tattoos on them. Though saying that, I did recently hand tap tattooed the band 'Cradle of Filth' on MTV."



So it seems that Fade has made quite a niche for herself. Her shop is getting booked up months ahead, her apprentice, Rosie Komorowski, is doing well developing her own style doing abstract and macabre artwork, she is hitting the convention circuit hard and travel plans are go.

Maybe there is something in travelling around the world like modern day merry men… it seems to have worked out very nicely for Fade!

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THE ANGEL

GABRIELA

You see Gabriela Lastra's art coming. Across the street or across the hall at Tattoo Jam (which is where I first meet her) those bold, colourful and sweetly weird pieces just pop out at you. The lady behind them on the other hand is a little more reserved and frets throughout our interview about how she's coming across.

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Russ Thorne Gabriela Lastra

She needn't worry: the impression is of a self-effacing, humble and thoughtful artist who just happens to create big, bolshy tattoos.

You don't just develop art as good as Gabriela's overnight. It's taken a great deal of hard work has been an ongoing process that began in childhood. The self confessed "weird foreign-looking kid at school," she was the one hiding out at break time drawing. "I wanted to grow up to be some sort of artist, not the generic astronaut or fairy," she recalls. With art as her driving force she studied art and design at college, then left her Sheffield hometown for university in Bournemouth.

Three years and a degree in illustration later she came back, only now she'd uncovered a definite desire to tattoo. The foundations were laid at college where she noticed body art around her, and also courtesy of an older cousin. "Coming from a religious Chilean family I wasn't around tattoos a lot," she says, "my family had the impression tattoos were mutilation of the body God gave us."

ROLE MODELS

A degree of rebellion was involved in her attraction to the art, but that wasn't all. "I really looked up to my cousin - she was the only one who 'understood me', being an artist herself." They'd go to the

LASTRA APPROACH TO TATTOOING, IN HER OWN WORDS... (I)

"I love it when customers come in with an idea and tell me to go wild. However, I'm still at the point where I like to try new things like black and grey or realism. I tend to draw designs a few days before or even a week beforehand as I hate being under pressure; I don't think you do your best work if you haven't given it enough thought.

"I also love talking to people about their loves and hates in life and do have a few customers I'm close to, who tell me to draw something special for them. I just think of all the stories they've told me and draw something I think relates to them, obviously with my own weird twist. That's probably when I do my best work, but I do have to be close to them.

COMING FROM A RELIGIOUS CHILEAN FAMILY I WASN'T AROUND TATTOOS A LOT - MY FAMILY HAD THE IMPRESSION TATTOOS WERE MUTILATION OF THE BODY GOD GAVE US

local rock clubs, where the young Gabriela (or Gabi, as she refers to herself) met more tattooed folk. "At the time I thought 'I wish I was that cool', which is cringeworthy looking back!"

The attraction to tattooing lay in the idea of drawing something and placing it on a living canvas, whether that canvas was a lawyer or the guy from the chippy. "You can express yourself on anyone and they're completely willing to walk around with your art on them," she says. "I found that really appealing and almost weird."

Her own "ridiculous!" debut experience as a living canvas came when she was a teenager (and an underage one at that, tsk), courtesy of a 'tattooist' (Gabi's ironic emphasis) her friend was going out with. "We used to go down the studio he worked at to hang out. We thought we were cool - and very clearly weren't!"

Employing the time-honoured tactic of getting inked in a place she could conceal from her mum, she opted for "some weird star thing on the side of my boob. For some reason the tattooist said he had to see both boobs to make sure the tattoo was right; I guess he was a bit of a perv!" But despite the slightly inappropriate first experience (she says it was both naïve and uncomfortable), Gabi wasn't put off and began her journey towards more art, and a career of her own.

Storemags

LASTRA APPROACH TO TATTOOING, IN HER OWN WORDS... (II)

"I think getting tattooed is a really personal thing, especially spending eight hours face to face with someone, so it's important to make your customers feel comfortable. It's sometimes like a counselling session for some people; it's really nice to hear customers say that to me.

"I like to draw in bed, while watching scary or sci-fi films and programmes. I know some artists like to work quietly or with films, but when I'm actually tattooing I just tend to talk a lot and I don't have many boundaries, which can sometimes help my customers relax and come out of their shell. I think a lot of the time they enjoy speaking to someone who isn't quite normal; they realise I'm not someone who will judge them."

GO HARD OR GO HOME

Post-uni there were a couple of false starts, including a period as a "shop bitch" in an unnamed studio ("it taught me how to deal with obnoxious people"), before her apprenticeship under Jamie Mac began at Couleys Tattoo Studio in Newcastle.

"I was lucky enough for Jamie to see the potential in me and agree to take me on as his 'Mexican' – which I'm not! - and teach me the ways of tattooing," she says. It was the start of "one of the most difficult and exhausting" times of her life, spending weekdays at the studio and weekends and evenings working in a cocktail bar (appropriate for a girl from the Human League's spiritual home).

All the while she was looking after the other Couleys artists and trying to make her mark. "I knew what I wanted but also knew I had to prove to the guys I deserved it," she says. This meant handling her fellow artists' "crazy challenges and unusual sense of humour," as she puts it. "I managed to, in Mr Couley's words [Martin Couley, artist and studio owner], 'have a bigger cock than most of them.' That comment made my day!"

Her apprenticeship taught her the skills, but also a few other things. "One thing that stuck in my head was something Robbo [Martin Robson, another Couleys artist] said as I was struggling to draw a portrait," she says. "'If you can't fucking do it, go fucking home' - Robbo's tough love approach!"

She saw three options: cry and show weakness; go home and quit tattooing; or "fucking do it!" She did it, of course (this would be a short feature otherwise), but she didn't just come away with a technical drawing lesson. "I learned what a lot of people should think about: if you can't draw something you sure as hell shouldn't be tattooing it!" Amen to that.

YOU CAN EXPRESS YOURSELF ON ANYONE AND THEY'RE COMPLETELY WILLING TO WALK AROUND WITH YOUR ART ON THEM

WEIRD AND WONDERFUL

The other tricky thing about an apprenticeship is knowing when it's over. With Gabi, it was a case of suddenly finding herself heading for the deep end. "Once I proved myself to Jamie he basically told me to set up my machines and 'just do it'," says Gabi. "I had no idea what he meant until I just did it! That's amongst the best advice he gave me, funnily enough."

Her first canvas was her partner, "bearded beauty Greg Scott!" Along with her Couleys colleagues and fellow artists Jim Aitken, Joe Frost and Kerry-Anne Richardson, she credits him with helping her along the path to becoming a fully fledged artist. In particular by offering up his leg, upon which she inked a wedge of cheese with a 'True Love' banner. "It was the most appalling tattoo ever seen, worse than most

FOR SOME REASON THE TATTOOIST SAID HE HAD TO SEE BOTH BOOBS TO MAKE SURE THE TATTOO WAS RIGHT; I GUESS HE WAS A BIT OF A PERV!

scratchers," she says firmly. "It took me an hour of hesitation and screeching and masses of sweat!"

The cheese is still there surrounded by tattoos of similar quality, according to Gabi, but that's not a totally bad thing. "I can see how far I've come, and that improving is the best part of tattooing."

As you'll be able to see from the work on these pages, Gabi is very, very far from being a scratcher. However, she finds it hard to pin down exactly what her art 'is'. "I never know how to describe my work. The only thing that I get from a lot of my customers as a description is the word 'weird'."

Weird is probably a good start. Also, while there are definite strains of both traditional and neo-trad art running through her work, she actually prefers to think of the completed tattoos as illustrations. "I love strange pieces that use bold lines and some technical aspects of traditional, without being traditional," she explains. "Having studied illustration I see things in a more illustrative way."

LITTLE SHOPS OF HORROR

Her own tastes are eclectic and she's collected work from many different artists in different styles. Similarly, she thinks it's been helpful for her art to be surrounded by a variety of specialists at Couleys, including her realism and new school colleagues. "I can use techniques related to those styles and it's brilliant to have a completely different set of eyes analysing my work," she says. "I think it's important to be artists,

ONES TO WATCH
Whose work does Gabi rate at the moment? "With so many social media sites it's so easy to follow so many amazing artists! It's hard to only pick out a handful of people I admire. There are some of the big big names like Emily Rose Murray, Uncle Allan, Sarah Carter [Gabi spots and identifies my own Sarah Carter tattoo immediately] and Dan Sins. I also really love the work of Sneaky Mitch, Joe Frost, Greg Scott and Jean Le Roux, and I keep my eye on up-and-coming artists like TJ Fairfax. I'd strongly recommend all these artists to Skin Deep readers!"

not simply tattooists trying to fit into a specific style."

Gabi clearly thinks a lot about her work and analyses where she wants, or needs, to go next. So is there a plan for the future? "Most importantly I want my work to progress," she says. "I still have so much to learn and understand in tattooing. I have ideas about how I want my work to look, but I'm still in the process of trying to get it out of my hand! I learn something new with every tattoo and I hope that feeling never stops."

She's up for more conventions and guests spots, but not for her the mad rush to set up on her own. "I think most artists dream about opening their own studio, but at the moment I think it's happening far too much and far too quickly for some people."

The problem with that, she explains, is a misplaced emphasis from new owners on either making money or on the ego trip of having their own shop, with a resulting lack of respect for the staff. Plus, it's no easy ride. "It must be pretty hard to try and keep the reputation of a studio high while trying to keep your employees happy," she says. "But the thing that makes me cringe the most is when people open up a studio with the intention of learning to tattoo, instead of finding an apprenticeship and serving their time first." That said, she has high hopes for the future of tattooing - "I only hope it's not diluted any more by the dreaded scratcher."

I LEARNED WHAT A LOT OF PEOPLE SHOULD THINK ABOUT: IF YOU CAN'T DRAW SOMETHING YOU SURE AS HELL SHOULDN'T BE TATTOOING IT!

As for Gabi, it's all about improving her work, meeting new artists and learning. Her commitment is as strong as her outlines, so while you might not see her making a fuss about it in person, her work will more than compensate. "The thing I like best is finding a way to get my art out to the world and not having to be dead before it's recognised!" she says. "What could be better than someone wearing your art in their day to day life? I can't think of any other job I would swap this for."

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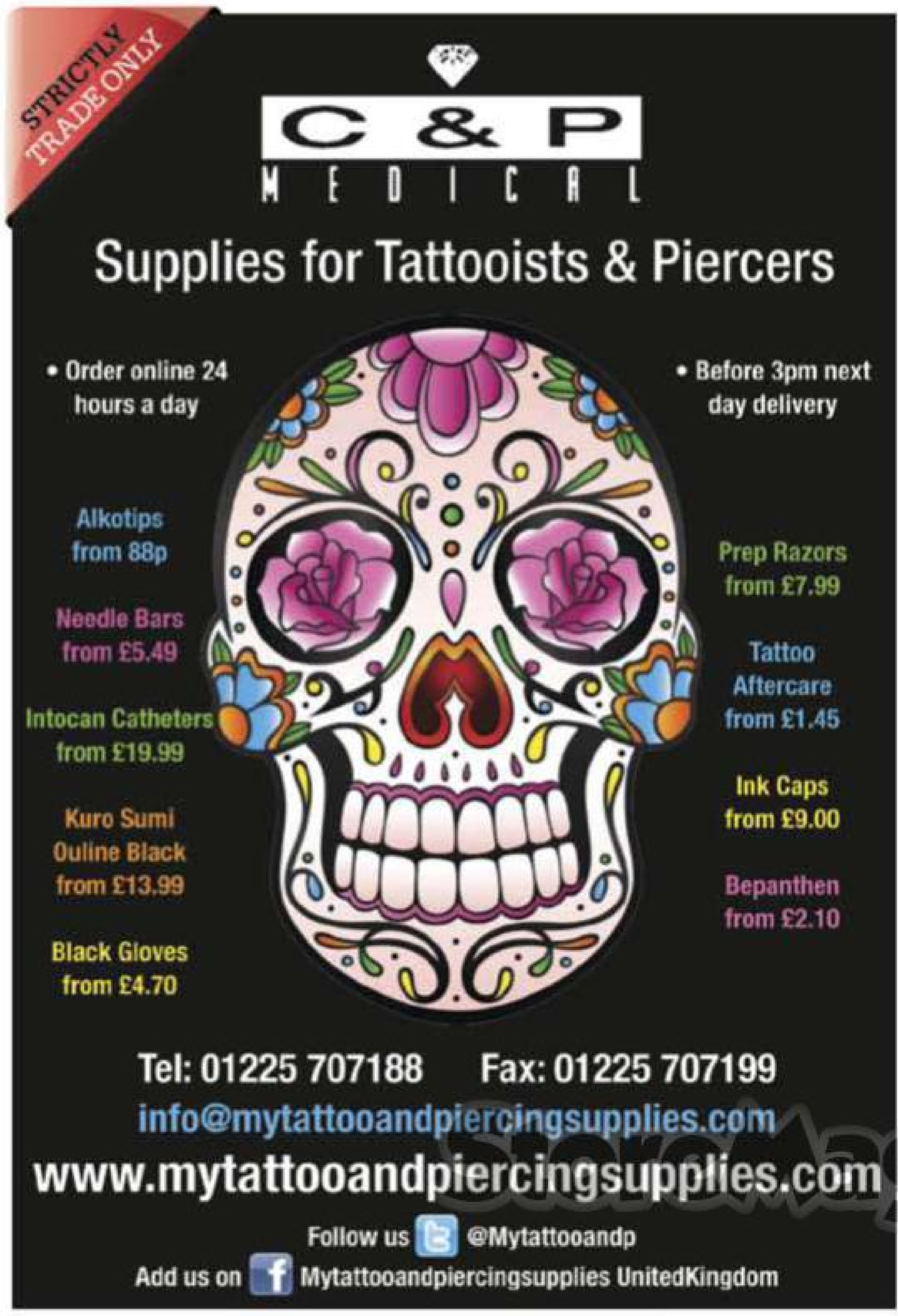
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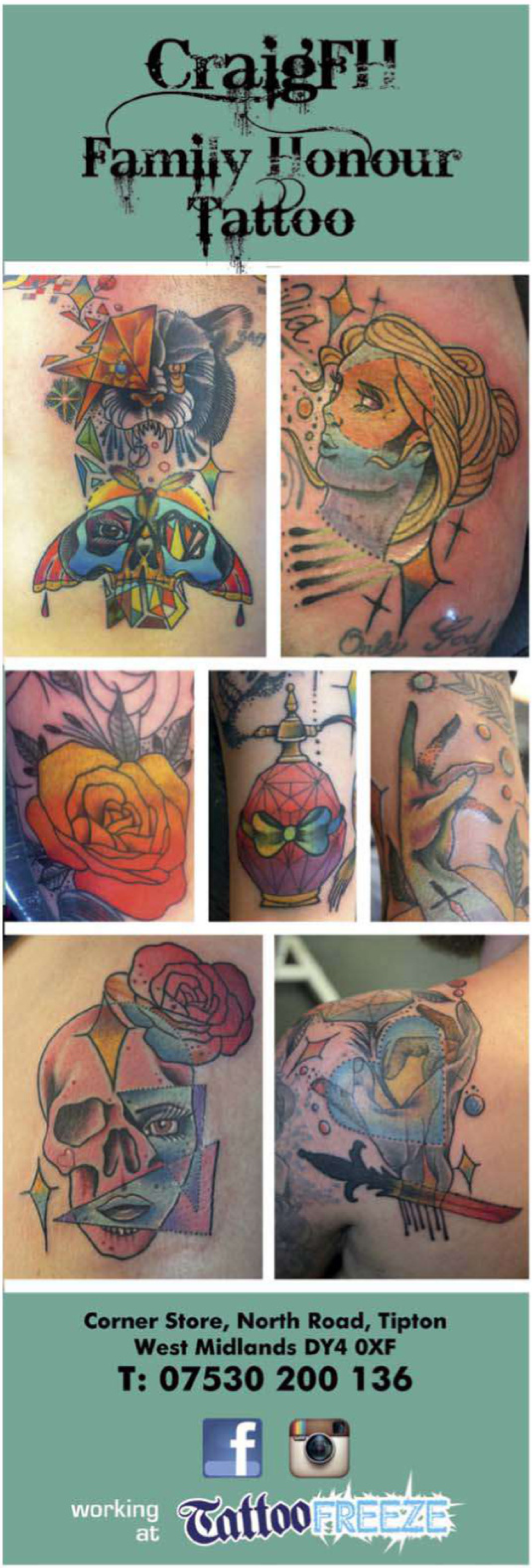
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GONE HOLLYWOOD

Joey 'Hollywood' Hamilton – who actually works at Club Tattoo in Las Vegas – is by no means a stranger to tattoo TV nor to hard work, having spent 10 years in the United States Air Force. But even he couldn't have foreseen the outcome of Ink Master's third season.

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After a gruelling 35-hour tattoo challenge and critiques evenly divided between all three finalists, it was anyone's game. When it came right down to it, though, our interviewee beat out Jime Litwalk and Tatu Baby in what was easily the most suspense-filled finale to date, taking home the coveted title of Ink Master.

After the dust settled, we caught up with Hamilton to talk about his numerous TV experiences, the city he calls home and even made time to play a few rounds of the ever-fun 'Would You Rather…?' game.

READY, SET, GO!

Raised in Oklahoma where tattooing was illegal until 2006 – talk about refusing to evolve with the times - Hamilton "didn't see any type of tattooing until I was around 25. I really didn't have a job when I was getting out of [the United States Air Force], so my last year-and-a-half I started looking into it."

"I had a friend suggest I meet another airman, Rodney Folsom, who was tattooing while he was in the USAF," remembers Hamilton. "We hit it off and he agreed to teach me, so we would work military during the day and tattoo at night."

"Being in the service there were always people looking to get work done and I remember many trips we would go on, I would take my equipment to work on everyone. I was very lucky, looking back, because it was very hard to get into the business."

Tasked with conquering the massive learning curve that faces all new tattooers, Hamilton's key to success came courtesy of his former vocation. "I think it helped I was in the service because it gave me a strong

Barbara Pavone ©Joey Hamilton

BEING IN THE SERVICE THERE WERE ALWAYS PEOPLE LOOKING TO GET WORK DONE AND I REMEMBER MANY TRIPS WE WOULD GO ON, I WOULD TAKE MY EQUIPMENT TO WORK ON EVERYONE

JOEY HAMILTON ON... BEING CALLED 'HOLLYWOOD'
The first day at Club one of the artists was putting labels on our bio trays. He labeled mine 'Hollywood' just because I had been on a couple of TV shows. When I tried out [for Ink Master], I threw it out to Spike and they liked it, but I didn't want to be known as just 'Hollywood' on the show.

work background," he says. "I started setting goals for myself and always moved forward."

Following a failed attempt to be cast on Best Ink, Hamilton admits he went into the Ink Master auditions "kind of burned out. Best Ink was a long process and they told me I had a 97 percent chance of being on, so after I didn't make it, I had an emotional dump. I wasn't going to try out for Ink Master, but my two friends, Chris and Walter, said, 'Let's all go to L.A. and try out'. They talked me into it."

A friend of Season 2 contestant Jesse Smith, Hamilton had a pretty decent idea of what to expect when it came to Ink Master and his time on another tattoo TV show didn't hurt any, either.

"I had been on Season 2 of Inked, so I had been around reality TV," he says. "I guess this was different because it was a competition, but I honestly felt like I was at work most of the time."

"I think working at Club Tattoo helped me out a lot. Actually, my whole career I have been an in-demand artist and when people come in, I try and work out what they want and then tattoo them. Rarely do I say 'Come back next week'. If they are in the shop, wanting to get something done and I'm not busy, it's best to just get it done."

INK MASTER REVISITED

Admitting he would perhaps add "some more black in my finale piece", it's the eyelid challenge he really could have done without, but Hamilton admits that, no matter how tough the competition got, the show's three judges - Chris Nunez, Oliver Peck and Dave Navarro – didn't have it any easier.

"I really have respect for all three of them," he says. "Seeing how much people feel the need to trash your work on social media, I can see they have to put up with a lot doing that job."

"I think Chris was very straightforward on most of his critiques and I must say Oliver had an amazing sense of humor; he had some really funny quotes. The best one was: 'If it was easy, the prize would be 20 bucks'."

"They were there to judge, so we didn't really get to hang out much and I would like to someday see how they really are as people."

Fellow finalist Jime Litwalk inspired a similar kind of respect and desire to keep in touch in Hamilton.

"I actually told Jime that was the first time I wish he wasn't there," he admits. "I knew one of us was winning and I really didn't want to see either one of us losing. As soon as they said I had won, I really just couldn't believe it. I knew I had worked hard and had a really strong showing, so I was very proud of myself, but then I knew Jime had lost, so I wanted to shake his hand."

THE ROAD AHEAD

Since that fateful night when he was crowned Ink Master, Hamilton has become even more of a hot commodity than usual. A reality that has resulted in both perks and downsides.

BEST INK WAS A LONG PROCESS AND THEY TOLD ME I HAD A 97 PERCENT CHANCE OF BEING ON, SO AFTER I DIDN'T MAKE IT, I HAD AN EMOTIONAL DUMP

"I have been getting slammed with e-mails and trying to keep up with social media has been a chore, but I am trying," he says. "I am looking forward to actually attending conventions next year, as I have really only done local ones in Las Vegas over the last couple of years." Not that that's a bad thing because as the man himself explains it, Las Vegas is just part of his legacy.

"I worked at Hart & Huntington and Starlight for my first three years in Vegas. I then interviewed with Sean Dowdell in Arizona while I was on a trip there and he said he was opening up a shop in Vegas, so I told him I wanted to work for him. Two years later, Club Tattoo opened and I have

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RARELY DO I SAY 'COME BACK NEXT WEEK'. IF THEY ARE IN THE SHOP, WANTING TO GET SOMETHING DONE AND I'M NOT BUSY, IT'S BEST TO JUST GET IT DONE

been there since the first day," he says and laughs, "I think I could say every story you can think of has happened in Vegas."

"I love Vegas and can't see myself living anywhere else," he continues. "As for Club Tattoo, it's a great place to work and I am very lucky to be around such a talented group of guys. I would like to maybe co-own my own place someday, but I don't miss the extra work of running a shop."

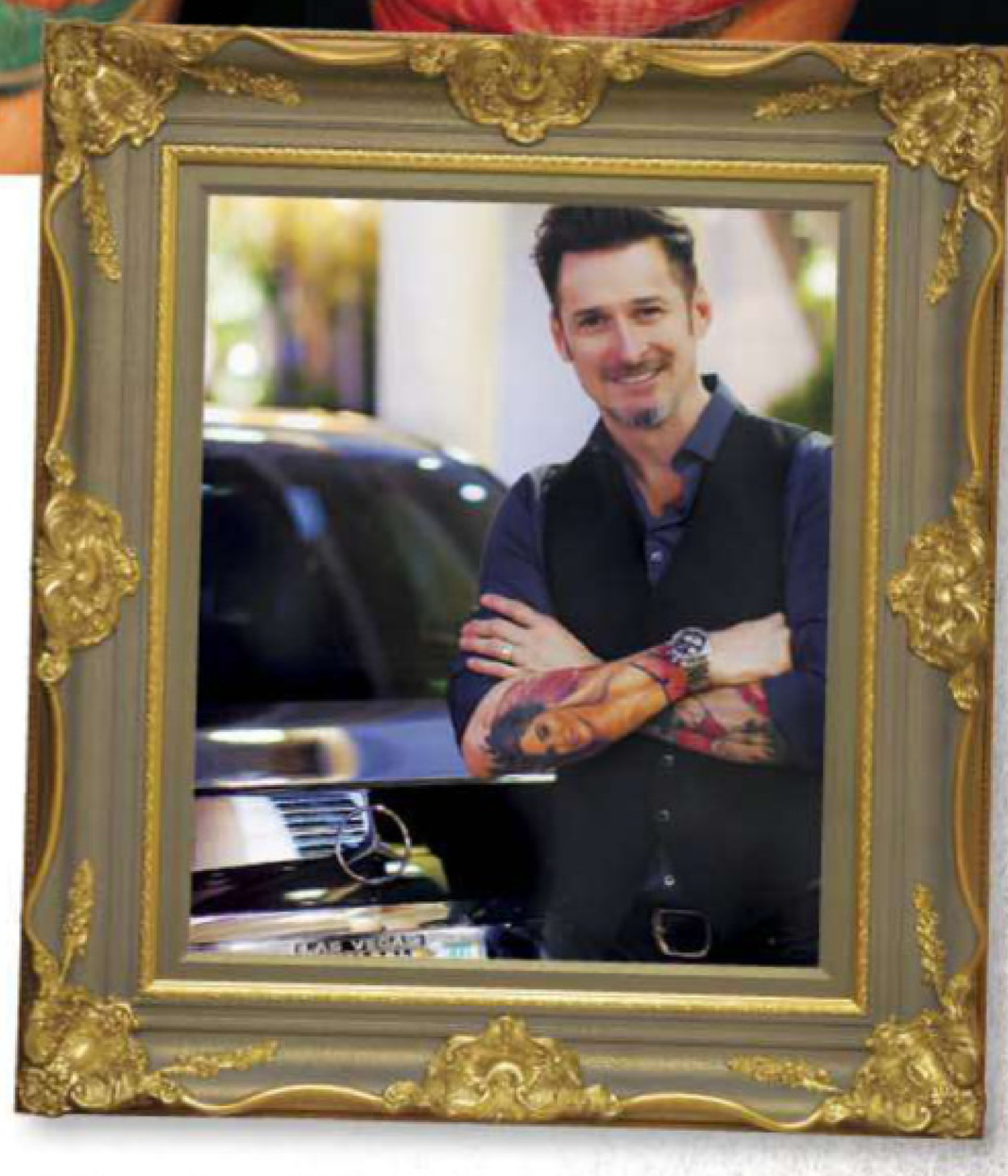
Taking a break from the hard-hitting questions to play a few rounds of 'Would You Rather...?', Hamilton tackles some seriously tough choices like a champ.

Would you rather tattoo the same design for the next three months or not tattoo at all? "I could do the same design for three months. While I was in Florida I think I tattooed over 20 dolphins in a row!"

Would you rather tattoo just eyelids for a month or go back on Ink Master and start all over again? "Easy: I would go back on the show."

Would you rather have Jime or Baby win the show or move into a house with the two runners-up for a year? "Tough one! I guess have one of them win." Back to the subject at hand, Hamilton paints a picture of his ideal future, which, as it turns out, is all about the simple pleasures.

"I really want to take a couple of weeks off with my wife," he says. "She turned pro this year for IFBB Bikini, so she has been working just as hard as me - I think we need a vacation. I tossed the idea around of going to Paris and working for a couple of months, I just thought that would be cool.



As for next year, I think I will attend one convention a month and I'm also looking to branch out into some other areas of art."

The ultimate goal, though, is "being a great artist but also a nice person. I can't say how many top artists I've met that were really down to earth and genuine - I would like to be known for that."

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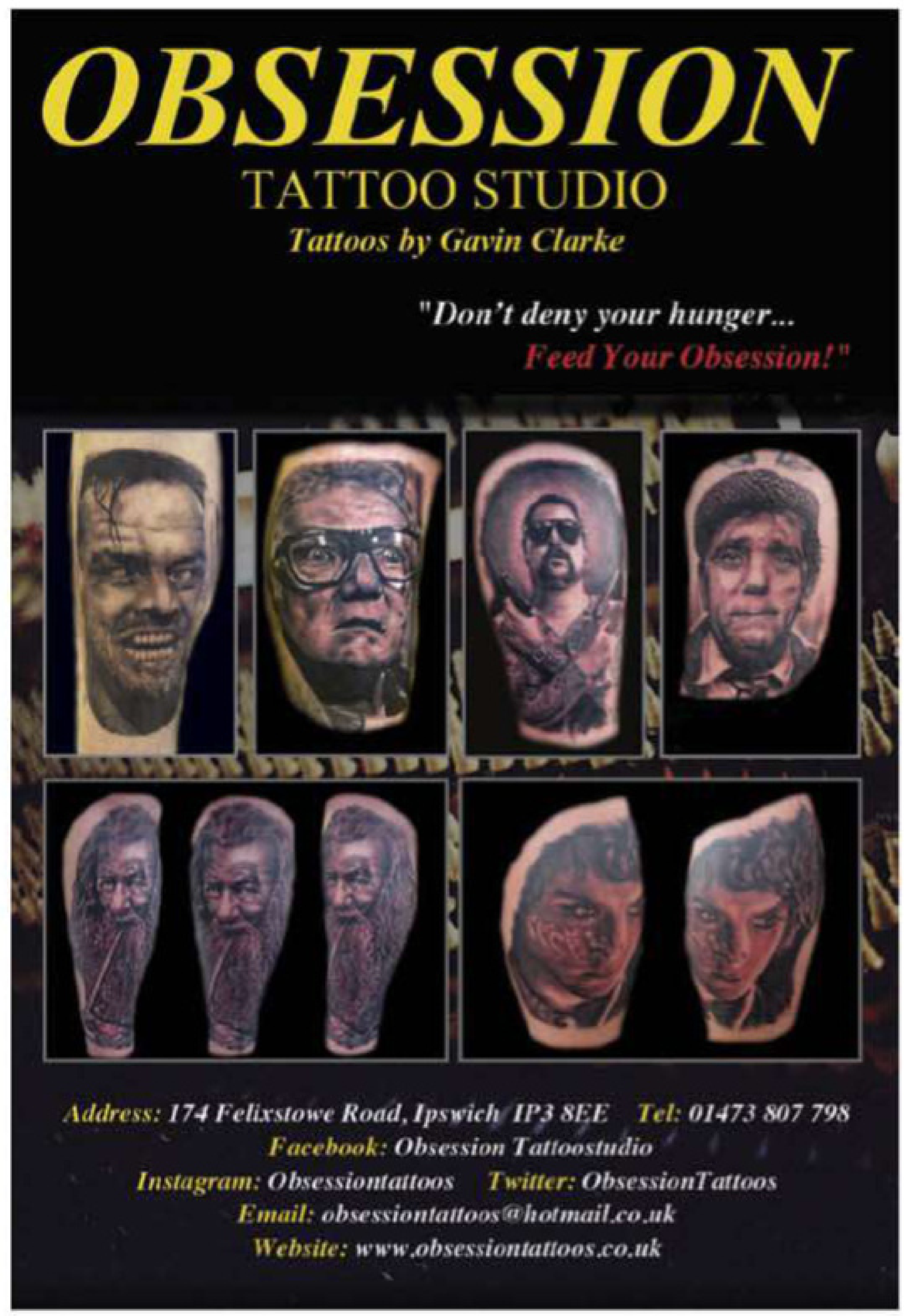
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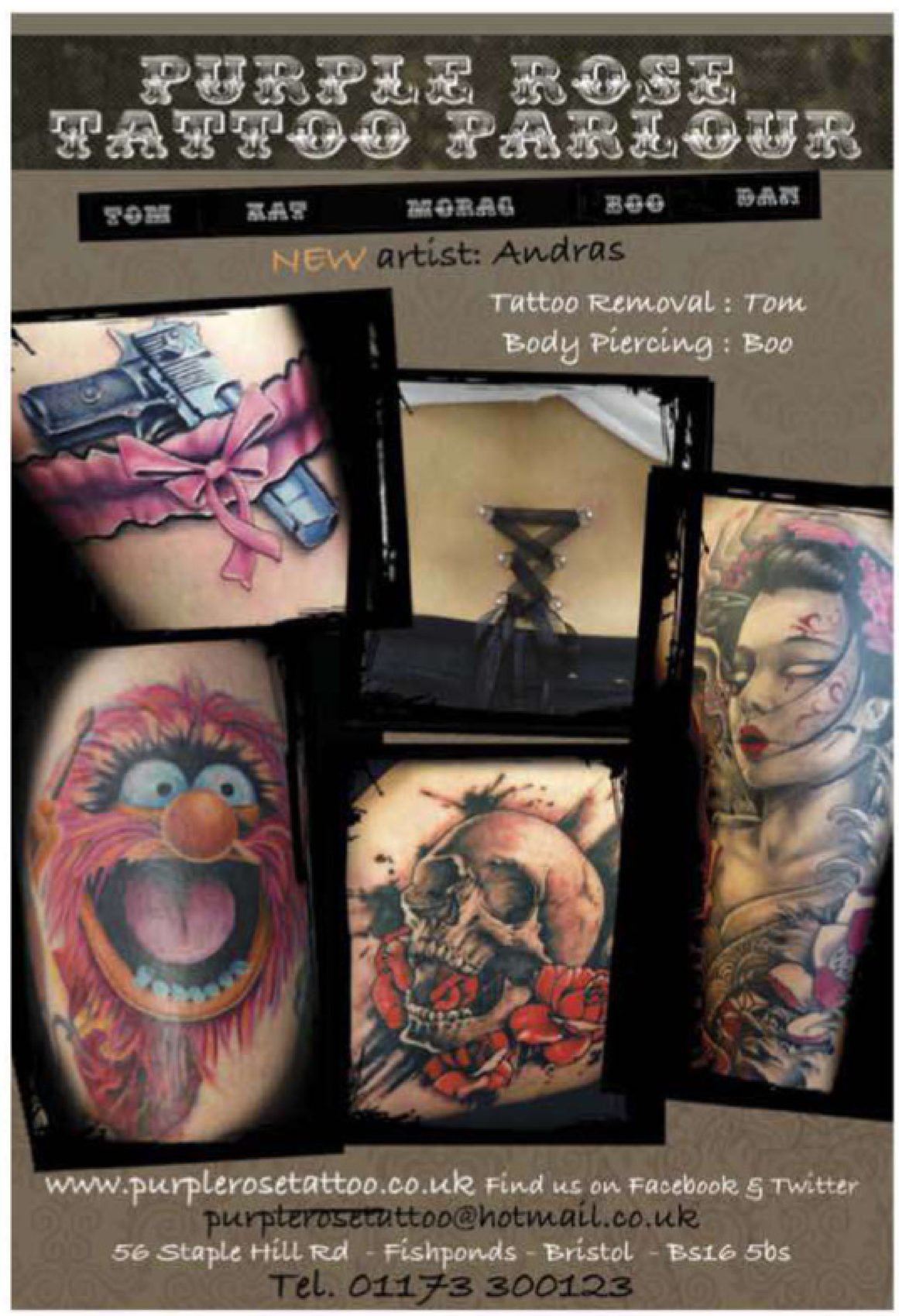
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THE DARK KNIGHT

Aside from the Best Horror Tattoos book, the last time we sat down and had a chat with Liorcifer was back in 2009. Since then he has opened his own place, Infernum Tattoos, a private studio in East Village New York, where he shares space with a crew of amazing artists.

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That was yet another lifetime ago, in the speed things have been moving in my little black bubble," Liorcifer tells me...and I can believe it. With space for three or four artist's stations and all the dark morbid atmosphere and black metal that you can handle, Infernum, looks to be another nail in coffin of Liorcifer's continued success.

"Tribulation Tattoo had changed a bit, as we all grew and evolved with time. So as a mutual respect that myself and partners-in-crime have (the three of us worked together for ten years), after four years at Tribulation Tattoo, it was time for me to branch out on my own way in order to raise the all familiar Hail Satan flag... and to blast out my black metal while at it."

In true Liorcifer fashion, on Halloween 2012, hours before "Frankenstorm Sandy" hit and as the great Mayan Armageddon was knocking at the door, he opened his own little corner of Hell...Infernum.

"I currently have one more artist part time at the studio and my main guy, Adel 156, to help keep the eternal hell fire burning. We're still looking for another artist for the team but I'd rather take my time and try and find the right person, as I really want a tight crew and family so we can all grow together. I really like the atmosphere created when you have a tight crew with killer artists. The whole interaction with them and the clients, it makes the whole amazing experience of getting tattooed even better. Anyone that's ever been to a studio with this kind of crew knows exactly what I'm talking about!"

So with the studio not falling prey to either a natural or Mayan catastrophe, Infernum was up and running and Liorcifer was back doing what he does best, creating tattoos that make zombies look tame in comparison.

Anyone who knows Liorcifer's work will instantly recognise his dark and macabre style. Loaded with demons, satanic images and general otherworldly craziness, it is art that demands to be looked at, but may leave you sleepless for your curiosity. But interestingly enough, chatting to him, it seems that his style of tattooing hasn't

Trent Aitken-Smith ● Liorcifer

WE'RE STILL LOOKING FOR ANOTHER ARTIST FOR THE TEAM BUT I'D RATHER TAKE MY TIME AND TRY AND FIND THE RIGHT PERSON, AS I REALLY WANT A TIGHT CREW AND FAMILY SO WE CAN ALL GROW TOGETHER

grown over the years. Sure, at the moment, there is a proliferation of zombie, horror and day of the dead tattoos but as far as Liorcifer is concerned, we're not talking the same thing. Not by a long stretch.

"I think in the past decade or so the truly dark, scary, traumatising, haunting tattoo designs, the real deep scare impact, has seriously thinned down in just about any medium, from music to movies to tattoos. Yes it has become much more accepted but as with many things that hit the mainstream, it has also turned into a joke more than anything. Take for example Twilight!

So for me, a lot of what we see nowadays is light horror. George Romero just described The Walking Dead as a soap opera with an occasional zombie. That really puts it all in a perfect nutshell. As a result that it's not so scary, or wrong or whatever you want to call it, you see more people that are ok with getting those images tattooed on them.

As I've said in the past, due to the more horrific and evil nature of this world and its people, there's more of a natural attraction for people with their darker side, as we all have it in us. Don't get me wrong, I'm still pleased with the fact that more people have more interest in their darker nature, but I don't find as many people getting really disturbing, in your face horror or demonic tattoos. Most people that still do get those tattoos are mostly in my chair at one point or another and for that I am grateful!"

Looking at Liorcifer's work, it is hard not to make connections with his art and 'religions' like Laveyen Satanism, or other ancient religious works and texts. But he dismisses an

FLAMING YOUTH
As for younger artists, I share just about any information I can in order to help us all grow, the same way I receive, at any given time, a lot of information from other artists. However, it seems like the majority of younger artists nowadays are very confident in what they do and rarely feel the need to 'bother' themselves with any type of advice or knowledge of their peers. Again, not all of them, but most for sure.

affinity to any one path.

"I was never a follower of any organization, but I am definitely deeply interested in just about anything related to horror. And demons and Satan sure fit the bill. I was always very close to many people in the Church of Satan as we come and go with the same crowd. And Lavey's common sense is very simple to just about any breathing being on this planet that wants to live and let live, in or out of our society. So I can relate.

"I also grew up in Israel so I can understand a lot of the ancient demon names and symbols and I really like to incorporate that in my art since it does represent evil things for all of us, whether believers or not. It's imbedded in our brain by now so it really helps and gives me much inspiration from all the symbolism, stories, beliefs and their meanings to people in one place or another on this planet."

A lot of Liorcifer's work is big. Full sleeves, back pieces; they take up space and are in your face; almost Western black and grey horror versions of the traditional Japanese body suits. As he has said in the past, "I like a piece that has a lot of impact and emotion behind it, something that really jumps at you, while it really flows and moves with your body. " I imagine that not many people find their way into Liorcifer's studio 'by mistake'. If you're booking an appointment to see him, it is because you love his style and you love it dark! And with Liorcifer, it is a two way street, with the client very involved with the design process.

THE TRULY DARK, SCARY, TRAUMATISING, HAUNTING TATTOO DESIGNS, THE REAL DEEP SCARE IMPACT, HAS BEEN SERIOUSLY THINNED DOWN IN JUST ABOUT ANY MEDIUM

"Many of my best and most out there art is either inspired by, or entirely, my client's ideas. Total freedom is great but I'd rather still work with the client to make sure they don't wake up in ten years and think, what the fuck did I do? Especially when it comes to anti religious imagery. Any Satanic symbols and such, those are always by request. I would not suggest these to a client, but I will gladly say yes of course! I am fortunate enough that most of my clients have been with me for a long time, so I know them much better and can easily just freehand stuff that I know will personally fit them. Some clients have very specific

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IT HAS BECOME MUCH MORE ACCEPTED BUT AS WITH MANY THINGS THAT HIT THE MAINSTREAM, IT HAS ALSO TURNED INTO A JOKE MORE THAN ANYTHING. TAKE FOR EXAMPLE TWILIGHT!

ideas or images and we work them into tattoos that fit an area. Some go back and forth with ideas till we narrow it down and some just have a rough concept and we work together until we have the main design sorted out. As always, it really depends on the client and how far and finished the sketch will be. Different strokes for different folks. Of course, there are always the ones that let me go nuts and do just about whatever I want but even in those cases, I rather pick their brain and make sure we are still on the same page and make it fit them specifically."

Having tattooed for half his life now, Liorcifer has carved a little corner of the tattoo world that is all his own. Like all great artists, his art has become his life. He even calls his 1996 Micky Sharpz

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ALWAYS LEARNING

I still feel like I'm in an apprenticeship at any given time, since the learning never stops. So it will be really hard for me to apprentice someone to a standard that I consider 'proper'. But I'm sure if the day and the right situation comes, then I will take on an apprentice of my own. At this point though, it will have to be someone's second apprenticeship, such as the one I did with Paul Booth, due to what I can actually teach them; meaning more of taking it to the next level rather than starting to tattoo from scratch.

EVERYTHING IN LIFE THAT YOU PUT YOUR ENERGY AND HEART INTO AND PAY YOUR RESPECTS AND DUES TO, WILL PAY YOU BACK IN MORE THAN ONE WAY IN RETURN

T-dial shader, Excalibur! It is said that the pen is mightier than the sword but in this case, I think it might be the other way around.

"This industry have been my true family, home and friends, and has taken me places and let me meet people I don't ever think I would have any other way. I believe that everything in life that you put your energy and heart into and pay your respects and dues with much dedication to, will pay you back in more than one way in return. Some things are way more valuable than money. I'm very grateful for all I have got so far and still am. It's always worth all the hard work, time and effort put into it.

I've managed to live many of my dreams and not have to compromise due to society, age, location, looks, etc...and still make a living being a metal head and drawing scary stuff. I can't even imagine where the future will take Infernum and myself, life sure has been one crazy roller coaster ride. But one thing is for sure, we will always remain evil and demonic. And always, hail Satan."

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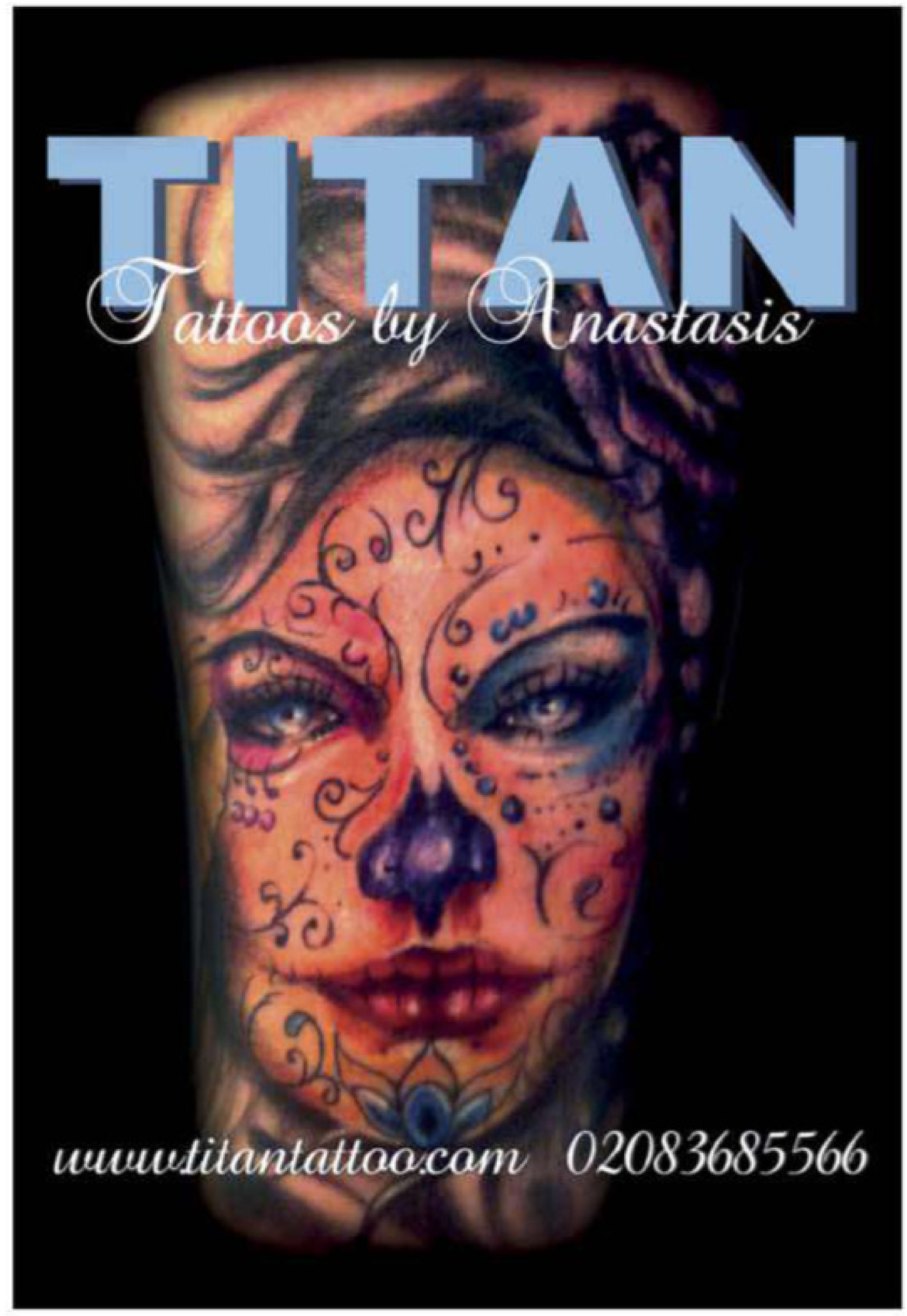
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ON THE ROAD

US WEST COAST (II)

Highway 101 stretches out in front of us as we continue our road trip of the West Coast of the USA...

Back on Highway 101 - the 1,500-mile long friend who carries me on its back along the West Coast during most of this trip - the landscapes that pass before our eyes as we ride towards California are a call for discovery. As a matter of fact, this temptation results in a ten-hour drive until we discover the wild coast where the waves of the Pacific Ocean crash and the Avenue of the Giants reveal its thousand-year-old trees, before we finally reach our next stop, San Francisco:

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

The Golden Gate Bridge barely crossed, it becomes clear that the five days we had planned to stay in the birthplace of many tattoo legends are going to be too short. The city still carries traces of the hippie counter-culture of the 70s. The tradition of tolerance, forerunner of the emancipation of minorities' rights, can still be felt.

The priority is the meeting with Juan Puente – a big deal in the tattoo world - in his studio Black Heart Tattoo in the centre of 'Frisco, just a few hours before he leaves for Ink n Iron. The man has a flawless charisma. He talks with great interest about the way the profession has evolved and how promoting artists' work has changed thanks to social networks.

As I take my last shots at Black Heart, an old friend, who heard about my stay in SF, contacts me:

P-mod, Assistant: Dwam, Translation: Charline

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IT BECOMES CLEAR THAT THE FIVE DAYS WE HAD PLANNED TO STAY INTHEBIRTHPLACE OF MANY TATTOO LEGENDS ARE GOING TO BE TOO SHORT

"Dude, are you in SF? I'm working at Lyle Tuttle's!"

Nakona MacDonald works in one of the shops that introduced tattoos to the general public in the 60s. The theme of the day "legend and internet" is validated. With no hesitation, I join the artist in the shop, decorated with flashes, illustration and other witnesses to the previous century. I don't have the chance to meet Lyle himself, for he retired from the tattoo industry back in 2010, but the chit-chatting with Nakona is super enjoyable.

The quick stay in San Francisco ends on a beautiful note: meeting the painter Charmaine Olivia, and taking a few pictures of Saint and Bob in the Golden Gate Park. To many in California, San Francisco is the antithesis of Los Angeles, and I am about to find out for myself by talking with locals.

SANTA BARBARA, CA

About 50 miles away from LA, it is time for me to stop in the American Rivera to meet Carrina. Hard and Fast could have been tattooed on her knuckles. At barely 21, the body of this neuroscience student is already quite heavily inked. Among the multiple characteristics of the US, Carrina who proclaims herself a "white trash princess", could be the personification of all excess. Those two days spent with her end in her bathroom in an impromptu shooting at 4 am, in the company of her boyfriend Josh.

LOS ANGELES, CA

The first contact I have with the City of Angels is Venice, where I meet Dali and Ackley, both models for suicidegirls.com. The neighbourhood located on the west side is so present in Hollywood productions that the whole district seems familiar. I take some quick shots in Venice Beach. It is impossible for me to figure out where the uncomfortable feeling of having been thrown in the middle of the Truman Show comes from:

JUAN PUENTE HAS A FLAWLESS CHARISMA. HE TALKS WITH GREAT INTEREST ABOUT THE WAY THE PROFESSION HAS EVOLVED AND HOW PROMOTING ARTISTS' WORK HAS CHANGED THANKS TO SOCIAL NETWORKS

the heat of the Californian sun, weed fumes, or just the tiredness from the miles I have accumulated. The place makes me feel like an extra and the impulse to throw up glitter comes over me. Some clichés don't fall too far from reality. Luckily, the golden polish of this huge metropolis hides interesting encounters: for example my meeting with Irinka, who takes me to the LA County Museum of Art. The permanent outdoor exhibition of urban lights becomes the perfect scene to shoot a few portraits.

The second part of our stay in LA is spent in company of Chloe, Vice, Vivid, Sash, Corrine and Alfredo. The house (which belongs to the wife of one of the guys in Steel Panther) is often full of suicidegirls or rock artists who come get their picture taken, while old 80s heavy metal plays in the background. (Sounds like my house! Ed.)

During the last stop on the Santa Monica Pier, a group of squealing girls catches my attention. The cause of those screams is Aaron and his

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WHAT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE RECREATION BASED IN THE 50S HAS TURNED INTO A POST APOCALYPTIC DÉCOR, DROWNED INTO A PESTILENTIAL SMELL DUE TO THE HEAT AND THE REMAINS OF DEAD FISH THAT HAVE REPLACED THE SAND

puppies; the whole thing is kind of cliché, but it does seem to work on the average middle-aged American housewife.

SALTON SEA AND SAN DIEGO, CA

Far from LA's bustle, the atmosphere of our last stop is like a 180° turn.

Exning is taking us through the dry landscapes of Salton Sea. Only a few dropouts and meth addicts hang around the endoheric lake. What was supposed to be recreation based in the 50s has turned into a post apocalyptic décor, drowned into a pestilential smell due to the heat and the remains of dead fish that have replaced the sand. "Jesus saves" and other Christian sentences are omnipresent on the rare traces of civilisation that remain in those hostile lands, like in Salvation Mountain. This artificial hill made of hay and bright colours, and covered with Christian sayings and verses was built by Leonard Knight, now interned in intensive care for dementia.

SALTON SEA
A major flood of the Colorado River created this lake in 1891. The region was colonised and major construction works were started in 1901 to divert the Colorado River water into the plains via the old bed of the river called the Alamo Canal. In 1906, another flood of the Colorado River caused another catastrophe: water poured through the irrigation canals for months in the Salton plain, flooding farms and its inhabitants. It drowned hundreds of square meters of desert and thus created an inland sea.

With its thin sand beaches and migratory birds, Salton Sea used to be a postcard-like landscape. It is now a distressed area, with very high salinity and pesticides. The surrounding lands contain salt left by an ancient sea that has been gone for thousands of years now. To be able to cultivate the land in the neighbouring Imperil Valley, farmers got rid of the salt, which ended up accumulating in the water of the lake, making it saltier than the water of the Pacific Ocean.

THE WEST COAST IS A LAND OF CONTRASTS, AND EACH CITY DROPS ITS VISITORS IN RADICALLY DIFFERENT UNIVERSES. THE COMMON POINT OF ALL OF THEM IS THE POSITIVE ATTITUDE" STATE OF MIND

VENICE
This district owes its name to the conservationist Abbott Kinney. While traveling to Italy he fell in love with Venice and decided to reproduce the Venetian canals. In 1906, visitors could use gondolas imported directly form Italy.

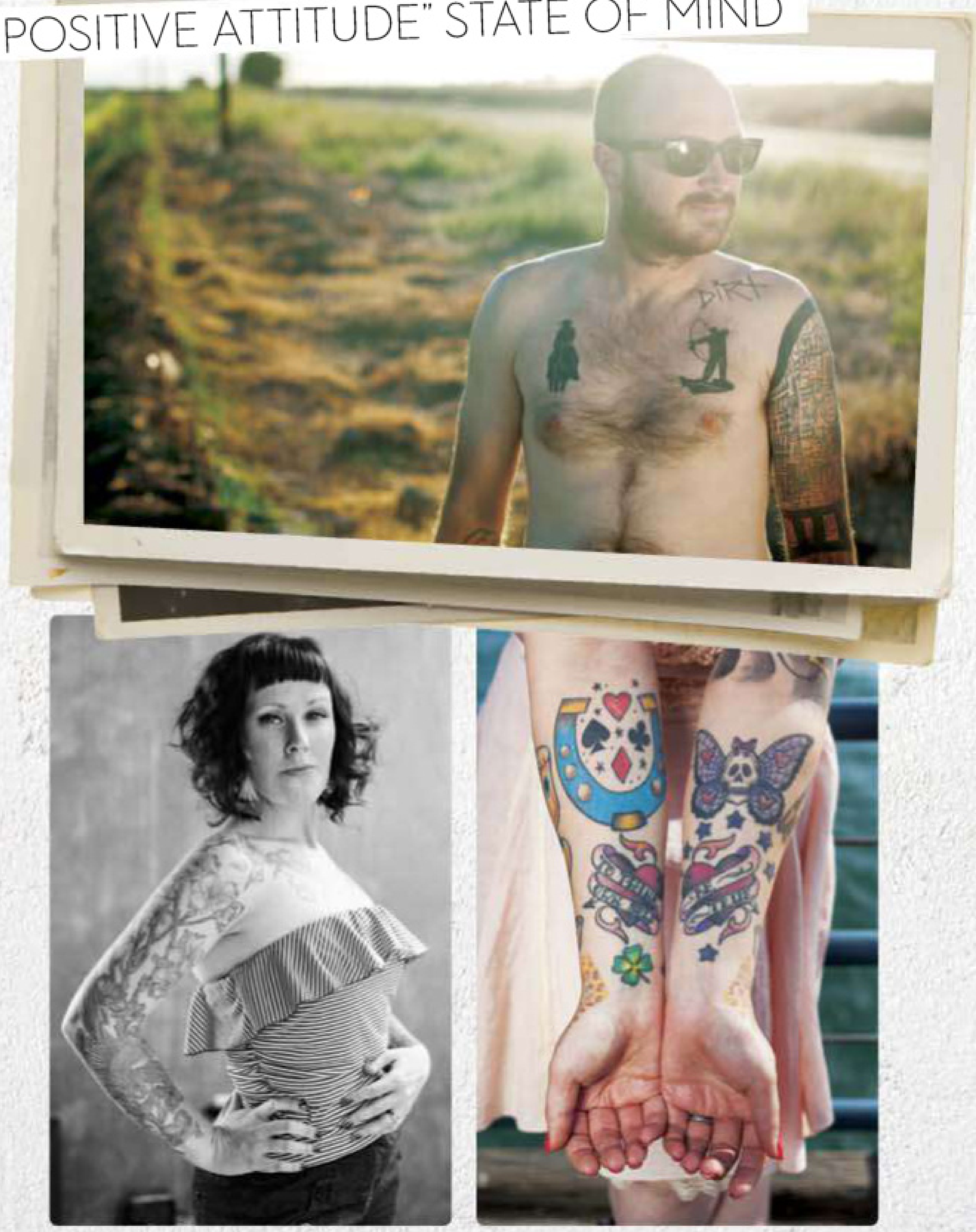
The six-week-long adventure finishes with a last trip in the Californian desert with Jack and Venom.

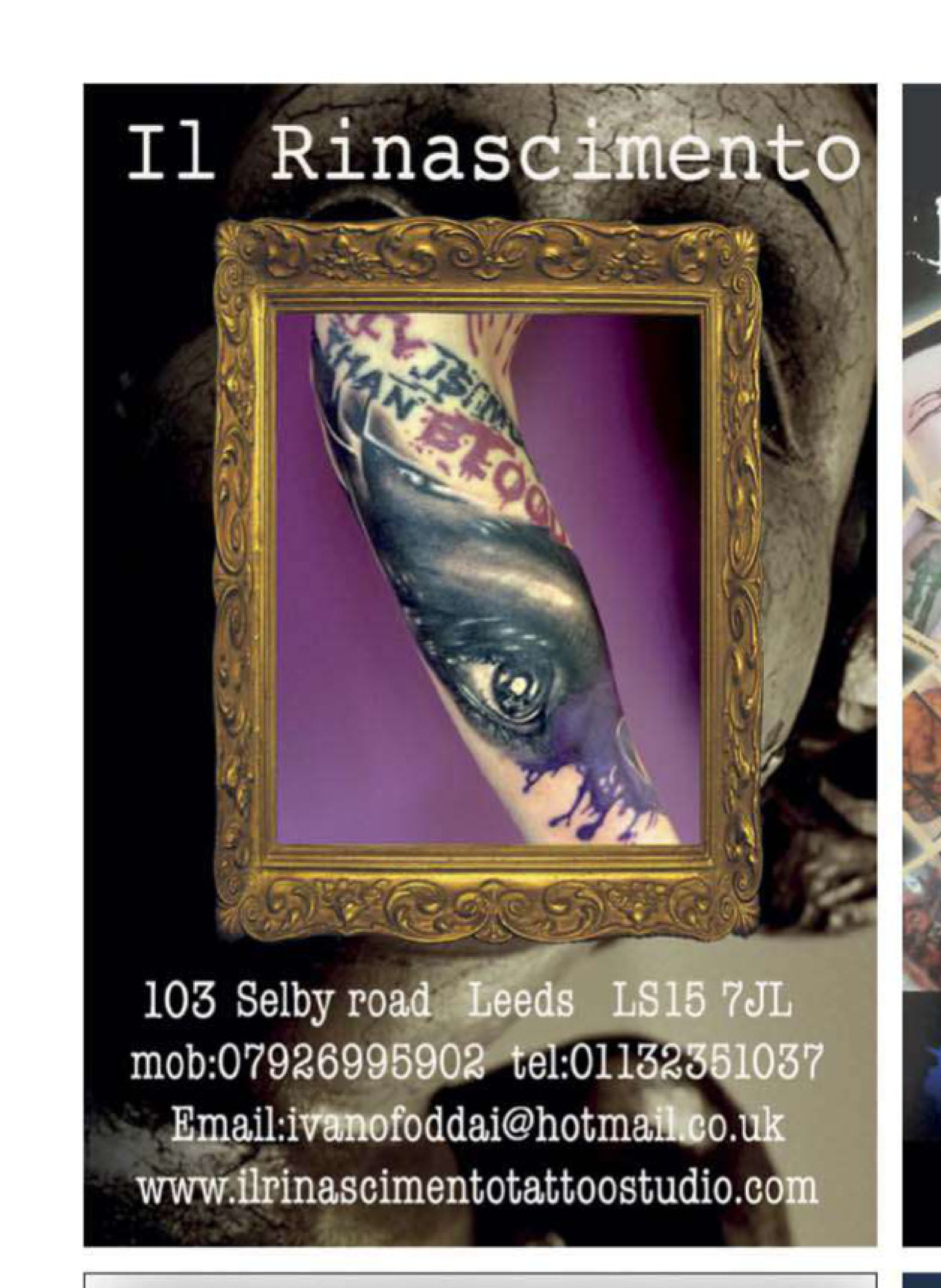
Summarising such a trip in a few lines is close to impossible. I must admit I initially didn't have any interest for the American West Coast, but there is no better way to change your preconceived ideas than to go and judge for yourself.

The West Coast is a land of contrasts, and each city drops its visitors in radically different universes. The common point of all of them is the "positive attitude" state of mind, often the cause of teasing from the American haters out there but you have to admit that this state of mind is a good defence system during dark and depressing times.

The hundreds of pictures of tattooists and tattooed people gathered during those six weeks sit together in the baggage hold on the flight back home, like dozens of lives reunited before a final gathering immortalised on glazed paper.

But the deepest engraving of those fleeting memories will be neither on film, nor on a hard drive...

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HALLOWEEN TATTOO BASH

Halloween, a time for geese to get fat, pennies to drop into the hats of old men and Cardiff to have its annual Tattoo Bash, courtesy of Mac McCarthy and his team. This year saw the Bash upgrade from the Coal Exchange to new venue the Millenium Stadium.

Having hosted the Olympics, the Millenium seemed a little on the grand side for a tattoo show of this scale, its sprawling labyrinth of corridors needing quite a bit of footfall to feel in any way packed. Trying to find the right entrance to the show proved to be a horror in itself, but when I finally got there, picking up a weary straggler or two on the way, three floors of artists, trade and kickass tattooing awaited.

Being Halloween, my bloodlust was at a seasonal high so I was on the hunt for the goriest tattoos I could find. Chloe Black was the first I spotted. A big horror fan herself, there was plenty of red ink on the table, Chloe kicking off with a Shaun of the Dead portrait. Meanwhile, George Torrington (Avon) was hammering out a full sleeve cover-up, aided by Vincent Price and huge dollops of gore. Dre from Addinktion, Belfast, put a comical twist on the horror theme with a thigh piece featuring cartoon versions of Jason and Freddy while, just around the corner, veteran inkman Podge knocked out his first new-school piece in six years; a meat cleaver wielding pumpkin.

As I ventured upstairs, the musty smell of horror grew even stronger in the air. Cosplay was the order of the day here; Jo Harrison looking suitably demure as a geisha while Gemma and Shaky Pete (Drunken Sailor) rocked the corpse paint. But the guys from Needle Asylum amped it to eleven; their table a full-on Theatre Of Blood featuring gore-stained bed sheets, spinning wheelchairs, clients in straitjackets and a rather bemused looking Captain Spaulding.

The traders weren't shy, either, plenty of gore-filled goodies on offer; from the kitsch hearts and skulls of custom jeweller Drown Soda to the actual hearts and skulls of taxidermists Dan Stox and Cranfield's Curiosity Cabinet. Mother's Basement catered for all the geeks with a fine selection of horror collectibles, while Bella Muerte offered their own brand of horror couture. The terror continued through the afternoon with Martin Binczewski spawning a jaw-dropping full colour Chucky and Gavin Clarke (Obsession) conjuring up a black and grey Exorcist portrait. Ollie Tye sliced his way through the first of three horror-themed tattoos, his definitive take on realism eye-poppingly good. But it was Steve Hunter (Touch of Ink) who impressed the most, wrapping on my favourite piece of the day: a black and grey half-sleeve featuring Grandpa and Lily Munster. As the machines wound down for the night, everyone getting ready for some wine and song at the Fancy Dress Ball, I made good my escape. Outside, the wind was howling, the rain pounding. I dipped my head and kept to the shadows, passing the many taverns full of cutthroat pirates and salty seamen. At home, I continued my own horror theme; sipping carrot juice and chain-watching episodes of Dexter, a Jack Russell Terrier propped on my lap.

Sunday was slow to start. Not as much horror today: even the Needle Asylum boys looked subdued. In fact, I was all for giving up on my theme, happy to settle for some of the stand-out non-horror pieces of the show; such as Aaron Usher's post-realism chest piece; when I spotted local lad Chris Jones working on a Dexter portrait. Not 100% horror,

COMPETITION WINNERS

BEST NEWCOMER: Molly Pritchard (Mink)
BEST REALISM: Matt Gardiner (End of the Line)
BEST HALLOWEEN HORROR: Martin Binczewski (Avon Tattoo)
BEST OLD SCHOOL: Josh Foulds (Never Say Die)
BEST NEW SCHOOL: Bobby Leach (Southmead)
BEST TRADITIONAL: Pete Oz (7 Star Tattooing)
BEST SMALL B&G: Greg Bishop (Ink the Skin)
BEST LARGE B&G: Chris Lewis (Lewis Point Tattoo Studio)
BEST SMALL COLOUR: Martin Binczewski (Avon Tattoo)
BEST LARGE COLOUR: Max Pniewski (Southmead)
RUNNER UP OF SHOW: Bobby Leach (Southmead)
BEST OF SHOW: Martin Binczewski (Avon Tattoo)

Wayne Simmons

Chucky by Martin Binczewski avon

Dexter by Chris Jones

by Ollie Tye

by Steve Hunter

by Ollie Tye

by Dre

you may argue, but it was a start. Before long, I'd tracked down even more: Chloe Black, having wrapped on her full-colour Shaun of the Dead, was now working on a small black and grey zombie. Meanwhile Jordan Osterki got cracking on a portrait piece that, while reminding me of the creatures from Neil Marshall's The Descent, was described by Jordan himself as simply 'monstrous'. The afternoon saw Jason James (Never Say Die) hack out what became my favourite tattoo of the whole weekend; a burning witch rib piece, blending old and new school with subtle hints of oriental. This was a tattoo to die for; simple, clean and brilliantly executed. And, hell, nothing says horror like a burning witch.

Time for the charity auction and this year's chosen cause was the Jo and Mya Fund, set up to help children who have either lost family, or need support while their parents or siblings undergo treatment for serious/ terminal illness. After a moving speech by founder, Ian Richardson, we were all encouraged to dig deep while bidding for a sizeable bag of swag. Meanwhile, brave scream queen for the day, Ashlea Missen, settled into the chair, not for tattoo work, but to get her head shaved to raise even more cash. Kudos to Ashlea for being such a trooper, and to the many artists and traders who offered up prints and merch for auctioning, not to mention everyone else for bidding their socks off. Judging came next, hordes of punters gathered like zombies to check out the day's talents. The organisers had decided only to allow entries of work done at the show, a decision I fully support (Well said. Ed.) Not surprisingly, Martin Binczewski cleaned up with his Chucky portrait, no less than three awards bagged. He had stiff competition, though, and it was great to see so many stellar tattoos onstage; a fitting climax to the weekend's ink-filled bloodbath.

FOR THE TATTOO FAN, ALL THE RIGHT INGREDIENTS WERE IN THE POT: GREAT ARTISTS, UNIQUE TRADERS, KICKASS BANDS, EVEN A SUSPENSION ROOM FOR THE LESS SQUEAMISH

Overall, this year's HTB was a killer show with a fine cast of players. For the tattoo fan, all the right ingredients were in the pot: great artists, unique traders, kickass bands, even a suspension room for the less squeamish. Footfall was a little sparse but this is an event with a lot of potential, next year sure to be even bigger and badder. I'm already sharpening my claws in anticipation. Oh, the horror...

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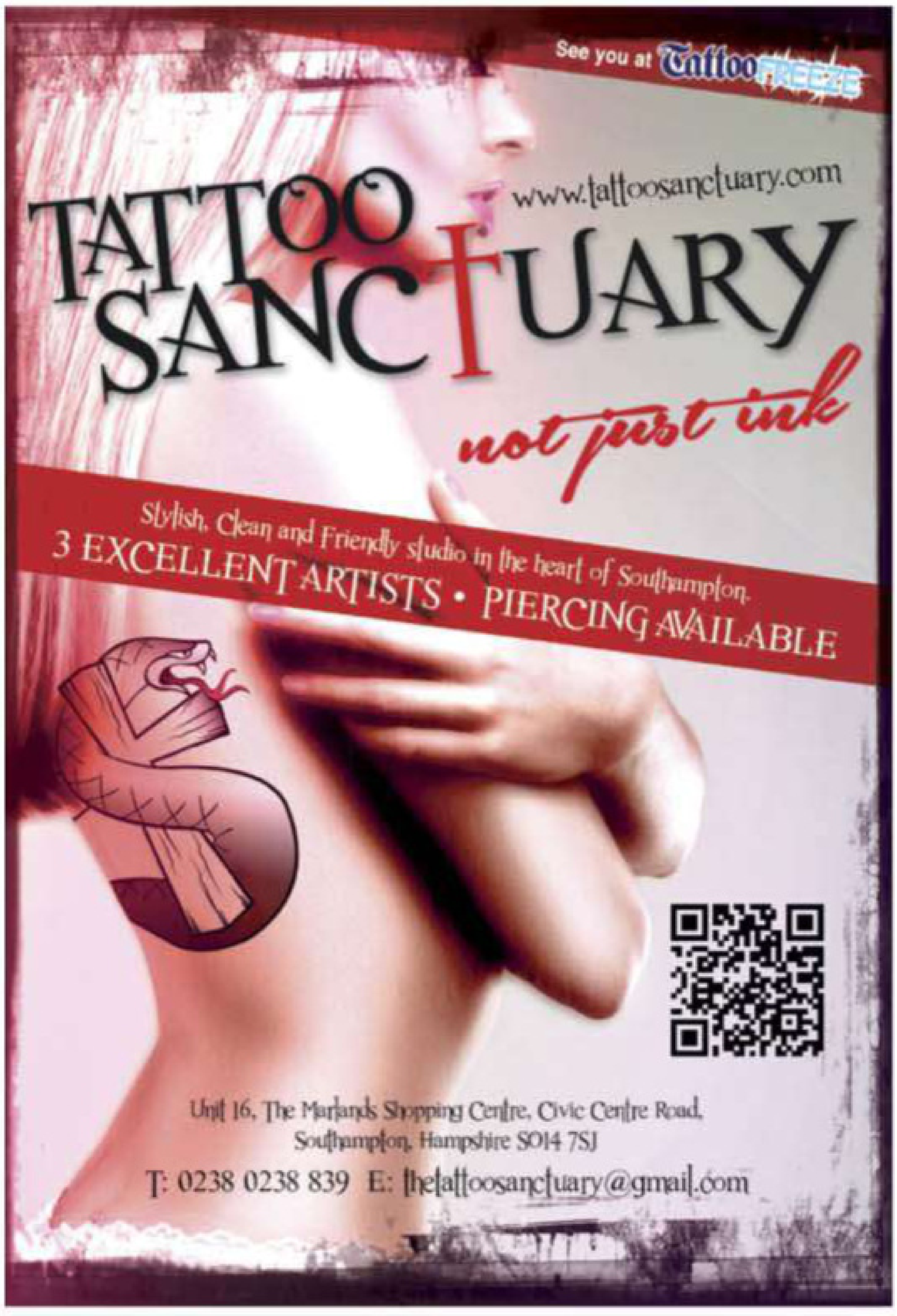
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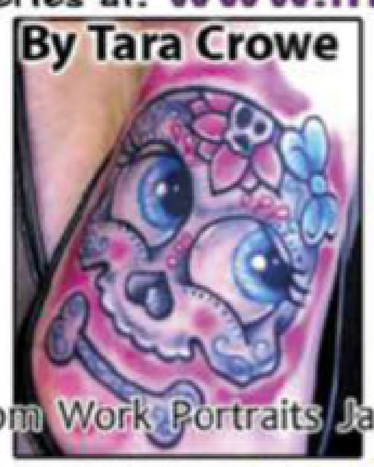

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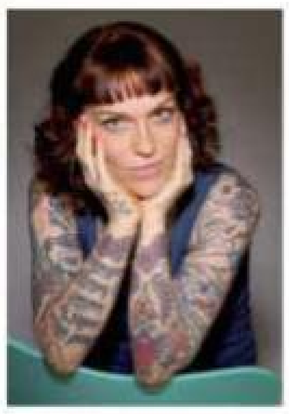
YOU'RE ONLY OLD ONCE

Every other Sunday afternoon I was sent to my grandmother's house, she'd make old fashioned suet puddings boiled in cloth, and I'd look for ways to entertain myself that didn't involve falling asleep in front of the telly.



Paula Hardy Kangelos

Luckily, up in the back bedroom was my mother's long abandoned Dansette record player (we had a terribly modern 8 track at home) and a box of old records - my great grandmother's Vera Lynn and Mario Lanza my grandmother's Liberace discs were worthy of a spin (especially if I flicked the rpm switch and made Ms Lynn sound like whale song) but the records I really loved to listen to were my mother's.

My mother left school at the grand old age of 14 and went to work in a lampshade factory, flush with her new disposable income she spent every spare penny on hairspray and 7 inch singles, until my father proposed, when she started saving for her 'bottom drawer' instead.

THERE'S A FREEDOM THAT COMES WITH LATER LIFE THAT HAS PROMPTED A NUMBER OF OTHER SENIOR CITIZENS TO EXPLORE TATTOO COLLECTING

So my mother moved on, got married, left home, had babies, but her record collection stayed it exactly as it was, in her old bedroom, in a box, a kind of audio time capsule representing the two year period when everything was new to her and full of possibility, 1964-1966. Twenty years later, while my Nan made old fashioned puddings from recipes she'd made up 40 years before, I'd sing along to those records, The Beatles, The Kinks and The Who, 'I hope I die before I get old', and while the concept of death wasn't exactly appealing, neither was the thought of growing up and leaving my own youth behind in a box in my mam's back bedroom.

Of course, as you age, you move the goalposts - 40 was unthinkable once, now it's just my next 'landmark' birthday. It's not even an impressive landmark, many of my friends are already post 40 and none of them seem old yet. Culturally the definition of old has shifted too, we're settling down later, having children later, studying later and even working later. We're living longer, yet somehow we're afraid of ageing, and an industry has emerged to exploit that fear.

Magazine retouching and cosmetic procedures have narrowed the collective definition of beauty and looking older doesn't fit. Western society seems to have decided that it's OK to be old, but it's not OK to look old, especially if you happen to be female. Women who manage to age and still fit the beauty stereotype are celebrated as successes, and by implication, those of us that do not, are deemed failures.

I wonder if this panicked desire to remain unchanged is what causes so many to ask of the tattooed, 'but what about when you are old?' after all, everyone has seen an ancient tattoo, blurred and blue, imagery no longer discernible, now just a stain or a never-healing bruise (brilliantly documented by Thomas Jeppe in the book, 'Old Men's Tattoos'). The breakdown of a tattoo is an unmissable indicator of the breakdown of the skin, and of the body itself, so is the real question, how can one be so accepting of one's own decline?

If tattoos are perceived to be joyful in youth, but a burden in our senior years, those that become tattooed later in life are an inconvenient divergence from the stereotype. David Dimbleby's recent tattoo has garnered quite some press attention, precisely because it doesn't fit the convenient narrative of youthful indiscretion and later regret. Dimbleby describes his new tattoo as something he had 'always wanted', and has shrugged off criticism with a droll, 'You're only old once'. The joke contains a truth, there is a freedom that comes with later life, a freedom that has prompted a number of other senior citizens to explore tattoo collecting, Felicity Kendall waited until 63 for her first tattoo, describing her decision as, 'Something you do that's just about you, nobody else', and it's not just celebrity seniors that choose to be tattooed, septuagenarian and even octogenarian tattoo fans exist all over the world.

In the near future, of course, there will be thousands of tattooed pensioners, I certainly don't expect, nor want to be the only tattooed lady in the nursing home. We'll be able to compare notes, show photos of our glory years and talk about where we were when they were done. Our tattoos will be a memory prompt, one that we cannot mislay or leave behind. Unlike my mother's abandoned 45's, my youthful interests won't be left behind. I'll carry them with me, adding and altering as I go, celebrating and remembering until they eventually break down with me, much more satisfying than a half forgotten dusty box.

Because unlike The Who, I hope I get old before I die.

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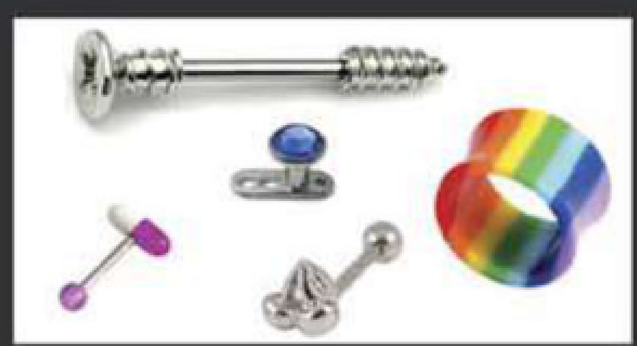

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