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WIN - VINYL FACTORY SPEAKERS

WIN - EL GATO NEGRO PRODUCTS

WIN - TIN TIN SUNGLASSES

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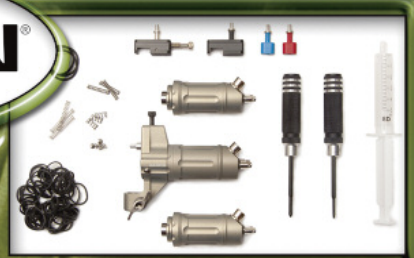


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Images must be high resolution (300) and sized at 100mm by 150mm. The disc needs to be labelled with the artist & studio name. Or email them to [galler@totaltattoo.co.uk](mailto:galler@totaltattoo.co.uk)

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All winners will be picked at random (or on merit if applicable) after the closing date. Entries received after the closing date will not be considered. The editor's decision is final. Only one entry per person please, and remember to include your name and address. Winners of convention tickets will be responsible for their own transport and accommodation unless stated otherwise. Total Tattoo is not responsible for items lost or damaged in transit – though of course we will try to help if we can.



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# WELCOME to 140

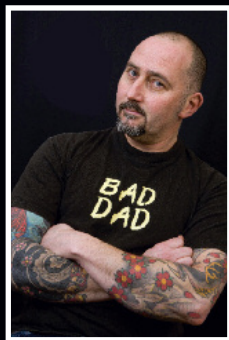
I like to keep an eye on how tattoos and tattooing are being reported by the world's media. There is the inevitable fascination with celebrities and their latest ink; there are the horrific crimes committed by the perps with Kill Kill Kill tattooed across their foreheads; now and again there are positive stories about tattoo artists who are reaching out and making a difference; but there are very very few stories portraying tattooists as the true professionals they really are.

Many tattooists run successful businesses, many are artists of the highest calibre, and all are required to maintain the highest standards of hygiene. Yet it would seem that in the eyes of the world's media they are just people who draw pretty (or not-so-pretty) pictures on skin – which is something I've always found deeply frustrating, and why we've always tried to redress the balance within the pages of Total Tattoo Magazine.

So you can imagine my excitement when I found out about a project in Brazil that saw 450 tattoo artists being trained by oncologists to spot signs of skin cancer. Every year in that sun-drenched land 180,000 new cases of skin cancer are diagnosed, and many of those are among the beach-loving tattooed younger generation. This project therefore makes perfect sense. The tattoo artists are asked to be on the look-out for any moles that have the tell-tale ABCD characteristics – Asymmetry, Border irregularity, Colour and Diameter. It's such a simple idea, and it's already proved its worth.

In fact our own NHS has been inspired by what's happening in Brazil. An educational event for tattooists was recently held at Southmead Hospital in Bristol, organised by skin cancer consultant Jonathon Pleat and Macmillan clinical specialist nurse Jaye Kissane. It remains to be seen if this scheme will be rolled out across the whole UK.

James Sandercock  
 editor@totaltattoo.co.uk



**“The first wealth is health”**

Ralph Waldo Emerson

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# TOTAL TATTOO SHIRTS



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# NEWS & REVIEWS

Tattoo news and reviews for your delectation and delight. If it goes on in the tattoo world, it goes in here. Send us your news items, books or products for review and items of general curiosity and intrigue for the tattoo cognoscenti.

News, Total Tattoo Magazine, 111 Furze Road, Norwich, Norfolk, NR7 0AU

## WIN - TIN TIN SUNGLASSES AND VINYL FACTORY MINI SPEAKERS

Vinyl Factory, the designers of very cool and highly desirable objects, have very kindly given us a pair of sunglasses designed by world famous tattooist Tin Tin, as well as one of their 'Enceintes Vintage' portable speakers. A very nice haul to get the summer underway, I think you will agree. All you need to do is answer the following question.

**What is the name of Tin Tin's Paris tattoo convention?**



- A) Mondial du Tatouage
- B) Eiffel Ink
- C) Ink de Triomphe

The first correct answer drawn out of the hat will win the speakers, and the second will win the shades.

Email [comps@totaltattoo.co.uk](mailto:comps@totaltattoo.co.uk) with the subject line VINYL FACTORY.

Answers must be in by June 2nd.

Terms and conditions apply (see page 5).



## NEW (OLD) WORLD RECORD

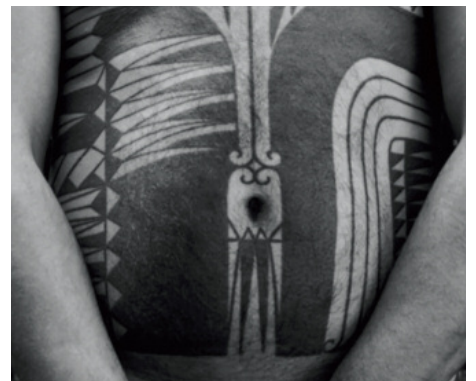


A great-grandfather from Derbyshire has achieved a Guinness World Record by getting his first tattoo on his 104th birthday. Jack Reynolds decided to get a tattoo of his name and birth date on his upper arm. He was encouraged by his daughter to get the tattoo, to raise money for Ashgate Hospice Care, a local charity. By doing so, he has raised over £2500. In an interview, she said: "I'm really proud of him. He's my superhero. He initially joked about getting it on his bottom, but then wasn't too keen on having to get out his bum to show people!"

## JUAN MATSUI - A FILM BY ANDRE FERREZINI

*"I had this thing with tattoos...It was like a dream, a fantasy, but it was so absurd - the kind of surreal and unachievable dream that you don't tell anybody about..."*

This short film documents the legacy of Juan Matsui, one of Brazil's most influential tattooists. Beautifully shot throughout, it features the artist talking about his life and his journey into tattooing, including his first memory of drawing, his travels in Japan, and fatherhood. The narration is combined with photographs and stills of Matsui's tattoos and clients, studio images and family life.



You can check out the film yourself at <https://vimeo.com/146436414>



## WIN - EL GATO NEGRO PRODUCTS!

El Gato Negro specialises in 100% vegan, natural and organic tattoo products. It is the brainchild of Sarah Taylor, RHS certified horticulturist, who told us: "I founded 'El Gato Negro' with the belief that natural botanicals have more to offer than manmade chemicals and animal derived components. All my products are 100% organic, natural and vegan-friendly and completely non-toxic. I never use chemicals, bulking agents or unnecessary additives, and everything is tested in line with EU Regulations" (For more details of the benefits of these ingredients, please visit: ([www.egntattooocare.uk](http://www.egntattooocare.uk)) Sarah and the team have kindly given us two packs of El Gato Negro products, for you to win, which include:

- TATTOOIST LUBE** – an alternative to petroleum jelly, to be used by the tattooist. It instantly melts into an oil which forms a thin moisturising layer, protecting your stencil from accidental removal. It reduces redness and swelling and allows for clear sight of the area being worked.
- TATTOO HEALING BALM** – a really great aftercare balm that keeps fresh tattoos moisturised, reducing scabbing and relieving itchiness and irritation.
- PERMACOLOUR** – a daily moisturiser for tattooed skin.

To be in with a chance of winning a pack of El Gato Negro tattoo aftercare products, simply answer the following question:

**Which El Gato Negro product is an alternative to petroleum jelly?**  
**A) Tattooist Lube B) Tattoo Healing Balm C) Permacolour**

Email your answer to [comps@totaltattoo.co.uk](mailto:comps@totaltattoo.co.uk) with the subject line EL GATO NEGRO. Answers must be in by June 2nd.  
 Terms and conditions apply (see page 5).



## JAPAN TATTOO BAN



Last month we brought you a feature on the Japanese 'tattoo ban' and the problems being encountered by tattooed people – including foreign visitors – who wish to use ryokan inns and bath houses. We've now heard that the Japan Tourism Agency is proposing various ways of softening the current outright ban. Measures include distributing 'stickers' to cover tattoos, encouraging tattooed customers to bathe in off-peak hours, and offering bathing rooms for private rental. The Japan Tourism Agency will also be reaching out to travel companies so that all tourists will be aware that tattooed visitors are required to follow certain protocols whilst staying in Japan.



## AHOY SAILOR

Members of the US Navy will now be allowed more tattoos below the elbows and knees, as well as neck tattoos, following feedback from current members of the service. The relaxed rules were announced in Washington in a statement, saying: "This policy update is being made in response to the increased popularity of tattoos for those currently serving and in the population from which the Navy draws its recruits. It is also meant to ensure the Navy does not miss opportunities to bring in talented young men and women who are willing to serve." Although tattoos on the neck must not be visible "more than an inch in any direction", Sailors are now permitted to have an unlimited number of tattoos below the elbow and knee, which includes sleeve and hand tattoos. All military services will continue their ban on any tattoos deemed "prejudicial to good order and discipline."

## PRISONER DIES FROM INFECTED TATTOO

We hear that in America a lawsuit is being brought against the healthcare provider at a state prison authority following the death of a prisoner allegedly as a result of an infected tattoo. According to news reports, relatives of the prisoner are claiming that inadequate medical care was provided, allowing the untreated infection to turn into sepsis. (We understand that there has been no comment from the prison authority or healthcare provider at this stage.) Despite being admitted to hospital, the prisoner tragically died. The story is given an even sadder dimension by the fact that he was reportedly only a couple of months away from his release when he was given the tattoo by a fellow inmate.

## Artist vacancy at Black Dog Tattoos (Norwich):



This vacancy is for a tattooer with a minimum of 2 years studio experience. Please note this is NOT a vacancy for an apprenticeship. Black Dog are an established custom studio, so a local customer base is a bonus but by no means a requirement. All styles considered. Anyone interested who fits the bill may contact them via e-mail or phone:  
[blackdogtattoos@gmail.com](mailto:blackdogtattoos@gmail.com)  
 01603 291049

## NEW STUDIO OPEN

Top tattooist Jake X from Hertfordshire has been in touch to announce the launch of his new private studio Crooked Rook, based at Hammer Lane, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP2 4ES. He will be working alongside Lewis King and Peter Balla and between them they are able to offer all styles of tattooing. Tel 07989 152413 or check out their website [thecrookedrook.com](http://thecrookedrook.com)

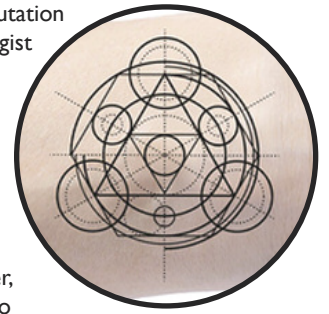
## FREE SCAR COVER-UPS

A laser removal studio in Staffordshire has started offering free 'medical' tattoos to those who have been physically scarred from accidents and illnesses. Tracy Eaton launched Renaissance Aesthetic at her tattoo removal studio, Invisible Ink, last year. After learning about scar camouflaging and its positive effects on clients, she decided to expand the treatments available and has trained in micro pigmentation and scar rejuvenation. The treatments are done once a person's medical scars are completely healed, and are executed by gradually building up colour to create realistic skin tone, over a series of sessions. For enquiries, visit [www.invisibleink-stoke.co.uk](http://www.invisibleink-stoke.co.uk)

## ALL THE TEMPORARY FUN OF THE FAIR

Theme parks are preparing to shed their rusty rollercoaster reputation and rocket right into the twenty first century. Esteemed futurologist Ian Pearson has teamed up with UK ticket provider Floridatix to forecast what theme parks might look like in years to come. And interestingly, skin technology will apparently have a large role to play.

It is estimated that by 2019 paper tickets and wristbands will no longer be in use, but will have been replaced by electronic temporary tattoos printed directly onto the skin – to allow faster, more secure entry. The idea of using active skin technology is also predicted to enhance park experiences. It is believed that from 2030, electronics printed onto skin will mimic the feeling of having superhero powers, stimulating the nerves and sharpening the senses. This will allow physical interactions to be recorded automatically, making adventure-goers able to share experiences with one another by using the active skin to relay signals.



To read more about what theme parks will have to offer in years to come, you can download and read the report here: [www.floridatix.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Theme-Parks-Of-The-Future-Doc.pdf](http://www.floridatix.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Theme-Parks-Of-The-Future-Doc.pdf)

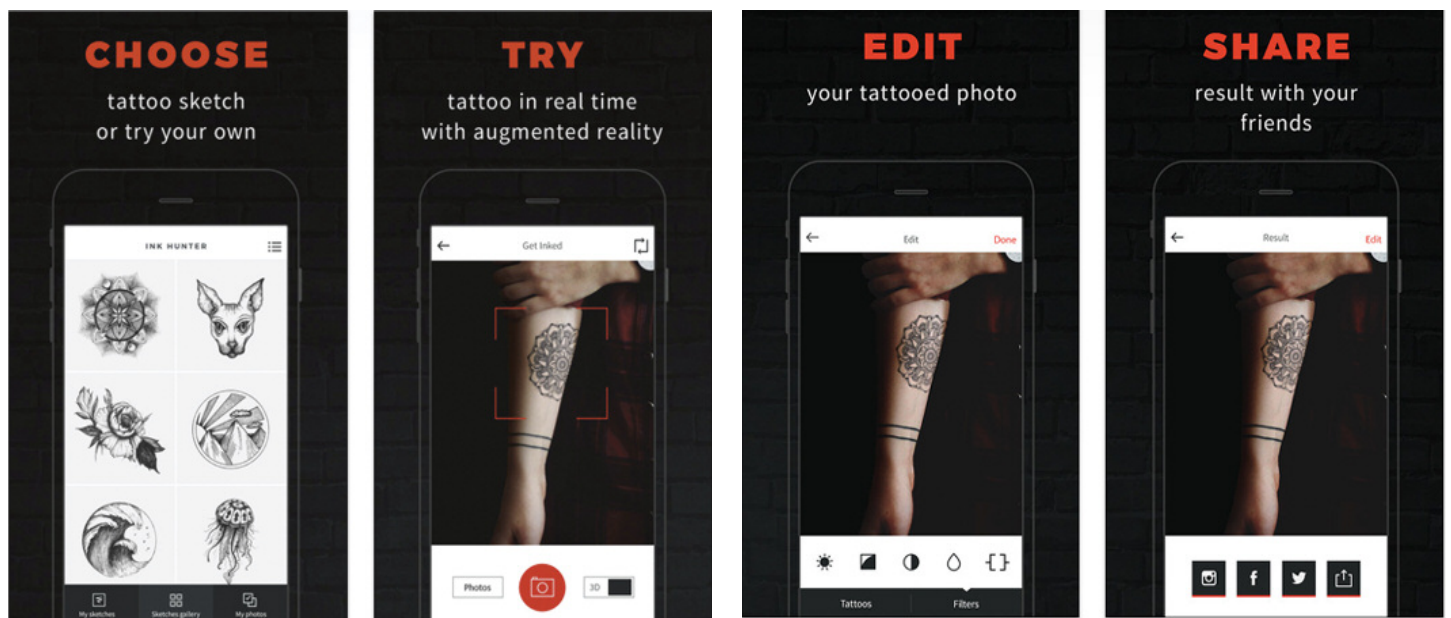
## THE DOCTOR WILL SEE YOU NOW

We read a news story recently about a Canadian woman who is calling for all medical staff to be banned from wearing visible tattoos after she suffered a traumatic bedside experience. Recovering after surgery, in a distressed state, and already hallucinating because of the drugs she had been given, the woman was horrified when she awoke to see a skull right in front of her face... which was in fact a tattoo on the nurse's forearm. Some hospital authorities have strict policies on visible tattoos, but according to the news reports we've read, a spokesperson from this particular hospital stated that they do not "discriminate against staff with tattoos". What do you think? Should medical staff be required to cover up visible tattoos in order to prevent any potential distress to vulnerable patients? Email your thoughts to [editor@totaltattoo.co.uk](mailto:editor@totaltattoo.co.uk)

## TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

Do you love tattoos, but don't know what you want? There's an app for that. Four students from Karazina University in Ukraine have developed a program that allows users to see what a tattoo would look like on their skin, before going under the needle. **Inkhunter** is available on iTunes, and is very simple to use. Users draw a smiley face on their skin, which acts as an area for the app to pinpoint the location of the tattoo.

Once these points connect with the matching face on the app's screen, you can superimpose a variety of drawings onto the photo, and view the virtual tattoo from a variety of angles. As well as designing their own tattoos, users also have access to designs created by tattooists. What's great to see is that the artists are fully credited, with links to their social media accounts. There is also the option to buy temporary tattoos.



# BOOK REVIEW

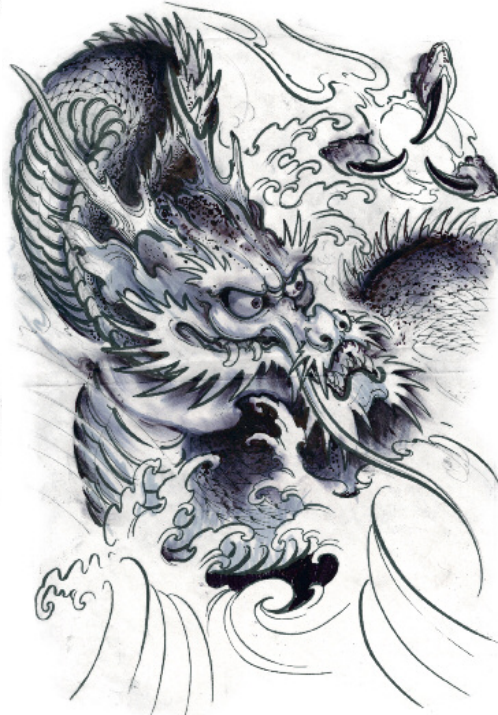
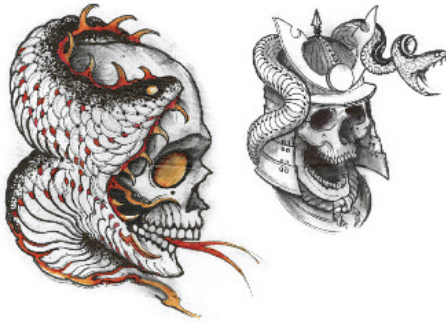
## GENESIS BY JOAO BOSCO

Published by Mediafriends (2016)

Perfect bound 29.7cm x 38 cm

Cover Price: 130 €

This book is a collection of Joao Bosco's drawings and sketches, which were produced from 2013 to 2015. 'Genesis' is definitive evidence that Bosco is an artist who has come of age. His dark, gothic style has become unmistakable, with flowing lines that create dynamic images, whether it be a small skull, or a tiger stretching across a back. These perfect creations seem to span genres whilst effortlessly combining elements and influences, from modern interpretations of the work of Filip Leu, to the fantasy masterpieces of Frank Frazetta, Boris Vallejo - and beyond. The romance of the occult weaves its way through Bosco's work as it draws you in and leaves you thinking about the artwork long after the book is closed. 'Genesis' also comes with four high quality prints, which only adds to the appeal of this must-have publication.



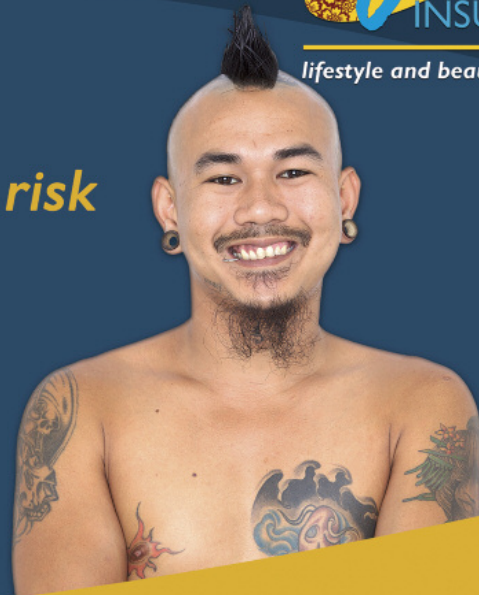
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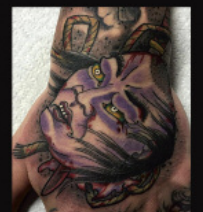
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# BRISTOL TATTOO CONVENTION



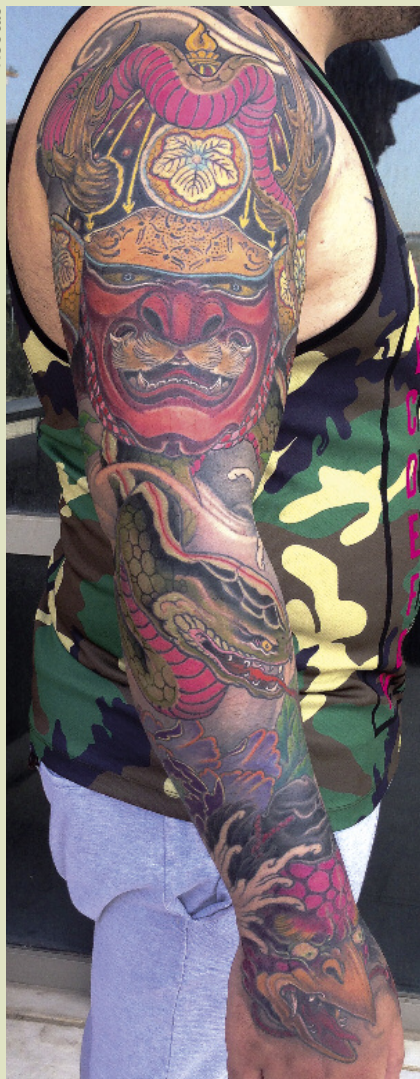
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OLD STATION  
BRISTOL

JUNE  
11TH & 12TH  
2016

[BRISTOLTATTOOCONVENTION.COM](http://BRISTOLTATTOOCONVENTION.COM)



kostas



**D**irty Roses is the studio name of Alex Gotza and Kostas Tzikalagias, two very talented Greek tattooists who are really starting to make a name for themselves. Their carefully constructed illustrative designs follow the body with a free flowing energy that combines classic imagery with a defined linear punch.

Our interview began with Kostas and Alex talking about their early artistic influences. Kostas is in no doubt that it's heavy metal and hardcore music that has been the primary influence on his work and, as he says, his "entire life". "As a child, I spent many hours watching all these rock stars with tattoos and that was an inspiration to me. Staring at album covers for so many hours (especially Mötörhead) influenced my whole style."

For Alex, it was rather different. "From very early on, around the age of five or six, I was always trying to draw the things I wanted to learn about – like the Greek Orthodox icons and frescoes in churches. It was all around me," he tells me. "I grew up in Thessaloniki, Greece's second city, full of culture, music, art. It was a good city to start out in. My tattooing has been influenced by lots of different kinds of art. Art is not blinkered. You have to see things to make something new. You have to look all the time."

alex



alex



In contrast, Kostas feels that traditional Greek art and culture have not influenced his tattooing style or imagery at all. "My favourite themes are skulls and Japanese style. Filip Leu has definitely influenced my tattooing. Every time I look at his work, I am speechless. There are many Japanese artists who I also really like. But now, with the internet, you can see a thousand tattoos and different artists every day and they will inevitably influence you even if you don't understand exactly how."

Graffiti was Alex's first real artistic passion. "I bought a lot of magazines, so I was seeing work from the US, from Europe, from all around the world," he tells me. "And I had the honour of meeting some of the artists at festivals when I was a teenager. It was like 'OK, they are gods!' But after that, I started seeing lots of things I didn't like in the graffiti scene. I liked the graffiti itself, the way it had evolved, and the people who were creating it, but I no longer wanted to make it myself. I decided I wanted to make paintings and drawings and designs on paper, and leave the walls for somebody else."

"At about the age of fifteen, tattooing started to make a big impression on me," Alex recalls. "It was more permanent than graffiti, which disappears off a wall in a few months. With the skin it's different. I bought some tattoo magazines, and inside I saw work by Filip Leu, Tin Tin, Claus Fullman, all these guys, and I was like 'Oh, what the fuck happened here!' It was something new for me. So I opened my mind."



kostas

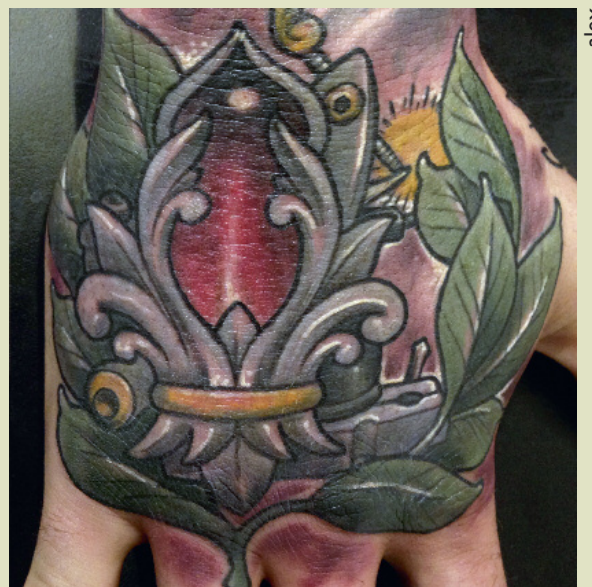
alex



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kostas



“Back then tattooing was seen as a little bit weird, especially in Greece,” continues Alex “It wasn't so mainstream. It was more for prisoners, and junkies and anyone who was an outcast. I talked to my mother, who was a make-up artist and beautician, said 'I want to work with tattoo'. She tried to make me aware of the kind of conditions I could expect, because back then the studios were underground and not so fancy. But my mother was an artist too and she understood my passion. I started tattooing at a very personal moment in my life. My mother passed on, and in 2002 I became an apprentice in a studio and started learning how to tattoo.”

I was interested to know whether making tattoos and making graffiti felt similar. “I don't know which feels more comfortable to me, but tattooing is very different to making graffiti,” Alex says. “When you make a tattoo, it's on a smaller scale, more closed and more focused. In the beginning I confused all these things so I didn't learn it well. I tried to pass ideas and techniques from graffiti through into the tattoo, and it didn't work. Right now I see a lot of graffiti artists going into tattooing and they seem to be able to use the same techniques, but I couldn't make this connection between the two art forms. So I totally separated them. *This* is graffiti and *this* is tattooing. Other art forms, like paintings, are totally different too. The only common point is that they are art. Art that I like.”



alex

kostas



kostas



alex





I asked Alex to tell me more about his development as a tattooist. "My apprenticeship was in a local studio owned by my friend George Mavridis [Tattooigans]. When I came there, he told me a few things, like a baby's first steps, and I was just drawing as much as I could and making small tattoos. It was just the two of us, and we worked together for about four years. Then I went to another studio in Salonika, where there were five or six artists. There was much more work, and lots of different techniques, and I learnt something from all the people there. But it was a mess. I was trying to make Maori tattoos, Japanese tattoos, so many styles because there was so much work."

"That's where I met Kostas," Alex continues. "He influenced me a lot. I focused on his designs, but after a while I said 'Fuck it', because that style wasn't for me. I was trying to make something different, but Kostas has a particular way of seeing things. I like lots of genres, things like realism and neo-traditional, so I tried to make my own way with those ideas instead. Then after he and I had been together for two, two and a half years, we realised 'OK, we're growing a lot, so let's make something for us.' So we set up our own studio."



alex



kostas



alex



alex Kostas tells me his side of the same story. "Alex was originally a graffiti artist, but when we started working together, he began doing Japanese style tattoos – I guess because of meeting me! But just because I showed him some things at the beginning, it doesn't make me his teacher. No, Alex did it by himself. We tried to help each other. In fact it was Alex who really helped me become a tattooist. I didn't have any formal art or tattoo training. I wish I had. I started drawing all by myself when I started tattooing. Alex and I spent many hours together, talking about tattoos and how we could become better artists. I'd been working in a tattoo studio for many years, but my development really only started when I met Alex and we opened our own place, the Dirty Roses tattoo studio. That was the moment when we decided to work seriously on our own terms. I told Alex that he had to search for what he really wanted to do about his personal style, and he became a neo-traditional artist."

alex



kostas



alex

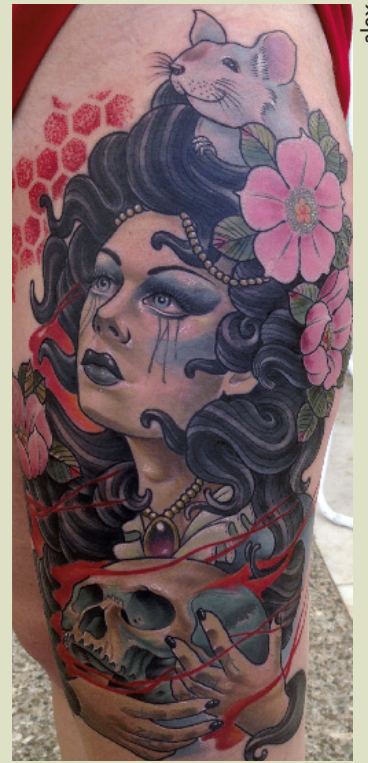
alex



kostas



kostas



"As soon as we had the studio, we felt free," Alex tells me. "I was free to decide what I wanted to do. All these years of having appointments made by other people – you have to do this, this this – and now, I feel free to do all the art I can do. We try to give feedback to each other and tell each other the good and the bad. It's much more helpful this way and it's so important to improve. Right now I am starting to do realistic tattoos."

Alex combines techniques and styles in a very personal way that makes them work well together, and his tattoos have a truly illustrative quality. "You have to learn a lot of things, and then you can combine what works for you and your own hand," he tells me. "I cannot make a piece like Victor Chil. I only have this kind of art in me. I try to make my own way somehow, but I always try to push myself to do something better. It's always a challenge. There are so many other artists around. Until the end, I have to keep trying!"





For Kostas, large-scale Japanese work is the ultimate tattoo style, with limitless possibilities. "It definitely gives you space to work in some crazy stuff. And damn it's not as easy as it sometimes looks, but it's exactly what I want to do. Japanese style tattooing came naturally to me. I've seen many different tattoo styles, but every time I see Japanese art my eye is drawn to it. I love their lines, the flow, their themes and what they symbolise. But you have to study. I've bought so many books over the years which have helped me to understand a lot of things about the style." I ask Kostas where he sees his work going from here. "Really, I don't know," is his candid response. "I just hope that it will get better."





And how about the development of tattooing itself? I wondered what Alex and Kostas felt about issues such as sponsorship and the involvement of big business. "Well, it's good for business, but I don't know if it's good for tattooing," Kostas answers. "To tell you the truth, I really prefer to stay out of sponsorship. It's my way of keeping my mind clear for the real target – tattooing. I believe that big shows and sponsorship (in all kinds of art) are only a good thing if they don't harm the real point, the art."

And how about conventions? "Some conventions are really important," Kostas tells me. "First of all, you meet other artists from all over the world and get drunk. While you're drinking, you're talking about art and sharing ideas. The truth is that we all have a great time. That's why we keep doing it!" Alex shares the same enthusiasm. "All these gatherings... Milan, Paris, Brighton... I had a great time. Conventions and exhibitions, these are the new things that are helping me to evolve. The quality of the tattooing you see at conventions, it's like 'Ooh, wow!' I sometimes think I'm going to disappear in two or three years time if I don't do something about it! You see a lot of young people who are starting out and they are already great artists."



kostas



kostas

alex



alex



kostas



kostas





I ask Alex and Kostas about the tattoo scene in Greece. "The attitude has changed a lot," Alex tells me. "It is good and bad. There are a lot of people who already work in art, but there are also a lot of people who don't, and don't have any idea about the work of the tattooist. But there are now plenty of studios in Greece, so more competition and the need to be better. This is quite new, because most of the people of our parents' generation saw tattoos as something that only criminals and outcasts would have. Things have changed totally. Everyone sees celebrities and people on television with big tattoos, so it's like 'OK, they have a good job, they have a lot of money, they're successful, so it must be alright.' It makes it easier."

Kostas adds an interesting comment about the effect of the downturn in the Greek economy. "The economic crisis made Greek people more careful about spending money. But tattooing seems to be another story entirely. A tattoo is a piece of art that lasts forever. When people really want to do it, they're gonna find a way. They'll save the money for it – especially when we're talking about large-scale tattoos. I always tell them not to hurry anyway."

Alex and Kostas are incredibly busy, and they both value their time out from tattooing. "When I have a free day, I try to relax and clear my mind," Alex tells me. "I love going to a bar with my friends and my girl, to drink beer and chill out. It's important to do something else, to talk about something other than work. Sometimes if I'm out, people come and ask me about tattooing and I say 'OK, but I'm not at work right now!'" When I ask Kostas what he does when he's not tattooing, his answer is straightforward. "Nothing extreme. Just spending time with my lady."



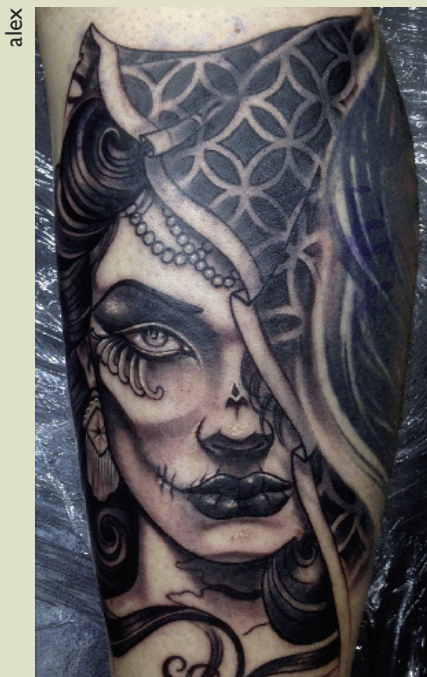
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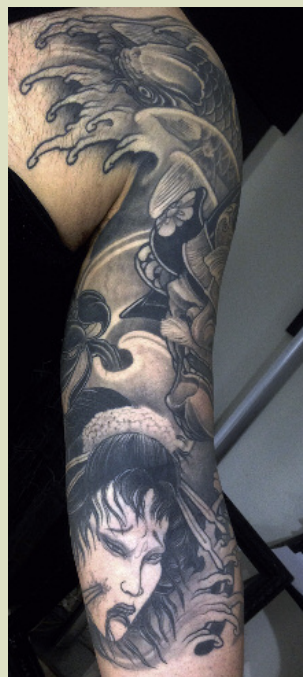
kostas



alex



alex



kostas

kostas



alex



kostas



Alex sums up the great teamwork that goes into making Dirty Roses such a special studio. "Me and Kostas are always trying to make Dirty Roses better and better – everything from our tattooing styles to the interior design of the studio, the furniture and everything. But the most important thing is our work. We try to hire good guys who will create something different, so we can offer something distinctive. We do things together because we are friends. We work together and we go out together. We try to work as a team, to make it better and better."

**Dirty Roses Tattoo & Piercing Studio**  
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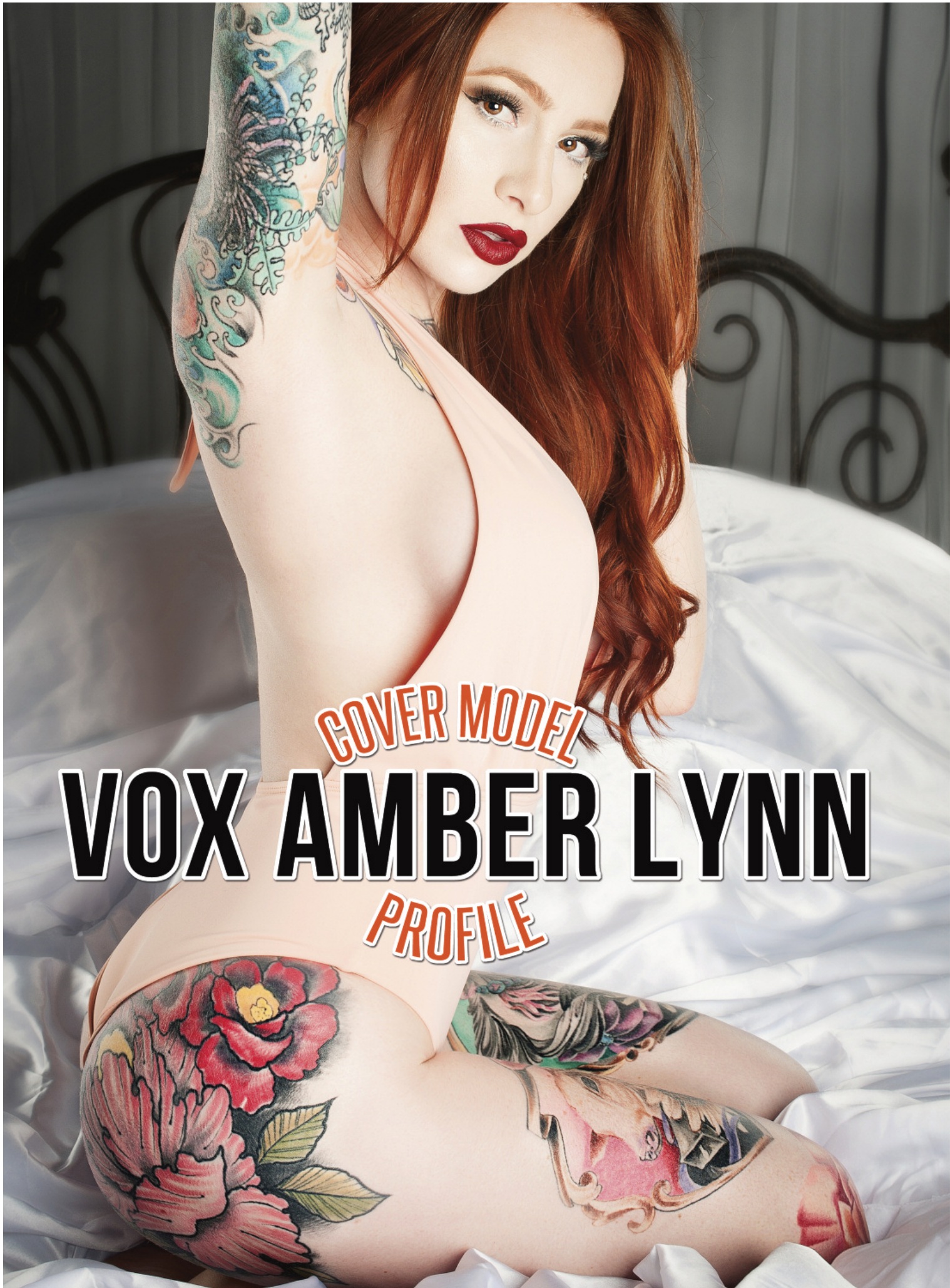
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COVER MODEL

# VOX AMBER LYNN

PROFILE

# COVER MODEL VOX AMBER LYNN PROFILE

**This month's cover model, Vox Amber Lynn, is passionate about her vegan lifestyle, obsessed with cows, and has some great advice for would-be tattooed models sharing their photos on social media.**

## **What should we know about you?**

This is a hard question. I guess I could start off by saying I'm a mother and a wife, and I also have a full-time office job. And I'm much friendlier than people assume! I have been told my entire life that I look mean, but I'm very approachable.

## **We've heard that you live a vegan lifestyle!**

Yes. I'm passionate about animal rights – and I'm obsessed with cows! I stopped eating meat in 2004 and I haven't gone back. I finally made the decision to eliminate all animal by-products about three or so years ago. Going vegan was one of the best decisions I've made in my life. It's very rewarding to know that I am making a difference (however small it may be).

## **What inspired your tattoos?**

Honestly, most of my tattoos are of animals or plants. Both I just really love!

## **What was your first tattoo?**

The script on my chest was my first tattoo. It says 'Forever yours, never again'. It's super dramatic and I don't think I'd choose that again if given the chance.

## **Do you have a favourite among your tattoo collection?**

My butt is my favourite! It makes me feel incredibly sexy.

## **Was there ever a moment where you decided you were going to be heavily tattooed?**

I don't think so. I just started feeling more and more beautiful the more tattooed I became. It's such an odd thing.

## **Any plans for more ink?**

I plan to tattoo my entire back, sleeve one of my legs, and possibly my stomach at some point.



## **Is your family supportive of your ink collection?**

They weren't in the beginning, but they don't care now. My mom has a tattoo anyway, so she can't even go there!

## **I hear you have a daughter. Any tattoo rules in your home for when she grows up?**

Obviously not until she's eighteen and even then, I say she should wait until she's 21 (only because I didn't know what to look for in a good tattoo artist and my ideas then seem not-so-good now as an adult).

## **How would you describe your fashion style?**

I don't know if I have one distinct style that I stick to. Crop tops and high-waisted bottoms are my jam.

## **How did you get into modelling?**

I joined Model Mayhem and started networking with anyone who wanted to work with me. Looking back, I don't know what style I had going on, but apparently it interested some photographers enough to shoot me! I actually started taking photos of myself when I was fourteen, which is how I got into the groove of seeing what poses looked best, etc. However, I started modelling for other people at about 18 which was when I really began pursuing the whole thing.

## **Any advice for other models trying to break into this inked industry?**

This is a difficult question to answer, because I don't really know why anyone follows me to begin with and I never did the 'share my photo and I'll share yours' type of deal. I'd say to take the best quality photos you can, and pay attention to your surroundings. I'm always looking at the backgrounds of people's photos, which is why I'm saying this! I love following Instagram accounts that are all-around visually appealing.

## **Are you a very private person?**

I'm pretty open about the things I share on social media. I love giving everyone some insight into my life whether it be favourite products I'm using at the moment, or showing everyone what we like to do as a family. And I'm always up for conversation too, so I encourage people to say Hi if they see me out and about!

*Photographs and interview: Jenna Kraczek*

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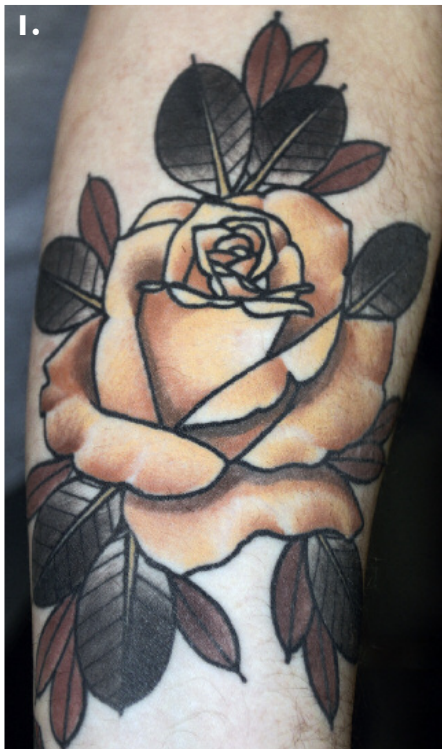
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# SCOTTISH TATTOO CONVENTION

**Whilst it's increasingly common for tattoo conventions to happen in England throughout the year, it's a different matter for Scotland. Because of the unusually strict health and safety regulations, it's almost impossible to hold these events – and many people thought it could never be done! However, six years down the line, Jim and his crew have steadily managed to build on the success of each previous year, culminating in the most triumphant show to date.**

The primary strength of this convention has always been the incredibly strong line-up of tattooists, not just from the UK, but from all over the world. This year was no exception, as the standard of both home-grown and international talent was second to none. The tattooists were split over two rooms with no discernible division of quality or style, in spacious, well-lit booths (a comfortable environment for artists and customer alike). All the artists appeared to be busy, producing original, solid tattoos one after the other.

The two tattooing areas were separated by a corridor, where the bar and trading stalls were conveniently located. This positioning meant that convention goers could peruse all manner of goods, from jewellery and clothing, to piercing and hairdressing, all at their own pace. An art exhibition was situated upstairs on the mezzanine floor, which overlooked the main stage in the larger of the two tattooing rooms.



- 1. cre, cloak and dagger
- 2. by chris meighan, santa cruz kustom club
- 3. by eva mpatshi, beautiful freak (belgium)
- 4. by francesco, ink 'n' roll (italy)





One of the major 'step-ups' for this year was the slick and constant programme of the weekend's entertainment. Every half an hour, there was a different act: knife throwing, Cervena Fox, Burlesque, Mister Bearty, Miss Scottish Pin-Up, there really was something for everyone. The performances were cleverly punctuated with tattoo competitions, something that I think worked really well; with fewer categories than some shows, and by being spaced out throughout the two days, it meant that the audience remained interested when it came to watching the pieces being judged.

The smooth running of a large tattoo event is down to the people behind the scenes, and the Scottish team worked hard to ensure the convention's success..



- 5. rob fraser, twit twoo
- 6. marcin, inkdependent tattoo
- 7. dan, north sea tattoo company
- 8. john anderton (left)  
nemesis tattoo  
lianne moule (chest)  
immortal ink  
jason butcher (right)  
immortal ink
- 9. mr greg, mr greg tattoo
- 10. tom davidson art
- 11. bunshin horitoshi (japan)
- 12. andy syne, crossroads tattoo
- 13. joe frost, oddfellows  
tattoo collective
- 14. manuel winkler,  
black and dotwork (italy)
- 15. jim, bath street  
tattoo collective
- 16. daniel, inkdependent tattoo









17.



18.



19.



20.



21.

- 17. billy hay, bath street tattoo collective
- 18. kat abdy, cloak and dagger
- 19. dom wiley, blue cardinal
- 20. daniel, hütmolat tattoo (germany)
- 21. piers lee, one shot charlie's
- 22. natalie petal gardiner,

- 23. gunnar foley, imperial tattoo (stockholm)
- 24. miss pin-up competition
- 25. sneaky mitch, dock street tattoo
- 26. ian, the comedian tattoo
- 27. cervana fox fire show

Every member was on hand all weekend, ready to help with anything and always with a smile that made visitors, traders and artists feel very welcome and a part of the show.

Every major city has a tattoo convention, but some are more successful than others. Some shows never reach their full potential because their organisers aren't as enthusiastic about tattooing. Edinburgh is very fortunate to have a truly fabulous convention. The organisers really know their stuff and have a genuine passion for both tattooing and the tattoo world. This was evident by its reception from the public: judging by its reception from the public: judging by the increased large numbers of visitors in attendance, this is one convention that appears to be bucking the trend and growing in popularity year on year.

I really did enjoy my weekend in Scotland and was sad to leave. It was so busy with so many great tattoos, many of which I did not even get a chance to photograph! My only criticism is that it was all over too soon and I'm already looking forward to heading north of the border again next year.

22.



23.



24.



25.



26.



27.



28.



29.



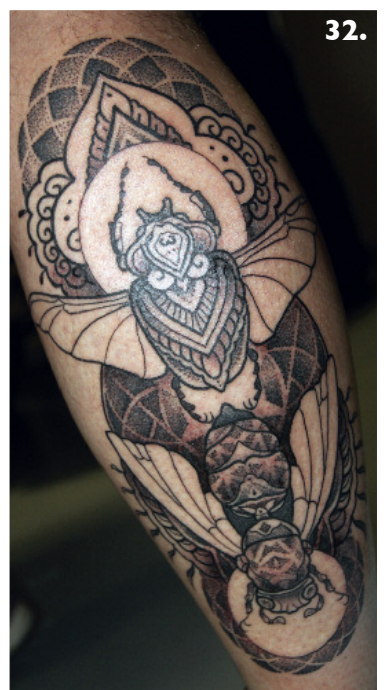
30.



31.



32.





28. chavez, borderline tattoo  
 29. beau, blue cardinal tattoo  
 30. petals puppet, angelic hell  
 31. marie, folklore tattoo  
 32. jason corbett,  
 red hot and blue  
 33 & 34. bripro,  
 idle hands tattoo  
 35. matt hart, inspirations tattoo  
 36. dani green, sudtiro (italy)  
 37. cervena fox and  
 pedro the compre



Special  
Feature

**T**attoo master Ajarn Matthieu Duquenois sits beside an elaborate altar in his hometown of Hua Hin comprised of numerous Buddha statues, charmed amulets, and masks of the sage Pho Kae (Old Father), the wise hermit who is believed to have begun the tradition of magical tattooing or *sak yan* in Thailand more than one thousand years ago. His client soon approaches on his knees and provides an offering and donation of money placed on a platter. Raising the tray above their head, the disciple now presents it to the master who blesses it. An incense bundle is lit to summon the spirits of past tattoo masters in Duquenois' lineage and then he blesses his elongated tattooing needle before plunging it into his client's skin.

For more than a thousand years, the cabalistic art of *sak yan*, literally "to tattoo a sacred (or magic) design," has been a significant part of religious life in Thailand. Integrated into a system of belief encompassing Theravada Buddhism, Hinduism, animism and ancestor worship, *sak yan* evolved into a kind of magical literature written on the body that disciples (*luksit*) use to navigate through an uncertain, unpredictable, and imperfect world dominated by human enemies, deities, spirits, and the dead.

Largely administered by monks and former holy men, the esoteric art of *sak yan* is not only believed to provide its wearers with indelible protection from a variety of misfortunes, but also the mystical power to influence other peoples' behaviour, carry the deceased safely into the afterlife or simply increase a person's luck.

Tattooists first apprentice for long periods under an older master tattooist. And once the student has fully absorbed the master's magical knowledge (*weecha*), a transfer ceremony takes place and the newly ordained *ajarn* takes his place in the lineage of sacred tattoo practitioners.

For nearly a decade, French-born Duquenois has studied the magico-religious culture of *sak yan* and the *yantras* (sacred or magic designs) that complete it. Visiting private sanctuaries where these hallowed tattoo rituals take place, he has learned the rituals of Thailand's most esteemed tattoo masters by apprenticing under many of them, while also becoming only the second European to bear the title of *ajarn* himself. He documented his journey with incredible photography – images that appear in this story.



Ajarn Matthieu Duquenois

Main picture: Ajarn Rung Duquenois (Matthieu's wife) tattooing

# A Journey to Tattoo Enlightenment

## A Magical Tattoo Adventure

Ajarn Matthieu's magical tattoo adventure began in 2009 when he received his first *sak yan* at the age of 37. "I was facing a difficult time in my life and needed something spiritually to move forward so that I could progress. I became a Buddhist monk for a time, then I began visiting several *arjans* across Thailand, and I participated in different magical rituals. Eventually, I was tattooed by 25 of the 200 masters I met and suddenly *sak yan* became my passion, my obsession."

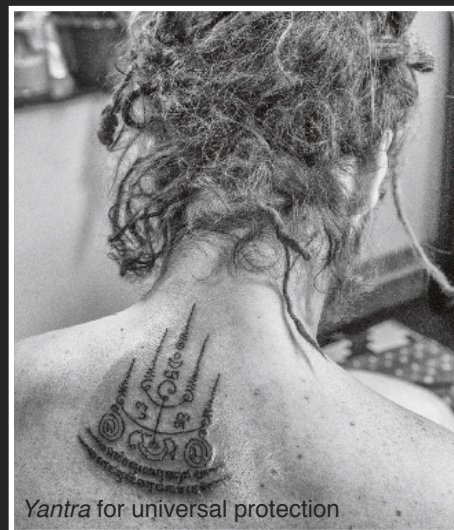
The intimate scenes captured by Matt's camera convey a profound landscape of spiritual faith. From the sacred tattoo rooms of *ajarns* and Buddhist temples to the bloodied and newly consecrated skins of *sak yan* disciples, these mystical realms offer a metaphysical statement on the meaning of human belief and life itself.

"I became a Thai tattoo master, an *arjan*, in different steps," Matthieu says. At first, my wife Rung and I joined three other Thais to become students of the renowned tattooist Luang Pi Man. We participated in a ceremony called '*Yoke Pan Khru*' in which we made a special offering to the master who accepted us into his lineage and started to teach us the Khom script – the sacred calligraphy of *sak yan* – and basic tattoo techniques. At this point, I still wasn't thinking about tattooing people but on the second day of my apprenticeship my master compelled me to give a Hanuman tattoo to a devotee."

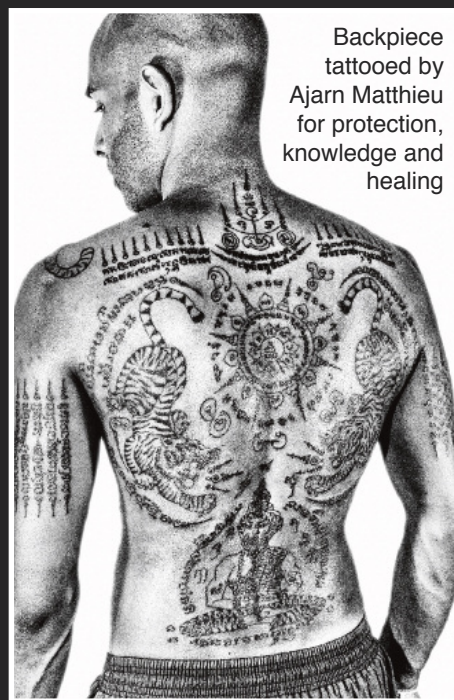
"Every year while I was apprenticing I would attend the *Wai Khru* or Master's Day of the late Ajarn Thong, one of the greatest and most respected tattoo masters of this century who started tattooing me four years earlier. During *Wai Khru*, devotees come to have the power of their tattoos 'reactivated' or tested for efficacy and power. Thong was told that I had started to learn the sacred art of *sak yan*, but instead of the standard blessing he gave to his disciples he blessed me with a very special one, called *Krop Khem*, that conferred the title of tattoo master upon me. He presented me with a tattooing tool (*mai sak*) and a book (*tamla yan*) of *sak yan* designs and secret formulas he had learned from his master. According to the other masters of Ajarn Thong's lineage, he gave me this honour because he sensed something in me. He then told me that I would now continue in his path and become a full time tattoo master. That same year, I became a Buddhist monk for a short time in order to purify myself and prepare for the tattooing that was to come."



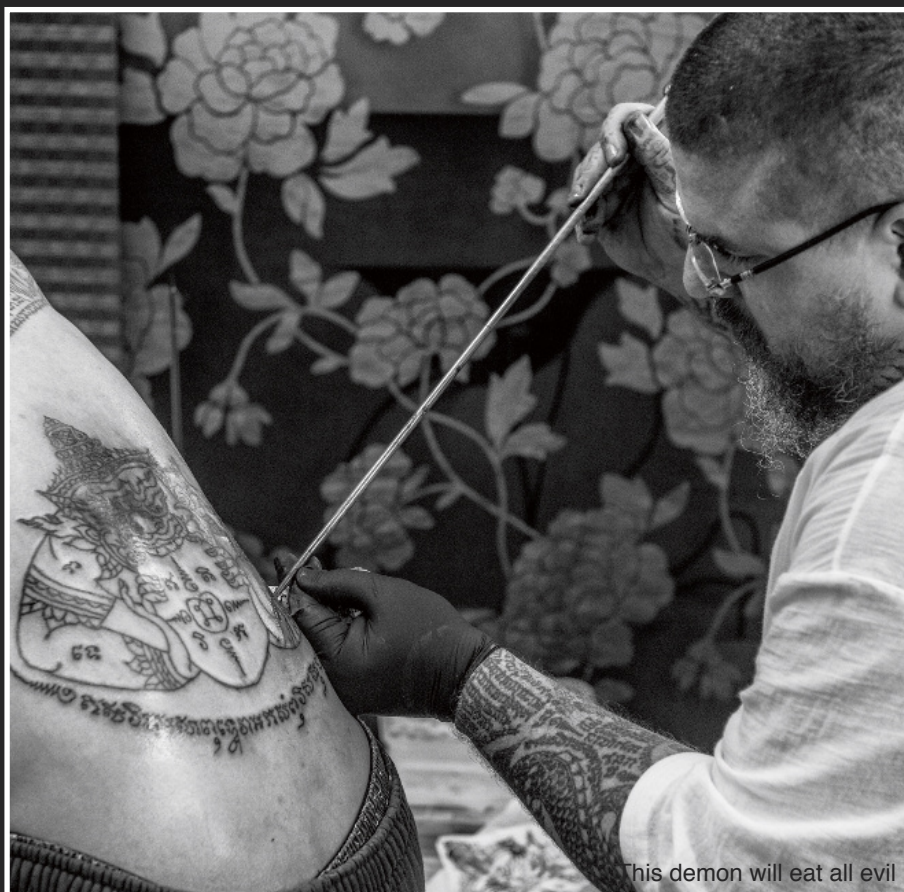
Elephant *yantra* symbolising strength, courage and confidence.



*Yantra* for universal protection



Backpiece tattooed by Ajarn Matthieu for protection, knowledge and healing



This demon will eat all evil



## Mastering Mystical Knowledge

Some monks in Thailand make tattoos that are so precise they look almost machine-made. I asked Ajarn Matthieu to tell me what he found most difficult about the process of making *sak yan* tattoos.

"As a foreigner, making genuine *sak yan* nowadays is a real challenge in many ways. Many people think it is easy to tattoo a *sak yan* design because they often see monks or others using stencils. But the meaning of these designs stem from a combination of many complex factors. First, the master tattooist has to be part of a lineage of masters. The more powerful the lineage, the more powerful are the master's tattoos. We also have to respect a certain amount of rules of conduct and respect the lineage and the Buddhist precepts. The most difficult is the apprenticeship where we must learn and memorise scripts in a variety of ancient languages like Khom, Pali, Lanna, Tai Yai, Môn, and Burmese, not to mention countless mantra chants. We chant these mantra loudly or silently to pay respect and call the spirits of our masters, to bless the body of the devotee before starting tattooing. During the tattooing ritual we keep chanting specific mantra for each design, each curve, or each script we ink. It is a very complicated and secret process. Each tattoo master keeps his own secret spells and they are different from one lineage to the other. That is why only a tattoo master can bless his own tattoos. Once the physical tattoo has been completed, it needs to be activated or empowered with more mantra chanting and blessings. My wife and I are still learning from our *ajarns* and it will take us years to become accomplished *sak yan* masters."



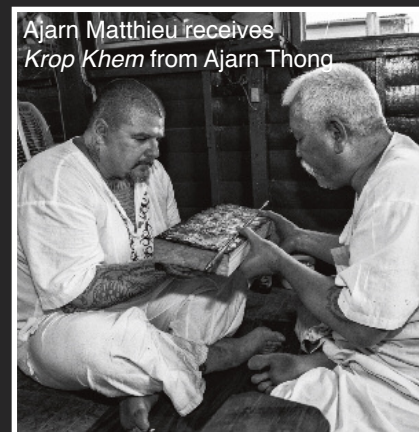
Collection of tattoo weights



Close-up of Hanuman yantra



Designs conveying knowledge, healing and protection



Ajarn Matthieu receives Krop Khem from Ajarn Thong

## Preserving Sak Yan Heritage

For centuries, *ajarns* have marked human skin with powerful animals (tigers, centipedes, turtles, lions), deities (Garuda, Ganesh, Hanuman), hermit sages (*ruesi*) and symbols in their quest to render the body everlasting and invincible. Drawing on knowledge of astronomy, sacred geometry, holy texts and incantations, the tattooist plunges his large tattooing needles into the flesh to render a rich visual mosaic of tattoo iconography that is at once a blessing of protection and personal sacrifice to the supernatural.

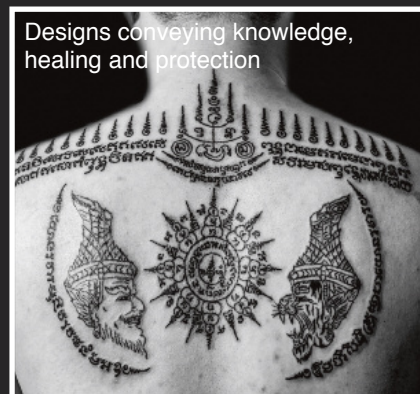
But according to Duquenois, these incredible traditions are in danger of vanishing. "Indeed, *sak yan* is gaining in popularity and can easily be machined at a rapid rate. But genuine Thai magical tattooing with full traditional ritual is slowly disappearing as the elder masters pass away. Although there are new tattoo artists practicing now, very few of them totally dedicate themselves to the tradition, learn the requirements, and respect the lineage. Although I just used the term 'tattoo artists,' my wife and I don't really consider ourselves to be among them. For us, the tattooing ritual is the medium to instill the required magic into the devotee's body. Our credo is to listen to people's needs, sometimes their distresses, and try to temper or balance them with the proper *yantra* and mantras to complete them. In our view, the meaning of *sak yan* is to try to help devotees to reach their goals through the power of their tattoos. *Sak yan* often takes people down paths they never even suspected or expected. The animist roots of *sak yan* really attract me and I can feel a deep and ancient force in these tattoos, so you can see why they are not art to me."

In order to keep the spirit of *sak yan* alive, Ajarn Matthieu and his wife are building the first tattoo museum in Thailand in their hometown of Hua Hin. Their goal is to help preserve the rich cultural and religious heritage of *sak yan* for future generations of students and disciples.

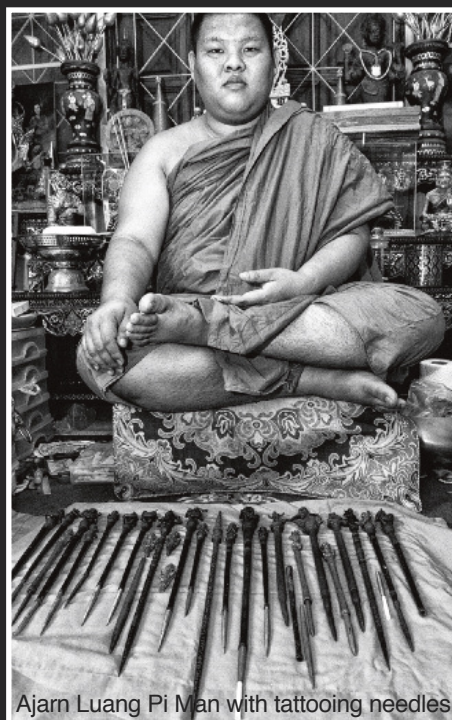
"The Museum project came out as an urgent necessity to save and protect vanishing tools and objects related to Thai sacred tattoos, but also those from Burma, Laos and Cambodia because all of these tattooing traditions share the same roots. By the end of the year the collection will hold 600-700 different pieces. Bronze tattoo weights, different types of ancient needle tips, wooden stamp blocs, ink pots, magical ingredients, books of spells and lots of other accessories used by tattoo masters will be displayed. 80% of the proceeds we receive for our *sak yan* this year will be used to purchase as many of these objects as possible before they vanish completely. We are also reaching out to private collectors to acquire more objects to complete the collection."

**ขอบคุณ Kob Kun!**

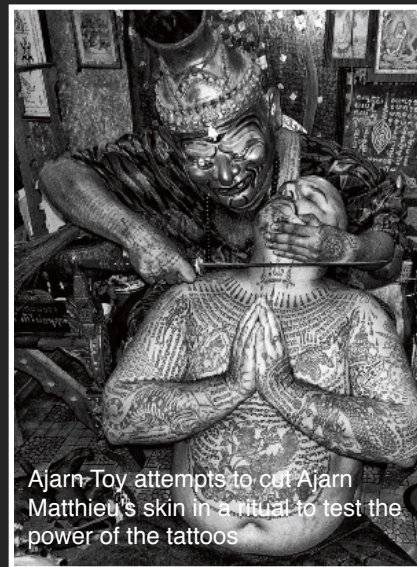
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Ajarn Luang Pi Man with tattooing needles



Ajarn-Toy attempts to cut Ajarn Matthieu's skin in a ritual to test the power of the tattoos



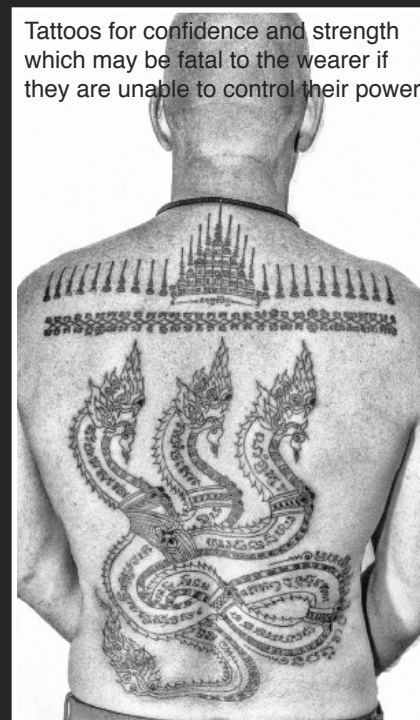
Twin tiger yantra for courage and strength

### FURTHER READING

(2012) Joe Cummings. Sacred Tattoos of Thailand: Exploring the Magic, Masters and Mystery of Sak Yan. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish.

(2012) Lars Krutak. Magical Tattoos and Scarification: Spiritual Skin. Aschaffenburg: Edition Reuss.

(2014) Tomasz Madej. Sak Yan: The Magic of Thai Tattoo. Warsaw: Asia and Pacific Museum.



Tattoos for confidence and strength which may be fatal to the wearer if they are unable to control their power



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<b>3-liner 0,25</b> Art.No. E-MC03-L25L	•• 0,25 mm	<b>7-magnum-se</b> Art.No. E-MC07-R30L	••••• 0,30 mm	<b>13-magnum-se</b> Art.No. E-MC13-R35L	•••••••• 0,35 mm
<b>3-liner</b> Art.No. E-MC03-L30L	•• 0,30 mm	<b>7-bp-magnum-se</b> Art.No. E-MC07-R30LB	••••• 0,30 mm	<b>13-magnum-se-bp</b> Art.No. E-MC13-R35LB	•••••••• 0,35 mm
<b>3-liner-bp</b> Art.No. E-MC03-L30LB	•• 0,30 mm	<b>7-shader 0,25</b> Art.No. E-MC07-S25L	••••• 0,25 mm	<b>13-shader</b> Art.No. E-MC13-S30L	•••••••• 0,30 mm
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<b>5-flat</b> Art.No. E-MC05-F35L	••••• 0,35 mm	<b>9-flat</b> Art.No. E-MC09-F35L	•••••••• 0,35 mm	<b>15-magnum</b> Art.No. E-MC15-M35L	•••••••• 0,35 mm
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<b>5-liner-bp</b> Art.No. E-MC05-L30LB	••••• 0,30 mm	<b>9-liner-mt</b> Art.No. E-MC09-L30M	•••••••• 0,30 mm	<b>15-shader</b> Art.No. E-MC15-S30L	•••••••• 0,30 mm
<b>5-liner-mt</b> Art.No. E-MC05-L30M	••••• 0,30 mm	<b>9-power</b> Art.No. E-MC09-L40L	•••••••• 0,40 mm	<b>17-magnum</b> Art.No. E-MC17-M35L	•••••••• 0,35 mm
<b>5-magnum</b> Art.No. E-MC05-M35L	••••• 0,35 mm	<b>9-magnum</b> Art.No. E-MC09-M35L	•••••••• 0,35 mm	<b>17-magnum-se</b> Art.No. E-MC17-R35L	••••~•••• 0,35 mm
<b>5-magnum-bp</b> Art.No. E-MC05-M35LB	••••• 0,35 mm	<b>9-magnum-se</b> Art.No. E-MC09-R35L	••••~•••• 0,35 mm	<b>17-magnum-se-bp</b> Art.No. E-MC17-R35LB	••~•••••••• 0,35 mm
<b>5-shader 0,25</b> Art.No. E-MC05-S25L	••••• 0,25 mm	<b>9-magnum-se-bp</b> Art.No. E-MC09-R35LB	••~•••••••• 0,35 mm	<b>23-magnum</b> Art.No. E-MC23-M30L	•••••••••• 0,30 mm
<b>5-shader</b> Art.No. E-MC05-S30L	••••• 0,30 mm	<b>9-shader</b> Art.No. E-MC09-S30L	•••••••• 0,30 mm	<b>23-magnum-se</b> Art.No. E-MC23-R30L	••••~•••••••• 0,30 mm
<b>7-liner 0,25</b> Art.No. E-MC07-L25L	•••••••• 0,25 mm	<b>11-liner</b> Art.No. E-MC11-L35L	••••~•••••••• 0,35 mm	<b>23-magnum-se-bp</b> Art.No. E-MC23-R30LB	••~•••••••••• 0,30 mm
<b>7-liner</b> Art.No. E-MC07-L30L	••••~•••••••• 0,30 mm	<b>11-liner-mt</b> Art.No. E-MC11-L35M	••~••••~•••••••• 0,35 mm	<b>27-magnum</b> Art.No. E-MC27-M30L	••••~•••••••••• 0,30 mm
<b>7-liner-bp</b> Art.No. E-MC07-L30LB	••~••••~•••••••• 0,30 mm	<b>11-shader</b> Art.No. E-MC11-S35L	••~••••~•••••••• 0,35 mm	<b>27-magnum-se</b> Art.No. E-MC27-R30L	••~••••~••••~•••••••• 0,30 mm
<b>7-liner-mt</b> Art.No. E-MC07-L30M	••~••••~••••~•••••••• 0,30 mm	<b>13-flat</b> Art.No. E-MC13-F35L	••~••••~••••~•••••••• 0,35 mm	<b>27-magnum-se-bp</b> Art.No. E-MC27-R30LB	••~••••~••••~••••~•••••••• 0,30 mm
<b>7-power</b> Art.No. E-MC07-L40L	••~••••~••••~••••~••••~•••• 0,40 mm	<b>13-liner</b> Art.No. E-MC13-L30L	••~••••~••••~••••~••••~•••• 0,30 mm		

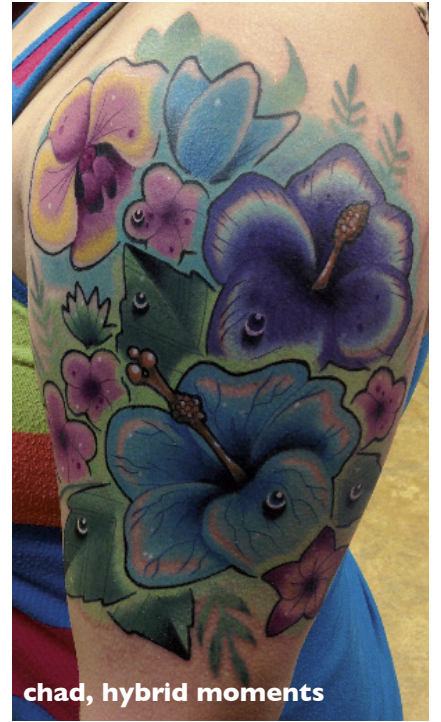
# GALLERY



dan jones, inktruzion tattoo



duncan fyfe, terrys tatoo



chad, hybrid moments



kirill putyatin, good luck tattoo (russia)



kiah o'rouke, candour custom



peter bienge, tony's tattoos



pashur canby, project tattoos



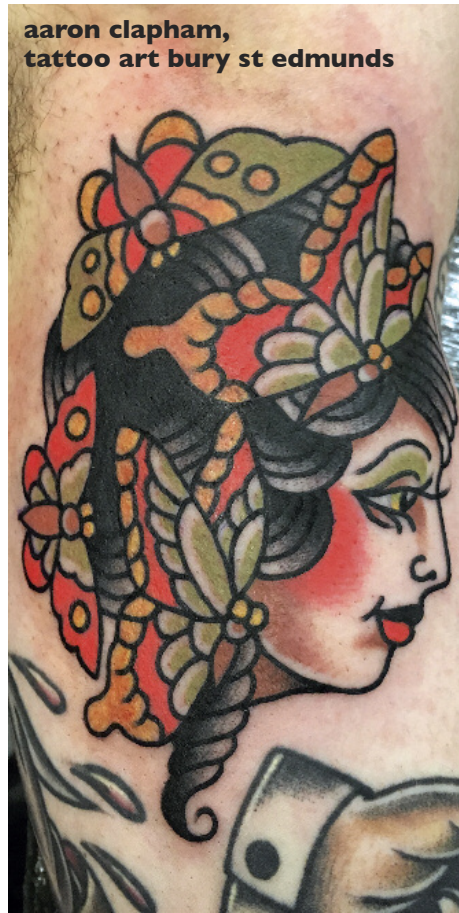
mark ford, jolie rouge



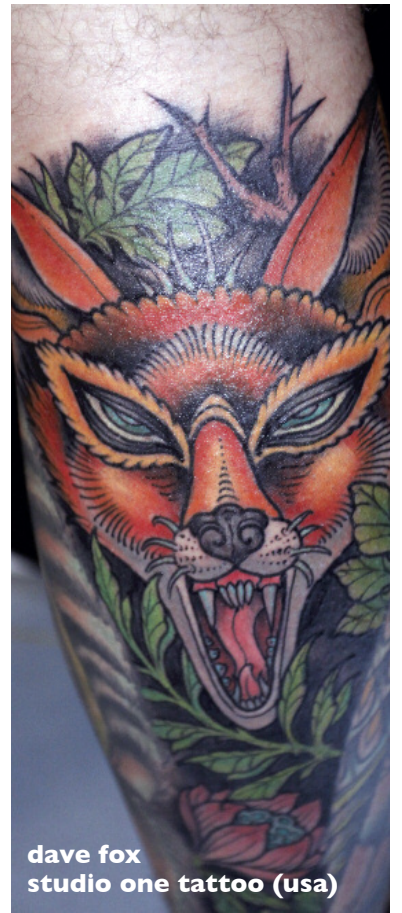
santa perpetua, black sails



orge, sake tattoo (greece)



aaron clapham,  
tattoo art bury st edmunds



dave fox  
studio one tattoo (usa)



dan frye, angelic hell



chloe jane, tanuki tattoo



mark ford, jolie rouge



szabolcs oravecz, perfect chaos tattoo (hungary)



ak alexander, art and soul tattoo studio



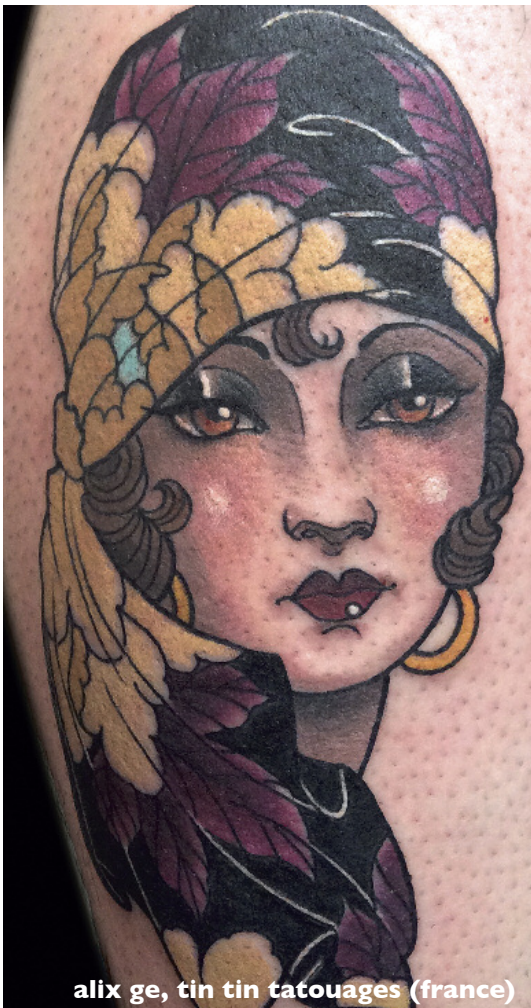
chelsea harrison, urban ink



**evaldas gulbinas, west one tattoo**



**alan aldred, cosmic tattoo**



**alix ge, tin tin tatouages (france)**



**steven mostyn, memories and mischief custom tattoo (germany)**

michaël taguet, yama tattoo (france)



max pniewski, southmead tattoo

james waters, inksmiths tattoo



mord, tin tin tattoo (france)



**marco manzo, tribal tattoo (italy)**



**steph d, octopus tatouage (france)**



**steph d, octopus tatouage (france)**

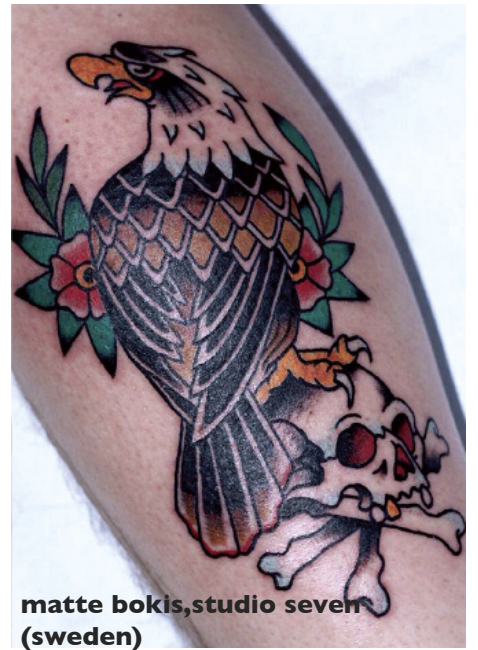


**mukesh, moksha tattoo studio (india)**

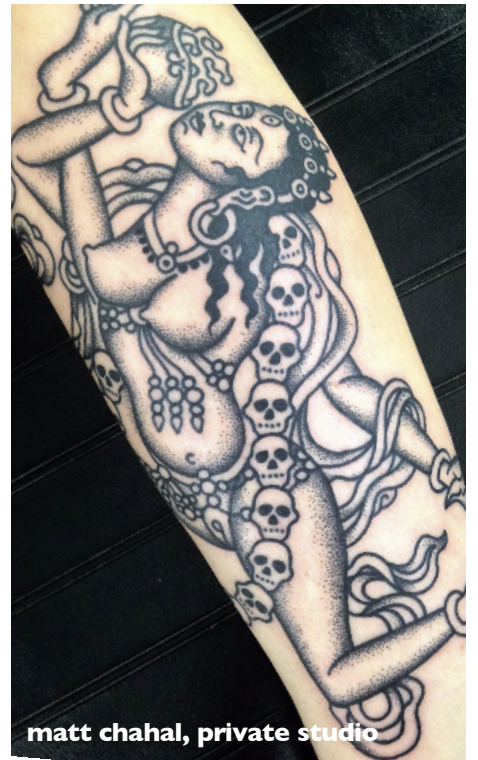


**steph d, octopus tatouage (france)**

**pete oz, tanuki tattoo**



**matte bokis, studio seven (sweden)**



**matt chahal, private studio**



**danny birch, heart for art**



**vainius anomaly, vainius art (lithuania)**



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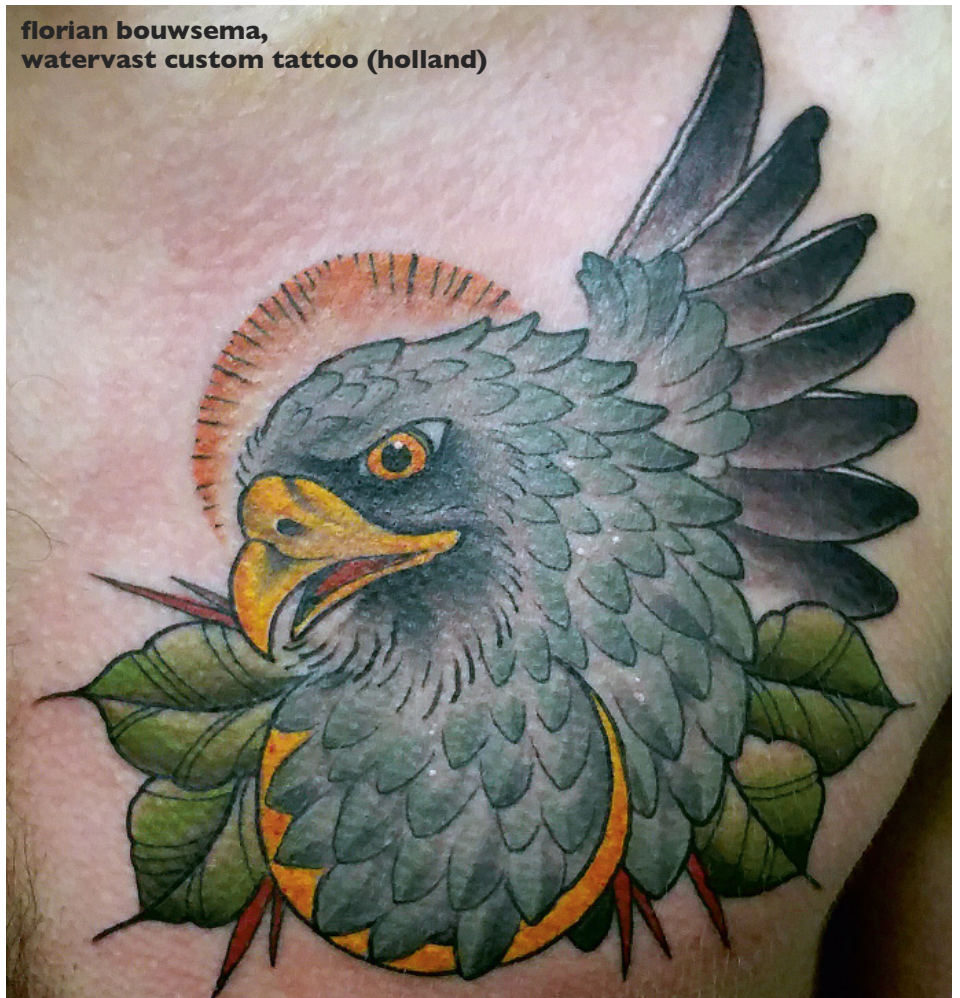
terry ribera, remington tattoo (usa)



sean fred hedger,  
needle and fred



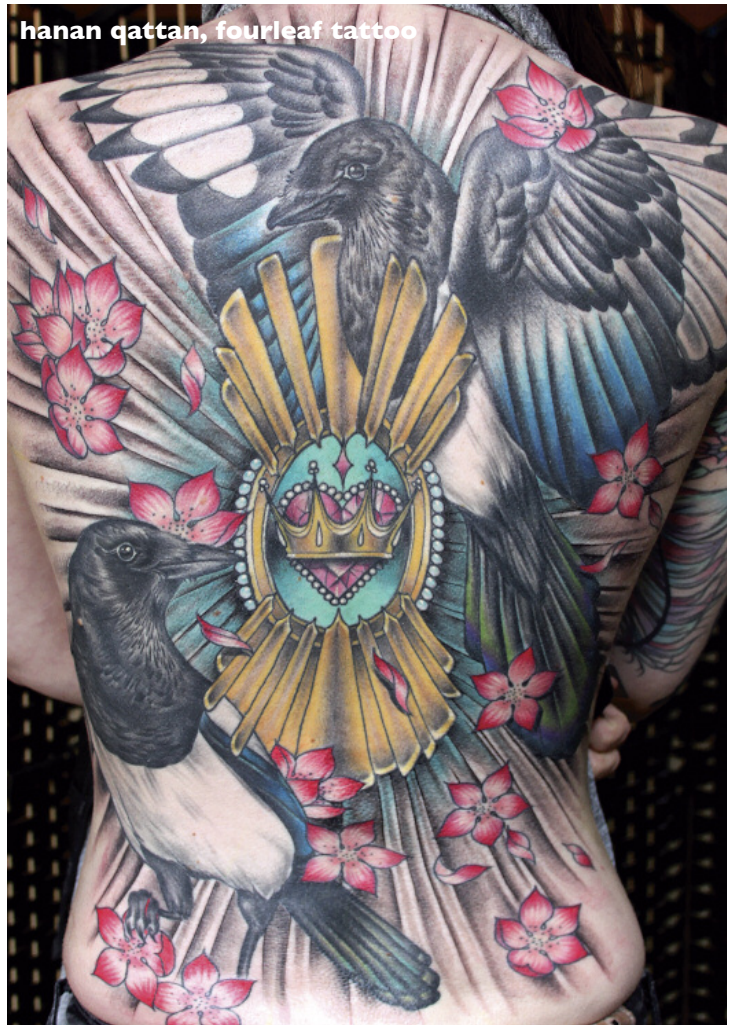
tom grosz, eightfold tattoo



florian bouwsema,  
watervast custom tattoo (holland)



dawnii, painted lady tattoo parlour



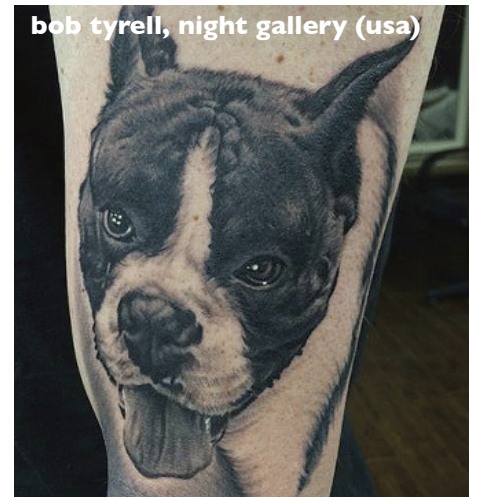
hanan qattan, fourleaf tattoo



mater totemica, black rose tattoo



max lutz, blood and tears tattoo studiio (spain)



bob tyrell, night gallery (usa)



rich wells, doc street tattoos

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# NEEDLE GANGSTAS ANNUAL BEANO



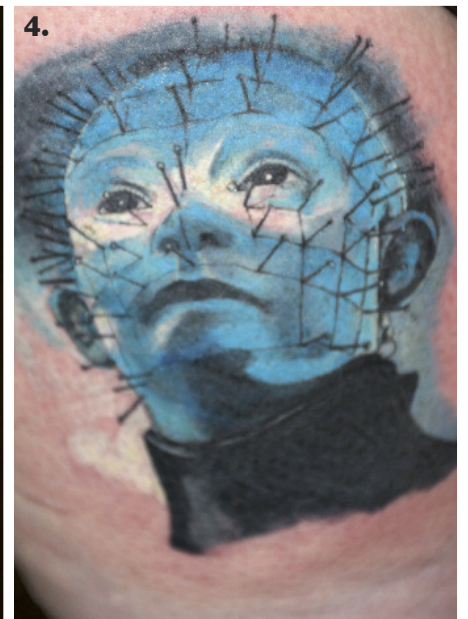
**S**tarted in 1993, Needle Gangstas is an association for tattooists, set up to reflect the old school principles of tattooing. In 2014, the group held their first UK convention in Milton Keynes then took a couple of years off. But they're back with a new name, the 'Beano Tattoo Expo', a new home and a new energy.

The show's new home is the iPro football stadium in Derby and the event was spaced out over two rooms joined with a corridor – a layout that worked well. The first room housed a bar area, around 20 tattoo booths and several handpicked traders. The second room contained the rest of the tattooists, another bar and a DJ.

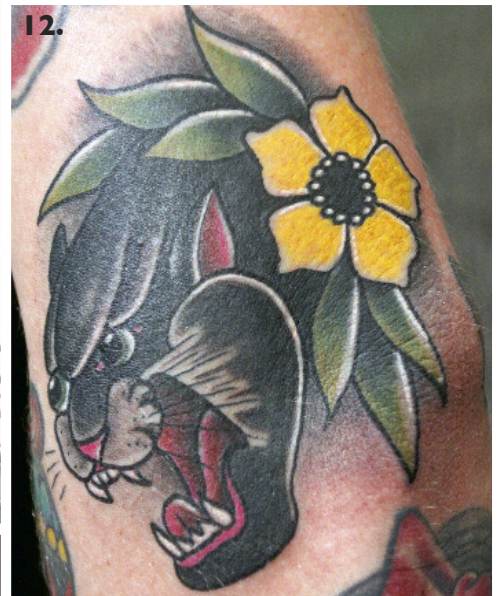
In total, about 70 studios turned up to support the show, with many more Needle Gangsta members coming along to hang out and soak up the atmosphere. The line-up read a little like a 'Who's Who' in UK tattooing: Pert from the Ink Castle (Ireland), Tony the Ted, Mickey B, Lal Hardy, Darren Stares, Kev Shercliffe and John Capon, to name just a few. I was pleased to see a few of the local studios in attendance, including Lifetime Tattoo, Baptist Tattoo, Waverley Street and Theresa Gordon Wade's new studio, Epona Tattoo.



The show was a slow starter, but fortunately this did not seem to bother the artists as they took the opportunity to catch up with old friends, and have a laugh and a good moan over more than a few pints at the bar. To be honest, this was the heart of the show and big part of what it's all about – getting together and creating some new memories.



- 1. adam, lifetime tattoo
- 2. domantas, domantas tattoo
- 3. rat, mandala tattoo
- 4. gayle, steel point tattoo



- 5. jay, lifetime tattoo
- 6. theresa gordon wade, epona tattoo
- 7. prince lal hardy
- 8. martin crosthwaite, flaming gun
- 9. rat, mandala tattoo
- 10. domantas, domantas tattoo
- 11. brian clyde and peter taylor
- 12. james blyde, art attack
- 13. shon lindauer, high seas (usa)
- 14. tim hendricks (usa)
- 15. kayleigh, mandala tattoo
- 16. ozzy with an old alcoholic
- 17. magician
- 18. mutsuo, three tides (japan)

I took the opportunity to have a word with Needle Gangsta founder Gary Simpson, to find out a little about the history of the club. "Whilst living in Germany, I visited the first Bologna show, with Tom Boglioni. He asked me what I did before I was into tattoos and piercing, and I told him I was a gangster and now I'm a needle gangster! That's where the name was born. Later Tom wanted to go on holiday and wanted someone he could trust to mind his studio, and I had the idea of getting together a bunch of guys who can watch each other's backs and support one another. That was in 1993 and that was the beginning of the Needle Gangstas. I kind of let it all drop when I moved back to England and then in 2010, Twist, the guy I taught to pierce, decided to resurrect it. It has really taken off from there."

Gary went on to tell me that the club is restricted to only 200 members and each one must be proposed by a member and seconded; a single no vote will initiate an investigation to ascertain the validity of the objection. "It is not always about top quality designs and not necessarily the best artists, but is more about attitude and respect for the industry," he explained. "It costs £25 a year to be a member. We have an online presence and we like our members to play an active role. Any new members are presented online and objections have to be made within a time period through the website."

I went on to ask about the convention. "Tattoo conventions today are just commercial ventures. A few years ago we decided to invite all the old boys and create something different with a greater emphasis on making it a social event, which is why we have called it a Beano. The way the money works is that the costs are divided by the Needle Gangstas who attend and if there are any profits they are divided and paid back, minus a 20% admin cost. For us it is more about the atmosphere and keeping the unity of tattooing alive and not really about making money."

On Sunday the show was much busier, numbers were up and it seemed that the artists who wanted to work were busy. Comedians and close-up magicians wandered around, entertaining the crowds and distracting the minds of those under the needle. In the afternoon competitions took place with some fabulous prizes for artists including handmade machines by Bov Williams of tattoo irons.

There was also another very special award. Earlier this year we lost Isobel Varley (the most tattooed female senior citizen) and to honour her memory her son Steve was presenting the first annual 'Isobel Varley Outstanding Contribution to the Tattoo World' award. The recipient was Theresa Gordon Wade of Epona tattoo, a positive, passionate tattooist, always willing to help, support and defend tattooing – a well-deserved winner.

Shortly after the competitions, the crowd headed back into the bar area to witness the world record attempt for the most tattooists tattooing one person at the same time. King of Ink Land King Body Art (his official name!) was suspended from a gantry using a special sling seat, while 36 tattooists lined up with machines at the ready. Extension leads were daisy chained around the roped off area and each artist was assigned a number to tattoo on any part of his body that could be reached. Power packs plugged in and needles primed, ready... steady... after several false starts they finally managed it. Organising 36 tattooists to do anything is difficult; so to juggle this bunch of jellies into some kind of order was hilarious! But amazingly enough, the record was broken. History was well and truly made.

Needle Gangstas was a lot of fun. It was a friendly inky family get-together that was different from the usual, and certainly not your average tattoo convention. It could have done with better attendance, but this show wasn't about huge footfall, or lots of competitions; this show was about the rich tattooing history and memories of the 'old timers' that have influenced the industry today.





19. dave bryant private studio  
20. world record  
21. al park mickey bee daryl lovle  
22. charlie black (usa)  
23. dave hall, southside ink  
24. signs by gypsy rich taylor  
25. domantas, domantas tattoo

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**S**avage by name, but definitely not by nature, Amy is becoming a very sought-after artist on the UK tattoo scene. It's not hard to see why. Known for her nature-themed tattoos, her work is beautifully executed, with each piece being unique to the owner. Having recently set up her own private studio, The Warren, and with a new direction in her style of tattooing, we were eager to find out more about these new changes in her career.

**You've recently opened your own private studio, The Warren. How was the transition from working in a large, custom shop, to running your own space?**

Amy: Overall, I think the whole process ran smoothly. I'm quite an organised person, so I didn't find it that difficult moving over to a private studio. During my last year at Jane Doe I was managing my own bookings, so that part came naturally to me. Obviously, setting up a studio is a little bit daunting when it comes to making sure all the right boxes are ticked in terms of the council. But once everything was completed and the right services (such as waste collection, etc) were set up, the place has literally run itself.

**'The Warren' is a really unique name for a studio, and I get the impression that it's something with personal meaning to you. What was the inspiration behind it?**

Yeah, it definitely has a personal meaning to me! As I was growing up, I always kept a lot of rabbits. I used to do a lot of voluntary work with them as well, so it was always something close to my heart. I always thought that if I had a studio, 'The Warren' would be a perfect name. It's a little home: a cosy hole, a den. When I found this workspace, the name was so perfect! It's really homely and hidden away.

**And is that aspect of being 'hidden away' a benefit?**

Yes, it's really quiet and personal when it's just me and my clients. I feel that it's a lot cosier, that they get more of a one-on-one experience. It's really private, you wouldn't go there unless you're going there for a purpose, so you don't have people walking in off the street. And because it's just me I'd find that a bit of a nightmare – it would be a bit unprofessional if I had to keep stopping and starting all the time. Occasionally, I get the postman coming in for a chat...





**That sounds like a really good way to work! Coming from a background in working in large studios, I was wondering if you ever missed working alongside other people?**

It's funny, people often ask me if I get lonely. I think I have a good balance with working alone, at conventions and doing guest spots. I enjoy working by myself, but I also enjoy being with other people, so it just means that I tend to enjoy myself more when I am with others and I feel like I'm a bit more sociable as a result. It's just nice to surround yourself with great people! But I definitely savour guest spots and conventions. It gives you the opportunity to see people, socialise and watch people work.

**Are there any downsides to owning and working in a private studio?**

To be honest, I really love my set-up and I have a really good balance with guest artists. They usually come, on average, once a month. So no, not really!

**Aside from having a busy tattooing schedule, I've noticed that you have designed prints and logos for animal rights groups. Could you tell me how this came about?**

With regards to the charity groups, I became friends with people in groups over the years and then started doing some artwork designs – just trying to utilise my skills to help them fundraise. It feels like I'm doing something and giving something back. I'm really grateful for the position I'm in, that I'm able to spread a message through my work.







**So would you say that spreading positive messages about the vegan lifestyle and animal rights is incredibly important to you, in terms of your artwork outside of tattooing?**

Definitely. In regards to personal artwork, I think it's always going to be about expressing yourself and expressing your views. Obviously, veganism is something I'm incredibly passionate about and I want to spread that message with my work; for me, it's not just simply artwork. What's nice is that as a result, I find that I get a lot of clients with really similar views to me; probably because they feel more comfortable and that we have a lot to talk about. For them, it's not just about getting the tattoo.

**With such a passion for nature, it seems almost inevitable that your tattoo designs are animal based. Is it because you push those ideas, or because they're in such a high demand?**

I think it's a bit of both. When I worked at Jane Doe, it was already established as being a wildlife-themed shop so I naturally had people booking in for animal designs. Once I started putting things like pet portraits up on social media, other people wanted them and suddenly I had a client base who just wanted animal tattoos – which is cool with me because I love animals! I guess my work pushes itself, because people ask for it. It's a good mixture. I love doing tattoos where the image has a character.



**As with any form of custom tattooing, there is a lot of pressure. Doing portraits of people's pets must be quite stressful at times. Perhaps more so than portraits of people?**

There's a lot of pressure! It's sometimes hard if people send you photos – particularly if it's an animal who has passed away – where you have very limited pictures, especially if they're old digital photos or analogue photos that are low quality. I have to just do my best. I will do a sketch, send it to the client and then work with their feedback. It's an important piece to them, so I have to make sure it's right.

**It's obvious that you strive for the best in your work. With so many images readily available at the click of a button, do you find it difficult to source 'original' reference?**

I always work from actual photographs, as opposed to other people's tattoos or illustrations. I collect different images, sketch and take different elements from them, whilst checking things such as the proportions and body positioning are correct. By working from photographs, I know I won't be influenced by any other artist's take on the subject matter. You'll always have your own take which will inevitably change as you progress.

**Some of the animals in your designs have a 'human' element to them. I was wondering if this was your idea, or something that your customers like to ask for?**

It's a mixture. I prefer doing animals that look a bit more natural and less 'human', but a lot of clients want me to 'dress up' animals, in jewellery, clothing, etc. Obviously, I work with the customers and it's their choice, so if I can make that work, then we'll go with it! If I had free rein, I would probably use more organic elements, such as flowers and fruit – things like that. I'm happy to do a mixture.



**I'd like to ask you about your new direction in tattoo style – going from colour, to stippled blackwork designs. Was this something you had always set out to do?**

It was a bit of an experiment, whilst also being quite natural! Although I did a lot of colour work, when I first started tattooing I didn't originally intend on doing it. I kind of fell into it, because people wanted it. However, outside of tattooing, I'd never painted or drawn in colour (always having worked in black and grey pencils or pens). I feel that my brain works a bit better that way – working with contrast instead of contrasting colours. Because all my artwork outside of tattooing was always in black, I started stippling because it translated really well into merchandise, like t-shirt designs. Then one day, Nick Whybrow said to me "Why don't you try doing a stippled tattoo?", and strangely enough, it had never really crossed my mind! So he became my guinea pig. I tried out a few techniques and it came out OK. From there, I started offering up small gap-fillers, then the pieces got bigger and bigger and I realised how much I enjoyed it. I really like playing with the detail whilst also keeping it simple. I know that these tattoos are going to last a long time, because they've got a good contrast and they will always look powerful from a distance. I really like that. Now, at least 60% of my work is stippled. I'm really happy with that and I'm always up for more!

**Changing a style of tattoo is a really bold move, which has obviously paid off. Did you find that the change was well received?**

I found that when I began offering the designs, my clients jumped at the chance. It was really lovely. They had their full trust in me, no questions asked. I've got customers who have had colour work from me over the years, and are now getting a mixture of colour and blackwork, which is great. And I've also got newer clients who are mainly interested in collecting blackwork, so it's a good mix. People give me a lot of fun projects and give me free rein, which I'm really happy about, too! In general, my customers are really lovely. They're more like friends to me!

**The different 'styles' of blackwork tattooing seem to have really changed over the past few years. Have you found yourself looking at it in a new way?**

Definitely. I can certainly appreciate it more. Blackwork is massive, it's like there's no limitations on it! Whereas before, if you said 'blackwork', you'd think of Polynesian or Tribal. Nowadays it could still be that, but it could be dotwork – which could be anything, even neo-traditional designs with dotwork, which I guess is what I do. Or it could be geometric which is equally beautiful.



**Have you found that your ways of drawing and executing a tattoo have changed as a result?**

My techniques have changed as I've played around with it and seen things yield. I'm a lot happier with how I do it. The key elements for me are that I take my time and make sure everything is as smooth as I can possibly get it. My drawing style has definitely been simplified, because it means I can put more detail in the contrast whilst I'm doing the tattoo. With my colour work, I use more detail in the linework – with smaller elements. There is a slight difference when I'm creating designs for either colour or stippled work, which I think has naturally changed and progressed in a way which works better for me.

**In general, do you feel it's important for artists to challenge and push themselves?**

Amy: Yeah, there's obviously a lot of pressure as it's a really saturated industry, which is getting more saturated over time. As a creative person, you'll always find there's that pressure to do more. I don't think drastic changes happen naturally, I always think that natural progression and revisiting your work is important. It's not something I do purposefully, it's just something that happens. I'll look at something and see the differences – even if it's not apparent to anyone else, just myself. I will always strive to do better. It's a burden, but it's the way to progress!

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# ROTTERDAM INK AND STEEL SHOW

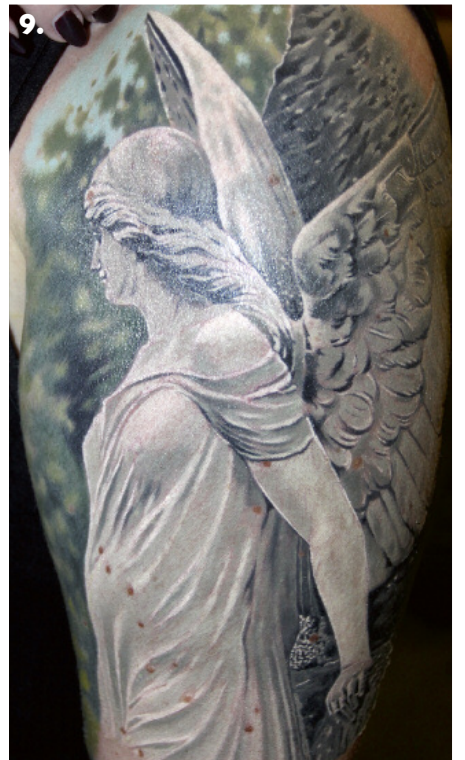
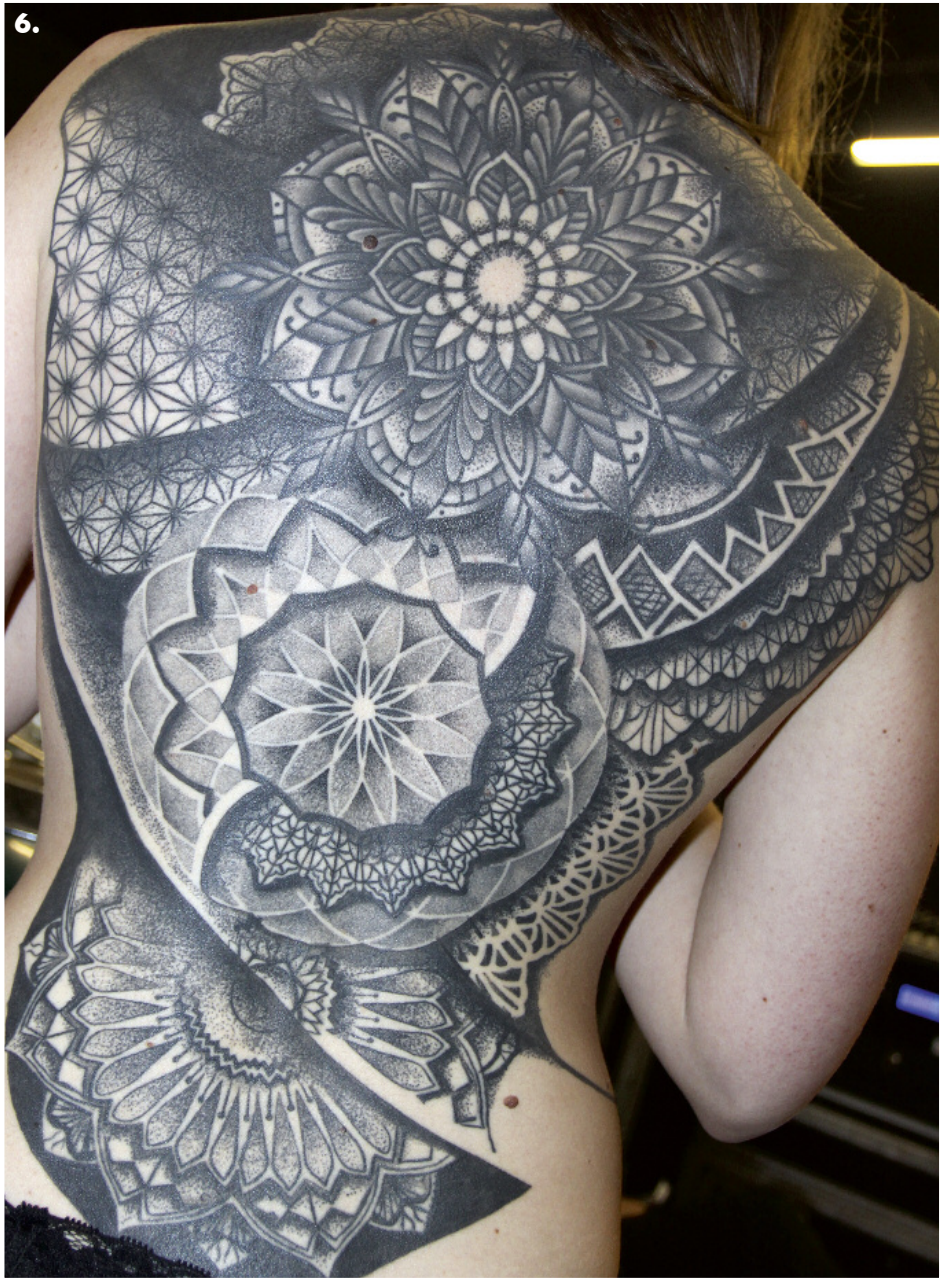
**I'd been looking for an excuse to visit a tattoo show in Holland for a while, so when Tony from Blue Hawaii Tattoo asked if we fancied coming to stay we jumped at the chance. The Rotterdam tattoo convention takes place at the Ahoy exhibition centre in the heart of the city, a large, modern, purpose-built venue consisting of several well-lit high-ceilinged halls connected by a large foyer housing a bar/restaurant area.**

Typically, we arrived late on the Friday night and so we had to set up early on the Saturday morning. The convention was spread over two large rooms. The first that you came to housed all of the tattoo artists – nearly 150 of them, divided over eight rows creating long well-spaced corridors with a gap halfway, making an easily navigated layout that worked well.

The second hall housed the 'steel' element of the show, mostly customs, retro cars and hotrods with a few special bikes here and there. Along with the cars came the retro stalls selling all manner of vintage shirts, shoes and hats and there were pinstripes, painters, leather workers and even a silversmith engraver! The Jesters car club lined three sides of the hall with some beautiful motors every one of which I really would have loved to bring home. In the far corner of the hall was a large stage that hosted the many bands and entertainment that went on over the weekend, most of which played good ol' rock 'n' roll in keeping with the general theme of the show.

Some really great international tattooists (including Boris from Hungary) had come to support the convention with many more from Rotterdam itself, a European city that has seen a reported rise of more than 30% in the number of tattoo studios in the last two years. It has to be said that a few were somewhat less than great, but I guess this is the case with most conventions.

1. azi, passion4ink (holland)
2. mircea, fearless tattoo (holland)
3. alex rodriguez, chameleon tattoo
4. dondersch l'extremiste (holland)



- 5. mete tungaz, cleopatra ink (turkey)
- 6. alvaro diaz delgado, dermadonna (holland)
- 7. daan van de dobbelsteen needle art (holland)
- 8. veerle london, skinwerks tattoo (holland)
- 9. eugen mahu, needle art (holland)
- 10. dmitriy goncharov, goncharov tattoo (belarus)
- 11. boris, boris tattoo (austria)
- 12. jarno, tattoo company (holland)
- 13. nicky, tattoo nicky (holland)
- 14. tina haktoo



Competitions were judged on a small stage in the middle of the tattoo hall and the categories were split over the two days. The prize giving took place on the main stage in the 'steel' hall. This show, like so many, seemed quiet on the Saturday but much busier on the Sunday. What was evident was the lack of money being spent. All the traders I spoke to said it was hard tempting the Euro from the pockets of the punters, despite there being a large number through the door. Entry price seemed reasonable at €17.50.

I had the chance to have a chat with show organiser Andy I asked him why he put the show on... "I choose Rotterdam because it is the second biggest city in Holland with a great tattoo history and it didn't have a show! I find most of my artists by travelling to other conventions and through recommendation; I try to get a nice balance of styles. The venue is good but it is expensive to rent, so I have to charge everyone more than I would really like." Andy told me that there might be plans for a new venue next year. When I asked about the standard of some of the artists he told me, "I know what you mean but some of these people have supported me in the past and some are getting better but just need some encouragement. They also represent such a small part of the show that sometimes you have to strike a balance between what is OK and what is right," and I have to say that I agree with him.

On the Sunday, Lawrence Ah Ching from Suluape Tattoo opened the show with a traditional Samoan ceremony in which we all sat around and partook of the passing of coconut shells filled with a herbal liquid that purifies the body, mind and spirit... after which the show was well and truly on! There was much photographing and making of new friends, but we unfortunately had to leave early to catch our ferry back home, tired but happy.

Rotterdam was a good show that is well organised, with ample parking and plenty of space in the venue, in a fabulous city. It was easily accessible from the UK and well worth a visit. I need to thank Tony and Sann from Blue Hawaii Tattoo for letting us stay at their apartment and for looking after us – cheers guys. Roll on next year. Hopefully we'll see you there.



15. mayke cuijpuers, lady luck (holland)  
 16. ian, nito ink (australia)  
 17. olga sergeeva, jaz tattoo (germany)  
 18. ramsley flaneur's tattoo studio (holland)  
 19-21 bertina swallow ink (holland)  
 22. sann, blue hawaii (holland)  
 23. joey boon, tattoo joey (holland)



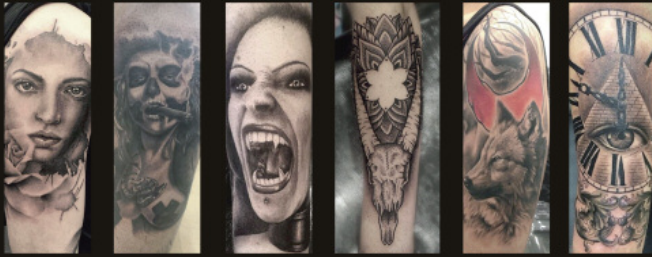


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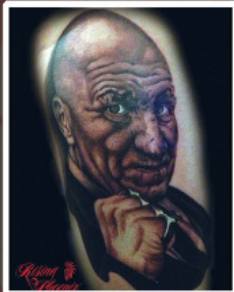
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**During a recent trip to Goa, I had the great pleasure of meeting some amazing local tattoo artists who are at the forefront of an artistic revolution. In India, Western style tattooing is very much in its infancy and there is therefore an amazing opportunity for the Indian scene to form itself into a coordinated creative force in the tattoo world. One artist who is driving this change is Sunny Bhanushali. Currently based in Mumbai, his vision for an organised, collective, hygienic industry has led him to create educational workshops which he hopes might just change the future of tattooing in India...**



Sunny started tattooing back in 2006 and admits that, at the time, it was really just a hobby for him. "It wasn't until about 2009 that people started asking me to tattoo them," he tells me, "so I have only really been a full-time tattooist for seven years. It was only a short time ago, but when I started there was no acceptance of tattooing as an art form. It was a very niche market. Even my own family could not see tattooing as a good source of steady income and although

they were happy for me to keep tattooing as a hobby, they insisted that I had to work at the same time. But things have changed. Being a tattooist in India is now seen as a respectable way to support your family. I have even seen families helping their children (financially) to become tattooists. People are far more accepting of tattoos; at least that seems to be the case in the larger cities like Mumbai. Of course in the more rural areas things may be a little slower

to adjust, but in places like Goa, that have so much western influence, tattooing is very much accepted."

In India, modern tattooing and traditional cultural values don't always sit comfortably together, but times certainly are changing. In one fascinating conversation during my stay in Goa, I learned that girls and young women are discouraged from being tattooed because, in a society where great

importance is placed on arranged marriage, many parents still believe that body art may damage the chances of a successful match. However, once they are married, a lot of young Indians view tattooing in a much more positive manner, with many couples getting tattooed soon after the ceremony!

I asked Sunny how he first got into tattooing. He explained that his desire to tattoo came after visiting a local tattooist with his friend, who was getting some work done. "I was fascinated and I asked if he would teach me, but he said that at first I would need to become a better artist. I had always drawn and so I felt a little hurt by his remarks, but I managed to save some money to buy a machine and some ink, and I started to tattoo on my own leg until I felt comfortable to progress further. The equipment was easy to get, but because there were only a few suppliers it was very expensive for no real reason. I paid 28,000 rupees (£280) for a coil machine from China that should have cost about 2000 rupees (£20). Now, I see the same machines going for 1500 rupees (£15)."

I asked Sunny how he found the transition from art to tattooing. "It has always been exciting. There was never any disappointment!" he says. "As with most things, the more you do the better you get. From the day I started, and even now, I always try to learn and push myself to do something new. I find a lot of inspiration from the internet."



"I do not follow any particular artists or tattooists," Sunny continues, "just anyone who is creating something visually new and exciting, so I can learn from them. I like to focus on realism and photo-realism as much as possible - something I am currently trying to move towards. I just want to push the boundaries of my ability and the medium of tattooing as far as I can. I also do a lot of charcoal drawings as well as digital paintings which include geometry, and I am hoping to combine geometric patterns with realistic portraits."





Sunny has one of the largest studios in Mumbai. He explains how he chose the five artists who currently work alongside him. "When an artist starts with me, they start on a fixed salary, for six months. During that time I'm able to find out if they're really interested in the art or just the money. If it is the art, then I will keep them and they go onto a commission basis; but first they must prove they have the desire and the ability before I invest my time in training them. Most people fail."

Indian art, and Asian art in general, have always had an influence on tattooing around the world. I was interested to know how much influence Sunny took from his own culture. "I feel that everything is changing at the moment. Ideas and influences are



happening quickly, which can be seen in the development of the artwork. Previously, images were limited to what we saw around us and what we grew up with. Now, with the internet, we can see what people are doing in the UK and all over the world and allow it to inspire us. We can take inspiration from German graphic design and blend it with Eastern spiritual imagery to create something new and exciting. I can see the hunger in every artist to do something new and bring something original to the scene."

Sunny explains how easier access to equipment is making a real difference to the overall reputation of tattooing in India. "We can now get hold of good equipment at a reasonable price and, as a result, the standard of work is getting better. This in turn is helping to make tattooing generally



more acceptable. When I started, most people only wanted a small tattoo – maybe a name or a small cross – that would need to be hidden. If you had a visible tattoo it would make it impossible to get a job, even as little as 10 years ago. This is now changing. It is now the managers that have the tattoos, and I even see children accepted at school with tattoos!"

I was quite shocked to hear that minors could be tattooed. Sunny explained that tattooing is regarded as part of the beauty industry, which operates without any age restrictions. However, he does assure me that all the reputable studios he knows would refuse to tattoo children. Likewise, there is no legalisation regarding the cleanliness of studios or the ability of the tattooist to do the job, which Sunny feels reflects negatively on the way people see tattooing.

One of the things that impressed me about Sunny is his willingness to give back to the Indian tattoo community. Together with other artists, he regularly runs not-for-profit workshops and seminars to improve the general standards of tattooing. "I am one of several people involved in running six workshops," he tells me. "I teach advanced levels of tattooing, mainly to Indian artists. The most important topic is the hygiene process and we are trying to bring all studios up to an acceptable standard. It starts from creating the correct mindset. Many studios would like to improve but don't want to invest the money. We have between 50 and 70 artists at each seminar and we keep





in touch with them after each course, to keep them 'in the loop' and encourage them to improve on all aspects of tattooing. Most Indian tattooists want to do things the right way but don't necessarily know what the right way is to do it, because they have never been shown. We are trying to change that. We have been doing this for two years and we know from following up on people that we are making a difference. Not everyone who attends will change, but most do, and that is good for the whole of tattooing."

As we were at the Goa tattoo convention, I asked Sunny what the convention scene was like in India at the moment. "I have only been to three!" he exclaimed. "The Delhi convention [featured in Total Tattoo issue 137] was very good, but for me this one is great because it is put on by people who really know how to do things properly and we will learn from this. All the artists from around the world are very willing to share with us, so it creates a great opportunity for growth and knowledge. It is a wonderful atmosphere."



I ask Sunny about his plans for the future and his own development. "I am not just a tattooist," he tells me. "I am a painter, photographer and charcoal artist. I don't really look to the future, I really do just live for today. I love art, and I know it will continue to flow through me."



Anyone interested in attending one of Sunny's workshops can find a link on his website [www.alienstattoos.com](http://www.alienstattoos.com) or through Facebook [www.facebook.com/alienstattoos](http://www.facebook.com/alienstattoos)





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**T**here are few subjects that can divide the tattoo community as effectively as a discussion about tattoo schools. Emotions run high, voices become raised and people immediately think of under-achieving artists charging huge amounts of money for basic knowledge, backed up by a paper certificate that means nothing and is recognised by no one (or maybe that's just my opinion).

So, when respected tattooist Mark Bester, of Marked for Life Tattoo in Stockton-on-Tees, invited me to attend his seminar and workshop weekend, which he described as 'Higher education for a handful of carefully selected artists', I was intrigued.

# tattoo ● Seminar

Words and Pictures Perry

## at marked for life



ryan 'the scientist' smith



by ryan 'the scientist' smith

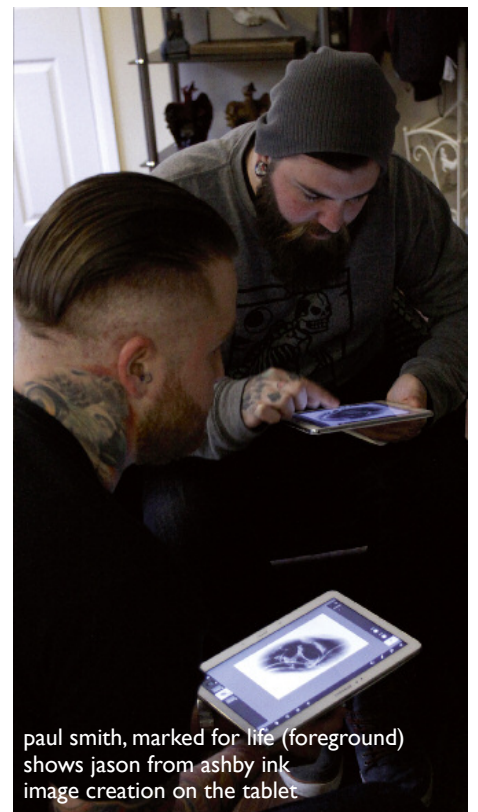
About a year ago Mark put together a two-hour seminar to explain his approach to tattooing images of fur and feathers, something for which he's become very well known. After the success of these short presentations, he had the idea of holding a workshop; somewhere artists could put into practice the techniques he was explaining.

Mark put a post online, inviting people to apply. Nearly one hundred artists got in touch; eight of these were selected to take part, each one carefully identified as having enough technical knowledge to keep up, and who would benefit from what the course had to offer. Mark explained "I decide who comes to the workshops: as soon as someone shows an interest in attending, I check out their work to see if there is anything I can help them with, or maybe they have the talent and just need a little help unlocking their ability. I also hand-picked customers from my own client base, people I knew would sit well and understood that they were giving up their skin for free to help an artist learn. I thank them for that."

The weekend of the workshop arrived and, after the initial meet-and-greet on the Friday morning, Mark began explaining his techniques, his planning process, the equipment he uses and the way he executes his tattoos. The afternoon was taken up by Mark demonstrating all of this on a customer, while everyone watched at close quarters and asked all manner of questions. No subject was off limits; Mark took time to answer every

question and is very free with his information and knowledge.

In the evening Mark took everyone out for dinner before we visited some local nightspots until it was time to head back to the B&B, which was organised and booked by the Marked for Life team.



paul smith, marked for life (foreground) shows jason from ashby ink image creation on the tablet



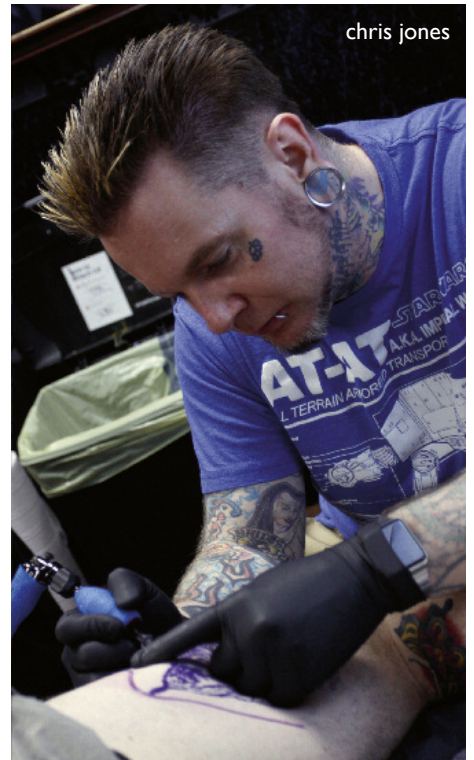


On Saturday morning we arrived at the studio to find eight workstations set up and eight customers waiting to be tattooed. Mark presented each artist with a complimentary set of World Famous inks to use during the weekend and then take home. Every artist was given a choice of subject matter and allocated a corresponding customer. Throughout the day, Mark spent time with each artist, demonstrating his method of application and offering advice on colour blends, shading techniques and methods of building the image without over-working the skin.

On Sunday Leah Moule from Sweet Life Gallery, who is famous for her super-bright, super-smooth colour shading, gave a lecture on her approach and techniques. This was followed by a practical demonstration of tattooing on Mark; it was interesting to see how their techniques shared so many similarities whilst the end results are poles apart.



by chris jones, physical graffiti



chris jones

I got the chance during the weekend to have a quick chat with Mark and ask him how the idea for the project came about: "I did a seminar at the Liverpool Show last year and I have done three more since then, but with this one the level has been raised a lot and hopefully the standard will continue to rise. I enjoy teaching and sharing knowledge. Plus I usually end up learning loads from the artists who attend. I do get a lot of stick from some people who think this shouldn't be done, but the positive vibes far outweigh any negativity."

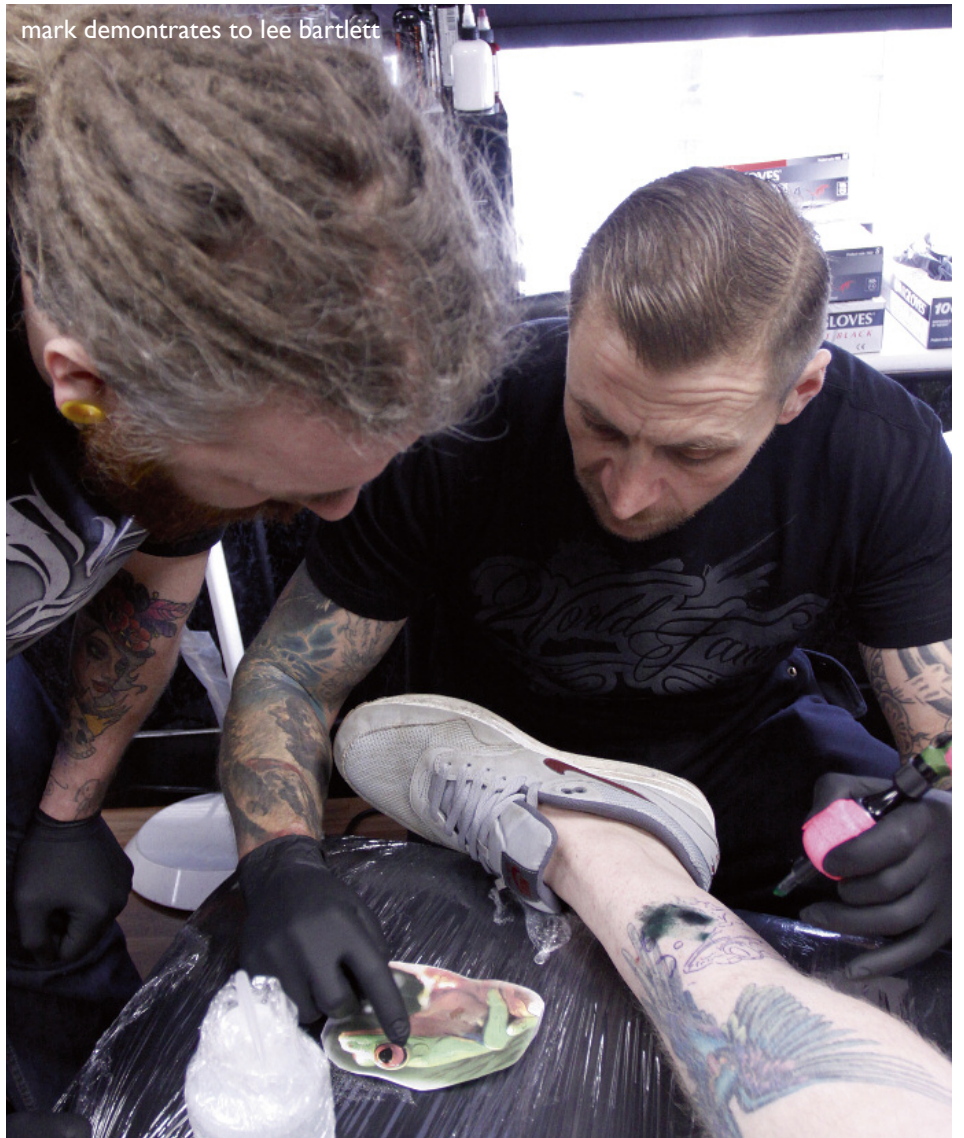
## Lee Devor – The Devils Angel



I've learnt a hell of a lot: image set-up, needle depths, how to saturate colour properly, stuff that I have never been shown before. I will definitely be taking a lot of these techniques forward in my everyday tattooing. You could double the cost of the weekend and it would still be great value. I did find it stressful and I very nearly didn't come but I'm glad I did. I would 100% recommend people to come on this course.



mark demonstrates his techniques



mark demonstrates to lee bartlett



by lee bartlett, underground tattoo

## Chris Jones – Physical Graffiti



The weekend has been fun as well as informative; it would be good to build a community of artists to share information. It's like higher education. I'm still learning; if you think you are above learning, then you're a bit of a bell-end and I try not to be a bell-end if I can help it! I really enjoyed the practical aspect where Mark came around and gave us lots of advice and hints. When I started out, I didn't learn from just one person and so I have always looked at what others do and how they do it. It's always good to be pushed outside your comfort zone, otherwise tattooing becomes boring and just like a job.

Many artists hold their trade secrets close to their chest. I asked Mark if he had any doubts about sharing his skills and potentially diluting his own customer base. "Not at all. I still see myself as a new tattooist who is learning all the time. I am open to attending seminars myself. I have analysed everything about my work and I can talk about it artistically, technically and explain it in such a way that, with practice, people can pick up. I've studied the way others work and discovered that my approach is different. That's not to say it's better, but it might suit some people. I believe with my techniques, the ink goes in fast and heals quickly, with less trauma to the skin, leaving it less open and prone to infection."

Advances in equipment and inks over the last few years have inspired whole new styles to develop. I wondered how much these developments have affected Mark's work. "I believe in the equipment I use; young people coming into tattooing are bombarded by a massive choice of machines, inks, everything. Tattooists are often led to believe that if you buy the machine that your heroes use, then you'll tattoo like them, but it ain't that simple. You really need to be shown how to use the equipment. If there had been seminars when I started, I would have been at them. But



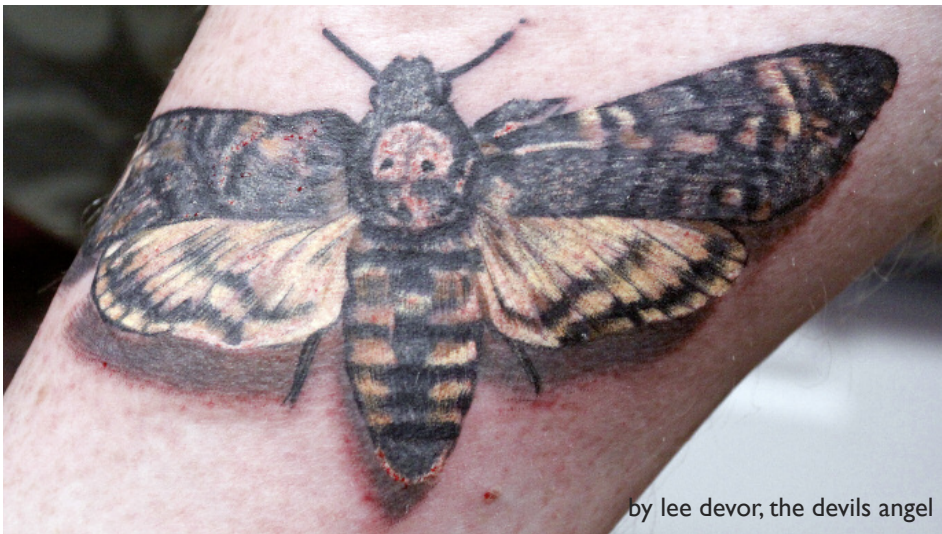
phil sanderson



## Sascia Marques – Inkvasion



What an eye opener. The diversity of artists! There was so much information, not just from Mark, but from all the other tattooists. It's good to cover everything from drawing and application of image through to actual tattooing. I would love to do more seminars. Some of what we covered I do already, but not to this degree. I'll certainly be putting a lot of this learning into my tattoos. You can never put a price on that sort of knowledge. Mark gives you the confidence to try things that usually you wouldn't do. It's been absolutely brilliant.



sometimes you have to wait until the time is right. I know some really good artists who have tried doing this in the past, and got completely hammered on social media. 'You can't do this. You shouldn't do that.' We have a great habit of knocking any kind of change in this country."

So what does Mark say to the people who criticise what he's doing?" A tattooist friend of



mine said 'We've ruined tattooing' and yet he's got three businesses, his own house and his kids go to private school – which bit of it is ruined? If you look at tattooists like Guy Aitchison, Gabe from Off the Map and Jeff Gogue, they are at the top of their game and are keen to share everything; they're not holding anything back. I think it's the future. If we want tattooing to get better we need to work together in a positive way to improve it constantly. Believe me, I am not doing this to earn money. You can see what's involved and what we supply to each artist."

How far does Mark see this going? Will he run it out around the country? "We already have a list of people wanting to get on the next course at Sweet Life Gallery in Birmingham in a few months time. I would like to get a few world class artists on board, people who I look up to, who do things differently from me. That's why I asked Leah Moule to do the talk on Sunday. Her work is completely different from mine. I know this sort of thing is happening around Europe, Ireland and in the States. I've got a few ideas for other workshops; maybe we could go into simple Photoshop preparation and construction of image. I had the initial idea of doing the practical one because at all the seminars that I've done before, people





leah moule explains her techniques

wanted to know about the techniques I used. The only way to get that across was if they tried it for themselves. Perhaps surprisingly, it is not just up-and-coming artists who attend the seminar. Mark told me “There are a few great artists in there and I questioned why they would want to come, but I guess they are good, humble people who want to continue learning. Unfortunately a lot of the old school tattooists won’t break away from what they know and they won’t try to learn something new. Obviously not all of them, but it is sad and I find it frustrating. However, one of the oldest tattooists in this area has done my seminar twice and wanted to come again, but as I’m going over the same stuff, I wouldn’t take his money. He has always been open to following the new developments in tattooing.”

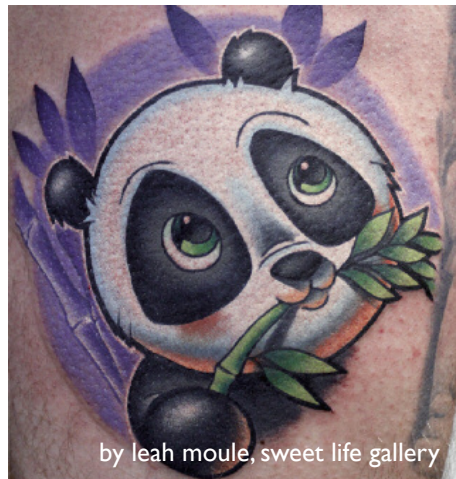
With the way conventions are going, maybe this is a way forward for tattooists to come together, share information and enjoy each others’ company without the need to work flat out to recoup the cost of attending the show.

This september, after his seminar at Leah Moule’s Sweet Life Gallery, Mark will be off to America to work with Off The Map to create a webinar. “I don’t want to keep going over the same ground and repeat myself; I want to develop what I do and how I do it. I find I’m learning from everyone who comes along.”

Anyone interested in finding out about future projects should contact Marked for Life. [www.marked-for-life.com](http://www.marked-for-life.com)



sketch by leah moule



by leah moule, sweet life gallery

## Phil Sanderson – Second 2 None



It’s been brilliant. I’ve learnt new techniques and gained so much confidence. Just seeing how other artists work, and that you can have so much needle out without chopping the skin to pieces... I would never have used a 27 mag before but, once you are shown how to use it and what it can do, it’s amazing! I’d definitely come to another one. Mark’s been great; we’ve been fed all weekend, the B&B was included in the price, he bought us all drinks, gave us inks, everything. You just turn up. To have someone look at your work and give you awesome advice and suddenly your tattooing is loads better is fantastic!



leah moule demonstrating on mark bester

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# Neon Judas

**He calls himself Neon Judas and he stares right into your soul! This 28 year old artist has already made a name for himself among the cognoscenti with his dark, imaginative and sometimes controversial tattoos. His imagery is nightmarish, brilliantly observed and wide open to interpretation, and he talks eloquently about where his unique artistic ideas come from.**



After years in a streetshop in northern Germany, he has now retreated to an atelier in Friedrichshain, a district of Berlin popular with artists of all kinds. Berlin is the place he's always wanted to be, and he fits it perfectly. "I like its special character," he tells me. "There are so many people to exchange ideas with, and this variety breeds creativity. We have a slightly anarchic atmosphere here, even among the establishment. People who experiment with alternative lifestyles meet here, people who are different. This city makes me smile." Describing himself as "pathologically sensible", it's only very occasionally that David feels the need to let his hair down and join the party crowd of this buzzing metropolis. He is content with the creative atmosphere that surrounds him, feeling there is nothing more important than focusing on his tattooing, music, and video art.





David likes to play with images that might raise eyebrows in some quarters. They are slightly provocative, either because of their sexual nature or because they portray the ambiguous relationship that Germany has with its own past. His fictional alter ego, 'Wehrjungfrau', makes those who subscribe to a more politically correct point of view squirm. His logo looks a bit too much like the German Reichsadler [Imperial Eagle]... a symbol often associated with Nazi rule, but which as also been used throughout history by other ideologies. David's own eagle is holding hearts in its talons, signifying the victory of love over hate.

There is an understandable tendency in society nowadays to despise any hint of neo-Nazism and react to it with instant distrust, often without taking a closer look at first. Neon Judas plays with this reflex, pointedly exposing the harmless nature of his own particular imagery. It is not his intention to downplay the true evil of fascism, but to urge the viewer to take a closer look before pre-judging or condemning prematurely.





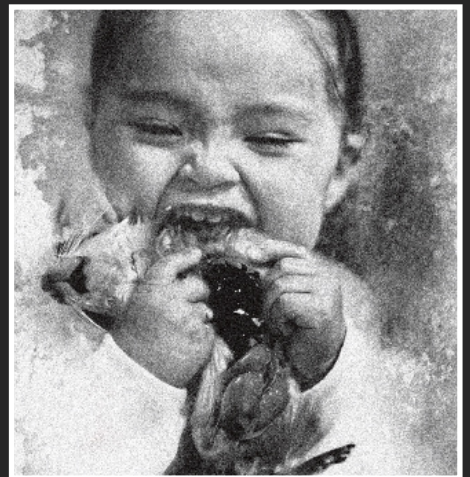


So where does his inspiration come from? Where did it all begin? "I couldn't have done anything else but tattooing," David tells me. "After graduating I didn't apply for a job of any kind; I simply started tattooing from home. Even my mother was OK with it." David then goes on to explain that he sees the world – quite literally – in a very 'different' way. "When I was three years old, I lost one eye and I am now only able to see in two dimensions. Therefore it doesn't make any difference to me if I am drawing from a live model or from a photo. There's no doubt this visual impairment has had a psychological effect on me. I am not aware of having suffered as a child because I was 'different', but the fact that I wasn't like other children surely shaped me. I grew up quickly, and learned how to reflect on my own thoughts, and how to be strong. Also, although I'm not a superstitious person, the fact that I've had five cornea transplants makes me think, 'Do I see the world through the eyes of a dead person...?'"

"I don't channel aggression through my work," David is keen to emphasise. "Rather the opposite: I love beautiful things, but I cannot work with them creatively. The palette of symbols in my brain just doesn't offer any medium of expression in this way. If it did, I would be tattooing more positive images..." But David adds, "It says a lot about the person viewing the tattoo if he or she projects negative thoughts on to my images. If a person accuses me of depicting violent scenes, it reveals his or her own inner self. For example if I use an image or text in a tattoo that includes a tooth, there is that automatic association with biting. You don't actually have to spell it out, because our brain subconsciously connects the thoughts and visualises them. To depict a child with a dog's snout, for instance, is not intrinsically a bad thing. It's what we think about it that can turn it into something negative."



"Tattooing has many similarities to music", David goes on to say, and I wonder where this curious statement will lead... "There's the bass, the middle range and the treble, and you need to cover the entire spectrum to achieve an effect. Then there's the hook. It's the same in tattooing. One single eye-catcher is better than five different themes that all detract from each other. The focus becomes too spread out and the impact fails. The attention span of the viewer is extremely limited, which means that you have to catch their eye fast. This is a basic principle that is valid for any kind of presentation or performance."



“Black areas are essential for the overall look of a large tattoo, and abstract elements are always a bonus – especially if you don't know what you're doing!” David laughs. “The heavy black needs to be balanced by detailed areas – or you can totally ignore the rules and impress everyone with the artistic liberties you take. But if this is done the wrong way, an expert will always be aware of it. Personally I like to counteract static areas with organic shapes. Whatever it is – layers, textured areas, blendings, edges – a stylistic device only works if it is combined with its matching counterpart. If everything looks smooth, it appears random and boring.”

“Volko and Simone at Buena Vista Tattoo Club work from their own instincts, but they usually get it right. This is rare and highly admirable! I had my back and one sleeve done by them, and we have similar views on aesthetics, content and effect. Their big pioneering achievement was to include typewriter fonts into tattooing. Those fonts were designed to be durable and highly legible. Because old-fashioned typed documents couldn't easily be replaced, the font needed to be clear, even when it was smudged and half gone. A tattoo works in a similar way.”



"Don't ask me what I think of my work," David says. "If I didn't think my work was shit, I wouldn't want to improve. You work harder to get better, because you are not happy with what you just did. It is very flattering if international clients fly in just to get tattooed by me, but what kind of expectations do they have? In ten years, all tattoos are going to be a blue blur, right? So are they just going with the hype? You buy a 'name', but for how long will that name sound special? Next week it'll be another artist who's being hyped, and I'll count for nothing..."

"I used to work a lot with PR strategies, including TV appearances, but this was when we had to attract the mainstream to our shop. TV people are usually media whores, but I knew the price I would pay for a media presence and I was OK with it. I don't care about popularity any more now. Most of my followers have enough sense and sane judgement to appreciate my artistic output. That's enough."

[instagram.com/neonjudas](https://www.instagram.com/neonjudas)

[www.facebook.com/NeonJudas69](https://www.facebook.com/NeonJudas69)

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The cover of Total Tattoo magazine for the next month. It features a woman with long, vibrant green hair and multiple tattoos. She is wearing a black top and has her hand near her face. The magazine title 'total tattoo' is prominently displayed at the top. Various headlines and teasers are scattered across the cover, including names of artists and event information.

# NEXT MONTH

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BRIGHTON TATTOO CONVENTION  
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# IN FOCUS

In these pages we showcase a small selection of work from a group of artists working together. This month:  
**North Sea Tattoo, 42 Huntriss Row, Scarborough, YO11 2EF**  
**Tel 01723 362286 • [www.northseatattoo.com](http://www.northseatattoo.com) • [northseatattoo@outlook.com](mailto:northseatattoo@outlook.com)**  
To have your studio featured, please send examples to:  
**In Focus, Total Tattoo Magazine, 111 Furze Road, Norwich, NR7 0AU, UK**

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Chris Newport



Nick Mayes



Costa Dan



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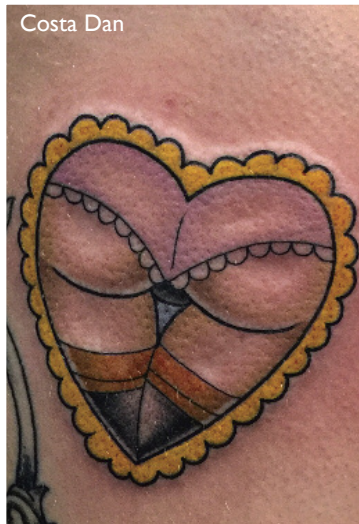
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# TALES FROM THE NAUGHTY STEP

by Paul Talbot

**Hello again dear reader. Welcome to another tale from the naughty step. This month I've gone way beyond the call of duty to bring you my opinion of the current elephant in the room: television tattoo shows.**

As I write this, I'm suffering my way through a 'Tattoos-On- Ice-That-Are-A-Nightmare-To-Fix-In-The-Jungle' type show, to see what all the fuss is about. I lost the will to live about 15 minutes ago, and I'm currently considering carving my eyeballs out with a teaspoon to avoid watching anymore.

Tattoo television in the UK sucks balls, big time. But why? As I see it, the problem is the format and the content of the programmes. Oh, and of course, you; apparently you want to see this crap. The TV chimps think you want this shit; partly because controversy creates viewers, and partly because the UK has long held a fascination for weekly doses of misfortune (provided it's not happening to us). The term is called 'Schadenfreude' - pleasure derived from another person's misery.

I'm going to make my position on this clear from the outset: I have no interest in watching any show where the weak are torn apart for our entertainment. I hate reality TV and everything about it, and I really hate that tattoos have been dragged into this particular human cesspit. If you agree then, please, just turn off your television set! If the ratings of these shows drop, they will just disappear.

In the late 1800s, the Victorians had 'freak shows': people who were classed as 'different' were put on display, stripping them of their dignity and exploiting them for being the way

they were. Although these 'exhibits' were outlawed in the 1900s, it seems that they re-emerged on our TV screens at the start of the Millennium; starting with 'Big Brother', and continuing downwards from there.

Even if you don't watch television very much, you probably know that reality TV has taken over the airwaves and our lives. It's dropped its trousers, crouched over our heads and taken a massive dump on us, from a great height. We now live in a world that believes that being famous is the ultimate goal; a world obsessed with the idea of possessing luxuries that only a few can afford. And why? Well, because we started to believe the bullshit fed to us by the TV executives.

But there's loads of great content out there which is infinitely more watchable than the bilge that's served up to us by the television companies. The problem is, it's almost always underfunded and underexposed - mainly because it's *actual content* and not a load of old cobbles. These programmes are interesting and engaging and offer a great view of a cross-section of our fantastic art form, and none of them exploit the art (or the artists). But unfortunately you'll probably never see any of them on UK television. This is something that needs to change...

What if a bunch of artists and clients got together with a skilled production crew to reinvent the reality show and make something that was both entertaining and worthwhile? What if this was done via social media so that fans could get involved too? What if it showcased tattoo talent from the youngest promising apprentice to the oldest of the old school, and really celebrated how far we've come? What if it had the backing of our industry and was something everyone could be proud of?

Sound good to you? It does to me - so good that I'm trying to get it made. But I'm going to need some help. Whether you have experience in TV, or just love filming conventions on your phone, get in touch if you want to be involved! If you're a tattooist and want to get interviewed, a studio owner who wouldn't mind us filming in your studio, or an apprentice who wants to document your journey, contact me and we'll talk.

**Until next time - Paul**  
**talesfromthenaughtystep@gmail.com**



**Do your eyeballs a favour, stop watching the shit that's forced on you and take a look at these:**

**The Gypsy Gentleman**  
[www.gypsygentleman.nl](http://www.gypsygentleman.nl)

**Tattoo Age**  
[www.vice.com/en\\_uk/series/tattoo-age](http://www.vice.com/en_uk/series/tattoo-age)

**Tattoo Nation**  
[www.tattoonation.com](http://www.tattoonation.com)

**Sullen TV**  
[www.youtube.com/user/SullenTv](http://www.youtube.com/user/SullenTv)

**TattooNowTV**  
[tattoonowtv.com](http://tattoonowtv.com)

# CONVENTION CALENDAR

## UK CONVENTIONS

May 6-8

### Liverpool Tattoo Convention

Britannia Adelphi Hotel, Ranelagh Place,  
Liverpool. L3 5UL  
[www.liverpooltattooconvention.com](http://www.liverpooltattooconvention.com)

May 28-29

### Northern Ireland Show

Belfast Waterfront, 2 Lanyon Pl  
Belfast BT1 3WH  
[www.nitattoo.com/](http://www.nitattoo.com/)

May 28-29

### Ink and Oil Tattoo Convention

Peterborough Arena  
The East of England Showground,  
Peterborough PE2 6XE,  
[www.facebook.com/ink.oil.tattoo](http://www.facebook.com/ink.oil.tattoo)

June 4-5

### Northampton tattoo Convention

The Northampton Saints Rugby Ground  
Weedon Road, Northampton. NN5 5BG.  
[www.northamptoninternationaltattooconvention.com](http://www.northamptoninternationaltattooconvention.com)

June 4-5

### Scarborough Tattoo Show

The Spa Scarborough, South Bay, Scarborough,  
North Yorkshire YO11 2HD  
[www.facebook.com/scarboroughtattooshow](http://www.facebook.com/scarboroughtattooshow)

June 4-5

### Leeds International Tattoo Convention

Exhibition Centre Leeds, Clarence Dock,  
Chadwick Street, Leeds LS10 1LT  
[www.leedstattooexpo.com](http://www.leedstattooexpo.com)

June 11-12

### Bristol Tattoo Convention

The Passenger Shed, Brunels Old Station,  
Station Approach,  
Bristol BS1 6QH  
[www.bristoltattooconvention.com](http://www.bristoltattooconvention.com)

June 18-19

### York International tattoo Convention

The York Race Course,  
Tadcaster Road York Yo23 1EX  
[www.yorkinternationaltattooconvention.co.uk](http://www.yorkinternationaltattooconvention.co.uk)

July 9-10

### The Southampton Tattoo Festival

Ageas Bowl, Botley Road, Southampton,  
Hampshire SO30 3XH  
[www.southamptontattoofestival.co.uk](http://www.southamptontattoofestival.co.uk)

July 16-17

### Powys Charity Tattoo Convention

Community Centre, Mount Lane  
Llanidloes, Powys SY18 6EZ  
[www.powystattooconvention.co.uk](http://www.powystattooconvention.co.uk)

July 22-24

### Midlands Tattoo Industry Show

Leicester Road Football Club, Leicester Rd.  
Hinckley, Leicester LE10 3DR  
[www.facebook.com/Midlands-Tattoo-industry-Show-980219155377587](http://www.facebook.com/Midlands-Tattoo-industry-Show-980219155377587)

July 23-24

### Cardiff Tattoo and Toy Convention

The Motorpoint Arena Cardiff  
Mary Ann Street, Cardiff CF10 2EQ  
[www.cardifftattooandtoycon.co.uk](http://www.cardifftattooandtoycon.co.uk)

July 29-31

### Titanic Tattoo Convention

Titanic Building Belfast  
1 Queens Rd, Titanic Quarter, Belfast BT3 9EP,  
[www.facebook.com/titanic.tattooconventionbelfast14?ref=ts](http://www.facebook.com/titanic.tattooconventionbelfast14?ref=ts)

July 30-31

### Portsmouth Tattoo Convention

The Guild Hall, Guildhall Square, Portsmouth  
PO1 2AD  
[www.portsmouthtattooconvention.co](http://www.portsmouthtattooconvention.co)

August 19-21

### Tatcon Blackpool

Norbreck Castle Hotel, Queen's Promenade  
Blackpool, Lancashire FY2 9AA  
[www.tatconblackpool.co.uk](http://www.tatconblackpool.co.uk)

August 20-21

### Robin Hood Tattoo Show

CotgraveSocial Club, Woodview, Cotgrave,  
Nottinghamshire NG12 3PJ.  
[www.robinhoodtattoofestival.com](http://www.robinhoodtattoofestival.com)

September 2-4

### South Yorkshire Body Art

## Festival

Ponds Forge International Sports Centre,  
Sheaf Street, Sheffield, S1 2BP

September 23-25

### London Tattoo Convention

Tobacco Quay Wapping Lane, London E1W 2SF  
[www.thelondontattooconvention.com](http://www.thelondontattooconvention.com)

October 1-2

### Ink 'n' art bournemouth

Pier Approach, Bournemouth,  
Dorset BH2 5AA  
[bournemouth.tattoo/](http://bournemouth.tattoo/)

October 8-9

### Halloween Tattoo Bash

Wolverhampton Racecourse, Dunstall Park  
Gorsebrook Rd, Wolverhampton WV6 0PE  
[www.halloweentattoobash.co.uk](http://www.halloweentattoobash.co.uk)

October 28-30

### Jurassic Coast Tattoo Convention

The Premier Inn, Bournemouth Central,  
Westover Rd, Bournemouth BH1 2BZ  
[www.jurassiccoasttattooconvention.co.uk](http://www.jurassiccoasttattooconvention.co.uk)

Nov 12-13

### East Coast Tattoo Expo

Highfield Holiday Park, London Road, Clacton-  
On-Sea, Essex, CO16 9QY  
[www.eastcoastexpo.co.uk](http://www.eastcoastexpo.co.uk)

April 15-16 2017

### Maidstone Tattoo Extravaganza

The John Hendry Pavilion  
Detling Showground, Maidstone, Kent  
[www.maidstonetattooextravaganza.co.uk](http://www.maidstonetattooextravaganza.co.uk)

## OVERSEAS CONVENTIONS

July 15-17

### NY Empire State Tattoo Expo

New York Hilton Midtown, 1335 Avenue of the  
Americas,  
New York, NY 10019,  
[www.empirestatetattooexpo.com](http://www.empirestatetattooexpo.com)

Oct 21-23

### Evian Tattoo Show

Palais Des Festivites, Evian  
[www.eviantattoo.com](http://www.eviantattoo.com)

Tattoo convention listings on this page are **free**. Send your details to

**Convention Calendar, Total Tattoo Magazine, 111 Furze Road, Norwich, Norfolk, NR7 0AU, UK**  
or e-mail [editor@totaltattoo.co.uk](mailto:editor@totaltattoo.co.uk) All details correct at time of going to press. E&OE.

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