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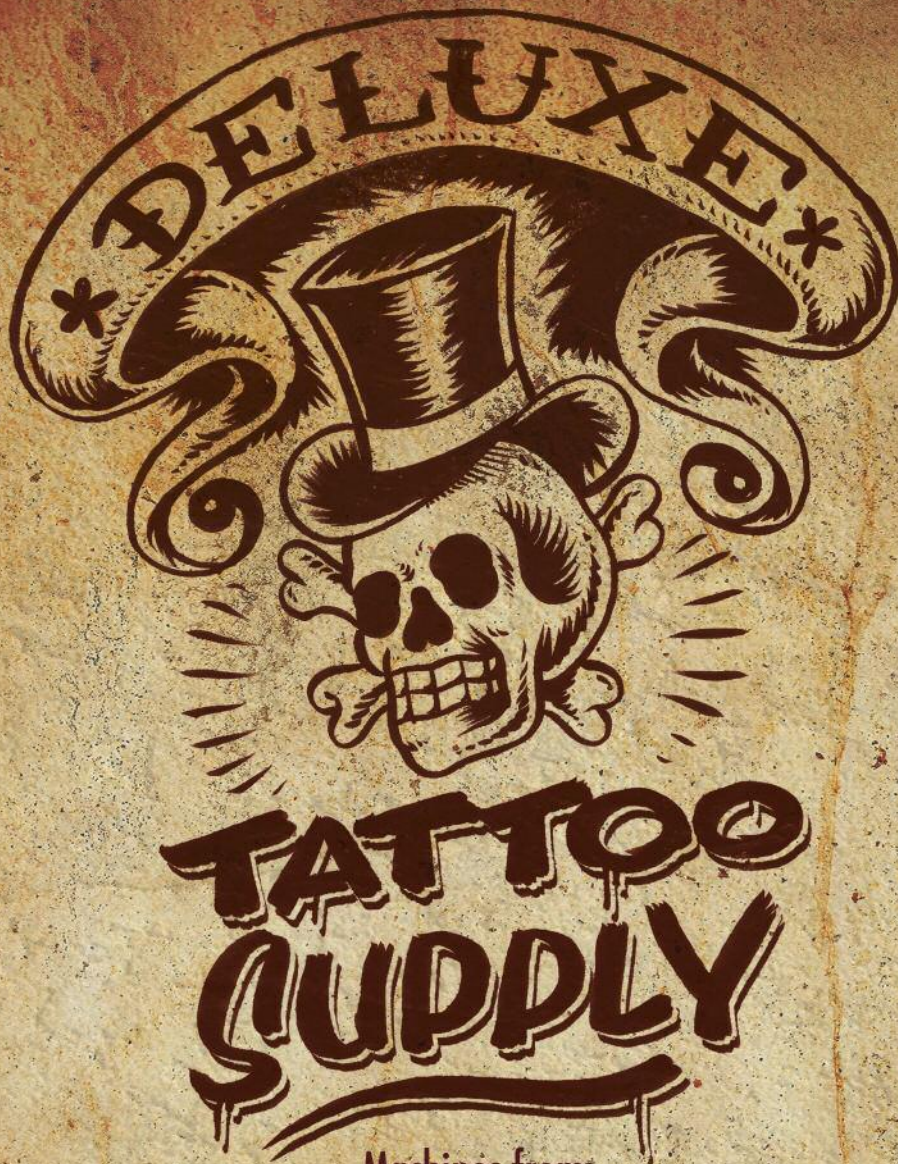
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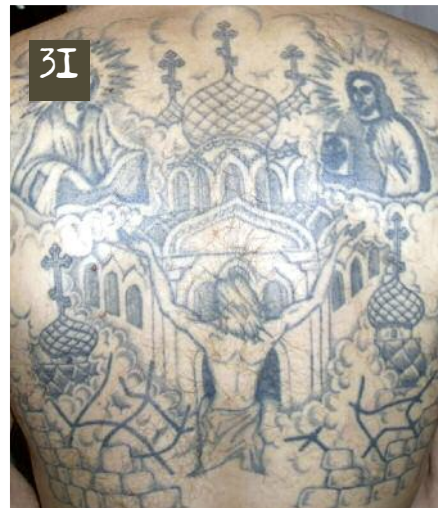
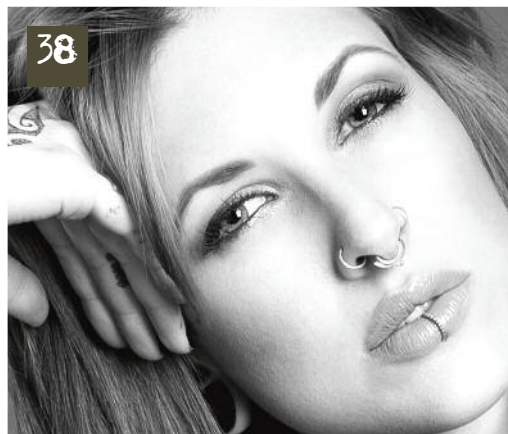
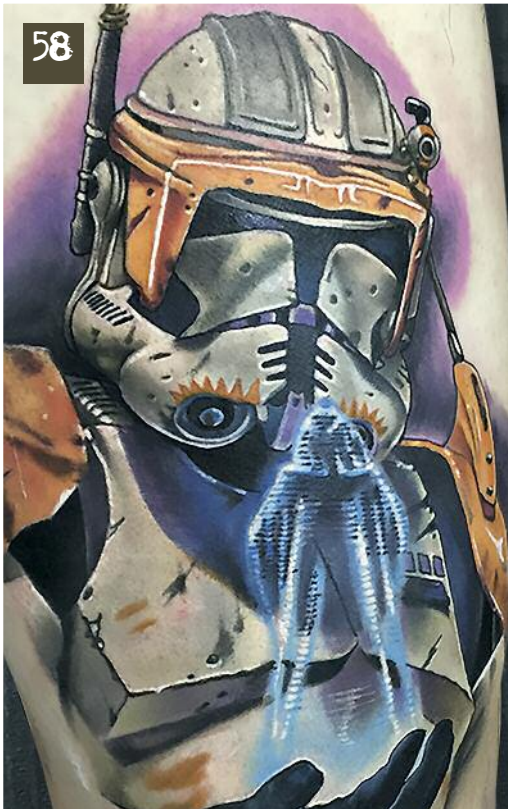
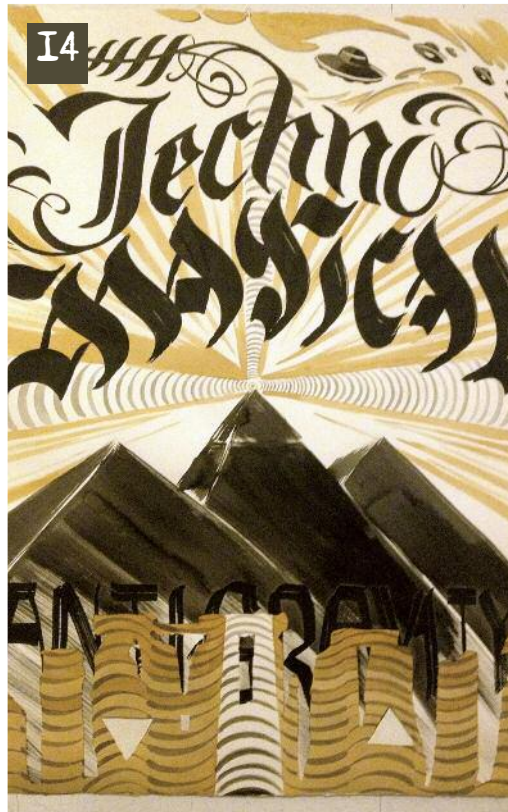
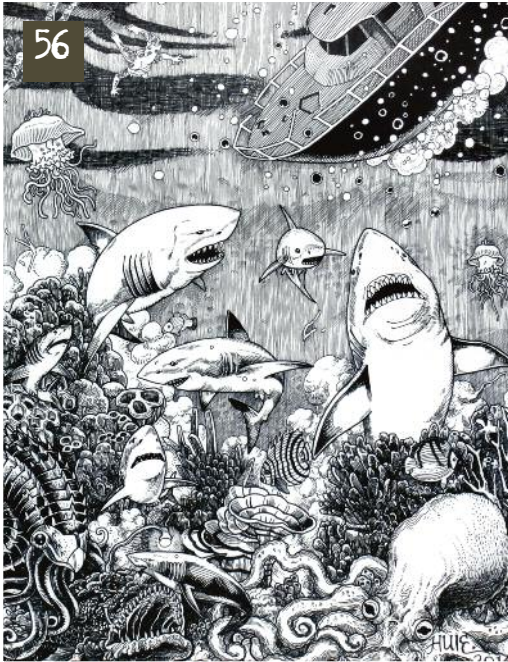
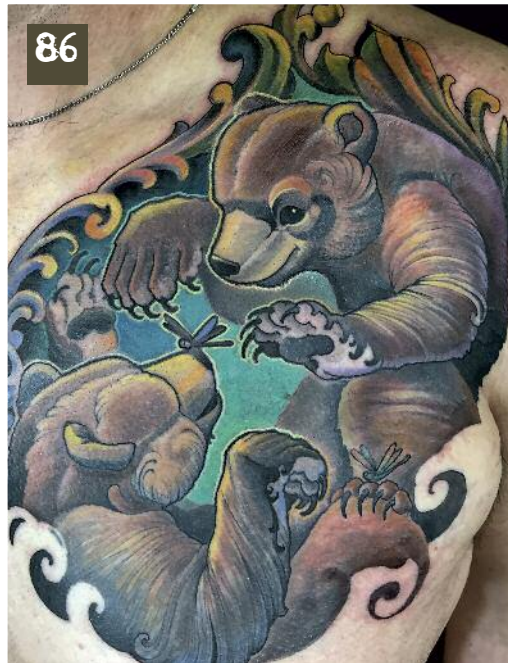


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Images must be high resolution (300) and sized at 100mm by 150mm. The disc needs to be labelled with the artist & studio name. Or email them to galleries@totaltattoo.co.uk

COMPETITION TERMS AND CONDITIONS

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 142

Last month, it was revealed that printed book sales rose for the first time in four years. It appears that people are beginning to shy away from the fads of e-readers and tablets, and opt for something more traditional. And I can see why. OK, technology means you can carry an entire library with you in a light-weight portable format, but there is nothing quite like holding a book. It won't run out of power, it won't break if you drop it on the floor, and it won't interrupt you with email notifications. And if it's an art book, it's a real pleasure to see the printed work in the flesh, so to speak.

I feel the same way about magazines. A printed magazine is more permanent and holds the reader's attention. Instead of having to bookmark, or take a screen shot of an image, it's there, right in front of you. And with all that glorious content already filtered, sorted and beautifully laid out, you won't find yourself drowning in a sea of information (much of it of dubious quality).

As I write this I am, of course, aware that the printed media are in a constant battle with social media. Look at a trending hashtag, and you can get the highlights of a convention, visit a tattoo studio, or see what an artist is up to. This instant gratification is something that printed publications can't compete with – even the Queen is taking to Twitter before the newspapers have a chance to get hold of the royal press releases – and from a magazine editor's point of view, it can be quite disheartening.

But one thing that motivates me to get into the office is the knowledge that the team here at Total Tattoo Magazine brings you – the reader – the very best there is from the world of ink. Our unbiased convention coverage takes you to events that are really worth visiting – without a filtered photograph anywhere in sight. Our news section handily condenses everything into just a few pages (instead of multiple tabs open across your computer) and brings you genuinely worthwhile competitions and giveaways. And, perhaps most importantly, our substantial in-depth interviews enable you to meet some of the most amazing tattooists on the planet. Read about their art and what it means to them... not just what they're eating or wearing.

At a convention recently, I was talking to a tattooist whose work had been featured in Total Tattoo. I gave him a copy, and he was visibly thrilled. "This," he said, pointing to the magazine, "means so much more than this", indicating his phone. Comments like that, and the knowledge that our humble magazine is held in such high regard by so many people in the tattoo world, are what keeps me at my desk every day.

Perry
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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

IT'S OFFICIAL - TATTOOISTS ARE HISTORY!



The prestigious Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (DNB) is a huge resource of information on people who have had a major influence on British history and culture, from the Romans to the present day. It contains nearly 60,000 concise biographies by specialist authors, and it now includes two notable names from tattoo history! In the new updated edition of this classic reference work, published in May, there are entries for George Burchett and Sutherland Macdonald – written and researched by Dr Matt Lodder (who has also provided Total



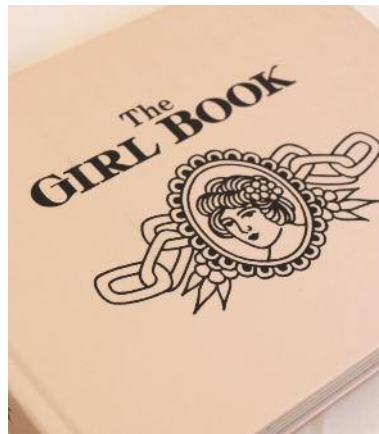
Tattoo with many interesting features over the years). George Burchett (1872-1953) counted many of the crowned heads of Europe amongst his clientele and is surely one of the most celebrated tattooists in history. And – factoid alert! – Sutherland Macdonald (1860-1942) is said to have been the first person ever to use the word “tattooist”. He invented the term – a contraction of the phrase “tattoo artist” – because he thought it sounded more professional than “tattooer”. You can access the DNB free-of-charge via your local public library. Go to www.oxforddnb.com and find the new tattoo entries with a simple name search, or use these direct links: George Burchett www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/100995 Sutherland Macdonald www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/100996

BOOK REVIEW

The Girl Book By Isaac Starr

A4 landscape hardback with leatherette cover
Published by LLL Books
Available from Gentlemen's Tattoo Flash

This book is the third in a series that also includes 'The Skull Book' and 'The Rose Book'. It's essentially a collection of modern-day flash sheets (primarily head and face studies) all centred on the topic of 'Girls'. Its 170 pages are packed with designs from the great and the good of the tattoo world – including Valarie Vargas, Filip Leu, Dan Smith and Dane Mancini to name but a few – and with every conceivable style represented, it's a treasure chest of inspiration.



WIN TICKETS TO ROBIN HOOD SHOW



The 3rd Robin Hood Tattoo Festival will take place at the Cotgrave Welfare Club in Nottinghamshire on 20th and 21st August. Small but perfectly formed, this fabulous little happening features brilliant artists from around the UK and some great vendors to boot. Check out www.robinhoodtattoofestival.co.uk for all the details. It's an exclusive event, with only a limited number of tickets available – but we've got a pair to give away. To be in with a chance of winning, all you have to do is answer this question:

What was Robin Hood famous for?

- A. He stole from the rich to give to the poor
- B. He played for Nottingham Forest
- C. He invented the hoodie

Email your answer to comps@totaltattoo.co.uk with the subject line ROBIN HOOD. Closing date July 31st and usual terms and conditions apply (see page 5).

TOTAL TATTOO NOW ON INSTAGRAM

We'll be posting great tattoos, news, information and exclusive competitions.

Follow us on
[#totaltattoomagazine](https://www.instagram.com/totaltattoomagazine)



ARTIST WANTED

Tribune Tattoo in Caerleon, South Wales, is moving to pastures new (and bigger!) and looking to recruit another tattoo artist to join their merry little band. Studio experience, a sweet portfolio and a good attitude are essential. The ideal person will have an established client base already, as there won't be a huge potential for walk-ins. If interested, email lizbuckland@live.com

WIN A SUMMER SURVIVAL KIT

What better way to keep cool than with this killer prize – courtesy of the guys at Killer Ink. You can win a New Era 9Fifty snapback cap, a t-shirt from the Luxury Hustle Wear range designed by Anrijs Straume, and a tube of Ink-Eeze sunscreen – a water-resistant vegan-friendly moisturising suncream specially formulated for tattooed skin with an ingredients list (including cucumber and liquorice extracts) that reads like a recipe for a fabulous cocktail! We have three of these summer prize bundles to give away, and all you have to do to be in with a chance of winning is email your t-shirt size (S, M or L) and address to comps@totaltattoo.co.uk with the subject line SUMMER SUN. Closing date July 30th. For terms and conditions see p5. Check out www.killerinktattoo.co.uk for more product details.



ANCIENT EGYPTIAN TATTOOS



Archaeologists at the University of Stanford have discovered some of the world's most ancient tattoos on a 3,000 year old female Egyptian mummy. The heavily-inked torso was found at the Deir el-Medina site (where the artisans and workers who built the tombs in the Valley of the Kings once lived). When the mummy was first examined it was assumed that the numerous marks on the body had been painted on as part of a burial ritual, but further investigations revealed that these were in fact tattoos that the woman had received during her lifetime. Although their meanings are not fully understood, many of the images are known to be linked with various religious beliefs. They include snakes, cattle, lotus blossoms, divine eyes and abstract designs. Their placement on the body is thought to be highly symbolic – the throat tattoos, for example, perhaps injecting special magical powers into the woman's speaking or singing voice.

MILE HIGH (TATTOO) CLUB

American football quarterback Johnny Manziel (formerly of the Cleveland Browns) astounded his fans when he posted a photo of himself getting tattooed whilst on a private jet. The photograph was reportedly taken mid-air, and shows the former star having his right arm tattooed with script.



CHARITY AIRBRUSHING

Benjamin Lloyd, an airbrush artist from Tauranga, New Zealand, is using his creative skills to bring much-needed fun and laughter to young patients at a children's hospital. A video of him using his airbrushing equipment to 'tattoo' a five year old boy went viral – with more than a quarter of a million Likes in one day – after he pledged that if he got just fifty Likes he would give airbrush tattoos to all the children in the Starship paediatric hospital. Benjamin had been creating airbrush tattoos for friends and family (using non-toxic ink that can easily be washed off). He got the idea for his hospital project after seeing children's amazed reactions, and noticing how the 'tattoos' seemed to boost their confidence. You can see Benjamin's work at www.facebook.com/BenjaminLloydCollection. If you would like to make a donation towards art materials for the continuation of the project, please visit: www.youcaring.com/benjamin-lloyd-art-collection-576958

WIN BLACKPOOL TATCON TICKETS!

Tatcon Blackpool is back and better than ever. This year will see entertainment, traders and tattooing of the highest calibre, graffiti displays, and a 3D seminar by none other than Tofi. The event will take place on 19th to 21st August at the Norbreck Castle Hotel (19th is trade only). Check out www.tatconblackpool.co.uk for all the latest. The organisers have given us three pairs of weekend tickets for three lucky Total Tattoo readers. To be in with a chance of winning, all you need to do is tell us...



What is the name of the famous landmark on Blackpool's seafront?

- A. Eiffel Tower
- B. Tower of London
- C. Blackpool Tower

Email your answer to comps@totaltattoo.co.uk with the subject line TATCON BLACKPOOL. Closing date July 31st and usual terms and conditions apply (see page 5).

SOMETHING IN THE WATER...

The makers of BLK Powder have launched a brand new product that they describe as "liquid magic". BLK Plasma 3-in-1 Body Art and Tattoo Cleanser and Aftercare can be used before, during and after tattooing – to sterilise the tattoo area, wash the skin throughout the session (in the same way as you would use green soap) and, we're told, speed the healing process and dramatically reduce redness afterwards. It's anti-microbial, non-irritant and fragrance-free, and contains no alcohol, petroleum, lanolin or oils. Most importantly, we're assured it won't fade or compromise your tattoos. Ultra-pure water and proprietary hypochlorite technology are the key ingredients. BLK Plasma will be available from Starr Tattoo Supplies and you can email emma.moss@blkpowder.com if you'd like more information.



ARTISTS AND GUESTS WANTED

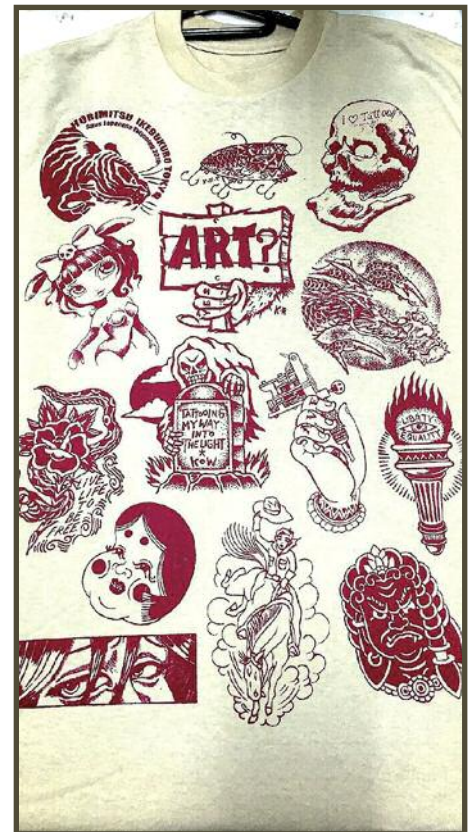
Rendition Tattoo Studio in

Nuneaton are currently taking on new artists and guests. Ideally you'll have your own client base, but it's not essential. (We have four resident artists and an apprentice but we're still struggling to meet demand!) Email renditionnuneaton@gmail.com, find them at 120 Queens Road, Nuneaton, CV11 5LG, or check out Facebook/instagram and www.nuneatontattoostudio.co.uk

SAVE TATTOOING IN JAPAN

Japanese tattooing is one of the most beautiful art forms in the world – and now it could be one of the most endangered as well. It's all to do with the enforcement of the Japanese 'Medical Practitioners Act', which states that only licensed doctors are allowed to perform permanent cosmetic treatments. This legislation – originally aimed at beauty salons with questionable standards of hygiene – is now being interpreted in a way that criminalises tattooists. There have already been several arrests, and with the possibility of fines of up to 300,000 Yen (about £1800) or 20 days in jail for those convicted, the situation is dire. There is a very real fear that Japanese tattoo artists will no longer be able to work unless they get a medical license. The police crackdown is causing hardship across the profession, and the amazing and beautiful legacy of tattooing in Japan, unbroken since the Edo period, is under serious threat.

The SAVETATTOOING IN JAPAN project is doing all it can to ensure that Japanese tattooing continues to develop and flourish, and that freedom of expression is respected and honoured. Their aim is to join forces with tattoo fans globally, and they warmly invite everyone to follow them on Facebook, sign the online petition at www.savetattooing.org and even buy the campaign t-shirt! They told us, "No matter who you are or where you are from, we appreciate your support. Thank you one and all."



日本の伝統、表現の自由を守るために
SAVE TATTOOING in Japan



Thomas Wooldridge (aka Tom Leppard)

1935-2016

Obituary by Paul Sayce

Thomas Wooldridge never bothered much with the big bad outside world. The world he lived in had everything he needed, and the small matter of everyday life as we know it didn't matter much to him. In fact all Tom really cared about was making people happy and being a good guy. And a good guy is what he was. I say 'was', because on June 12th this year, Tom died at the Meallmore Lodge Care Home in Inverness, Scotland, aged 80. For many years, he'd lived a reclusive life on the Isle of Skye, only leaving his little self-built home a couple of times a month to travel by kayak to the mainland to pick up supplies. Of course in the tattooing world we also knew Tom as the 'Leopard Man' and a former Guinness World Record holder for his extensive tattoo coverage.

Tom didn't have any particular affection for the leopard as an animal *per se*. He just saw its distinctive spots as something that would be easy for a tattooist to execute – and for himself to take, bearing in mind the many hours he knew he would have to spend under the tattooist's needle. The plan to become the 'Leopard Man' came about when Tom moved to Scotland after he left the armed forces. He found there was very little paid work to be had and decided that he would become a freak (Tom loved calling himself a freak) and make a living by exhibiting himself at local shows and the new tattoo conventions he had starting hearing about. So in 1984 or thereabouts he got in touch with Tattoo Jock, who had a studio in Kings Cross, and travelled down to London to start getting his body covered in the big cat markings he would become so well known for.



But it wasn't Jock who did Tom's first work. It was Ted Zeek, who was working with Jock at the time. Soon, though, Jock (who, it must be said, wasn't slow in seeing an opportunity to make a bit of money) took over from Ted. This was fine at first, until Tom realised that Jock wasn't tattooing as quickly as he usually did and was charging a lot of money for not much work. Plus Tom specifically wanted all his spots to be the same size, but Jock didn't seem to have listened and was just doing whatever he wanted. So Tom took his custom elsewhere, to Barry Louvaine's in Earlsfield. Tracy, Barry's apprentice, started covering Tom's legs then Barry then took over when she left. Things went smoothly until Barry started drinking heavily and working in a slapdash way, which prompted another move to another tattooist. This time it was Chris Connett in Kingston, who tattooed the side of Tom's head. But Tom

didn't like the shade of orange Chris used to fill in the gaps and he moved on again. Gary White, on the South Coast, did most of his face, and then Tom had fangs fitted to his dentures to give him a more catlike appearance. (Tom gave me all this information in a tape-recorded interview in 1995. There may well have been others who had tattooed Tom over the years, but the aforementioned names were the only ones he mentioned in that conversation.)

It was John Lomax of The Wildcat Collection Ltd who was instrumental in securing Tom's record as the world's most tattooed man by sending Guinness pictures of his tattoos and a video of him having his bodysuit completed. (Tom's record later passed to Lucky Diamond Rich.) Tom received a lot of press coverage over the years and it was largely favourable. A few complete fabrications made him laugh, though, such as the totally untrue report that Michael Jackson wanted to buy his body when he died, and a bizarre story about leopard worship. And of course there were all the TV interviews, where Tom always gave an excellent account of himself.

Tom was really a bit of a loner and he never got on with his family (although in our interview he did state that he only called himself Tom Leppard to save them from embarrassment). But he was a very warm person who would go out of his way to make people happy. He was a good man, and a good guy to the tattooing world. He was someone who should be remembered for being there when tattooing wasn't always as liked as it is today.

RIP my friend... until we meet again.

FERANK MANSEED APPEAL

We were very sad to hear the news that the much-loved Ferank Manseed, from Northside Tattooz has recently suffered a stroke. Northside have contacted us to let us know about a series of forthcoming tattoo events where all the money raised will be donated to Ferank and his family. These fundraisers will feature resident artists from Northside, as well as tattooists from across the world including Izayas Sottaz (Switzerland), Deeper Magic Studios (USA) and Primitive Tattoo (Poland).

At present, there are six dates:

Sunday 3rd July
Saturday 9th July
Sunday 10th July
Thursday 14th July
Saturday 16th July
Saturday 23rd July

For more information, or if you would like to take part, call Northside Tattooz on 0191 221 0328 or 0191 297 1327.





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Freddy Corbin

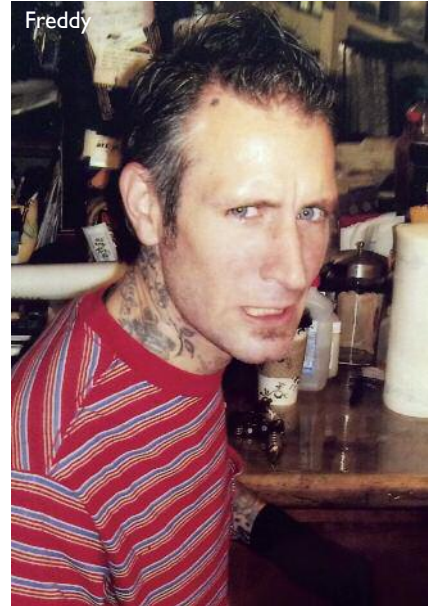
Interview James Sandercock
Pictures Freddy Corbin

Freddy Corbin is a tattooer I've always wanted to interview. I'll be straight up and honest with you, I've just always wanted to hang out with him. Who wouldn't? He's part of the legendary West Coast US tattoo scene, he played Irish Freddy in *Sons of Anarchy*, and Vice TV recently made a wonderful four-part documentary about him (it's part of their *Tattoo Age* series – watch them all!) Freddy's brand of cool isn't manufactured or contrived. It's effortless and it comes from the heart.

Freddy has been tattooing for over 30 years now. He got his first tattoo at Lyle Tuttle's shop – at #30 7th St, San Francisco – way back in the mid 1980s when the city was in the midst of the tattoo revolution driven by Ed Hardy. Freddy went on to work with Ed, then in 1998 opened up his own shop across the Bay and called it Temple Tattoo. He still works out of that shop, and it's earned its own place in tattoo history. If you're on a US West Coast tattoo pilgrimage, you have to go there.

Our first topic of conversation is contemporary tattooing. "The internet has changed everything," Freddy begins, "from how-to videos to fantastic reference. If you want to do a tiger, you can just go on Instagram and screenshot a Chris Garver or a Mike Rubendall. You used to have to consult a reference library of books you'd collected on your travels, but that's not necessary now. And you don't need an apprenticeship any more either; there are so many supply companies, you just take your pick and get started. A lot of people tattoo out of their houses and have never even worked in a shop. They have huge online followings and that's very different. I've been in the same city, in the same spot, for almost 30 years. I tattoo a lot of working class people and I have a lot of repeat customers. I make a living, but it would be a totally different if I started now. The pie is sliced so much thinner. Once, we were one of three shops, then we were one of ten, then twelve... and that's not including the guys working from home."





So what are the positives of this access-all-areas pass the internet has given us? "For me, it's the quality," says Freddy. "The bar is now set so high. When I first started tattooing, you knew who all the great tattooers were – Ed Hardy, Filip Leu, Jack Rudy... There was like a dozen incredible artists, and then a lot of really good ones. Now people get good so fast! After five years they are doing some amazing shit. Back in the day, you could be limited by something as simple as your geographic location. If you lived in San Francisco you could go and visit some top artists and pick up some tricks – but not so if you lived in Ohio. Now the really great stuff is just a click away. And that's a good thing."

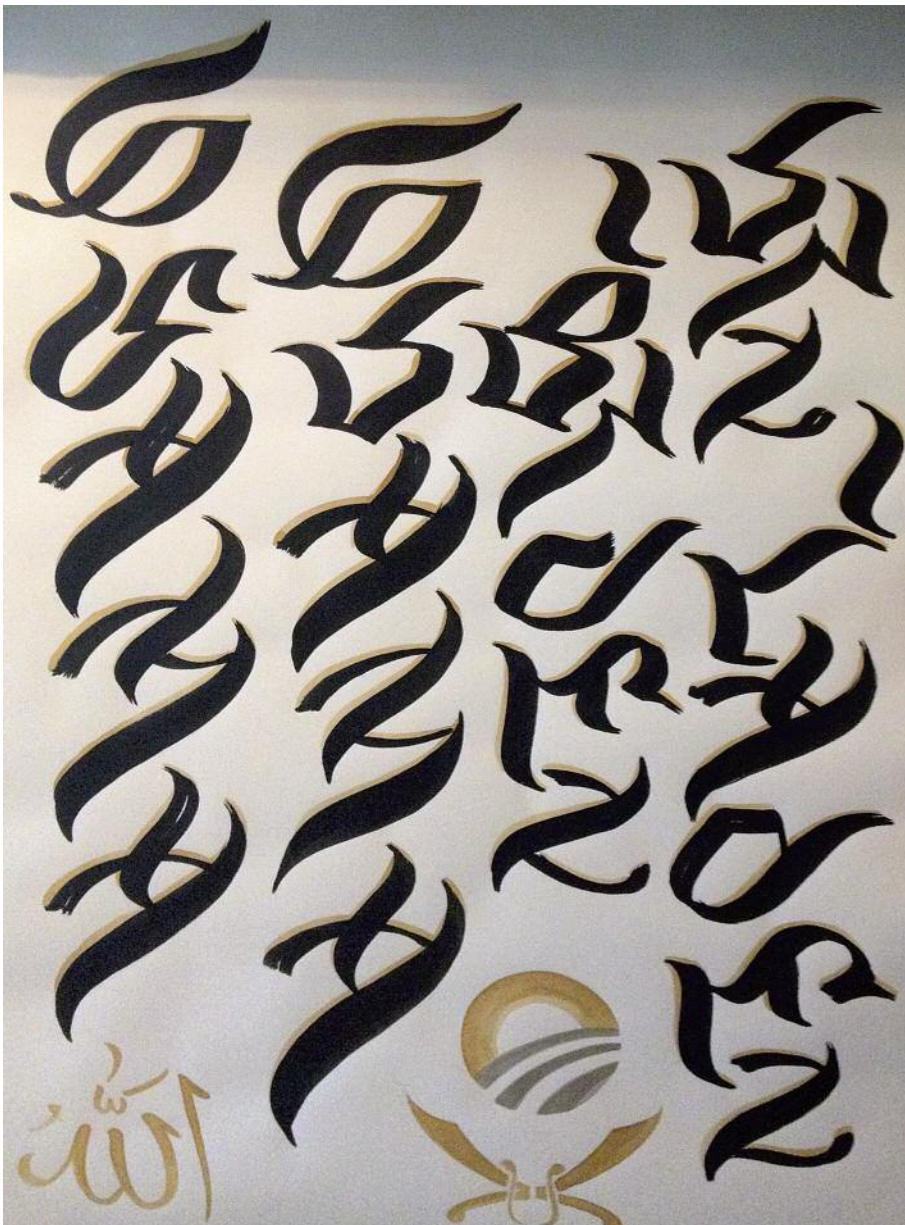
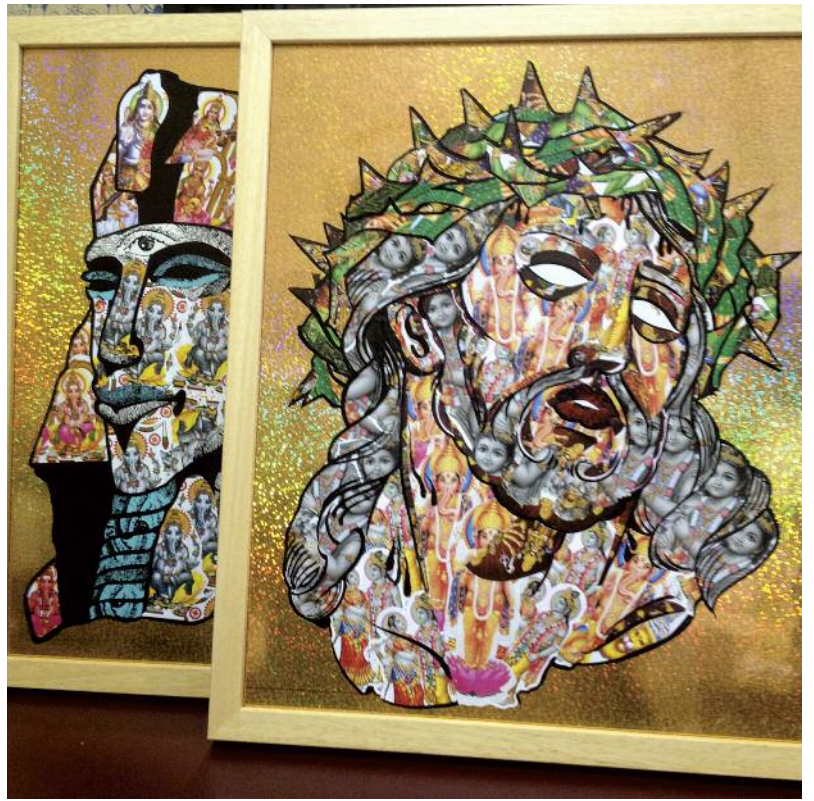




And the downsides? "Some people who have been in the business for a long time are finding it hard to make a living. That's kind of a bummer. And maybe things come too easy," Freddy continues. "I think the master and student thing is getting lost, and for me that's a big part of becoming a tattooer. You respect it. You earn it. It's not that there's anything wrong with jumping in and just doing it by yourself, but there's a bit of a disconnect there."

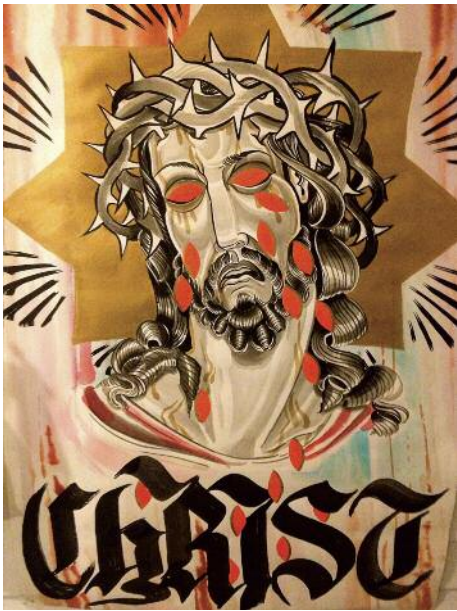
So does Freddy feel there a tendency for the new generation of artists to see tattooing as easy-come easy-go rather than as something for life? "Sure, it definitely seems that way. For a lot of people it's more like a hobby now, and I'm not into that at all. It does bug me when somebody who has only been tattooing for a few years shows their friends how to do it, then each of those friends gets another five people started... The foundations are so shaky. But somehow this thing of kids getting machines and tattooing each other harks back to the 'Fuck it, I'm going to do it' attitude of punk rock, and that gives it a different perspective. I totally get it. And that's why I can't really be mad about it. Yes, it's a bit of a bummer that it's so easy to get into the business these days, but at the same time I kind of admire that way of thinking - 'I'm just going to go for it. Fuck what anyone else says.' I try to be positive. I don't want to walk around being angry. I love what I do and I love tattooing. God knows what I'd be doing if I wasn't a tattooer."





Freddy, Chris Conn, Nate Sponsler

“What it can create, though, is bubbles,” Freddy continues. “People go from one tattooer who’s maybe working from home, to another who’s maybe working in some chichi boutique shop, and they don’t really interact with the tattoo community. It’s not because they don’t want to. It’s just the way it happens. A big part of becoming a tattooer is making those pilgrimages – going Switzerland to get tattooed by Filip Leu, or Amsterdam to get tattooed by Hanky Panky, or whoever is important to you. I’m sad that a lot of that has gone. I’m still doing it! If they are good I get a big one and if they are not so good I get a smaller one!” [He bursts out laughing] “I met Xed LeHead, Tomas Tomas and Jondix at the first London Convention. To take that sacred geometry stuff and mix it with a negative space mandala and make it so psychedelic... that is so up my alley. What they were doing was something completely new. The next year Xed tattooed me, and Tomas Tomas the year after. I don’t do tattoos like that, but I love that kind of stuff.” And Freddy tells me he is still saving space for artists who excite him.



Heath Preheim, Derrick Snodgrass and Freddy in 2007

Freddy has been machine-in-hand now for 30 years, and he's seen tattooing go through more than a few changes. The big difference now, of course, is the involvement of mass media and big business. As Freddy points out, "a lot of those crazy punks are now running stuff" which has led to what once was considered underground and dangerous being integrated into the everyday mainstream. "Everything that used to be taboo – rock 'n' roll, bikers, tattooing – has become boutique chic. You go into the grocery store and you hear Ozzy Osbourne! And some elements of tattooing have become like stadium rock. But younger artists are saying, 'OK, we'll just do this ourselves. I want to get tattooed and I want it to look kind of fucked up.' So prison-style tattoos are kind of in vogue right now!"



Bill Wissman, Charlie Cartwright, Bill Salmon and Freddy in 1990

"Creatively, the tattoo world is changing in a lot of positive ways," Freddy continues, "but it's changing in some not-so-positive ways too. I hate the fact that people outside of tattooing are queuing up to make money off the back of it – and that includes reality TV, even though a lot of my dear friends are involved in it. The thing I liked about the Vice documentaries – whether it was myself, Mike Rubendall or Grime – was that they were a window into our real lives. As a tattooed person, I can now function within society without a problem, which is cool, but I do miss that time when tattoos were taboo and we were scumbags. Tattooing was this wonderful little secret. It was like you had found your tribe. If my car broke down, I could just look in the phone book and ring the local tattoo shop. We stuck together and did shit for each other. A little bit of that has been lost, just in the sheer numbers. It's inevitable."



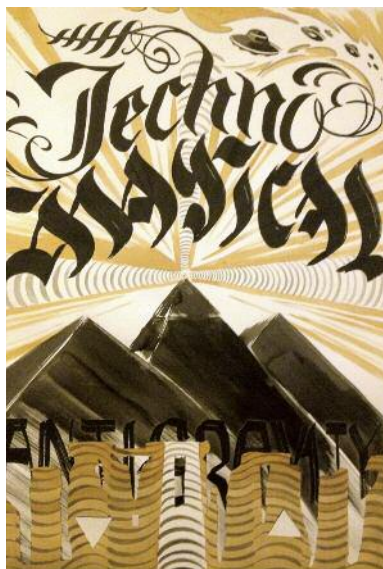
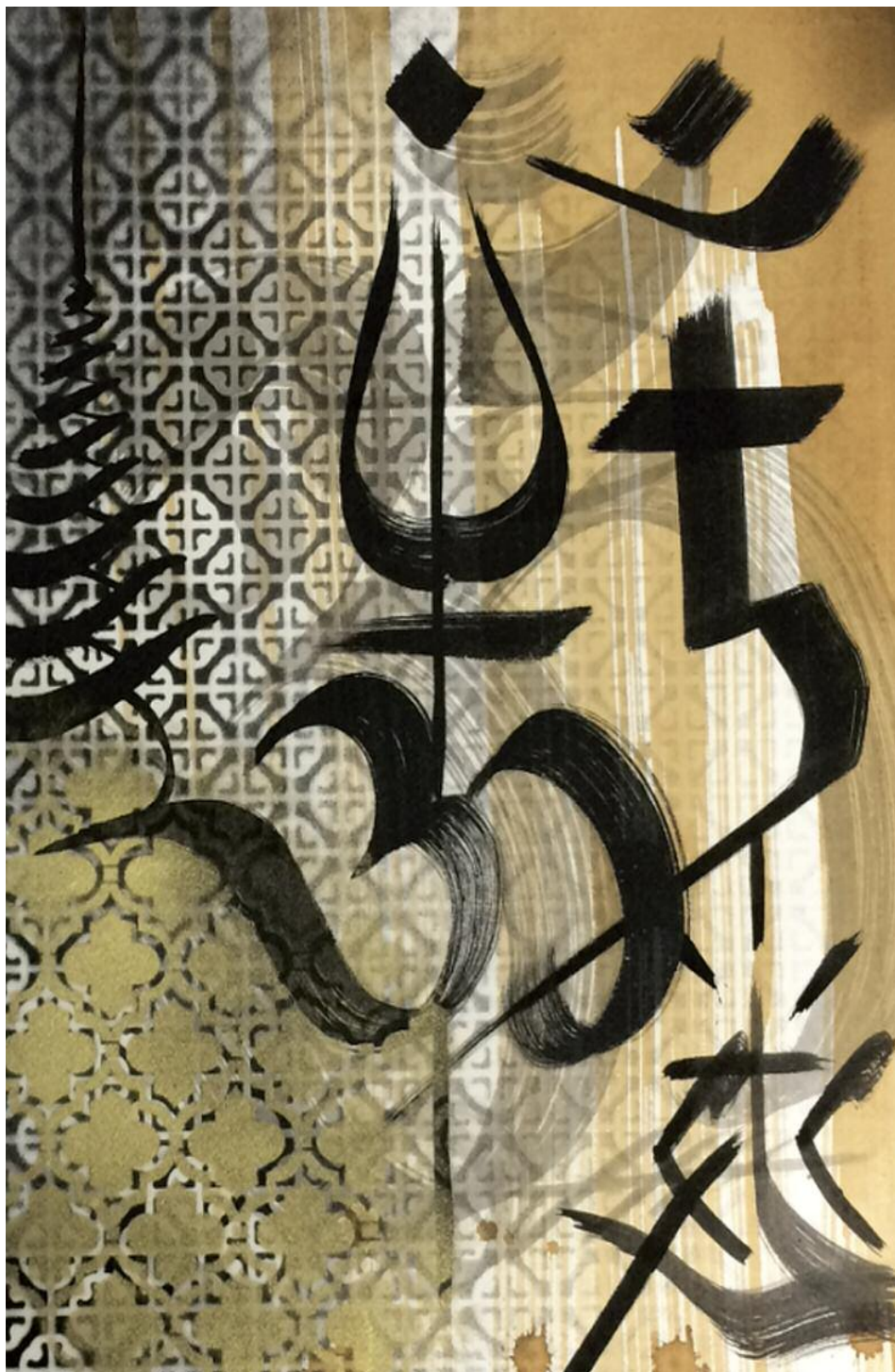
It's always seemed to me that if you treat tattooing right it will do the same for you. Freddy has always done just that; he's given tattooing a lot. Look round any convention in any country on any given weekend and you'll see Freddy's creative influence, whether it's a sugar skull or slicked back hair with a punk rock attitude. He lit the blue touch paper for a whole new generation of tattooers, but I wondered what he felt tattooing had given him? "Oh man! Tattooing has given me freedom. It's given me a trade to support my family. It's given me travel like I never otherwise would have experienced, and it's given me a network of friends around the world. I've gone to Japan with a couple of hundred bucks in my pocket and been able to stay for a month because I could tattoo there. I will always be grateful to tattooing."

I was curious to know whether Freddy remembered the first time he saw a tattoo. "Yes, I know exactly the moment. It was around 1985. My girlfriend at the time had a little hand-poked tattoo, a pseudo Egyptian eye, and I just fell in love with it. I felt like, I'm not in the military so I don't want a battleship or a pin-up. I can love that stuff and appreciate it, but it's not what I want to wear. *This* was decorating the body with beautiful designs. So I tattooed myself with one of Leo Zulueta's designs that I got from 'Tattoo Time' [Ed Hardy's seminal publication]. When I saw *New Tribalism*, that was the game-changer for me. I knew this was what I wanted to do, whatever it was going to take. I thought, 'I'll leave all my friends behind... I'm going to go there and hang out with these people, and bring them gifts, or weed, whatever they want, until I can start scrubbing their toilets and answering their phone... Eventually I got the keys to the shop and I started tattooing.' And that's how it all began.

As our interview draws to a close, there's one big question that needs to be asked. What keeps a person so in love with tattooing for three decades? "I remember at Lyle Tuttle's, back in the 80s, seeing people getting tattooed despite the fact that you couldn't get a job if you had loads of ink," Freddy recalls. "My mind was blown right open then. I think tattoos are totally magical." I couldn't agree more.

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To watch the first part of Vice TV's Freddy Corbin documentary, head to www.vice.com/en_uk/video/freddy-corbin-part-1



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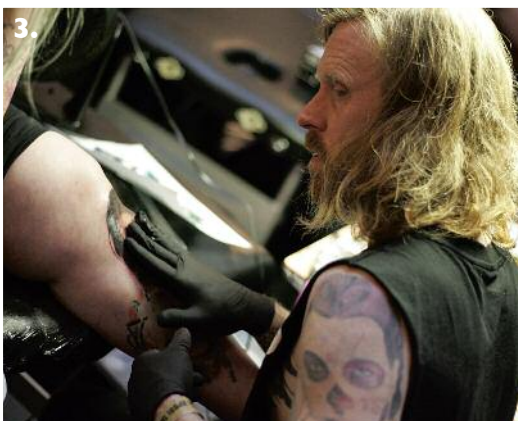
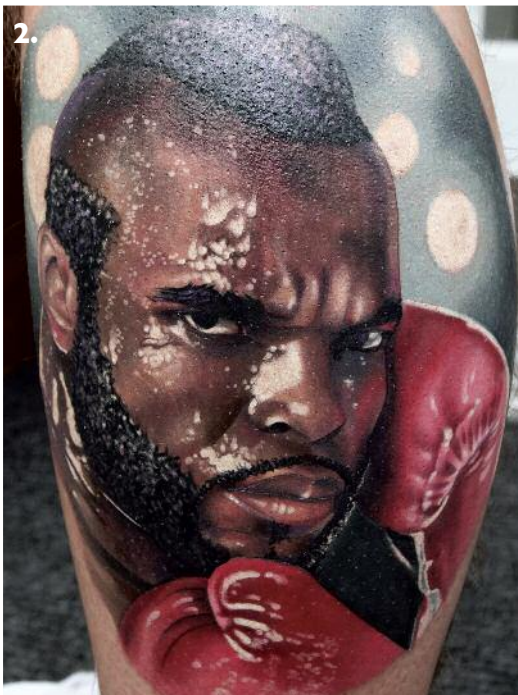
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LIVERPOOL TATTOO CONVENTION

Ladies and gentlemen, it's time for the friendly Liverpool Tattoo Convention to welcome us once again! The grand Adelphi Hotel – that strange warren of conference rooms and bars resembling a set design for a Wes Anderson film – was transformed into a paradise for tattoo collectors, artists and traders, and we all looked forward to an entertaining weekend of high quality tattooing.

Ant and Hazel (from Design 4 Life) and their team worked incredibly hard, not just during the weekend but also while setting up the show. Friday is Artists' Day, with all the studios and traders being greeted upon arrival and helped with unloading – followed by plenty of time to socialise and attend seminars before the business of the weekend really starts. The Industry Awards were presented on the Friday evening, and attendees were treated to live bands and karaoke before retiring to their hotel beds.

The theme of the convention - 'Respecting the Past, Celebrating the Present and Embracing the Future' – was very much in evidence, with the Bristol Tattoo Museum positioned near Banana Tattoo, and younger studios working in amongst all the established artists. Overall, the artist list was, once again, excellent. Not only was the quality of the work incredibly high, but the sheer variety was staggering. It was a great opportunity for potential clients to check out different artists' styles, and for other artists to watch their peers working. As well as the valued local support, tattooists came from across the UK, Europe and America to take part. The high standard of work was further demonstrated during the competitions, where both tattooists and clients could display their pieces to the public.

1. alex rattray, red hot and blue
2. chris heighan, santa cruz kustom club
3. matt 'oddboy' barrett-jones, real art



Five years at the same familiar venue means the organisers know how to lay everything out efficiently. They work within the constraints of the building to give us the show we know and love. The public are given maps upon arrival (printed on the show guide) and the smaller tattooing and trade rooms are clearly signposted.

The saying goes 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' – and why would they need to? As in previous years, we were treated to live bands, tattoo duels and a variety of other performances – with everything running on time. Richie Bulldog was the Master of Ceremonies for the weekend, and remained superbly cool throughout. The Fuel Girls raised the temperature on stage, and we were also entertained by some great musicians, including Delta blues and roots specialist Big Joe Bone, who was my personal favourite. A fun addition to the show was the Liverpool Tattoo Convention Photobooth, which gave out free souvenir photographs for those who were ready for their close-up.

As I walked around the show, I chatted to people to find out what they thought of the event.



4. richard guy, private studio
5. emilio winter, house of wolves
6. dane grannon, creative vandals
7. geezy edge, flesh tattoo studio
8. cathy sue, dexterity ink
9. bex lowe, royal owl tattoo
10. alex wright, grindhouse tattoo productions
11. angus wall, awol tattoos
12. daz crane, alan's tattoo studio
13. alan proctor, twit two tattoo
14. tony ciavarrò, stinky monkey (usa)



Hannah - Stag and Raven

Is this your first time at the Liverpool Tattoo Convention?

No, this is our second year as a trader at Liverpool.

How are you finding it?

We're having a good time. We've been really really busy this year, and we've had a very positive response from the artists, which is great.

What do you like best?

I like the fact that the artists and the traders are all in the same area, and you have a free flow of people, just having drinks and walking around and enjoying it.

There's also entertainment throughout the day. I've been to other conventions where there's been a bit of separation between artists and traders. This feels more inclusive.

What could be improved?

It's really hot in here! [laughs] Apart from that, we love it here. Good food, good drinks good people... it's our favourite convention to work at!

Will you back next year?

That's the plan.

How would you sum it up, in three words?

Friendly, busy and diverse!

15.



16.



There were lots of favourable comments about the food and drink, and the entertainment too. Some people complained about the heat – and yes, it was hot in the convention. But the organisers did bring in air conditioning units to cope with the unusually warm weather.

On the final day, I grabbed a portion of chips and a £1.70 pint of Carlsberg and took some time out. The tattooists were hard at work, and a wonderful mix of music played in the background. It was loud enough to be heard, but not so loud that it distracted everyone; it just added to the happily buzzing atmosphere. Some of the smaller areas were very congested with a high volume of foot traffic, but this wasn't a major issue – more of a reflection on the success of the event.

As the show drew to a natural close, and all the cling-film wrapped customers began to leave, I overheard someone say "I'm definitely coming back next year!" As with all great conventions, Liverpool ended on a high note and left us wanting more. Next year, the show will return for its 10th anniversary on the 5th, 6th and 7th of May, and I for one have already saved the date.

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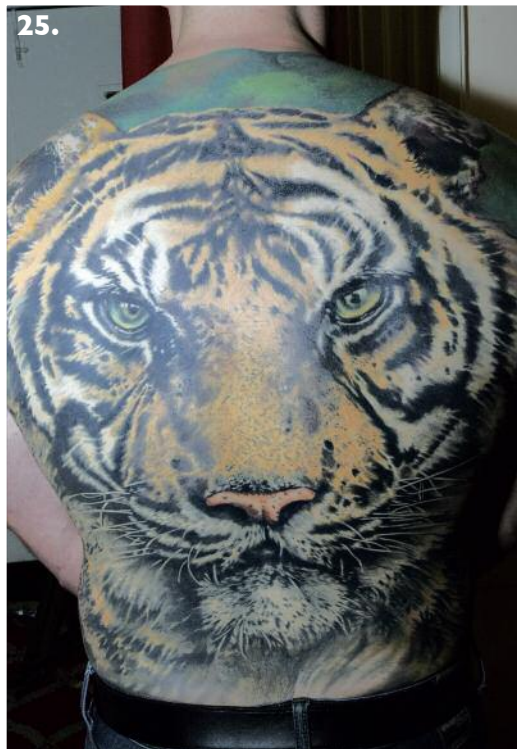


19.



20.





- 15. piotr gie, rock 'n' roll tattoos
- 16. dan banas, bananas tattoo
- 17. adam mcdermott, folklore
- 18. lisa walker, inkabella
- 19. nick camillaire, the ink spot
- 20. theresa gordon-wade, epona
- 21. kamil mocet, kamil tattoos
- 22. michelle maddison, semper tattoo
- 23. phatt german, no regrets
- 24. craig measures, sweet life gallery
- 25. michael rose,
michael rose visual arts

Fae - convention attendee

Is this your first time at Liverpool?

As a convention goer, yes – but I've been before as a trader.

What was your reason for coming today? Do you have plans to get tattooed, or are you just browsing?

I've popped along to see everybody – the tattooists, the people I work with (at Barber DTS) and friends too. I don't have any plans to get tattooed today.

What's good?

There's loads of entertainment, and a good selection of food and drink available. Because it's centrally located, it's easy to get to and everything is all in one place.

Anything bad?

It's quite hot, but that's not the fault of the organisers. It's because of the building and how popular the convention is!

As a convention goer, would you come back again?

Yes, definitely!

26.



27.



28.



Luke Naylor - Hand on Heart

Is this your first time at Liverpool?

Hell no! [laughs] I've been doing the show for six years! It runs so smoothly and it's got a great feel to it, which gets better as it goes along.

Walk-ups or pre-booked?

I always do pre-booked. With my style of realism, I have to take a client with me because there's a lot of preparation beforehand.

What's been this best part of the weekend for you?

Winning the tattoo duel! [laughs] Finally winning after six years has been a great achievement.

Do you think anything could be improved?

If I was going to say anything, it would be to have the bands not playing so loud during the artists' evening. I like coming to the shows to meet fellow artists, to get to know everybody and see what they're doing. I'm getting grumpy – I wanna have a beer with 'em, not shout at 'em! Other than that, it's brilliant!

How would you describe this convention, in three words?

Awesome, sexy and busy. If you do come to work or visit, make sure you're prepared for the hustle and bustle. And have fun!

29.



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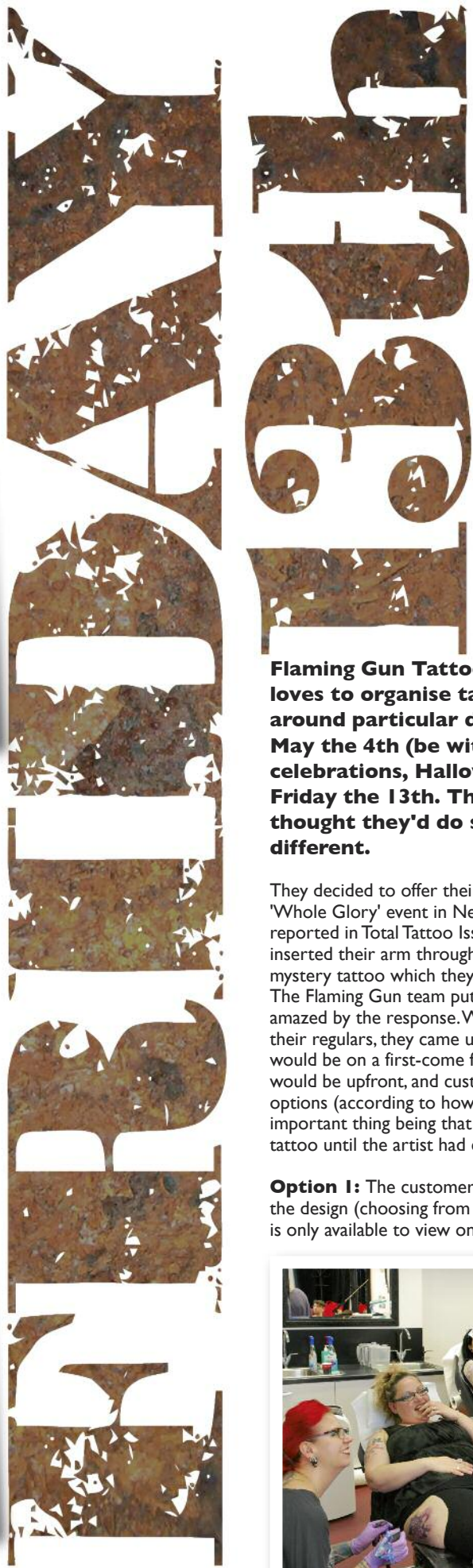


31.





- 26. lauren gow, no regrets
- 27. dave 'the buddha' ashton, all star tattoos
- 28. anrijs straume, bold as brass
- 29. billy, tattoo art
- 30. ryan 'the scientist' smith, studio ink tattoo parlour
- 31. hollie may smith, the old smithy tattoo parlour
- 32. tacho franch, follow your dreams
- 33. gordon killin, do or die
- 34. sophie brown, forever ink
- 35. jak connolly
- 36. adem senturk, fat fugu
- 37. sophie brown, forever ink



Flaming Gun Tattoo Studio in Colchester loves to organise tattoo events themed around particular dates on the calendar – May the 4th (be with you) Star Wars celebrations, Halloween of course, and Friday the 13th. This time round they thought they'd do something a little different.

They decided to offer their own version of Scott Campbell's 'Whole Glory' event in New York last November (which we reported in Total Tattoo Issue 136) – where customers inserted their arm through a hole in the wall to receive a mystery tattoo which they wouldn't see until it was finished. The Flaming Gun team put the idea up on Facebook and were amazed by the response. With the help of suggestions from their regulars, they came up with a formula for the day. It would be on a first-come first-served basis, all payments would be upfront, and customers would choose one of three options (according to how courageous they felt) – the important thing being that nobody would see their own tattoo until the artist had completed it.

Option 1: The customer picks the artist, the placement, and the design (choosing from a sheet the artist has drawn, which is only available to view on the day itself).



Option 2: The customer picks the artist, and can have a chat about preferred design and placement, but the artist makes all the final decisions.

Option 3: The customer picks the artist... and leaves the rest to them!

Julie Clarke, owner and tattooist at Flaming Gun, told us, "We were swamped! The original date filled up within 48 hours of us announcing it, and we had to extend the event to a second day. We could easily have filled a whole week. The level of trust was humbling, with almost all of the 37 customers choosing Option 3."

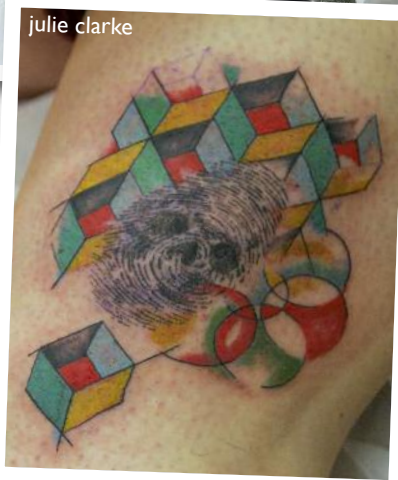
All four tattooists – Julie, Martin Crosthwaite, Doug Fawkes and Alex Bach – had similar feelings about the day. "I think it surprised us how affected we were by the sense of responsibility," Julie said. "We were all a bit stressed at the start. Nervous, but excited too. When I spoke to my first customer, Pete, I thought I'd give him a sneaky chat and a choice, but no, he refused! 'Blindfold me and tattoo whatever wherever, that was the deal', he insisted."

Flaming Gun's customers obviously think very highly of their artists, and being blindfolded simply added an extra dimension of excitement to the normal tattooing process. "Everyone wanted the experience, to take a safe risk, to be surprised," Julie continued. "One customer, Darren, told us, 'I've spent too much time playing safe. This is an interesting way to inject that sense of risk back into my life and feel young again. A bit of living on the edge is what you need from time to time.' We all respected that. It was really lovely having the freedom to 'read' our customers, and tattoo what we thought suited their style and existing ink, and thank goodness they were all happy! It was just a shame there weren't more hours in the day to fit everyone in."

www.flamingguntattoo.com
tel: 01206 575705



martin crosthwaite working



julie clarke



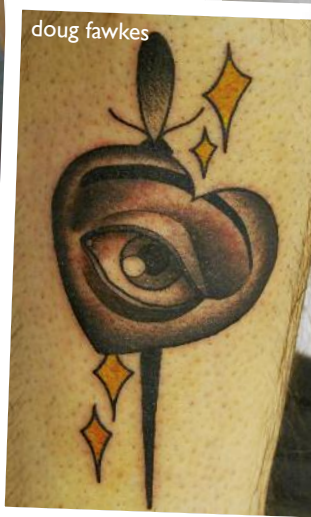
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alex bach



julie clarke



doug fawkes



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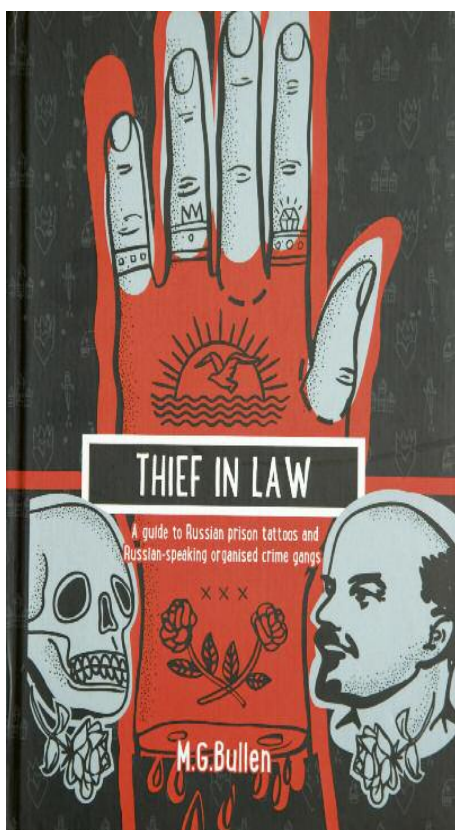
Russian prison tattoos are shrouded in mystery. Numerous artists are inspired by this brutal, linear, monochrome style, but its true origins and meanings are buried deep in the criminal netherworld. Former police officer Mark G Bullen is a well-known authority on the subject and has recently published *'Thief in Law: A Guide to Russian Prison Tattoos and Russian-Speaking Organised Crime Gangs'*. Based on the training courses he delivers to police forces around the world, this is the first such publication in English and it's chock full of rare photos from Russian and European police archives as well as original drawings by artist Alina Malkovskaya. We spoke to the author on the eve of publication, and this is his own very personal account of how he developed his in-depth knowledge. It's a fascinating glimpse into a shadowy world that most people know very little about...

THIEF IN LAW

RUSSIAN PRISON TATTOOS

"I've been interested in Russia all my life," Mark tells me. "As a teenager I used to read all the books I could about the USSR and I've always supported the Russian football team. Before joining the police, aged 23, I lived in Russia for two years. In 1999, when I was 18, I went to St.Petersburg to learn Russian and then I moved to Rostov-on-Don, a large city north of the Caucasus mountains. That was the year Putin became President and things in Russia began to change. *'Rostov-papa, Odessa-mama'* is a phrase you hear when Russians talk about criminal cities, but I thought Rostov was a great place. I loved living there, even at that chaotic time."

"On joining the police in the UK," Mark continues, "I found my ability to speak Russian was actually quite useful. I worked as a response officer, going to 999 calls, doing the usual uniform work, dealing with shoplifters, drink drivers and so on, and at first I needed to speak Russian maybe once a month. Then when the Baltic states joined the EU, and there were so many more Russian-speaking people coming to the UK, it was almost every day. I met some very interesting people and some terrifying ones too."



Mark relates the story of how he once looked after a group of Russian academics, police officers and prosecutors on an information gathering trip to the UK. They had come to find out how the British police work, but they weren't interested in all the PR hype... "One of the professors asked me if I could take them sightseeing instead!" Mark tells me. "I've always found Russians to be cool like that. No bullshit and straight to the point. I then became involved in the International Police Association and ended up running it in my area. We arranged foreign exchanges, and we had cops coming over to work with us from Ukraine, Latvia, France, Luxembourg and America, as well as Russia too of course. That's how, in 2010, I got to spend a month with the St.Petersburg police. Despite how Russia and its police are portrayed in the west, I was really impressed with them. I thought they were highly professional and determined to do a great job. They were hard men, but they liked to have a good time after work and they had real team spirit. They all looked out for each other, and that's something that seems to have disappeared in the British police. The drive to stamp out 'canteen culture' has destroyed a lot of the camaraderie that existed before."

Romanov eagle, the symbol of criminal authority, good luck and strength

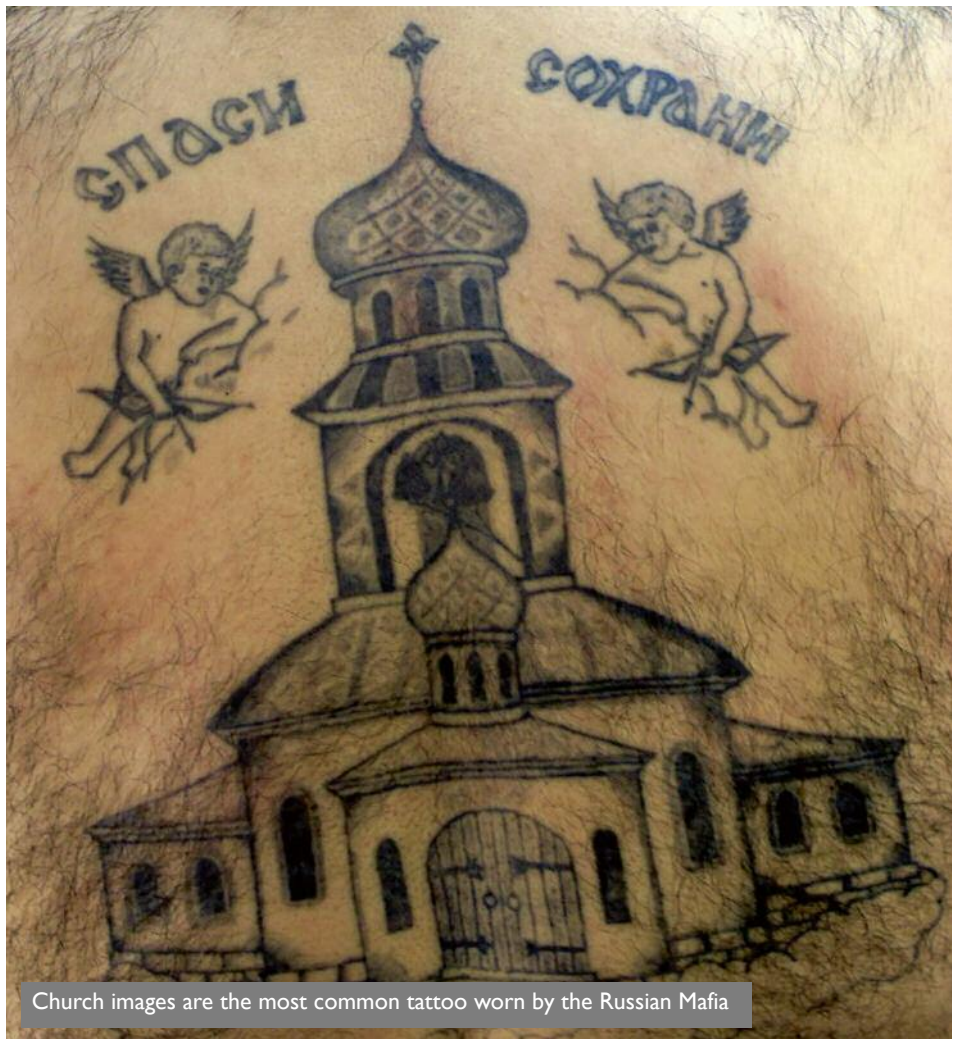


It was during this stay in St Petersburg that Mark first started to learn about Russian criminal tattoos. "I began to notice that almost everyone the cops dealt with had these bluey-green tattoos. Their hands would be covered in them. We have this prison tattoo thing in the UK too, but nothing on the scale that I saw in Russia. I asked the cops I was on patrol with what it was all about, and they explained that all criminals in Russian jails tattoo themselves as a sort of 'criminal CV' – almost like a uniform. A cop could know all about an offender just by reading his tattoos; it was an important part of their job. I found this fascinating, and when I got back to the UK I tried to find out more about it."

"There aren't many books on the subject," Mark tells me. "The main ones are by Danzig Baldaev, a Soviet prison guard in the 1950s and 60s. He documented the tattoos prisoners wore, sketching them and building up a great collection, but his books are of course a bit out of date. That was basically all I could find. I contacted Interpol and the College of Policing Agency (then the National Police Improvement Agency) to ask them for information, but they told me they had nothing. In fact Interpol told me to ask the Americans!" he adds with a wry smile.



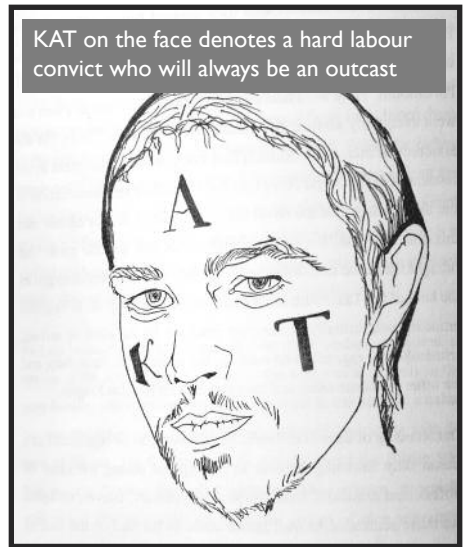
The pirate symbol of an armed robber (a top-ranking thief)



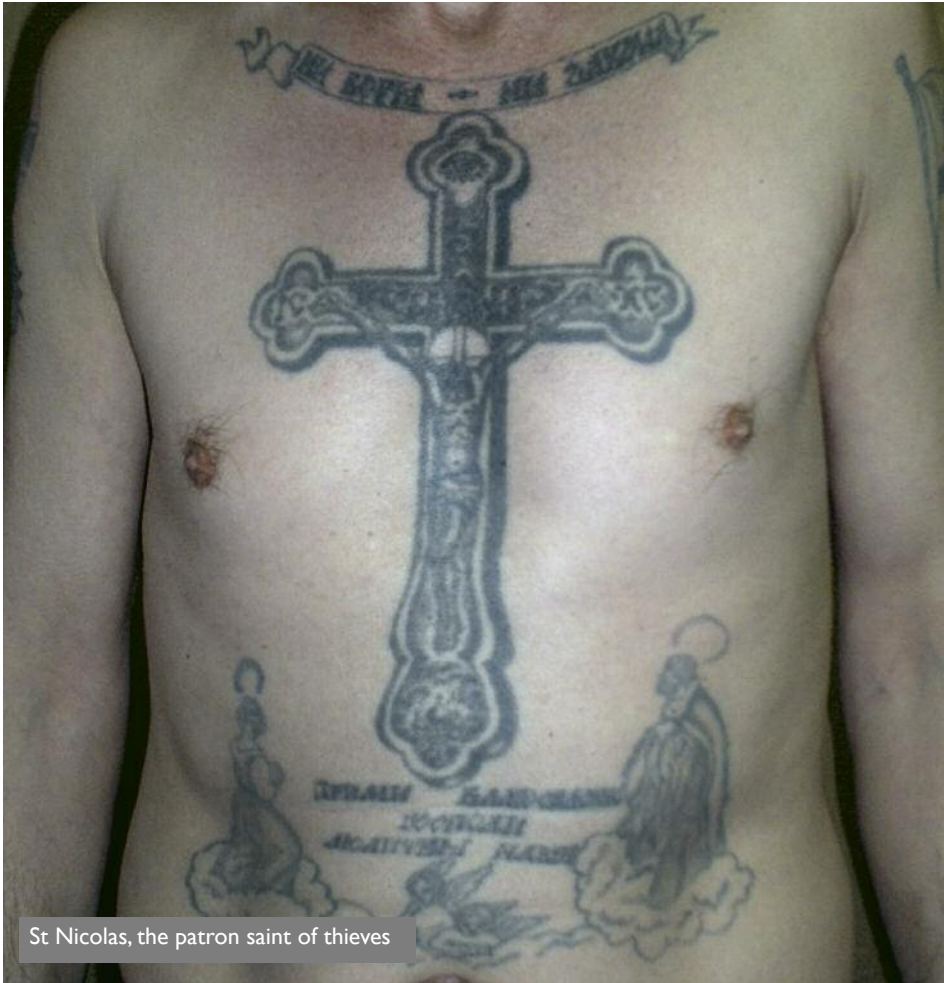
Church images are the most common tattoo worn by the Russian Mafia



Stars on the shoulders show a high criminal status



KAT on the face denotes a hard labour convict who will always be an outcast



St Nicolas, the patron saint of thieves

“So I got friends in Russia to send me a couple of books and I started to learn as much as I could from those. I've got a few tattoos myself, and I really couldn't get enough of the subject! I made a short briefing for the guys at my nick, and this grew into a training package. I had a great boss who supported and encouraged me, and after a couple of years I'd built up a two-hour presentation. I was collecting as much info on Russian criminal tattoos as I possibly could, from Russia and all over the world, and it seemed no other cop in the UK was doing it. Anytime a tattooed Russian was arrested, I'd go and do an 'intelligence interview'. We'd usually end up talking about Spartak Moscow, or their home town, and I'd give them a few cigarettes if they wanted them. They'd always let me photograph their tattoos and they'd explain what each one meant. I gathered quite a collection that way. I also exchanged photos with cops in Russia who wanted to help me with the project. I had hundreds of pics in the end. Prisoners were always happy to talk with me about their tattoos,” Mark recalls. “I think this was partly due to the pride they felt in their ink, but also because they knew they would then receive the respect they felt they deserved from the police officers holding them in custody.”



Stars on the knees show that the wearer will bow to authority



Tattoo symbolising betrayal

THIEF IN LAW

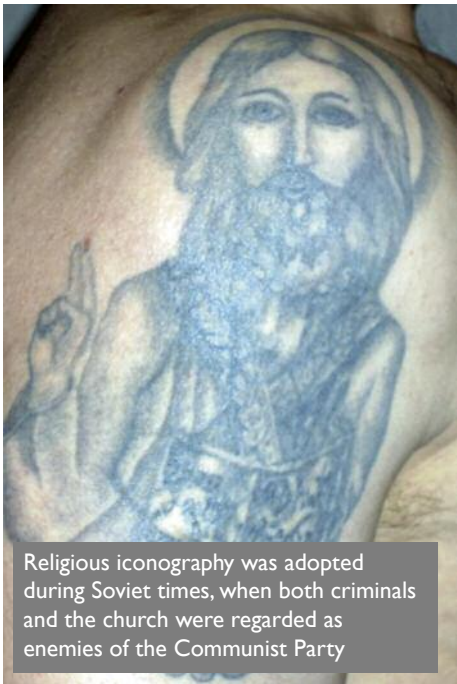
Ring tattoos

ARTIST'S IMPRESSIONS

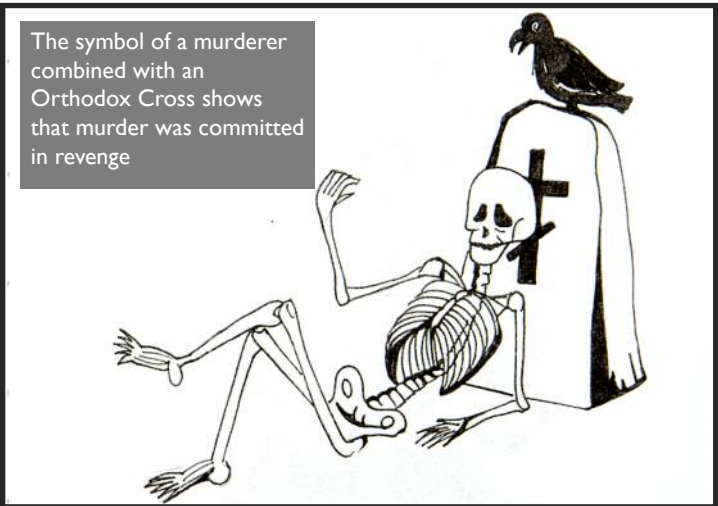
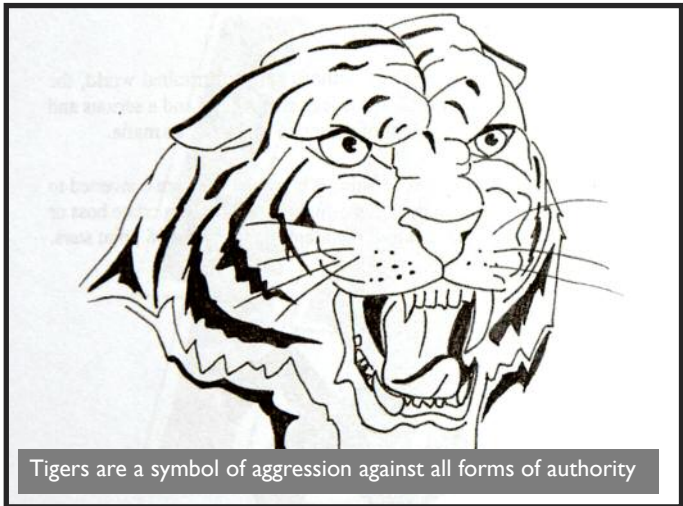
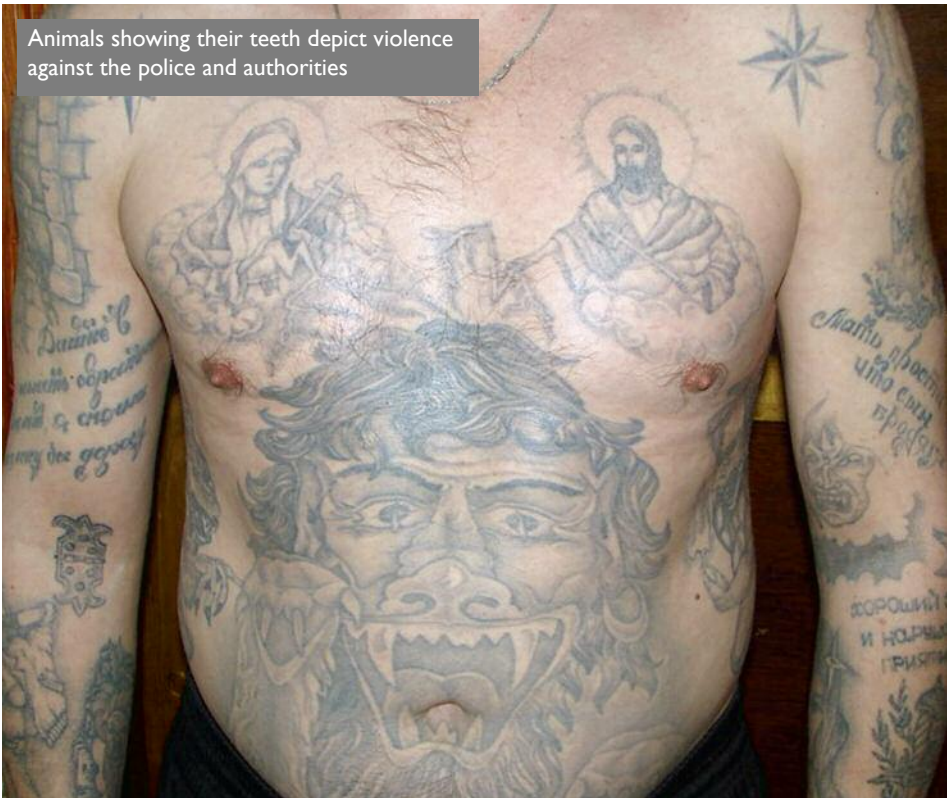
Ring tattoo meanings

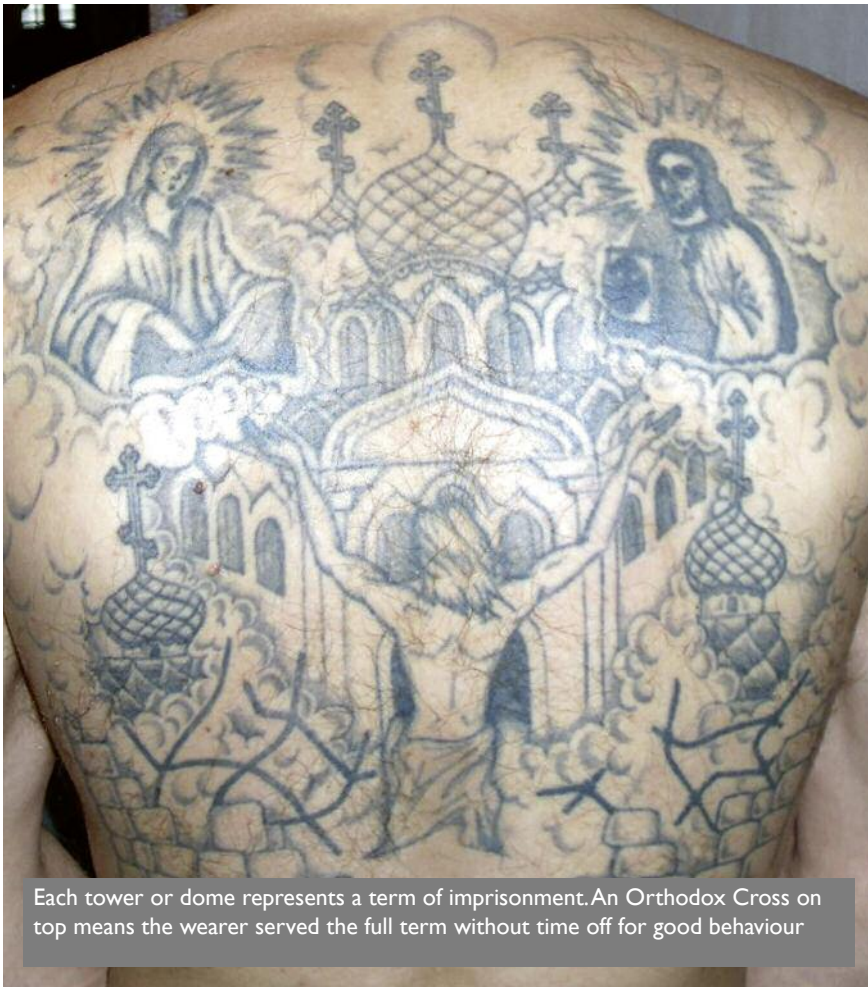
- 1 - In memory of parents who died while in prison.
- 2 - Served the full sentence.
- 3 - Denied, hostile to the police or authorities.
- 4 - Conviction for rape. Rare.
- 5 - Man, neutrality, indifference, lives on the principle of "none of my business".
- 6 - Served his time in prison.
- 7 - Conviction for hooliganism, an anti-social man.
- 8 - Conviction for theft.
- 9 - One in a circle of friends, feels at home in prison.
- 10 - Convicted for armed robbery.
- 11 - Convicted for robbery.
- 12 - In the footsteps of his father, honouring the memory of a convicted parent.
- 13 - The four towers, shows the wearer has been in prison.
- 14 - Downcast, the wearer is of the lowest prison status. A Punishment tattoo.*
- 15 - Passage through the Kresty, has been in the Kresty prison in St. Petersburg.
- 16 - Convicted of GBH or a serious assault.
- 17 - Convicted of violence against the police.
- 18 - I do not work for a master, similar to stars on shoulder/knees.
- 19 - Siver, morally bankrupt and the tattoo of a Downcast. A Punishment tattoo.^{15*}
- 20 - A homosexual Downcast. A Punishment tattoo.*

^{15*} Punishment tattoos are normally changed on release from prison to tattoo 2.



With his unique expertise, Mark soon found himself to be in demand. "I began going to Scotland Yard every three months to teach the Met. Then the Czech police heard about it and I presented the package twice in Prague at their training school, and a few times in Germany as well. I ended up training Special Branch and new Detective Sergeants across the South East of England too. But the highlight was the Americans. I taught US Air Force Intelligence Officers and even went to their Christmas party. Now that was class. They looked after me extremely well. In terms of law enforcement, the Yanks are light years ahead of us in Europe. They are properly funded, and their bosses look out for them. In 2014 I was flown out to Seattle to teach a group of about a hundred American law enforcement guys – FBI, DEA and all sorts of cops. The funny thing is, they go everywhere all tooled up, even when they're out relaxing. They told me they're always ready for a terrorist attack or a mass shooting incident, and they were prepared to blow anyone away who might have tried it. I had a great time with them. I'm due back out there in 2017 to do it all again."





Each tower or dome represents a term of imprisonment. An Orthodox Cross on top means the wearer served the full term without time off for good behaviour



Some of the things that lead a man to prison



Stars on the shoulders for high status, and bat on the chest to show he worked at night as a burglar

"In 2015 I left the British police. I wanted to try something new. Personally, I felt the mentality had changed – with constant cancelled rest days and cuts after cuts – and things just didn't seem as good as they'd been. I won two Commendations in my career, received two Officer of the Year awards, had some top arrests and dealt with some real bad guys. Drug dealers, robbers, sex offenders... I loved nicking them and locking them up. The month before I left I caught a guy burgling a church while I was out on foot patrol. I was alone. There was no radio call – it was just instinct. The guy was a proper low-life thief I'd put away before. I saw him cycle past me and I knew there was a church a few streets away that he would fancy turning over. I walked in there and caught him in the act. We had a great scrap and I ended up choking him out – a Russian-style move – and it was a good way to end my career!"

"Anyway, I made my escape and left the UK. I now live in North America and work as a writer and translator for one of the world's biggest sports teams. I love my new job, and it was doing writing for a living that made me think I ought to turn my passion for Russian prison tattoos into a book. So I gathered up all my photos of criminals and their tattooed bodies, started choosing the best ones, got a young artist I know to produce illustrations of the most common tattoos, and eventually found a small publisher in St.Petersburg who would take it on. It took me about a year to write the book. I've only got a deal to have it in shops in Russia, so I'm selling it on Amazon Kindle. The hardback is available from my website."

"I have to be quite careful about my personal details, as you can imagine. There's a few people out there who would like to take revenge... But I'm pleased to have the book on sale. The feedback's been amazing. And since it's been published, I've been contacted by dozens of police officers all over the world looking for assistance in identifying the tattoos on persons of interest to them. I still do the talks, and I hope to keep my hand in as much as possible. I'd be really happy to hear what everyone thinks of the book."

'Thief in Law: A Guide to Russian Prison Tattoos and Russian-Speaking Organised Crime Gangs' is available on Amazon Kindle and in hardback from www.thiefinlaw.com



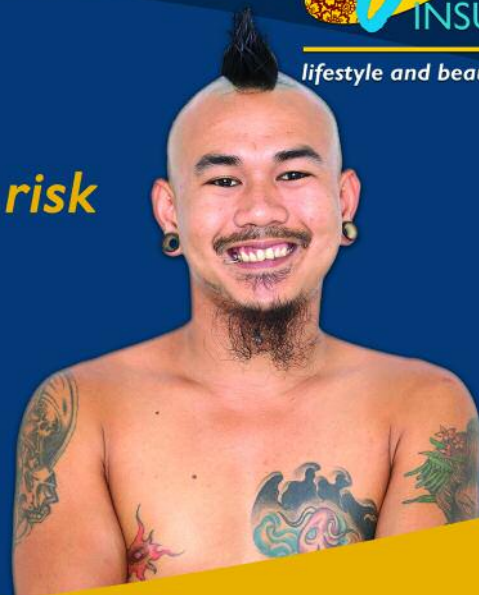
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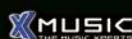
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**On our cover this month is Jessica Kittredge
– dancer, actor and singer-songwriter –
who relishes the artistic freedom, wild locations
and emotional extremes of her modelling work**

Jessica Kittredge

Cover Model Profile

Tell us a little about yourself...

I am California gypsy, workaholic, dreamer and sensitive soul. I'm currently based in Hollywood where I've been pursuing careers in dance, singing and acting as well as continuing to model and do hair and make-up. I'm hoping someday soon to open my own small studio with space to practice all my passions under one roof – and have the resources for other artists to utilise as well. I regularly pinch myself to remember that this is real life!

What is Shaken Vanity?

It was actually something I came up with about eight years ago when I was thinking real deep about a name for my band. What it symbolises will always remain true for me. "Shaken" represents my love for dance, music and movement, paired with a constant feeling of unrest physically, mentally and emotionally – that little voice of self-torment that we all hear sometimes. "Vanity" of course represents my careers in the beauty and talent industries.

Tell us about your taste in music...

I could go on for days about this, but my biggest inspiration over the past six years has been Florence and the Machine. I have lyrics from her song 'Heavy in your Arms' tattooed on my legs.

How did you get into being a pro make-up artist and model?

I was always attracted to the beauty and entertainment industries. I had a pretty strict upbringing in a small town, so television, movies, magazines, etc, were fantasy worlds I always wanted to escape to and learn more about. I began dancing, singing, acting and modelling at a very early age. I wanted to study the arts, but a college degree would have been too expensive (and not absolutely necessary) so I decided to train as a make-up artist instead, which would mean I'd always have a career to support me while I pursued my other passions. It was one of the best decisions I've ever made.

What inspires you about modelling?

A picture is worth a thousand words. I love how just one image can say so much, and I like pushing myself to portray any and every emotion. I really love the most raw and natural shoots, where I can really show deep feelings and do extreme posing – in weird places, or climbing on things, or going to places most people wouldn't go. I enjoy the artistic freedom.

Any new creative projects on the horizon?

I am scheduled to shoot my first feature film later this year. The story is about a woman travelling to find herself after the loss of her father. I play a bartender

she falls for along the way... I'm also diving back into song-writing and singing in the hope of developing myself more as a musician.

What inspired your front piece?

I wanted a visual representation of my alias (a kind of logo for my own brand!) – the gypsy woman with medusa hair tangled in all my passions.

Was that your most painful tattoo?

No, so far that was my back. It was pretty damn uncomfortable the whole time! Luckily my artist (Gerard Collette, Hermosa Ink & Apparel) is skilled and quick.

Are you planning any more ink?

Always! My next piece will be my throat. I have a couple ideas, but I'm still trying to decide on an artist and a style. I have a traditional memorial piece in mind for my dad as well. And I have to get to work on my lower legs, they're so naked!

shakenvanity13@gmail.com

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BOLOGNA TATTOO CONVENTION

I have fond memories of the Bologna tattoo convention back in the '90s. It was the first tattoo convention I ever attended, when the tattoo industry was still niche and not the cultural juggernaut it has become in recent years. I was able to form relationships that last to this day and learn about an ancient artform in a cocooned environment, and it was the start of a lifelong love affair. Back in the day, Bologna, Berlin and Dunstable formed a sort of Holy Trinity of tattoo conventions. So did I have high expectations about the return of this legendary show? Hell yeah!

Returning after a 14 year gap was always going to be a risky endeavour for any convention. Tattoo shows have moved on and multiplied, and they have become slick businesses. The audience has changed, and so have tattoo techniques and people's expectations. Could the Bologna show really just slot back in and reclaim its place in the tattoo calendar? On first impressions I have to say, simply, yes.

With Marco Leoni still at the helm, together with artist Genziana, the show has certainly benefited from its organisers' experience on the international tattoo circuit. The venue is on the outskirts of Bologna, but easily reachable. There was great attention to detail in the organisation of the event and a massive appreciation of the visiting public in the form of non-patronising entertainment. (If you've ever visited a tattoo show you'll know what I mean.) From the Ritmo Flamenco show to Pari Consensus, a 36-piece orchestra who serenaded the audience with classic tunes, to a Celtic harp player accompanying the competitions, the entertainment was fun and unpredictable.

And the artists? Well there was a large number of them from all over the world. To give you an idea of the range, here's just a

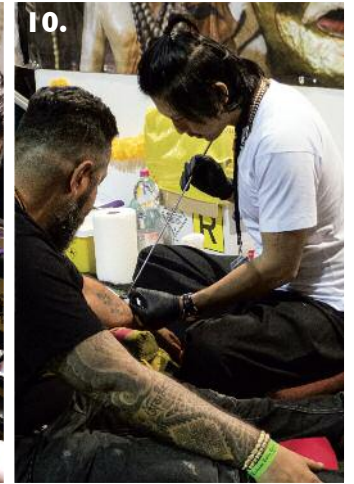
sample of who was present: Shige, Henning Jørgensen, Inma, Pili Mo'o, Kostas Pliakas, Ucarı Jr, Marco Manzo, Ching, Xoil, Alex Reinke, Ursula Colombo, Patrick Hüttlinger, Pietro Sedda, Laura Juan, Amanda Toy, Jimmy Wong, Luca Ortis, Victor Policheri, George Bone, Robert Hernandez, and many, many more. The list was long and impressive.

From what I saw, the artists were busy and the punters were interested in their work, getting tattooed, shopping and having a good time. There was plenty to do and see, with a wide area dedicated to the tattoo stalls, an art exhibition and even a crèche for the younger visitors. And for those in need of a city fix before or after the show, Bologna is a great place to experience, being a blend of Northern European and Mediterranean cultures – and you can certainly eat well while you're there!

As the show came to a close on Sunday evening, the convention organisers whipped out two enormous celebratory cakes which were cut into portions and distributed to everyone, audience and artists – an exceptionally nice way to finish an exciting weekend of art, music and catching up with old friends. Next year's convention is already being planned, and I for one can't wait.



1. by giorgio ganna, pistola
2. by donna mayla, inside tattoo shop (italy)
3. by mauro tampieri, raion tattoo (italy)
4. highly original entertainment





- 5. by capex, great seal tattoo lodge (italy)
- 6. by massimo tonoli, stardust tattoo (italy)
- 7. flo nuttall, swan song tattoo
- 8. luca ortis, private studio
- 9. fiumix et quila tattoo (italy)
- 10. arjan pi, bangkating (thailand)
- 11. by victor policheri (italy)
- 12. by garba, inkiostro mancino (italy)
- 13. by vincent zattera, bloodline (italy)
- 14. by giuseppe gucciardo, skin project tattoo (italy)
- 15. by doc gariato, tesla tattoo
- 16. by giorgio ganna, pistola
- 17. shige, yellow blaze (japan)
- 18. by ueo, chiasso (switzerland)



19. by tseng yu-chieh, shen yun tattoo (taiwan)
 20. by lorenzo botti, pace e inchiostro (italy)
 21. by pablo de (petto), tattoo lifestyle (italy)
 22. by marcello zechini, tiki tattoo studio (italy)
 23. by marco manzo, tribal tattoo (italy)
 24. by shige, yellow blaze (japan)
 25 & 26. by ucari feck braga jr, four roses (brazil)
 27. by marcello zechini, tiki tattoo studio (italy)



28.



29.



28. by adamo morky, speranza tatuaggi (italy)
 29. by ching, orient ching tattoo (taiwan)
 30. by bruno salata duarte, four roses (brazil)
 31. by ueo tattoo, chiasso (switzerland)
 32. by patrick hüttlinger, sakrosankt (germany)
 33. by sergio salas, grial tattoo (spain)

30.



31.



32.



33.



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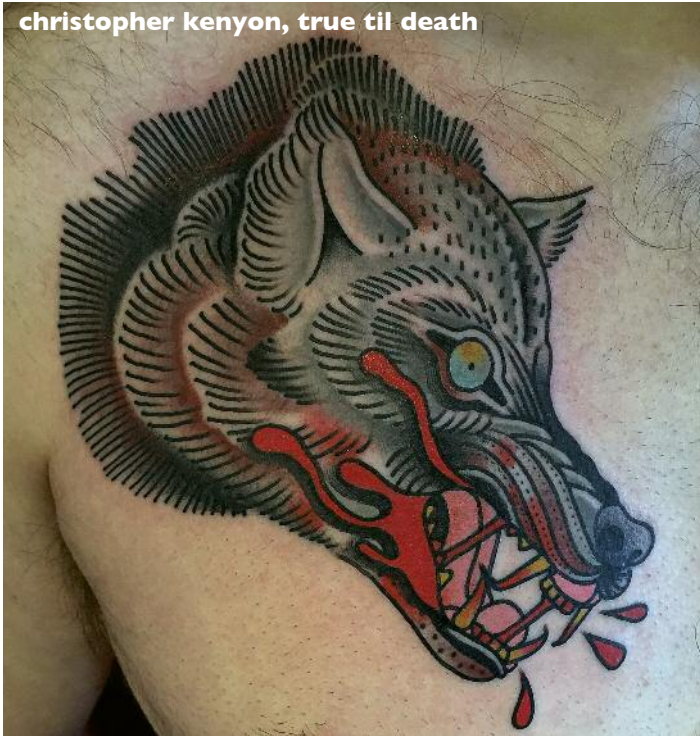
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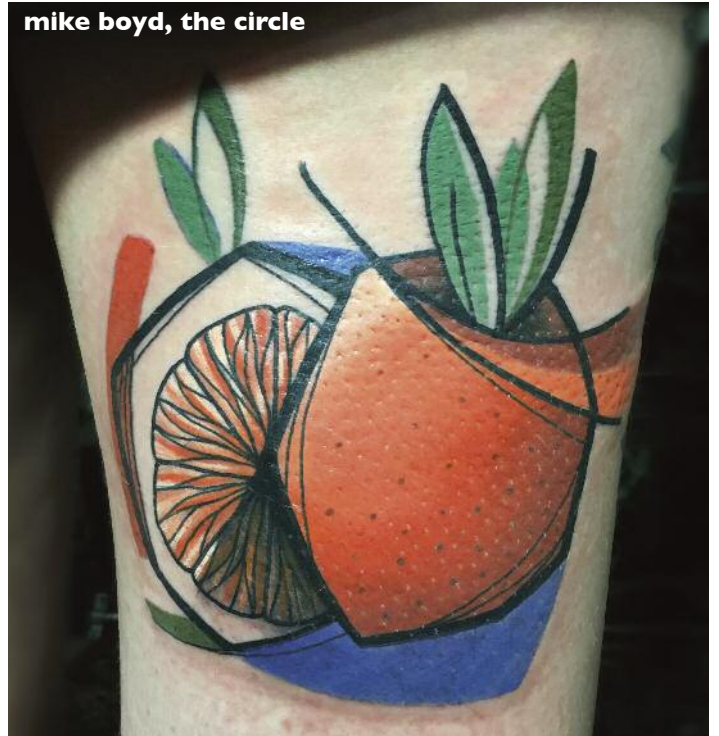


GALLERY

christopher kenyon, true til death



mike boyd, the circle



jacek stasica, js forneus (ireland)



claire griffin, ink sane (ireland)



thomas carli jarlier, noire ink (france)



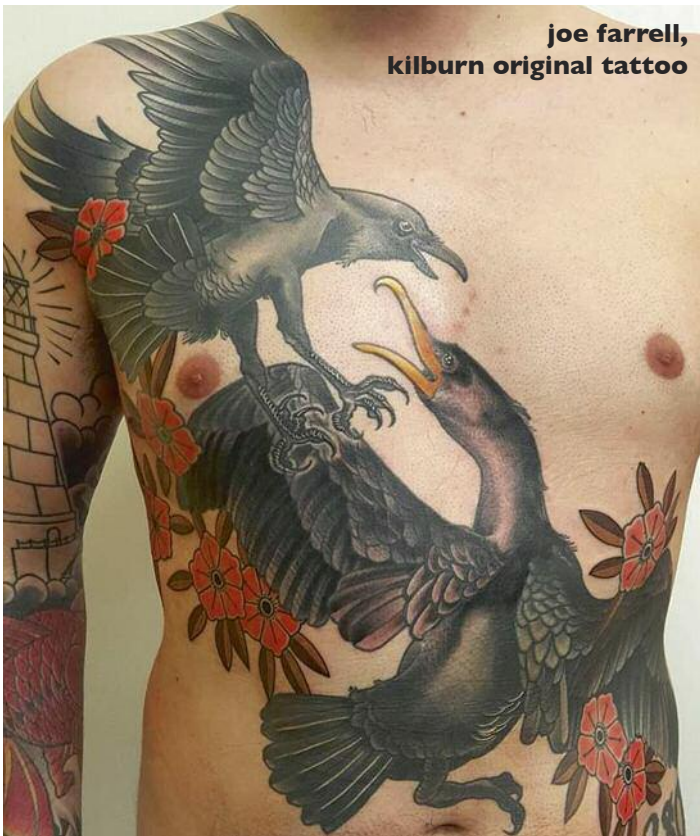
chay ballard, chakra tattoo lounge



leo d-t, hope and glory



grucha, tattoo zone (poland)



joe farrell, kilburn original tattoo



tan van den broek, dark cloud electric (australia)



craig dawson, the monster shop

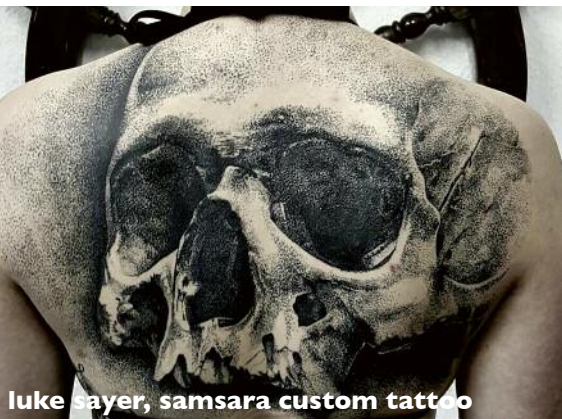
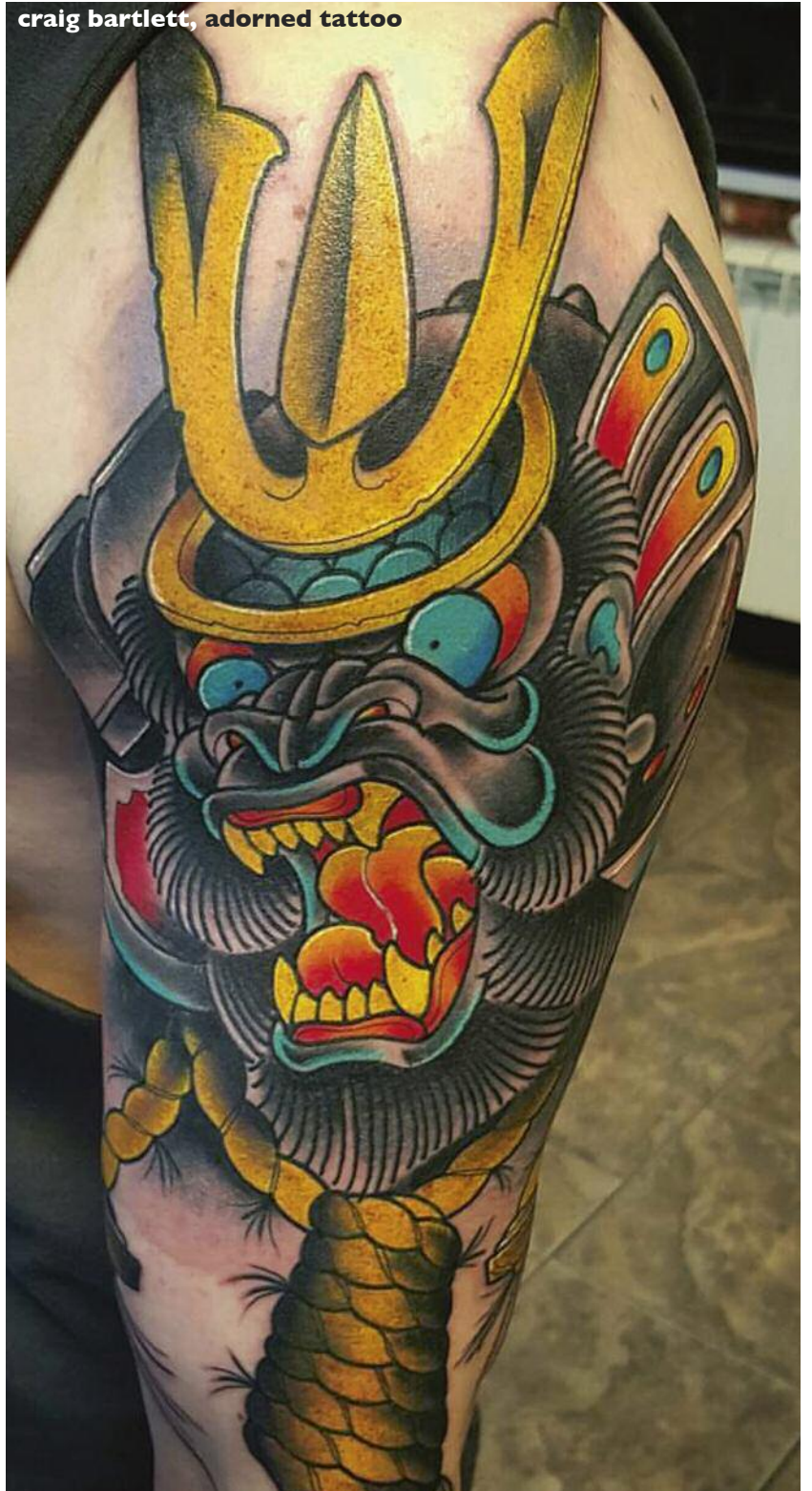
santa perpetua, black sails tattoo



aj richards, inkspirations



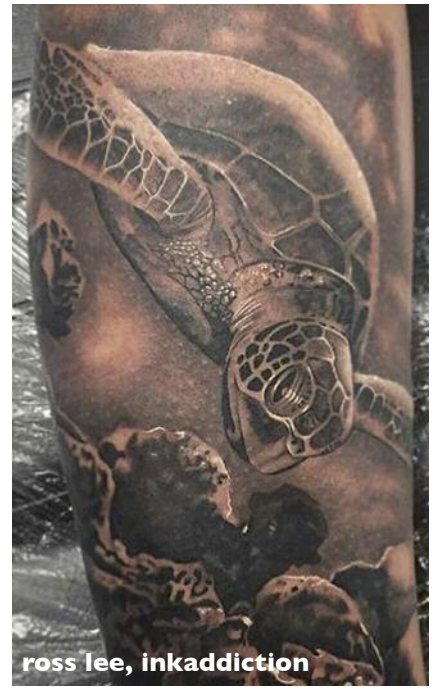
craig bartlett, adorned tattoo



luke sayer, samsara custom tattoo



laura lenihan, kilburn original tattoo



ross lee, inkaddiction



sarah lu, blue dragon tattoo



jon longstaff, black dog tattoos



dave barry, custom tattoo (ireland)

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LOST AT SEA

Every now and then, something comes your way that reminds you how amazing the tattoo world can be. When Nick Caruso handed me a large heavy cardboard box at a convention recently I had no idea of the treasures held within. Back home, a couple of days later, I opened the mystery package to find one of the most incredible books I have ever seen. A3 in size, bound in a foil-blocked hardback cover, and with more than 200 pages of beautiful eclectic sheets of flash and prints all based around the subject of 'the sea', it blew me away. I really wanted find out more, so I arranged a chat with Nick.



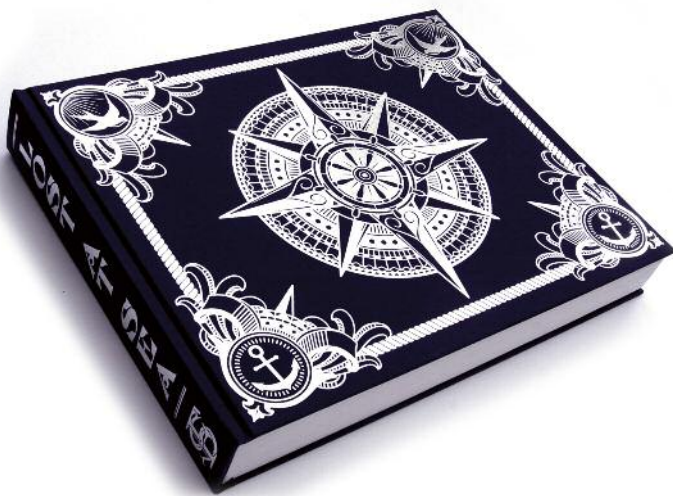
adrian willard

Can you tell us the thinking behind the project?

I'd been thinking about doing it for a while. As a tattooer, I've gotten so much from tattooing; I really wanted to do something for the craft and give back a bit. I live on an island and I love tattooing water and nautical-themed images, so I just thought the idea would be a good one.

How did you meet Eric Perfect? What led to you deciding to produce the book with him?

I've known Eric for a really long time. We met about fifteen years ago at a convention. The first thing he ever said to me was some sort of insult; I laughed, and we just kind of stayed friends. We've got closer and closer as time has gone by, and I consider him to be my mentor in lots of ways. Because I know and trust him so much, I decided to include him in this project. We spoke quite a bit about it, brainstormed and pooled our ideas, and the whole concept became even better and stronger because of him.



harisumi



dan crowe

timothy english



jan netten



andy northup



forrest cavacco

How did you divide the workload?

We pretty much split it down the middle. Between us, we came up with the list of artists we wanted to invite, and then we just shared all the responsibilities evenly.



adam guy hays

It must have been a huge undertaking.

Yes, wrangling tattooers is no easy task. The book was a year of pretty intense work and planning, but the most difficult part was actually getting everyone's original art back to them. And even though we all worked so hard, some things got lost in the mail and got messed up and we feel terrible about that.

What was the most rewarding part of the project?

Seeing the finished product! It was pretty astounding seeing all that flash together in one place. Most people really did an outstanding job. It was very humbling. I would like to say a huge thank you to the contributing artists. The book wouldn't be in existence without them.

How did you decide on the artists you would invite to take part?

At first we came up with lists of people we were either close with or whose work we respected and enjoyed. It kind of snowballed after that, and artists started asking us, and we wound up having almost too many paintings. There were many more we'd like to have included, but it would've filled several volumes.



jeremy swed



eric perfect

stefano c



dave kruseman



rinto



hanky panky





The production values are amazing...

Thank you! The publishers did an outstanding job choosing the paper, and with the scans and print quality. We partnered with Sean and Jesse from Scorpion Front Publishing after seeing the excellent job they did on their previous publications. We knew immediately that this was how we wanted our book to look, and we wanted it to be presented with those other great editions. During their short existence, Scorpion Front have put out some of the best tattooing books I've ever seen. We limited the

number of copies to 1,000. There will never be any more printed. Once they're gone, they're gone. We didn't do this to make money. In fact it cost us money. We did it because we love tattooing and we wanted to give something back, to leave some sort of legacy behind. So I hope tattooers can use the book for inspiration and, more importantly, for making money! I hope we did something good for tattooing.



alex reinke



cian sinnes

Is there anything you would do differently next time round?

Producing something like this takes a lot of time – and a lot of patience. Next time round, I would probably make a smaller book with fewer pages and have one single person handle all the shipping. But I have no plans for another book at the moment!

'Lost at Sea' can be purchased from Scorpionfront.com, Kingpin, Amazon, eBay, Etsy, gentlemanstatooflash.com, tattooflashbooks.com or directly from Nick Caruso and Eric Perfect. Price \$200.

Nick Caruso
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steve hule



STAR WARS GALLERY

In anticipation of the forthcoming STAR WARS CELEBRATION at the Excel Centre in London on 15th-17th July, we've put together a collection of Star Wars tattoos as a trailer for the main event. (Look out for our full report of the Celebration in next month's Total Tattoo!)



matzon, zombie tattoo (finland)



karen maxey, ouch tattoo studio



adam hays, red rocket (usa)



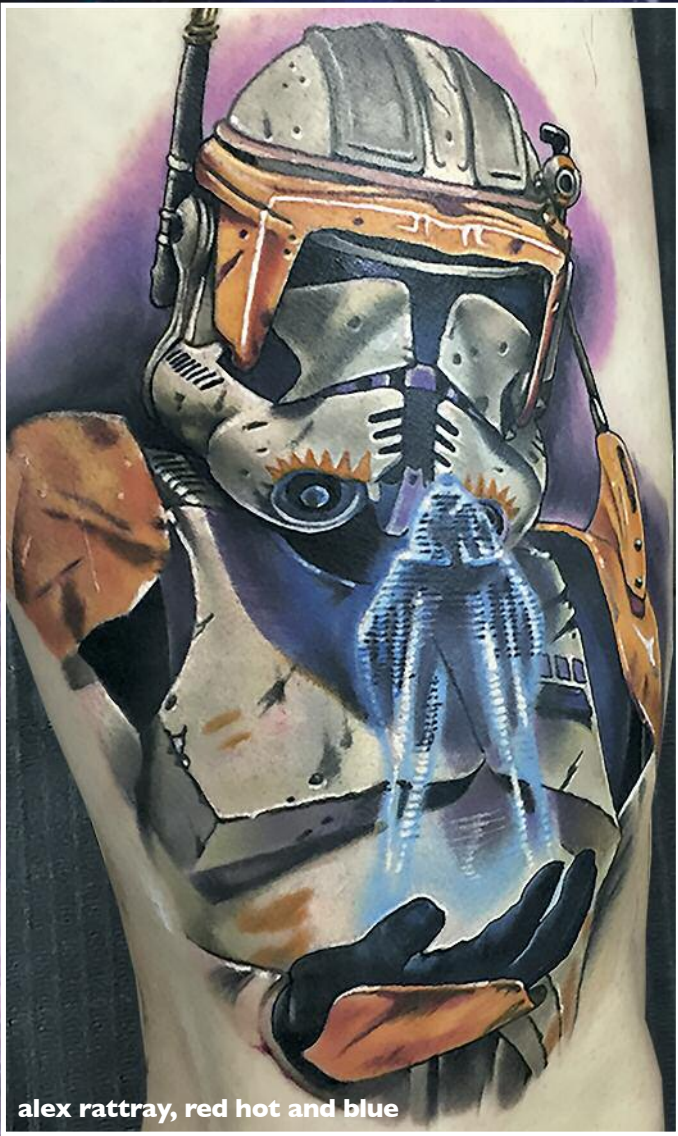
alexey lauz,
mad fish tattoo (russia)



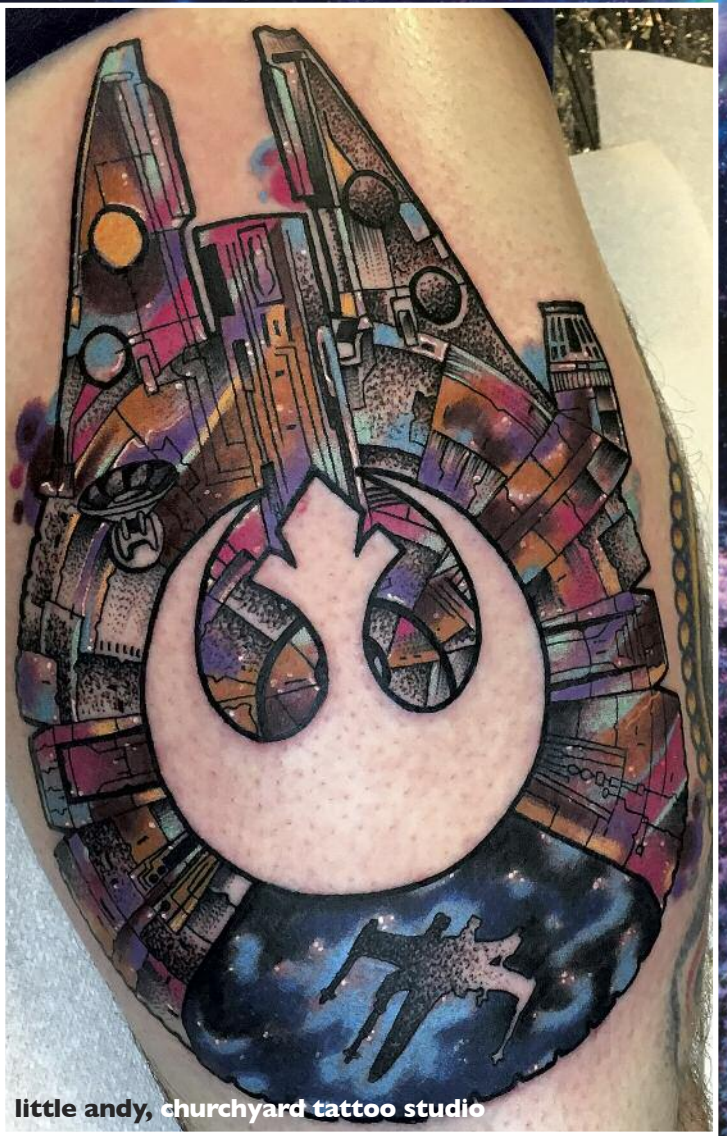
patrick mcfarlane,
black freighter tattoo company



alex whiley, death or glory



alex rattray, red hot and blue



little andy, churchyard tattoo studio

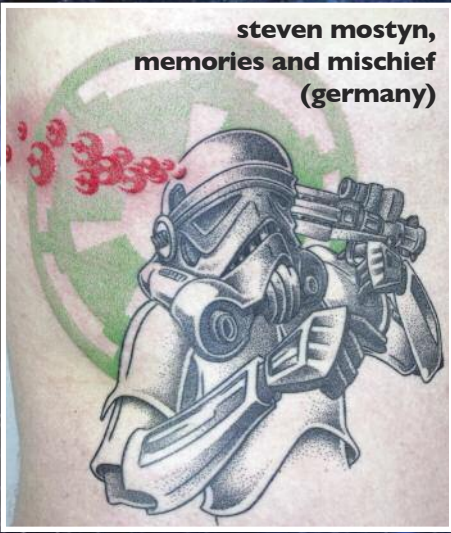


josh bodwell, funhouse



radu rasu, atelier four

steven mostyn,
memories and mischief
(germany)



guy tinsley, wise guys ink



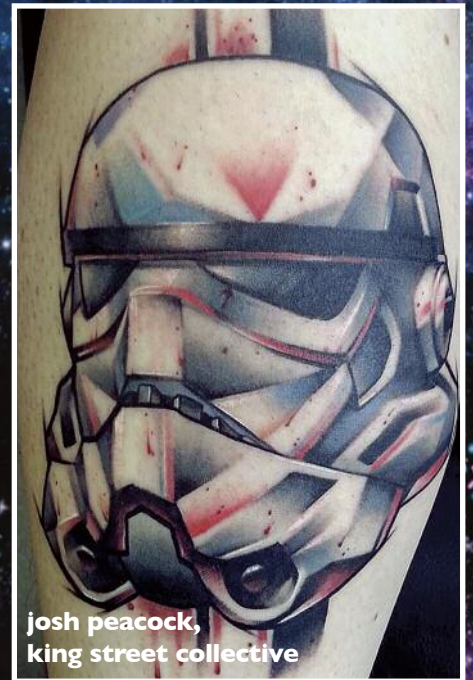
silvano fiato,
eternal tattoo (italy)



adam hays, red rocket (usa)



oscar akermo
studio 71 (sweden)



josh peacock,
king street collective



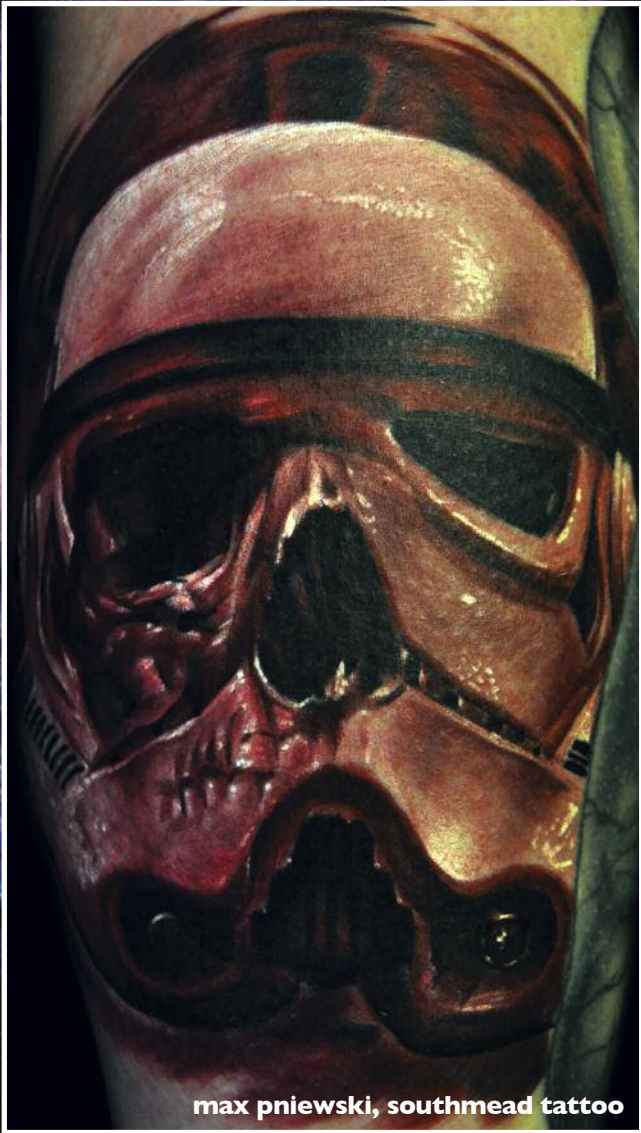
jack goks, cloak and dagger



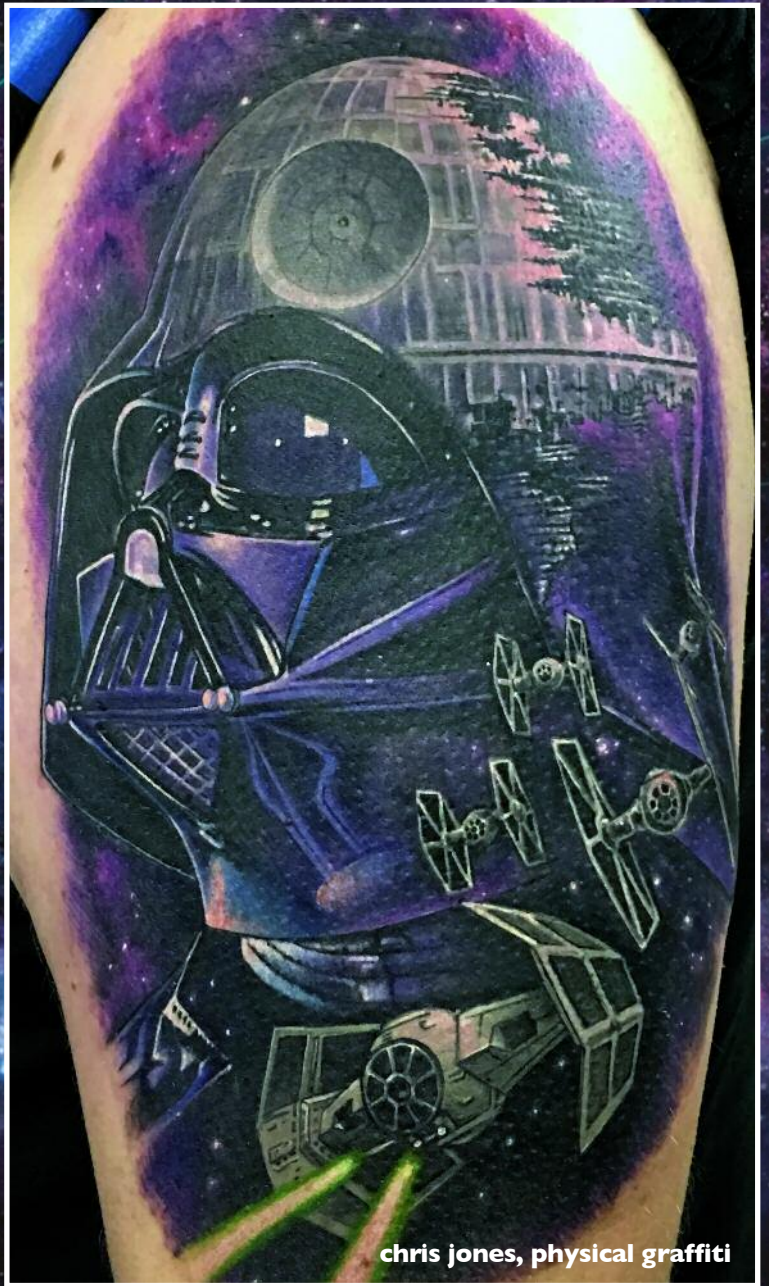
matt difa, jolie rouge



clara sinclair, jolie rouge



max pniewski, southmead tattoo



chris jones, physical graffiti



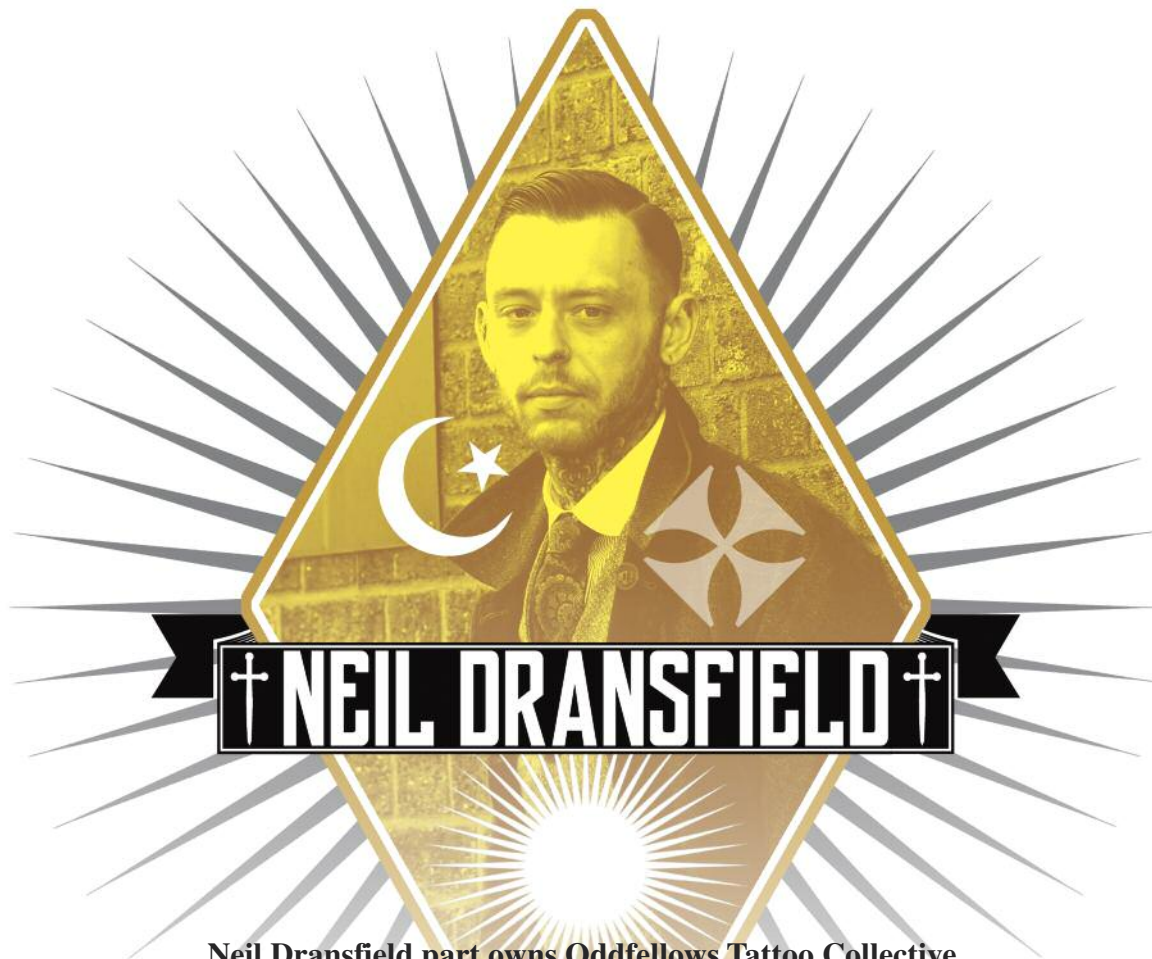
alan ramirez,
grade a tattoos (usa)



rember orellana,
dark age tattoo studio (usa)



dan stone, electric buddha



Neil Dransfield part owns Oddfellows Tattoo Collective. Neo-traditional was always his thing. He became known for blending colour realism techniques into that genre, he then surprised everyone by switching to black and grey and he's now built a whole new fan base. Here's his story...

It all started quietly. "A proper 2.4 children family upbringing," as Neil describes it. "I was rubbish at school," he tells me. "My Mum always said that if there was a GCSE in video gaming, that would be the one for me. Everything else just went in one ear and out the other. I could draw and design, but that was literally all I could do." It was not until secondary school that Neil really began to focus on his creative talent, completing his GCSEs and moving on to college to do Fine Art. He knew that he wanted to use his creativity somehow to build his future, but like most people at that age had no idea how the hell he was going to do that.

Fine Art courses can be pretty random when it comes to curriculum, so I asked Neil what he actually studied. "Basically I was allowed to do anything I wanted. I started out drawing and painting, but eventually I gravitated towards making video installations and got really into that. They just gave me a camera and complete creative freedom. They were really supportive." Thinking he'd found what he was looking for, he successfully applied for a place on a course to do a further three years of video installation. For the first couple of years things went well, but in year three something changed. Neil has a slightly melancholic aspect to his personality that has always fuelled his creativity but, as he told me,





“I reached a point where, once again, I didn't really know what I wanted to do. I had previously been so focused. But now I felt pretty lost.”

So began what we will call the 'retail years'. It's where people often end up when they need time to think and take stock. In fact the whole retail sector seems to be staffed by talented creative types who feel a bit lost, and it's where we now find Neil. It was not until he suddenly decided that he wanted to get a tattoo for himself that things started move in an artistic direction again. Not that tattoos had every really played a large part in his life, but he does have vivid childhood memories of his local tattoo shop. “As a kid, I would always walk past it and think 'What's that all about?' It was painted white, and it had grim reapers and skulls in the window. That feeling just stuck with me.”

Like a lot of people, Neil had been into tattoo shops several times but always bottled it. That process kind of builds up into a subconscious resistance to getting inked and it takes a gentle push or a good kick up the arse to shift it. Neil's wife Rachael came to the rescue when he confided in her that he had always wanted a tattoo. Her response was straightforward. “Just go and get one then.” So he did. And then she suggested that he could perhaps become a tattooist. So he did that too. But that makes it all sound easy...

And it wasn't. The first thing Neil had to do was sit down and start drawing again, which is no mean feat when you've been working entirely in film for the last six years. He produced some portraits, built up a bit of a portfolio, and headed out around the shops. Neil and Rachael were now living in Leeds, so

there was a good number to visit. Eventually, with legwork and perseverance, someone offered him an apprenticeship. However, in Neil's own words, “it kind of went wrong”. He told me, “I stuck at it for about a year, but I was treated in a way that I was not used to being treated. I just felt that if this was what the tattoo industry was like I didn't want any to work within it.” So he quit, spent another two years in retail, and in due course was offered the opportunity to be trained up for a managerial position. It was then that it hit him. “I thought, oh god, was this going to be it for the rest of my life?! So I got my shit together again and found myself another job in a tattoo shop.”

The changes within tattooing that we love to wax so lyrical about had really built up a head of steam by then, and Neil's second adventure



in tattooland was very different from his first. He didn't head back to the city centre but choose a shop on the outskirts and persuaded the owner, Matt Hart, to give him a desk job. "I felt a lot more comfortable in that environment," Neil tells me, "and things just progressed from that point on."

Matt then decided to open a second shop in Leeds and asked Neil to run it. "I thought great, I can do what I want, when I want," Neil recalls. "Wrong! That was probably my hardest year in tattooing. I just felt lost again. I was teaching myself to tattoo, and I wasn't really sure of what I was doing." It wasn't that Neil didn't know how to tattoo – far from it – but he was a developing artist, and he needed other artists around him to bounce ideas off and learn from.



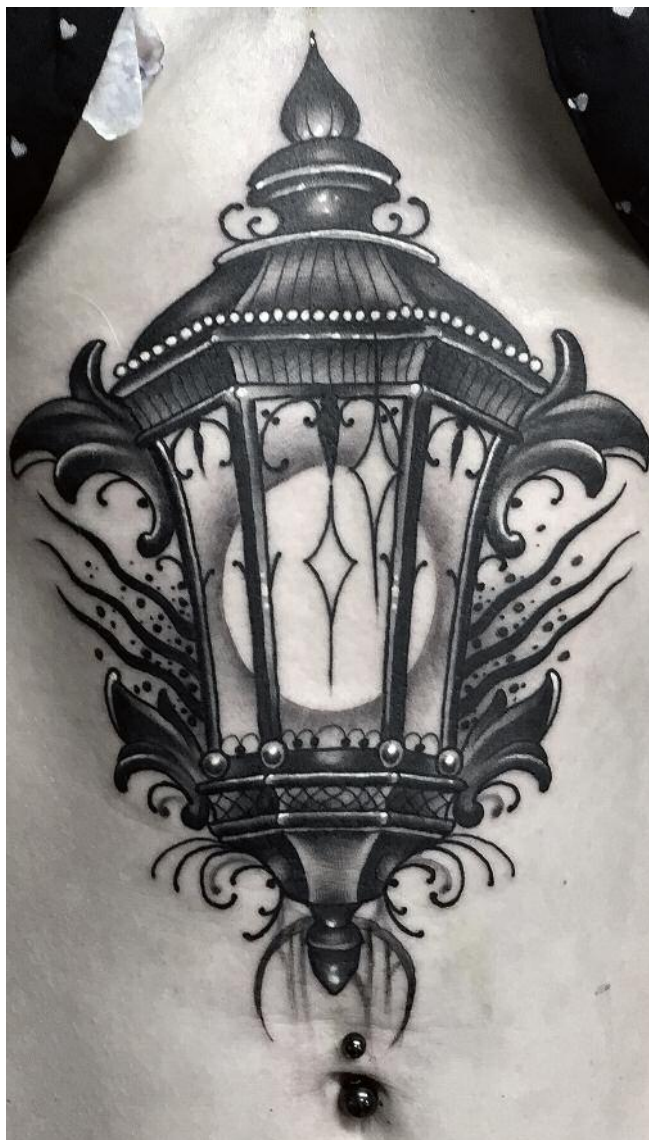
One thing that did develop during this time was Neil's love of the neo-traditional style. Inspired by the likes of Eckel and Uncle Allan, he pushed his own agenda. "I liked traditional tattooing, but I drew things in a realistic way. Neo-traditional enabled me to combine the two, and I developed things from there." Social media was on the up and as Neil posted more of this style of work the bookings came in. "I just wanted to tattoo, but at that time there didn't seem to be many artists in the area doing that kind of thing. People seemed to like this more stylised way of working. Coming from a fine arts background, and being familiar with classical paintings, etc, really helped. Maybe I was just in the right place at the right time."

Neil would be the first to admit he is not the world's most outgoing person, but to move forward he needed to reach out to other artists. It was the convention circuit that would enable him to do this. He began to get tattooed by the artists he admired, and it was only a matter of time before another opportunity would present itself to him. "I had tattooed Tom Flanagan a few times," he tells me, "and he was friends with Scott Mustapic. They opened Oddfellows Tattoo Collective together, and they asked me to join them. I was seeing Tom doing great traditional tattoos, and Scott doing colour realism, and it was blowing my mind every day. I learnt so much from them, and it directly affected what I was doing. I started to work colour realism techniques in to my neo-traditional tattoos and things continued to develop."





Neil's reputation grew from there. He now part-owns Oddfellows and has published two very successful sketch books in collaboration with Gentlemen's Tattoo Flash (with talk of a third). These are all things that he never expected. He has also recently instigated a fairly dramatic change in the way he works. I wanted to find out why! "This may sound strange," he confides, "but doing what I've been doing for so long, and being so successful at it, I just began to feel bogged down. I don't know if it was just in my head, but doing colour work and overcomplicating things just started to stress me out. I felt like I should have kept progressing, but I couldn't. I got to the point where I just had to stop. I wasn't enjoying tattooing any more. I decided I needed to strip everything back and try to re-find myself. Turning pencil sketches into colour tattoos has never come easily to me. Going back to black and grey feels right."



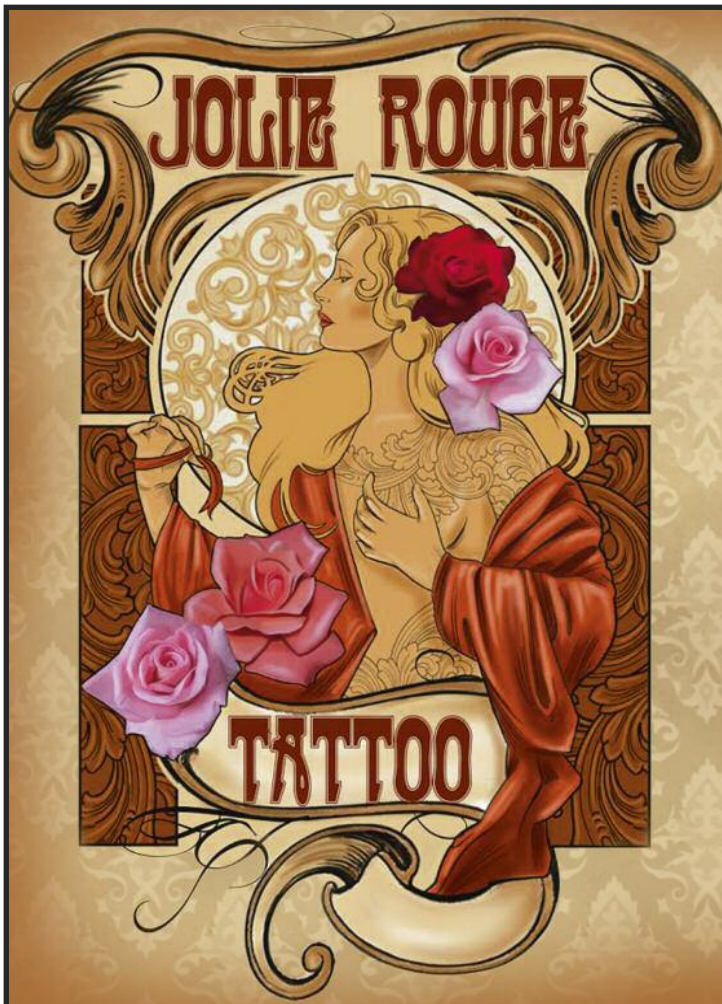
It's taken about a year of hard work – tattooing on his day off in the new style, and posting those tattoos (and nothing else) on social media – but the shift has been made. In fact that sort of transition would probably have been almost impossible *without* social media. Neil freely admits that during that it felt like Instagram was talking over his life. "It really helped with what I was doing, but of course you do get feedback as well, and boy do people like voicing their opinions – especially when they don't like stuff. In the end I just posted work but would never actually go on the site. You can get too hung up on the things people are saying. You lose your sense of perspective. I asked myself why I was bothered about what other people were thinking – and came to the conclusion that as long as I'm still tattooing, and there are enough people who like what I'm doing, then that's all that matters."





It was not a stress-free time, but change is an inevitable part of life and we only really grow when we take ourselves out of our comfort zone. "If you think of tattooing for a lifetime, then of course you are going to develop," Neil continues, "but there will be times when you are going to need to do something a bit more radical to stay happy doing it. Everything is always personal for me; it was the same with my video projects when I was in college and university. As I continued to work within neo-traditional I think almost imperceptibly I started to lose that connection. I felt like my work no longer reflected my personality. Somehow the designs I'm doing now feel more personal." Neil has kept some of his old customers and gained some new ones, but all of them have one important thing in common: They, too, feel a personal connection with Neil's work. And that is a powerful combination.

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WOMEN in tattooing

Text and interviews by Lizzy Guy
Pictures supplied by the artists



fiona long, feline tattoo

Many years ago, I was at a convention with a friend and we were talking to a man who had some incredible artwork adorning his body – pieces from Claudia De Sabe, Valerie Vargas and Tamara Lee, to name but a few. After he'd gone, my friend said to me, "Don't you think it's a bit weird that he only gets tattoos from women? Maybe he gets a kick out of it!" I was puzzled by this remark; I've had tattoos from male artists, and can honestly say that I've never 'got a kick out of it'. Why should it be different the other way around?

Yes, I'm one of those feminist killjoys. I believe in equal rights for all genders, ages and sexualities. I like cooking, but I do not belong in a kitchen. And, I certainly do not think that 'female tattooists' are eye candy, an extra visual bonus when having a tattoo.

Tattoos on women were once associated with criminality or 'seedy' lifestyles. Thankfully, society is slowly dragging its arse out of the 20th century. Women are now able to celebrate and own their bodies by choosing to get tattooed – where they want, how they want, and when they want. But we still talk of 'tattooists' and 'female tattooists', as if gender is important, and it seems that women who work in tattooing are still judged on a more superficial level than their male peers.

For this article, I spoke to five leading tattooers (who happen to be female) about their own individual experiences in tattooing. Starting with 'veterans' of the industry and leading up to newer artists, I wanted to know how things had changed, and if there were any gender-related issues that were still outstanding within the world of tattooing...



fiona long, feline tattoo

FIONA LONG

"I've been tattooing for 27 years. When I started, it was a time of one tattooist in each town and one tattoo convention in each country – so most tattooists either knew each other or knew of each other. And, as you can guess, very few of them were female.

"Before I came to tattooing I was on a government scheme for the unemployed, and I was told I had to find myself a work experience placement. The scheme's manager took me to see a lady who needed a pattern cutter for leather garments, but it turned out she only wanted someone for the run-up to Christmas. When I came back out to the car and told him I hadn't taken the placement, he shouted at me, 'What are you going to do with your life?' Over his shoulder I could see a sign saying TATTOOIST, so I said: 'I'm going to be a tattooist.' 'Oh no you're not,' he said. 'You're female!' And that's where the challenge began.

"Getting into the secretive underground world of tattooing was no mean feat. I phoned all the tattooists in the towns near where I lived, and they all either swore at me or laughed at me. There was only one guy who wasn't rude to me – Tiger Sid from Worksop – so I harassed him until he agreed to meet me and look through my drawings. After a brief chat he said start tomorrow! I was so excited. Sid's Tattoo Parlour was in a garage behind his house. The customers were rough and ready, but it was all quite respectful. From there I moved to a shop in Chesterfield which was a whole different story. The customers seemed to think I was just someone's bird who happened to be hanging out. God forbid a woman was going to tattoo them. They'd say 'No woman's tattooing me!' – right in front of me – and if they needed to pay, or ask a question, they'd ask any man who happened to be in the shop (even if he was another customer) rather than speak to me.

"I went to my first convention in America, where I won a couple of awards. The Americans were used to seeing female tattooists, and the sexism only came from the other English tattooists who were there. But UK shows were completely different. I was usually the only female artist. There was one occasion when I had to be let into the show through a fire door because the security guy on the main door didn't believe I was a tattooist. And of course I could never get into the tattooist-only supply rooms. At one show, I was tattooing with my wrist bandaged and a male artist asked what I'd done. When I told him I'd been working too hard, and it was because of the weight of the machine, he replied, 'That's why women shouldn't be in this business.' I was also informed that the only reason 'they' were putting up with me was that I was good looking... Whenever I met another female artist working a show I'd introduce myself and we'd instantly become friends because we'd be going through the same experiences. How things have changed! I remember working the London show in Brick Lane twelve years ago and suddenly realising there were more female than male artists in our aisle.

"We're no longer underground. But, strange as it may seem, I prefer the way it used to be! I've been asked on many occasions to work at an all-female tattoo shows, but I've always declined. After all, I'd be pretty pissed off if a show was for guys only. That would be SEXIST and I've fought that battle already! I'm one of the boys."



fiona long, feline tattoo



fiona long, feline tattoo



fiona long, feline tattoo

from l-r. theresa gordon-wade, fiona long, sabine gaiffon



TERESA GORDON-WADE

"I don't think gender is an issue any more but it most definitely was when I started out 25 years ago. It was very difficult to get an apprenticeship, and even if you did manage to find someone who was interested in taking you on, it was usually a case of 'Basically, you've got to sleep with me'. I was like 'Oh no no no. That's not gonna happen!' There were a few tattooists who obviously did take me seriously and who did treat me with respect. Actually, quite a lot of them did. When I said 'no' they just shrugged their shoulders. Nobody was nasty to me. It was just that people didn't see anything wrong with asking. This was the late eighties after all, and women were expected to cook and be a sex slave. Fuck that! It was the same in the entertainment industry, with the infamous 'casting couch'. It was the price women had to pay to get anywhere, and I wasn't prepared to pay it.

from l-r. filip leu, theresa gordon-wade, titine leu



"Most of the female tattooists at that time were married to a tattooist, or had a way 'in', so it was a very closed shop. I got my break thanks to Lal Hardy, who put an advert in The Buzz for me. He was brilliant. A few weeks later Chris Cougar offered me an interview, and the first thing I said to him when I walked through the door was, 'I ain't gonna sleep with you for this. I just wanna get that straight!' He was like, 'Erm... I wasn't gonna ask you to!' *[laughs]* and that obviously broke the ice.

theresa gordon-wade, epona tattoo



theresa gordon-wade, epona tattoo

"Chris was well respected and that respect rubbed off on me. I didn't have any problems with suppliers or anything like that. But when I was looking for my next studio to work in, there were quite a few places I went into that were like, 'It's not about your work Theresa, it's just that you wouldn't be able to handle the Saturday crowds. You're a small girl. How would you be able to turf out a six foot rugby player who's drunk and causing grief?' They were right, but I didn't think that was a good enough reason not to employ me as a tattoo artist. There's other ways around those problems. But that's how it was. It was a man's world and it was a very rough man's world. One day I met the legendary Jock Liddel. He came to Chris's studio. He scared the living daylights out of me – this really big Scotsman – and he told me 'Tattooing's nay business for a woman!' According to him, my job was to make the tea and sweep the floor. I was like, 'Agrrrr!' – but I could see his point. His shop was in Kings Cross and it was a dangerous place. I'd have been eaten alive.



theresa gordon-wade, epona tattoo

"In the early nineties, when I was working at Taurus Tattoo, clients would often come into the shop and go straight to Pete, walking right past me. Pete would then tell me to do the tattoo, and they'd be like, 'What, you mean she's doing it?! Oh no, I'm not getting tattooed by a woman!' But as time went by that kind of thing happened less. People came to me to get tattooed because they wanted me to tattoo them – not because I'm a woman, but because they'd heard about my work. But if clients didn't know me, even women, they'd still be



theresa gordon-wade, epona tattoo



theresa gordon-wade, epona tattoo

like, 'Oh? You mean *she's* tattooing me? I'm not sure about that!' Especially if I was tattooing their husband!

"People don't bat an eyelid nowadays if a tattooist is a woman. It's all about being clean, professional and talented – and how you treat your clients. Tattooing has changed so much. A lot of old timers tend to dwell on the negatives but, speaking as an old timer myself, I think the changes are brilliant! I'm so glad it's not like the mad old days any more, and I can go to work and not worry about people tearing up the shop.

"The label 'female tattooist' can be both positive and negative. If you see a train driver who's a woman, you might think 'Oh my god, a female train driver!' because they're such a rarity. But with tattooing, you see just as many female tattooists as you do male (though admittedly they're mostly a lot younger, because there aren't many female tattooists of my generation) and I really don't think people are as bothered any more. Why use the phrase 'female tattooist'? What difference does it make? It's not a job requiring physical strength, so a hefty 6ft bloke doesn't have any advantage over a petite 5ft woman. But I guess some people might prefer a female tattooist because women are perceived as more gentle or more careful... but I'm not being sexist, boys!"

KANAE

"Before I started my apprenticeship with my teacher Makoto Hasegawa at Hocus Pocus Tattoo [in Shizuoka, Japan], I was working as his studio assistant. I didn't think that I could ever be a tattooer, but one day he told me that if I wanted to learn, he would teach me. Obviously I wanted to say yes, but it took me a few weeks to decide because I knew what hard work it would be, especially for a woman. There weren't many female tattooers at that time. It was rare. And I wasn't sure if those badass yakuza guys would accept me as a tattooer! That was partly my own narrow-minded imagination though... Also, in Japanese culture, being a tattooer just wasn't a cool job. Unfortunately it's still not acceptable in our society. So I needed to prepare myself fully for it. It was definitely one of the biggest decisions of my life!

"I don't think women are so under-represented in Japanese tattooing now. In general, in Japan, people are much more open-minded. After all, good work is good work, and it doesn't matter if it's done by a man or a woman. The quality of the work depends on the person, not their gender. But not so long ago, one of my Japanese customers said to me, when I'd finished his tattoo, 'I thought women couldn't tattoo – but after this, I think they can. Or at least *you* can!' He was a young man, and I was surprised that these ideas persist even in young people. My home city is a small city, so maybe that's why. But I took it as a compliment."



kanae, nine tails



kanae, nine tails



kanae, nine tails



"I think the idea that a woman can't have a career and a family is very outdated, but I'm not going to lie – balancing life with my baby and my tattoo career has been really hard work. But so worth it! I'm lucky that my husband Nick shares both jobs with me, so when I'm in work he's with the baby and vice versa. We split everything right down the middle, which makes us both appreciate tattooing and having precious time with our baby growing up. I do wish I had a bit more time to spend on my artwork, but I felt like that even before I had the baby. There's just never enough hours in the day..."

RACHEL BALDWIN

"My kawaii tattoo style has often been labelled as 'girly' and I'd say that's a massive advantage!! I'm lucky that a lot of people seem to like my work. This keeps me nice and busy, making pretty things! I draw and tattoo the way I like things to look, which is usually cute and colourful. My client base is ninety percent female, but I do tattoo guys too. A few years ago I remember having a consultation with the tallest dude I have ever seen. During the consultation I mentioned that my style is pretty girly and I asked if he was sure he wanted to get tattooed by me. His reply stuck in my head. He said, 'Yeah, that's why I want a tattoo from you! Your stuff is girly, but I really like it.' Guys like cute things too. Cute is not just for girls.





HOLLIE WEST

“Even before I began tattooing, the women I drew were always curvy. I find it easier to show their characteristics and they are more aesthetically pleasing. I don't do this to rebel against how society says women 'should' look. I just think a curvy figure is more honest to real life. A lot of the people who contact me about chubbies refer to themselves as 'chubby' and that's why I think these images appeal to people. Someone once commented on a picture of my work saying they found it to be offensive to fat people. I think it's the opposite. My work celebrates every type of woman. I tattoo a very wide range of customers – male and female – and I think my work manages to stretch across the gender gap.

“My tattoo style is often referred to as 'girly', and I don't see any problem with that label, but I don't think it defines what it actually is. Even some of my male customers use the term, but I think what they mean is that it's not a dark or aggressive style. People don't ever ask for a 'masculine' or 'manly' tattoo. I don't think the term 'girly' has anything to do with gender.

“On a different note, there was one male customer who came in for his first tattoo and told me afterwards that he thought he was 'going to be more of a girl about it'. I reminded him I was a girl, and that most girls take it better than he did anyway!

“I don't think gender should even be an issue in our industry. Your sex doesn't determine your skill and it shouldn't affect your success. My colleagues have been mostly male and they have been nothing but fair and treated me equally, and I certainly haven't noticed that I have been treated any differently at tattoo conventions or whilst doing guest spots simply because I am a woman.”

Talking to these five tattooists, it's very apparent that things have changed drastically in the last thirty years. The tattoo world is a diverse one, and it has embraced a complete turnaround in the assumptions that are made about women who tattoo – so much so, that some of the questions I asked Fiona and Theresa almost seemed irrelevant when I spoke to Rachel and Hollie. Tattooists are now recognised and respected for their talent, regardless of their gender, and that's a truly welcome change.





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TAIWAN TATTOO CONVENTION

The Taiwan Tattoo Convention in Kaohsiung is rather special. It's an absolute treat for the eyes – a unique display of literally hundreds of amazing examples of Asian body art. A few Western artists come here too, and they usually keep coming back because this really is one of the world's most incredible tattoo events.

It's quite hard not to indulge in too many superlatives after attending the Taiwan Tattoo Convention. Is it the biggest show in Asia? The best? The craziest? The most important? Impossible to say, but it's certainly a unique experience, immense fun, and an unforgettable event for visitors and artists alike. Many friends of Asian tattoo art come back to this wonderful island year after year, and organiser Tai of Top Tattoo makes sure everyone is kept entertained all weekend. He knows that in order to put on a great event – with longevity – one has to attend to every detail and raise the bar each year.

International guests at the 2016 event included California-based black-and-grey master Carlos Torres and his team from Timeline Gallery, plus Pepa Heller from New Zealand and Ivana (who now works with Kari Barba in San Diego). The watercolour style was enthusiastically received by the Taiwanese audience and will probably become even more popular now, after Ivana won Best of Sunday with a lovely blowfish piece and Pepa spread some beautiful ink on his fast-growing Asian clientele.

But there was plenty of local talent on display too, including Allan Jiang, the former apprentice of black-and-grey

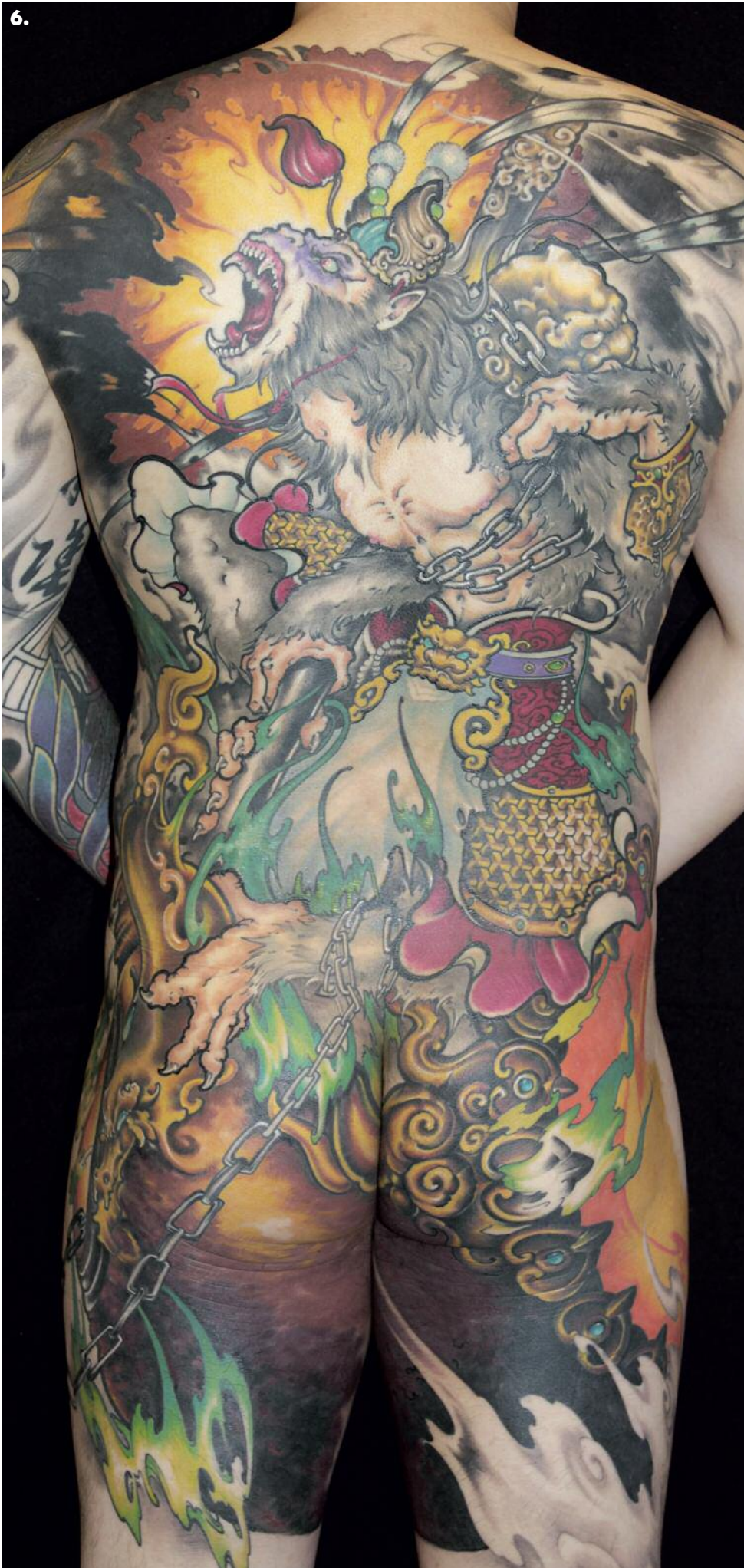
master Josh Lin, who came down from the capital Taipei, and a really strong contingent of Taiwanese artists specialising in fine art designs. Chinese star Guan Xiao Peng (aka D-Snake) brought a group of clients with mind-blowing backpieces from Shanghai, his theatrical style taking inspiration from Gao Bin (Lion King), who introduced this genre to Eastern tattooing. It is a genuinely Chinese tattoo art, inspired by animations and soap operas based on ancient legends and stories that are known by every child – all of which provide great themes for tattoos. And of course further artistic inspiration was provided by the Chinese Year of the Monkey, with all manner of monkey tattoos very much in evidence all around the convention.

There were also many artists from neighbouring Japan and Korea. The discrimination suffered by tattooists in these countries nowadays makes it difficult for them to showcase their work at home, so many of them are becoming true tattoo travellers, spreading their art across Asia and the globe. (Social media – even though it's extremely popular in Asia – can never replace the real thing!) One could feel the sense of community that the tattoo scene has achieved worldwide. Japanese masters like Horitada and



1. haha tattoo (taiwan)
2. that'll be a back piece
- 3&4. opening celebrations taiwan style
5. organiser tai and horihide

6.



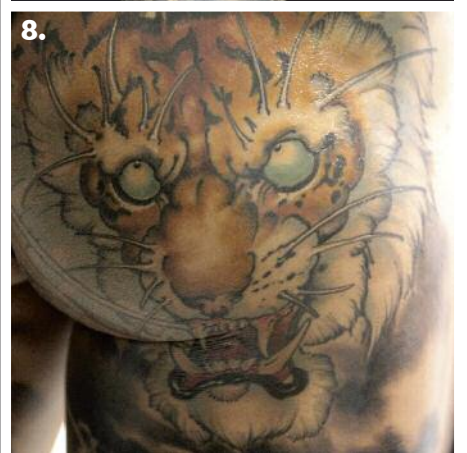
Horigen have been coming to Taiwan for years, and now the young guns are coming too. An additional surprise visitor this year came in the shape of the ever-happy legend that is Horihide. 84 years old now, and two years into his retirement (after no less than 63 years of active tattooing!), he travelled over on Tai's invitation and stunned everybody with his extraordinary energy. He was met with deep respect wherever he went, even though his humble and easygoing nature made it easy to forget his status in the tattoo world.

Respect is a key feature of this convention – respect for tattooing, art, history, culture and all of those who were in this business long before us – and I think that's what makes this show such an asset to the tattoo world. And the dates for next year are already set! The Taiwan convention 2017 will take place on 14th-16th April (with the Singapore convention already being planned for the following weekend, just in case you're planning an Asian trip...)

7.



8.



- 6. by guan xiao peng, d-snake (china)
- 7. by carlos torres, timeline gallery (usa)
- 8. by guan xiao peng, d-snake (china)
- 9. diao zuo (taiwan)
- 10 & 11. dean ink (taiwan)

9.



10.

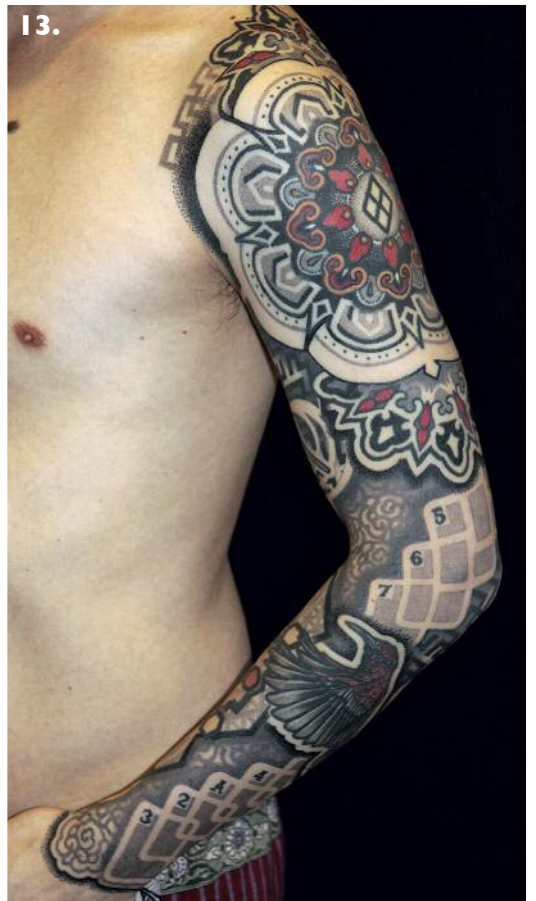


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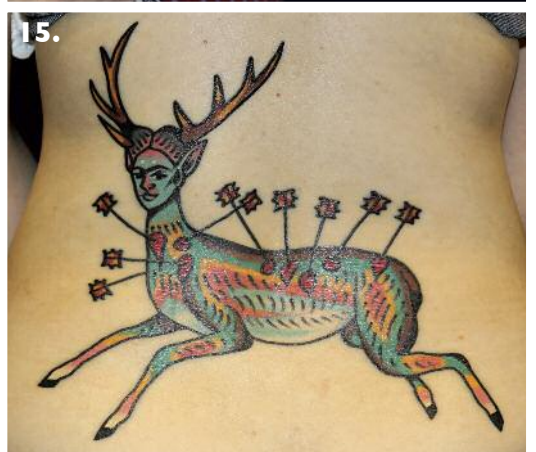
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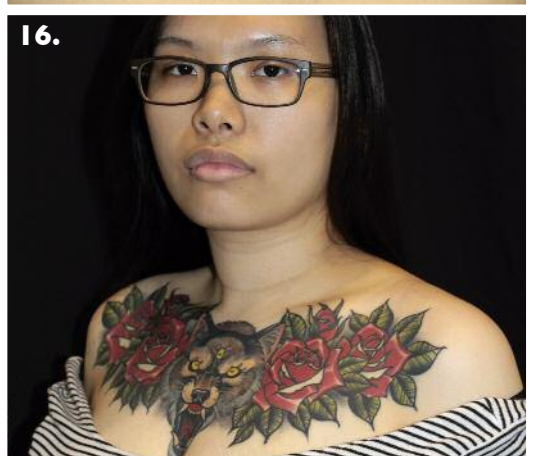
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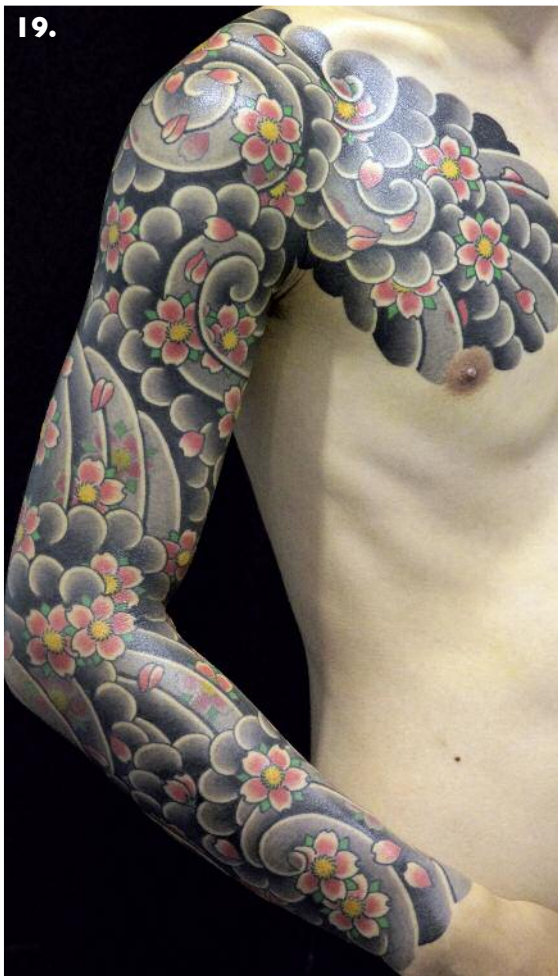


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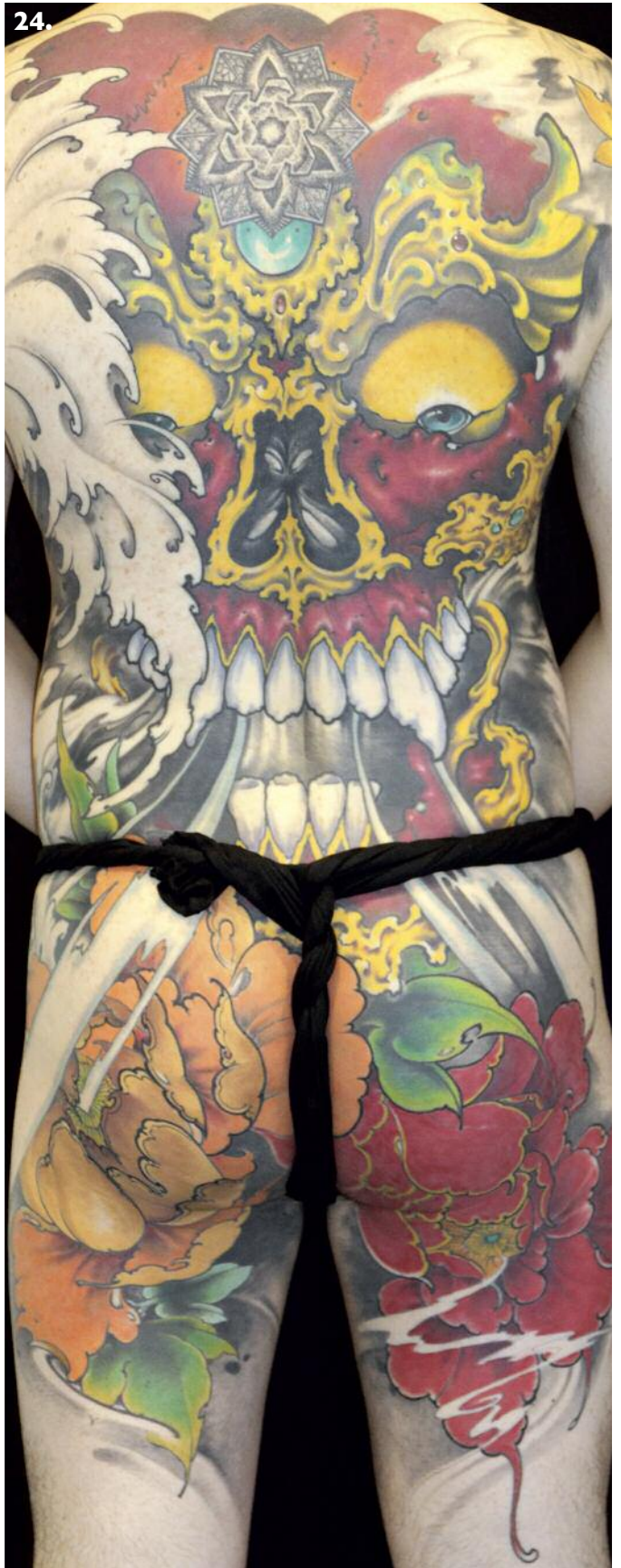


16.

12. beautiful collection of suits
 13. by 13 luk
 14. by diao zuo (taiwan)
 15. by york yeh (taiwan)
 16. by crispy lennox,
 the black mark (australia)



17. by Horikoi (korea)
18. by Horikoi (korea)
19. by horikaka, (korea)
20. by jessi manchester (germany)
21. by ivana, ivana tattoo art (usa)

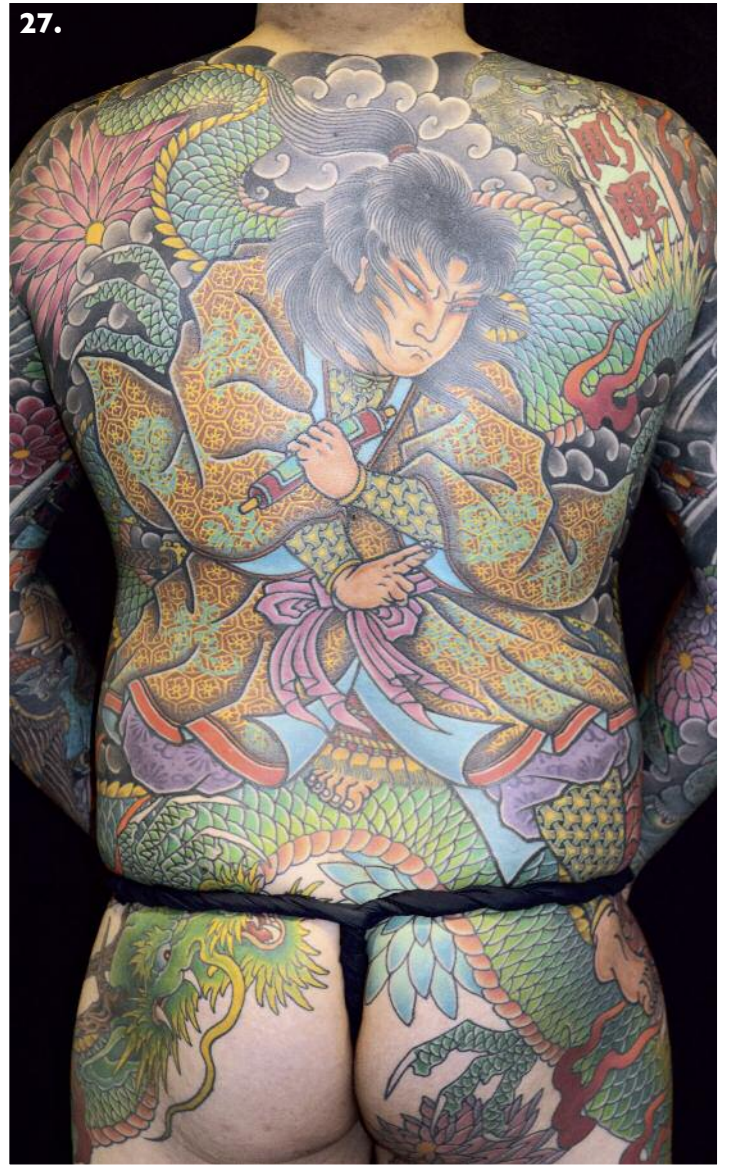


22. by guan xiao peng, d-snake (china)
23. unknown artist
24. by guan xiao peng, d-snake (china)
25. by tai, top tattoo (taiwan)
26 & 27. by horihui (taiwan)
28. by orient ching (taiwan)
29. by tai, top tattoo (taiwan)
30. by horikashi (japan)

26.



27.



28.



29.



30.



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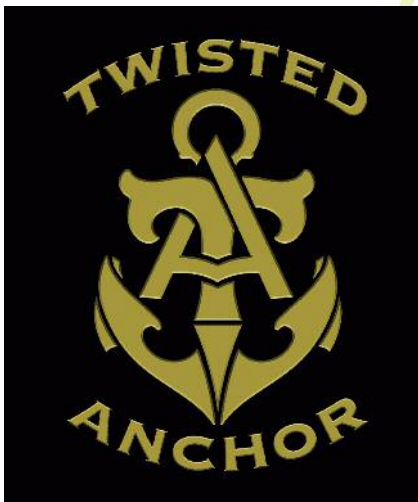
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American born and bred, Matt Stebly has fused elements of neo-traditional and new school with a fabulous colour palette that really packs a punch! The results are, quite simply, stunning. I managed to catch up with him in between clients at the Liverpool Tattoo Convention, to talk about his work and his life on the other side of the pond...

So Matt, you're based in Ocean Springs, Mississippi, at Twisted Anchor.

Yes, Twisted Anchor is my own shop. I don't know how I got the opportunity to get a building like this in such a good location. But we had to fight to get permission to have the shop here. It's all to do with zoning. In the US, certain businesses are only allowed in certain areas, and tattoo shops are only allowed in with pool halls, massage parlours and so on. This building wasn't in the right zone, so we had to go through a bunch of red tape. Then when we went in to renovate it, the whole thing was infested with termites so we had to completely tear it down and build it back up. So something that we thought was going to take us a few months ended up taking us almost two years from start to finish!

How did you get into tattooing?

Ocean Springs is where I grew up. Tattoos have interested me right from when I was very young. My family was artistic and I've always made art and done designs for people, but nothing huge or anything. In school, everyone had small, solid black tattoos. It wasn't until college and afterwards that I became interested in tattoos as an artform, more than just 'trinket tattoos'. I ended up getting into tattooing by accident – I say by accident, because there's no job application or anything and nobody ever quite knows how to become a tattooer. I would go to the local tattoo shop, and just hang around and whatnot. The guy I learnt from was a good technical tattooer, but he lacked creativity. So I would do drawings for him and I just kinda worked my way into becoming an apprentice and it all rolled in from there. I left a few years later, wanting to travel and knowing I had to go out and start something that the town didn't have at that time.

And are there many tattoo studios in the area now?

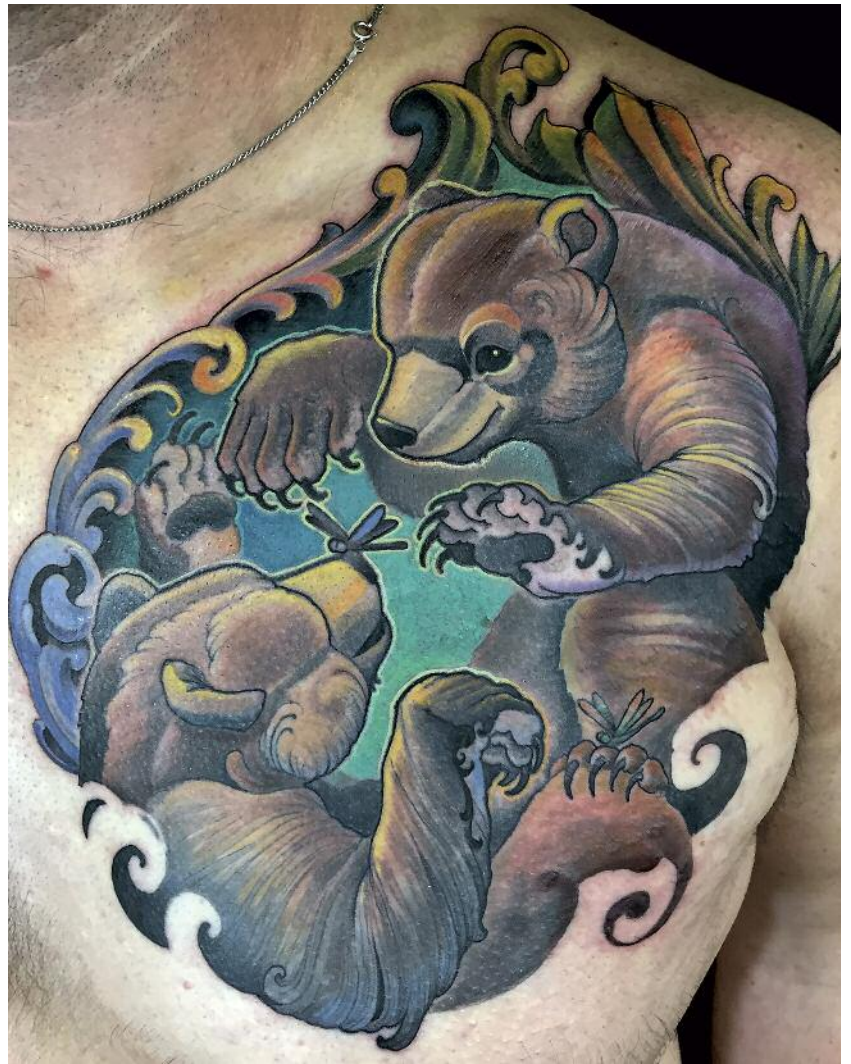
No, there's still not many. Mississippi and the South in general aren't very well known for anything tattoo-wise! There are a few *really* good tattooers, but not many in comparison to other areas of the US.

Your client base is far from local...

Yeah, the longer I do this, the further people travel to see me. The first time you have somebody travel from out of state it's quite a big deal – and it still is to me. If people want to take that much time out of their life to get something, it means they're doing their research and not just going to the closest person available.

Do you have a particular technique for packing in the colour?

I guess I've just slowed it down. I'm now using rotaries for colour, having been lining with them for the last six years. (I've done things the other way round to most people!) It's the same movement, but you have to work slower and it took me a while to get used to it. I do use a lot of rounds, like round shaders, to make things a little crisper. It takes a long time to achieve that complete saturation, which is one of those things that people who are getting tattooed often don't understand. I don't mind going into a tattoo twice. I'd much rather be able to do a second pass and make sure it's saturated. I know some people would rather just get straight into a tattoo with one pass and be done with it, which is great – a lot of tattoos are done that way – but I guess my style is different. I recently took a seminar with Nikko Hurtado and that's where I was given the reassurance that I wasn't the only person who needed to go in there and do a second pass. In the seminar, he said that he likes to go back to a tattoo and do the black again at least, to make sure the contrast is there. Obviously his is a completely different style to mine, but it's still the same technical concept. I just want to make sure the client gets that tattoo that's in my head – the tattoo that I want them to have. I could easily go over every tattoo I've done, because I'm that nit-picky about it!



Has your style changed along with your technique?

It's evolving. Right now, I'm trying to do a mix of stylised, clean lines and realistic textures. It's kind of in the middle between neo-traditional and illustrative new school. There's a lot less skin breaks than with traditional, but enough line weight and black in there to make it last forever. But it's difficult trying to explain that to clients!

The trust between artist and client is very important...

Yeah, you have to be honest with clients. I didn't used to be assertive enough. It was one of my main flaws. You know, if a client has unrealistic expectations, you have to be able to say, 'That's not gonna happen.' Especially when a client doesn't understand how long a tattoo's going to take. I don't know when it started, this assumption that you can get a tattoo before the commercial break! I always over-estimate on times now. If I think it will take three hours, I'll say it will take three to five. I'd rather the client was mentally prepared. And it kinda weeds out those who aren't so committed or who start thinking about the money. Saying that, I do get scalded quite a few times by my assistant who says, 'You had that person in all day and you only charged them for two hours!' But I'm really adamant about only charging what I think it's worth. If I think I didn't get enough done in that day, or if we only got two hours of solid tattooing done, then that's all I will charge for. I love what I do. If I wanted to be rich, I would have been a doctor or something. I'd much rather cut everybody a break on their tattoos than have loads of unfinished work around. If you stay busy all the time, you'll have enough to pay the bills.



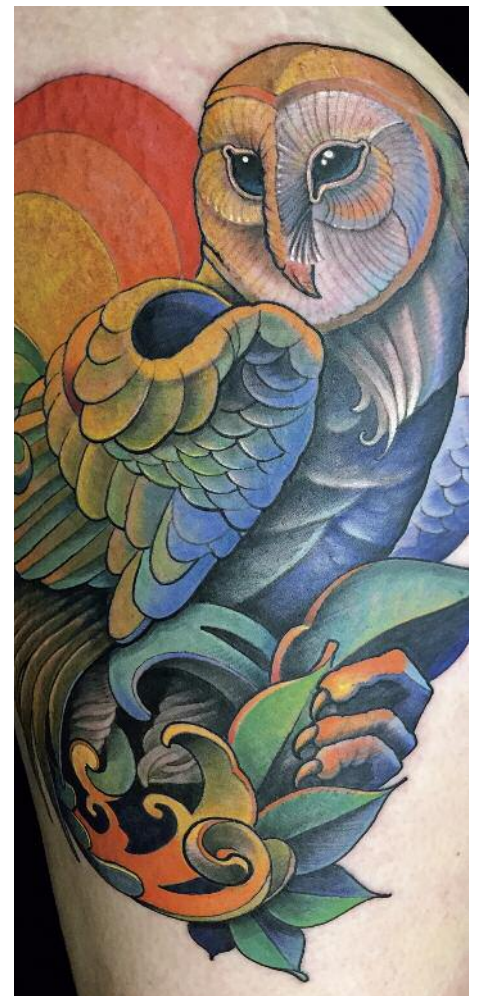


So tattooing is definitely a lifestyle rather than just a job?

Yeah, and the work-life balance is probably one of the most challenging things in tattooing – especially for me now. My son is almost three, and my little girl is five, so they're getting big. Just seeing them grow... I don't want to miss it. But making sure I set aside that time to spend with my kids and my wife, and even making sure I have time to myself, is very difficult. If I have any spare time, I spend it with them. I don't have any other hobbies besides tattooing and art. I get a lot of grief for working so much, but it's what I'm passionate about, and what I want to do, and what I'm happy doing.

Is your painting integral to your tattooing?

Before I was a tattooist, I was an artist. I did ceramics and painting. I got into tattooing because it was a way to make a living and still do art. I just had to figure out how to tweak my images and make them into tattoos – which actually help both my painting and my tattooing to develop. When I look at paintings I did a few years ago, it's like 'Damn! I see where I was going with that, but if I'd just tried to tattoo it...!' My tattooing has definitely helped make my painting much better. And I'm more patient too. Before, I would get frustrated with a painting after just a couple of hours, but now it's like, 'I've spent two years tattooing this backpiece and it's just coming together!' So patience is definitely one of those things that tattooing has taught me!



That must be a good moment, when you see a tattoo start to come together...

Yeah, it is. With a large piece, the first couple of sessions are the ones I like least – when I'm getting the outline down and starting to block things in – because it's all still in my head. After the second or third session you can usually see everything starting to come together. A back is a larger canvas, so it might take more time. Once it's all mapped out, it's easy from there.

And both you and the client can 'relax' into it?

Yeah, because that's the most important part done – the placement and the line work. It's much more relaxing after that. As long as the client sits well, you can kinda get into a nice groove.

Finally, do you have any tips to prevent hard-working tattooists like yourself getting too exhausted?

I have to make myself go to sleep at a certain time, or else I'll stay up doing stuff until I'm done! It just kinda gets out of hand pretty quickly. I really have to monitor myself. No one else is gonna tell me, because everyone else is asleep! I gotta make sure I'm taking care of myself so I don't burn out...

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IN FOCUS

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TALES FROM THE NAUGHTY STEP

by Paul talbot

This month's column is the product of a few conversations, a couple of bottles of cheap red, and several hours of YouTube. I'm attempting to write about a train of thought that connects you, me, Bob Ross, some tattooists, a famous guitarist, and the making of the Rocky movies. And the point? Well, let's just join the dots and see where we end up.

Many of the artists, musicians and other creatives that I know suffer from what psychologists call 'Impostor Syndrome'. This is where someone refuses to believe in their own talent, despite clear evidence to the contrary. They put their success down to pure luck or the deluded opinions of others, and they fear that they may one day be exposed as a fraud. Post-convention bar talk often consists of tattooists dismissing their own award-winning work as a 'happy accident', or describing their style as nothing more than an inability to tattoo any other subjects or employ any other techniques. Please don't ask me to give you specific examples. I'm not going to tell you who I'm talking about because I've only got a few friends and I intend to keep them, thanks!

This brings me to the famous guitarist I mentioned in the intro, and an interview I once saw online. I can't recall the exact details, so I won't give his name, but his wise words were the starting point for this whole piece. He was asked whether, despite the fact that he is regarded as one of the best guitarists in the world, he had any deficiencies in his technique or found certain styles hard to play. He answered, "Yes, of course." The interviewer then asked whether he practised those techniques or styles in order to improve them. His answer took me by surprise, but it actually made perfect sense. He said, "No. I don't play them at all. I just stick to the stuff I'm good at, and let those who are good at the other stuff have it."

There isn't a hint of Impostor Syndrome here. He's obviously very comfortable with who is and what he does. He's running his own race. And by concentrating only on the things that make him 'him', he's carved out his own career as a unique and individual artist. He doesn't need to learn fingerpicking or the blues; he's developed a style and sound all of his own by focusing on and perfecting the things he does well. And believe me, he does them very, very well.

And that led me to thinking that maybe all artists should concentrate on running their own races and forget about running along with everyone else. In the increasingly crowded world that is tattooing – a world that seems to spit out yet another amazing newcomer almost daily – individuality is the only thing that separates us. When the world and his wife can knock out a black and grey portrait, maybe we should all just focus on the things we're really good at, and make those things our 'thing'!

Early on in my career, I was given a great piece of advice about making art (of any kind). **START TODAY, USE WHAT YOU HAVE, DO WHAT YOU CAN.** And with those words ringing in my ears I set about making graphic art the only way I knew how – which, at the time, was with a Pritt stick, a photocopier and some Letraset rub-down letters. And ever since then, I have never attempted to be anything other than the artist/designer that I am. I have concentrated on

finding like-minded clients rather than attempting to please everyone in the world. I am simply a tattooist by definition, a designer by trade and a musician by the grace of (yeah) God.

And the Rocky movies? I was in the middle of writing this column, and the dots were beginning to join up into some sort of coherent idea. Even though I wasn't quite there yet, I had the feeling I was on to something. It was time to take a quick break and open that second bottle of liquid Italian inspiration. When I returned to my keyboard a few moments later YouTube was auto-playing a documentary about the making of Rocky. Now maybe it was the wine, but what I saw kind of made my point for me.

According to this documentary, they didn't have enough money (not even half) to make the movie the way they initially wanted, so they had to change a bunch of things to accommodate the budget. And that's actually why many of the iconic scenes look the way they do. The location, for instance. It was intended to be New York, but they supposedly switched to Philadelphia because without the unions they could pay people less. The ice-skating scene is shot in an empty rink because they couldn't afford any extras. And for the action shots, because they couldn't afford all the tracks, etc, for the dolly, they had to use an invention of the head cameraman which turned out to be an early version of the (now industry-standard) steadicam rig. This meant they ended up with shots that would have been impossible to film using the traditional dolly method – giving Rocky a cinematic look all its own.

And the connection? Well they could have held out and waited for everything to be perfect so that they could make their movie in exactly the same way as every other movie is made... but they decided just to roll with it (**START NOW**), change what had to be changed (**USE WHAT YOU HAVE**), and think their way out of the problems (**DO WHAT YOU CAN**). Rocky is a better – not worse – movie for it; it won several Oscars and influenced many later sports films. And what would it be without the famous training montage and the Rocky Steps?

I believe that running your own race is the most (and perhaps the only) rewarding way to create art. So next time you find yourself doubting your abilities and talents, remember: You're not an imposter. You're an individual. You're an artist. Do the stuff you love and find an audience for it.

But what about Bob Ross? He was the guy who taught me about painting, and I'll leave you with a couple of quotes from him.

"The secret to doing anything is believing that you can do it. *Anything*. As long as you believe."

"We don't make mistakes. We just have happy accidents."

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

CONVENTION CALENDAR

UK CONVENTIONS

July 9-10

The Southampton Tattoo Festival

Ageas Bowl, Botley Road, Southampton, Hampshire SO30 3XH
www.southamptontattoofestival.co.uk

July 16-17

Powys Charity Tattoo Convention

Community Centre, Mount Lane Llanidloes, Powys SY18 6EZ
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

July 23-24

Cardiff Tattoo and Toy Convention

The Motorpoint Arena Cardiff Mary Ann Street, Cardiff CF10 2EQ
www.cardiffattooandtoycon.co.uk

July 29-31

Titanic Tattoo Convention

Titanic Building Belfast 1 Queens Rd, Titanic Quarter, Belfast BT3 9EP,
www.facebook.com/titanic.tattooconventionbelfast14?fref=ts

July 30-31

Portsmouth Tattoo Convention

The Guild Hall, Guildhall Square, Portsmouth PO1 2AD
www.portsmouthtattooconvention.co

August 19-21

Tatcon Blackpool

Norbreck Castle Hotel, Queen's Promenade Blackpool, Lancashire FY2 9AA
www.tatconblackpool.co.uk

August 20-21

Robin Hood Tattoo Show

Cotgrave Social Club, Woodview, Cotgrave, Nottinghamshire NG12 3PJ.
www.robinhoodtattoofestival.com

August 26-28

Maiden City

Everglades Hotel, Prehen Rd, Derry BT47 2NS,
maidencityink.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

October 1-2

Ink 'n' art Bournemouth

Pier Approach, Bournemouth, Dorset BH2 5AA
bournemouth.tattoo/

October 15-16

Oxford Tattoo Convention

Exeter Hall, Oxford Rd Kidlington OX5 1AB
www.facebook.com/oxfordtattooconvention

October 15

Halloween Tattoo Bash

Wolverhampton Racecourse, Dunstall Park Gorsebrook Rd, Wolverhampton WV6 0PE
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

October 29-30

Cambridge Tattoo Convention

Hilton Cambridge City Centre, Grand Arcade, 20 Downing St, Cambridge CB2 3DT
www.cambridgetattoocon.com

Nov 12-13

East Coast Tattoo Expo

Highfield Holiday Park, London Road, Clacton-On-Sea, Essex, CO16 9QY
www.eastcoastexpo.co.uk

December 3

Cariad Ink Tattoo Festival

Venue Cymru, The Promenade, Llandudno LL30 1BB
www.facebook.com/CariadInk

April 15-16 2017

Maidstone Tattoo Extravaganza

The John Hendry Pavilion Detling Showground, Maidstone, Kent
www.maidstonetattooextravaganza.co.uk

OVERSEAS CONVENTIONS

February 3-5

Milano Tattoo Convention

Hotel Quark, Via Lampedusa, 11/3 20141 Milano, Italy
www.milanotattooconvention.it/

July 15-17

NY Empire State Tattoo Expo

New York Hilton Midtown, 1335 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019,
www.empirestatetattooexpo.com

September 16-18

Kaiserstadt Tattoo Expo Aachen

Hubert-Wienen-Straße 8 Aachen, Germany
www.kaiserstadt-tattoo-expo-aachen.com

Oct 21-23

Evian Tattoo Show

Palais Des Festivites, Evian, france
www.eviantattoo.com

October 30

Tattoo Sunday

Studio Hall, Boogschutterslaan 41, Sint-Kruis, Brugge, Brussels
www.facebook.com/tattoosundaybrugge

November 11-13

International Brussels Tattoo Convention

Tour and Taxis, Brussels Belgium
www.brusselstattooconvention.be

October 21-13

Evian Tattoo Show

Charles Cottet 74500, Evian, france
Tel: +33.450.71.51.05
www.evian.tattoo

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