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Amie Conradine

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ISSUE 226 • SUMMER 2013 • £3.95

MODEL: AMIE CONRADINE PHOTOGRAPHY: SCOTT COLE

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The needle has landed

Megan Massacre by Nicky Nindor

GETTING WHAT YOU PAY FOR

Last night, somebody broke into my car. I say 'broke in', but I'd actually left it unlocked which is a slightly different kettle of fish. The two front doors were pushed 'not quite' closed but not properly; the boot was the same. Inside, all the sun visors were down, the centre console and glove box were wide open. Whoever it was had taken great care to do whatever they were doing very quietly. I don't actually think anything was taken though...

There was an old phone in the glovebox, along with about maybe ten compact discs of no value to anybody (I had even forgotten they were there). In the pocket of my door, there was a scruffy paperback, a few pens and a notebook. The only other stuff in there was a bunch of tangled charging leads and a pair of gloves under the seat. I know – gloves belong in the glove box, right? I'm pretty pissed at the invasion, but it could have been a lot worse than the loss of the 80-odd pence that I'd left in there. I'm also pissed off because...

well, what's wrong with my stuff? That four-disc Kiss box set is a classic. That old Sony Cybershot still takes pretty good pictures, don't you know? That's the problem with thieves these days. There's no honour and no taste – it's just for the sake of it, not because you actually want something out of it.

WHEN I ASK TO SEE PORTFOLIOS, FAR TOO LARGE A PERCENTAGE MAIL IN DRAWINGS THAT LOOK LIKE A SCHOOL PROJECT. IN SOME CASES, I THINK THEY ARE SCHOOL PROJECTS

And whilst I don't want to draw parallels with tattooing, fact of the matter is, there are far too many. I get tons of mail every week asking my advice – and as a lot of you will know, I'm pretty good with that sort of thing – but when I ask to see portfolios, far too large a percentage mail in drawings that look like a school project. In some cases, I think they are school projects. Life has a way of keeping you from things that you're not ready for. You can try and steal your way in but somehow, the honest cream will be the only thing

left in the bottle. The world is pretty amazing about being its own spirit level.

I thought that might be a bit harsh, but last week, I was introduced to somebody that has just been taken under the wing of an artist that has become a really good friend. All day long, she draws. All day long she is never happy

but b) the guy who ripped it off (and it was hook, line and sinker) has nothing but a few quid in his pocket. If that's what you want, fine. Knock yourself out. Chances are, if you never post on Facebook or anywhere else, nobody would ever know. I simply don't get what possible satisfaction there is in it for the tattooist – and certainly not the bearer of the work who can now show off the inked-up equivalent of going out with your best friend's girlfriend.

Your tattoo should be 'your' tattoo – just as your car should be your car. Is nothing sacred anymore? Probably not...

Sen



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Feldman

22 VALENTIN HIRSCH
Valentin Hirsch
started drawing
when he was a child
and has never looked
back. He studied fine
arts in Stuttgart and
Vienna, and well
- you will see the
magic for yourself

60 An American tattoo master, skilled drummer, motorcycle aficionado and television star – Mr. Corey Miller isn't just another tattooer.

72 He spent nine long years holding down two jobs; one as a graphic designer and the other as a tattoo

P32

THIS 40 G

TATTOO NATION

artist and you start
to get a good idea
about the man...

A dead person's skin is a little bit tougher than that of a live person. Mike Rubendall at Kings Avenue Tattooing in New York knows this well...

great pleasure (as always) that this issue we deliver straight to your door, the skin bearing talents of Amie Conradine. Let's see what she's got to say for herself...

Here's one from
the Ed's wish-list -
luckily it turned out
as good as planned
- and an awful lot
longer too...

26 **AMIE - THE
COVER GIRL**
It is indeed with

THIS MONTH'S PULL OUT:
40 GREAT ANIMAL TATTOOS

40 GREAT *Animal Tattoos*

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

THE CAMERA NEVER LIES.

The no-shit stares speak volumes - but it's the stories behind the ink that really captured Eric Schwartz's imagination!

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colour coverage
of the larger
than life show
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Sleeve Notes

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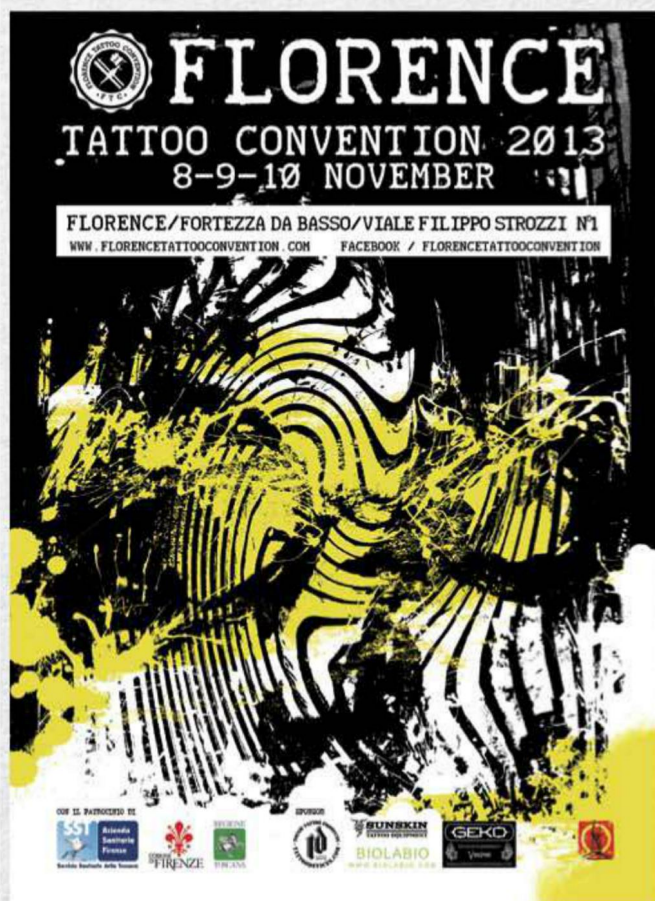
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COMPETITIONS

WIN 5 PAIRS OF TICKETS TO THE MANCHESTER INTERNATIONAL TATTOO SHOW

I'm sure it was only a couple of months ago we were here last, but apparently it's been a whole year! We're really stoked about this one – the Manchester Show (3-4 August) is a real showstopper – so to celebrate, we're giving away five pairs of tickets. Usual rules apply – send an email to editor@skindeep.co.uk with the subject line of 'MANCHESTER' and we'll do the rest. Comp closes July 14 to give everybody a fighting chance of arranging travel... good luck!

www.manchestertattooshow.com



WIN 5 PAIRS OF TICKETS TO THE FLORENCE TATTOO CONVENTION

In plenty of time for you to get your game faces together, suitcases packed and flights and hotels arranged, we've got five pairs of tickets to give away for the 6th Florence Tattoo Convention

Running from November 8-10, this is going to be a peach – and hey, it's Florence! Simply send an email to editor@skindeep.co.uk with the subject line of 'FLORENCE' and we'll choose five winners on July 31 to give everybody more than enough time to get the hell over there.

Good luck (and see you there!).
www.florencetattooconvention.com

THE HOT LIST



SION

SINCE LAST ISSUE I HAVE BEEN... DIGGING THE TALENTS OF DAVID SENA – YOU WILL SEE...

LISTENING TO TOM KEIFER AND FALL OUT BOY

WATCHING 'A UNIT' KICK ASS IN ARNE DAHL

WAITING FOR MANCHESTER!

AND KICKING MYSELF OVER NOTHING ACTUALLY... A GOOD MONTH ALL ROUND! (NOT NORMAL THOUGH)



PAULA

DIGGING THE TALENTS OF MATTHEW CHAHAL – A TRADITIONAL TATTOOER WITH AN UNUSUALLY NUANCED APPROACH TO COLOUR

LISTENING TO LESTER YOUNG AND BILLIE HOLIDAY – THE GRAM PARSONS AND EMMYLOU HARRIS OF JAZZ

WATCHING GAME OF THRONES, OBVIOUSLY

WAITING FOR GODOT

AND KICKING MYSELF OVER THE SAD AND UNTIMELY DEATH OF THE STINKY £3 SECOND-HAND CLOTHES SHOP. MAYBE IF I'D BOUGHT A FEW MORE POLYESTER FROCKS IT WOULD HAVE BEEN LESS FLAMMABLE?

SHORT SLEEVES

FLEUR DE LIS TATTOOS

Shaun Gillhaney is pleased to announce the opening of our second studio, Fleur de Lis Tattoos. Located in the heart of Glasgow city centre at 52 St Enoch Square, Glasgow, G1 4AA. Multi-award-winning artist; custom and flash studio. We are open seven days from 10am till 5.30pm. Tel: 01413 280701, email: fleurdelistattoos@gmail.com or find us on www.facebook.com/fleurdelistattoos.

AN APOLOGY...

It's been a while since we've had to do this – last issue, we made an error with the name of one of our featured artists (due to a mis-labelled folder of all things). Where we extolled the virtues of the Japanese artist Psyten, it came to our attention that the incorrect spelling (Pysten) was used on the cover. We hate making errors of that magnitude. Apologies Sir.



LOADED FORTY FOUR

There's a couple of nice guest spots going on over at Loaded Forty Four in the coming weeks that look like this: Jody Dawber (of Real Art, Syston, Leicester, UK), August 8-10; Ricardo Contreras (of True Love Tattoo, Madrid, Spain), August 29-31. You can find them at Loaded Forty Four Tattoo Parlour, 223 Chorley Road, Swinton, Manchester, M27 6AZ. loaded44studio@gmail.com facebook.com/loadedfortyfourtattoo 0161 312 0202



(NOT SO) RANDOM READER
PHOTOGRAPH OF
THE MONTH

And the reason it's not so random is that it was plucked from the folder of images we took at the Great British Tattoo Show

What's it all about? Well, there was an opportunity for anybody and everybody to sit in our big throne chairs and get their mugs taken either by themselves looking godlike, or alongside whatever Vixens happened to be passing at the time (hey, it was busy – you don't always get to be choosy!).

We settled on this one because, well, the dude looks young, the dude looks happy, and to be honest, this might be as good as it ever gets for the man! What I'm actually hoping is that in 20 years, somebody will drag this corner of the magazine out again and say, "Hey look what <insert name of future extremely famous person> looked like 20 years ago!"

If this is you, get in touch and I'll send you a copy of our Best Horror Tattoos book for letting us poke fun at you. Not that you had a choice...

THE HOT LIST



BARBARA

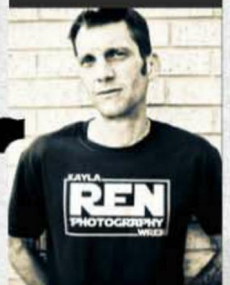
SINCE LAST ISSUE
I HAVE BEEN...
DIGGING THE TALENTS OF
RALPH STEADMAN - 77
AND COOLER THAN YOU

LISTENING TO
CANADIAN THRASHERS
FATALITY - LITTLE
WEIRD, LOTS GOOD

WATCHING
THE BIG BANG
THEORY RERUNS LIKE
NOBODY'S BUSINESS

WAITING FOR
AN AC/DC TOUR
I.E. A MIRACLE

AND KICKING MYSELF OVER
MISSING THE GREAT
BRITISH TATTOO SHOW
BY A DAY... STUPID PLANE



TRENT

DIGGING THE TALENTS OF
KEV JAMES AND
TOKO LOREN

LISTENING TO
MAYA JANE COLES

WATCHING
NOTHING. READING
INSTEAD. ANYONE
REMEMBER READING?
FROM THE OLD DAYS...

WAITING FOR
THE NEXT
CONVENTION...
GOT THEM POST
CONVENTION BLUES

AND KICKING MYSELF OVER
MISSING THE CYANIDE
GIRLS AT THE GREAT
BRITISH TATTOO SHOW



SKULLS & ORCHIDS GIVEAWAY

Hot off the back of showing (and shifting a ton) of his custom made jewellery at the Great British Tattoo Show, the man behind this beautiful gear at Skulls and Orchids, Steve Dennis, has come to us with a fine idea – to give away some stuff! Not being ones to turn away from flaunting sexy wares in front of the readership, we wholeheartedly agreed

With this being a little different from the usual swag we have here, we're going to run this giveaway over the next two issues as well – what we have in mind is something quite special that will be revealed shortly – which, if you read between the lines means we haven't decided what it is yet, but we guarantee it will be interstellar!

To get your name added to the list, whip in an email with the subject line of 'Skulls and Orchids' and we'll store it safely – when the time comes to customise the concept, we'll pick a winner and be in touch to see just how customised it will need to be.

Stay tuned. Meanwhile, you can check out all their available goodies at www.somjewellery.com or to be more specific: www.somjewellery.com/skulls_and_orchids.php.

RESTLESS SOUL: NEW STUDIO

Remember a few issues back when we published that great reader photo of the babies in the sun and the moon?

The artist who rustled that great piece up was Jeff – and he has a brand new studio to get acquainted with – built with his own fair hands no less. For those in the area or intent on travelling here's what you need to know: Restless Soul Tattoo, 101 Rowland Rd, Worthing, West Sussex, BN11 3JX.



SCREWS: LOOSE

Everybody loves a good Jesse Smith piece right? Well, the man has some new threads that you might want to be seen haring around town in while you do whatever it is you do...

There's the Heraldry Tee – scribed by Craola (see feature later in this issue) and also the One Trick Pony Tee (scribed by Brent McHugh).

As you'd expect from Jesse, the duds are top notch – all shirts are 100 percent cotton and rather special all round. Check them out at: jessesmithtattoos.com/t-shirts.

THE HOT LIST



TOM

SINCE LAST ISSUE I HAVE BEEN...
DIGGING THE TALENTS OF ERIN GREENOUGH

LISTENING TO STONE ROSES

WATCHING ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT

WAITING FOR INSPIRATION

AND KICKING MYSELF OVER WRITING HALF A NOVEL EVEN THOUGH I KNEW I WASN'T TELLING IT IN THE WAY I WANTED TO TELL IT.



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Blue



Orange



Red



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Mercure Cardiff Holland
House Hotel & Spa,
24-26 Newport Rd,
Cardiff, CF24 0DD
www.cardiffattooandtoycon.co.uk

July 13-14

CUSTOM CARNAGE UK

Stoneleigh Park,
Warwickshire CV8 2LZ,
United Kingdom
www.customcarnageuk.com

July 19-21

1ST KERRY INTERNATIONAL TATTOO CONVENTION

The Gleneagle Hotel
Muckross Rd
Killarney, Co. Kerry,
Ireland

July 27-28,

PORTSMOUTH INTERNATIONAL TATTOO CONVENTION

Portsmouth Guildhall
Guildhall Square, Portsmouth,
Hampshire PO1 2AB,
United Kingdom
www.portsmouthtattooconvention.com

August 2-4

MAIDEN CITY INK INTERNATIONAL TATTOO CONVENTION

Millennium Forum
3 Newmarket Street
Derry, BT48 6EB,
United Kingdom
www.maidencityink.com

AUGUST 3-4

MANCHESTER INTERNATIONAL TATTOO SHOW

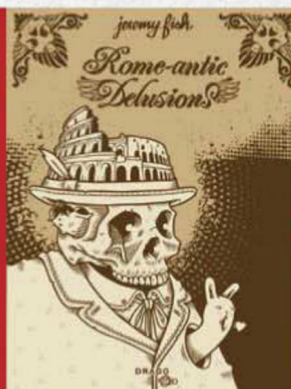
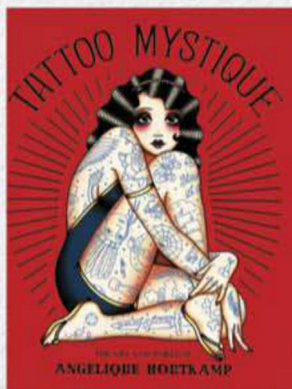
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SOURCE MATERIAL

TURNAROUND PUBLISHER SERVICES

www.turnaround-uk.com
sarah@turnaround-uk.com

Over the last few months, Sarah in publicity and promotions over at Turnaround, has been sending us some really cool books from their catalogue



With titles ranging from pure hardcore tattoo books to street art, and everything in between, I thought it would be in everyone's interest to delve a little deeper into what Turnaround Publisher Services is hiding in their, not so small, store room.

First off, Turnaround is a distributor, not a publisher. So for all you inspiring art book creators or future writers, this is not the place to come looking for book publishing help – Turnaround's publishing service refers to the services they provide for publishers. Sarah has explained to me that Turnaround acts as a sales and distribution service, working for publishers to get their books into the trade and online. They don't distribute directly to individuals, but their books should be available from online retailers in most cases. However, if you've searched shops and the internet and still can't find what you need, they can most likely help you out in these cases.

So, the technicalities out the way, let's have a quick root around and see what we can come up with. After all, as Turnaround rightly claims, they do have a catalogue of books from some of the coolest, edgiest publishers out there, whether they're based in the

UK, Europe, America or elsewhere.

So diving right in at the tattoo-related books and you have got the likes of Shawn Barber's *Memoir* and Angelique Houtkamp's *Tattoo Mystique*, heading up the list. Both books are brilliant insights into the people behind the art and well worth a look. Another gem in Turnaround's catalogue has to be the Ukiyo-E series, featuring the art of Kunichika and Yoshitoshi, six books crammed full of Japanese art. But my favourite has to be *Old Men's Tattoos* by Thomas Jeppe. Jeppe's book covers tattoo images from the '40s through to the '70s from across the world, "... a blurry embodiment of the passing of time, a permanent relic."

But Turnaround don't just have a big selection of tattoo books, they also cover many other areas that throw up some surprising little finds. With areas covering anime, manga, graphic novels, erotic art, graffiti and street art (and we're only scratching the surface here), there seems to be an inexhaustible supply of amazing books to be discovered... my wishlist has already gotten far too long!

I would highly recommend heading over to Turnaround's site and losing a few hours. It certainly won't be time wasted.

WorldMags.net

Barber Dts



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Conventions

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ART PROGRESSION

DIG THIS: LEGOLISM

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Prestbury Park, Cheltenham,
Gloucestershire GL50 4SH, UK
www.tattooroyale.co.uk

OCTOBER 11-13**TATTOO JAM**

Doncaster Racecourse
Doncaster, UK
www.tattoojam.com

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Province of Milano, Italy
www.tatuami.it

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Albuquerque, NM 87102, US
www.dukecitytattoo fiesta.com

July 20-21**GDAŃSK TATTOO KONWENT**

Stocznia Gdańska, Plac
Solidarności, Gdańsk, Poland
www.tattookonwent.pl

July 26-27**9TH INTERNATIONAL TATTOO CONVENTION STAVANGER**

Sjøhusene i Stavanger
Nedre Holmegate 12,
4006 Stavanger, Norway
www.tattooconvention.no

July 26-28**VISIONARY TATTOO ARTS FESTIVAL**

Asbury Park, Convention Hall
1300 Ocean Avenue
Asbury Park, NJ 07712,
United States
www.visionarytattoofest.com



Our good friend Max over at Southmead Tattoo (Bristol) has come up with a wonderful new concept in tattooing – one that we would love to see propel itself into the stratosphere. Ladies and gents, we offer you Legolism! Here's Max:

"Legolism is the world of lego blocks and realism combined in one piece. The idea of Legolism is my answer to some opinions that realism is just copying photos onto skin. It is associated with the new school style and I'd like to prove that I might achieve a surprising outcome using the techniques and solutions that I use every day in my painterly realism like three plans of the composition, perspective, alternative lights and blur effects, etc.

"Being someone who likes challenges, I wanted to look for something new – something that no one has done before. I wanted to combine these two worlds and add some kind of a story to it. I'd like to create a new trend in tattooing, escape from all the popular motifs like muertos, day of the dead faces, religious sleeves, etc. It is basically my response to the monotony that has begun to surround me in tattooing. I'd like it to be opposed to new school, to be proof that lego can mix with realism



and make a lot of sense together.

I've been spreading the word about this idea and my fellow tattooing friends have expressed their curiosity and interest. They, in turn, motivated me and now await the outcome of my project – which has helped me realise even more that this has a lot to offer. I have plenty of ideas under construction and hope that people will respond optimistically to it. I would love to hear from people about their ideas for Legolism stories and give them life."

You can contact Max at these places, and we'd love to hear what you think of the concept too. You know what to do...

Facebook: max.pniewski • instagram: @maxpniewski • info@southmead-tattoo.co.uk • www.southmead-tattoo.co.uk



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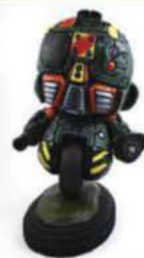
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"Some sins don't wash away..."

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THE MIGHTY DOLLAR

A bit of an exclusive for you this month: Johnny Dollar hasn't done an interview for some years after he realised newspapers and journalists "take the words outta your mouth and change them all around to fit their story". But as a fellow artist he was happy to spend a morning talking to me... I hope I did him justice!



I very much believe that everything happens for a reason especially on my travels. Sometimes on my quest for an interview, artist's schedules fit effortlessly with mine, and every now and then, no matter how hard you both try, your paths simply do not cross.

There is an important figure in Australian tattoo history I very much wanted to meet and get tattooed by the last time I was in this great country, but due to various reasons, it was a missed opportunity. So when I knew I was returning to the southern hemisphere there was one name on the top of my list... Johnny Dollar.

by Craig Lee

John Entwistle (aka Johnny Dollar) has been working in Melbourne for well over 40 years, and with the exception of Cindy Ray, has been tattooing in the city longer than anybody else.

His machines and supply business have helped many artists get started in the industry, which has in turn contributed to moving Australian tattooing forward to where it is today. Since 1968 he has had studios situated in three different locations, the latest of which is his shop on the Punt Road in Richmond which has been there for ten years, and is where I spent one sunny Monday morning.

John's shop is a converted house

and very typical of Melbourne architecture – the studio signs are all hand-painted and slightly weathered. As you walk up to the shop, an 'open' sign sits in the window in front of some net curtains hanging from a brass rail.

I walk through the door into a small room where three old theatre seats sit against one wall





**I GOT MY FIRST TATTOO FROM
TEX NEWELL IN THE CITY. I GOT
THE SMALLEST ONE I COULD
FIND ON THE WALL, COS I WAS
SHIT SCARED!**

John is softly spoken, humble and a gentleman. I instantly shut up and listen in case I miss something. When an artist of John's generation and experience shares his stories and personal tattoo history with you, you would be a fool to miss anything.

"I dug something out to show you," John tells me and ushers us through to

the back room where there is a painted tattoo design of a woman on a peacock. "You know the old London tattoo artist, Rich Mingins? Well this was painted by his Australian brother, Alf Mingins – I thought you may appreciate it."

John offers us a coffee and then we retreat through the back to sit in the sun and chat.

John started tattooing way back in 1962. After getting his first one, he decided his art was not commercial enough to make money from, but tattooing would be a viable way to make a living from his art.

"I got my first tattoo from Tex Newell in the city. I got the smallest one I could find on the wall, cos I was shit scared!"

Back then a tattoo apprenticeship was pretty much unheard of, but luckily John found an advert in an American mechanics magazine;

"The first tattoo equipment I got was from Milton Zeis in Illinois, USA. I bought a hand tattoo kit from him," John recalls. "It was really just four needles hanging out the end of a bit of dowel, but to me that was the first I knew about it." John used that kit for about two years until he found a tattoo machine manufacturer in Melbourne and bought his first electric machines. He worked full-time and tattooed at home from 1962 until 1968 when he opened his first studio in Flinders Street, in the heart of Melbourne. Five years later he moved out to Richmond where he had three or four shops before settling in his current shop on Punt Road.

John works alone: "I've been working alone for some time now; there's so many mixed personalities in tattooing I don't have to deal with any of them. When I opened, there were only three established shops in Melbourne." Which is a damn sight different to today when 🌻

opposite a high wooden counter. A picture rail runs around the walls, and hanging from the chains is hand-drawn flash and photos – everything in the room gives you a sense of nostalgia and quality. There is attention to detail in everything from the designs on the walls right down to the light switches which are brass mounted on dark wood. Some studios in the UK decorate to look 'old school', but this is the real deal. Behind a glass cabinet full of supplies, a mirror hangs with the engraved words, 'John Entwistle Tattooist' alongside two sailing ships and in the corner, a small work station is set up and ready to go.

After a few minutes taking everything in, a figure dressed in a black shirt and black jeans appears through a door in the back; "Good to see ya Craig," I hear, as John comes through to greet us.

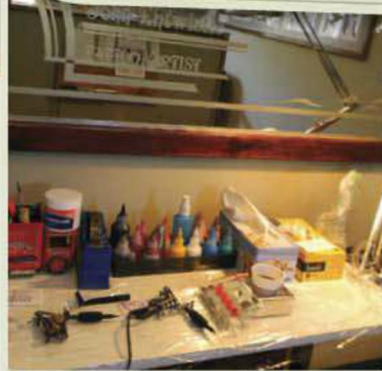


**WE'RE JUST LUCKY THERE ARE PEOPLE
WILLING TO WEAR OUR TATTOOS
OTHERWISE NOBODY WOULD MAKE A
SHILLING OUT OF IT**

Melbourne has a studio on every corner! Despite the large number of artists in the city, John is unbelievably humble.

"We're just lucky there are people willing to wear our tattoos, otherwise nobody would make a shilling out of it" – a good thought for a lot of younger artists! "Melbourne has always been the worlds' tattoo capital. When every other capital has had one tattooist, we always had two." This is now the case with conventions as well as studios – in 2012 the city hosted four large international tattoo shows, and while you may often see John walking around and taking it all in, you won't see him working at any. "I think the conventions here are only money-making for the people that run them. I prefer to work on home ground – I'm not one for working in strange surroundings." And indeed with such a comfortable studio, I don't think I would either.

John has seen plenty of changes over the years not only in his clientele, but also with the expectations people bring in to the



studio. John is surrounded by all his own hand-painted flash: "you know, nowadays people just walk in straight past it all. Hours of work on the wall and they walk up to me and show me a tiny little thing on their phone." The work may be lost on some people but there are still plenty of customers wanting his old school traditional designs.

"I get a lot of young tattoo artists coming in now wanting a genuine oldie. I also tattoo a lot of women – back in the day, it was always men, knockabouts and blue-collars, never white-collared folk."

While white-collar, high paid city workers and soccer mums may be the bread and butter for a lot of studios, John would like to see tattooing go back to what it once was. "I'd like to see tattooing come out of the mainstream; there's

plenty of art school students who come into tattooing now, which is a good thing. I think Melbourne has always been a great place because we had Dick Reynolds tattooing here for 50 years – he always put out a clean presentable design so you had to work hard to at least come up to that standard or go above it, to make a go of it here. Good competition is only a good thing and Melbourne has a lot of great artists. But I'm prejudiced, I was born and bred here!"

It was an honour to be able to talk to John, as he is well-known for not doing magazine, TV or newspaper interviews, and so I leave you with this final thought from the man himself: "We can all put some mystery back into tattooing. Tell no bastard nothing. We paid our dues to become picture people, let others do the same."

If you would like to learn a little more about John and get your hands on some of his flash, you can get a copy of the independently published book, *John Entwistle Tattooist*, which is crammed full of old pictures and flash available now from www.johnnydollartattoo.com.

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🎧 Vincent Malvaez

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

This issue, we took a bit of a left turn with the concept of Behind Closed Doors because the photography of Vincent Malvaez is not something to be walked away from easily. Enjoy...

Twitter: @Taadow69k
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WorldMags.net

<< "I shot this photo of Fernie Andrade at Ink 'n' Iron three years ago, again while I was covering the event for Sullen Clothing. Fernie is a good friend of mine and this photo is one of my more popular photos. It's been his default photo on his social network sites for quite some time now."



^ "This image was when I got tattooed by Nikko the Ink 'n' Iron Tattoo Convention in Long Beach, California. This was back in 2006. I got a portrait of my mother tattooed on me and four years later, I got my father on the opposite side on my forearm."

>> "I took this photo at Muzink a couple of years back when Jeremy Hanna got his hand blessed by Carlos Torres. I was there to capture the moment, one of my favourite tattoos that Jeremy has collected."

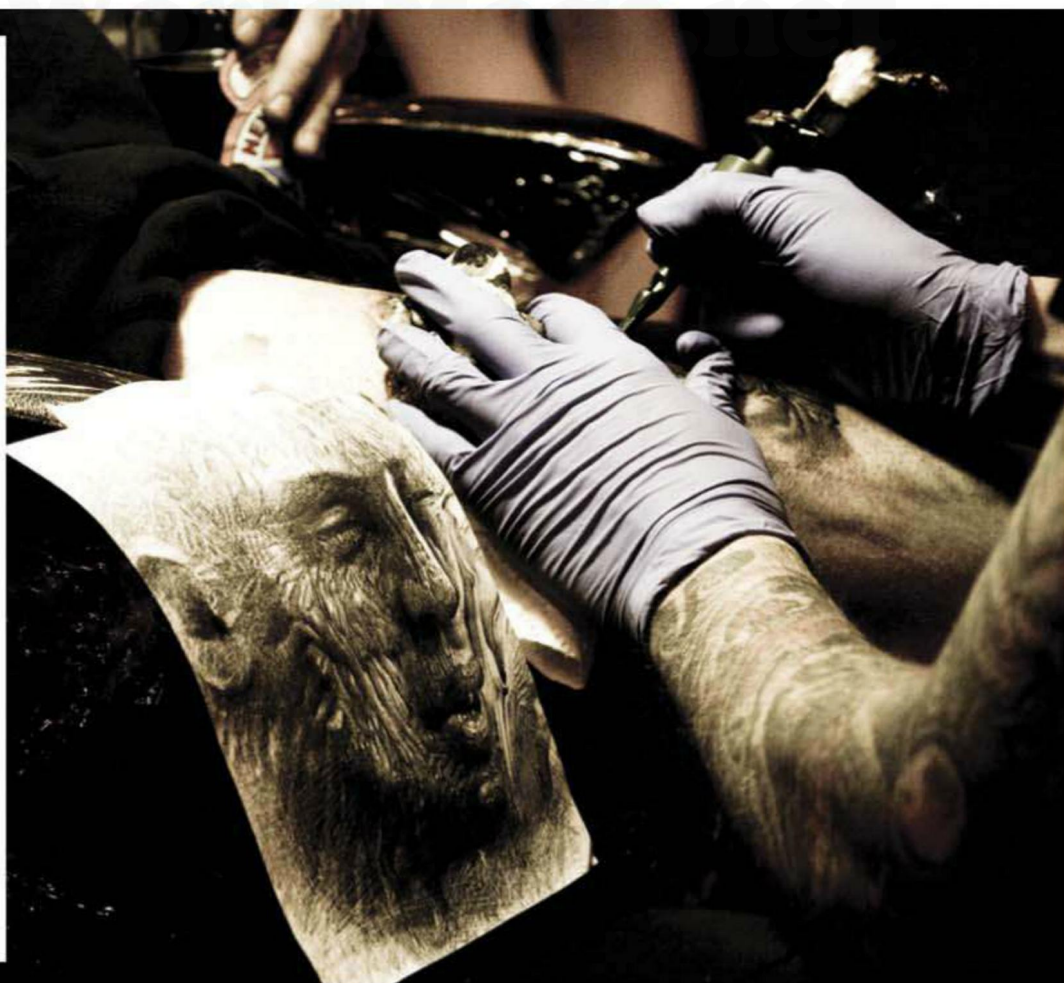


<< "The image I have of Nikko and Robert was the day before he tattooed Jeremiah Barba at Motavation Tattoo/ Silverback Ink in Los Angeles, California. I was invited to come hang out with them and I brought my camera just for some good memories and I captured some of the coolest shots that I have in my collection till this day."

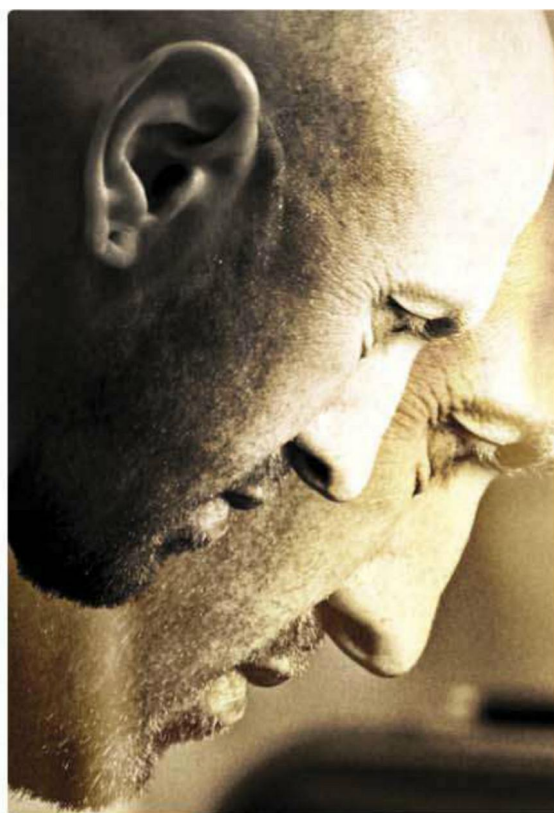


I come from an artistic family, my Dad is a man of many talents but his portraits are what interested me the most. I was always around art so I appreciated seeing other people's art, because I knew the time and effort that it took to make the art piece they created. My artistic way of expressing my talent is through music and photography – as a music artist, always in front of the lens, attending photo shoots for promotional purposes was a great experience. So being able to capture the perfect shot for some 🍷

"I took this photo of Jeremiah getting tattooed by Robert Hernandez at Motavation/ Silverback Ink in Los Angeles. Robert invited me over to hang out and I had just bought my Canon camera so I brought it with me just for memories. That was pretty much my first time doing anything like that... but not the last. That night we went out for Sushi with Randy Howell and I was nervous. I'd never had Sushi before and I don't like seafood very much, but I couldn't turn down dinner with people I looked up to. So I went and it turns out I actually love Sushi. Thanks to those guys, I now eat it on a regular basis. That day was one for the books and a highlight in my life."



✂ "I took this photograph of Andy Engel at Mario Barth's Biggest Tattoo Show on Earth during the coverage – I do it every year for Sullen Clothing. Andy is an amazing artist and person, so it was an honour to work on this photo for him."



one else is an awesome feeling. I was inspired by Diane Arbus' photography and the oddities that she would shoot. After attending photography school, I discovered David LaChapelle and Dave Hill and was automatically inspired. But back to my passion for art... I'm also inspired by Michael Hussar, David Stoupakis, Keven Llewellyn, Hajime Sorayama and Paul Booth's paintings, which are very appealing to me. 🖌️



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Unscrew Tunnel And Lay Disc Inside Tunnel As Shown Above



Screw Together

BLACK MAJICK

Valentin Hirsch, in terms of my knowledge of him, is another result of the wonders of the internet. I would never have come across him if it wasn't for the contacts I've made through trawling the internet, as I do on a daily basis. Procrastination leads to great discovery... or something like that



tattoo@valentinhirsch.com
ichliebeaka@gmail.com
(studio berlin)

In this case it did anyway. And that's all I need to justify all the spare time I have on my hands, because Valentin Hirsch is a fantastic artist, influenced by the kinds of things I like to see tattoo artists influenced by.

From a young age art has played a central part in Valentin's life, and so when I asked him about a pre-art life, there was only very early childhood. He started drawing when he was a child and since then has never looked back. He studied fine arts in Stuttgart and Vienna, and cites the work of Albrecht Dürer as one of his most important influences. Not only is he fascinated by the lines of Dürer, but he explains that he is simply, "influenced by everything that is out there, or inside of me. It could and still can inspire my work".

That was something that really resonated. I liked how he stated that he can still be inspired, because so often you see artists resting on their laurels, and Valentin is quite the opposite. "There were times in my life when drawing felt like an escape to a place calmer and more peaceful than what surrounded me in the real world. For hours and hours, drawing meant being alone with myself with some pen and paper and good music."

Apart from Dürer, Valentin talked



THERE WERE TIMES IN MY LIFE WHEN DRAWING FELT LIKE AN ESCAPE TO A PLACE CALMER AND MORE PEACEFUL THAN WHICH SURROUNDED ME IN THE REAL WORLD

about an artistic movement in Austria that has been particularly relevant to him, yet stated that the names of those within that community would tell us nothing. He talked about how, being young, he was less likely to allow for too many influences, explaining, "young people often are much more strict and severe in their judgements

and what they let into their lives. So when I was younger, there were few role models that I adored." But today, now that Valentin is older, he is more open to things and artists who don't appear to have anything to do with him on the surface. And, for me, this is very important.

It means he can be influenced by anything. Too often we see tattoo





I WORK MOSTLY WITH THE TECHNIQUE OF DOTTING POINTILLISM, AND WITH THIS METHOD A SINGLE WORK TAKES A LOT OF TIME

artists who have clearly only ever seen what other tattoo artists are producing, but the impression I get from Valentin is that he has his eye on the world as a whole as a source of influence. And you can see it in his art. There is a mind at work behind his masterpieces.

I asked him to explain the practical elements of his craft, in both drawing and in tattooing: "There are two different ways of drawing for me. Let's say I am

working on a drawing as a piece of fine art, and not as a sketch for a tattoo (which, of course, should be a piece of art too). For that I need simple ink, a pen or a feather, and special paper. I work mostly with the technique of dotting/pointillism, and with this method a single work takes a lot of time.

"When I am working on tattoo sketches, I use simple fine-liner pens, with which it is much easier to do the dotwork than with a feather. Most of the sketches I do on transparent paper, which makes it easier to do collages. And last but not least, even I use picture editing programs, especially for mirroring or multiplication of single elements. But the manual aspect of drawing is very important to me."

Valentin came to tattooing later than most people generally do. He realised that he wanted to express himself through his art not only on paper, but on human skin. He liked the idea that the art would last a personal lifetime, which he finds to be a more intimate example of artistic expression.

When he was living in Vienna he ordered some tattoo equipment from the States and that's how it all started for him. Now, being a tattoo artist, he, of course, has his own approach to the whole process: "The working process begins with an interesting client request. Sometimes it is a motif that I end up creating myself. But oftentimes the client already has



a vague idea of the tattoo that they want, or specific elements they'd like for me to incorporate, eg. a certain animal or a flower. Then I take that idea and see where my creativity and my hands lead me. Sometimes I pin the finished sketch on the wall and let it hang for a while, metaphorically speaking. As my work usually includes dotwork, I do not only make use of coil machines, of which by the way, I prefer Dringenberg machines, but rotaries as well."

I started off my own journey into the world of tattoos by creating a





blog where I interviewed people within the tattoo industry—initially I was mostly interested in finding out the stories behind the tattoos they had on themselves, rather than just let them tell me about their lives. But since then I've realised that the stories aren't necessarily in the tattoos, the real stories are simply in the experiences those people have had.

To understand the tattoos, I feel now, one must simply allow the person to tell of their experiences. And it's important to always allow for mystery, and that there aren't always clear reasons why people get the tattoos that they do, and the beauty of it is that there doesn't have to be. When I posed the question to Valentin, he gave me the answer that I was hoping for. He explained that his tattoos were very personal to him, and although most of them didn't have a particular meaning and that he didn't favour a certain style, the overall combination of all of them together is a more or less spontaneous collection of work by all the tattoo artists he admires. And so to see them as a whole, and to understand how Valentin draws on his influences and continues to do so, one can see a physical incarnation of somebody interested in many things, which is something

that has become abundantly clear over the course of the interview.

Valentin discovered pointillism early in his artistic career, initially through some Austrian realists. He adopted the technique in order to develop his own style. "What I like about dotwork is the meditative aspect; dotwork is a time-consuming technique, and much of its expressive power depends on the precision and concentration with which I sit there and do every single dot. Dotworking done manually teaches you humility; it somehow keeps you grounded by the way dotwork has a similar character

becoming more and more globally networked, thanks to the internet. I try to participate in this great process and I'm convinced that this form of interaction between tattoo artists worldwide brings tattooing forward in huge steps."

Valentin began his tattooing career in a small shop in Berlin-Neukölln. He told me that they generally saw tattooing more as a service, and yet he found it a great opportunity to acquire practice in different techniques and styles. It helped him differentiate between what he wanted to do and what he didn't want to do. And now he

DOTWORKING DONE MANUALLY TEACHES YOU HUMILITY; IT SOMEHOW KEEPS YOU GROUNDED BY THE WAY DOTWORK HAS A SIMILAR CHARACTER AND AESTHETIC OF A BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHER

and aesthetic of a black and white photographer. That makes the image more eternal and timeless for me."

Valentin lives and works in Berlin and explains how lucky he is to be surrounded by free-minded and open people, who are all constantly striving for new ways to express themselves artistically. He believes that he is witnessing tattooing undergoing a transformation from service to art and counts himself particularly lucky to be a part of that trend.

"Today, the tattoo scene is

works in the world-renowned AKA Berlin, which he describes as a lively and inspiring place. "It is a very vivid working environment where good things happen. And now I guest tattoo at AKA London and NY Adorned too."

I hope to continue watching how Valentin's work develops. For me he is one of the leading blackwork/dotwork artists out there, and with his openness to new influences and inspirations, I can only see his work evolving in a continually great way. 🐾



Thrash queen

It is indeed with great pleasure (as always) that this issue we deliver straight to your door, the skin-bearing talents of Amie Conradine. Let's see what she's got to say for herself...

WHAT THE HELL KIND OF NAMES ARE AVA AND RATCHET FOR YOUR CATS? AVA IS PRETTY NEAT, BUT WHAT DID THE OTHER ONE DO TO DESERVE THE NAME RATCHET?

Awh... my girls! Ratchet's name was given to her by her previous owner and she responded so well to it that I felt mean changing it. My gamer friends still insist I change Ava's name to clank now, but no way in hell is that happening!

I SEE FROM THE SPY CAMS WE HAVE IN YOUR HOUSE, YOU'RE A SKULLDUGGERY PLEASANT FAN – ASSUMING YOU WOULD DROP EVERYTHING TO BE IN A MOVIE ADAPTATION, WOULD YOU PREFER TO PLAY VALKYRIE, CHINA, OR PERHAPS MELANCHOLIA? (DEAR READERS WHO HAVEN'T GOT A CLUE WHAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT – GET WITH THE FREAKING PROGRAMME...)

I would love to play Valkyrie as her real name is Darquesse – she's badass, evil and there's nothing more fun than performing as a villain. Heroes are borrring!

I SAW SOME PICTURES OF YOU WITH THE INSTRUMENT OF THE DAMNED – THE BASS GUITAR! ARE YOU GOOD? PLAY IN A BAND STILL, OR THINKING OF PUTTING SOMETHING TOGETHER?

Bass-wise, it's just something I sit at home and jam with. Same as me and my guitar. I played in a band before playing bass and singing, but the bass isn't where my musical talents lie – or where



my heart is. I'm mainly a singer-songwriter and a drummer – I've spent years dedicating myself to those roles in bands of my own.

BACK UP ONE SECOND. DRUMS AS WELL? WHAT GIVES? DO YOU PLAY THEM WELL OR JUST LIKE SITTING ON THE STOOL FOR A REST?

No rest for me I'm afraid! Yes, I'm a drummer as well as a singer-songwriter. My drumming style is very much thrash-punk-double-kick craziness! I haven't been in a thrash punk band for a while now – since I left my last band, in fact, but I miss gigging behind a kit so bad! I'm always stealing

my friend Sam's kit for a good old jam so I don't get too rusty.

Music is such a big part of my life and it always has been, I've just finished doing vocals on a project with good friends of mine, David Donley, Ed Graham and Glen Matlock, which I can't wait to be released. It's being produced by the awesome Jim Lowe and there will be a seven-inch vinyl (don't you just love vinyl?!), and also on iTunes. Hopefully that will all be revealed to the world soon.

I've also started my own EP which will feature my singing, songwriting and drumming on the tracks. The process is taking 🍷

The last time I trained with Matt I was indeed left with massive (and I mean massive) black bruises all over my shins as we were doing shin



longer than I'd like it to due to being absolutely skint, but what musician isn't?! My tastes are heavily influenced by thrash punk and '80s hardcore in-your-face no bollox

music. I'm so fucking ready to get it all recorded and out there and to start gigging again!

WHAT'S IT LIKE CARING FOR YOUR KICKBOXING DUDE, METAL MATTIUS? DO YOU HANG OUT AT THE FIGHTS WHEREVER YOU CAN? ARE YOU ABLE TO SUPPORT HIM WITHOUT LOSING IT?

Ah my Mattius, he's awesome and a very talented K1 fighter. He's an amateur world champion and recently became British Champion at WKA. He's off to Italy in October to compete for the



WOMAA world title and is looking for sponsors—so get in touch! I love watching him train at 5 Elements in Basildon, Essex, and I try to go to all of his fights, though I have to refrain from being my usual lager-lout geezer bird self and stop myself from screaming 'fucking hit him!' from the side of the ring. I promised I'd never be a distraction, and me and his coach, Tony, always have a good banter session about him, which never fails to amuse...

DO YOU NOT FANCY IT YOURSELF? I KNOW SOME GIRLS WHO REALLY KICK ASS AT KICKBOXING... THEN AGAIN, I GUESS THE BRUISING MIGHT TAKE ITS TOLL ON YOUR MODELLING ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS, HUH?

I love K1 kickboxing! I'm a massive tomboy at heart and I've trained a few times at Matt's gym before, but the last time I trained with Matt I was indeed left with massive (and I mean massive) black bruises all over my shins as we were doing shin conditioning exercises and block—three weeks later, I arrived to a magazine shoot with the same big black bruises on my legs. That's when I realised that I couldn't

risk it, and to be honest, if anyone punched me on the nose I don't think I could be held responsible for my She-Hulk reactions.

TELL ME ABOUT YOUR BACKPIECE... WHAT'S GOING ON THERE? IT LOOKS LIKE IT WILL SLAY WHEN IT'S FINISHED.

My newest back piece is something I've been planning for quite a while now. When Scott shot these pics we hadn't started working on it, but I'm hoping once it's all finished, Scott can shoot again and get some real kick-ass photos of it.

The piece is by good friend of mine, Tommy Farrow, at his studio Level 13 in Brentwood, Essex. The stencil was an absolute pain in the arse to put on correctly onto my back, and all-in-all it took five hours of pain, sweets and uncomfortable positions to complete the lining work. I'm now known in the studio as having alligator skin for being such a tough cookie with it. Next session is shading of the frame



'If anyone punched me on the nose I don't think I could be held responsible for my She-Hulk reactions.'

and the completion of the realism skulls which is booked in for mid-June. The last session will be finishing the masterpiece inside the frame, which I'm keeping a secret until it's finished as it's pretty fucking epic and I've never ever seen anyone else with it. It's a completely original concept I came up with that 🍌



Tattoo Vixens

has some old school elements—and I can't wait to see it finished...

HERE'S AN INTERESTING (ALMOST PROPER) QUESTION FOR YOU: DO YOU FIND THAT PEOPLE TREAT YOU DIFFERENTLY ACCORDING TO THE HAIR COLOUR YOU HAPPEN TO HAVE—OR DO THE TATTOOS OVER-RIDE THAT?

Yes! And it drives me absolutely insane. It's just a hair colour and yet people can't seem to get past that and typecast you immediately. I've recently changed my hair back to platinum blonde after being blue for two years, and before I dyed it, I let my fans know of the plan—most of them were outraged or unsettled by the thought of me not being their 'true blue' anymore. But once they saw the new locks they soon realised that blonde is the new blue.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU? I HEAR YOU'RE HEADING OUT TO BULGARIA OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT... PLEASE TELL ME THAT'S NOT JUST A HOLIDAY AND YOU'RE GOING TO BE THERE SHOOTING SOME RIOTOUS THING THAT WILL BLOW US ALL AWAY!

I'm actually packing right now! I'm off to Tunisia for some well-needed and deserved rest. I've had a lot of health issues and frustrating commitments at home these past few years, and a break away from it all for ten nights is exactly what I need! Booze, food, sex and the beach—as soon as I've finished this with you, I am out of here!

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I'm actually packing right now! I'm off to Tunisia for some well-needed and deserved rest



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THE WORLD OUTSIDE

The world outside is an odd place at the best of times. Recently, the media appears to have become aware of tattooing and related fine art – or to be more precise, how tattoo culture has seeped into a world it perhaps shouldn't have. To this I scream: "just because you've decided to notice it, doesn't mean it wasn't happening before." Thus, with great pride and other wholesome things, I sat down with Greg 'Craola' Simkins to figure some stuff out... and got more than I bargained for

craola1.blogspot.com
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I have admired from afar... very afar. Then I admired from slightly closer, but a book is still quite far away.

To find yourself in the eye of the hurricane, up close and personal, while digging on a story is the best feeling in the world. A family man first and foremost these days, the former graffiti artist, Greg Simkins – better known to the world as Craola – is startlingly easy to get along with. That's no surprise to be honest, if you are able to digest a person's work properly, you'll find that when the work is intense, the person is not. If the work is lacking, the frustration sits with the artist.

The purpose of my stay here is to do what I love doing and that's trying to figure out the inner workings of a word class artist. As a writer, I don't plan anything... I turn up at the page and see what the page wants to do. I may have a vague idea of where to start, but I find planning ruins most things for me and takes away any spontaneity that is likely to happen. As for working when other people are around – that's a major crime around here.

"I understand what you're saying and I feel you to a point. I look at my sketch time as my writing time and my painting time, as the editing of those ideas I came to when drawing. I also don't fully flesh out a painting at drawing time, because I love discovering new things that the painting is asking me to do. You just start seeing new things in the rendered shapes once the paint goes on;

Sion Smith © Greg Craola Simkins



STUCK OUTSIDE 40"X36" ACRYLIC

that's the time to be spontaneous and I love that part of painting.

"I share my studio space/ warehouse with four other dudes, Kevin Pasko, Bob Dob, Graham Curran and A.J. Dia, so there's never a dull moment. There are plenty of guys to bounce ideas around with and they aren't afraid of being honest with a 'that sucks' at the appropriate moment. I do see some differences with my work prior to having people in the studio, but it is hard to gauge if the work has altered because of that, or if its because its just the natural progression. I do get

away to draw though. I prefer to being 'alone in public', like at a library or a coffee shop to draw. A change of scenery is always good."

We're bandying the phrase and concept of 'work' around here like it's something everybody understands, but one look at any (take your pick) of Greg's pieces reveals that not to be the case at all. The concept of originality in a world in which the obvious paths have been worn dry is tough. Personally, I deal with it like this – I smash opposing concepts into each other – things that have no right to go together and 🍌

There are plenty of guys to bounce ideas around with and they aren't afraid of being honest with a "that sucks" at the appropriate moment



FINDING HOME 60"x48" ACRYLIC





PREY 48"X35" ACRYLIC



GATHER AROUND 60"X84" ACRYLIC

make them work. I wonder out loud if that's the way Greg's brain works without even consciously thinking about it anymore?

"Wow, that's almost exactly how the pieces come together. It started making more sense to me when my interest in coral reefs collided with forest wildlife, and wanting them to 'meet'. After that, everything was game and there were no more boundaries. Composing the morphs has become almost unconscious and more about textures colliding than creatures. It is a license to try anything and everything out and make them fit seamlessly."

I dare say that a vast percentage of readers will be somewhat surprised to learn that Greg is a Christian. A church-going man who finds a spirituality there that fuels a very large part of his work – whether that be conscious or otherwise is in the eye of the beholder. I didn't know this beforehand, but once learned, went back to Greg's work and came out with a different view than I came in with. Funny how knowing a person even a little bit changes how you look at what they do. So would I be a million miles away from the truth if I were to suggest there were subtle themes of 'giving' and 'taking care of each other' as a primary themes?

"You are correct. I am a Christ follower, I would say I am Christian – and am – but the term has become loaded and trampled by so many people in the media. And I believe rightfully so in some cases.

"There are many people out



ONCE THEY ARRIVE 16"X42" ACRYLIC

I am amazed that we can even be contemplating things in such a way with our minds totally irrelevant of the natural world – things that don't make sense somehow manifest just by daydreaming

there professing to be Christians and then doing everything in their power to expose their ignorance to anything that is in the Bible they claim to believe or of Jesus whom they profess to follow. Just watch TBN (Trinity Broadcasting Network) for a few minutes and you'll get my drift. It's a carnival sideshow that has no idea what it's doing.

"Sometimes my work is taking a shot at this very picture. I have a piece called 'Prey' that I recently painted which showcases a lamb walking into a room full of wolf snakes draped in sheep skins. It is loosely based on Matthew 7:15. The Lamb is representational of unblemished purity boldly walking into a horrible fate by those he knows to be liars and murderers. These wolves are described as people professing to be 'believers' and the passage is directed to 'the Church'.

"As far as the majority of my work goes however, I don't

approach it theologically. I don't attempt to put messages in most pieces... 'Prey' and 'Here Stands Matt Riddle' are exceptions. I enjoy creating narratives about interactions and relationships between worlds that wouldn't normally meet under any other circumstance than popping into my brain. I believe my world view seasons my work and that comes out in instances while drawing and painting without a forceful push. I have said it in the past; I am attempting to explore the depths of creativity that we have all been given in the likeness of a vastly imaginative Creator.

"I am amazed that we can even be contemplating things in such a way with our minds totally irrelevant of the natural world. Things that don't make sense somehow manifest just by daydreaming. It's pondering ideas of time, eternity, infinity, minds, souls and the basic question of 'Why are we here?' that has me 🙏

THE TATTOOS (I)

I am completely and always cool with people getting my work tattooed on them. By whomever, wherever and however they want. Even if the tattoo doesn't always best represent my work, this person at some point in their life said to themselves that they liked my art so much that they had to make it permanently a part of their body. Something that they would see the rest of their lives – or at least the rest of the drive to the laser removal studio. It is flattering and I have seen the great and not so great. My wife has set up a Facebook page on my fanpage where people post their 'Craola' tattoos. Anybody can feel free to scan through those folders on the fanpage.



FEEDERS 22"x50" ACRYLIC AND SPRAY PAINT

battling back and forth daily. As much as I'd like to just believe we popped into existence out of absolute 'nothing' (and I mean real nothing, not particles, or vacuums, because that would be something), I can't buy into it.

"Even the multiverse discussions I have heard just push back the ultimate timing of the Big Bang and ultimately, you have to ask the question, where did the Multiverse come from?"

"Watching William Lane Craig debate Lawrence Krauss on these topics and similar discussions is inspiring. These discussions also give me great ideas for creating my own imaginative worlds and ask the question, what would be going on in another universe separate from our own; what would we see there? Then topics such as relationships, love, longing to be loved, heartache, suffering, regret, courage and as you have pointed out, giving, and ultimately sacrifice, seep their way into the narrative as I draw ideas. These thoughts are just

there and I am sure are a result of what I take into my mind – be it through discussion, reading, podcasts or sitting and pondering the world before my eyes."

That's pretty heavy I thought to myself, but in a world where people think putting a pineapple on a bed and drawing a square around it is art – also relevant and worth pointing out by not editing down any part of that segment.

On a totally different subject, when you work like this, one idea must surely lead to another that doesn't fit into what you happen to be doing at the time. Do these ideas get put to one side to become something else or are they simply let go?

"Each painting has a life of its own and the time frame can go from one day to many months. I tend to jot down notes and sketches in my little sketch books so as to never lose my ideas. Sometimes I scan them in and put them in 'idea' folders logged under whichever show I am working on. That becomes a time stamp

for the idea. I then either leave it there to address later, or copy and paste it into future folders so as not to lose the thought.

"I am discouraged that I won't be able to paint the majority of ideas I have stored away in these folders. There isn't enough time in the day to address these sketches, and at times I find myself irritable. By not being able to visibly kick out an idea, I am left to wonder about it. It consumes me sometimes."

Let's talk about mistakes and criticism. Are you able to live comfortably with both once a piece is finished? Most great artists I know are incredibly hard on themselves. The good criticism you are grateful for but pay little attention to – and the bad, you take very much to heart and analyse it to see if you can better yourself or whether that person just didn't get what you were trying to do.

"I have a lot of critics in my life surrounding me closely. Be it my friends/ studio-mates, family members or acquaintances. I

THE TATTOOS (II)

As you'll have noticed, Greg has got one or two tattoos about himself – here's a definitive list of those responsible:

- Nick Rodin
- Mark Landis
- Gunnar
- Adam Hathorn
- Joel Bones
- Joe Capobianco
- Matt Shamah
- Mike Giant
- Rich Cahill
- Aaron DellaVedova
- Sparky
- Charles Hare
- Tanane Whitfield
- Jeffery Page
- Luis Gonzalez
- Ian Cherry





I enjoy creating narratives about interactions and relationships between worlds that wouldn't normally meet under any other circumstance then popping into my brain

also know my limitations. I am nowhere near where I want to be. I am always frustrated... always. A lot of times, it is my drawings that kill me. I am in such a hurry at times because I can't wait to see the painted version, that I push the drawing out. It usually takes a few weeks after I finish a painting that I can begin to enjoy it – especially the larger ones. I tend to like to paint the big ones way more than the small, but I still need to separate from it for a while before I can engage it again and begin to enjoy it. I am excited to have my new book out right now, but am totally unable to look at the early chapters of it. Most times I feel like a huge phony and that I am going to be found out as being a horrible artist. I think I definitely fall into the trap of being my worst critic.”

Ah, the old impostor syndrome

that all true originals feel on a daily basis. Here she is again, doing her thing. Is it harder or easier as you go along to make a decent living and put food on the table? Do you find that – particularly after a successful period – you wonder how you can ever better yourself or progress forward fast enough? I see this a lot in the tattoo industry. A lot of artists once thought they were safe and these last few years have really seen some supreme talents come along and kick ass in the world. Do ever feel like you're, er... what's a good way to put it... only as good as your last piece of work?

“That's a great question. I always live with the realisation that I need to be a good steward of what I have. We live very thriftily, stay well within our means because what I do could disappear in an 🍊

STOP HAUNTING ME 60"x48" ACRYLIC



I am taking each day at a time and chasing after concepts that haunt me and trying to add new things to my tool belt everyday



THE BOOK

The Outside is available now from all good bookshops and by mail order. See the review on page 92 of this issue for more details.

instant. Buying art is a luxury item for people and not on the top of their lists if times get rough.

"I am not performing necessary surgeries, or anything like that which will always be necessary. So thinking realistically, I have to do the best job that I can and work as hard as I can to be honest to my work, but also to provide for my family. It is hard to contemplate these things, but necessary. We are grown ups now, it is important to take things seriously. It's important to progress and learn as much as I can as I go so as to better myself and my work. But that's half the fun of it, so it weighs in my favor.

"The journey is scary and awesome at the same time. I don't want to go back to not painting full-time, but if that was to be the case, so be it. There are things far more important than art and keeping my family safe and fed is way up there on the list."

There's a good question in an interview online in which Greg says: "I have this fear that if I get too stoked on one moment then that's where my growth ends." I like that and it sits well

with me, but is it possible to improve forever? Is anybody able to project themselves forwards and see themselves in ten years, 20 years, and even begin to imagine what they're capable of? I guess the big worry may be that one day, you do a piece that is so good (to you personally) you have to wonder where on earth you're going to go next.

"I still feel that way. I want to progress until I die. If my technique ever gets polished to where I want it to be, maybe I'll be able to fully realise the narrative end of things and the conceptual side in more depth. Perhaps that side will take over and my interests will become more abstract, who knows? I am taking each day at a time and chasing after concepts that haunt me and trying to add new things to my tool belt everyday.

"I hate my limitations though. It makes me sick that I can't do certain things with my drawings. More exploration is in order."

Time can be a cruel mistress. It runs out for everybody eventually, but I have one final question and it's a good one if not only because I'm curious for myself: I like a lot of the same things as Greg, literature and art-wise – I'm a spiritual kind of guy for


sure, but not a Christian – so I'm interested as to what an artist like Greg makes of a writer/ artist like Clive Barker (and similar), who kind of exist on the same plane but approach the art from the darkness as opposed to the light. Is the artist part able to appreciate things like that, or is it preferable to stay away from them as not being something wanted or needed to influence your work, no matter how good they may be?

"That is a good question. My studio-mate, Kevin, is a huge Clive Barker fan and talks about him all the time. I still haven't read him. Just synopses of his works or what Kevin describes. And, of course, I appreciate works that come from other angles than what I hold. I appreciate the technical skills and creative flow of thought very much.

"The fact that there is even an approach that would be considered 'darkness' versus 'light' and that the two sides of thought are in opposition drives my creative juices. How are these things grounded if there were no ultimate good? These things bounce around in my head all day long.

"But to get back to your point, I do personally favour fiction which is fantasy based, and balances good versus evil. The entire back story of my White Knight hero (some of which I have written just to document for myself) is about the grey areas we find ourselves in between the two sides, but trying to strive towards ultimate good in an otherwise dark and scary world.

"My interests have been leading me these days more towards things that I find beautiful and fantastic as opposed to horrific and depraved, and then past that to why do we consider such things beautiful or depraved, what gets us to that point?"

Those must remain questions for another time – another life even. Right now, my head hurts a little from being enlightened. I wonder sometimes if people only look at pictures in magazines and that's something that comes with the territory, but just this once, I hope that's not the case... 



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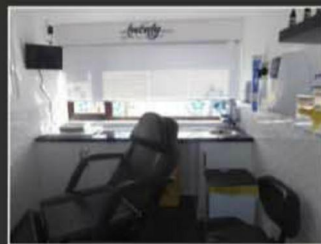
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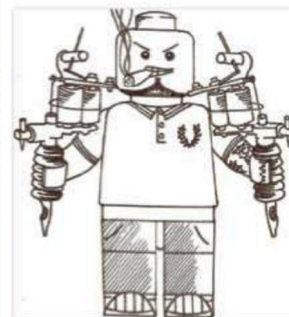
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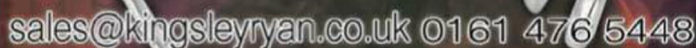
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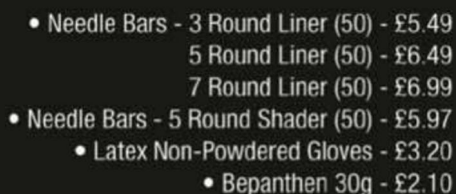
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COREY MILLER

S T A N D S U P



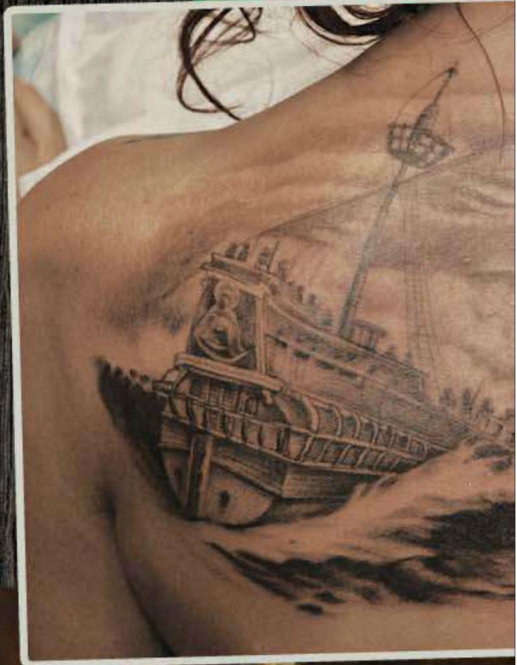
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An American tattoo master, skilled drummer, motorcycle aficionado and television star – he was on all four seasons of *LA Ink* – Mr. Corey Miller isn't just another tattooer. A cool cat and a wicked artist, Miller tells it like it is, and from the much disputed topic of selling out to his exciting new collaboration with Bell Helmets – he's helping launch Bell's new Rogue helmet and 'Go Rogue' campaign – we left no stone unturned. Let's go for a ride...

Barbara Pavone Corey Miller

From the age of 15, Corey Miller could often be found hanging out in tattoo shops – “I never had a dream to be an artist, it was more out of rebellion, it was just a place to have fun” – and by the time he hit 20, he was working at Fat George's in La Puente, California before joining Mark Mahoney in '87, then moving to Tattooland to work alongside Jack Rudy.

“I was not aware of it then but looking back now, man, I was in a really good spot to be around guys like that and come up in those ranks,” says Miller of the early years, a time when things were rather different.



MY FIRST TATTOO MACHINE
WAS MADE FROM AN OLD FISH
PUMP MOTOR AND GUITAR
STRING – I CAN'T IMAGINE
HOW I DIDN'T ELECTROCUTE
ONE OF MY FRIENDS



"The first tattoo I ever did – the insignia for the punk rock band I was in – was with a straight razor and pin and my first tattoo machine was made from an old fish pump motor and guitar string.

"The fish pump motor was weird because I had only seen a rotary machine before... I just broke apart an old fish pump motor and inside of it, it had a big, fat square electromagnetic single coil. I just figured it out, taped it to the head of a toothbrush with a bic pen, and used the guitar string. I can't imagine how I didn't electrocute one of [my friends]."

LEARNING THE ROPES

"You gotta remember, back then nobody was giving anything up, even Mark Mahoney," says Miller. "It wasn't personal, it was just the way it was. I remember when Mark first told me about tattooing a name on a curved line, not just on a straight line, it sounds like such a little thing but it was huge at that time.

"Oh, man, I remember when Mark was like, 'Quit tattooing, it's a terrible job'. There was no 'Oh, little brother, let me help you out'. Nobody did that. If anything, if they gave you advice, it was the wrong advice. So it was only if you were smart enough and strong enough to get through that you might actually get somewhere.

"Fat George taught me a lot just about working at a street shop... about treating people really fucking shitty, watching

out for hustlers, robbers and thieves," remembers Miller.

"He told me that even if I got robbed at the shop, the money better be there in the fucking morning – these guys were just like that. It was a very different mentality, very street level."

But as rough as it could get, the shop turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

"I would be in a tattoo shop every Friday and Saturday night, it was probably the best thing that could have happened to me," starts Miller. "Those years being 21, 22, a lot of my friends on those weekend nights were going out and getting busted for random shit, so, ironically, I was in this seedy shop while my buddies were catching felonies.

"You can sit and rationalise and try to make sense of it, and say it was all part of a master 🍀

POSSIBLE MUSIC-TATTOO- MOTORCYCLE EXTRAVAGANZA

"I have been doing the same thing for over 30 years: tattoos, punk rock and motorcycles. They all go hand in hand; it's a lifestyle. If I was the type to have a manager or an agent, which I don't, then maybe. If somebody asked me to, that would be the only way that would happen. I'm just focused on being a dad. It sounds like a great idea, though."



plan, but there was no fucking plan! Thinking back now [I see] how lucky I was to be in that shithole. It had a dual purpose – it was preparing me for what I was going to be, but it was also keeping me kind of safe.”

BIKES, BIKES, BIKES

“Oh God, it was 1978, I was probably 11 years old and I started riding motorcycles,” says Miller of his first introduction to bikes, which soon developed into a major passion that was indulged with help from his solid tattoo skills.

“I was tattooing all these creeps and drug dealers; I went into this house where they had all this bike shit around and I tattooed these guys and that’s how I got my first Harley. It was a ’73 shovelhead in a ’57 ridged frame, a total Frankenstein, parts from everywhere.” Which didn’t make it any less awesome and, soon, the custom of exchanging tattoos for things he liked became a part of Miller’s reality.

“Around 2000, I tattooed Jesse James for a West Coast Choppers frame and that started a three-

year project,” he says, then adds, “but, you know, I’m not really a custom guy. It’s just so funny, I have always been tattooing for parts and cool shit. Just recently I tattooed Robin Zander’s – from Cheap Trick – wife for a guitar, and I also tattooed James Hetfield for a guitar. I don’t even play guitar, I’m a drummer!”

HELLO, BELL HELMETS!

Taking his love for motorcycles to the next level, Miller recently teamed up with Bell to help launch their new Rogue helmet and spearhead their ‘Go Rogue’ campaign, a collaboration that came about by chance, but that he’s super-proud of.

“My buddy, Marc Altieri, was doing some marketing for them and he called me and said, ‘You would be perfect for this!’ He showed me the helmet and I said ‘Duuude, that thing looks baaaad. It looks like a riot cops helmet or something, it’s got that rogue look!’ Bell knows I’m an artist so when the next run of Rogue helmets come out, my art will be on them.

“I guess I’m kind of spoiled, I have a few different Bell helmets,



BELL HELMETS & COREY MILLER

Bell’s new Rogue helmet fuses the open-face and full-face categories and is aimed towards cruiser riders. As for the ‘Go Rogue’ campaign, which Miller is at the forefront of, according to the folks at Bell, it “champions the free spirited and oft rebellious lifestyle that’s associated with this unique category of American motorcycle culture.” Sounds like the perfect collaboration.

it depends on the bike I’m riding. As far as quality, and I’m not just saying it. It’s Bell Helmets, man... it’s the top dag!”

TV LAND

It’s been over two years since Corey Miller left *LA Ink*, the show that first introduced him to TV audiences worldwide. And although things may have ended on a sour note, there’s very little



he would have done differently. "I was naïve. I didn't know how big it was going to be, I should have gotten an agent or at least a manager," he says. "On the other hand, I ended up getting into a lot of cool shit anyways. I did those Ludwig Drums, the Bell Helmet thing, I did a label for a liquor company."

The show "was fine at first, but then came the drama and the fake bullshit, ya know? Getting rid of the real artists and bringing in fake actors," he explains. "By the time it was all said and done, it was all just so fake. I literally packed my shit and left. You saw me come back and ask for my job back, but I had to because of my contract."

And that wasn't the only downside of reality TV.

"I went from tattooing three to four people, to one person a day. This role of perpetual spontaneous slow motion is my description of reality TV. All these years later, I had to remember that there weren't breaks for food because, in reality TV, they take eating very seriously," he laughs, then points out a few things that

are still a little off today.

"It was a big adjustment getting back to normal... and it's not even normal. I jump around from here to Australia, and I get recognised. That's one of the stranger things. It's strange when you have lived your whole life in this independent, outlaw, underground scene, and then all of a sudden everyone in the general public loves it."

As for the media's favorite topic, that of Miss Von D, Miller says, "I have always been friends with Kim and Hannah, [but] I haven't seen Kat since the day I walked off the set. We actually texted a few months back... It's weird that Kat and I had that kind of break. I would love to see her one day, and I hope she is doing well and I'm sure she is, man."

SELLING OUT

'Sellout' is a title that gets thrown around a lot nowadays, especially when it comes to tattoos on TV or as part of clothing lines, books, you name it, but the way Miller sees it, he's not too concerned about haters.

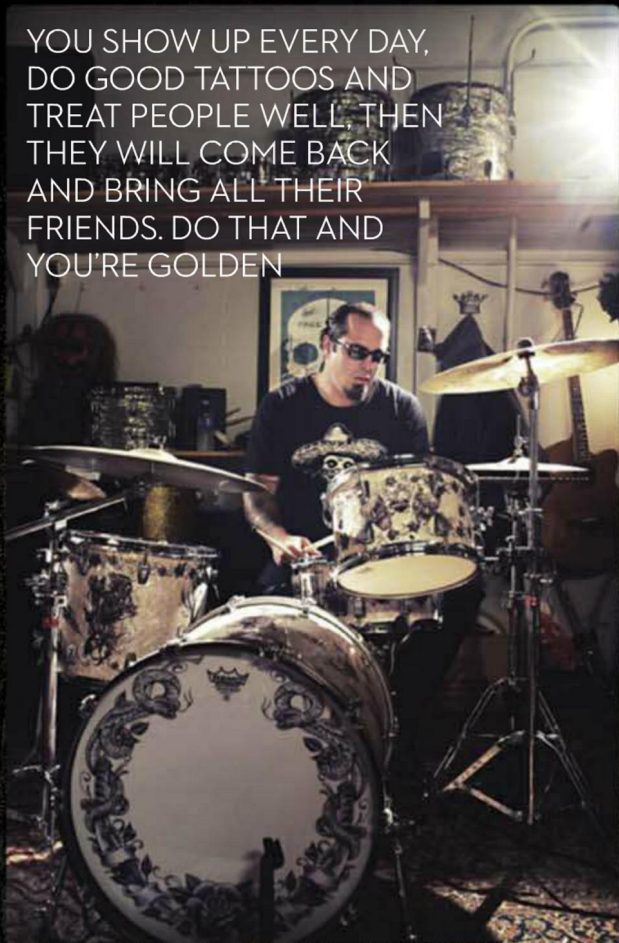
"The show didn't make me.

HE TOLD ME THAT EVEN IF I GOT ROBBED AT THE SHOP, THE MONEY BETTER BE THERE IN THE FUCKING MORNING - THESE GUYS WERE JUST LIKE THAT

It just exposed who I am," he points out. "Most of the people that called [LA Ink] a sellout were hypocrites and I have no regrets saying that. As far as I'm concerned, us tattoo artists are glorified carnies. Ya know, back in the day the carny that had the loudest, brightest sign, they got the business. Well, the sign in the 2000s is television.

"You want to talk about giving this business a black eye, you can't, there have always been shitheads in this business and guys that have marketed off of it. If people want to call me a sellout, they're trippin' because I haven't sold out yet," he laughs. 🙄

YOU SHOW UP EVERY DAY,
DO GOOD TATTOOS AND
TREAT PEOPLE WELL, THEN
THEY WILL COME BACK
AND BRING ALL THEIR
FRIENDS. DO THAT AND
YOU'RE GOLDEN



DREAM CLIENT AND DREAM COLLABORATION

"It may sound kind of hippie, but I wouldn't mind tattooing John Lennon. Who I would really like to hang out with is Greg Irons, a tattoo artist that passed away too early in life. Filip Leu told me that my art reminded him of Greg's and that was a huge compliment. There is something about Greg that I look up to. If anyone wants to go look up Greg Irons, it might explain why."

"A lot of people assume we made all this money, but we really didn't. The people who made the money were the producers. Ah, I don't get the whole sellout thing, I work too hard to take that shit serious."

SIX FEET UNDER

Going strong for over a decade, Six Feet Under Tattoo, Miller's third shop, opened its doors in 1997, and although LA Ink helped raise its popularity, there's a simple rule that Miller has never once lost sight of that has kept it successful for all these years: "You show up every day and do good tattoos and treat people well, then they will come back and bring all their friends. That is my philosophy, do that and you're golden."

Having amazing artists also never hurt anyone.

"Anybody who has worked with me has been given the same speech and been told what I expect," says Miller. "Ya know, if you're going to do bad things, don't get caught; if you're going to rip off the shop, don't get caught or it will be the worst thing ever for you. I kind of say it like that. If



someone isn't smart enough to be an artist and to have this job and come to work and take advantage of this and have fun... if they want to go and be a pain in the ass and be fuckin' idiots, they won't last.

"Henry Powell has worked with me for 20 years. Larry Garcia has been with me for 16 years, and Neil Wilson, a newer guy, has great work ethic and has been with me for six years." Miller pauses, then adds, "you know what's cool? Some of these guys that work in Orange County and Hollywood, where there are a lot of shops compounded, these guys start to develop the same style, but I can honestly say, being out here, my guys have developed their own style."

MILLER HERITAGE

Often described as a tattoo master, Miller laughs, "I don't know if I can accept that, man. I'm good, but honestly, I love tattooing and I am learning every day. I really am, I'm not just saying it to be cliché."

"For instance, people joke with me that I call my Japanese style 'Coriental' because it is my own style. I would like to

delve into it a bit more, even though I have my own style, and I would like to learn more.

"Thank you for the compliment but, ah, I'm 46, been tattooing about 30 years, I don't want to say I'm a master yet, I want to get another 20 years in," he laughs, and jokes, "I've heard youngsters say they're masters, I say 'Yeah, you're a masturbator!' We're all practicing and I'm still trying to become a better artist every day."

Other than perfecting his work, Miller is loving traveling as much as ever – "I'm waiting for my kids to get older so I can drag them around and show them some places" – and in addition to his music and bike riding, he admits, "I have wanted to write a book way before I was on TV, explaining all the awesome experiences I have had. I think by doing the show it will be the catalyst for that, where enough people will care."

With so much going for him, it's difficult to describe this talented man in one concise parting statement, but he offers, "Corey Miller is an American tattoo artist, musician, family man, and one lucky mother fucker!" Perfect. 🙌

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STATION TO STATION

The no-shit stares speak volumes – but it's the stories behind the ink that really captured Eric Schwartz's imagination

Born in New York City, Eric moved west to Denver in the late '60s and has been there ever since. Trained as a fine artist, by the time he was in his 20s, he'd already made a name for himself with his ethereal light sculptures. Later, he moved into print and graphics before finally returning to that world of illumination and shadow as a photographer. This year, Eric completed his first film, *Tattoo Nation*, which, like all good stories, starts with a eureka moment.

"About seven or eight years ago I noticed that there were suddenly a lot more tattoos around," Eric explained. "Nothing like it is today, but I thought 'this is interesting' and so I started speaking to people about their tattoos."

Eric admits that he was pretty uninformed about the whole process of drilling ink into flesh, but the more people he

spoke to, the more he realised that behind the imagery, lay something much deeper than the stereotypes of teen rebellion and wanting "to look cool".

"I can give you one story which was a real turning point. I was at a restaurant and the manager noticed that I was in a place that didn't really get great service. So she came up to me and said 'is there anything I can help you with?' She had a sleeveless blouse on and I noticed that there was a little bit of tattoo sticking out of each side. It was symmetrical so I thought it could be like a back piece, you know? So I said 'yeah you can tell me about your tattoos' and she lit up like a Christmas tree. I'd never seen anything like it. We actually became friends later and she told me how she'd decided to dedicate her body to the two most influential people in her life – her daughter and her grandmother



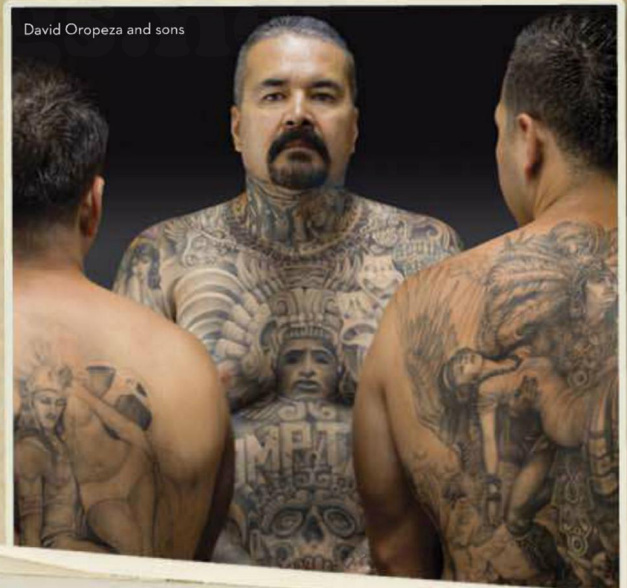
– and I thought OK, this tattoo thing is completely different than I thought."

INKY DEPTHS

As Eric dove into *tattooland's* inky depths, he became intrigued by the fact that an outsider could never know what the images meant to the person wearing them.

"That really fascinated me. The whole use of imagery is totally different from what I was used to from a fine arts background. So I decided to take portraits of people with tattoos and then interview them so that others could read how they felt about their ink." The result was a series of compelling, life-size portraits called *LA in Black and Grey*, in which tattooed sitters, with bare torsos, stare out at passers by

Paula Hammond Courtesy of Tattoo Nation/As Credited



David Oropeza and sons

I FELT THAT I'D FOUND THESE GUYS AND THAT THIS STORY NEEDED TO BE TOLD NOW OR BE LOST FOREVER

Travis Barker Tattoo

as if daring them to disapprove. However, it was a chance meeting at a tattoo convention that persuaded Eric to swap stills for the moving image.

"I came across a gentleman named Chuco... he just happened to be walking down this aisle at a convention and he was wearing some of the most amazing art work I'd ever seen in my life. I mean, I don't care what medium it was. It was incredible. Really conceptual.

"It was fascinating to me because on one leg he had actors who had played gangsters: Joe Pesci, Marlon Brando, Al Pacino. And on the other leg he had actual portraits of the real gangsters, which I thought was just so cool. Then, on one side of his body, was all this Roman Catholic imagery and on the other side was the Aztec. Across his chest were things to do with Mexican culture, and across his back was some of the prison stuff that he'd had done about his family. This man was very modest, but, artistically, he knew exactly



Ed Hardy, Jack Rudy, Bob Roberts

what he was doing. And I stopped him and said 'you have to tell me about this' and he started explaining about the Chicano black and grey, and I realised that I had come across a story that needed to be told."

That story – *Tattoo Nation* – begins back in the '50s when most white people would have told you that the blues (assuming they'd heard of it at all) was invented by a Tupelo kid called Elvis. Of course, in reality, its roots lie in the soulful songs and rhythmic field hollers of Mississippi's black farm workers. It was already half a century old when folk historian, Alan Lomax, went in search of blues wizard Robert Johnson, only to discover that he'd been murdered three years earlier by

a jealous husband. If it wasn't for Lomax, though, the world would never have heard of Johnson, Son House, or Elmore James. Speaking to Chuco that day, Eric suddenly felt like a latter-day Lomax. "I felt that I'd found these guys and that this story needed to be told now or be lost forever."

Unravelling that story took time and a fair amount of chutzpah. "We interviewed – and I'm being conservative – 40 artists, and slowly the story started coming through. But it took about two-and-a-half years to really do it because I had two things to overcome: there was the Mexican-American Chicano culture, which, for very good reasons, was very suspicious; and I also had the tattoo culture. I have no ink, so it was all about 🍌



I HAVE NO INK, SO IT WAS ALL ABOUT GETTING PEOPLE TO SEE THE WORK I WAS DOING SO THAT THEY COULD GROW TO TRUST ME

getting people to see the work I was doing so that they could grow to trust me." It helped that David Oropeza, whose ink-covered torso has adorned its fair share of tattoo mags, was one of the film's co-producers.

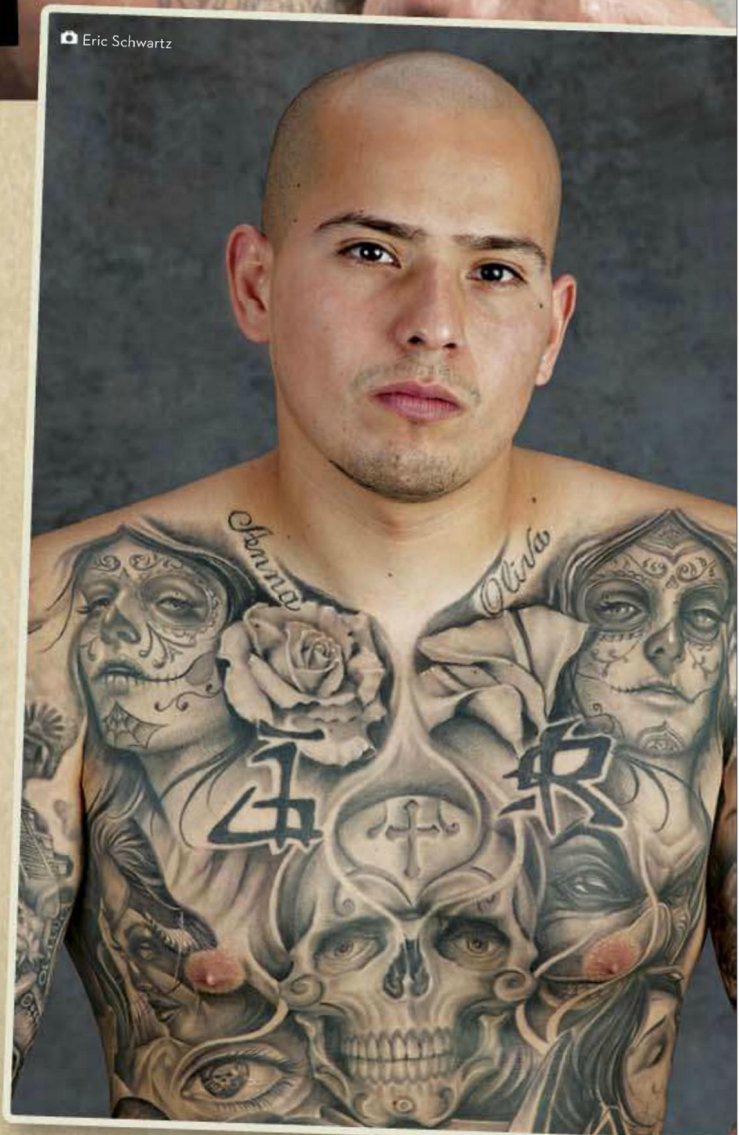
MONOCHROME RAINBOWS

Back in the '50s, if you wore ink, chances were, you were a sailor or an ex-con. In the straight world, there was only really one place you could get a legit tattoo... the Pike. It was there, on a stretch of pier which had seen better days, that you'd find shops selling four-colour tattoos from 'off-the-wall' flashes which went on the skin in under 20 minutes. In prisons, though, tattooing was a whole new ball game. There, magic was being made with tools as basic as the E-string of a guitar fused with a toothbrush. For ink, inmates burned bibles and magazines

to create a monochrome palate – rainbows in black and grey. The actual hand-poke procedure itself was a slow, bloody process. As actor and ex-con, Danny Trejo, explains in *Tattoo Nation* his own chest piece was created over two-and-a-half years in three different penitentiaries. An intrinsic problem with prison art was that the artist and his canvas couldn't always be in the same place at the same time!

Although back then, few 'respectable' Mexican-Americans would probably have called themselves 'Chicano', amongst these prison communities the word was already being reclaimed. In places like San Quentin, Chicanos were using tattoos to effectively tag themselves. Their ink celebrated friends, family, the all-important neighbourhood, along with a liberal dash of jail-house fantasies. However this was the era of Chevez, of Che,

Eric Schwartz



Danny's kids

Danny Trejo and Mark Mahoney



SHE TOLD ME HOW SHE'D DECIDED TO DEDICATE HER BODY TO THE TWO MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN HER LIFE AND I THOUGHT, OK THIS TATTOO THING IS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT THAN I THOUGHT

WHATEVER YOU WANT

So what exactly is Chicano black and grey? Crucial to the look were three things: 1) the fine lines of a prison-style, single-needle tattoo (most professional machines at this time used three or five needles); 2) lots of shading to add realism and depth; 3) choice.

Eric: "The guys who really started this, way back, we're never going to know their names. But as far as what's going on today, it was Charlie Cartwright who said 'I'm going to give them the haircut they want'. Charlie, along with Ed Hardy, was one of the first tattooists who took on that whole idea of doing what the client wants.

"Hardy was perhaps a bit more formal. If you wanted to express something, he would talk to you and then give you the Japanese references and do this beautiful composition, but it was really Charlie who said 'whatever you want'."



Freddy tattooing Jack Rudy

and of Castro, and it's no great leap to believe that a community which had been marginalised for centuries also saw an opportunity to express their growing sense of cultural identity through these striking designs.

So just how did Chicano black and grey become part of mainstream Americana? Like all good stories, Tattoo Nation has its heroes too. There's Jack Rudy from LA, a natural-born inker who turned his dad's electric razor into a tattoo machine when he was just 15. There was Charlie Cartwright, an ex-Marine who was punched out by his father for continually tattooing his brother – his jaw still clicks to this day. There was Freddy Negrete, a genuine

Cholo gangster who earned his black and grey in Juvie Hall. And there was 'Shanghai' Kate Hellenbrand, who grew up on a farm in Utah and spent her days as an artist for an ad agency and nights amongst New York's (then) illegal tattoo shops. These talents collided on Whittier Boulevard, East LA, at a place called Goodtime Charlie's Tattoland. There, in a neighbourhood fought over by 27 rival gangs, Charlie's curious little cottage was neutral ground. It was there that the gangsters, hustlers, low-riders, bikers and blue-collar workers, put aside their collective beefs and came to worship at the altar of black and grey. It wouldn't be long before the whole world was doing the same.

THE GUYS WHO REALLY STARTED THIS, WAY BACK, WE'RE NEVER GOING TO KNOW THEIR NAMES

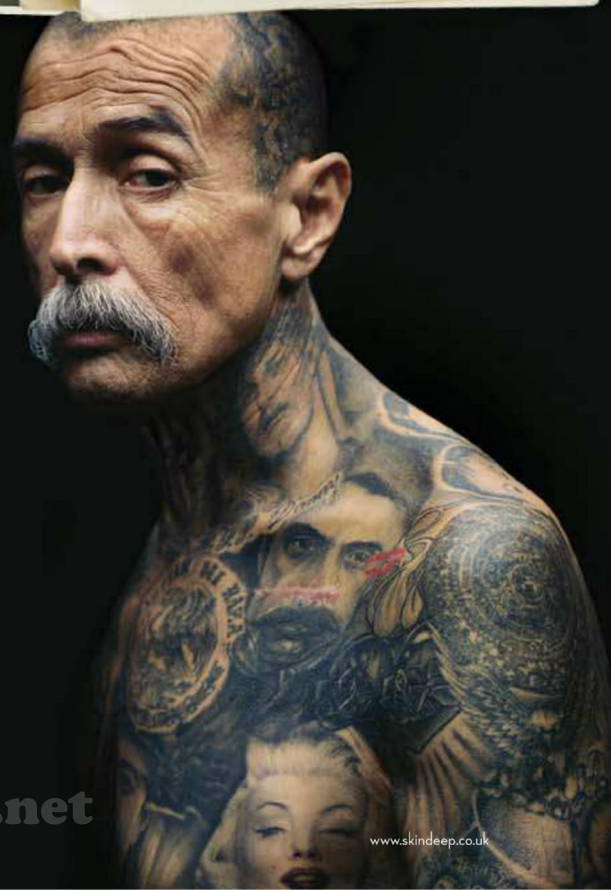
Jack today working



With Chicano black and grey, the people who were getting the tattoos were like the director of a film. They were the artists. They had all these people collaborating with them, but it was their art. That's how I feel about it."

Three years later, and Eric has now met some of the best tattooists in the business. Yet despite his clear passion for the art, he remains an ink virgin. Wasn't he ever tempted to set some of those great talents to work on his own body? "I really wasn't. It's just not my form of expression. I mean. If there were something that I felt I needed to express in that way, I would do it without any hesitation because I think it's amazing. The work is so beautiful. But my way

of self-expression is telling other people's stories, and what's been so great is that now we've presented this story, people are learning the same lessons that I learnt. In fact, I gave a talk after one screening and these people came up to me and said 'we just saw your film and we want to thank you. We have no ink on us whatsoever, but you've actually changed our lives because now when we see someone who's tattooed we understand'. The film really started out as an oral history. I wanted to get the story down before it was lost... but now I realise that it's not only given a voice to a lot of people who didn't have one, but it's also said, 'you have every right to get a tattoo. Yeah, it's a legitimate art form'. And that's what I like."



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ABSOLUTE REALITY

By his own admission, André Zechmann, is a very cautious person. Take the fact that he spent nine long years holding down two jobs, one as a graphic designer and the other as a tattoo artist, and you start to get the idea...



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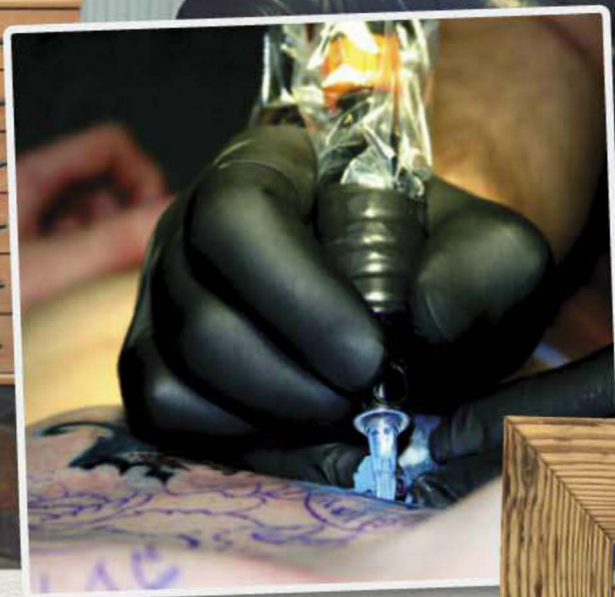
André has always been a good artist. While he was still at school his art was attracting attention, so it seemed a career in graphics was the way forward. But it was to be a little while before his friends could persuade him to pick up a tattoo machine.

"My friends always thought that I was a really good artist, so they were always pushing me to start tattooing. This was ten years ago and at the time I was worried about the hygiene side of things; I was working for free at the Red Cross and





**MY MOTHER WAS WONDERING
WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE WOULD BE
IN OUR HOUSE GETTING A TATTOO**



everybody was afraid of getting an infection from a patient. We knew how dangerous this could be and so I thought it was the same with tattooing.

"I was also a bit wary of the whole tattoo scene ten years ago – it seemed that only bad people were tattooed; like prisoners or gang members... well that's what everyone seemed to think. My mother was wondering what kind of people would be in our house getting a tattoo. It is funny, when I did start tattooing, there were people who no longer greeted me in the street!

"But still, my friends really 🌸





IT IS FUNNY, WHEN I DID START TATTOOING, THERE WERE PEOPLE WHO NO LONGER GREETED ME IN THE STREET!

wanted me to get into tattooing. So one day, they said to me, 'Let's go shopping in the next big town'. But the reality was, they had found some tattoo equipment in a newspaper and we were going to pick it up. They tricked me! Because all my friends loved tattoos and they wanted me to tattoo their ideas and designs on them, they 'forced' me to buy the equipment. The one advantage was that when I finally got some equipment, I had lots of



skin to start practising on.

"At my first 'lesson', my friends and I tried to build a machine based on Micky Sharpz's Micro Dial. It took forever because nobody knew how to build a tattoo machine. And for me, it was the first time I had ever seen a tattoo machine. My friends knew bits and pieces from their own experiences in other studios. I even tried to learn how to assemble needles by myself. Remember, ten years ago, you couldn't find any help or information on the internet. In order to try and

better myself, I went to some conventions and I found some artists who were willing to help me out. But all-in-all, I learned everything by doing it myself."

Luck was on André's side though. In 2003, the year André started tattooing, the tattoo industry in Austria changed completely. A new set of qualifications were needed to be a tattooist, which in Austria meant a proper display of your abilities and knowledge.

"I was one of the first artists who had to do a qualification. Before then, you didn't need a





I WAS ONE OF THE FIRST ARTISTS WHO HAD TO DO A QUALIFICATION. BEFORE THEN, YOU DIDN'T NEED A LICENSE IN AUSTRIA

license in Austria. In order to qualify for my licence, I had to tattoo somebody, as well as answer questions about tattooing, skin dermatology, sterilisation and needle manufacture. For the practical side, I did a portrait of a soldier from the French Foreign Legion, with a cap and dirt in all his face. I chose this design because I was able to draw a perfect portrait.

"As soon as I got my licence, I tattooed every chance I got. Ten years later, the qualification is even more difficult. Now it

lasts three days. The first day you tattoo, the second day is a written theory exam and the third day is an oral exam."

André passed the exam and then it was down to the business of tattooing. Quickly, his name started getting about and it wasn't long before he was filling up his books with appointments. The only problem was, André found himself stuck tattooing stars, flowers and tribal. He wanted to do something that challenged his abilities and it was a chance flick through a tattoo magazine

that would change all of this.

"One day, I was looking through a tattoo magazine and came across these tattoos by Mike DeVries and Randy Engelhard... and it all seemed to fit together. I looked at the tattoos and I thought, 'Could do the same quality tattoos as them?' I knew if I spent more time tattooing, I could do much better tattoos. They inspired me to cancel my graphic designer job and concentrate on tattooing."

Completely inspired, André decided he wanted to create tattoos that were individual and artistic. It was time to get serious.

"My first realistic tattoo was Eve, an apple and the snake... you know the image. I did the tattoo at a convention in Graz. I charged the customer a fixed price so I had time enough without stress. I really took my time as I knew I wanted to 🍏"

ANDRÉ ON LIFE

My life as a tattoo artist literally changed when I got my first Cheyenne tattoo machine. From then on, everything seemed easy, there was no need to work on the machine, it looked after itself. Or more correctly, I was able to work with the machine. On top of this, soon after, I met Randy Engelhard. I was really impressed with his work and the seminar he was teaching taught me so much. Both these events were the start, for me, of my new style and quality of work. Conventions are also very important for a tattooist. I learn a lot from other artists when I watch them working or while talking with them. And it is always nice to see that most of the real great artists are not envious with their knowledge and skills.



ONE DAY, I WAS LOOKING THROUGH A TATTOO MAGAZINE AND CAME ACROSS THESE TATTOOS BY MIKE DEVRIES AND RANDY ENGELHARD... AND IT ALL SEEMED TO FIT TOGETHER...

show my best quality work. And when it was finished, I couldn't believe that I had done a realistic tattoo. I had never before spent so much time on one tattoo, before they had always been small or quick tattoos. Ten years after starting, I know I am a better artist but I will never feel like a star. I changed my whole style in the last year. No more stars! I decided to do only artistic tattoos. And that's the reason I feel my tattoos are getting better and better. I am very proud of what I have achieved.

"Tattoo art has massively improved over the last few years as a high quality tattoo art scene has developed driven by ambition, devotion and open-

minded customers. The results are extraordinary skin art. I am so inspired by all the incredibly talented tattoo artists around the world. They drive me to create the perfect piece of tattoo art. Will I ever manage to create it? For me, as a perfectionist and workaholic, this task seems to be impossible, but looking back, my skills have evolved far beyond what I ever dreamed of and this gives me hope.

"Now I just want to give it my all and hope that maybe, one day, I can also do the best tattoos possible. I always strive to become better and better. I hate it when I open a magazine and there are so many great tattoos and I think to myself, 'How can they do such great things? And how can I do the same? I am never satisfied.'"

Over the years, things have changed drastically for André. Instead of stars and simple flower designs, he is now putting out some amazing realistic work, some of the best in the field. He is still working out of the studio he built in his house, but no doubt, this won't



be for long... even though it does have its benefits.

"I have a very small studio in the house where I was born. It is too small for a second artist, but that's not so bad. The great thing is, I don't need fixed opening hours. I start at seven in the morning and when I have finished the tattoo, I go upstairs to my family. The other benefit is that all mistakes are my own. I am not responsible for other artists in the studios mistakes...which is a bonus for me as I am a massive perfectionist. I think I would be a very bad boss actually. I am never satisfied with my work, so how could I be satisfied with somebody else's work?" 🐼

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THE KINGS HIGHWAY

A dead person's skin is a little bit tougher than that of a live person. Mike Rubendall at Kings Avenue Tattooing in New York knows this. He also knows he can never be a full blooded traditional tattoo artist within the Japanese style, no matter how hard he tries...



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After 16 years of tattooing in Massapequa, Long Island, Mike Rubendall at King's Avenue Tattoo finally took a step he'd been thinking of for a while. And in 2011 he opened up one more shop on Manhattan.

"It's always been a fantasy of mine, but I never really felt the urge to do it until 2011," he says. "Massapequa is a small town, kind of tucked away and not really in the spotlight. I was able to get out to the rest of the world through travelling, internet and magazines – the normal vehicles – but being outside of the city I felt like I was missing out on

opportunities. New York has this energy and magic lore. Art here in general is cutting edge and ahead of its time. Not being a part of it was weighing heavy on my mind."

And the part-time move did him good. "Kings Avenue is a whole new monster now. It's the result of the New York energy. A lot of the top artists in the world are here and we fed of that. It's brought our art to a new level and for us who's done this a long time it has sparked the

fire. It gets us hungry again. It's like when we first got started."

With that said he still can't wait to get back to Long Island again. One or two days in the city is enough for this hometown boy.

"It's too high pace. I like my family life. In my work I'm very social and dealing with the public, so the last thing I want to do when I come home is to hang out with anyone else but my family. Working here once or twice a week is 🍷"









IF YOU DO A GOOD JOB AND TREAT THEM WELL, YOU HAVE CLIENTS FOR LIFE. THE MAJORITY DON'T BELIEVE IN WHAT YOU DO, BUT WHY YOU DO IT

a good balance. There are too many distractions in New York. Let's put it like that. Also, I have other responsibilities."

Meaning kids, of which he has three aged between almost two and almost five years of age, and a new house too.

"The house is chaotic but it's been a great experience. They grow up fast. At the end of the day I'm sending them off to college and I don't want to miss out."

All in all there's a family atmosphere in Massapequa that he likes.

"I was very comfortable opening up a shop in Long Island. I had a lot of history here, I knew people and had a lot of support. If you do a good job and treat them well, you have clients for life. The majority don't believe in what you do, but why you do it."

This became extremely

apparent in the documentary series on Vice TV called *Tattoo Age*.

For three episodes, each of the TV crew followed five tattooists around in their hometowns. One of them was Mike Rubendall.

"It was a good experience. The director is a client of mine and a big tattoo enthusiast. He has a really good idea of what's good in tattooing and he portrayed it in a positive light. He made what he wanted to see, what he's interested in knowing, not what the general public sees. They see reality shows. This was no drama; it showed a lot of prep work and how much actually goes into tattooing. It's something we can't stop thinking about. It's like a drug."

Starting his career in a street shop in 1995 meant he adapted to many different styles, but he

always gravitated towards one.

"To this day Japanese still excites me. Even though I've done a lot of it many times, it's still challenging. It stands the test of time and you can do it in so many ways. I take a more westernised approach to it. Japanese tattooing is based overall on woodblock prints. Therefore there's a pretty strict tradition and I try to follow that to the best of my abilities. What inhibits me is not being Japanese, not speaking or reading the language and not being part of the culture. I take whatever I know and have learned over the years and incorporate that in my work. To say I'm a traditional tattoo artist within the Japanese style would be unfair. I could work 🇯🇵"



JAPANESE TATTOOING IS BASED OVERALL ON WOODBLOCK PRINTS. THEREFORE THERE'S A PRETTY STRICT TRADITION AND I TRY TO FOLLOW THAT TO THE BEST OF MY ABILITIES

very hard at it, but I don't think I would ever get it." Rubendall does other styles as well, though.

"I do Japanese so much now that it's refreshing doing other stuff. In Long Island I do a lot of religious tattoos, like Virgin Marys, Christheads, different saints, and so on. If people don't mind waiting and have a good idea I'll do anything. I won't do biomechanics, though. I don't think I'm very good at it."

Throughout his career Mike Rubendall has undoubtedly done some interesting pieces, but there is one experience that stands out more than any... tattooing a dead person.

"That's an odd story. When

I first started tattooing I had a client who was a funeral director. I wanted to get good fast so I asked him if it was possible to tattoo dead people. He said no. 15 years later he calls me and gives me the craziest request.

A man had passed away and he had the names of three of his four children tattooed on his body, but he was lacking his ten month old daughter Sophia's. Now his wife wanted me to tattoo her name as well."


So he took his gear and went to the funeral home.

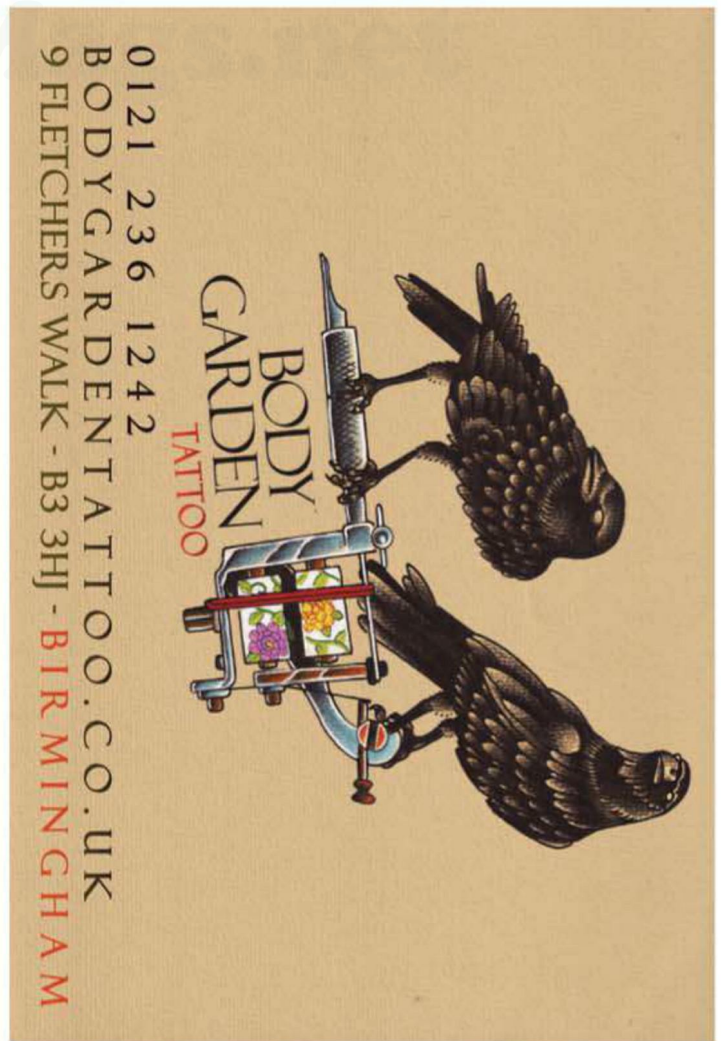
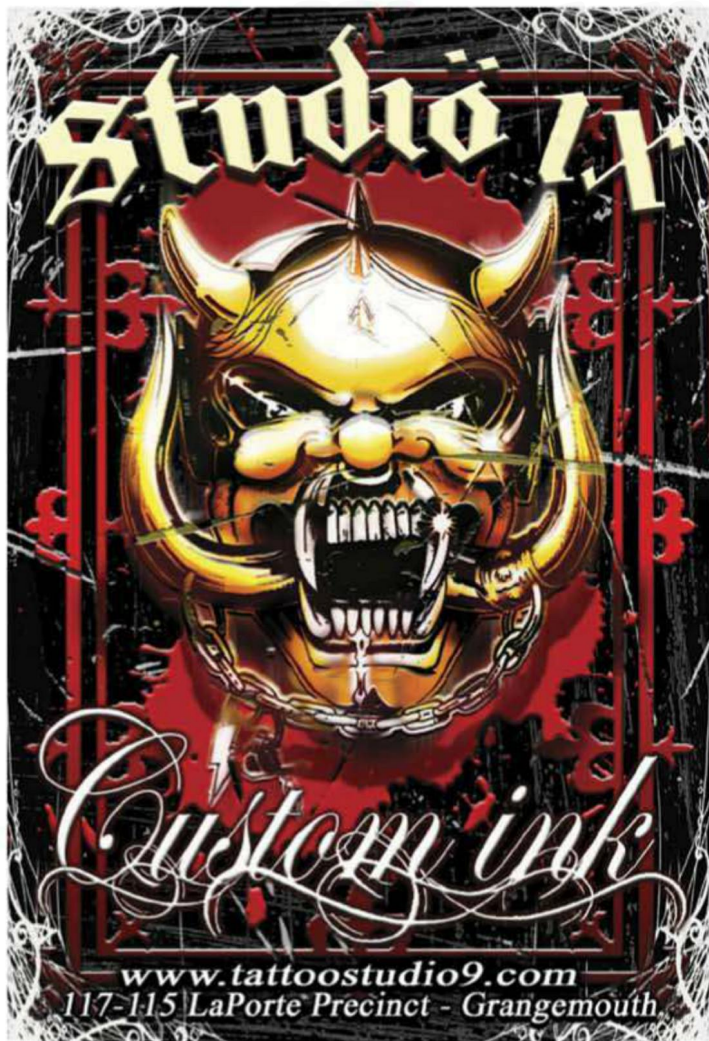
"It was a super creepy feeling, very silent. I didn't know how the skin would react, but it was just like regular skin – just a little tougher, and it felt good. It was a challenge, but I wanted to do it for the experience and because of the story. It brought some closure for the family and at the funeral they had a photo of the tattoo which felt nice."

The story doesn't end there.

A few weeks later the widow walks in through the door at the shop. "She also wanted to get 'Sophia' tattooed and that would have been a great ending, but I needed a cancellation to do it. When I called her later on her phone number was disconnected. Hopefully she'll come by again."

When he's not tattooing dead people his average clientele actually consists mostly of other tattooists.

"I don't know how that happened but it's challenging. If an abundance of tattooists walk through the door you constantly push yourself to impress them. It's different to tattoo them. Not that you don't do your best with other customers, but sometimes it's easy to take the safe route and with tattoo artists you can take more risks. There's more to explore and you have more artistic freedom." 



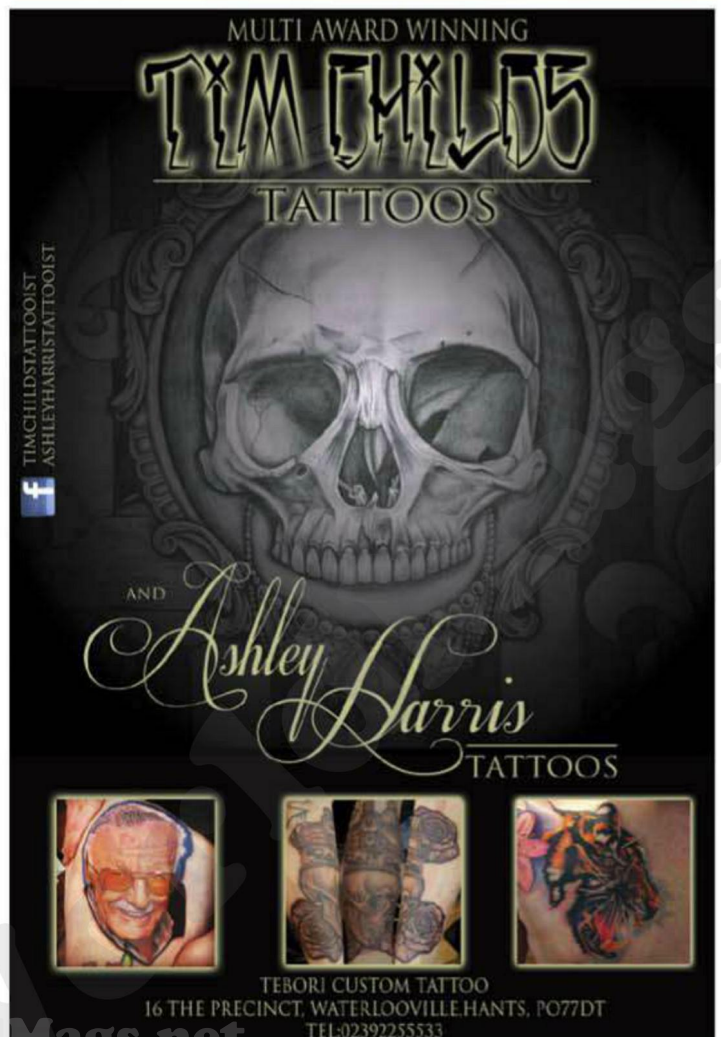
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The Great British Tattoo Show

THE INK PALACE

I feel like I just got off a flight from Korea or something. One that was recalled halfway home then got re-routed... and the show was over a week ago!



I believe the correct term for show jetlag is 'knackered' – it's just about all I can manage to lie in a beanbag watching some old episodes of *Starsky & Hutch* and attempt to connect the things going on in my brain with the end of a pen (yeah... still old school for the first draft).

Alexander Palace is something else. Its reputation precedes it and it doesn't disappoint in the slightest. With that world-famous mast that can be seen from a good couple of miles away (and is very handy for confirming you're headed in the right direction), the inside is just as impressive. If you stand around the back of

LOOKING DOWN ON LONDON IS A LOT DIFFERENT FROM NAVIGATING THE STREETS ON FOOT. IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE THERE'S A WHOLE OTHER WORLD UNDERGROUND TOO

WINNERS LIST (I) SMALL BLACK & GREY

Damien by Eugene Rubuls at Ian Ink Tattoo

LARGE COLOUR Eugene by Eugene Rubuls at Ian Ink Tattoo

BEST ORIENTAL Lisa by Dan Arietti at Black Sails Tattoo

BEST PORTRAIT Martynas by Domantas Parvainis at Totemas Tattoo

the joint, you can look out over London and Canary Wharf where the city looks positively Lilliputian in the distance. I lived here once (London, not Alexander Palace) and never noticed just how green it is until I came up this high.

I'm standing here with Sean Dowdell from Club Tattoo hoping that I'm not lying as I'm pointing these landmarks out. I think I'm pretty accurate, but I have to tell you, looking down on London is a lot different from

navigating the streets on foot. And it's hard to believe there's a whole other world underground too. Coming from Vegas, I couldn't hope to show a more contrasting view of the world than Sean has – and that probably goes for tattooing as well.

There is a point to this meandering thought process because the next person to show up is Megan Massacre – maybe it's something about the American way of life that says



Winner Best of Saturday & Best of Convention
Izzy by Polish Dan at True Colour Trinity



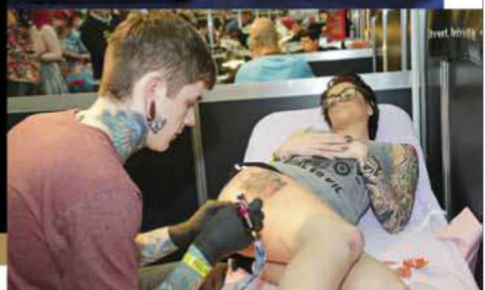
Winner Small Black & Grey
Damien by Eugene Rubuls at Ian Ink Tattoo



Winner Best Oriental
Lisa by Dan Arietti at Black Sails Tattoo



Winner Best Portrait
Martynas by Domantas Parvainis at Totemas Tattoo





Winner Large Colour

Eugene by Eugene Rubuls at Ian Ink Tattoo



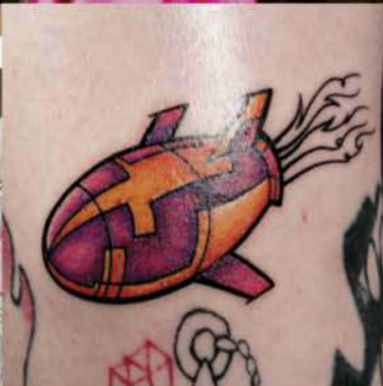
Winner Best Realism

Dan by Martin Binczewski at Avon Tattoo



Winner Small Colour

AK Alexander by Maciej 'Magic' at Magic's Tattoo Studio





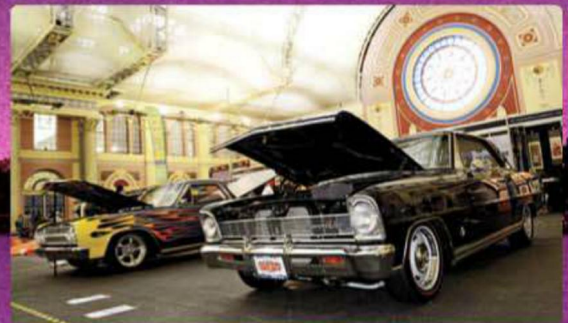
"best get there in good time" that makes it this way, as opposed to the slightly more, er... laid back European approach of "we'll get there when we get there"

Eventually, the Palace starts to look less like a show waiting to happen and turns into a show that is happening 'right now', very quickly indeed. Alongside some of the 'jazz show' regulars are some new faces – a lot of new faces in fact – not least 'Polish' Dan who walked away with the Best of Saturday and Best of Show for a frankly astounding piece of realism. With the world talking about what eastern Europe has to offer the world when it comes to tattooing – and there's a lot to talk about – it's great to see first-hand exactly what's going on out there. The irony of Great British/eastern Europe is not lost on me, but is that not what we do best around here? Open the doors so that talent can shine?

Generally speaking, I won't interrupt anybody while they're working unless they see me and stop anyway. I like it that way – it's good to cruise like you paid to get in and see what's going on. It was great to see new and old doing their thing: Fade FX at work with a mighty

fine hand piece; Sean Vasquez working on an impressively dark sleeve; Drew LeFox doing... well, you get the picture.

There's always a preconceived notion that London is not a friendly place – that may be the case when you're battling the forces of evil on the street, but tattooing has a way of drawing people together. It's bigger than any of its individual parts. I meet a guy who is (understatement follows) a little excited to have his copy of Skin Deep signed by Leanne James (the show issue cover girl). We get to talking – he's come to see how to get started on a huge idea he has for a tattoo. It's complicated and this will be his first – he asks my advice, so we wander around a little with me pointing out styles and options and he asks questions. This is a good thing. This is the way things should be. After (yet another) tour of the floor space, he leaves to investigate some other options on the table and comes back later a very happy man that he's got an appointment to get started. This is not unusual. This happens a lot and I'm always more than happy to spend time talking about stuff like that – it kind of makes it all worthwhile. All those



THE STANDARD OF TATTOOING IS GETTING RIDICULOUS OUT THERE. SERIOUSLY. IT'S HARDER NOW THAN IT WAS THREE YEARS AGO TO CHOOSE A 'HIGHLANDER'

WINNERS LIST (II)
BEST OF SATURDAY & BEST OF CONVENTION
 Izzy by Polish Dan at True Colour Trinity

SMALL COLOUR
 AK Alexandar by Maciej 'Magic' at Magic's Tattoo Studio

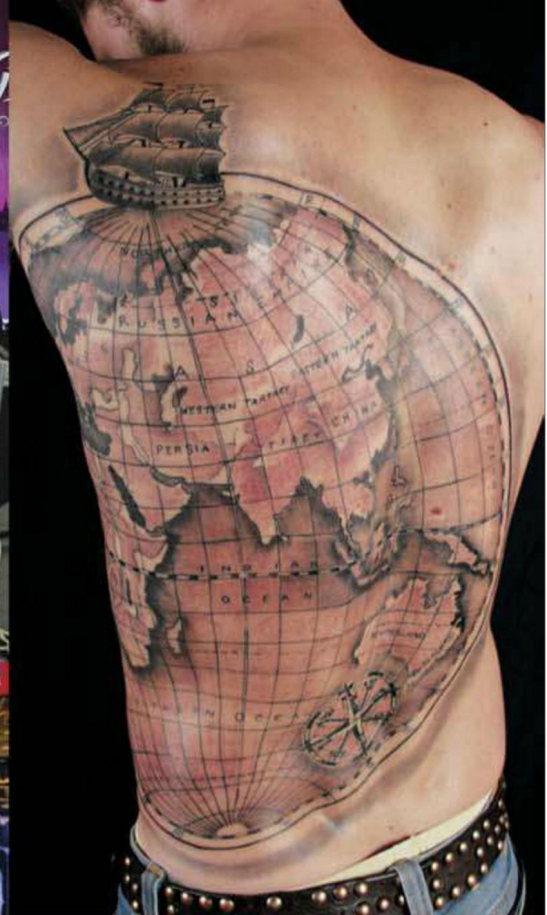
BEST REALISM
 Dan by Martin Binczewski at Avon Tattoo

BEST AVANT GARDE
 Marion by Toko Loren at Needleside Tattoo

things you ever wrote about how to do things the right way? It's nice to see them hit the ground.

Meantime, while this individual sightseeing tour is taking place, on the stage there is much entertainment to be had. Tattooed girls mostly. Sounds tacky from the outside, but in practice, it's beautiful and exciting to watch. Sometimes when you try and explain these things on paper, it doesn't work... but to be there and see it in action is another thing entirely.

The standard of tattooing is getting ridiculous out there. Seriously. It's harder now than it



Winner Large Black & Grey

Michael by Derek Nelson at Bodycraft



Winner Best of Sunday

Ellen by Ming King at Ohh My God Tattoo



was three years ago to choose a 'Highlander' (there can be only one) out of the entires – to the point that you actually feel bad when interstellar work doesn't win an award.

And that was pretty much the Great British Tattoo Show through my eyes. Personally speaking, I had a fantastic event. I have a big thanks list – thanks to all the artists, their clients, the traders and roller girls for taking time out to play with us. It's not just business, it's also a pleasure. Thanks to Henrik Gallon, Leticia Vasquez and Paul Talbot

for chipping in with the judging across the two days – that's a hard freaking job at the best of times – over 200 entries in one category on the Saturday alone... ouch!

Most of all though, I shall also (collectively for all of us) say thanks to you guys who showed up in vast numbers to make the Great British Tattoo Show what it was. Thanks for caring to come – it would be nothing without you. Thanks for entering the competitions (there were some killer tattoos done and it pains me sometimes that there can only be a few 'winners'), and finally, thanks

THERE'S ALWAYS A PRECONCEIVED NOTION THAT LONDON IS NOT A FRIENDLY PLACE - THAT MAY BE THE CASE WHEN YOU'RE BATTLING THE FORCES OF EVIL ON THE STREET, BUT TATTOOING HAS A WAY OF DRAWING PEOPLE TOGETHER

WINNERS LIST (III) LARGE BLACK & GREY

Michael by Derek Nelson at Bodycraft

BEST OF SUNDAY Ellen by Ming King at Ohh My God Tattoo

to whoever it was that figured out how to crush coffee beans and make them into a very satisfying hot drink that helped you do all these things... we salute you.

Next stop... Manchester. Bring it the hell on. ☺

Classifieds

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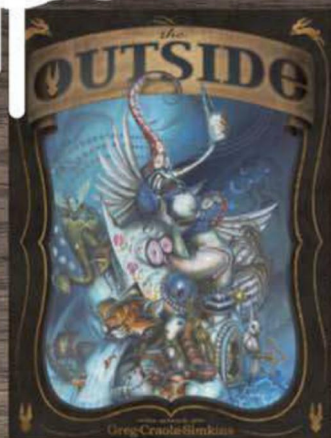
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Reviews

THIS ISSUE, WE HAVE SOME ALTERNATIVES TO THE ALTERNATIVES - GATHER THESE THINGS AROUND YOU AND BECOME INSTANTLY CULTURED!



THE OUTSIDE

THE ARTWORK OF GREG CRAOLA SIMKINS

PUBLISHED BY: PRESTO

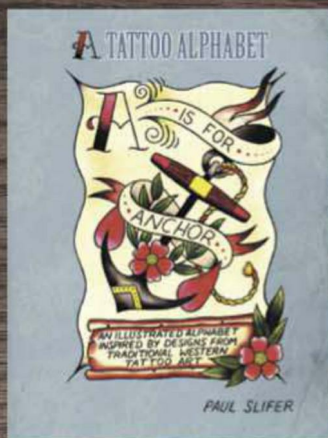
PRICE: \$54.95

Given that Greg himself has a feature in this very issue, and between the two of us, we've said everything there is to say, there's very little left to talk about... or is there?

Of course there is. *The Outside* is a phenomenal piece of work. Clocking in at 268 pages, the art we had room for in said feature is not even the tip of the iceberg when it comes to this man. If I told you there are no words in the book bar the short introduction and foreword, that will give you a good indication of just how much art is on display here. And when I say 'art', we're not just talking a collection of pictures. We're talking Art with an intentional leading cap.

At some given point in the future, people will look back on this book as something of a game changer for both Greg and the art world. For me, Greg's work is the tipping point that you have to take art seriously and the fact that he is so influenced by - and has such an influence on - tattoo culture makes it all the more important. The work itself is simply stunning (as you have already seen), the thought processes so meticulous and the delivery of such a high standard, there is little doubt that both Greg and his work can stand toe-to-toe with any giant you care to pit him against.

It's impossible to single out a piece of work or even a few pages of work



as being better than any other because page after page is as good as the last - dip in. Dip in anywhere and if you can't find something to pore over for the longest time, your heart is in the wrong place.

There cannot be a single soul out there that would not appreciate and love this book for exactly what it is - a modern, supremely talented artist working at the the very top of his game.

Frighteningly, that last statement is probably a lie. The best is probably still to come from Craola - and for that, we should be both thankful and worried.

Mr Smith

A TATTOO ALPHABET • A IS FOR ANCHOR

PUBLISHED BY: SCHIFFER

PRICE: \$19.99

Now this is a fun book. With its roots firmly based in the traditional branch of tattoo art, these 26 (natch) designs combine to make one beautiful piece of work. Written and illustrated by Paul Slifer, *A Is For Anchor* successfully bridges the gap that really does exist between a love of traditional art and children's books.

Designed out of love to appeal to parents looking for something a little different from the norm when it came to teaching their kids, the book gets a massive thumbs up here - we know because we road tested it! It's folk art at the peak of its powers, and there's also a great poster included of all the imagery



to be found inside the book. The biggest success though, comes from the fact that it doesn't say the same old things about the same subjects along the way as every other 'alphabet book' on the shelf. This is more than well thought-out on so many levels - and for such a simple and short book (by the very nature of it), it's deceptive in its smartness.

Worth the admission price for sure... and then some.

Mr Smith

THE GOLDEN AGE OF DC COMICS

PUBLISHED BY: TASCHEN

PRICE: £34.99

KAPOW! Long before a man in a bat costume could gross over \$1 billion at the cinema, the foundations were firmly laid in the 1930s, an era that was dubbed 'the golden age of comics'.

This book is 400 pages of comics, covers, interiors, original illustrations, comics, photographs, film stills and collectibles that have been reproduced to bring the storylines, the characters, and their creators to vibrant life. And did I mention it's about comics?

This book has to be the single most comprehensive book on DC, and this volume only traces the company's first decades, from its pulp origins up to the comicbook burnings of the McCarthy '50s. Setting out to be a visual history of DC, it really does meet its objectives with massive style and awesomeness.

The large page format and excellent paper quality do full justice to the images of old comics. For any comics history buff this is addictive stuff.

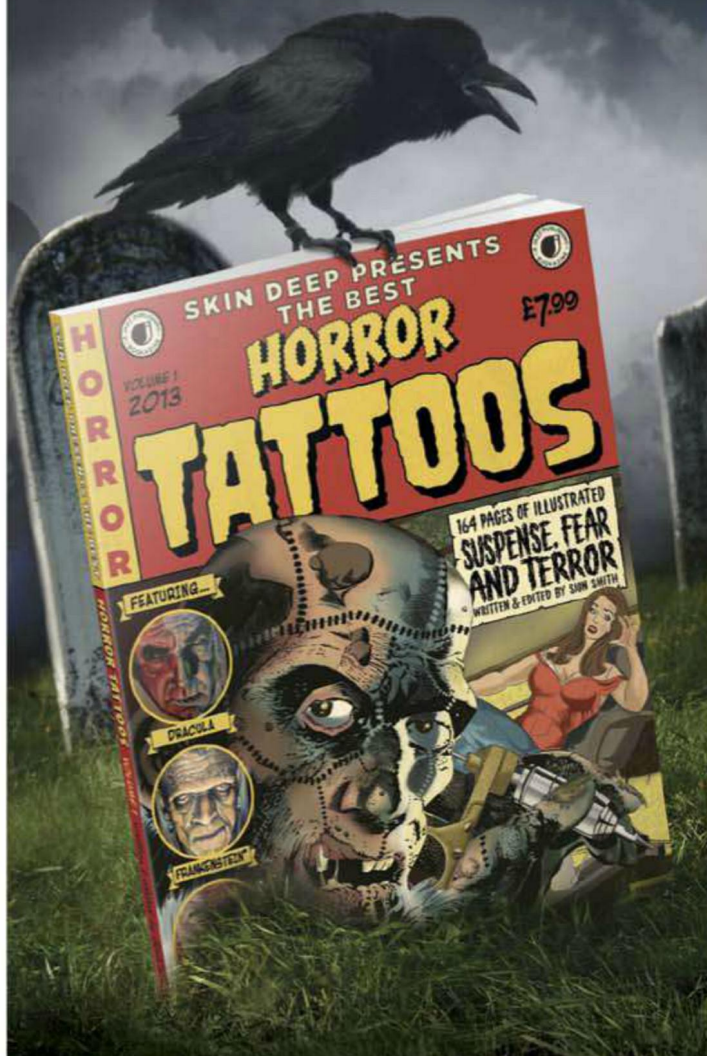
Edited by Paul Levitz who has worked as the editor of Batman titles, writer of more than 300 stories, a DC Comics executive, and finishing his 38-year stint with the company as president and publisher, he knows what he is talking about. And with an exclusive interview with the legend that is Joe Kubert, this is a fantastic read too. (If you don't know who Joe Kubert is, I would highly recommend you get online and check out some of his stuff. And while you are at it, take a minute to check out his sons - Adam and Andy - work... you will not be disappointed.)

This tome covers Superman's story, as well as those of Batman and Wonder Woman among many other great DC Comics characters that thrived in the golden age. Yes, some of the art work may seem crude by today's standards, and many of you who are interested in getting some ink of your favourite superhero or villain, will never think of looking at this era, but why not?! It's fascinating to see the roots of the modern comic world, and how your favourite characters looked though the eyes of their original creators.

This is a visually glorious book that's a delight to look at and to learn more about how the amazing medium of comics came into existence. Four follow-ups are planned, covering the Silver, Bronze, Dark and Modern Ages of DC, and I, for one, can't wait to see what they have planned.

Mr McCarthy

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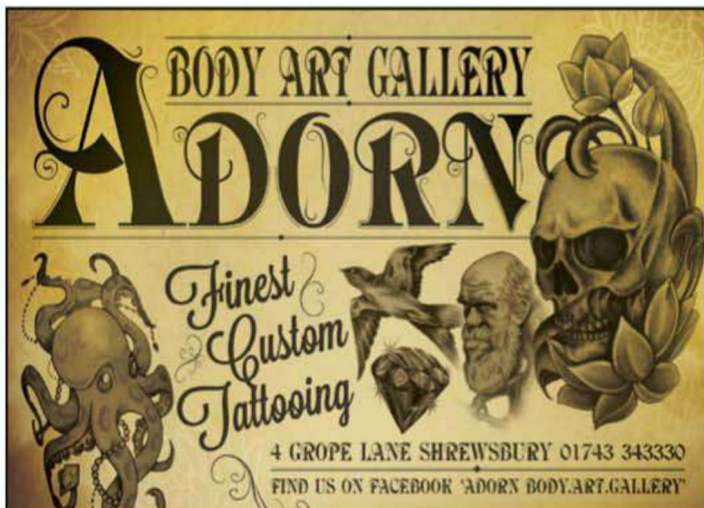
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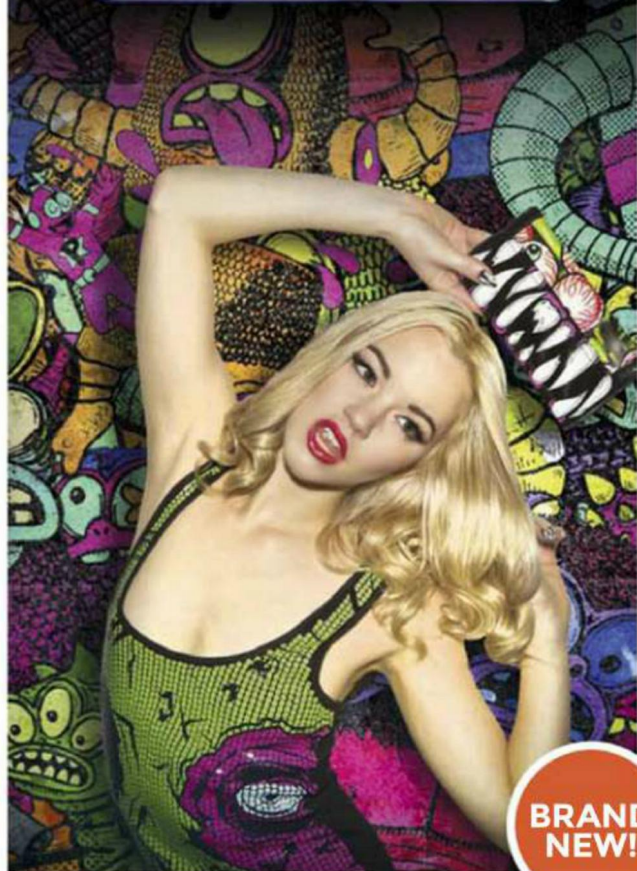
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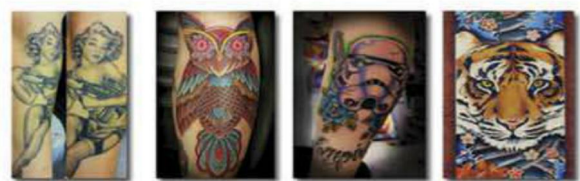
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Illustration: Tommy Lee Wendtner

PLEASE INK RESPONSIBLY

If you were playing a word association game and your opponent said 'tattoos', what would your reaction be?



Paula Hardy Kangelos

Badass? Biker? Pain? Art? How about 'responsibility'? Probably not your first thought, but perhaps it should be.

Issues of responsibility permeate tattooing, for instance, the all-too-common question, "But what will you look like when you are old?", does not come from a place of curiosity or concern. It's an accusation of irresponsibility – an insinuation that we couldn't possibly have thought this through and still gone ahead.

Clumsy articulation aside, this charge has some validity – most of us did not set out with multiple tattoos or large-scale coverage in mind. Tattoo collecting is usually

the majority of us have considered, decided and taken full responsibility for our choices and actions.

Sadly, that still leaves a minority that haven't thought about the future. A minority who have witnessed the ever-increasing numbers of tattooed people and seen the tattoo imagery that is everywhere and on everything. They've watched tattoo-related 'reality' TV, drunk tattoo branded drinks, they've consumed a normalised version of tattoo culture.

Tattoos are traditionally associated with a maverick attitude – they are perceived to be a symbol of life lived on the edge, a sign of rebelliousness, the concern of rock stars, artists, travellers... free spirits and eccentrics. Those that were attracted to this bohemian ideal have instinctively acted to preserve it, pushing beyond previously accepted limits and increasing the size and scope of their collection by tattooing, 'public skin' – hands, necks and faces. But this contemporary wave of explicit visibility also contributes to the normalisation process. Who will stop to question the wisdom of a forearm tattoo when they are surrounded by people with tattooed hands?


This apparent normalisation of tattoos and tattoo culture can be viewed both positively and negatively, depending on one's personal viewpoint. Some of us rejoice in the proliferation of tattooing and tattoo art and fantasise of a future world where everyone is tattooed; others bemoan the loss of specialness, of difference, of exoticism.

The newest, youngest, tattoo

enthusiasts are not compelled to consider either viewpoint. For them, tattoos appear to be simple aesthetic fact. When you are tattooed and most of your social circle are too, it is unexceptional, even ordinary, but tattoos can easily shift from this comfortable shared commonality to bold statement of separation – all we need do to find opposition is step outside of our literal and metaphorical front doors. Yet step outside we must, for it is not desirable to limit our interactions to only those that reflect ourselves, and for most of us, it's not practical either. We may want to work/ play/ educate our children in mainstream environments, and to do this, we must accept that our choices will invite extra difficulties and challenges.

Do tattooers have a responsibility to explain these challenges to their customers? To dissuade, warn, and sometimes outright refuse to make permanent marks on the young, the naive and the impulsive? Perhaps.

In law, tattooists are only responsible for maintaining a sterile environment and ensuring safety in the studio. Everything else rests with us, the customers. We choose the artist, agree to the design and accept the variables caused by skin tone or texture. We are responsible for keeping still and for taking adequate care during the healing process. If we make a bad, or uninformed decision, or experience regret, we must accept responsibility for that too.

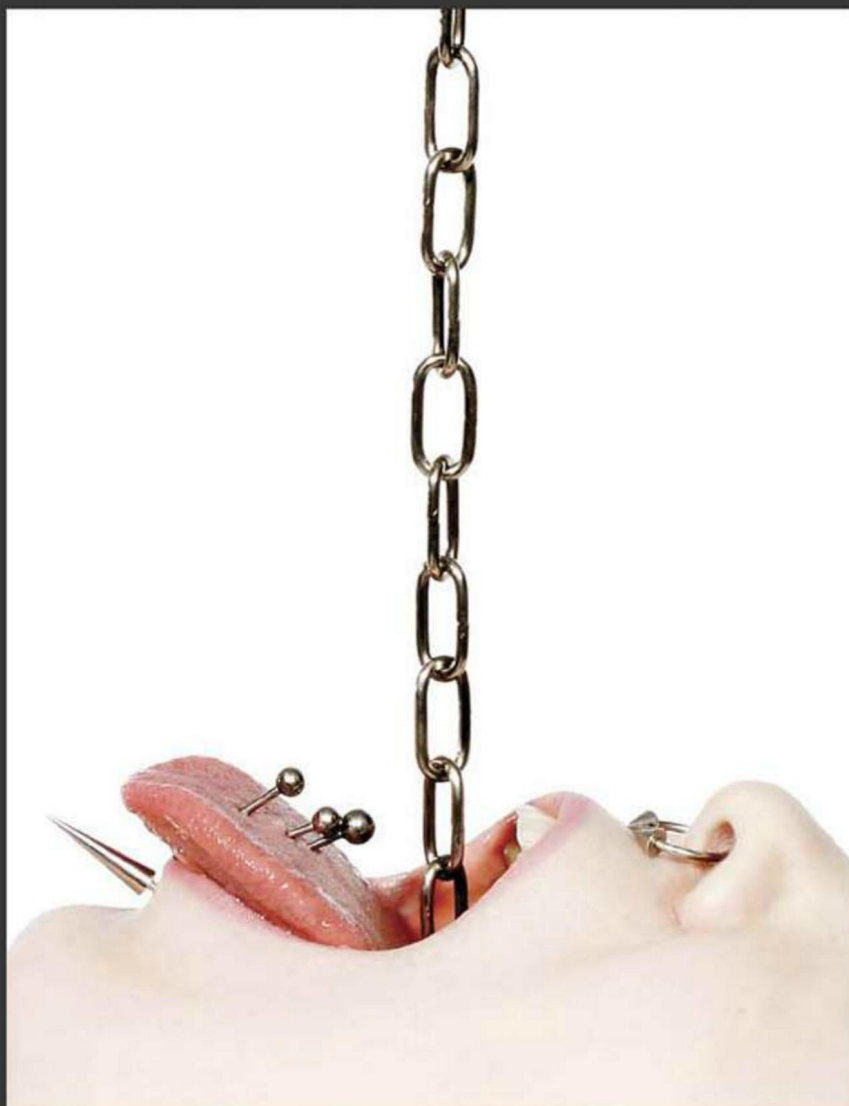
Ethical tattoo supply companies and responsible tattoo artists have lead the way. Now the rest of the tattoo world must follow. To paraphrase a borrowed slogan, 'Please Ink Responsibly'. 

WE WILL BE JUDGED ON OUR APPEARANCE, SOMETIMES IN UNFAIR AND UNJUST WAYS

an incremental process, rather than a well-executed plan, but this need not be problematic, as it affords plenty of opportunity for self reflection and critical thought. We have thought about what we look like now, and how we'll look in ten years, in 20 years, and beyond. We've thought about our jobs and our future career prospects and we've thought about how becoming tattooed might affect our parents, our partners, our children. We've looked to earlier generations of tattooed people, specifically to those currently considered 'old', such as Lyle Tuttle and Isobel Varley, and we are aware that we will be judged on our appearance, sometimes in unfair and unjust ways. We accept that our tattoos may fade, spread and blur. In short,



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