

## Tattoo beauty is skin deep Am-Jam Expo '93 offers "Art to take with you"

By Randy Scott Howard  
Editor In Chief

**T**he drone of the low, familiar buzz draws you in and intrigues you. The treatment of vivid colors and meticulous designs catches your eye and holds it. While some say getting a tattoo is painful, others argue that it is a feeling comparable to having an orgasm.

Erotic sensation or not, about 3000 people gathered at the Schenectady Armory, January 16 and 17, to attend the seventh annual Am Jam Tattoo Expo '93.

Dragons with unfurled wings breathed fire across the bear backs of men. Women flaunted butterflies on their breasts and buttocks'. Tongues pierced with stud earrings popped out for display.

Stereotyped as an old biker

magazine.

Weeks, heavy set, hair pulled back and a scraggly goat-tee, sees himself as being from the "old school" in the tattoo profession. An assortment of Harley wings, knives, and daggers are his forte. Doing "cover-up" work in quick fashion is also his specialty. To anyone who is unfamiliar with the business, it would sound like he has a beat on the profession.

Unfortunately, the new biomechanical style that the younger artists have incorporated into the hobby is, as Weeks states, "more in-depth, with more of a science fiction twist." He's aware of it, and admits he has to practice more if he hopes to adjust to the style.

At the flat rate of around \$100 an hour, it's easy to see why one would do well to hone his/her skills in the profession.

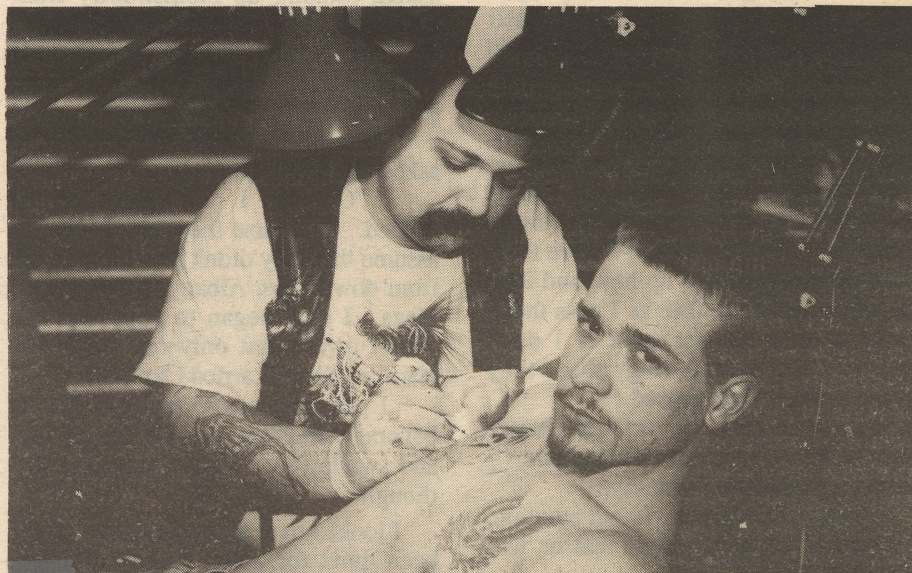
**A**n art form that was believed to have originated thousands of years ago in the Orient, Egyptian mummies from around 1300 B.C. showed blue tattoo marks under the skin. In the United States, it appears that the art form had its birth in prisons in the early half of the century. Inmates would melt checker pieces down and use the tar like residue with water to make ink.

The work, by nature, has to be concise. Tattoos are permanent unless someone wanted to get his/her skin grafted, and even then a scar remains. There is no room for mistake for the tattoo artist.

To the dismay of the patrons and the artists, tattooing has had to confront opposition from various factions in society. Most ecclesiasts see tattoos as a desecration of the body. They perceive it as a violation of that which is, in a sense, a holy temple. Many parents think tattoos make an individual look "indecent." Others don't see it that way.

"I've spent roughly \$50,000 on tattoos so far," said 27 year-old Hawk Sarina. A native of Ontario, Canada, Sarina is both a vehicle and an artist of "tats." Unlike most tattoo buffs, he finds himself able to boast about taking his obsession one step higher--that is, getting his face tattooed.

"I've been hearing compliments all



An eager "Am-Jammer" adds another design to his chest.

Photo By Randy Howard

day," Sarina added with a stern expression. "I plan to get a full body suit."

The expo was organized by Frank DeLuca. In an article in the Sunday Gazette, DeLuca stated, "tattoos may turn many people away. Others look at tattoos as a creative way to chronicle their lives or to rebel against the daily grind."

They say there is a definite addictive quality in getting a "body modification." Like crack cocaine or another potent mind alterer, getting a tattoo means inevitably yearning for more. Some people acknowledge that the process can be painful. Often times these are the same people that will tell you: "it's a good kind of pain."

**B**rian Cross, 22, of Baltimore, Maryland, won the competition in the Best Male Overall contest which was viewer's choice. Depicted on his back is a male figure being clutched towards the underground by a cluster of hands which symbolized the dead.

"It represents how we are tormented by the various things in life, and how the final torment is death. As much as to live life is agony, we would rather endure it than go to the next realm," he said. Cross has only been "into it" for

18 months and plans to get a full body suit as well.

Not everyone who gets a tattoo is prepared to recite the significant meaning of each piece on their body. They may have just gotten one because they found the design appealing. Perhaps it was pot-luck pick for them, and not necessarily an expression of themselves at all. One theory is that tattoos are a form of rebellion. People get them to differentiate themselves from the norm.

"It's a lifestyle," contested George Frick, of Copake, New York. Clad in a red flannel shirt and a ten gallon hat, Frick is a Born Again Christian and the deacon of his church. He sells Native American products with his wife, and explained that this was his seventh visit to Am-Jam.

"I see it as a chance to talk with people," Frick said. He added that he doesn't beat people over the head with what he believes in, but that the Lord sees everyone as sinners. "The Lord makes no distinction of who to associate with," he continued.

Long haired leather necks marched up and down the aisles like painted soldiers of a misplaced tribe. Among them, Hell's Angels could be identified by their silver studs reflecting in the dull smoke. No one dared to take pictures of them.



Hawk Sarina of Ontario, Canada has spent roughly \$50,000 on tattoos so far.

Photo By Randy Howard

practice or the capricious end product of heavy partying in the Navy, the art of tattooing is gaining popularity all over the world today. It has emerged as a viable form of "art that you take with you."

Being jabbed repeatedly with sharp needles doesn't sound like a good time?

For Scotty Weeks, a 17 year artist who came all the way from Santa Clara, California, tattooing is not only a profession he enjoys--it's a passion.

"I used to draw a lot as a kid and I basically got into it as a result of peer pressure," Weeks explained, as he thumbed through a copy of Flesh

"It represents how we are tormented by the various things in life, and how the final torment is death."  
-Brian Cross

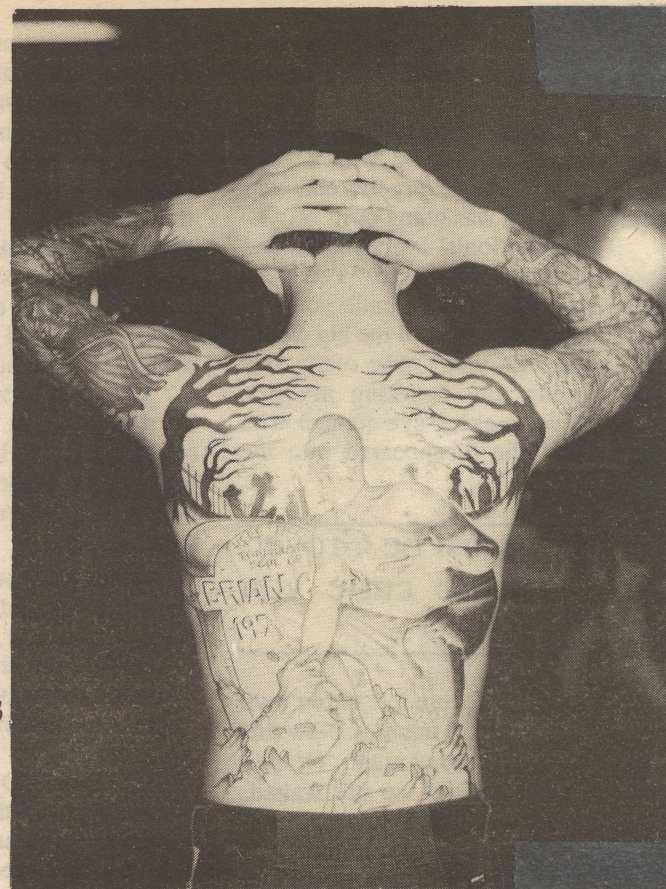


Photo By Randy Howard