

TATTOO SAVAGE

SAVAGE

A Walk
on the
Wild Side

Pin-Up

PORNO TATS

by Joe Capobianco

Whore-ish
Street Scene

RETAIL SLUT

Spiritualized

SCARIFICATION

by Seattle's "Al D."

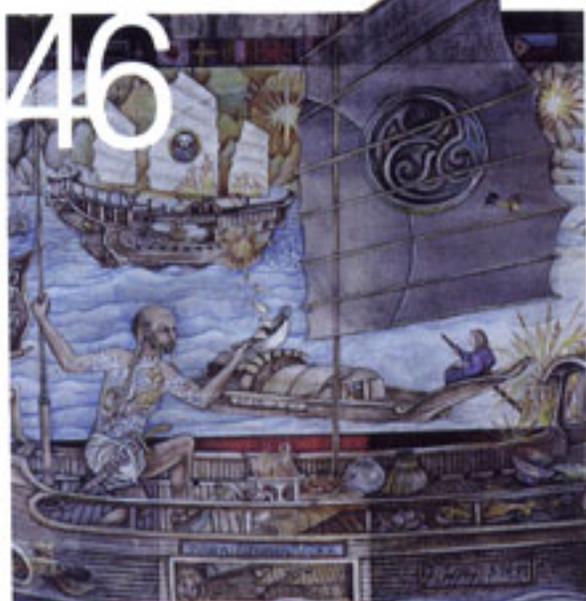
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walk on the wild side

SAVAGE BY PHOTOFEST
 WITH FLORIAN JOE SPINELLI
 COVER PHOTO: NIKOLOFF / PHOTOFEST; NIKOLOFF / PHOTOFEST



the brand that **FITS**

It can safely be said that **Blair**, this 29-year-old artist, piercer, brander, cutter, and body modifier, has pushed traditional strike-branding to the limits of the art form. His contoured, overlapping-strike style allows for designs almost as complex as those given by electrocautery "laser" branding.

By Shannon Larratt



Body Mod Effects By Blair

Eight years ago, Blair was

working as a school janitor in the suburb of Toronto, Canada. He remembers unsuccessfully seeking out scarification services, after having seen the procedure in documentaries and in copies of *National Geographic*. "I just assumed tattooists would know about it — it is a body modification after all." It wasn't until much later that Blair witnessed someone getting branded at a public event. "I remember it looked somewhat inconsistent and the artist was stoned at the time. That was irresponsible, and I recall thinking that I could definitely do a better job."

So Blair sold his Harley to buy an autoclave and started piercing. Shortly afterwards, he picked up some surgical steel and designed some bits that he thought would work as branding tools. They were modeled after traditional brand-

ing tools, and after branding himself and a few friends, he found his tools to be too limiting. "You do one strike and that's it. I decided I needed to do something more than just the traditional procedure. I started trying different little techniques here and there, studying what worked and what didn't. Eventually I got to the point where I was branding using overlapping strikes. That way you get a nice consistent line. I was always told by other branders that you shouldn't touch a strike twice, but that didn't seem to make a lot of sense to me. Sometimes you have to give it another little touch just to make it heal evenly."

Blair made some new tools, and perfected his style. "It's a lot like painting and stenciling. But just because a stencil is perfect doesn't mean it's going to look good on the body. Sometimes you have to re-draw it by hand to make it look perfect. I'll also do designs freehand. When we did my client Sarai's arm, it took four hours to







draw it on, and an hour and forty-five minutes to brand it."

The technical aspects are a part of the thrill as well. "You have to know the skin. When you put a hot piece of metal up to the skin, it shrivels and distorts. You have to do the strikes in a very specific order so it distorts in your favor. Also,

"You have to know the skin. When you put a hot piece of metal up to the skin, it shrivels and distorts."

Everyone's skin is different. Some people have thick skin and a lot of fat cells, and other people have very thin skin where you can see everything underneath, and they burn differently. If you don't know the skin, you can brand too deep and really damage a person."

Of all the body arts, Blair finds





branding the most rewarding. "It's much more meaningful and symbolic. It's not like tattoos or piercings. People know what they want in (and from) a brand."

Outside of branding and piercing, Blair also performs more advanced body modifications, like sub-incisions. Sub-incision is the cutting open of the underside of the urethra, resulting in something a bit like an overcooked split hot dog. Before you shrivel up in pain, realize that this is an incredibly enhancing genital transformation.

"The inside of the urethra is really, really sensitive — there are a lot of nerves there that don't normally get stimulated. Once you do a sub-incision they're all exposed. When you're having intercourse, it feels a whole lot better. Traditionally it was done by Aborigines in Australia, so it's not just something we invented. It's been around for a long time."

Blair adds, "No doctor's going to do



it, however, because it's not a medically accepted procedure. It's also not a procedure that I take lightly, and I would only do it on a client who has a lot of experience with body modification and understands all the potential risks involved." Probably one of the only other artists performing the same range of modifications as Blair is Steve Haworth of 3D-implant fame.

While Blair was guided to body modification in a vision, his primary quest has always been learning. He's now studying photography, taking trumpet lessons, and is always taking at least one other class. He reasons, "It's great to have a really cool hobby like piercing and branding, but when it becomes a job, you need another fun hobby. I just want to learn so much."

Blair can be contacted at Tat-A-Rama, 3834 Bloor St. West, Toronto, Canada M9B 1L1, (416) 234-1144. He dreams of doing a full back portrait using branding, and if you're experienced and ready, you can always contact him for custom and cutting-edge procedures. ♦

TATARAMA

BLAIR'S GUIDE TO HEALING A BRAND

- A brand takes on average three weeks for primary healing. It's a bright red scar, and will eventually fade, usually to white, but sometimes to a darker color on dark-skinned people. The fastest I have ever seen for total healing (totally white) was three months. But I have seen it take up to two or three years.

- Here are a few suggestions for care of brands: Never touch it unless you have washed your hands, wash the branding twice a day with a mild soap and keep it covered. The highest level risk of infection comes from picking at the scab indiscriminately.



- There is a right way to pick a scar to get it to keloid evenly. Pick in the direction of the branding, with the grain. You can't just take an iron-wool pad and scrub away. If you go with the flow, lines will remain sharp and heal evenly.

