

# THE POINT

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The Quarterly Journal of the Association of Professional Performers

A photograph of a shirtless male performer suspended in a wire cage. He is looking down and to the left. A person in the foreground is holding a microphone with a red 'M' logo towards him. The scene is dimly lit with stage lights.

**SUSPENSION**  
MISHAP & THE MEDIA



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# FROM THE EDITOR



**James Weber**  
President  
Infinite Body Piercing, Inc.  
Philadelphia, PA

As I watched the national election returns from Philadelphia, I saw the footage of the celebration happening in Grant Park, in Chicago: the images of the jubilant crowd, the sea of people who, like me, thought we might never see a day like this one in our lifetime. Watching Jesse Jackson with tears of joy streaming down his face was an image I will not soon forget; the power of that night will stay with me a long time.

Several of us watched the coverage together on a variety of channels—BBC, CNN, Comedy Central, Fox News, in addition to checking various web sites and blogs—to try to get a true feeling for what was happening. It seems most people (except those shown by Fox News, apparently) were ecstatic at the outcome. It was impossible to not feel like part of something big, something that the whole country (well, at least 53% of it) was feeling at the same time.

Footage aired from other countries showed people everywhere were excited about the Obama victory, about what it meant for not only the US but also the rest of the world. Many saw this as the start of a new age in American diplomacy, when we begin to act like we are not the only one in the world, when we realize our part in a larger community. Where we take more responsibility for our country's policies and their effect on everyone, everywhere.

It's not hard to see the similarities between this shift and the evolving role of the APP. The early days of our industry, when modern body piercing was almost solely an American (and, to a smaller extent, European) activity are over. Modern body piercing is becoming a global phenomenon—some would say it already is—and as the US is re-evaluating its role in the larger world, so do we, on a smaller scale, as the APP.

Though started by a small group of piercers in California, the APP has grown to include members from all over the world: We now have members from the US, Canada, Mexico, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Spain. In the last APP election, we saw two who reside in Mexico chosen to serve on the Board of Directors: one a recent American ex-pat, and one a transplant from Belgium.

As this issue of *The Point* shows, the APP has expanded its role in education about body piercing to reach people all over the world.

Inside is a review of the APP Mexico seminars, now in their third year, which continue our educational outreach in Mexico. There is a report from Paul King on the most recent Oslo Suspension Conference in Norway, and then a second article from him as he continued on to represent the APP at the 2008 BMXnet Conference, held the following weekend in Germany. In January he will also be attending the APTPI Conference in Italy, accompanied by the current APP Vice President, Didier Suarez.

But as we educate piercers from all over the world with information drafted by primarily an American group (much of it in response to American issues), it's important we understand the arrogance in assuming that we should go to other countries to "raise them up" to our standards, to assume that, because we are who we are and where we're from, we have every right to tell others how to do what they do. (See *To the Editor* on the next page.)

We educate, we try not to dictate policy. We don't attempt to start a branch of the APP in each country, we advise them on setting up their own organization—and we respect their autonomy of those who already have. While we have our opinions (and those of us from the States tend to have strong opinions on what is right for other people), we don't presume to tell everyone what is best for them.

And this understanding need not stop at those in other countries. Also in this issue, Allen Falkner writes about the recent suspension accident that took place in Florida, and the resulting media exposure that followed as people raced to place blame on members of our industry for their perceived negligence. This cycle is nothing new, but this time the damning criticism came not from the mainstream media, but our own. Not from traditional news sources, but from articles on BME and YouTube links passed around from piercer to piercer. It seems in our quest to educate and defend what we do we are quick to condemn those that we feel would bring heat on our industry—to the point that we bring the heat ourselves first, sometimes even stronger. In our rush to defend our practices from the criticism of the mainstream press, we are even harsher to those within our own community for their mistakes.

So while the US addresses its new role, we have a similar struggle as an American-based organization in a larger world. Can we do it? Can we succeed in educating, while honoring and respecting those we seek to educate? In the US, as well as abroad?

You can guess my answer: Yes We Can.

Welcome to issue #45 of *The Point*, the *Journal of the Association of Professional Piercers*. **P**

# THE POINT

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The mission of the Association of Professional Piercers is to disseminate information about body piercing to piercers, health care professionals, legislators, and the general public.

Material submitted for publication is subject to editing. Submissions must be in a digital format, and should be sent via e-mail to [medical@safepiercing.org](mailto:medical@safepiercing.org).

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# TO THE EDITOR

I am a fervent reader of *The Point* and I was pretty happy to see an article about body piercing in France in the summary of your last edition. [Issue #43] I was really excited... before I read it. I don't know if I am the first French body piercer to write to you about this article, but some parts need explanation.

—The article published in 2002 in *Le Bulletin Épidémiologique Hebdomadaire* was written in 1999 by two medical students: [http://www.invs.sante.fr/beh/2002/04/beh\\_04\\_2002.pdf](http://www.invs.sante.fr/beh/2002/04/beh_04_2002.pdf)

This was based on eight tattoo studios where only three body piercers were found. Two shops were near a beach, in a seaside station. In other words...

These shops were located in south of France in a department called "l'Herault" in the border of the Mediterranean Sea. The sea is 200km from the farthest city of this department.

In 1999, the body piercing industry was in its early development here in France. Some owners already put high standards on hygiene... some others not. I don't know how it works in the USA, but in France, in a seaside station, most of the shops are closed and empty during Autumn, Winter and the beginning of the spring. During the high season (Summer) the small cities see their populations multiplied by five or ten with tourism. Most of the shops responsible are locators, so sometimes the site of a shop is not the same as the past year. The rents are quite expensive and the quality of work is not the aim... the aim is making money during Summer.

This study does not show how body piercing works in France, it only shows the drift of some shopkeepers without scruples in a tourism area... and of course, it represents a high risk of contamination.

- *Le Guide Des Bonnes Pratiques Du Piercing* was edited in 2001 by the Paris hospitals and a gathering of body piercers.

It is a true guide for working properly. Now, most of the body piercers respect its suggestions and some of them already worked with a lot of the precautions before this manual was published.

Unfortunately, the shopkeepers still exist... with or without an autoclave.

- APERF has been dead for many years. It was maybe too elitist and not reactive enough.
- Le Syndicat des Perceurs Professionnels Français (SPPF) was formed at the end of 2006 in order to have some representatives in front of the authorities in case a law arrived. At the very beginning, the goal of this gathering was the "number": The more we are, the better it will be. Unfortunately it's all the same now... they accept everyone without any control. It serves the worst and might even confuse customers. Being a member is not a label of quality. I hope it will change.
- A law was voted in 2008 without our help, not even with our consultation. It is based in part on *Le Rapport De l'Académie De Médecine*. This law is not totally ready yet. It is less complete than *Le Guide Des Bonnes Pratiques Du Piercing*, which recommends:
  - Working rooms separated from the reception area.
  - A separate sterilization room.

- Sterilization by a "B" autoclave. (The same one as a dental cabinet).

There is no provision about a separate room for sterilization or an autoclave type in the 2008 law. It allows us to work with single use instrumentation if no sterilizer is owned.

It also allows traditional jewelry shops to work with a piercing gun for ear lobes...and cartilage areas too, without autoclave or any separated rooms of course... on recommendation of *Le Rapport De l'Académie De Médecine*. Totally hypocritical!

How can a doctor say, "There is less contamination risk with a lobule piercing than a navel piercing?" A piercing wound is a piercing wound.

A last problem:

*Le Rapport De l'Académie De Médecine*, written by pretty aged people, was based on fantastic and prejudicial facts. We (and our customers) are depicted as drug & alcohol addicts, homosexual, marginal...

"...Elles traduisent plusieurs états: perception négative des conditions de vie, mauvaise intégration sociale, souci d'amélioration de l'image de soi, précocité des rapports sexuels avec grand nombre de partenaires, homosexualité, usage de drogues et consommation d'alcool, activités illicites et appartenance à un gang, mauvaises habitudes alimentaires..."

I really would like to have that exiting life style shown in their report... but I might be too calm or too shy.

I believe SNAT (Syndicat National des Artistes Tatoueurs) has lodged a complaint against the medical academie.

All this is to tell you that I was pretty sad to read this mistaken information relayed by your publication.

The majority of our shops are not as depicted in these different articles. I currently work in a shop where the tattoo artists use two ultrasonic cleaners (one for disinfection, one for rinsing), an instrument dryer and heater, an electronic sealer and a "B" autoclave. I also own a "B" autoclave with two ultrasonic cleaners (one for brand new jewelry, one for disinfection) and an electronic sealer at my residential address for body piercing and body mod purpose only. Both of us have dedicated rooms for sterilization.

France is not the third world of body piercing.

I wanted to write to you for several weeks, but I did not take the time... now it's done.

I will stay a faithful reader of *The Point* anyway!!

Take care.

**Update:** In June, a new gathering including le SNAT (a tattoo syndicate) and le SPPF (a piercing syndicate), a member of la Direction Départementale des Affaires Sanitaires et Sociales (DDASS), and some people from la direction générale de la santé adjusted this new law. French body piercers have been heard thanks to the SPPF. The new law is more suitable to our work.

Unfortunately, this new law is not yet edited in *Le Journal Officiel*, so it is not official.

—ERW, [www.myspace.com/little\\_frankenstein](http://www.myspace.com/little_frankenstein)

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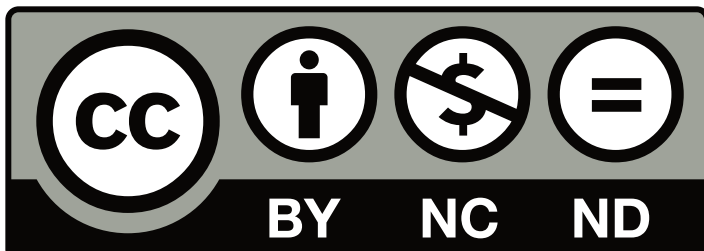


**James Weber**  
APP President  
Infinite Body Piercing, Inc.  
Philadelphia, PA

When requests come through the APP office asking about reprinting our material, permission is traditionally granted based on three “rules”: the APP must be credited as the material’s originators, the use may not be for anything commercial (and if it is, the use must be approved by the Board), and the work cannot be used in an edited form—i.e., it must be used in its entirety. While this system has worked, it does have its drawbacks: Permission for each use must be individually approved by the Board; it was not clear to others before requesting to use the information whether permission was likely to be granted; and—most importantly, in my opinion—this system was not proactive enough in encouraging the dissemination of APP literature.

It is then with great pleasure that I announce the new copyright policy of the Association of Professional Piercers: The APP Board has approved a change in the copyright designation of all APP literature and educational materials. All future information will be designated with the Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd) license outlined by Creative Commons.

This license will be displayed on future publications with the following image:



## So what does this mean?

It means instead of insisting upon a more exclusive copyright, the APP will allow others to reuse, reproduce, and redistribute all future APP material and information—text, photos, illustrations, etc.—as long as our chosen conditions are met:

**ATTRIBUTION:** Any of the APP’s information may be freely copied, distributed, displayed, or performed (recited), but must be credited to the Association of Professional Piercers. Additionally, anyone reusing this information may not state, suggest, or imply the use of APP material alone denotes membership, or that the APP endorses the person or organization using our information.

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## So how does this work?

Under copyright law, the originator of any work is considered the copyright holder of that work. This work cannot be copied, distributed, displayed, or performed (recited) for any reason without the express permission of the copyright holder.

Anyone with any knowledge of the current situation of copyright—especially as it pertains to digital media—is aware of the battle being waged by copyright holders against what they see as the improper (illegal) use of their content. File-sharing, peer-to-peer networks, and the ease at which content is duplicated and distributed have undeniably changed the landscape of copyright law. While pre-millennium copyright was able to (mostly) cover authoring, publication and distribution of content, the advances in the digital media and the Internet show this way of licensing to be, at best, outdated and, at worst, convoluted and unenforceable.

Creative Commons was established in 2002 as an addition to this copyright designation of “all rights reserved.” Creative Commons licenses let people easily change their copyright terms from the default of “all rights reserved” to “some rights reserved.” Copyright holders can more easily state how they or allow their content to be reproduced, and those that wish to use, copy, distribute, display or perform, publish, remix, etc., can easily find out what exactly they are (legally) allowed to do with what content.

## So is the APP giving up its rights to its content?

No. We are specifying how and in what context APP material may be re-used, re-distributed, and re-published. We still reserve the rights outlined by our Creative Commons designation.

## But why is this important?

Members of the APP have worked tirelessly to distribute our information to everyone who wants or needs it. I would argue (and I did at the last Board meeting) that it is counterintuitive and counterproductive to work towards the widest distribution of our

content while using a copyright designation that discourages our educational information's re-use.

By publishing our conditions of reproduction and distribution prominently on our website and on our publications, we more readily allow—and actively encourage—the distribution of APP materials, all while still allowing for legal actions should the stated terms of reproduction and distribution be ignored.

Digital content can now be searched on the Internet based on Creative Commons designations. (Firefox now has this capability, and both Flickr and Picasa both support Creative Commons licensing.) Someone looking for information on body piercing that can be used, reprinted, and/or redistributed without traditional copyright constraints will be directed to our site and publications, which will include instructions for appropriate use.

Lastly—and most importantly—this copyright designation most closely adheres to our mission statement: “To disseminate information about body piercing to piercers, health care professionals, legislators, and the general public.” However you see the APP—and there are many opinions on what the APP should be—our stated mission is to educate by the distribution of information. I am incredibly excited about this new license, because it encourages not only us, but also others to do just that.

*For more information, go to [creativecommons.org](http://creativecommons.org) P*

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## SUSPENSION: MISHAP AND THE MEDIA



Allen Falkner  
Suspension.org

The headline in the South Florida Sun-Sentinel read, “Performer held up by hooks falls 12 feet, breaks a leg at the Deerfield Beach tattoo convention.” To many, this came as a shock but hardly a surprise. The real shock was not in the response from the mainstream media or general public; it was in the backlash that came from within the modification community. Our people wanted answers and they wanted them *immediately*.

On August 16th of this year, Jimmy Pinango, of the SMS suspension team, fell during a suspension performance at the South Florida Tattoo Expo. Within minutes, calls and text messages shot across the globe. It’s quite possible the first images and inevitable YouTube videos hit the Internet before Jimmy even reached the hospital. My personal phone and email were both blowing up, and before I had any of the facts I found myself forced to take a stand on something I knew little to nothing about. “What went wrong?” “Why did this happen?” “Who is responsible?” “Is the guy OK?”

Normally, I would expect the mainstream media to go into a feeding frenzy over a story like this. As the days passed, it became evident the news had simply lost interest. No one was famous. The fall was not fatal. The injured person had been rushed to the hospital. Yes, his condition was bad—worse than most people knew. To the media, however, it was just a stunt gone wrong and the story seemed to drift into obscurity, at least to the people outside of the body modification community. Inside of it, it was like a bomb had gone off.

By the way everyone was acting, you would think the suspension stock market just dropped 500 points. (Maybe it did.) Hanging from hooks is hardly seen as a “normal” activity; generally, the outside world ignores us. They only seem to take interest when it becomes a spectacle, is broadcast on national television, or when someone falls twenty to thirty feet and breaks their leg. (Yes, I think the 12-foot fall was an incorrect estimation—more on this later.) To many in our community, this accident was seen as double blow: First, a mistake by one team would be seen as an indicator of the general lack of skill of us all. And second, the sudden, negative exposure would put us all in the spotlight and under a microscope. In a field where very little regulation exists and where there is often misunderstanding by those not part of it, there was a sense this very unfortunate accident could serve to change the public’s view of our art form. Self-preservation took over and people wanted answers and to place blame. Then things took a turn for the worse.

Oh, the Internet, such a wonderful invention. With just few keystrokes you can speak to people on the other side of world, post information about the things you think and with one click of the return key publicly announce how you feel, all without having to consider the possible repercussions—in the famous words of the Human Torch, “Flame On!” That’s exactly what happened: Emails went out, blogs went up, and finally, two opinion pieces went to print on BME. [See links at the end of this article.]

Now, the dust has finally cleared and all the facts are out. So, what happened? What went wrong? Where do we go from here?



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## The real shock was not in the response from the mainstream media or general public; it was in the backlash that came from within the modification community.

For those who have not seen the photos or viewed the online videos, the performance consisted of Jimmy hanging upright from six eight-gauge hooks in his back—sometimes called a suicide position. He was raised into the air using a boom lift and then preceded to bounce up and down approximately ten feet on shock (bungee) cord with the help of a rope thrown up from the ground. The idea was that one of three sets of monofilament-line rigging would progressively break each time, dropping him onto the next set, with a final drop onto a 5mm accessory cord. The stunt—or a version of it—had been performed successfully prior to this event. Sadly, this time a vital rigging component failed and Jimmy dropped approximately twenty to thirty feet onto concrete, shattering the bones in his leg.

It is obvious from the videos that those involved were shocked. Unfortunately, it is difficult to tell much else due to the video quality, darkness and poor angles of the grainy recordings. One thing that is readily apparent—and has not up to now been mentioned—is that security was quickly on top of things and seemed to keep the crowd back while the crew rushed in to help.

Also, very little has been said about the health, healing and well-being of Jimmy. Luckily, his injury was not as severe as it could have been. His leg was broken and required an operation to fix it. Post surgery he spent time in ICU for marrow that had entered his blood and a clot in his lung—both complications from the fracture. Jimmy has returned home and seems in good spirits. He is still resting and says it will take some time before he gets back to his old routine.

So what went wrong? The answer may never be clear. It's easy to point a finger at SMS or its leader and place blame. Yes, mistakes were made and what happened was horrible. The events following the accident may not have been handled well by several different people, but the root of the problem goes much deeper. Much of the equipment used and safety protocols that are commonplace in the suspension community are not what they should be. Just as the piercing industry once borrowed tools and knowledge from similar industries, the suspension community is now in the same place.

Want to hang 300 pounds? Then why not use six 660 pound rated quick-links? Suspension practitioners have been hanging more weight from less and lower-rated links for years. Simple math makes it seem like the rigging—or at least the group of components—should have held 3960 pounds. In a perfectly static system, this would be true. Unfortunately, this was a case where

things weren't loaded correctly, and it appears one of the links was side-loaded with part—or possibly all—of the weight. The failure of this one tiny piece caused a catastrophic failure that made the entire system collapse.

To the crew, it was a simple quick-link failure. To the rest of the suspension community, it was open season to pick apart every flaw. Under mass scrutiny there have been numerous problems with the rigging identified, but that's not the worrisome part. The real issue is this suspension was done with equipment well within our present industry standards. Because someone was hurt, it's easy to single this one out to find fault. However, it only takes a simple Internet image search to bring up hordes of photos with similar—if not worse—rigging errors. In fact, I will go so far as to say that body suspensions are rarely ever rigged with equipment designed to adequately hold human weight.

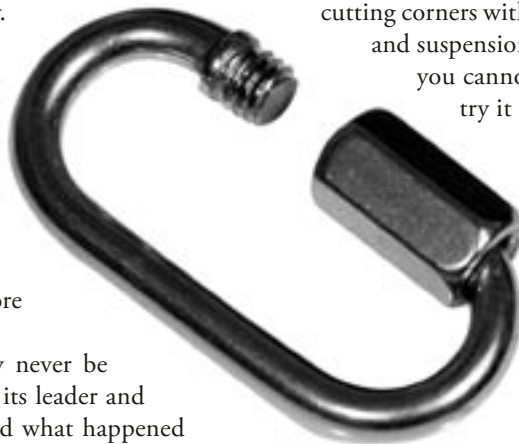
So what now? Simple: This is our wakeup call. The time has come to make changes, improve our equipment and further our training. Will improved rigging be too expensive? The poverty excuse no longer has any validity. If a group cannot afford the tools of the trade, then it's time for them to step down. As with body piercing, cutting corners with safety just is not an option. As both a piercer and suspension practitioner, I can speak from experience: If you cannot do the procedure safely then you shouldn't try it at all.

Piercers are piercers, nothing more. Inserting a hook in the skin does not qualify a person to lift another off the ground. The skill of rigging is a very specialized field. The introduction of the hook might be within the range of experience of a piercer, but the rest of the mechanics must be worked out to a science. Only those trained, educated—and qualified—to hang someone should be facilitating suspensions.

Who is qualified? Therein lies the problem. As was the case with piercing a decade or two ago, suspension is now a fledgling industry. We are still learning, still improving, and sadly, still making mistakes. I've said it many times before and I will say it again: Suspension is an inherently dangerous activity and should not be attempted by anyone not fully aware of the dangers and risks involved.

*Further articles on the incident at BMEzine.com: <http://news.bmezine.com/2008/08/22/suspension-failures-and-not-just-the-quick-link/>*

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Left: Courtesy Helene Fjell. Center: Courtesy Daniel Jansson (mousevomitic.com). Right: Courtesy Paul King

## THE 7TH ANNUAL OSLO SUSCON



**Paul King**  
APP Treasurer  
Cold Steel  
San Francisco, CA

My plane approached the airport over the greenest capital I have ever seen—and I've seen plenty. Fir forests tower in all directions extending to the horizon. The beauty of this country was even worth the crappy flight itinerary I served up for myself: San Francisco to Philadelphia to Zurich to Düsseldorf to Hamburg and finally, to Oslo, the capital of Norway. You would think I'd never booked an airline ticket before.

Norway continues to fascinate me. Until the 1970's, it was a lush backwater of a third-world country. At that time, vast fields of black gold were discovered, and the entire country became a population of nouveau riche almost overnight. It now boasts the highest number of millionaires per capita in the world—and one needs to be a millionaire here to afford the fifteen dollars for a pack of cigarettes, or a beer. If you want to move it costs four hundred dollars for a rental van for the day. A gallon of gas or the night bus is ten dollars. But, lest I paint too bleak a picture: there is no visible homeless or poverty, no insecurity from lack of health care, or shortfall of social security. This country takes care of *all* its people, and is very generous to the developing world as well. Setting my own nationalistic tendencies

(maybe shame?) aside, its difficult not to feel a little jealous.

This time of year the weather is gorgeous. It's mostly sunny and remains comfortable, t-shirt weather for both days and evenings. Being this far north, there's only darkness from about 11pm until 4am. Nature energizes and inspires, but some strange vacation custom has the half the population leave Oslo during what I would consider the best season, creating a ghost-town ambiance.

The 7th annual Oslo SusCon took place this year from the 18th through 20th of July. It was hosted by Oslo's suspension team and performance troupe Wings of Desire, co-led by Christiane Löftblad of Pinpoint Piercing and Håvve Fjell of Pain Solution. Their ambition to spearhead a team of handpicked volunteers to pierce, hook, rig and hoist nearly 70 participants from 14 countries in two and-a-half days was admirable, but bewildering. Their organizational abilities proved to be masterful, running on a military scale—like proverbial Swiss clockwork. Four prep and aftercare stations with five separate suspension areas were constantly monitored for safety from mechanical failure, cross contamination, and human frailty.

Håvve opened with a welcoming speech, including a general






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Gradually I was swinging, then pushed in great circles six feet off the ground. It was exhilarating yet relaxing at the same time.

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schedule of the weekend's events and safety ground rules. Steve Haworth followed with a presentation about his suspension exploration, and the development of advanced rigging constructions with his performance group, LifeSuspended. Long-time suspension veteran Steve Joyner discussed his performance background with TSD, (Traumatic Stress Discipline) and his current project managing the three chapters of CoRE, (Constructs of Ritual Evolution).

The first day, several people underwent advanced suspensions, including the "pain-doll": Alice, of the UK, who stunningly lifted up by a two-point full back arch "resurrection" pose from hooks in her midsection, then cut the rope dropping her full body weight to a single hook. (Wow.) The night closed with a performance by the Finnish performance group Circus Mundus Absurdus: a bawdy burlesque in clown-face with Black Dahlia smiles, featuring impromptu magic with staple guns and a single-point chest suspension.

On Saturday and Sunday I shared my lecture on the ancient practices of ritual suspension in Sri Lankan religious festivals. The intimate and relaxed environment of couches and candles and the informed contributions of attendees made the talks especially enjoyable.

Sunday, the final day of suspensions, the skies opened up with the sight and sound of rain acting as a backdrop for the event. Håvve hoisted himself upside-down from four points, two on either calf, generating a pendulum motion. Christiane and a volunteer worker, Martin, exhibited the two-person beam suspension on the main stage. They suspended from two points in their backs attached to a swiveling single beam chained to the ceiling. At first they casually traveled in a circle. Then, building speed, they alternated with turning leaps until eventually the centrifugal force lifted them simultaneously off the ground while they spun and oscillated.

Then Ellen, my Oslo flat-mate, let me play with the mini air bubbles trapped under her skin. She had just finished a lovely "plushy-inspired" suspension—complete with furry lynx ears. (Too cute.) Great attention was given during the aftercare procedures to push out as much of the pocketed air as possible, but there is usually residual "subcutaneous emphysema" that the body eventually absorbs.

Over the entire weekend, people kept asking me when I planned to suspend. Each time, I politely responded with, "I haven't decided," when in fact what I was thinking was "Oh, fuck no!" In my mind, I was here to give a lecture and represent the APP—nothing more. With the exception of tattooing and a couple of ear cartilage piercings, I haven't partaken in any sort of body modification ritual or performance in more than ten years. But the weekend continued and some beautiful

suspensions were performed, including the Frenchman Clem's eight-point Angel suspension. From an open, U-shaped steel suspension rig ropes were zigzagged through four hooks on both sides of his shoulders and lats creating a beautiful winged illusion. A little voice from the back of my head said, "That's the one."

An internal, skeptical back-and-forth debate ensued. "Should I suspend or not? What's my motivation? Peer pressure? To be 'cool?' To grasp for some spiritual experience?" In the end, after much deliberating, I realized my two-fold desire: the experience of the physical action, and the sense of communion with the other participants. The ritualized facing of fear and struggling through it is death and rebirth at its most ancient and primal metaphor. "Surviving" such ordeals, whether natural tragedies or staged rituals, creates intimacy and emotional bonds that transcend most mundane social interaction.

Three people went to work on my back, each with a hook and 8 gauge needle. "Deep breath in... and breathe... out." The pain of the piercing is almost never as bad for me as the pre-jitters; I *hate* the anticipation. With two exhales my six hooks were installed. I thought I was through the hard part, when my other flat mate, Alan—with a warm and comforting smile—handed me the rope to lift myself. The piercings started to burn. This was not the best time to have put on a few extra pounds, I thought. How in the hell was I ever going to lift the 180 pounds I call "me" off the ground? I managed to lift myself to balance on one big toe then hand the rope back to Alan to finish the job. Still, the searing pain continued. I felt my ego creeping in. "You are not giving up if it kills you." Then I let go of my struggle, giving in and allowing the sensation to wash through me, it quickly dissipates. "I'm flying!?" Gradually I was swinging, then pushed in great circles six feet off the ground. It was exhilarating yet relaxing at the same time.

For the closing-night entertainment, industry veterans Steve and Cookie Haworth—purposely avoiding the "performance" label—arranged an impromptu public "act of love": Three assistants performed a "pull", (the act of two or more participants being tied together through hooks in their flesh and pulling away from each other), lifting Cookie into the air. Steve grasped parts of her body: hands, feet, hips, twisting and turning, building up centrifugal force then releasing her in an explosion of movement, to soar in circles to the "ooh's" and "aaah's" of the audience. For the finale, Cookie's hooks sustained the weight of Steve's added, gyrating body. The audience went nuts. I have to admit: I'm more than a bit jaded to

body play performance, but I was thoroughly impressed.

“Play with my rice crispies, but stay away from my danger zone.”

This has to be one of the funniest and most bizarre things ever said to me. Rachel Larratt—of BMEzine.com—invited me to share in the fascinating sensation of popping the tiny pockets of trapped air under her skin, but to not touch the actual wounds of the suspension hooks. She and I shared our loss of suspension innocence together. (Like the strong bond of a young couple losing their virginity...)

The Oslo SusCon after-party is infamous. Everyone behaved himself or herself over the entire weekend, abstaining from alcohol, getting plenty of sleep, etc., but this party was a complete blowout. A barbecue led to a campfire which led to branding which led to nudity—enough said. There was enough blackmail to go around for all of us, so let everyone who attended remember: “What happens in Oslo stays in Oslo.” If you want to find out, you’ll just have to come next year and create your own scandal.

*For more information on the topics and people discussed above:*

[painsolution.net](http://painsolution.net)

[wingsofdesire.org](http://wingsofdesire.org)

[lifesuspended.com](http://lifesuspended.com)

[wearecore.com](http://wearecore.com)

[pinpoint-piercing.no](http://pinpoint-piercing.no)

[news.bmezine.com](http://news.bmezine.com) (search “Oslo SusCon”) **P**



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Ana Paula Escalante, Matt Southwood, Ed Chavarria and Corey Lolley



Luis Angel, "El Yako". Photo by by Alexandre Meneghini, ©2008 Associated Press



Interpreters



Alex, "El Huracan". Photo by by Alexandre Meneghini, ©2008 Associated Press



From Chile, "Fingazz"



David Vidra teaching



# THE APP IN MEXICO



**Danny Yerna**  
International Outreach Coordinator  
Association of Professional Piercers

September 17th through 20th, for the third year in a row, the APP held body piercing seminars in Mexico City. Each year the content has grown: speakers, attendees and number of classes. Because of scheduling and class size, this year we were in a different hotel. Instead of being in the Zona Rosa, we just moved a few blocks away, to the Quality Inn Roma. The hotel, which is only two years old, opened their doors for us and warmly welcomed the event. In addition to piercers (and tattoo artists) from all over Mexico, the seminars had international attendees as well: two piercers from Costa Rica, one from Spain and one from Chile.

At eight o'clock in the morning on the first day, the registration table was open and volunteers were handing out badges and folders with programs and details of the event. The seminars officially started at 10 am with introductions from members of the APP Board of Directors as well as the other speakers. In this first hour we also talked about the achievements and targets of APP, and explained the protocol for attendees. Unlike previous years, we moved the roundtables to the morning, and the first day Bethra Szumski (with Ana Paula translating) spoke the importance of Starting an Association in Mexico, and the benefits to the industry and our clients. There was a visit from healthcare officials from Cofepri (the Federal Commission for Protection Against Health Risks) who explained what has been done with proposed legislation to regulate the activities of tattooing and piercing. It was good to see someone from the healthcare department to hear the progress on Legislation in Mexico. Ed Chavarria, who returned after his participation last year, gave a lecture on the correct use and maintenance of Autoclaves, and after lunch Dr. Ibarran again gave his class on Anatomy. In the past, this class was divided into general and oral anatomy, but this year we chose to give a single seminar. As this class had many repeat attendees, this change was well received. At the end of the day, the instructors and attendees met at a snooker place called Lucille, and we all continued to talk about what we like most over a few drinks, some food, and a few games of pool.

The second day began with a roundtable on Discrimination in our industry. Dante Salomo, who has been working very closely on this issue with the Mexican government, facilitated it. [See *The Point*, issue #43.] We then we had a big guest—in every sense of the word—when David Vidra taught classes on Medical Risks and Aseptic Techniques. With this class, for the first time, we started working with professional

interpreters, which gave us the opportunity to invite more educators from the industry without the risk of losing important information while translating. The presence of Mr. Vidra greatly impressed the attendees, and I think he was surprised by the enthusiasm displayed by the all the piercers to improve their work, professionalism, ethics and hygiene. After lunch Didier Suarez, his first time teaching in Mexico, taught Ear Projects and showed a clear understanding of his knowledge of piercing. Later on that day, Paul King showed videos and talked about his numerous trips to Thailand. These several hours of Anthropology were possible with the support and interpretation skills of Ana Paula. After classes, the night's party was also a birthday of one the attendees. We were all invited to the Under Bar, where many stayed late into the night.

...for the first time, we started working with professional interpreters, which gave us the opportunity to invite more educators from the industry without the risk of losing important information while translating.

The third day began somewhat differently. Because of unforeseen circumstances, we had to reorganize the schedule as I was unable to give some of my classes. But people showed their support, and with a little help from friends the changes did not affect the event. It was just the opposite, showing the solidarity of all those present.

This day also had something different to prior years, as the attendees were split into two groups: The first group was those who had already participated in previous seminars, and the second was for those attending for the first time. The first group stayed in the hands of David Vidra as he gave the class on Infection Control, a presentation of more than four hours that did not bore anyone. This class also opened the doors for Latin American attendees to become members of the APP, as this class is the equal of the Bloodborne Pathogens class in the USA.

The second group had new speakers: Ricardo and Antonio from Argus did a roundtable on Suspensions, followed by Leticia Mejia who talked about the importance of Customer Service. Ana Paula then shared her experience with Stretching, talking about materials and sizing. At lunch, many realized why the importance of resting and drinking water was mentioned in the orientation class. You could start to see the lack of sleep and fatigue in some.



**Didier Suarez**  
 APP Vice-President  
 Enigma Professional Piercing  
 San Diego, CA

It was an honor to participate in the 2008 APP seminars in Mexico City. I know there are many who would have loved the chance to teach, and to talk to our peers in Mexico about piercing theories and techniques. As an instructor, I am still learning how to share my experience and knowledge. Just as I—as a conscientious piercer—attempt to educate my clients, I now find myself concerned with how well my ideas come across to other piercers. I have been exposed to many great teachers and speakers throughout the years, and I am now doubly grateful these professionals took the time and energy to help me. By teaching now, I see myself as part of a cycle of education that is necessary for our industry to grow and flourish.

Mexico City itself was also an educational experience for me. The city and people are instilled with a rich history of

piercing, body adornment and modification. Although, between attending the Board meetings and teaching two classes, I was only able to see a little of it, what I did see was amazing.

The piercers that attended this year’s seminars reminded me of the groups that assembled for the early APP Conferences: They were there simply because they all had a desire to better themselves as professionals. Sometimes within our own group (in the US), we forget that is what brought us together in the first place. In Mexico, I often pointed this out, along with the importance of the strong foundation of community.

I am proud to be part of movement to make such a big difference to so many piercers. I would like to thank the attendees, Danny Yerna, and all the volunteers for making a difference.



Some of the attendees outside the hotel



In class with David Vidra



“El Pelon” and “El Clavo” on break between classes (Photo by by Alexandre Meneghini, ©2008 Associated Press\*)

In the afternoon, the first group attended Male Genital Piercing, originally scheduled for me but finally taught by Ed, Ana Paula and Didier. Didier then continued with Surface Piercings & Microdermals, showing his experience as an originator and innovator of placement and technique. The interpreters seemed happy about the seminars coming to an end as they were visibly tired. It was surely was the first time they attended an event with such a “colorful” audience. I think they did a great job, and, without a doubt, the seminars came to a new level with simultaneous translation.

But the rest of the group two still had a way to go. Friday afternoon, Leticia offered classes on Biohazard and the proper handling of garbage in the store, and Initial Piercing Jewelry. Ed and Ana Paula were responsible for providing the Female Genital Piercing class. (Thank you for covering for me.)

For the most attendees, the seminars ended on Friday night. Many were exhausted, but had faces full of joy because of everything they learned in these days. That night, one group went to Lucha Libre to see Mexican wrestling, while others went to Bizarro Cafe to share even more information and talk in a more relaxed atmosphere, outside the classrooms.

On Saturday, the fourth (and last) day of seminars was organized around the First Aid and CPR classes. These were very dynamic and practical classes of about seven hours (and also mandatory for membership of the APP).

Looking back, the week was a very intense one; the months of preparations were well worth it. The comments were positive, the event is growing, and the farewell among fellow piercers was, “See you next year.” We expect to count on even more classes and speakers next time, no matter the language. **P**



**Ed Chavarria**  
APP Membership Liaison

Since beginning my career in piercing, I’ve known that I entered this industry a little spoiled. I’ve had the privilege of learning from, working with, and befriending some of the best piercers, shop owners, and manufacturers in the body modification industry. Never has this been clearer to me than at this year’s Mexico City APP seminars. From the start I was faced with the reality that not everyone has access to the information I have long since thought was second nature to anyone piercing. I realized most of the knowledge I’ve had handed down to me is information that many do not have access to.

This year marked the third of the Mexico City seminars, and the second year I was privileged enough to attend and to share my knowledge. This event hosted roughly seventy-five to eighty piercers from all over Mexico and South America. About fifty percent returned from previous years; the other half were new attendees. It was good to see the familiar faces and even better to see new ones in the crowd. It was a challenge for many to attend, yet they all made the tremendous effort in order receive the information presented.

It’s hard to describe this event. Speaking as a piercer from the United States, we not only have the best information at our disposal, we also have access to the best equipment, jewelry, and aftercare products, not to mention the amount of networking readily available that allows for the sharing of knowledge. We work in a country that has organizations that (try to) look out for our best interests when it comes to our safety—such as OSHA and our local health departments. The Latin American piercing population has none of this. There are little to no regulations, and few government organizations

formed to help. (There is also little to no help available from medical suppliers.) In this environment, it’s easy to find piercers performing piercing—and other more extreme procedures—in places like flea markets and street corners.

These classes take place in a country where many doctors and dentists do not own autoclaves. When talking to various attendees, I found that medical suppliers commonly attempt to sell dry-heat sterilizers to piercers and pass them off as autoclaves. Until recently, there was no spore testing for autoclaves available. This is not only a problem for the piercing industry in Mexico—it also applies to doctors, dentists, and other medical professionals.

In this environment, it was inspiring to see the attendees’ eagerness to learn, especially since most of them do not really make a full living off piercing. The energy in the classrooms was enough to make the hair on your body stand up. Question after question was asked, and all you could see when you looked around were people taking notes—not only on what was being instructed, but what is being discussed by others during the class as well.

A special thank you is due Danny Yerna, not only for organizing and hosting this event, but as well for being the eternal soldier when it comes to working with, and for, piercers and piercees in Mexico. Thank you to everyone who attended, and who made this event so comfortable and inviting and welcomed us into your family.

I wish the best for these fellow piercers, and that they are able to succeed in what they love to do as I have. The humility I returned home with made me truly appreciate what it is that has been handed down to me—maybe for the first time.



## THE 2008 BMXNET CONFERENCE

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**Paul King**  
APP Treasurer  
Cold Steel  
San Francisco, CA

In 2002 and 2003, the Association of Professional Piercers hosted conferences in Amsterdam. The APP committed its time and resources to planting the seeds for practitioner-based and organized piercing education in Europe. No one could have guessed just how well this leap of faith would take off.

July 25th through the 27th of this year, BMXnet held its second annual conference. BMXnet presented a comprehensive body modification conference with the familiar piercing health and safety information, as well as classes covering various aspects of tattooing, scarification, suspension, laser tattoo removal, laser branding and beading. This time the location was the quaint village of Vluyn, in Germany, in a beautiful brick building in the center of town. When not rented to a bunch of freaks, it serves as the town's civic center and local museum.

The instructor lineup was impressive: Industry veterans like Steve Haworth, Steve Joyner, Nils Weiss, Marcus Strohner, Thorsten Sekira, Totto Jeratsch and Jason Pfohl taught piercing information and technique classes; tattoo machine seminars were led by Steve and Art Godoy; and Bethra Szumski and I were also invited to teach—and to officially represent the APP. Standout classes were portrait painting by Shawn Barber, advanced scarification by Ryan Ouellette, and Allen Falkner demonstrating his new vocation: laser tattoo removal.

Evening entertainment highlights were performances by the Saviours from Finland, Håvve Fjell of Pain Solution and Operafication. The Saviours' hysterical performance included antics by the sexiest rabbit I've ever met; Jussi's sauntering hop,

flirtatious nose wiggle and carrot manipulations got the audience in touch with their unconscious plushy fantasies. His partner-in-crime, Lassi, had some spectacular adult-rated abilities of his own, including an attempted single point guiche suspension. (You had to be there...)

This year's attendance grew from 150 to nearly 250. (That's an increase of over 60%.) Classes increased by 30%, (from 20 to 26) and the number of hands-on technical training workshops

**If you are thinking about going,  
the only problem you may have  
is the next event selling out.**

increased as well. Being only English-speaking (American?) was no handicap to attending. Half the instructors were from the United States, and almost all the classes were taught in English or translated over an audio system by interpreters. If you are thinking about going, the only problem you may have is the next event selling out. Spaces are limited so don't wait to register! I've been in talks with the organizers, and they already have some new surprises in development for next year. (For now, "mums the word.")

And if you just can't wait for warmer weather, you don't have to! The Italians have organized a conference January 18-19-20th 2009, in Milan. Check out [www.aptpi.org](http://www.aptpi.org) for details.





A special “thank you” goes out to the hardworking and usually under-appreciated organizers of BMXnet:

**Marcus Strohner** – Trust Bodypiercing  
**Stefanie & Chris Rhim** – Native Rituals  
**Nils Weiss** – ModHouse  
**Stephan Strestik** – Wildcat Media

The conference could not have run without additional work from:

**Sanny Oeing** – Wildcat  
**Michael Kolar** – Nightliner, Berlin  
**Oliver Lueckel** – Trust Bodypiercing  
**Mike Huelsewig** – Serious Piercing  
**Dirk Hueckler** – Naked Steel  
**Alexander Woellert** – Stichcode, Dresden

Conference contact: [admin@bmxnet.org](mailto:admin@bmxnet.org)  
 Conference WebSite: [www.bmxnet.org](http://www.bmxnet.org)  
 Conference MySpace: [www.myspace.com/bodymodificationexchange](http://www.myspace.com/bodymodificationexchange)

[www.fabulousparadise.com](http://www.fabulousparadise.com) – for info on Lassi and Jussi, or the Saviours  
[www.bmezine.com](http://www.bmezine.com) – for video and images from BMXnet, and all things body modification-related  
[www.sdbarber.com](http://www.sdbarber.com) – for painter and tattooist Shawn Barber  
[www.precisionbodyarts.com/artists/ryan/ryanbio.htm](http://www.precisionbodyarts.com/artists/ryan/ryanbio.htm) – for Ryan Ouellette’s bio  
[www.allenfalkner.com](http://www.allenfalkner.com)  
[www.werecore.com](http://www.werecore.com) – info on Steve Joyner and CoRE  
[www.painsolution.net](http://www.painsolution.net) and [www.wingsofdesire.org](http://www.wingsofdesire.org) – for more info on Haave Fjell **P**



Operafication

Without a microphone, her sweet soprano voice punches to the back wall then springs lightly on the audience’s ears. She’s floated from the eaves through six gauge hooks in her upper back. Her scarlet velvet dress sways several feet past her heels. Slowly she’s lowered, her dress pillowing on the floor. Her partner, in flight, is pursuing; his frenetic attempts to save her are in vain. She nestles into the fabric folds of her deathbed. Removing her steel crown of thorns from her forehead her blood streams like tears down her cheeks. Bare-chested the would-be-savior lands beside her. In anguish he withdraws the skewers from the flesh crisscrossing his heart. She dies while singing *Donde lieta uscì*, (Mimi’s goodbye to Rodolfo in *La Bohème*). It is a fitting farewell. He pins trails of gossamer to her arms. She rises to the heavens streaking her white flowing wings with her blood. The curtain falls.

This archetypal scene is worthy of any 18th century operatic tragedy except of course it has all the passion of real blood.

I first fell in love with Operafication at last year’s BMXnet conference in Essen, Germany. Then our inconsolable diva was smashing mirrors and crying tears of blood for her fallen soldier, played by Zane Whitmore, who remained deathly still during the entire performance in a “suicide” pose, back fully arched from suspension points in his abdomen. [See issue #43 of *The Point*.]

Hilary Whitmore has been singing opera for eleven years, and her offstage joyful nature stands in stark contrast to her dramatic onstage presence. She started utilizing corporeal suffering to embellish her performances in 2003. The American-born artist is finishing her degree in vocal performance and vocal pedagogy at Trinity College of Music in London, U.K. Recently Zane moved back to the states and Hilary took on a new performance partner: Peter Bohm of Sweden debuted at this July’s BMXnet performance. Operafication has performed live more than 20 times in the US, UK, Germany and Norway.

For bookings, photos and additional information, Operafication can be contacted at: [operafication@gmail.com](mailto:operafication@gmail.com) and [www.myspace.com/Operafication](http://www.myspace.com/Operafication)

—PAUL KING

# APP AT ACHA



**Rick Frueh**  
Industrial Primitives  
Austin, Texas

I recently had the honor of representing the Association of Professional Piercers at the 2008 conference of the American College Health Association, held June 3-7 in Orlando, Florida. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Rick Frueh, and I am the owner of Industrial Primitives in Austin, Texas. I began piercing professionally in 1999, and have been a member of the APP since 2002.

My flight touched down in Orlando on Tuesday, June 2nd. I had the pleasure of the first evening off, as our part of the conference—the exposition—took place Wednesday through Friday. I was glad to have the time to relax since the back of my knee was tattooed only a few days earlier. Caitlin (the APP Administrator) was able to find us a great deal on a hotel. The only “catch” was that it was pretty much kiddy-land; the multitudes of screaming, jumping kids definitely let you know Disney was close by. This was a great source of amusement—and horror—to us as the week progressed.

Bethra arrived Wednesday morning. After dropping her stuff off in the hotel room we headed out to the conference, navigating the registration process and finding our booth location. We then began the difficult task of figuring out how to assemble our display. After several attempts, without instructions, the stars aligned and the design finally revealed itself—setup went quickly from there. After finishing, we left to find some food and prepare for the next day.

Thursday began with us waking up at the unspeakable hour of 5:30 am. When we arrived at the expo hall, there were already people in line waiting to enter, and they all had the same glazed, zombie-like expression that we did. Once inside, we dropped off our stuff and proceeded to find the free breakfast, which helped to make the early start a little easier to manage—and provided us with much-needed caffeine.

Attendance Thursday was good. The ACHA booth had a signature raffle for all who attended, so Bethra and I signed our names—a lot. There were attendees from colleges and universities from all over the country, and we discussed piercing-related health and safety issues with everyone who came by. The groups that we talked to included people from ivy league schools such as Harvard and Yale to small local colleges. We were incredibly well received, and it was clear from the feedback there that our attendance was greatly appreciated. Many of the professionals we spoke with had already been linking to the APP website and passing out our literature to their students. Some had even contacted APP members local to their area for in-person talks to the student bodies they serve.

Friday started the same as Thursday—with the alarm going off at 5:30. Attendance was a little slower, but many attendees were still present and stopping by the booth, and we handed out more brochures, posters, stickers, and issues of *The Point*. There was a big demand for our printed material—we even ran out of some items early on—but we were still able to send people to the



Bethra and Rick at ACHA

website for downloads of those items. Interestingly, although the general consensus amongst the membership is that the web site is becoming outdated, everyone at the conference who mentioned it did so with high praise. It was a reminder of what an asset it is to have an abundance of information available on the web.

The expo part ended at 1 pm on Friday. After closing was announced, we began to break down the booth. (We even got a little “gold star” for not breaking down early and staying until the end.) Once everything was packed up and ready to ship out, we headed back to the hotel and one last meal before Bethra and I had to get to our flights.

Overall, this was a great experience. I had the opportunity to meet a lot of people. I talked piercing with college health people from all over, including several in my area. I now know Bethra much better. (We spent our evening time discussing membership issues and Conference. It was a welcome escape from the loud children and cartoon character cut-outs that seemed to be everywhere in the hotel.) I am looking forward to getting the chance to do this again. If you want more information on the ACHA, their website is: [www.acha.org](http://www.acha.org).

And Bethra, you still owe me a round of miniature golf. **P**

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## UPCOMING APP EVENTS

▶ **ASSOCIAZIONE PIERCERS  
E TATUATORI PROFESSIONISTI  
ITALIANI CONFERENCE**  
January 18-20, 2009  
Milan, Italy

▶ **ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL  
PIERCERS ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
AND EXPOSITION**  
May 3-8, 2009  
Tropicana Hotel and Casino  
Las Vegas, NV

▶ **AMERICAN COLLEGE HEALTH  
ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE**  
May 26-30, 2009  
San Francisco, CA

▶ **AMERICAN DENTAL HYGIENISTS'  
ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE**  
June 18-20, 2009  
Washington, DC

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