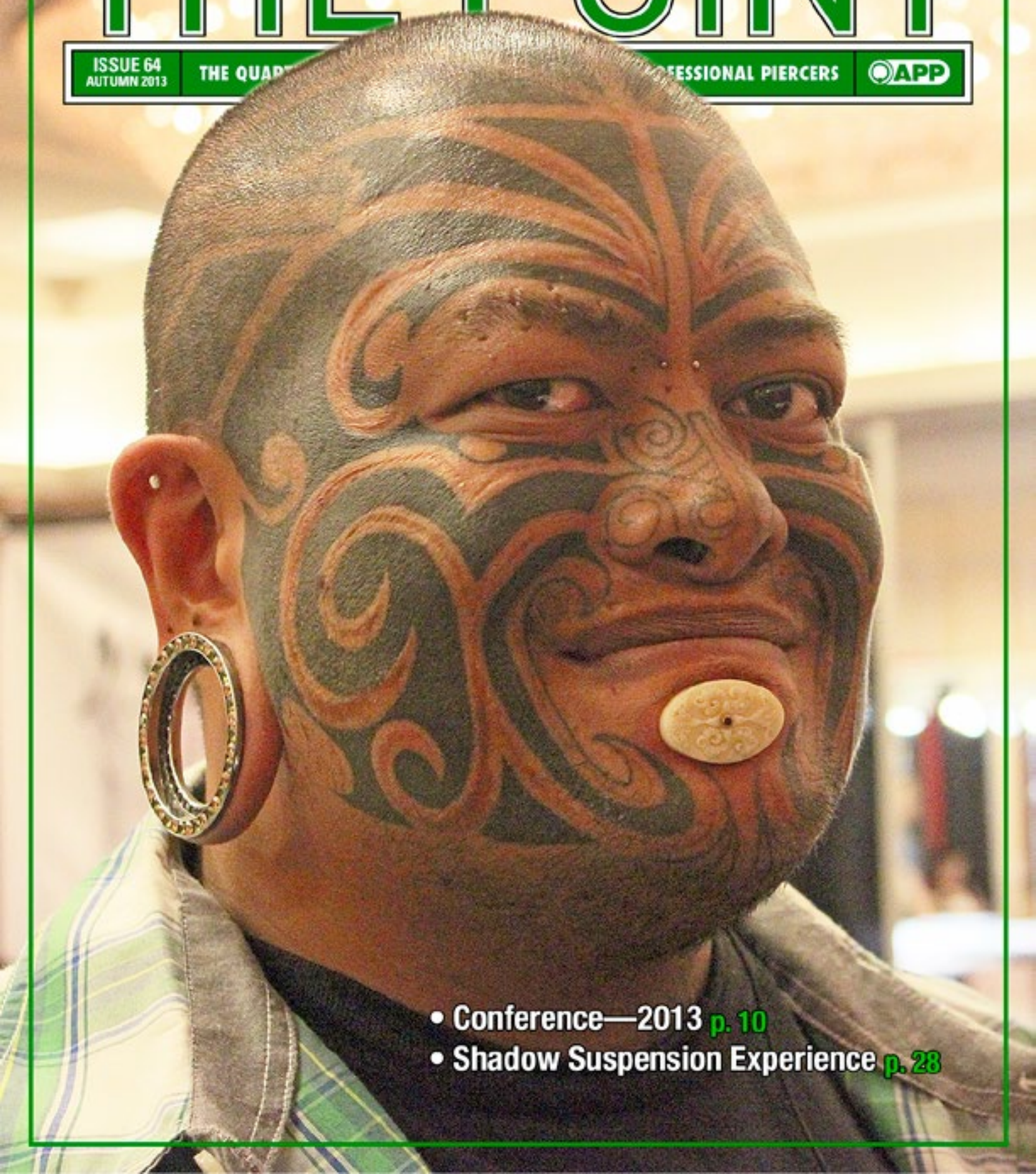


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ISSUE 64
AUTUMN 2013

THE QUARTER

PROFESSIONAL PIERCERS



- Conference—2013 p. 10
- Shadow Suspension Experience p. 28

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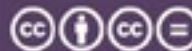
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FROM THE EDITOR



KIMBERLY ZAPATA
The Point Editor

This is a strange issue for me as it is the first post-Conference recap I am covering as an editor, and from the confines of my four-floor walkup in Brooklyn, New York. You see this Conference, the 18th Annual Conference of the Association of Professional Piercers, is the first Conference I have missed in years. My reasons were good—I was nine months pregnant with my first child (who I am happy to say was born on July 14, 2013)—but that did not make the week any easier, especially when I logged onto Facebook and saw my feed full of posts by colleagues and friends about their annual APP adventure. I lived vicariously through your check-ins, status updates, and photos, and while I am certain I did not miss the temperatures this year (dry heat or not, it seems as though it was just damn hot), I did miss the camaraderie, the classes, and the parties, handshakes and hugs. So as you can imagine when content for this issue came tumbling in—an issue dedicated to post-Conference coverage—I was both excited and at a loss.

I worked through the week backwards. I began with the events of the banquet dinner: the [President's Award](#), the [Josh A. Prentice Award](#), the [Creative Innovator's Award](#), and

the [Award for Technical Innovation](#). As the pictures poured in, I also got to see the fashion show everyone was talking about (seriously, all of my social media pages were abuzz about this) and the opening party. I also saw pictures of piercers and other industry professionals learning and conversing. Some were taken in the classroom but others captured the moments that took place in hallways, restaurants, and at the Bally's main casino bar (an unofficial meeting ground for many). Even though I will never know what was said in these shots, I know—from my prior experiences—the dialogue exchanged was unlike any other. (Sure there were jokes and the annual idol chatter, but there was also advice—given and received—stories shared, and memories made.) It is a conversation neither you nor I can replicate, one that articles fail to fully capture, and one that is exclusive to the Conference experience.

In addition to the thank-yous and award announcements, we are fortunate enough to have two “full-Conference” coverage articles this year: [one](#) from Courtney Jane Maxwell and the [other](#), “Confessions from a Conference First-Timer,” by Amanda Badger. While Amanda's [article](#) reminded me of my own first Conference experience—so much so I could

I lived vicariously through check-ins, status updates, and photos, and while I am certain I did not miss the temperatures this year (dry heat or not, it seems as though it was just damn hot)

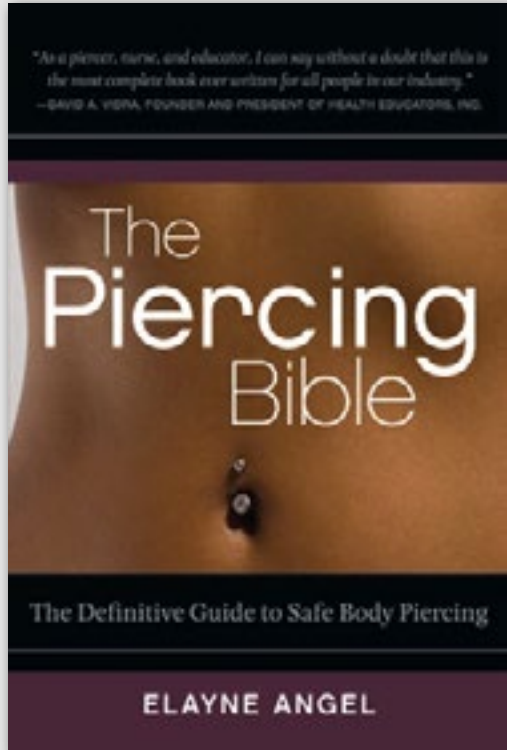
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feel the nervous, anxious excitement well in my chest (even amidst the breastmilk!)—Courtney's [article](#) reminded how far we have come. We also have recaps from [Dianna Brown](#), [Jacob Spjut](#), and [Parker Webb](#), a few of our ever amazing Al D. scholars

So as I sit here, typing with one hand while my newborn babe—propped in the other—pulls and sucks on my breast, I hope you find this issue as nostalgic as I did. Relive your annual pilgrimage in these posts, photos, and pages, and let them serve as a reminder as to why you do what you do (and keep doing it with pride). And if you weren't at Conference this year, like me, read on to see what you missed, and what you have to look forward to next year!

Welcome to issue #64 of *The Point: The Journal of the Association of Professional Piercers*. ©



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR - ELAYNE ANGEL has been a professional piercer for more than 20 years and has performed over 40,000 piercings. She was awarded the President's Lifetime Achievement Award by the Association of Professional Piercers in 2006 and is a contributing writer for *PAIN* Magazine. She lives in Mérida, Mexico. Visit www.piercingbible.com for more information.

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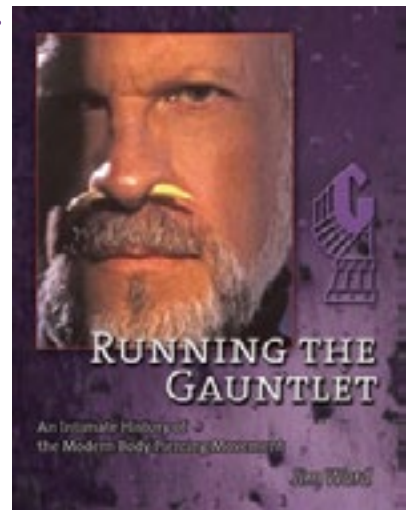
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PRESIDENT'S CORNER



ELAYNE ANGEL
APP President

Video Transcript: An Overview of the Expo at the 18th Annual APP Conference and Exposition in Las Vegas, June 9–14, 2013

Our annual event is such an extraordinary experience and there's really no way to get a genuine sense of it without attending. Even with all the many reviews, commentaries, photo galleries, and other coverage included in this issue of *The Point*, the breadth and scope is hard to convey. So I shot this video with the intention of giving viewers a bit of an idea of what they could expect to see in the Expo hall.

Those of you who were there may enjoy reliving the excitement. I know it gives me a jolt of pleasure to see the footage and clearly recall my time in Las Vegas. Any piercers or studio owners who have not yet attended, please spend a few minutes with me and the merchants and shoppers, my friends and colleagues. This is just a small sampling of the more than 50 vendors that were on the Expo floor.

(You can also visit the [APP's YouTube channel](#) for lots more Expo coverage: Coming soon.)

Transcript:

Hi! I'm Elayne Angel. I'm President of the Association of Professional Piercers, and I'm so excited to be here at the 18th Annual Conference and Expo. And I'm in the Expo right now. We're just going to take a spin around, so you can see the size of the Expo. It is a huge expo room, and it is absolutely filled with the best body jewelry in the industry. There is no place in the world you



Elayne and Buck Angel—photo by Matte Erickson

can go to find this amount of body jewelry, and products and services for the piercing industry.

We're just having a great time. Over here we're selling raffle tickets, and if you're not here you totally missed out because the grand prize is \$15,000 (at cost, not retail) of body jewelry from Industrial Strength. I also want to take you over to the APP table where we have merchandise, and we have something that is so super exciting: It is the brand new APP Procedure Manual. If you are in the industry this is something that you will absolutely need to see. It is completely redone—the last one was from 2005—and this one has over 100 references for all of the information that's in there. It's terrific! So, that is something you can also get

in a digital download from the [APP website](#). Don't miss out; it's amazing!

Now I am at the author's table with famous author and body art industry personality, Fakir Musafar. He's selling his book and video here.

Fakir: Hellooo!

EA: Hey guys, I want you to stop for a second. These are some of my friends from Infinite Body Piercing and I'd like to hear what you like best about Conference.

Kellan Smith: I'm Kellan from Infinite. What I like best about Conference is seeing all of my friends that I never get to see, getting up early, it's really fun. Classes are always great, and I think connecting with people and seeing all of the fun jewelry and all the new stuff that's out. Three-way

kiss!

EA: Hi there, want to give a second to the camera to say what you like best about Conference?

Jason King (23rd Street Body Piercing): What I like best about Conference is two things: I get to see everybody that I only get to see once a year, and as a piercer it helps recharge my batteries. It gets me excited about piercing again.

EA: Look at this stuff, oh my gosh! It's gorgeous, gorgeous.

Is there something you want to say about being at the APP Conference and Expo?

Jenella Brooks (Tawapa): I love it here. Everybody is so beautiful.

Kat Wickersham (Buddha Jewelry): This has been a phenomenal Conference. It is my tenth Conference over 12 years, and God only knows how many more for you (indicating Rion Wickersham). It's definitely my favorite year. Beautiful banquet, beautiful conference all around. Like you said last night, "lots of love."

EA: Amazing...

So, we're here with Ryan Kremp of Glasswear Studios.

Ryan: We have hearts this year, and...

EA: Bacon and eggs. You gotta love that. Bacon and egg plugs!

Mark Thone (Heart on Sleeve Jewelry): [We have] wood, stone, metal, and a combination of all three.

EA: There is a very handcrafted look to your stuff. You can see that its not mass-manufactured in any way.

So now we're over at the Ear Emporium.

K.C. Peck (Ear Emporium): We make mostly wood plugs and specialize in graphic wooden plugs.

Brett Perkins (Inherent Body Jewelry): No matter what, you walk away from it [Conference] feeling like you had fun.

EA: Absolutely! It's a lot of fun. Thank you so much for bringing your creativity and innovation to the APP Expo!

BP: Yeah, thank you!

EA: Oh butterfly wings...stunning. So, is this your first APP Conference?

Linda (eleven44): Yes, it is my first one.

EA: And how did you like it?

LE: Great response, I had a great time. Everyone's been super sweet and really encouraging.

EA: (Re: Oracle Body Jewelry): Absolutely astoundingly, beautifully done! Gosh, [there's] a lot of heart and soul in that.

EA: So, you've been around here for a long time. John, how was the vibe of this Conference compared to any other? Anything different?

John Durante (Evolve Body Jewelry): Well I mean, you know, what is different for me is that I would normally come just personally to hang out. This is the first year that I've ever actually done a jewelry booth at the Expo.

EA: Wow, cool!

JD: Yep so that was exciting for us.

EA: Great, yeah! That's super exciting.

JD: I think that will continue from now on.

EA: Excellent. So you'll be back?

JD: Indeed!

EA: Excellent.

Jason Pfohl (Gorilla Glass): Well the show's been great. I love being here and seeing all my friends and family. It is great time to connect with community.

EA: Thanks for being here!

We also have some companies that provide services and products that are related to other aspects of the industry. Here we have Industrial Strength, LLC. This is a company that makes high-quality tools and instruments for the industry, including piercing needles. They have great array of high-quality options to work with, and when I stocked my studio with tools, equipment, and piercing needles, it was with these guys. They do great work and have excellent customer service as well.

I'm here at a booth that has some merchandise that's obviously pretty different from most of what's on the Expo floor. Great—really cool. Love it!

Elijah Sound (A.D. 2013): For men and women; lots of leather.

EA: Really gorgeous.

ES: We have a holster and a little bustier as well, and a leather wrap skirt.

EA: So cute. That looks fantastic.

Really, if you didn't come this year, you're going to have to come next year! Be there!

You may view the video in its entirety [here](#).

APP Conference June 8-13, 2014

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THE 18TH ANNUAL APP CONFERENCE & EXPO—2013



COURTNEY JANE MAXWELL

June 9-14, 2013, the Association of Professional Piercers returned to Bally's in Las Vegas, Nevada for their 18th Annual Conference and Exposition. For me, Conference has always been an interesting way to observe growth and change in our industry—so very much can happen in just one year. The past few have been pretty amazing thanks to rapidly expanding technology—mainly social media—which seemingly overflows into every aspect of the piercing community.

Social media is bringing us together now more than ever, and is helping to inspire a surge of new attendees. Our ability to promote safe piercing and the benefits of attending Conference, both individually and as an organization, has been directly impacted by the increasingly broad reach of online networking. As a result, we welcomed an impressive 285 first timers this year, bringing the grand total of registrants to 950. On top of that, the increased online discussion about the importance of booking in the APP room block enabled us to oversell our room block by an unprecedented fifty percent!

One look at this year's curriculum, and you can see that studios have been experiencing growth as well. The

demand for business-oriented classes was high, and offerings such as "Corporate Branding," "Photography Tips for Industry Pros," "Going Paperless," "Marketing and Social Media," "Studio Aesthetics," and "Gold & Diamonds: Knowledge, Sales, and Custom Design," had attendees inspired and buzzing with new ideas.

The ever-popular workshops have had continued success as well, with four distinct classes ("Preventing Cross Contamination in the Sterilization and Piercing Room," "Surface Piercing," "Minimizing Tools: An Intro to Toolless Piercing," and "Tools Are Not the Devil") filling twenty-one time slots throughout the week. The wide variety of core classes, such as "Steel and Titanium" and "Aftercare," continued in the circulation as well that together with the roundtable discussions (not including "First Aid and CPR") that brought us up to 110.5 hours of class time this year, presented to us by 52 instructors and facilitators.

This year, fifty fantastic volunteers teamed up with Caitlin and the Conference Committee to bring all of these classes and instructors together and make the magic happen. Return attendees likely noticed that the Sun-



APP Members meeting about to commence (photo by Brian Skellie)

day evening registration process was easier than ever, thanks to the hard work and fine tuning on the part of these folks. They also brought us a more efficient way of checking into classes: Paper tickets have been replaced with a barcode that a volunteer scans upon each student's entrance to the classrooms. As our attendance numbers continue to rise, the ability of the Conference staff and volunteers to grow and change to accommodate us has been appreciated greatly.

This year's banquet was yet another sign of our industry's growth. A fashion show, featuring cutting-edge body jewelry design, was a reflection of an industry rushing to keep up with our fashion-forward clientele. (You may have seen photos: if not, check out social media sites using the hashtag #app2013.)

When talking to Conference veterans and newcomers alike, I got the distinct impression that people were extremely happy with their experiences this year. The ability to welcome and accommodate so many new faces while still keeping "repeat offenders" on their toes with new ideas is something that, in my opinion, the APP has had great success with in 2013. It seems that things are looking pretty bright for the piercing industry, and I for one can't wait to return to Bally's next June 8-14 (2014) to see how much more we've all accomplished in just twelve months time. ©



Tuesday night at the bar with folks rocking their animal PJ's. (photo by Brian Skellie)



THE 18TH ANNUAL APP CONFERENCE & EXPO 2013



Top to bottom, International Meeting (photo by Brian Skellie); Samar Soriano (photo by Matte Erickson); Members of the Social Media subcommittee (photo by Brian Skellie); Crystal Sims and Joeltron (photo by Matte Erickson)

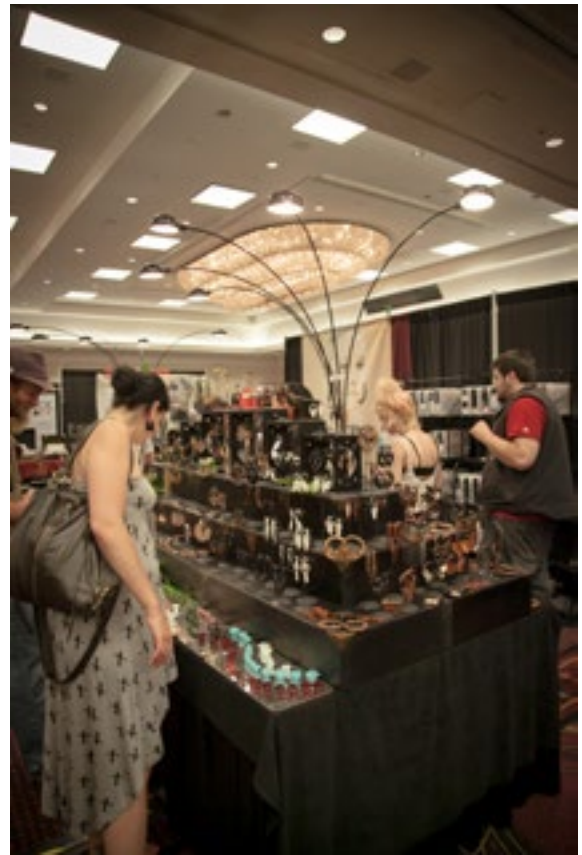


Top to bottom, Members of the Outreach/ Social Media subcommittee (photo by Brian Skellie); Bethra addressing the Members Meeting (photo by Brian Skellie); John Johnson and Rick Frueh of the Manual Committee show off our updated *Procedure Manual*, available in two cover choices (photo by Brian Skellie); Allen Falkner (photo by Brian Skellie); Membership Committee (photo by Brian Skellie)





Above, Members Only Class: Exploring Sexually Functional Piercings (photo by Brian Skellie); right, Tawapa booth on Expo Floor (photo by April Berardi)



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MY 2013 APP CONFERENCE EXPERIENCE



MAYA COE

The whirlwind of adjectives that appear in my mind when I go to describe my experience at my first APP Conference is blindingly overwhelming. Ever since my return from Vegas, every time I've been asked to talk about my trip I am at a loss of words. So now I'm going to take the time to finally sit down and spill the details of my wonderful experience at Conference.

Let's back up to how I was even able to attend. I became aware of a scholarship being offered by a group of piercers generous enough to help send those in need to Conference, and so I applied. Soon after, I was accepted as a recipient and my Conference experience began. From the moment I stepped off the plane, I was in a state of constant motion, both physically and mentally. At first it was a bit nerve wracking to be amongst so many people I had only read about (and even written reports on), but as I began to meet others the feelings of uneasiness quickly dissolved. Everyone was friendly, relaxed, and accepting. If you at all ever found yourself wanting company it was not a problem, and if you found yourself just needing a bit of solitude, again, not a problem. This being the valuable outcome of being surrounded by people that are just as socially sensitive as you.

Being an apprentice, I opted to take full advantage of my trip and attended 13 classes and two meetings. These classes included information on jewelry, aftercare, anatomy, Statim usage, medical risk assessment, how to prevent cross-contamination, and ways to use tools. I also renewed my bloodborne pathogens. The amount of information I was being taught was stunning. The anatomy classes I attended were instructed by Elayne Angel, and it felt totally exhilarating to be taught by one of the original piercers that helped shape our industry. I also felt privileged to receive instruc-

tion from David Vidra being that this was his last year teaching courses at Conference. (He is particularly inviting to learn from due to his ability to mix humor with otherwise dry and heavy subject matter.) Aside from the more technical classes, I also treated myself to Fakir's class on making effective piercing rituals. This class touched on a spiritual level, and is part of what makes piercing so appealing to me. And again, being instructed by such a legend of the industry was very inspiring. I left every class I attended with something new, which has impacted my career much more than if I had only studied the subjects via books and the internet.

I left every class I attended with something new, which has impacted my career much more than if I had only studied the subjects via books and the internet.

When I was not in class you could usually find me relaxing at the little bar in the casino of Bally's with my beer and cigar, soaking in my surroundings or leisurely chatting with whoever was sitting next to me. If not there, I was getting as much rest as I could! I only explored outside of the hotel a few times during my stay, just to get fresh air and a change of scenery or bite to eat. (One of these nights included the scholarship dinner, in which all of the recipients got to meet the people who helped us get to Conference, and when all 25 of us piled in a van and went to eat delicious Ethiopian food.)

I often reiterated the following statement when asked how I was doing while at Conference: I've never felt so exhausted yet awesome in my life. Not only was I learning and networking, but I was also making new friends and experiencing Vegas for the first time—and the ability to network with piercers from around the world was something I felt extremely appreciative of. It's safe to say that I feel I have benefited in a HUGE way from attendance. I wouldn't trade my time at Conference for anything, and I look forward to attending many more. ©

CONFESSIONS FROM A CONFERENCE FIRST-TIMER



AMANDA BADGER

Las Vegas is not for everyone. It's bright lights, crowded streets, casinos, and bars are meant for folks who enjoy the "nightlife." (For me, the "nightlife" usually consists of seeing how far I can get into the *Lord of the Rings* movie series before falling asleep—i.e., I'm not exactly a party person.) Vegas is also well known for its fabulous shows. I know that many people also go to Vegas for the shows, however, I plan on returning every year for something I find truly special. Once a year, for one week, Las Vegas plays host to a ragtag crew of shiny, sparkling weirdos with a bad case of collective insomnia. A group of people who dedicate their lives to the happiness and empowerment of their clients, who spend large chunks of their hard-earned money learning how to provide the safest, cleanest studios (which require even larger chunks of hard-earned money), and who do their best to accept others for exactly who they are; this is the group of people that attend the annual Association of Professional Piercers Conference.

I had known about the annual APP Conference for several years before I actually made the decision to go. When I realized that anyone in the industry was eligible to attend, I ended up working between sixty and eighty hours a week for more than three months just to save the money. Some days I was working from 5:30 a.m. until 10:30 p.m. As difficult as that seemed, I know now that it was absolutely worth every single minute.

Waiting to board the plane to Las Vegas was the most nerve-racking thing I've ever experienced. I've hung from hooks and, scarier than that, I've thrown hooks in backs, arms, and abdomens, but sitting in the airport waiting for my plane to board, I was more terrified than I've ever been before. There I was, going to a Conference where I knew fewer than ten people, having landed an internship at a shop a month and a half earlier...I didn't feel like I deserved to attend.

On Monday I was very nervous, and quite sick—too sick to care about my nerves actually, which worked out nicely. On the way to my very first class I spotted some-

one with blue hair, a matching shirt, and a nervous excitement that matched my own. We got to talking and pretty much latched onto each other. While sitting in class, we were joined by a third first-timer from Slovenia, which I'd never even heard of. These were my Conference buddies. If it weren't for these two I would have had a pretty lonely week. I'm so thankful that we were all bold enough to reach out to each other and so amazed that we were all outgoing enough to respond positively. I can be kind of a loner in large groups, but the fact that

I was doing almost the opposite in this situation adds to the pile of proof I'm collecting for myself that this is, in fact, my passion.

Once I had joined that small group of awkward Conference virgins, everything seemed a lot less scary. The classes were amazing. People warned that some of the basic or introductory courses might put me to sleep, but I found them extremely informative and helpful. The "Preventing Cross-Contamination" workshop was phenomenal—with four instructors, all from different areas—I knew this was not something I could learn as in-depth anywhere else, and the minute I stepped into Fakir's "Making Effective Piercing Rituals" presentation, I started to cry. (The room had been smudged with white sage, and Fakir's partner Cleo was cleansing each person as they walked in. This is something we used to do before our suspension meets, and the smell of the sage brought so many beautiful memories to mind.)

I took two anatomy courses taught by Elayne Angel, one co-taught by Dr. Jack Ward and the other by Betsy Reynolds. I really enjoyed the perspective of these medical professionals and was admittedly surprised to learn how long they'd been supporters of our community. It's always seemed to me that the body modification world is on its own, so it was very illuminating to see people with little-to-no modifications at our Conference helping us to better our industry and further our knowledge.

Honestly, the only thing I was left wanting was more (and longer) classes. Despite my feelings about Las Vegas, I would have stayed there indefinitely if there were

My first and lasting impression of this event is that it is something entirely unique.

more classes to be taken. I also would have sacrificed a weeks worth of sleep for the chance to learn more. However, instead of night classes I got the opportunity to meet tons of people: people I've Facebook-stalked, people I've never seen before, people from all over the world! I couldn't believe how welcoming everyone was, and from apprentices to piercing icons, every single person I spoke with was kind and happy to be there.

I have to admit, I was a bit uncomfortable when people asked the "How long have you been piercing" question—to which I would reply "Oh, I'm not a piercer, I'm an intern." The majority of reactions went something like this: blank stare, "What's an intern?" I was left feeling a bit like I was at the bottom of the food chain, but it's a food chain I definitely feel lucky to be part of.

I also came to find that many current piercers did not have a formal apprenticeship, much less an enjoyable one. The more I heard stories about the start of people's careers, the more I realized how lucky I am for the chance to go about this the way I'd like. I'm working in a studio that meets the environmental criteria set forth by the APP, and I was able to attend an APP Conference before even beginning an apprenticeship. I feel so unbelievably thankful to have all of these pieces fitting together

so nicely. I don't believe the journey to a successful piercing career is easy, nor should it be. That being said, due to this experience I now realize that I, unlike so many others, have the resources to create the career I want for myself with relatively little strife, which is priceless. I plan to be a volunteer at next year's Conference and to become a member of the organization as soon as possible so I can do more to support it and—hopefully—help it to grow and thrive.

My first and lasting impression of this event is that it is something entirely unique. As far as I know, no other industry has professionals who are so willing to share their knowledge with one another for the betterment of the community as a whole. The APP and the various instructors don't participate in this Conference for fame or notoriety, they do it for the safety and security of clients everywhere. These piercers truly cherish their clientele, and they prove that every year through their attendance to and participation in the APP Conference, among other things. Not many people understand what it takes to be a professional piercer; it takes hard work, dedication and, oftentimes, sacrifice. I'm slowly learning the specifics of that dedication, and I hope someday I will be able to prove myself worthy of the title of "piercer." ©

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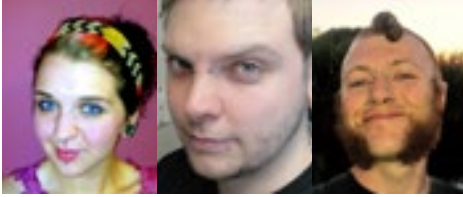
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AL D. SCHOLARS—2013



DIANNA BROWN
JACOB SPJUT
PARKER WEBB

Dianna Brown

As usual, I'm waiting until the last minute to turn in the writing assignment asked of me by the APP. This isn't because I'm lazy; it's because I've been trying for over a month to put my Conference experience into words. I'm still not sure if I can.

I went to Conference not knowing a single soul outside the realm of the internet, and feeling much like I did when I was 15 and starting a brand-new high school. (I didn't know what the other kids were wearing, what they had already studied, or if they'd like me.) Upon my arrival in Las Vegas, I was greeted as if I had known everyone for years; it was like starting a conversation with an old friend. In fact, I feel like I didn't meet a single stranger, and I learned just as much from these "friends" and our late night talks at the bar as I did in the classes I attended.

As a volunteer, I spent the majority of my week surviving on coffee, snacks, and a purely stubborn will to make it through the week without suffering the "mid-week meltdown" I had heard so much about. Don't let anyone tell you differently: Conference *is* a long, stressful, and expensive week, but it is worth every single bit of time and effort. Not only do you leave Conference with a plethora of new information and new friendships, but you will leave with an overall new outlook on everything you thought you knew, and to be surrounded by so much talent, knowledge, and information is overwhelming, intimidating, and humbling.

As a recipient of the Al D. Scholarship, my experience was mainly financed by the kindness of others. I don't think it would have been possible to attend without this opportunity, and I am grateful beyond words for it. It has been a goal of mine to attend Conference since I entered this industry six years ago, and it was the generosity of strangers that made it possible for this dream to come true.

- To those that conducted the interview process and made the decision to give me this amazing opportunity: Thank you from the bottom of my heart. My life and career are changed for the better.
- To everyone at home that gave me the support, awe-

some references, and constant love before, during, and after Conference, thank you.

- And to my fellow volunteers: Thank you for being my family. I can't wait to continue on the tradition of working with you all. I wish you all the best this year. May you all be happy, healthy, and may your crystals always shine bright. ☺

Jacob Spjut

"You are here in order to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world."

—Woodrow Wilson

It has been almost two weeks since Conference ended, and I think I am finally starting to come down from that amazing high.

As a first time attendee and as a recipient of the Al D. Scholarship, I was overwhelmed, underfed, and scared for my life: so many made it the most fulfilling experience of my young life, and will drive me to attend every year it is held, and to volunteer every year they will have me!

While Conference is known for its wonderful classes, world-class teachers and instructors, and the jewelry expo to end all jewelry expos, the annual Association of Professional Piercers Conference will undoubtedly work towards changing your world view just by standing at the bar. The interactions that take place all week, in all places we congregate in Vegas, will push you towards positive change and help give you some of the tools needed to impact not only your career but the industry as a whole. (In my opinion, the foundation of the whole experience are these positive interactions amongst peers.)

When I first arrived in Vegas, thankfully in the company of a fellow Al D, I did not even remember how to breathe; I was no longer on this planet, and certainly no longer in the world I was comfortable in. I was transported, scared, and alone, but this was an important ceremony to face: the fear that comes with attending for the first time. It reminds you of the magnitude of this opportunity. The sight of the hotel sent chills down my spine; I giggled and screamed like a school child. Upon entering

the hotel my attempts to gather myself and regain my composition were laughable, especially when I saw—in person—piercers that I follow/stalk through various social media outlets just sitting at the bar!

Once checked in, my bags placed in room, I took the first of many walks past the holiest of bars in Las Vegas. Soon after I was greeted by the magnificent Caitlin! As anyone who has had the pleasure of dealing with this powerhouse of a woman over the interwebs knows, she is tiny (in size) yet explodes with energy you can feel in your chest.

My experience meeting with the other volunteers, was amazing as well. I have never met a group of people so open to new folks, so quick to hug and love and help. It was awe-inspiring to have these strangers welcome you into their fold and not for a second show contempt for their role in the machine that is Conference. That alone has made me more inclined to give myself completely to helping the industry any way I can. The sincere kindness that these people hold inside themselves is magical.

All the hugs and kisses aside, Conference requires a lot of hard work from everyone in order to run smoothly. With almost 300 new attendees, I can see how important the cooperation of everyone involved—volunteers and conference attendees alike—is paramount to an educational and fun Conference. I have never seen so much sacrifice to ensure the level of professionalism that this industry strives to maintain, and I was truly humbled by that gift.

I must send out my thanks to everyone who even took even an hour to help on all fronts; you truly made my experience extraordinary! To the teachers, the love volunteers, the Supers, the registration, the raffle booth, the merch booth, the people who would just stop to talk to me, anyone who I met in passing, or had a few hours with: I want to express my undying and unconditional love. You have changed my life for the better, and made this adventure a hallmark in my journey. You have prompted something great in my life.

To my fellow Al D's: I could not have asked for anyone better to share my time with, or to struggle alongside of. You are all so special to me now. You are all beautiful people that I know will be lifelong friends. Not one of you was too good for anyone else, and you have all been so open and loving to me. Thank you for being you!

To the Supers and love volunteers: My deepest regret is I did not get to work with as many of you as much as I would have liked. This is something I hope to change next year. I hold so much respect for you, and if not for your leadership, I do not think I would have been able to push through. You are great people, not only in this industry, but in life. You have my deepest thanks for being amazing role models.

To Caitlin, the great protector and leader of the volunteer army: I stand by what I said before; I fucking love the shit out of you! I cannot stand that I have just met you; I should have had you in my life from the beginning. You are strong and motivating and honestly the reason I am who I am today. Your hard work changed my life. Thank you for the patience, the time away just to talk that I desperately needed, and the care and compassion that comes with running such a monumental task. You are a shining example of what we should all hope to one day become! I will happily run your errands forever!

My deepest thanks go out to anyone who gave me well wishes during Conference and those who helped me get the scholarship. Thank you to my interviewers, Ryan and Tiana, who made it fun and more conversation than anything.

To anyone who has not attended: If any of you have ever told yourself that conference is not worth the money, time, hassle, headache, etc., I kindly assert that you are wrong. I would walk through fire to attend again, and I hope my experience helps push you into attending! ☺

Parker Webb

I must admit that I'm not one for expressing myself through written words. My dedication to the industry is conveyed through my lifestyle, so these words may be all over the place, but I hope they convey my love for the work I did at the 18th Annual Conference and Exposition as much as the actions of my work did.

After a two month process of applying for this scholarship, collecting references, and going through the phone interviews, I really couldn't have had a better learning venture. For the past eight years I have worked in the piercing/tattoo industry, but this experience—by far—reassured the fact that I am in fact in the right field. All the knowledge I've collected has given me more confidence and made me more aware of my trade, and being in a place surrounded by like-minded people in such mass was pretty amazing.

Being that I am not a piercer there has always been a lot of uncertainty about where my place was in the body modification world, not necessarily by others but by myself. However, as soon as I became an Al D recipient my role became clearer; I am very passionate about body modification, and I don't necessarily need to be piercing to find happiness in this community. The kind of love and welcome I felt at APP is something rare, and something I will always cherish.

The moments, the memories, those few seconds at the dinner when there was a roar of cheer at the announcement of my name, they are all thanks to the Al D scholarship, and for that I am forever grateful. ☺

VOLUNTEER THANK YOU



CAITLIN MCDIARMID

Our 18th Annual Conference and Exposition has come and gone, and I am proud to say it was our biggest success, personally and professionally. It's been a tough year, and I have to toot my own horn, I f***ing kicked its ass! But I also didn't do it alone, and a lot of the people who take care of things at Conference took care of me this entire year.

Throughout the year, I felt their love and their support. I got their cards and their presents during a tough time. They were strong, positive, and present. They shaved their heads, they got tattoos, they visited. This year—more than ever—I needed them and Conference. I needed all of the hugs, all of the laughs, all of the quiet talks in the wee hours, and all of the frantic moments solving problems as a team. I needed to know I mattered, that my work mattered, and I needed to know my team could step up and take on just a bit more and still shine, still produce a brilliant event. They could and they did.

I was so happy that I made it this year: happy and grateful.

More so than in years past, I need to thank the Board of Directors and the Officers of the APP for their support of me and my family. There really is no way for me to express how much having an employer with a heart can mean in times of need, and I want to thank them from the bottom of my heart.

I also need to thank all the attendees for their warmth and recognition. So many strangers come up to me these days at Conference and

thank me, and it makes all the work worth it. (I've received thanks at the Banquet Dinner before, but this year it really was something special.)

This year all the "Super" volunteers went through advanced online training—some more than one session—and many of whom pitched in to help with review of schedules, organization, and training. This year, we added four more "Super" volunteers and three "Supers in training" (Al D's that we felt were exceptional last year). The Supers really are the backbone of the team; they do all the heavy lifting (so-to-speak) at Conference, and I have learned the more I stand back and let them do their work, the more successful they become—and the better the Conference is.

Registration Supers:

- Alexander Kumaritakis
- Anna York
- David Kelso
- Kendra Berndt
- Theo Sheffler
- Marah Kelso

Booth and Classroom Supers

- Aaron Foster
- Casey Hosch
- Zane Nichols
- Tiana McGuire
- Kenny Hughes
- Chadwick Jackson
- Luna Duran
- Autumn Spinks
- Danielle Greenwood
- Jezebel Voulé
- Kristin Young

Our AV Supers

- Gus Diamond
- Allen Falkner

- Brian Moeller
- Badur Ramji

Supers-in-training:

- Ken Seyler
- Andrew Rogge
- Monica Sabin

Special thanks to Will Spencer and Sarah Wooten; they are both "Super" volunteers and serve on the Conference Committee. They are my friends and work extremely hard in their respective areas of Speaker Wrangling/Registration and Raffle; they have my back all the time, and I could not do this job without them.

We were graced this year with another outstanding group of Al. D. Scholars—they rivaled the "dream team" of 2011! They were extremely excited, incredibly humble, warm, and hardworking. Many of them gave impromptu thank-you speeches at the shuttle stop, and all of them grabbed the Conference experience with both hands and dove in.

- Mike McInnes
- Shorty Calma
- Frankie Pistone
- Nathan Grosvenor
- Apple Murray
- Dianna Brown
- Jacob Spjut
- Jane Marie Ravelo
- Parker Webb
- Ryan Feagin

If that list seemed longer than usual, it's because it was. Thanks to JD Lorenz and Industrial Strength Body Jewelry, the funds for two additional full scholarships were made available—in Shannon Larratt's name.

Believe it or not, I have a few more



—photo by Andru Rogge

people to thank. In fact, I have more people each year approaching me to volunteer, and I hope that means that we are doing things right—that volunteering isn't seen as a burden, and that people are beginning to understand that acting in service to the organization at Conference brings about a different level of joy.

This year's love volunteers were:

- Shannon Dey
- Madicken Engström
- Brianna Belladonna
- Kelly Zeien
- Megan Naito
- Chris Smith
- Eric Grippe
- Jared Silverman
- Mark Montgomery
- Marley Cote
- Mike Araya Baker
- Seven Wolfe
- Justin Naffziger

• Shea Derifield

I would also be remiss if I didn't thank Courtney Maxwell and all of the mentors who—hopefully—made Conference a bit easier and more welcoming for our first-time attendees.

A special thanks to:

- Gus Diamond—for giving “T” the tour, and for being you.
- Sarah Wooten—for never ending hard work, showing that you're human, and for introducing me (and others) to Bouchon.
- Jezebel Voulé—for saving my ass before Conference and for making it sweat after (paddle-boats).
- Theo & Kristin—for schlepping me around Vegas.
- Jacob Spjut—who got it, truly got it, this year—and shared it with me, so I knew I was doing things right.
- Will Spencer—for stepping in

and up on a moment's notice when needed.

- Courtney Maxwell—for showing grace and strength; for showing me how to fall down, get up, make the most of it, and turn it around so fast and beautiful it made my head spin. Now that's a teacher!

And finally, every year I thank the two men in my life—Paul King and Thaddeous (“T”) Love—and this year is no different. Without these two guys I would not be the person I am, or be able to do the things I do. I was lucky enough to share part of my Conference experience with “T” this year, and I thank all of you for welcoming him, razzing him, hugging him, and making him see how wonderful it all is. (Thanks babe, for being there through all of it.) And Paul, we'll always have Paris. ☺

JOSH A. PRENTICE VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION AWARD



CAITLIN MCDAIRMID



Luis Garcia receives the Josh A. Prentice Award from APP Administrator Caitlin McDiarmid. Photo by Juan “DiabLoco” Duran



Luis Garcia (center) at the pool party with Ed Chavarria (left) and Prince Cyrus (right). Photo by Matte Erickson

I love that I get to give out the Josh A. Prentice Volunteer Appreciation Award each and every year. Unfortunately, as the years go by, there are fewer and fewer people who knew Josh and worked with him at Conference. Josh (then and now) reminds me to reach out and really find out how people are doing in their lives: to be genuine, give with the whole of your heart, smile more, and say you’re sorry when you make a mistake—and move on. He was just one person, but he still made a difference.

This year’s Josh A. Prentice Volunteer Award recipient is Luis Garcia.

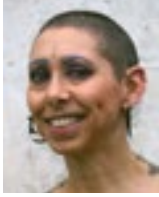
Last year, as I was walking through the banquet hall getting ready to give Gus Diamond his award, I wondered to myself who would be the next recipient. At that very moment Luis walked by me, and I immediately thought, “Jesus, why did you not think of this before?”

This is what I know about Luis Garcia:

- He’s always been super friendly towards me.
- He has an infectious smile.
- He’s an amazing instructor at Conference.
- He served as a board member, and he served honestly—with no bullshit, during a difficult time.
- He can be brutally blunt, but always gets the job done.
- He’s got pretty jewelry.
- As a volunteer, he’s stood close to me many, many, many times while we figured out how best to solve complex

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PRESIDENT'S AWARD WINNER—SARAH WOOTEN



ELAYNE ANGEL

One of my favorite things about serving as APP President is that I have the “job” of bestowing an annual award. There aren’t any formal or established criteria for me to follow, and in some ways that makes it even harder to reach a decision on the winner. That said, when I came up with the idea of naming this individual, I knew it was absolutely the right choice.

I wanted to make it clear during my brief speech at the banquet that it shouldn’t only be the super-sparkly, outgoing, attention-getting folks (such as myself) who are noticed. I wanted to recognize someone who is hard-working and highly participatory, but in a quieter, more behind-the-scenes way than some of us.

This person studied photography at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1992-93. They have been a professional piercer since 1998 and an APP member since 1999. This piercer worked in a studio as an employee for eight years, until 2006 when that business closed. They opened their own studio in 2007. This person is incredibly devoted, dedicated, consistent, and cares deeply about doing quality work.

This recipient has served admirably on the Conference Committee since it formed in 2008; she also volunteered at our annual events before that. She handles a task that is surely one of the most daunting and difficult with grace and compassion: She wrangles all of us speakers and our handouts and PowerPoint presentations so they are ready for Conference. Her patience and diligence are beyond measure. I’m a little embarrassed to admit she’s even had to goad me at times to extract my presentation materials.

Not only is this woman a wonderful piercer, a respected colleague, and a fantastic employer, she is also an amazing mother. She has aptly been described as “The APP’s best kept secret.” This woman has earned my deepest respect and is so deserving of recognition for her ef-

forts on behalf of the industry and this organization.

My selection for the 2013 recipient of the President’s Award is Sarah Wooten.

Thank you so much Sarah for all that you do. You earned this award so quietly and gently, yet thoroughly. Congratulations!

Preferring to make receiving the award a positive and pleasant experience, I did not require her to address the audience at the banquet. I am aware that this woman of many talents does not have public speaking high on her list of favorite things to do. So instead I suggested that she write something for *The Point* and here it is:



“I am feeling honored, humbled, and a little overwhelmed with having been chosen to receive the 2013 APP President’s Award. I like to joke around that I have some sort of obsession with volunteering, but the truth of the matter is that it’s one of the most rewarding aspects of having a career in this industry. I strongly believe that the APP has done an immeasurable amount of good for piercers, both for our industry and for our community. To me, the ability to give back by donating my time and en-

ergy in such a direct way is really gratifying. Being a part of the Conference Committee allows me to work closely with people I respect and admire, and to help create this wonderful educational event that benefits fellow piercers. I had no idea in advance just how much hard work goes into each year’s Conference, but the result makes the effort more than worth it.

I’m incredibly thankful for the recognition. It makes me want to work harder and to do more. I’d also like to take this opportunity to encourage others to consider volunteering in some capacity. There are so many different ways to reach out and give something back, and I promise you’ll be glad that you did.”

Well said, Sarah! ☺

CREATIVE INNOVATION AWARD WINNER JOE AMATO—SKIN MECHANICS



MIKE COONS



Joe Amato is a man who wears many hats: piercer and owner at No Hard Feelings Tattoo Gallery in Coral Springs, FL; Executive Director of DisgraceLand Entertainment; Director of Skin Mechanics Suspensions; and owner/lead fabricator for Skin Mechanics Steelworks, which is the entity that brought us this year's winner of the Creative Innovation Award.

Skin Mechanics Steelworks "Art Hook" line is a beautiful twist on the Gilson hook design. It fuses custom-shaped side plates (boat anchors with captain's wheels and brass knuckles to name a few) with gems and tricked-out anodization to create something that is both aesthetically pleasing and still safe for human suspension.

As some of you know, Joe is a bit of an introvert, so as his friend and business partner (at DisGraceLand Entertainment), I felt I would be able to get a little more out of him than some other interviewer. I sat down with Joe to hear his thoughts on winning this year's Creative Innovations Award, the future of Skin Mechanics, and the future of the suspension and piercing communities.

Mike Coons: So tell us Joe, what are your thoughts on winning this year's Creative Innovation Award at the APP Conference?

Joe Amato: My first thought now is, thank god we are doing this interview! I was so ecstatic at the banquet when they announced it that all I could do was smile, say thanks, and run back to my seat, so I left a lot unsaid.

I have so many thoughts; it is hard

to pick one thing to say. I could say “thank you” all day long, because this is a huge team effort. It is no longer just me and a machine shop: in addition to Nicola Sands, Brandon Pearce, Joshua Fisher, and Nathan Mahle, there is the big team with Marc Gagneir and Jason Coale—of Painful Pleasures—who make our titanium pins. In fact, I owe these guys a lot. (They carry our entire line of hooks and rigs, and we are going to be selling the new art hooks and art rigs exclusively through their [web-site](#)). Both the Art Hooks and the Gilson Hooks are thanks to the collective effort of all these people.

But I still can't believe this happened. Looking at my hooks in that showcase during Conference, it was hard to conceive of winning. My hooks were sitting next to my very inspirations; that was pretty cool.

MC: What was your inspiration for the new hook design?

JA: I was in the workshop, playing with a chrome-plated 12-point bolt that I had to buy to make a hook with, and I decided I wanted to do special editions of really cool artsy hooks. Some I would always offer, and some I would do like 5-pairs of and that would be it.

I thought about Jimmy Buddha's jewelry while we were making it. I love his large gemmed jewelry and his style, and I was inspired to find big crystals to put into some fresh, new designs.

We got right to drawing. That night we drafted up 6 new hooks, and in two weeks they were assembled and in my hands. I could hardly believe we got them done so fast, but the work was so exciting we went non-stop.

MC: Suspension hook design has primarily stuck to functionality over form. Why go the other direction?

JA: Even from the start (with the rigs) I have always wanted to make functional art. We have spent years



working on function, manufacturing processes, new finishes, and making the rigs more artistic, but the hooks still felt like parts. It was time. This idea will give us something new and fun to make, and add to the art of suspension.

Not to mention that there are a lot of people doing suspension photo shoots, and I think this can add a lot to that too. The possibilities are so exciting—and almost endless—from the variety of materials I can use to the different plating, anodizing, overlay, and customization options; this idea has a long way to grow.

MC: What else does Skin Mechanics produce?

JA: We make a lot of suspension gear—almost 30 different suspension rig plates, and all are available in many finishes plus anodizing options. There are custom rig plates, Gilson hooks and wrenches (these are also available in three finishes and two different materials), and now there are the art hooks and even our own cord.

But we are a growing job shop at heart; it's not just suspension gear. We make arcade cabinets and parts for them. We make a single-player, arcade-style controller that works on PS3, Xbox 360 and even retro systems. We make a lot of parts for other people, too. Some are completely finished, from bottle openers to—one my favorites—a sewing jig for a CNC sewing machine that makes Ballistics Body Armor...we make whatever comes up really.

My favorite part about what we make is that we do almost everything in house. We get to play with the processes and be artistic with them as opposed to outsourcing, where you would never gain that experience nor would you have the control to do custom work.

Who knows what type of stuff we'll make in the future; I don't want

to limit myself on what I make, because I never imagined I would be making most of the things I am now, and I love new projects.

MC: Let's shift gears here for a second. What are your thoughts on the suspension community as a whole?

JA: It is growing so much on every level: acceptance is greater, shows are getting better. Events like Dallas SusCon have evolved and education is huge deal right now. With all the people working hard to make it so, the suspension community is growing quickly, and safely, and I couldn't be happier. Suspension is evolving too, the huge regional groups are still there, but there are a lot of smaller local groups now, so a lot more people are getting involved on that end.

MC: Where do you see suspension going, and what's your place in its future?

JA: Just like the progression we have seen with tattoo and piercing shops—people go from apprentice to artist to opening a shop—in the suspension community they go from member to team leader to starting a group of their own.

This is a good thing for suspension. The information is there and everyone wants to share it with you. There are events based around learning, and many people that never would have will suspend because of it. Members of groups all over will start new groups, and in time, this cycle will start over again. It's awesome to watch because even as old as suspension is, it is still so new.

Being a supplier to the groups, I may have a unique view of this. Since September, 2012—when I announced a wholesale offer to groups—I have sent out more hooks than every year previous combined. I have spoken with so many new groups, and got them safe stuff to work with. I have also helped exist-

ing groups get more gear, which was the hope with the wholesale program in the first place.

So where do I see myself in it's future? Well, I hope that trend stays true. As this grows, we have grown with it. There is so much ground left to cover, so many areas untouched, and so much left to innovate. Suspension is the creative love of my life, so I just hope I can keep being creative with it as long as this world will let me.

MC: It sometimes gets overlooked, but you are also an accomplished body piercer. How are things at the shop these days?

JA: Things at the shop are great. No Hard Feelings Tattoo And Piercing is the best we have ever been. We are a big team, so there is always a lot of people and good vibes going around the place. There are seven tattooists, two counter people, and four piercers—Nicola, Brandon, Josh, and I—so there is a cool dynamic that I really enjoy, especially since I am used to being the only piercer at a shop.

MC: How do you find time to pierce with everything you have going on?

JA: I work seven days a week to try to fit it all in. I work weekdays at the waterjet and do steelworks at night, or visa/versa. This leaves weekends for the shop (and piercing). After working so hard all week, the shop is like heaven: air conditioning *and* awesome work in a social environment with cool clients; it's the best. Even though I am working, it feels like a few days off.

MC: I'm gonna go ahead and slip this in there. Are you going to MECCA?

JA: Without a doubt, MECCA is actually the biggest production we will be doing all summer. We at Skin Mechanics Steelworks will be sponsoring MECCA with

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TECHNICAL INNOVATION AWARD JIMMY BUDDHA—DIABLO ORGANICS



SHANNA DICKEY



Shanna Dickey: Congratulations on winning the Technical Innovator Award this year.

Jimmy Buddha: I appreciate it, and a big “thank you” to the APP community and everyone who was a part of this year’s Conference. We couldn’t be happier to bring home the Technical Innovator Award. In a craft that has been around for thousands of years, it is difficult to come up with new, innovative concepts, and to be recognized among a community of trail blazers is a great honor.

SD: How do you come up with your ideas?

JB: As a piercer for more than 15 years, I have insight into body jew-

elry function and design. When I work with people who have specific body modification needs, I love the challenge; that’s what gets me going in the morning.

SD: What is your design process?

JB: It’s really organic and depends upon the materials around me. I just start playing with a design and incorporate function for that specific material. If I like something, I run with it.

SD: Who inspires you?

JB: I get inspiration from our industry’s wide array of individuals. That’s what keeps me here: the independence and originality.

SD: What was your new technical innovation?

JB: I designed spreader hooks for JP. They were created from 28-million-year-old megalodon teeth unearthed in the deltas of the southeastern US. They took about eight months to complete, from sourcing the material to designing the piece.

SD: How are spreader hooks innovative?

JB: People with large stretched lobes want to wear heavy weight without permanently damaging their ears. Heavy weights can leave sore spots and even cause thinning of the lobe itself. The spreader hooks help to distribute the weight over a larger surface area than traditional hooks. It also turned out to be a pretty sexy design element for the piece overall.

SD: Do you create custom orders for a lot of people?

JB: I put a lot of time and energy into custom orders and try not to over-extend myself. Sometimes they can take a year to complete. A lot of the designs we create have limited availability, so we have to reshape and transform to stay current. That way even our “classic” products are limited and have a custom feel.

SD: How is working with an individual different than designing for your new lines?

JB: Everybody’s needs are different. With regular catalog designs, I have to compromise. With custom orders, I have the opportunity to really focus on their specific modification needs.

—continued on page 30

SHADOW SUSPENSION EXPERIENCE, BODY #5

—STELARC & HÅVVE FJELL

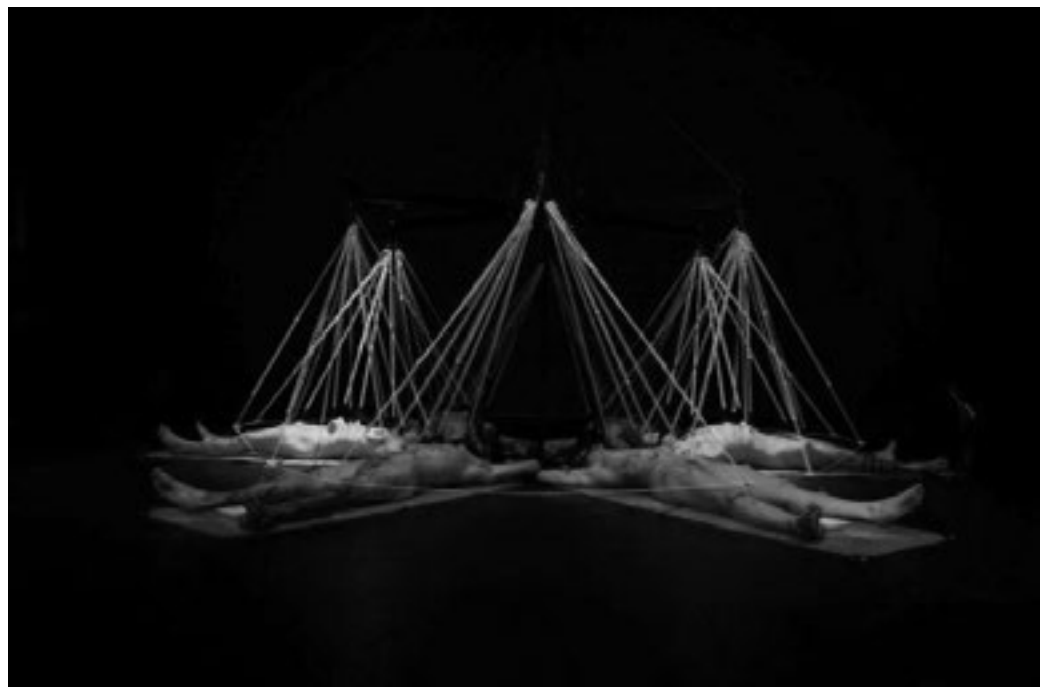


JASON PFOHL



“Anonymous and uncertain, suspended in stress, the body realizes its obsolescence. Its stretched skin becomes a gravitational landscape. The suspended and pacified body is obsolete but not yet extinct. It has desires but does not fulfill them. It feels pain but remains silent and stoic. A body that neither thinks nor shows emotions. A suspended body is a zombie body. It does not think because it does not have a mind of its own nor any mind at all in the traditional metaphysical sense. To be suspended is to be between states. To be neither one nor the other. To be in suspense is neither to be able to participate in the present nor to anticipate the outcome.”

- Stelarc



I feel my naked body's weight on the ground with ten hooks already through the skin on the front of my body. My hands grip the central wheel of the mainframe over my head, opening and immobilizing my chest. My gaze is aimed at the ceiling, focused on the central swivel system and the winch. My sight is obstructed and narrowed by the strap that will support the weight of my head when we are lifted into space, but technicians float in and out of my peripheral vision as they prepare the rigging, connecting the framework to me and to the other five bodies.

Time is temporarily suspended. Thoughts flicker through my mind. My passing memories and emotions are only a reminder that I am losing my identity as an individual and becoming a mechanical support unit for a larger entity. I repeatedly return to focus on my breathing and observe the stillness of my body lying on the ground, interrupted by cycles of trembling and an accelerated heartbeat. As the lines connecting us are tensed and adjusted, pulling the skin upwards, I collapse my weight inwards, testing the elasticity of my skin against gravity while preparing for the inevitable.

The observers in the audience who expected a performance will be disappointed; this is not a theatrical event for entertainment. There is no concern for time limitations. Instead, this is the vision of the futurist artist, Stelarc, made into reality by Havve Fjell and his technical support team of more than thirty people from nine countries. Wearing face masks and nitrile gloves while the rigging is threaded and adjusted, Havve and his crew operate with the smooth efficiency of a medical team combined with the knowledge of alpine explorers, carefully calculating weight bearing loads and the practical concerns of lifting six bodies into the air. The hush in the room, and

the rise and fall of the murmur of the audience as expectation builds, is all I know of the progress the technical crew is making. My nudity feels clinical rather than artistic: I am a specimen, an experiment, disposable. Our bodies can be replaced by other bodies that meet the same size and weight parameters. We are no longer individuals but structural elements, spokes on a wheel.

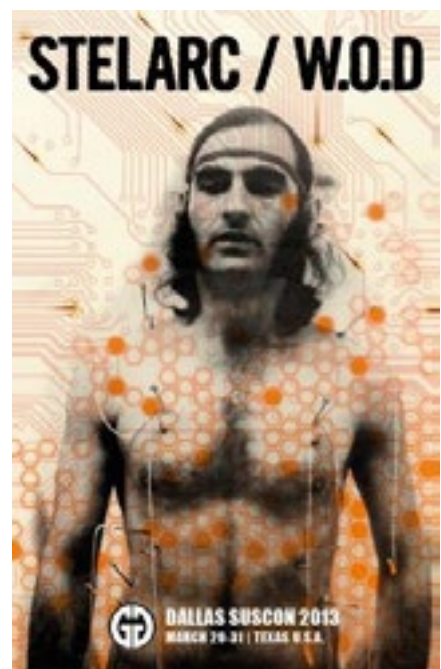
With a jolt, the amplified sound of the winch announces the bodies', our bodies', departure from the ground. The machine has no empathy and no concern for human sensation; a switch controls our position in space. I cannot see the others, as my movement and vision is constrained, but I am aware of them through the tension in the hooks in my skin. We are a single entity.

The technicians make adjustments. There is no applause.

The structure begins to spin. There is no sense of being lifted, just the amplified sound of the winch as we are raised and lowered. The jolt on the hooks and flesh is the same regardless of upward or downward movement. The shadows on the ceiling are spinning, but I cannot make out individual bodies; we have become a living-kinetic sculpture—a biomechanical support system of six bodies alternating between tension and relaxation, spinning in Earth's gravity. Time remains suspended. We spin faster and then slower; we are raised and lowered. I feel like the ghost inside the machine; deep serenity combined with awe of the sublime beauty of the constantly moving shadows in my peripheral vision.

Eventually, Stelarc's voice informs us that the experiment is almost over.

The amplified sounds of the winch announce our return to the ground with the same cold indifference that hoisted us into space. The technicians reappear to unplug the bodies from



the metal structure. The cones formed by the rigging quickly disappear, and the tension is cut. The bodies are released and the wounds from the hooks are cleaned and bandaged. We rise again to our feet, once again human.

“*SHADOW SUSPENSION* WAS A COLLABORATION WITH HÅVVE FJELL FOR THE DALLAS SUSCON 2013, ORGANIZED BY ALLEN FALKNER. IT WAS HELD AT THE LAKEWOOD THEATRE, DALLAS ON MARCH 30, 2013. 6 BODIES, 3 MALES AND 3 FEMALES, WERE SUSPENDED HORIZONTALLY FACE-UP IN A HEXAGONAL CONFIGURATION. THE BODY STRUCTURE WAS SPUN, WHILST WINCHED UP AND LOWERED DOWN AND THE SOUNDS AMPLIFIED. AN AESTHETIC SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM OF CAMERAS POSITIONED ABOVE, BELOW AND A HAND-HELD CAMERA ENABLED STREAMING OF THE PERFORMANCE FROM A MULTIPLICITY OF VIEWPOINTS. THE DURATION OF THE SUSPENSION ITSELF WAS 23 MINUTES.”

—STELARC ©

Volunteer Appreciation Award—*continued from page 22*

problems that arose at Conference. He understands the reason why we are here—and how best to serve the industry, the APP, the Conference, it's attendees and vendors.

- He's got the respect of most—if not everyone—in our community.
- He's been an APP member since 1999.
- He's able to teach pretty much anything, and has done so at the drop of a hat.
- He has a very big voice, gives big hugs, and has a big personality.
- He is blessed with an abundance of passion.

Recently he talked (on Facebook) about his favorite flower being the passion flower. He called them May-pops, which I had never heard of, but somehow made sense coming from him. I don't take his classes, but he's taught me just the same—about being a good manager, about facing difficult problems head on, about being direct when you speak, and showed me how passion gives you strength in all things.

I think everyone in the banquet hall felt that I made a good decision in honoring Luis Garcia with the Josh A. Prentice Volunteer Appreciation Award. He is just one person, but he continuously makes a difference in his studio, at Conference, and in his life.

Congratulations Luis! ☺

Jimmy Buddha Interview —*continued from page 27*

SD: What did you think of this year's fashion show?

JB: I was really excited to be a part of the fashion show. I think it was a great success and an important direction to move in for body modification, fashion, and jewelry. Everyone really stepped up to the plate, and we made each other look good.

SD: What was most memorable at this year's APP Conference?

JB: The APP Conference is a family reunion of sorts. I have built some really strong relationships over the years, and APP gives me the opportunity to visit with friends I don't otherwise get to see. It's also my chance to make connections with our new clients and continue to build those relationships.

SD: What are you currently working on?

JB: I want to make sure our designs stay fresh and relevant. We are a wholesale company and customers have a lot of different shopping options today. We want to keep our clients in the loop and remain competitive. I have assembled a great team to help with every step of the way.

SD: Tell me a little bit about your team?

JB: Jenny and Shanna are holding down the fort in Austin five days a week, always willing to answer any questions. Lauren is traveling around the States in "La Diablitita"—our little red Diablo Organics' car—and heading to a shop near you. We are really focusing on customer service and providing a good product to our clients. Our designs have been really well received, and we continue to evolve as a company and team.

SD: What do you have in store for the next year?

JB: I've been focused on creating a strong infrastructure in Austin. I feel like now I can really begin to search for different raw materials, and continue to look for new methods, techniques, designs for that next big thing. I'll let you know when I find it.... ☺

Joe Amato Interview —*continued from page 26*

free Gilson Hooks to any attendee that wants to use them. They can then buy them or give them, back. We are shooting to have 500 Gilsions, plus tools, by MECCA. Last year, when we did this sponsorship on a smaller scale, we noticed a lot more people suspending, and people suspending multiple times in the weekend, because they weren't limited by the amount of hooks they brought with them, and we are hoping to see an even greater turnout this year.

MC: I have to mention it, the new look: the hair, the beard...it kinda has a Charles Manson/crazy scientist feel. What do you have going on it that head of yours? What can we expect from the mind of Joe Amato in the future?

JA: Hahaha, I kinda feel like a crazy scientist. I have been making jokes that the hair and beard have been growing as long as I have been in the machine shop. It's kinda true. But seriously, I started growing it out because I want to attempt a beard lift with Jason the Illustrated Penguin Boy of the Freak Kings. He is about 70 pounds, and I want to suspend him at the South Florida Tattoo Expo in August before I shave it off for my 30th birthday, on August 19.

As far as what to come, the best I could hope for is that we continue to grow and acquire more machinery to keep adding things to the line. We have tons of ideas. We would like to branch out in the future as well, but all things at the right time. One thing I have learned is when you have cool ideas is that it's better to build suspense than blow the surprise. So you'll just have to wait and see. Whatever it is you can be sure we are always trying to be innovative, and we're doing it for the right reasons. ☺





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