



INK.
TATS..
DOODLES...

STEPHANIE MEE DISSECTS THE
BUSINESS OF BODY ART
IN KUTA.

PHOTOS: ANTHONY DODDS.



Diamond dogs.



Tough hands make light work

It's almost impossible to walk around Kuta and not see a slew of locals and foreigners rocking some serious ink. Bali is home to an extraordinary number of tattoo artists, and Kuta is the epicentre for ink on the island. From old school Sailor Jerry style tats to biomechanical pieces and everything in between, these are some of the best studios in Kuta to start or expand your body art collection. Yew.

MAD INK TATTOO STUDIO

Located down a small laneway off Poppies Lane II, Mad Ink Tattoo Parlour was recently named the most popular tattoo studio on the island for new school and old school designs by *Magic Ink* magazine, no small feat considering the studio is basically a tiny space with just a handful of tattooists headed by the affable artist, David.

With no advertising other than simple stickers with the studio's name, a Facebook page and an Instagram gallery, Mad Ink gained its popularity based on David's mad skills and word of mouth alone.

He says: "I treat my customers like family, and I have a lot of respect for my clients. For me it's an honour to create art on someone's skin that will be there forever. That's a challenge, but it's also my passion. I always try to create long-term relationships with my clients, and now I have many people that keep coming back for on-going pieces or additional art. This is how I plant the seeds of something good, and from there, people spread the word and more good comes back to me too."

David specialises in new traditional designs that feature big, bold outlines, and vivid colours that make the designs pop and stylized skulls, anchors, swallows and pin-up girls. Custom designs are welcome, so all you need to do is give him an idea of what you want and he can whip up a prototype for you based on your specifications. His designs recently won third place at the Magic Ink Tattoo Competition in the Fantasy Colours category, so you can

pretty much guarantee that he'll come up with something creative that you won't see on anyone else. Just be sure to book ahead, as David is always in high demand.

Poppies Lane 2 (at Tunjung Bali Inn)
T 0813 3746 1922
FB Mad Ink Tattoo

SUKU SUKU TATAU

Far from ordinary, Suku Suku Tatau is renowned for being one of the most artistic and unique tattoo studios in Bali. Run by the talented artists Pitzi Maudita and Albar Tikan, Suku Suku Tatau is the only studio on Bali that offers traditional Indonesian tribal hand-tapping tattoos as well as modern machine tattoos, body modifications like piercings, ear plugs, implants, scarification and tongue splitting, and even tribal clothing tattoo wear from Gado Gado Vienna.

Albar says: "We just want to make something different from other studios and concentrate more on the art and culture of Indonesia. From what I see right now, many people want to go back to the manual or traditional way of getting tattoos. There are still a few great artists across Indonesia who tattoo in the traditional way, but in Bali for an official tattoo studio making traditional tattoos, I think it's only me at Suku Suku Tatau." Albar will be heading off on a tour across Europe this summer to promote traditional Indonesian tattooing, and, he says, "I just want to try my best to show international people all over the world my art and culture, and I really hope this will be great for the future of Indonesia."

Suku Suku Tatau not only wins accolades for its traditional methods and high-quality work, but also for its high standards of safety and cleanliness. To maintain these standards, they have a few rules in the studio, including no kids allowed inside and only one guest per client to provide support during the tattoo or piercing session. Because of this attention to detail, slow days are rare at Suku Suku Tatau, but even so, the team here does its best to accommodate

TATTOO STYLES DECODED

OLD SCHOOL

Also known as Americana or "traditional" style tattooing, old school stems from the early 20th century and features big bold outlines in black or blue, solid colours, and simple motifs with little shading. Some common old school tattoos include swallows and sparrows, cherries, hearts, nautical stars, pin-up girls, knives, anchors and dice. The most famous old school tattoo artist was Sailor Jerry, who later went on to mentor Ed Hardy.

NEW SCHOOL

New school tattoos take some influence from old school designs, including bold outlines and bright colours, but they also draw on hip-hop, gangster and graffiti styles, cartoon-like characters, Celtic and bubble lettering and unique freehand patterns. The motifs tend to be more modern than old school designs, the colour palette is much broader, and detailed pattern work features in a lot of new school tattoos.

NEW TRADITIONAL

In recent years, there has been huge move to return to old school motifs and styles. New traditional style takes common Americana images like cherries, swallows and pin-up girls with bold outlines and colours, but infuses them with new techniques like shading, varied needle sizes and colours, new patterns and intricate linework.



Steady Eddy.



DOODLES

Doodles – as in draw whatever you want on your friend's body while drunk in charge of a tattoo gun – are in. Go random with personal messages, daft artwork and odd positions on your body, the wackier and more unconventional the better. You didn't read it here.

TRIBAL

If you've had a gander at Mike Tyson's face lately, you have a pretty good idea of what a tribal tattoo looks like. This style has exploded over the past 20 years, so tribal tattoos are a dime a dozen these days. However, the intricate linework and heavy black patterns that are distinctive of tribal tattoos originated from ancient Polynesian, Maori, African and Asian traditional tattoo patterns, and true tribal tattoos are often steeped in meaning. Purists will tell you that the only way to get a tribal tattoo is in the traditional hand-tapping method, preferably from the place where the design originates.

BIOMECHANICAL

After the release of the 1979 film *Alien*, a new tattoo style emerged called biomechanical, which featured exceptionally realistic designs that aimed to make the wearer look like there were mechanical and robotic parts underlying the skin. Biomechanical designs are typically done in black and grey shades, with an emphasis on detailed shading and fantasy-like 3D designs that feature bones and joints replaced with gears, pistons and hydraulics.

all clients. The best way to ensure you get an appointment is to contact them ahead of time via their website or Facebook page.

Jl. Nakula No 99 x, Seminyak
T 0815 9691475
www.sukusukutatau.com

SHOTONK TATTOOS

Ever since he was in junior high school, Gede Shotonk knew he wanted to be a tattoo artist. Luckily for him, a friend noticed his unique talent for drawing intricate designs, and lent Shotonk some equipment and his skin to practice on. Although Shotonk admits that his first designs were less than spectacular, he persevered, gradually improved and eventually went on to open his first tattoo studio in Singaraja. Soon after, he made the move to Kuta and worked for a number of high-profile studios, before opening Shotonk Tattoos.

Shotonk Tattoos quickly gained notoriety for the incredibly tight and detailed designs that Shotonk was producing along with talented tattooist Pa'udy. The artists specialise in realist pieces that include black and white Buddha and Ganesha pieces, Japanese geishas, Balinese barongs and temples, fantasy pieces and portraits. In fact, their work has become so popular that Shotonk now has two other studios in the Kuta area besides the original studio on Jalan Majapahit. If you like Shotonk's style and are looking for some inspiration before you go under the gun, pick up a copy of his book, *Tattoo Art & Culture: Collection Tattoo Design Book* by Shotonk.

Shotonk Tattoos 1
Jl. Majapahit 63, Kuta
T0361 758793

Shotonk Tattoo Family
Jalan Legian Kuta Bali
(in front of Mamas Restaurant), Kuta
T 0819 36552965

Shotonk Tattoos 3
Poppies I, Gang Bedugul
(in front of Kuta Townhouses)
www.shotonktattoos.com

IBUD TATTOO

With award-winning artists who have been killing it in tattoo competitions for categories as broad as Realist Colour, Black and Grey and Oriental work since 2006, it's pretty hard to dispute that Ibud Tattoo is one of the top players in the Kuta tattoo scene. Owner and artist Ibud has over 14 year's experience, so he is proficient in all styles of ink, but his passion and specialty lies in freehand tattoos. Together with resident artist Wirama, who recently nailed the number-one spot at the Bandung Body Art Festival, Ibud strives to create striking designs that fit the style and personality of the wearer.

Ibud says: "In my opinion, what makes our shop awesome is that we have really friendly staff who are responsible and really take care of our customers, we work in categories and to our customers needs, we always give a friendly price, and we have the equipment to support our work. For example, we have a scanner, printers, two computers with full Internet access and good programs to edit pictures. And of course, we keep our shop and equipment super clean."

Jalan Padma Utara St (Near Jayakarta Hotel)
T 0361 754162
www.ibud-tattoo.com

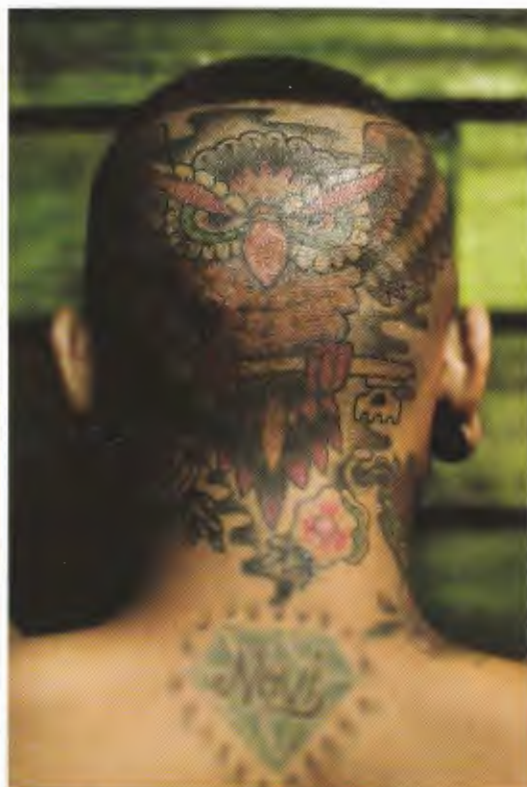
BALINESIA 2 TATTOO STUDIO

No matter what your style is, Balnesia has you covered, as the heavily inked team here can do pretty much any design under the sun. The two main artists, Wayan Suartana (Tagel) and Ibud Nyoman, each have over 12 years of experience under their belts and are seasoned pros at intricate blackwork and tribal pieces, shading, colour tats and cover-ups. There are also artists on call who specialise in realist pieces, portraits, Japanese style, old school, new school and new traditional tattoos.

With a central location on Poppies Lane II, Balnesia sees no shortage of clients seeking creative bespoke tattoos and body piercings. Wayan Tagel says, "Ninety per cent of our clients are from Australia and most of them are young guys, but lately lots of women are starting to get big tattoos in our shop too."



Tats in the shaping bay.



Body, mind and skull candy.

Wayan credits Balnesia's success not only to the superb artwork, but also to the studio's relaxed atmosphere and safe environment. He says: "Our clients at Balnesia are our utmost priority, therefore our hygiene and cleanliness is second to none. We pride ourselves on giving clients the highest standard of work with all new equipment and new needles used at all times. Also, with two shops operating now, we can concentrate even more on quality as our prime concern."

Balnesia Tattoo Studio 1
Poppies Lane 2 (In front of Gora Beach Inn)
T 0361 764 762

Balnesia Tattoo Studio 2
Jalan Pantai Kuta (Turn right @ Bemo corner)
T 0361 767 394

www.balnesiatattoo.com

BALI DREAMZ

Bali Dreamz is the brainchild of Songcat, who got his start as a traditional Balinese painter in Sukawati, Gianyar. In 1994, Songcat shifted his creative focus to tattooing, and after honing his skills for many years, he opened Bali Dreamz in 2009 with the help of some good Australian friends. Today, his artistic talents lie in freehand tattoo designs catering to his clients' needs. Whether it's Celtic or tribal pieces, full arm sleeves, detailed biomechanical work, portraits, old school or black and grey pieces that you're looking for, Songcat ensures that each and every person who gets inked at his studio leaves with a unique piece that holds its own as a piece of art.

Step into Bali Dreamz Tattoo Studio, and the place exudes professionalism. From the air-conditioned multi-level space to the chilled out reception lounge, the glass-partitioned tattoo room with fully adjustable hydraulic treatment beds and the separate sterilisation space with its own autoclave, you know you're in for a superior experience. No detail is spared here, as the team has gone out of their way to make guests as comfortable as possible. Take, for example, the padded massage-style chair for lengthy back tattoos or the 21-inch TV with wireless

headphones to take your mind of the buzzing of the needles. Plus, Bali Dreamz uses only Eternal Ink and has over 50 colours to choose from, so no piece is too detailed or vivid.

Jl.Wana Segara, Tuban Kompleks
Pertokoan Wana Segara Kav.8
T 0361 763178
www.balidreamzattoo.com

PARADISE INK TATTOO PARLOUR

Located on a quiet laneway just off the main drag in Kuta, Paradise Ink Tattoo Parlour is an oasis of calm, cleanliness and comfort. Leather sofas await in the reception room, where you can chat with owner Tirtha Ambara and the three experienced and helpful artists about custom and ready-made designs. Once you're set up on the comfortable massage-style table, your artist will show you the sealed, disposable needles and get you to check the packaging and expiry dates to ensure you are getting only new and hygienic equipment. Paradise Ink also uses only the best quality inks and pigments, so your tattoo will stay vibrant and crisp well after the ink dries.

Tirtha says, "Our talented artists do all kind of designs, such as portraits, biomechanical, cover-ups, etc., and they've received many awards from many tattoo conventions such as third place for Best of the Day Tattoo in the 2nd Tattoo Convention in Rudesheim am Rhein, Germany and first place in the 1st Tattoo War convention in Yogyakarta, to name a few. In my opinion, Paradise Ink is well known for the great job we do, our cleanliness and our relaxed and friendly vibe."

Jl. Legian, Cempaka Lane #1, Kuta
T 081 23607362
www.paradise-ink.com

BALI SHADOW TATTOO AND BODY PIERCING STUDIO

Opened in 2007, Bali Shadow gets rave reviews for its spotless studio, first-class American inks and stellar designs by award-winning

ORIENTAL/ASIAN/JAPANESE

Oriental-style tattoos draw their influence from Irezumi, the Japanese art of tattooing that dates back to the woodblock art of the Edo period. The designs are usually flat and 2D, but feature animals, people or mythological characters interwoven with repeating patterns in the background. Oriental tattoos can be inked in simple black and grey tones or bright vibrant colours, and popular motifs include cherry blossoms, koi fish, dragons, geishas, samurai and tigers set against waves, clouds or flowing black linework.

BLACK AND GREY

Just like the name suggests, black and grey work is created using a simple palette of black ink mixed with diluted water to produce deep black lines and light grey shadows. The shading is executed with a range of needle sizes to create depth and texture. Black and grey tattoos are often extremely detailed and realistic, and can include portraits, fantasy themes and religious images.

FLASH TATTOOS

The term 'flash tattoos' does not actually refer to a specific style, but rather to the pre-made designs that you find in booklets or on boards at tattoo studios. Although a common practice in many tattoo studios across the world, many contemporary tattoo artists shy away from flash tattoos and prefer to make custom designs for their clients, as they believe that there is a lack of passion in copying a pre-made tattoo design from a book.

DEUS EX MACHINA
TACO-N-TAT TUESDAYS

For some, the idea of tequila, tacos and tattoos sounds like trouble waiting to happen, but it all comes together and makes sense at Deus Ex Machina's Taco-n-Tat Tuesdays nights. As the name suggests, every Tuesday it's all about stuffing your face with south of the border grub and grog and getting inked at Deus' super chill space in Canggu.

Grab a Taco Platter for 55K and treat yourself to two different kinds of tacos including chicken, beef, pork, fish or veggie. Pump yourself up with a few shots of Jose Cuervo or a Cuervo Margarita for just 50K a pop, and when you've sufficiently numbed your nerve endings, follow the sound of the buzzing tattoo gun to get your free tattoo. Yep, that's right — tattoos are free on Taco-n-Tat Tuesdays. There are only two rules:

1. Have your art handy and ready to go,
- and 2. Your tat should take no longer than 15-20 minutes from start to finish.

Taco-n-Tat Tuesdays takes place every Tuesday from 5pm to 10pm at the Deus Temple of Enthusiasm.

Deus Ex Machina
Jalan Batu Mejan No.8, Canggu
0361 3683395
id.deuscustoms.com ▲

artists Abenk and Nyoman. Abenk specialises in freehand designs and is especially skilled at doing realist pieces with minute details and shading. Both Abenk and Nyoman excel at drawing and sketching custom tattoos and creating original designs that are adapted to suit the part of the body they are inked on and the personality of the wearer.

According to Abenk, the majority of the clients at Bali Shadow hail from Australia and Europe, and they are drawn to the studio for its solid reputation for cleanliness, good hospitality and reasonable prices. He says: "Most of our customers like oriental style tattoos, and we can definitely do that, but we can also take anything that comes our way." The combined portfolios of the artists at Bali Shadow are impressive to say the least, with an incredibly varied range of designs, including Maori and Polynesian works, Balinese script combined with mythological characters, intricate Chinese dragons and colourful fantasy pieces.

Dhyana Pura Street 2200, Seminyak
T 081 805411155
www.balishadowtattoo.com

GOLDFINGER TATTOO STUDIO

Opened in 2009, Goldfinger Studio is a temple of black and grey and realism designs and old school motifs freehand sketched and inked by skilled artist Koko. No stranger to the tattoo scene, Koko has been cleaning up at tattoo competitions on the island, with his most recent achievements being first place in the Old School/New School Colour category at the 2012 Magic Ink Tattoo Contest and 2nd place in the Fantasy Colour and Fantasy Black & Grey category at the 2013 Magic Ink Tattoo Contest.

The Goldfinger studio may not be massive, but what it lacks in size, it makes up for in cleanliness, class and professionalism. Enter the guest reception room and you get a taste of Koko's style from the detailed designs framed and adorning the walls. The tattoo studio itself is set up for comfort with a reclining treatment table, TV, A/C, and a proper medical sterilizer to sanitize the brand-new needles and

equipment. The studio also uses only Intenz and Kuro Sumi ink, so you can be sure that your colours will stay strong and fresh, no matter what tattoo style you choose.

Jl. Melasti, Gang Lebak Bena (beside Sayang Maha Merta Hotel), Kuta
T 0819 99065028

HELLMONK TATTOO STUDIO

Hellmonk Tattoo Studio may be a tad off the beaten path from Kuta, but it deserves a mention because owner and artist Marmar Herayukti has been making huge waves in the tattoo scene in Bali for quite some time now. Winner of the Magic Ink Tattoo Contest 2012 in the Biomechanic Colour category, this artist extraordinaire is the master of fantasy pieces, traditional Balinese mythological characters, Japanese motifs and detailed shading and colour.

After working at some of the top tattoo studios in south Bali, Marmar set up Hellmonk Tattoo Studio in his house in Denpasar. Inside, exposed wooden plank walls sport the artist's drawings, softly lit shelving houses kitsch sculptures and figurines, and a comfy couch in back makes for a plush place to go over designs with the artist.

As the first tattoo artist to be interviewed on Indonesia's first ever tattoo reality show, *Travelink*, Marmar says: "For me a studio is like a home, a place to comfort and a place to find new ideas. This is also where I can entertain guests, including clients." After one visit, it's easy to see why his clients rave about the chilled out space that feels more like a living room than a noisy tattoo shop, and of course, Marmar's excellent work.

Jl. Mayjen Soetoyo Gang 5,
No.16, Denpasar ▲

