

The pleasure & the pain

Erica Haas, a graduate student in anthropology, displays her back tattoos. Haas is writing her thesis on body modification.

PHOTOGRAPH: Pat James

Tattoos: what was once labeled a trend is now becoming standard

By APRIL TOWERY
THE BATTALION

A 21-year-old walks down the street. He notices mothers pulling their children a little closer. Is it because he was on last night's episode of America's Most Wanted? No, he is one of the many Americans with permanent graffiti on his body, the crazy thing we call tattoos.

The person described is Bryan Barrs, who proudly displays nine tattoos, including dragons on his right arm, a lion on his left arm, tribal designs on his arms and legs, a cross on his back and "corny ones" on his ankles.

Although Barrs said he displays his tattoos for personal expression, this was not the case three years ago.

"When I first got one, I just thought they were so cool," he said.

When he got his first tattoo, Barrs said his parents "flipped out," but they have gotten used to his body art. The stares he gets on the streets are from strangers.

"I just think that they shouldn't look at the outside of somebody," Barrs said. "They should get to know them first. I think it's some-

one's personal choice."

Although many students may worry about what their parents think, as well as the health risks, Michael C., a tattoo artist at Tattoo Consortium, said it is a safe process.

C., a 1985 graduate of Texas A&M, attended a medical seminar last April where he learned that no cases of HIV transmission have been reported from a reputable tattoo parlor in the United States.

"Everything is regulated now," he said.

C. has been tattooing for 16 years, and even gave himself tattoos on his arms.

"It's living art," he said. "It literally comes alive as I do it."

C. said 80 percent of his clientele is students, and 70 percent is female. C. said he had an unusual experience with a female client.

"I had a student come in and get a tattoo and put it on her credit card," he said. "She came back in and wanted me to cover it up and fix it because she was afraid her dad would see it. I was like, 'Oh, that's good, now your dad will see it when it shows up on his credit card bill twice.'"

Although Tattoo Consortium does not remove tattoos, the em-

ployees are sometimes asked to cover homemade tattoos.

Body piercing is another trend that is becoming popular among students, but C. said tattoos will not go out of style.

"Tattoos have become a standard," he said. "They're becoming socially acceptable. Fifteen years ago, they were for men in the military or motorcyclists. That's not the case anymore."

But tattoos are still considered by many to be socially unacceptable in the workplace, C. said.

"My first wife had one arm sleeved, and she couldn't get a job at 7-11," he said. "She's certified in accounting."

Diana Houghton, a senior environmental design major, has had little negative feedback about her two tattoos — except from her parents.

"I believe my dad's words were, 'That's white trash,'" she said. "But they've gotten pretty used to it. My dad still looks at it and tries to rub it off sometimes."

Houghton's tattoos are on her foot and her back. She is already planning her third for the base of her spine.

"I know I like it (getting tattoos), and I wanted to do it again," she said. "My next one will be a Celtic

knot — I'm planning on about \$200 worth of work."

Houghton said her tattoos are special to her because she designs them herself.

"The first one was a picture out of a book," she said. "The last two were ones I designed. It's a little bit of me. I don't want anyone to have the same thing."

Few people would want to sit through Houghton's second tattoo, which is on the top of her foot.

"I had a friend on my right and a friend on my left," she said. "I was squeezing their hands. I bit one of my friends. And I hyperventilated. My friends were like, 'She's giving birth to a cow.'"

There are people who make the argument that one's body is a temple, and Houghton said she respects their opinions.

"People who have tattoos know they're fun," Houghton said. "My body's a temple, and I'm going to decorate it."

After all, tattooing brings pleasure (and sometimes pain) to many people in Bryan-College Station.

"I'm a perfectionist by nature," C. said. "This is the perfect job for a perfectionist — there's no eraser."

Psychic hotlines fail to provide genuine advice



Columnist
RHONDA REINHART
Junior journalism major

If you have questions about love, money, career or past lives, then for \$3.99 a minute, a soft-voiced, slow-talking psychic friend can give you the answers. Whether or not the answers are accurate depends on how well you are able to apply the vague, generic responses to specific areas of your life.

Yes, that is right. You no longer have to wait outside a carnival tent to have a woman wearing flashy jewelry and heavy make-up stare into a crystal ball and tell your fortune to know what lies ahead for you in the future. Now the answers are just a 900 number away, and there are several numbers from which to choose.

The August issue of Mademoiselle lists more than 30 psychic hotlines in its classified ads section, and daytime television is not without its share of commercials about how to contact a psychic partner.

There are love psychics, pet psychics, Spanish-speaking psychics and "psychics who care." One hotline will even allow you to talk with two psychics at once, and almost all of the ads describe their psychics as real, authentic, genuine, accurate or gifted. There is even an organization called the Association of Professional Psychics that is registered with the United States government. The ad claims these psychics are "certified for ethics, professionalism and proven psychic ability." They will even provide you with free referrals to certified psychics in your area.

The ads fail to explain the concept of certification, but perhaps there is some sort of paranormal obstacle course prospective psychics must complete to become certified.

Some of the hotlines offer free gifts. One call to a psychic can get you a free astrological chart, a deck of tarot cards or even a Brazilian power crystal (which from the picture on the commercial looks more like a piece of quartz attached to a string). And believe it or not, this power crystal has a \$24.99 value.

Yeah, maybe in Brazilian money.

A few of the hotlines promise that the first two minutes of your psychic reading will be free. These two minutes include a recording welcoming you to the wonderful world of psychic friends that will give you instructions on how to pay by credit card and the time you are kept on hold waiting to be connected to the next available psychic. The recording also advises that if you are under 18, you must hang up immediately. No doubt, an effective deterrent to minors.

Generally, your free psychic reading will consist of about 45 seconds. The marketing technique of giving customers the first two minutes free is almost like that of the drug dealer who gives a teen-ager a few doses of a substance at no charge, gets him hooked and then has a regular customer.

Although psychic hotlines may be a somewhat recent development, the idea of psychic phenomena dates back to much earlier times.

Both phrenology, relating sections of the human head to ability and personality, and palm-reading can be traced to the ancient Greeks. It seems that society's preoccupation with wanting to know what the future holds crosses eras and cultures.

Theodore Roosevelt is said to have consulted his horoscope frequently, and in 1932, two astrology magazines appeared on newsstands. Today, almost everyone knows what sign of the zodiac they were born under, many newspapers publish daily horoscopes and Chinese restaurants hand out fortune cookies.

There may be some truth to the existence of psychic ability. Many people claim to be psychics, and some of these people have many supporters.

Carl Payne Tobey, author of "Astrology Primer For the Millions," writes that in parts of the Orient, astrology is accepted by almost everyone.

The authenticity of psychics and their various methods remains debatable, however, the psychic hotline is becoming one of the major money-making schemes of the '90s.

It seems anyone who claims to be able to predict your future by phone from hundreds of miles away should be questionable. Maybe that Brazilian power crystal is more of a consolation prize than a free gift.

Primus release lives up to expectations

Primus
Brown Album
Interscope Records
★★★★1/2 (out of five)

By KEITH MCPHAIL
THE BATTALION

You have to give Primus points for consistency if nothing else. However, Les Claypool and the boys deserve credit for a whole lot more.

Its fifth full length disc, *Brown Album*, lives up to the high expectations that Primus fans have, as the band returns in classic form. Fans of the band need not hesitate in picking up this disc. They will not be disappointed.

The musical oddity that is Primus is back with this four-and-a-half star installment to its already impressive catalog. *Brown Album* can

be described as crystal meth on wax. It may be awkward if one is unfamiliar with it. But those who like it, swear by it. The difference being *Brown Album* is twice as addictive as anything ever to come out of a speed lab.

The years of touring have resulted in a more flowing, coordinated band. While Primus is fundamentally a bass driven vehicle for the strange and bizarre stylings of front man Claypool, *Brown Album* finds Primus a more balanced band than on previous LPs. Claypool, who also engineered the album, credits the lighthearted attitude of percussionist Brain for the smooth flow of *Brown Album*.

The 1997 version of Primus sees the return of Brain on drums. Brain, a member of Primus in the late '80s, left the band when he broke his ankle skateboarding just before Primus was to open for Faith No More. Since Primus could not afford to miss such a gig at that time, members were forced to find a replacement,

Tim Alexander. Recent events gave an opportunity for Brain to regain his slot on the skins for Primus. His studio presence freed Primus to record in a jam session atmosphere.

These developments noted, fans will be pleased to discover that differences between *Brown Album* and previous recordings are subtle. This is vintage Primus.

Larry LaLonde provides his always impressive and timely guitar work with precision.

Claypool's lyrics are strange and twisted prose as always. For example, there are the unusual lyrics of "Duchess and the Proverbial Mind Spread." Claypool sings, "Swimmin', I see myself a treadin' water / I see no signs of other people / There's a heron up above me / I lay back and spread my mind."

The flowing, bass-driven melodies engulf the listener with a feeling that will alter the perspective of any right thinking individual. Like all Primus albums, *Brown Album* takes some getting used to for one to truly appreciate.



Primus

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All students, faculty and staff are invited to attend a public meeting to hear a briefing on the recent legislative action that designates the General Use Fee (GUF) as Tuition (this briefing relates to the GUF increase approved in January 1997)

Friday, August 1, 1997

9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Memorial Student Center, Room 292

Office of the President, Texas A&M University