



## AUTHENT/INK

**Inked Australia's resident tattoo advisor Kian Forreal on the protection of tattooing.**

**HOLY SHIT WAS I ASLEEP OR WHAT?** So while I was keeping my head down and staying busy with tattooing here in Sydney a lot changed with tattooing around the world! I just got back from the London Tattoo Convention in the UK, which except for last year I have attended annually since its inception in 2005. This year was my first actually participating in the show and tattooing the entire weekend in my own booth representing Authent/Ink. The show is put on by Miki from Tattoo Life and is so professionally run, and I will say respectfully run, that it was a pleasure in every sense of the word to be a part of the show. What an amazing convention it was! I know that I frequently rant on about this and that and the negatives of tattooing – too many shit artists, tattooing being too mainstream etc... and although in London all that mainstream bullshit stuff was present, as it is everywhere, there was also the other side of it – the fantastic talent and dedication of real tattooers, real tattoo artists and just badass classical artists making all sorts of mind-blowing art! I mean, it has exploded, and it looks to me like the tattooers are taking it back from the charlatans, making tattooing real again. No fucking piercing, scarring or any of that stuff that has nothing to do with tattooing, just great tattoo art. I was also blown away by the amount of supply companies and the level of R&D that has gone into new products. Gloves in every colour of the rainbow (for people who care), a variety of disposables that makes life easier for the artists, machines of every type and configuration, power supplies, inks and on and on... tattooing has become big business globally. And finally it's being made by artists for artists in the western world once again and not just all shit out of Chinese factories for the lowest price. I personally like to pay top dollar for good kit, best of everything for my gear and for the wellbeing of my clients. I also like to support the artists out there putting out books by buying original copies and not just bootleg editions printed in Asia. It makes a difference. No one likes to be ripped off and we all put hard work into this.

So back to the show. I left on the Tuesday before convention weekend and flew 23 hours to Heathrow from Sydney. I managed to sleep quite a bit and I have my routine that lessens the effect of jetlag. After the flight it was only two hours in the London underground to the hotel. Fuck, right? That's what you want after being in a sardine can in the sky – to be in a sardine can in the ground a kilometre under the city. No fun. Of course, I was also too early to check in to the hotel so I just chilled in the hotel café and ate as much fresh fruit from the buffet as I could. Once settled I pretty much just slept most of the morning and early arvo and finished the day with a visit to a legendary London tattoo shop, Lal Hardy's New Wave Tattoo. Real old-school shop in North London that's been around for over 25 years. It's like a museum in there. So much tattoo history, and Lal is an awesome guy! Finished the day drinking wine and trying to sleep.

Thursday was all about setup and orientation. Registered to get our passes for the booth, got the little welcome kit, tested our electronics for safety and then off to make the booth functional and look inviting. At this convention, which is run by tattoo shop owners' themselves, the needs of the artists were heavily considered, and because it was an international show and many artists were traveling from far and wide to attend, even the little things were seen to. Something as simple as where to get paper towel an hour before the show starts, if you arrive late, can really mess up your schedule, but in London, the organisers supplied all that – paper towel, bottles of water, plastic wrap, razors, Vaseline... they really made it easy for us. Other organisers should take note.

Surprisingly enough, Thursday night ended with drinking in the hotel, and as many artists were staying near the show it made for festive times. Not too festive though, as we were here to work and not get messy on the first night.

I had a big weekend ahead work-wise. I had taken pre-bookings for most of the show and really had to perform. My Friday was an all-day session on one client, who flew into London from Kazakhstan to get a half sleeve traditional koi tattoo from me, similar to the one I have posted on YouTube. The convention only allowed 10 hours of tattooing on Friday and Saturday, and seven on Sunday. So it was a race against the clock, to be sure. As soon as the show opened on Friday and people started pouring in I was already free-handing on the background to the sleeve and getting my gameface on. Nine hours later I



looked up when the tattoo was done and the show was almost closed for the day. I didn't see a thing other than what was right in front of my face. Mission success in any case, and my client was super happy. Eat, drink and sleep.

Saturday was even busier, but again, I was booked in with one client to tattoo a koi-dragon traditional half sleeve in one session. This one was far more complicated than the previous day. Again, head down for 10 hours and when I looked up the tattoo was done and so was the day! Mission completed again, but my back was killing me from the crappy chairs, and my brain was somewhat fried. Thank fuck I didn't book a third all-day session, it would have put me over the line. We drank a lot on Saturday night to unwind... really needed it!

Sunday was a walk in the park by comparison. All I had booked in was some script on the inner arm and some interest from people who wanted to walk up and do more script. Easy peasy Sunday arvo, did lettering all day and had fun and enough time to walk around and reconnect with old friends and make new ones. Awesome. Suffice it to say we all partied 'til dawn at the hotel and woke up feeling worse for wear. My only mission at this point was to get to Terminal 3 at Heathrow and sit in a chair for 23 hours for the ride home. I managed this and slept most of the way, including the cab ride to the airport! Woke up in Sydney and it was great to be home. Forty-six hours of flying to work 27 hours... if that's not love I don't know what is! See you next year London! 🍷

*Kian Forreal is a professional tattoo artist with 18 years international experience who specialises in traditional Japanese tattoo work and script lettering. He has worked all over the world and has studied under some of the leading tattoo artists of today. He is based in Sydney at Inner Vision Tattoo in Surry Hills. His website is: [www.kianforreal.com](http://www.kianforreal.com) For information on Laser Tattoo Fading and Removal please visit [www.fadeyourtattoo.com](http://www.fadeyourtattoo.com)*

