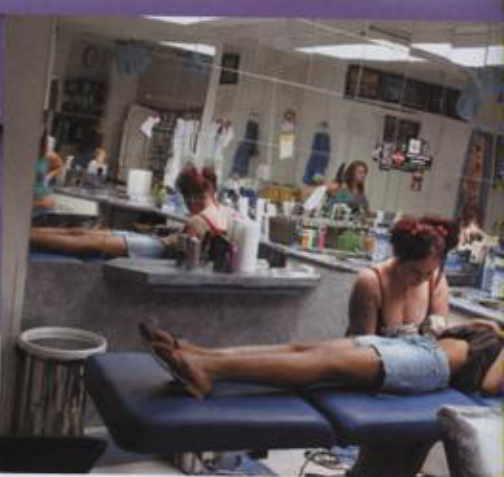


# ALZONE



If you have been to any of the UK conventions in the last few years, you can be forgiven for not noticing a quiet, unassuming guy, head down, working his socks off, turning out some superb B&G demonic work and well as some blinding colour work to boot. Alan from Alzone Tattoos in Gloucester has been working the convention scene for quite a few years now, picking up an armful of trophies along the way. Skin Deep decided to do its best Dr Foster impression (You know, Dr Foster went to Gloucester etc – Oh, never mind) to find out what made this hard workingman tick...

#### In Alan's own words:

'I have been here for the last five years, I started off seven years ago in the back of a hair salon which was a good stepping stone to start with but I had a bit of a falling out with the proprietor and I wanted to do my own thing, so I moved here and since then I haven't looked back. I couldn't have done it without some help from Gary Whitman He was a great help from day one, pointing me in the right direction.

I'm basically self-taught, and I've never done an apprenticeship, I guess I'm just one of the lucky ones. There have been a lot of people who have influenced me and helped me over the years, whom I owe a big thanks to all. I was a slow starter when it came to tattooing. It took me two years or so to before I was starting to get there. I have seen some artists recently after six or seven months turning out some superb work. I wouldn't say I'm the best

in the world by any means, but I feel that I have improved hugely after being worked on by Paul Booth last August. I have learnt more from Paul than from any other artist. He's been a real guidance for me, I speak to him on a regular basis and he has been just so helpful. I had my first tattoo at the age of fifteen by Bob Moore from Mantra many years ago'.

Alan is a tireless worker, covering hundreds of miles to virtually every show in the UK in the last seven years. 'I won my first award at my first convention which was a real boost to my confidence. I have won two awards every year since so far. I love working the shows as I feel that I come away with a little more knowledge each time.'

Alan isn't a man to sit idly doing nothing. He freely admits that he needs to be doing something with his hands. After doing a couple of art courses, he decided that his path was set on the metal work/engineering from school. 'If I wasn't painting or drawing, I was sawing, bending and welding bits of metal together.' After school, Alan did his share of dead-end jobs, working for unappreciative bosses, so he ended up not wanting to work for somebody else.

Having been asked to do some designs for other artists and friends wanting a one-off design, Alan progressed from the pen to the tattoo machine. So during a bout of unemployment he started tattooing. Things progressed from there and by the time he

opened up his first shop, he had a list of clients queuing up for Alan's own particular style of work.

'Believe it or not my interest in tattoos first came about after seeing the singer Marc Almond. I saw a picture of him in something like Vogue magazine and saw his full sleeve, which just blew me away. From then on I wanted some ink.' At this point Alan befriended Bob Moore of Mantra Tattoos in Cheltenham and he inspired him immensely. 'I met a girl by the name of Kelly and she showed me a whole new way of using black and I took this on board. She also helped me out with some designs too.'

Alan earned quite a name for himself with his black and grey work, being inspired by the likes of Bob Tyrrell and Paul Booth. Again, Alan's horror work has come from his love of all things macabre. 'I think there are some superb artists in this country, the likes of Spacey, Andy Morrison, Jason Butcher and others. I think we are all inspired by each other but we don't like to say it, we just bounce off each other, all improving as we go.'

Alan's main influence is Paul Booth as he says; 'I know everyone says Paul Booth is their main influence but he really is a pioneer in the black and grey field of tattooing. He has perfected his style to a point where you can't see any dots when he's, using a magnum (type of needle set-up) for his needlework. I can honestly say I have learnt so much just by