

ART ON THE EDGE



STAFF PHOTOS BY HILL DWISLER

Art of Tattooing: Dan Collins lays in an outline for a tattoo on Dean Haworth's back.

Skin serves as his canvas

BY LINDA ANN CHIONIN
SPECIAL WRITER

From Pegasus the winged horse of Greek mythology to American eagles, beautiful women and dragons, artist "Tatu Dan" Collins has captured them all on skin.

"If you can imagine it, it can be illustrated on skin," Collins said. "Death figures, butterflies, nipples on male burn victims, I've done them all. I've even done permanent eyeliner and lips."

Now in his second decade of tattooing Collins, who has no formal art training except for high school art classes, estimates he has done more than 50,000 tattoos. He creates his own designs in four basic styles: tribalism, traditional, American and Japanese.

"I prefer American fine line, black and gray work; it's more detailed," the Canton Township resident said. "You get a lot more realism out of it."

The art of tattooing hails back to the Egyptian times. Tattoos found on mummies date back to around 2000 B.C. Polynesians used tattoos to denote social standing and for purposes, erotic and decorative. For New Guinea women, tattoos were a sign of beauty.

Doctors, lawyers, officers of the law, musicians, bikers, burn victims, and even dermatologists have walked away with body art by Collins. Many are repeat customers. Some of them are new customers, needing cover-ups of bad designs done by other tattoo artists.

"Half of all the collectors I tattoo are women," he said. "I think women wear them to be sexy. Men wear them to be macho."

"You could ask a thousand different people and get a thousand answers. They're all art collectors. It's a need to express themselves. It's often been called the signature of the soul."

Collins said his mother knew he'd eventually become an artist, when he began drawing at two years old. At age 13, Collins created his first tattoo in Eskimo fashion on himself using a train, a thread and India ink. By 15, he had his first professional tattoo. After serving in the U.S. Marine Corps, he lived for 5 1/2 years in Hawaii learning the art and practicing it.

"There's no Gemini School of Tattooing," he said. "You learn by apprenticing and picking the artist's brain whose doing it."

Collins has worked at several area tattoo parlors and for two years had his own shop, "Tattoos by Tatu Dan" in Taylor.

"It's the most personal art form there is, to have your canvas smile back at you and say thanks; it looks great," he said. "A sculptor doesn't get that, an airbrush artist doesn't."

Collins has created a collage of beautiful women running the entire length of Dean Haworth's left arm. "I like the way it looks on my body," said the Allen Park resident who got his first tattoo in 1986. "I'm into the art of it. I'm into the beauty of it. I have it on my walls, but I have it on my body, too."

Haworth says his tattoos serve as a good indicator of the types of people he meets. "People have a different attitude when you have tattoos," he said. "There's a stigma attached or bigotry against people with tattoos."

In the last six months, Collins' art has taken on a new format — that of ink and colored pencil on paper. In November his works on paper were exhibited as part of a group show at Nelson's Gallery in Livonia. Viking girls once found only on skin, now smile back from behind glass. Many of the works are takeoffs on tattoos he designed after woodblock prints by Japanese artist Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797-1861) for the epic novel "The Water Margin Heroes."

"The detailing he puts in, you just don't see this art every day. There is history behind it. It's been around hundreds of years," said gallery director Laura Hardy.

Collins said he's grateful to Hardy for the opportunities she's given him and his art.



Collins' work: Pen. There's even a portrait of and ink on paper. Haworth's mother.

Live performance is the 'cure'

There was a time when The Incurables played at any place that would let them, when they were labeled as playing hard rock and oldies. Times have changed and the group has carved out a niche for its high energy sounds.

BY KYLE GREEN
SPECIAL WRITER

The Incurables they are, immortals they are not.

The four-member group which prides itself on its high energy performances, usually obtains wounds as a result.

"We've acquired a number of bodily injuries just from adrenaline and running into walls," said Pat Kelly, guitarist/vocalist.

"I jumped off stage, I miscalculated . . . and I ran into a mirrored wall . . . I came up with two permanently scarred knees," bassist Ray

STREET BEATS

Lawson said with a laugh. "I hit a ceiling before, I misjumped one time and kind of hit it."

"I don't want to give you the impression we are slimmers or anything or we smash our equipment type stuff," said Kelly. "It's all just internal adrenalin, opposed to externally produced, this is all self-induced-preduced."

The power they generate when performing has been captured onto a seven-single cassette, "The Incurables," which is being sold independently.

The group will be hosting a release party at Reiser's Keyboard Lounge, 1570 S. Wayne Road, Westland, Saturday, Feb. 13.

The idea for their second release is to solely capture their live performance strength for their fans to enjoy at home.

"We're very energetic on stage," said Ray. "We like to move around and like to get into the music."

"The music actually gets into us, that's how it has always been," Kelly added. "We have been real true to our music and that's what we do: that's where our energy is. We go deep inside of our music and it explodes back out of us."

"The Incurables" follows their first release, "Look in Your Mind," by two years. The latter has found



Band mates: Members of The Incurables are Pat Kelly (from left), Chuck Byberg, Ray Lawson and Darrin Lawson.

itsself on local radio stations' playlists. The latest release took eight months to record at the Tempermill in Ferndale and will launch the group onto a new rock'n'roll highway.

"We didn't get to the point that all songs had the same sounds," said drummer Darrin Lawson. "This is aimed at the younger audience, the college audience. The first one was more poppier and it appealed to a number of people."

The group has been schooled in students' dislikes and likes by playing fraternity parties. The group feels that such crowds are more open to their performances, which include cover tunes and original songs, and get as consumed into the music and performances as the band does, said rhythm guitarist Chuck Byberg.

"We have played without our pants and people took off their pants," Byberg said.

"It's a great feeling when you look out and see the crowd mouth the words to songs even I can't remember," Kelly added.

Playing fraternity parties and bars is a long way from the conception of the group when Kelly and Ray Lawson started playing when they were students at Wayne Memorial High School.

"We would play any place that would let us — a lot of benefits and a lot of hotel lounges," Kelly said. "We did a lot of audition night-type things. We'd play until we found a

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Pat Kelly
guitarist/vocalist

song they liked and then play it over and over."

"We started playing oldies," Ray Lawson said. "13th Floor Elevator, 'Mr. Mingo' — a lot of alternative oldies."

"There wasn't much classification at the time," Kelly said. "You were either heavy metal, you were country or you were this oldies music they called it. Some how they stuck us with these guys and we'd have a lot of trouble because with playing these bars and places they would go 'You guys are hard rock,' and we'd go to clubs that played hard rock and they'd go 'You guys are playing oldies.'"

"Fortunately music changed and we pretty much stuck with our roots and stuck with our music and the world caught up with us."

The Incurables have had more member changes than diseases cured this century, but Ray's cousin Darrin joined the group five years ago, followed three years later by Byberg to create today's line-up and sound.

"I would have to say if you have to

classify our music into a style we now would be alternative-pop with a hard edge," Ray said.

Friendship is the key to their existence.

"It's like we are married," Darrin said.

"I'd consider this a marriage with these guys in the band. A more solid and stable and honest marriage than my previous one," Ray said. "We are committed to a goal. We would like to have a major record contract, but we are not going to be blinded by that. We are going to have fun in the mean time."

Fun means playing roughly four gigs per month this winter and spring, going back into the studio in the fall and having a new release by winter, but still maintaining a focus on their music.

"It's a need . . . You can be a good musician and play in your basement all your life until you're dead. We want more than that," Kelly said.

"We're looking to make the most out of all we are doing now," Darrin added.

Rembrandts master art of acoustic play



Music masters: Phil Solem (left) and Danny Wilde paint a colorful soundscape with their music.

BY CHRISTINA PUOCO
STAFF WRITER

The Rembrandts hope to storm into Detroit for their show on Saturday, Feb. 13, at St. Andrew's Hall. Hopefully Mother Nature won't take the pop band's intentions too seriously this time.

"We were supposed to have this huge show last time but there was a big snow storm," said member Phil Solem who along with Danny Wilde makes up the Rembrandts. "We managed to show up. Only about 50 people showed up. I couldn't blame the (other) people for not coming though."

For this show, the Rembrandts are planning a "humongous, variety, action-packed show."

"We decided to go all the way . . . spend all the cash."

"That includes hiring an eight-piece band including two cellists, and an accordion player, Michael Ramos,

who has played with the Bo Deans. Solem said carting along a large band is the result of "acoustic show overkill."

"It's probably a knee-jerk reaction to the fact that we've been doing so many acoustic gigs. Once you do an acoustic show, everybody lines up to get you to do one," Solem said in an interview from his Golden Valley, Minn., home. "We've done about 18 quaddillion acoustic gigs. You won't soon hear us a cappella."

This "plugged-in" tour, promoting their artistically named album "Untitled," will take the Rembrandts throughout the United States and possibly to Europe. Solem said it doesn't really matter where the band plays because they can't go sight-seeing anyway.

"When you actually get into the thick of it, all you see are the insides of hotel rooms and sitting in a room doing interviews for 12 hours," Solem

said. "The most amazing things in the world are at your fingertips, but you aren't allowed to touch them."

One thing the duo almost did get to see was a Rembrandt exhibit at a Detroit-area art museum.

"We passed by this museum that had a Rembrandt exhibit. One of our reps said, 'Oh, I want to take pictures of you around the signs.' He pulls over and he got out the camera and stuff. Got us posing around the museum and the entrance hall," Solem said.

"The (guard) wouldn't let us into the exhibit. He didn't seem to care that we were the Rembrandts."

"It turned out he didn't have any film in the camera."

The Rembrandts perform Saturday, Feb. 13, at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Doors open at 9 p.m. Must be 18 or older to enter. Call 961-MELT for more information.

IN CONCERT

Alvin's, 5756 Cass Ave., Detroit. (poetry) 832-2355

Thursday, Feb. 11

LIZ STORY AND JOEL DIBARTOLO
The Ark, 637 1/4 S. Main St., Ann Arbor. (live acoustic piano) 761-1451

DETTROIT BLUES BAND
And blues jam session at Motby Dicks, 5452 Schaefer Road, Dearborn. (blues) 581-3555

JOE HUNTER
Big Fish, 700 Town Center Drive, Dearborn. (solo vocals and piano) 334-9292

BLUES PIPE
With Moon Dog at Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. (alternative rock) 996-8555

OPEN BLUES JAM
Liz & 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. (blues) 875-6555

DEPARTMENT 10
With You Are Here Dottie at Paycheck's Lounge, 2032 Canfield, Hamtramck. 874-0909

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Giff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. (rock) 334-9292

UNCLE CHUCK
Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. 996-8555

NEIGHBORHOOD NIGHT
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. (electic CDs) 832-2355

CAKE
With Surge to Union at 3-D, 1815 N. Main, Royal Oak. (hard alternative rock) 589-3344

ON-XYZ
Record release party and performance at In-

dusty, 15 S. Saginaw, Pontiac. (world beat) 334-1999

TURMOIL
With Aura and Fiends in Wonderland at the Marquee, 8139 E. Seven Mile Road, Detroit. 368-3633

ROBERT NOLL
Headlines Unplugged Blues Jam with special guests at Q Club, 29 S. Saginaw St., Pontiac. (blues) 334-7411

ETHAN TOUCH FREAK AND BOO BLAST
Part of the Tempermill Studio contest finals at The Shelter behind St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. 961-MELT

Friday, Feb. 12

EXTREME
With Saigon Kick at State Theatre, 2115 Woodward, Detroit. (rock) 961-5450

See IN CONCERT, 6B

HORIZONS IN POETRY