

Arts & Entertainment

Tattoo experience leaves permanent impression

I arrived in Omaha at 12:45 p.m., looking for a stiff drink. I wasn't thirsty. In less than 45 minutes, I was going to do something painfully permanent.

My friends and colleagues promised it would be painful. I knew it was permanent. It was a tattoo.

You have to go to Omaha for a tattoo nowadays. Lincoln doesn't have any practicing tattoo artists. So myself, Wire Editor Michiela Thuman and Editor Vicki Runga sped to Omaha to get tattoos.

Thom Gabrukiewicz

I wanted a design on my left arm, Michiela a rose somewhere on her body. Vicki was along for the ride.

We entered a modest, older South-side neighborhood near 35th and F streets. Once there, we found the home of Dick "Tornado" Warsocki, tattoo artist. Toys, a child's bike and an old, black truck littered the yard and drive. More toys occupied the sagging porch. Warsocki and his daughter, Jenny, watched from the front door as we approached the dusty, brown-brick house.

We knocked and were ordered to "come on in." There we found a large man dressed in faded Levis and big black kicks. A T-shirt covered a slight beer-belly; tattoos sprang from his arms, contrasting fiery red hair. A cap with a tornado logo sat askew on his head.

Warsocki, who conducts his Derma-graphics business from his dining room, set out three chairs. In a gruff voice, he ordered us to save him the chair at the head of the table. Warsocki's portfolios, books and 14-by-17 artist paper of tattoo prints were scattered across the

table. He invited us to look while he readied the equipment.

The equipment consisted of medical supplies, colored inks, electronic gizmos and what looked like a cross between a fountain pen and a doorbell. It was the electronic needle. It would put the ink under the skin with a series of electronic shocks; an engraver, of sorts.

I chose a lion in a leather jacket (sassy, but not too precocious). Michiela found the rose she was looking for.

"Hell, let me do the rose freehand," Warsocki said. "I can do one much better freehand."

I was to go first, to feel how much pain was really involved. Sitting in a hard wooden chair, Warsocki began drawing the lion on my arm with a ball point pen — freehand. He couldn't find his stencils.

Ten minutes later, a lion appeared on my arm.

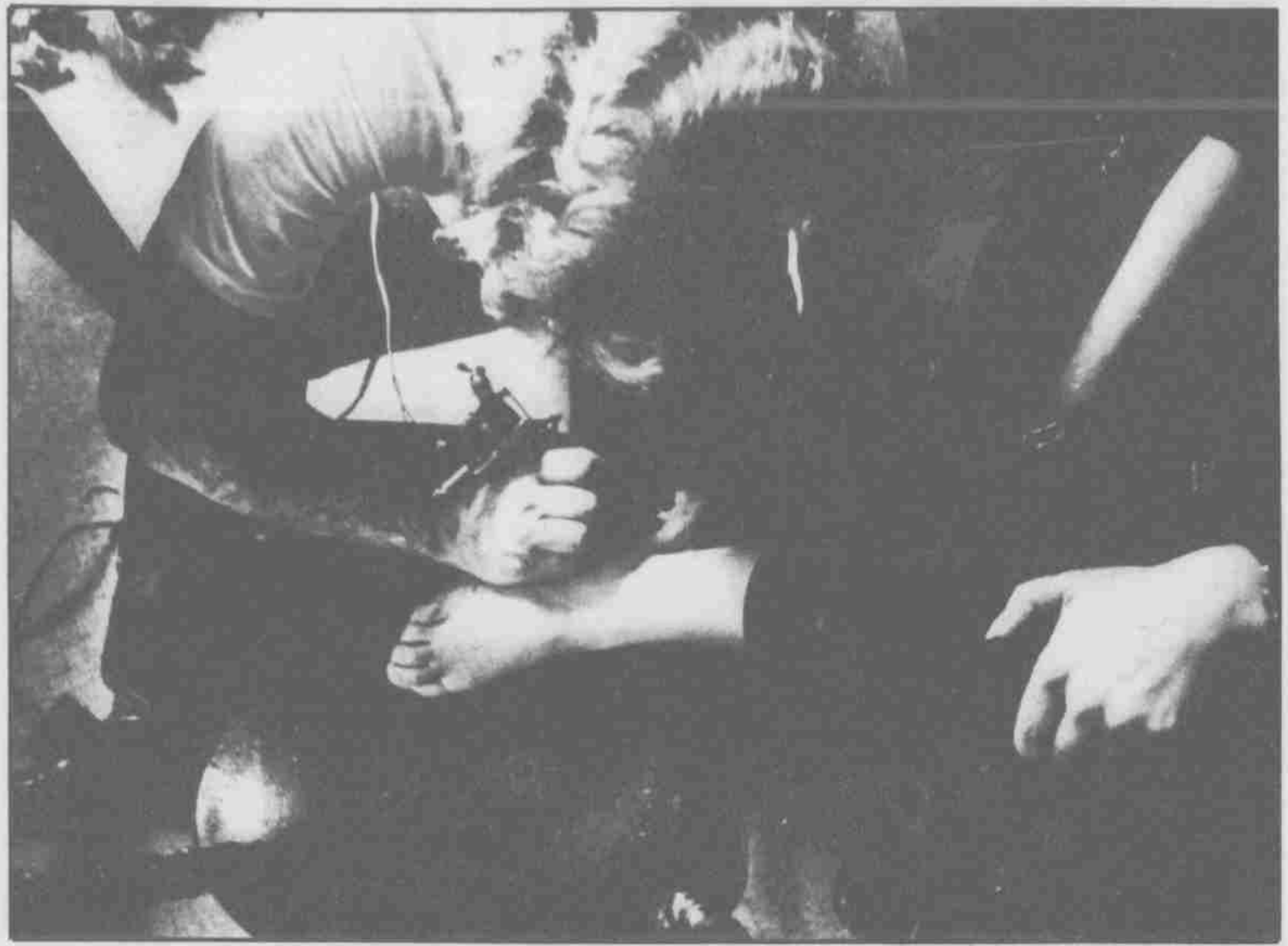
He pulled the electronic needle from a sterile solution bath. His equipment was kept in a battered black footlocker beneath the dining room table. The locker was plastered with business cards from other tattoo artists. Warsocki had just returned from a tattoo convention in New Orleans the week before. It was a good time, he told us.

"I'll do a short line to show you what it feels like," he said.

There wasn't the searing pain I expected. Blood didn't ooze from some invisible open wound. Getting a tattoo was like getting shocked by your little sister when she scooted across the shag carpeting. Only this was continuous.

Warsocki said little. He answered our questions and occasionally reprimanded his toddler daughter, Jenny.

"I'm working now honey, so go play in your room. Daddy has to work."



Thom Gabrukiewicz/Daily Nebraskan

Warsocki tattoos a rose on Michiela's right ankle.

The burly man pointed to the bedroom and Jenny, with the same fiery red hair as her father, went.

Warsocki explained how he got his first tattoo. It was in Hong Kong. He was a young Marine during the Vietnam War. And like a potato chip, he said he couldn't have just one.

"My mother had some advice for me," he said. "Don't get killed, don't marry an Oriental girl and don't get a tattoo." I was nearing the end of my

time and I had been pretty good, so I had to do something.

After the war, Warsocki bought some tattooing equipment from his uncle. He began to learn. He tattooed his left forearm.

I asked what kind of ink was used in a tattoo. Warsocki said it was basic India ink mixed with something.

"With what?" I asked.

"Hey, that's my business," he said. Trade secrets abound in tattooing.

Warsocki finished the lion in a little more than an hour. It wasn't painful, but it wasn't pleasing either. An hour was enough to endure. Warsocki showed us a tattoo on his right shoulder done by another artist in New Orleans. It was Warsocki's own design — an eagle in a blue-and-black pattern that looked three-dimensional. It took eight hours to complete. Warsocki admitted eight hours was enough for him.

See TATTOO on 8

Don't cross out cut-outs

Cut-out records are sad things. You sort of hope they'll follow you home. I mean, they're cheap, humble, unpretentious and, for all you know, they might be great.

Probably they won't be great by everybody's standards, not like The Clash's "London Calling" or Talking Heads' "Speaking in Tongues." Those albums wouldn't be caught dead in a cut-out rack. Probably they won't be completely noxious either. Notice, for instance, that nothing by The Grateful Dead is ever in the cut-out racks. Dead-heads must make oaths not to let that happen.



Charles Lieurance

There are some though, that people should know about that have hung around, looking forlorn and dejected under the humiliating sign that says "\$2.99."

Here's a few: "Don't Follow Me, I'm Lost Too" by Pearl Harbour and the Explosions

I see this in cut-out bins, used racks, trash cans, the back of record collections — everywhere it shouldn't be.

This San Francisco group with a Filipino lead singer who belted rockabilly tunes like a cross between Patsy Cline and Presley/Holly/Cochran, made one album before this that you could smell in the next county. The bad rep they got from that must have rubbed a little stink on this one too. Unfair.

"Don't Follow Me" is ecstasy, a bouncy (sometimes frantic) collection of all-but-forgotten rockabilly tunes that Pearl Harbour sings as if she's got a legion of incubi crawling up her dress. "Fujiyama Mama" . . .

Oh, I was going to list the good tunes, but they're all fantastic.

If you're one of those who believe rockabilly will never be produced with the same sense of fun it was in the '50s at Sun studios, this'll make you swallow your cornpone with a little more modesty. A buck at most.

"Hurt Me" by Johnny Thunders

Ex-New York Doll Johnny Thunders decided to put together an acoustic album of great Doll's hits, favorite covers and some solo classics. This could have been a wretched idea and maybe that's why it pops up for \$3 once in a while, sometimes less.

I mean, Thunders isn't known for his subtle charms; he's known for turning Chuck Berry riffs into electric hamburger.

But this works like a charm. Thunders comes off sincere and stark, like a moody version of Jonathan Richman. The whole set-up sounds a lot like Springsteen's "Nebraska," as far as production goes.

Thunders performs Barry McGuire's "Eve of Destruction," Dylan's "It Ain't Me Babe," The Doll's "Lonely Planet Boy" and seemingly everything else that came to mind. His forced tenor may be a bit of an acquired taste but it's worth acquiring.

"Celebrate the Bullet," Selecter

This ska two-tone band was even well received on their first LP, "Too Much Pressure." Still, the LP's priced at \$3 most everywhere cut-outs are sold.

If this won't follow you home, drag it by the off-beat crooked rhythm. Selecter, fronted by Pauline Black, has put out a shattering piece of political manifesto. Every song is filled with complex political details, ironies and views. No empty sloganeering here.

The title-track boasts one of the best lead guitar riffs I've heard since the Au Pair's "Diet." The production is dense, atmospheric, dizzyingly layered and the music goes from speedy, inspired ska to slow, dirge-like reggae.

If rastah beat's not your bowl of ganja, this might not lively up yourself, but otherwise it's a don't miss.

Psychedelic Furs, Self-titled

What on earth is this doing in cut-out racks at both Dirt Cheap and Pickles? Well, I won't complain. I have two copies already, but I can always give them as Christmas gifts to my friends in Borneo who might not own them.

You either know this LP or you don't. Richard Butler, lead singer, sounds like Iggy Pop after a tracheotomy with a blow torch and the sax and guitars have some of the most startlingly original interplays on vinyl.

The songs, especially "Flowers," "Susan's Strange" and "We Love You" are intelligent, poetic psychedelia, doused in double-meanings, lyrical eccentricities and angry social criticism.

Listen to these lines: "Make a god of politics/Make a god of peace/Worship them with automobiles/Worship them with streets. . ."

Well, maybe it doesn't make sense to you, but . . .

There are a lot more aural treasures out there. A lot more. First come, first served.



Andrea Hoy/Daily Nebraskan

Johnny Reno, in a characteristic high energy show, stormed through sax-souped favorites and several tunes from his albums while playing to a

packed house at the Drumstick on Monday night. Reno and the Sax Maniacs will play the Drumstick again tonight.