

# What's On

LEBANON

Entertainment Monthly

## CHRISTMAS SHOPPING SPECIAL

Jazz genius

Get tattooed

Grand Theatre

Lennon  
remembered

YOUR  
COMPLETE  
GUIDE  
TO THE  
HOLIDAY  
SEASON

# 1998

the new year dawns

beirut beat...

# TATTOO YOU

*Ever thought of getting tattooed or pierced? Gareth Smyth explores these ancient art forms and came away with everything intact*



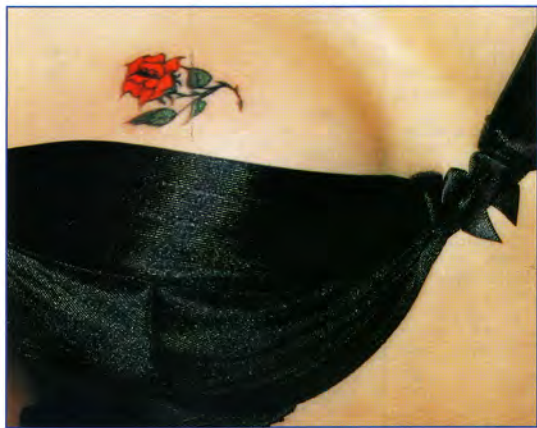
*Get off my back!*



Angel? Or devil in disguise?



Too much beer will do this to you



ground-rules: *If you are drunk, on drugs, sick, pregnant, sun-burned ... barefoot, dirty, smelly, under 18, broke, trying to sell me something...looking for a deal, or otherwise obnoxious ... Please come back when you are not.*

The process begins with choice of design, size and location. Hadi then draws onto tracing paper, which placed against the skin gives an idea of what the tattoo will look like. He then shaves the skin and prints the design. Thus far, the customer can change his/her mind, but next comes the tattoo machine.

Hadi use new needles for everyone - round needles for outline and flat for shading - which he imports from England. The ink, which he brings from the US, goes about 1/10 inch under the skin. A small design can be done in three minutes, but more complex work can take hours. "It depends how the customer responds to pain," he says.

Ah, yes. While blotting out the memory of the pierced penis, I'd forgotten to ask about pain. Hadi laughs. He points to a picture of a man with a Tabasco sauce bottle tattooed on the sole of his foot: "He was able to do that with two bottles

of wine and four people holding him down."

But the sole of the foot is an unusual place. Tattoos are least painful on the back or shoulder where the skin is already taut.

Generally, he continues, body piercing is less painful than a tattoo. Hadi himself has a pierced nipple, and he shows me a kind of forceps with which he grabs the tongue before pushing a needle through.

Prices for tattoos vary with their size and complexity, and are higher when the design is original to the tattooist. Small tattoos are \$25; one round the arm, for example, is around \$200. For a very complicated design on someone's back, Hadi has charged \$1300.

You can have your nose pierced for as little as \$10 (that's with a stud - pierced with a ring will cost you \$45). Pierced eyebrows, nipples and belly buttons are \$75, and pierced genitalia come at \$100.

With both tattoos and piercing, hygiene is very important to recovery. A tattoo needs to be carefully washed, explains Hadi, and antibiotic ointment rubbed into it every five hours: it must be kept out of direct sunlight for around 30 days and covered with loose, clean clothing.

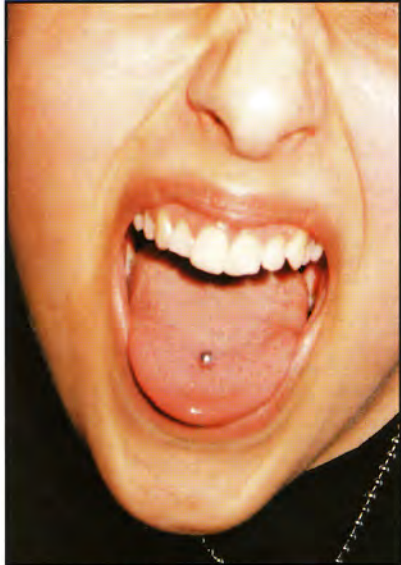
A pierced belly button should take around two weeks to heal. During that time, it needs to be washed with mercuryl every five hours.

"A pierced tongue can take between ten and 20 days to recover," Hadi continues. "You have to rinse your mouth after every meal or cigarette, and you shouldn't kiss with your tongue or give head." But there is no hard-and-fast time scale, he adds. "People's bodies vary - some heal quickly, some don't."

In any case, tongue piercing is still quite rare: Hadi has done only two in three years - one more than the sole, pierced penis.

And belly buttons? He grins. "Hundreds."

*Hadi Beydoun's parlor 'Skin Deep' is in Antelias, facing the Ministry of the Environment; telephone 03 - 689 466*



**T**he most startling photograph in Hadi Beydoun's collection is one of a pierced penis. A stud penetrates the glans from one side to the other, "going", he says, "through the tube in the middle."

He adds that he takes pictures only of his "more unusual" creations, and it is oddly reassuring that puncturing the male member is not a day-to-day activity in his small studio in Antelias. The bulk of his work as a tattooist and body-piercer is more restrained. Forget any image of a grimy parlor by the docks run by a wizened salty-dog sailor with no teeth and a large gold ring in his ear. Hadi is a together young man of 23, who will craft colorful images onto jet-skis or motorbikes as well as human skin and who prepares his more complex works on Adobe Illustrator or Photoshop.

He studied graphic design at the American University, Beirut, before buying tattoo machines in England, beginning with his own legs and then moving into the art professionally. He became fascinated by why different cultures have different types of tattoos while still a student, reading in the AUB's Jaffet Library of the ancient tattooing techniques and mixing of pigments.

In Japan, he says, a tattoo was histor-

ically an important sign of bravery. Firemen who carried out acts of great courage would have a dragon tattooed on their back. Criminals were also tattooed as a form of branding, and prostitutes would have a rose or butterfly on their abdomens.

In the West, tattoos were for centuries associated with "gang members, sailors, the poor and the very rich". In Nazi Germany, Hitler had the elite SS tattooed on the upper arm with the SS symbol and their blood group, so as to ensure them better treatment if injured, and of course Jews in Nazi concentration camps were branded with a number. "Tattooing is a universal language," says Hadi. "But it can have many purposes. And, at the same time, a tattoo can say many things. It can say, 'I want you to be interested in my butt, or my tit'. Or, 'Look, I'm 14, but I can handle the pain - I can get more girls that way.'"

If tattooing is less usual in Lebanon than in other parts of the world, demand seems to be increasing. Hadi has done 1,149 tattoos in the three years since he opened his shop.

"Women prefer smaller tattoos, men larger ones," he notes. A majority of

**A pierced tongue can take between ten and 20 days to recover, Hadi continues. You have to rinse your mouth after every meal or cigarette, and you shouldn't kiss with your tongue or give head**

*One way to endear yourself to your parents*



A sign on the wall of the parlor lays down some