

Celebrity Tattoos

Celebrity tattoos are a frequent topic in mainstream pop culture and the media since the early 1990s. Actors, musicians and sports figures have gone under the needle, and their designs have inspired millions to do the same.

Oscar winning actor and world humanitarian, Angelina Jolie, is noted for her myriad of tattoos. Jolie is a dedicated tattoo enthusiast, collecting at least a dozen tattoos to symbolize various beliefs and life events. Jolie has made the dragon one of the most popular tattoos for women and sparked interest in traditional tattoo styles of Southeast Asia.

Rapper, Record Producer and actor 50 Cent is as noted for his body art as for his music. Fifty's tattoos cover his back; the giant "Southside 50" rising from smoke and flames has become his signature. His back tattoo was designed by celebrity inkster Mr. Cartoon, who also designs Nike sneakers.

Eminem, another Mr. Cartoon client, has dog tags tattooed around his neck, a large mushroom on his left shoulder, his daughter's name on his left wrist, "Slit Here" on his right wrist, a D on his right arm, the number 12 on his left arm, tattoos for Eminem and Slim Shady on his chest and several others.

The actor and reality television star Nicole Richie has at least nine tattoos, including wings on her back, a rosary around her ankle and a spider on her lower back. A pair

of ballerina slippers commemorate both her childhood passion and her father Lionel Richie's song "Ballerina Girl."

Similarly, Britney Spears has several tattoos: a fairy on her lower back, a small daisy circling her second toe on right foot, a butterfly leaving a vine on left foot, a flower with Chinese symbol for mystery in middle of lower stomach, three Hebrew characters on back of her neck, and reportedly several others. Critics allege Britney's rather varied assortment of body art is indicative of her impulsive vices, but others celebrate her love of tattooing.

Drew Barrymore has sported inked crosses and butterflies for more than a decade. Barrymore has posed for countless photographs displaying her tattoos. She has perhaps the most extensively photographed body art of anyone in the public eye.

In abandoning her late 1990s teen pop image, Christina Aguilera adopted a variety of tattoos. She had the name of her controversial alter ego, Xtina, inked on her neck. She also obtained a flower on her wrist, a design on her forearm and reportedly several unseen designs. Later, she celebrated her marriage to record producer Jordan Bratman with the words "Te Amo Siempre" on her arm.

International sports star David Beckham is as famed for his jet-setting lifestyle, celebrity wife Victoria "Posh" Beckham, and famous friends as he is for his skills. Beckham has his sons' names on his back, his wife's name and his jersey number on his arm, and other tattoos. Beckham detailed his tattoos' symbolic value in his autobiography, and his wife is also a body art fan.

Another celebrity couple who are tattoo fans are pop star Pink and her husband motocross racer Carey Hart. The singer's tattoos may well number in the dozens. She has a shooting star and angel on her shoulder, "what goes around comes around" on her wrist, "tru luv" on her arm, "Mr. Pink" on her thigh, a cartoon cat on her stomach, the barcode from the album Missundaztood just below her hairline on back of her neck, and many more. Hart owns the Huntington-Hart Tattoo Shop inside the Palms Casino in Las Vegas. The shop is featured in the reality television show "Inked."

Branded for Life: Tattooing and Social Status

Twelve thousand years has not altered the cross-cultural significance of tattoos. From the jungles of Borneo to dorm rooms at Harvard, their significance as status symbols as well as symbols of rebellion and non-conformity still hold true today.

In Indochina, ladies forearm tattoos made them desirable for marriage. Various designs denoted the wearer's station in life. Rich women wore delicate arm tattoos that looked like expensive gloves that women buy today at Bloomingdale's. Warrior tattoos showed how many lives men had taken in battle. Tattoos commanded respect and assured their wearers status for life.

Today, tattoos signify a specific personal trait or membership in either clan or society. The Hells Angels jealously guard their tattoo. Secret societies do the same. The aura of mystery and secrecy pervades the tattoo wearer whether they repel or attract us. Whatever our reasons for asking, the question remains: "What ARE they wearing? And WHY?"

Some believe a tattoo wearer possesses the spirit of his “dragon, eagle or flower.” William Blake might have said the ferocity of the Tiger belongs to others. Today, tigers, snakes, and bird of prey stalk unchecked in our midst. We might want to be careful whom we antagonize.

Mediterranean civilizations used tattoos for espionage, slavery and the demarcation of crime, a filthy practice that continues to this day. Japanese girls were tattooed as rite of passage to womanhood and the Japanese tattoo assumed a religious significance.

Western cultures have tattooed family crests for centuries. Pope Hadrian banned tattooing in 787 AD but thrived in the British Isles until the Battle of Hastings, 1066 AD. William the Conqueror forced its disappearance from Western culture until the 16th century.

Yet tattoos thrived in Japan, notably for marking criminals. First offenses carried a line across the forehead. The second, an arch and the third, another line – t

– The start of the: “Three strikes and you’re out law.”

The Japanese tattoo became an aesthetic art form with the “body suit”, a social reaction to strict laws. While royalty alone were allowed to wear ornate clothing, nothing stopped the middle class from wearing elaborate full body tattoos that left the naked considered “well dressed”.

American tattoos were born in Chatham Square, New York City; a seaport and entertainment center attracting the affluent as well as the working class. Tattoo artists gained respectability and so too did the tattoo. Flourishing artists tattooed their wives with their work and the wives became their billboards. Cosmetic tattooing meshed

with cheek blush, lipstick and eyeliner. Cardinals' fans might want to investigate Jim Edmonds.

After World War I, tattoos began to symbolize bravery and wartime solidarity. With Prohibition and The Great Depression, tattoos became travelers' markers telling the story of where the wearer had been.

Post World War II America became disenchanted with the tattoo by its association with delinquency. Tattooing had little respect in American culture. The 1961 hepatitis outbreak all but destroyed any positive status the tattoo had earned.

Lyle Tuttle changed the American attitude toward tattoos in the late '60s with media coverage of celebrity women sporting tattoos. Scores of magazines rushed to him for information about this ancient art form.

Toady, tattoos are more popular than they have ever been. All classes of people seek them and the tattooist is considered a "fine artist". Political consultants, actors and baseball players wear them – proudly or sheepishly – but wear them nonetheless. While the status tattoo enthusiasts enjoy is certainly less clear than it was a thousand years ago, the status the tattoo itself enjoys is popular, albeit confused reputation.

Before You Get Your First Tattoo

So, you've finally decided to take the leap into the tattooed community and get some ink done. A new tattoo is fun and exciting, but it's a massive commitment. You need to do some serious soul searching and educate yourself. Getting a tattoo is an experience, and obviously one that's going to follow you everywhere you go for the

rest of your life. Make sure you know everything you need to know to make it something you are proud of and not something you regret. Here's a partial check list of things to think about in no particular order, because they're all important.

- The Design – This is a huge deal. You don't want to pick something you're going to feel stupid about later. Think along the lines of something classy, something that will always be cool to you. For example, if you run out and get a cartoon character tattooed on your ankle the first possible second you're legally old enough, are you still going to love Tweety Bird as much when you're 48 as you did when you were 18? The same goes for the name of a significant other and anything else you might grow out of. Sometimes you can get a temporary tattoo of the design you are considering so you can wear it around a while before you commit. Consider every possible circumstance in which you may be embarrassed about that design and make sure you're OK with it.
 - The Placement – There is absolutely nothing wrong with having an obvious tattoo if that's what you want, but you have to be aware that there is still a significant amount of stigma associated with tattoos and there will probably be consequences at some point down the road. Depending on your line of work, your employer may require you to cover up your tattoo while you are on the clock. If t
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some public places. When you get mad about it, remember you knew what you were getting into.

- The Price – Be prepared to shell out some cash. The cost of a tattoo can vary quite a lot, depending on the size, how many sessions it takes, if you choose some flash straight off the wall, or decided to go custom. It's a good idea to pick out your design when you don't have the money, that way you have time to think about it while you save up. Don't settle for something cheap just because you don't have the money. You will always wish you would have just waited.
- The Artist – Perhaps the best way to pick an artist is by spotting some work you like and finding out who did it. It's almost always OK to ask someone about their tattoo. If they didn't want you to notice it, they wouldn't be showing it off. Once you know who the artist is, visit the shop. Don't make a nuisance of yourself, but it wouldn't hurt to drop in a few times. Observe how the tattooists interact with their clients, and make sure to watch for telltale signs of sterilization. Is everybody wearing gloves? Do you see the autoclave? If not, then ask about it. If they're hesitant to answer any of your questions, walk out and keep looking.

This list is not even close to all the things to consider before getting inked, but they are a few of the biggest ones. Remember, the tattoo is the end result, but you'll bear the experience forever too, and much of the outcome depends on you. Do what you can to make it a happy memory.