

PAUL KING INTERVIEW



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Recently, as I found myself talking with a client about his piercing—we discuss jewelry options, aftercare, and carry on with small talk while I get everything set up—he asks me about why I got into body piercing. He seems like a nice enough guy, but the conversation soon takes a predictable turn.

“Do you pierce guys’... you know... stuff?” He asks.

By “stuff,” he’s referring to male genitals.

“Of course I do,” I answer.

“You do? Man, that’s gay.”

I’ve heard this countless times—or a variation of it. For those familiar with the history of our industry it’s no secret that our roots were mostly planted by gay men from the leather community. Unfortunately, the majority of our clientele—and even some body piercers—seem clueless about our history. In an attempt to rectify this, here is the first of what I hope will be a series of interviews discussing the role and significance piercers and enthusiasts from the gay community had in defining and shaping modern body piercing.

Paul King is a well-known name in the body piercing industry. He worked at Gauntlet from ‘91 to ‘98, co-founded and has operated Cold Steel America in San Francisco since 1999, has served as Treasurer for The Association of Professional Piercers off and on for the better part of ten years, is a “layman anthropologist” (his description), and finally, was the piercer shown in the 1993 Aerosmith video, “Cryin’.”

I met with Paul this past January while working in San Francisco. When I arrived at his home Paul gave me a warm greeting and wasted no time in getting things started. He pointed me to a body piercing archive he had acquired from fetish photographer Charles Gatewood, and suggested I look through that while he got changed out of his gym clothes.

There were handwritten “Pin Pal” letters from the early Gauntlet days, a typewritten rough draft of Doug Malloy’s book *The Adventures of a Piercing Freak* with a handwritten note above it that said “The original title was you to?” [sic], and an early piercing “menu” from when Body Manipulations first opened in San Francisco. (Fingernail piercings were only \$7.00.)

After an hour or so of going through various first edition books, magazine clippings, and all

sorts of other items pertaining to the history of body piercing that Paul had acquired throughout the years, we headed to the kitchen to officially start the interview. The following three to four hours were a mix of history lessons (not unlike his body piercing history classes taught at the APP conferences), candid conversation, and a question-and-answer session. Fortunately, for the sake of this article, Paul has a tendency for his stories to segue smoothly from one to another.

Q: What was everyday life like as a gay man in the late seventies and eighties? How did you perceive society’s mentality at that time?

I can’t comment on the seventies because I was too young. I didn’t have awareness of my sexuality. Was I diddling with boys? Yes—and girls.

The eighties: I remember riding down the street with my blue hair and earrings and having shit thrown at me because I had both of my ears pierced. For that I was called a drag queen. Just for having both ears pierced. It was definitely a much different time, and a much harder time.

In 1980 I was outed by a psychiatrist to my

I had a period where I wasn't doing any body modification. I took everything out and went real straitlaced. I had just gotten that tattoo done and then I looked at this book [*Modern Primitives*] and I was like, oh my god, this is what I want. I want tattoos *everywhere!*

mom. It was a hugely shameful thing. We're the only minority group that grows up with the enemy. For anyone else, you can go to school as an African-American kid and get called the n-word, then go home and Mom and Dad are going to hold you. They're going to love you. They understand, and you're getting some sort of support and validation. We have to go home and hide it from our families.

I was coming of age in the eighties, so I have a very different story than somebody like Fakir who is more pansexual or Jim [Ward], who is also gay but from a different generation.

When I was fourteen I was into punk rock, and I was carving on my arm. Because that's what you're supposed to do when you're into punk rock. I was hitting on this guy, and later I was carving on his arm, and then we had sex. And that was one of my first associations of knives, cutting, blood, and sex. It makes perfect sense! I don't know why, but it makes perfect sense [*laughs*]. To put it into context, there was something going on at a young age.

It was 1981 when I first pierced my ear lobes. By 1983 I had multiple piercings in both ear lobes, and I had pierced my nostril, too. That was about the first time I saw a lip piercing in person, though I'd seen pictures of them before.

This girl came to school with an ear stud stuck through her lip, and it just looked nasty. Nothing about it made any sense. Her lip was bulging, the gem was covered in crust, and the post and earring back were poking into her gums. Even with no knowledge of piercing, we all knew this couldn't work. And she was doing it because everyone else was pierced and she was trying to show us up.

In 1986 I started reading Anne Rice. I loved her books and read everything of hers I could get my hands on. I heard she'd done a series

that was fetish oriented. She had written it under a pseudonym [A.N. Roquelaure], *The Sleeping Beauty Trilogy*. I started reading it, and I'm like, oh my god, this is fucking gross. This is sick. This is abuse to women! They were enslaving her, raping her, and all of these horrible things, and I thought it was awful and disgusting. And then I start reading the chapter where they're doing it to a boy. And suddenly it clicked, and I got it. I don't know how to explain it, but I just got it. I was able to break through my feminist viewpoint on it. And when I say I got it, I don't just mean the male-on-male action; I got the male-on-female action too. It was revolutionary for me. It shifted everything and made the male stuff even more okay. And it made all of it okay.

So while reading that series, I started picking guys up and abusing them before I even knew what I was doing. That was definitely a process of trial and error. Good lord, I have some amends to make from that period.

In 1988, I was living in Long Beach and I had just gotten my first tattoo. My friend was an architect and drew me a design that was based on Russian Constructivist art. It was all shapes and whatnot.

The following year was a really important one for me. The book *Modern Primitives* came out in 1989. I'd already had those dreams about getting pierced, but again, it was fetish. All my other friends who were my role models already had tattoos. I felt like a late bloomer; I was about 23. I had a period where I wasn't doing any body modification. I took everything out and went real straitlaced. I had just gotten that tattoo done and then I looked at this book [*Modern Primitives*] and I was like, oh my god, this is what I want. I want tattoos *everywhere!* And I want them to be big, and I want them to be bold. This is what I wanted, but until then I didn't have the

visual symbolic vocabulary to think of it. But this is what I wanted.

So I went to Bert Grimm's tattoo shop in Long Beach. I showed this guy Dave what I wanted and he said, "I think that's one of them tribal tattoos. I need to get a picture of that, I've never done a tribal tattoo before." Can you imagine those words coming out of a tattoo artist's mouth? Yeah, that dates me. That was my second tattoo.

I remember going to see a therapist in 1990 and saying I needed help with some relationship stuff. I told him I was not there to deal with my interest in BDSM [bondage and discipline/dominance and submission/Sadomasochism]. I told him, "If you have questions about BDSM you can ask, but I am not here to 'treat' my BDSM." Well of course that opened up the floodgates. Every other session it'd come up. Eventually, I brought books and gave them to him. I said, "I'm not going to teach you about BDSM, power exchange dynamics, and healthy behaviors on my dime. You're welcome to read up on it." I literally told him that. And he laughed and said, "Fair enough." He let it go after that.

A dear friend of mine, a gentlemen named Race Bannon (and also Guy Baldwin) were instrumental along with some other people in getting BDSM declassified as a mental illness. And that's just within my lifetime: to declassify it as a mental illness and redefine it as a lifestyle; that's huge.

Q: In the late eighties and early nineties, who or what were some of your influences?

Genesis P-Orridge. It's weird; history is such a strange thing. In my day he had a *huge* influence with piercing because of The Temple of Psychick Youth, and Psychic TV, which were a major deal in the eighties and nineties to a very small community. But that



little group was engaged in blood rites and piercings and what not. Though I wasn't a member, I was aware of their activities.

Genesis P-Orridge was a very early customer of Mr. Sebastian and The Gauntlet. He was affecting tons of youth and was one of those original hipsters that wasn't necessarily into BDSM.

Q: How large of a role would you say Genesis P-Orridge played in the association of piercing with the gay community, and then it branching off into the straight population?

I guess a good analogy is a branch, because the history is like a tree. And he's definitely a big branch; he's not a twig. So he wouldn't be the only one, he wouldn't be the first one, but he was substantial. What we're talking about now is not necessarily about BDSM, or gay culture, but people who are into music and who are pursuing alternative spirituality.

Psychic TV was already a phenomenon. You could've done a book just on Psychic TV, like *Modern Primitives*. It was already coherent, whereas *Modern Primitives* didn't become a coherent underground until after that book was published. Once something is named, it takes on a life of its own.

The book *Modern Primitives* started off as this project, where they talked to this person, interviewed that person. Then they met Fakir, who is very dynamic, totally interesting, and really articulate. So they started hearing what Fakir had to say and started meeting what Fakir first coined the phrase "Modern Primitive" in an

issue of *PFIQ* in the 1970s. They decided to make that the title of their book.

There was no movement. Some of the people they interviewed barely talked to each other, and some of them didn't even know each other. They were doing these self-play things, or just exploring their bodies and what have you, but there was no cohesion to it. There was no "modern primitive." Then you have the title of the book and all of a sudden it coalesces; it brings together a movement. And it's a nice little package. It was like, "This is what the modern primitive people do, and this is what it's called, and you're going to look like this." So it was totally like an accident. There was something already going on, but without a name or anything like that, which I think is really fascinating. But what Genesis P-Orridge did with *Psychic TV*, that was deliberate, and it was already going on.

Another person was Bob Flanagan, who was a performance artist. He honestly wasn't that important to the piercing scene, but I just loved Bob. He was a great guy. He did work for The Gauntlet and was certainly known, at least in Los Angeles. The *RE/Search* book *Supermasochist* was about him.

Cliff Raven is one of my role models. I wish I would've met him. Actually, I probably wish I had dated him. He was a tattoo artist in the 1970's. If I'm not mistaken, Cliff Raven was at a few of the T&P [tattoo and piercing] parties.

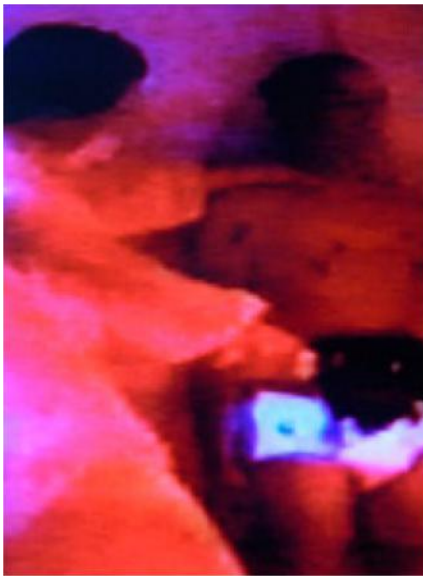
I don't know who trained who, but Cliff was tied in with Don Ed Hardy, and Cliff was queer. I wish Don Ed Hardy wasn't so put off by piercing. Although he wasn't as put off by

it as Chuck Eldridge. Nothing against Chuck, but the tattoo archive [located in Winston Salem, NC, and founded in Berkeley, CA by Eldridge in 1980] could be a great resource. Over ten years ago I asked Chuck if he had anything piercing related in the archive. "Nope." I was thinking to myself, you're telling me that in a tattoo archive there's not one piercing? Not a single earlobe piercing? He just didn't care for it and didn't want to be associated with it.

Q: Can you tell me about the years leading up to, and while you were working at, Gauntlet?

At one point, Fakir and Jim were very close. Mr. Sebastian was introduced to their group by either Sailor Sid or Doug Malloy. Doug Malloy flew all these guys out to the states, got them together. But Mr. Sebastian never had any aspirations of this thing getting big. The U.K. piercing scene was stagnant. You had this little fetish corner, but it never had the same boom until it exploded in the states; really, until it exploded in Los Angeles. The exception to this was Pauline Clarke of *Piercing World* magazine and P.A.U.K. [Piercing Association of the U.K.], a piercing enthusiasts club.

You can't talk about piercing history without talking about Gauntlet. Yes, piercing was around before Gauntlet, and piercing was already in the fetish scene, but it became Gauntlet's job to promote it in the fetish scene. It was definitely there before, but it became exponentially larger in the leather scene because that was Jim's first market. The



gay male SM scene was the first market.

Then it started going in to the tangential gay market, but it also went into the straight fetish market. And I hate to say “market,” but that was more like the Gauntlet business model perspective. But keep in mind it was very much a community. Gauntlet was in the community; it wasn’t some random corporation. All of us that were initially at Gauntlet were there out of fetish. And then there was this crossover when it went into hipster cool.

In 1988 I saw this fetish magazine that had an ad in it. The guy had his nipples pierced, and it was the hottest thing I’d ever seen in my life, and I don’t know why. One year later I was visiting my friend in San Francisco, and she said she needed to go get her nipple re-pierced. She’d had it pierced before in the eighties, I think at Gauntlet. She said she knew this shop that just opened [Body Manipulations, opened in San Francisco, CA in 1989 by Vaughan and Esther Saldana].

I saw my friend getting her nipple pierced, and for whatever reason I was still on the fence about it. I had the idea that it was the sexiest thing I’d ever seen. Within a year of that, I was dreaming about it.

So I was with another girlfriend and told her I had to get my nipples pierced. I didn’t know where to go. I knew of that one shop in San Francisco and that was it. She got back to me a month later and said there’s this place called Gauntlet in Hollywood on Santa Monica Boulevard, but you have to call for an appointment. So I called, and the earliest

appointment I could get was after Christmas. I decided this was going to be my Christmas gift to myself. So the first week of January in 1990 was the first time I’d walked into Gauntlet. Elayne [Angel] was working.

I got my nipples pierced by some guy with dreadlocks that had come in. He gave me an aftercare sheet and sold me Hibiclens. I have no idea why they never healed! *[laughs]* I had a horrible allergic reaction to Hibiclens.

So he does my piercings, I’m pretty sure he was stoned, and says he’ll be right back. He steps out of the room and never comes back. That’s the Gauntlet customer service they were famous for! *[laughs]*

I waited about five or ten minutes and thought, “I don’t think he’s coming back.” So I get dressed and go outside, and he’s out there smoking a cigarette. He says, “Oh, you’re still here?” He totally forgot about me.

Later I reconnected with a high school friend. I didn’t know this when I had went into Gauntlet to get my nipples pierced, but this friend worked there in the jewelry department. We started hanging out again; we reconnected. Then I met one of his close friends, who was the guy that pierced me, Dan.

At some point Dan cut his dreads off and, no offense but I’m not the long-haired type, I thought he was kind of cute. So we dated for a *minute*. And when I say we dated for a minute, I mean we dated for a minute. I think we had sex once and knew we weren’t compatible. Dan was roommates with Elayne. I was hanging out there all the time, and I

started getting close to Elayne.

When Dan and I were close, in whatever way it was, I said I really wanted to get a Prince Albert. He told me to come in since it was close to my birthday, which would’ve been April of 1990.

So I go in, and he and Elayne proceed to hammer me saying “You’re not going to get your Prince Albert done. They’re boring, they’re stupid, and you pee everywhere. It’s a ridiculous piercing. You’re going to get an Ampallang.” And I’m like, what about blowjobs? They said, “It’s no problem, you’ll be fine.” Totally bullshitting me!

The next thing I know, I’m getting an ampallang. To put things in perspective, this was done with a Gauntlet needle. We used to pierce with a needle pusher and put Band-Aids on our fingers, the whole time thinking that some tissue is just tough without realizing that our needles were just fucking dull! *[laughs]* So it was one of these dull Gauntlet needles later and I had my ampallang done. It was the single most painful thing I’ve ever felt in my life. But I’ll tell you what, I couldn’t get off that bench, I was so high. It was amazing. Later, I had altered orgasms and such. It was really cool. Eventually I had a boyfriend that didn’t like it and I took it out; it happens to the best of us.

Around that time, we started talking about getting me hired at Gauntlet. Elayne was doing all of their bookkeeping, and I was working elsewhere. I took the only job I could get at the time, which was answering phones. I found out that if you didn’t screw up, showed

up every day and had a good attitude, they just kept promoting you! *[laughs]* Even if you weren't qualified, they just kept promoting you! Eventually I had to go take accounting classes. Now you're in accounts payable, now you're in accounts receivable, now you're the supervisor of this department and are overseeing five people. It was crazy, but it wasn't what I wanted to do. I knew I wanted to have my own business one day, I just didn't know what kind it would be. I could see that there was enough business, even though I knew piercing was a marginal, underground fetish. And I thought: you know what, this might actually pan out. So I said to Elayne, "I will do your accounting if you teach me how to pierce."

Elayne said she would hire me if I could get a year of being clean and sober. Oops, cat's out of the bag. So the short of it is that's why I wasn't hired in 1990. It wasn't until 1991 when I had been clean and sober for a year. It was cute. I decided I was going to be very professional. I showed up in a suit and tie for my interview with Elayne, gave her my updated resume and everything.

So one day, this woman came into Gauntlet asking, "Do you guys know where I can find a T&P party?"

And I'm like, "What?"

She says, "You know, a T&P party."

"What's a T&P party?"

"You know, tattoo and piercing."

So I'm rolling my eyes; I was a little shit. I was in my early twenties. She leaves and I'm like "Oh my god. A T&P party?" I told Peter Morrison [then jeweler at Gauntlet], "You wouldn't believe this stupid woman that came in asking about T&P parties!" Peter said, "Yeah, it means tattoo and piercing. Haven't you ever heard of them?" And all of a sudden the tables turned, and I showed just how ignorant and stupid I was.

I could kick myself for this, but in the original Gauntlet, there was this little tiny, piece of crap staircase going into a cellar, and that was where the stock pile of *PFIQ* magazines were. That's where a lot of them got damaged. I think that's where the jewelers initially were. What a little shithole. We eventually expanded their space. There was this weird stuff, like filing cabinets

that hadn't been moved since it'd opened. We used to have this tool chest, and that's where our tools were kept. There was some weird stuff that looked like medieval torture devices. I'm sad to say a lot of that stuff didn't make the move. And who knew that a lot of that stuff was our history? We had some reusable biopsy punches if you can believe that. *[laughs]* I only used them maybe twice. I pierced a friend's ear with it and he asked, "How's it look?" and I said, "It looks good." It looked like he had been in a car accident, horrible.

I feel like when I stepped into the world of body piercing it was like walking into a damn bomb. Within a year it blew up! It went from this cute little thing where we're downstairs to us doing three or five or six magazine and television interviews a week. It was crazy.

Q: So, the uvula piercing...

Jon Cobb and I met in 1993. He was this cute adorable guy, really bubbly energy, really nice. He was obviously in his own head a lot. He had a little bit of OCD going on. We're talking and he's picking my brain and he says, "You know, there's something I've always wanted to do. I want to pierce my uvula." And even in '93 I'm like, "Really?" Honestly, if he wasn't cute, the conversation probably would've stopped right there.

Jon starts telling me the ideas he has, like, "Yeah so I'm gonna cut down the needle, and I'll get some Elmer's glue or something that'll wear off of the barbell so I can stick it to one side of the forceps." So I'm listening to this train wreck procedure and I asked him, "What about your gag reflex?" He starts sticking his fingers into the back of his throat and says, "I've been pulling at it for six months!" So we did it. It was his idea, and I give him full credit for it.

I had the second uvula piercing ever. After the jewelry was in, I started vomiting and vomiting and vomiting; this combination of dry heaves and gagging, then calming down, then gagging, and then calming down. I finally made it home, I had it in for maybe an hour and half, and I took some hemostats and took that thing right out. Jon had his for years without any problem. He probably still has it for all I know.

Q: Was the piercing community, once more established after the opening and subsequent success of Gauntlet, seen as a "safe" or more welcoming community for gay men and women compared to outside the piercing community?

Let's be honest, prior to the Aerosmith video the community was pretty much freak show and queer. Almost all the piercers I knew, even outside of Gauntlet—and there wasn't very many—were all queer. It was accepting because that's who was doing it and that's who the vast majority of our customers were.

Part of our training was "wanker" protocol: how to deal with masturbation phone calls. Not to freak out or call the police, but more like, alright this is what you do. If they're asking for a woman, always give them to a man. If they're asking for a man, always give them to a woman. We literally had to have protocol because it was such a common occurrence. So it was very fetish and queer oriented. Not a very typical job at all.

Q: If not for the gay/BDSM/kink culture, could body piercing as we know it today have formed in the first place?

That's a really hard hypothetical question. On one hand, you have the pioneers: The main motivation and drive was from kinky people, particularly queer people. On the other hand, what has ultimately attracted people to body piercing has nothing to do with that. So you wouldn't have had that initial drive, but somewhere you had that flip where it became about something completely different.

That's a great question, but it's really hard to answer. Because even initially when it was starting to make its roots, much of early punk started around a sex shop. So even as far back as that, the whole music scene and alternative fashion and culture was all about the taboo of sex and capitalizing on it and making a fashion out of it. As much as I hate to say it, that's what piercing is too: fashion.

It certainly would have been very different. I think a big part of where it is now has only a nod to where it was.

All right, here's a for instance: while Vaughan and Esther may have had some kink—I don't know a whole lot about their sex lives—he seemed to have more of a love

of the piercing. He just really loved piercing. I don't think there was as much kink in it. And I could be dead wrong about that, but I never got that impression from Vaughan, that he was a part of the BDSM culture. And for all I know he was straight too. He was an integral part of the San Francisco scene. He opened up Body Manipulations before Gauntlet San Francisco opened, though Jim was already piercing up here. So a lot of the gay community was getting pierced at Gauntlet, but a lot of the straight population was getting pierced at Body Manipulations.

And then the straight community also started stretching their ears. You want to talk about critical, you can't stress enough about Nomad's impact. They put stretched ears on the map. We did stretching at Gauntlet; the first eyelets were made by Gauntlet, but we were so narrow with, "How big are people going to go with their ears?" We never put the energy into diversifying ear jewelry, really. That was all Nomad did. From a cultural standpoint, you can't stress it enough. From a business standpoint, it was genius. We knew people were stretching their PAs, why didn't we think they'd do it for their ears? So they got a big clientele, and a loyal clientele. They by far had the most ridiculous collection of ear jewelry; amazing. I think they were integral in spreading that. When Blake [Perlingieri, original owner of Nomad Body Piercing in San Francisco, first opened in 1993] went to New York, he took that love of stretched ears with him. And whatever piercing you have, it is the best advertisement that you can do. You can sell more of that piercing.

Q: Within the piercing community in the 1970's-1990's, were the gay piercers generally accepted and free from prejudice from straight body piercers?

Up through the 1990s there was still enough queer presence, particularly as long as Gauntlet was around. Then piercers became like a virus.

So, what is a piercer? If you're putting holes in people does that make you a piercer? And you have no idea what you're doing, and you have no idea of your history, no training at all, but you're putting holes in people? Okay, you're a piercer. So that piercer exploded overnight and they would have been just as filled with hate.

I was at a lecture in Oakland, CA, and a "piercer" said, "Yeah, I wanna get my nipples pierced, but only faggots get them pierced." And I thought, "Not only did you have that thought, but you just let a room full of body piercers know you had that thought."

Q: What year was this?

A month or two ago. I thought, you have got to be kidding me.

So that runs into another thing: It's weird when somebody is homophobic, and they say, "I know what you guys have done is great and all, but..."

So yeah, seventies it was only queer.

In the eighties there were maybe a couple of exceptions. A master or mistress here and there were doing it. So yes, it was very accepting.

The nineties was when you saw an influx of knucklehead tattoo artists, not all tattoo artists, but the knucklehead ones, give their wives and their girlfriends something to do. Here, go poke holes in people. That's when you saw the culture change. It definitely started to change in the nineties.

Q: So there was homophobia present within the community once there were more straight body piercers?

That gets back to, what is community?

I saw my community as educated piercers. So this may be a little weird, but the educated piercers then, I would say, displayed less homophobia than the educated piercers now. And the reason I say that is, then, the educated straight piercers very much understood that they were coming into queer territory. The non-educated ones? Yeah, there was plenty of homophobia from people that didn't care to read or research.

Once piercing exploded, it was commonplace to hear, "I don't want to pierce a guy's dick. What do you think I am a faggot?" Or you know, it costs an extra \$100 if you want to have your genitals pierced.

The fact that Gauntlet charged the same price for everything from navels to genitals was symbolically profound. Something as simple as you getting your nipple pierced, or your navel pierced, or your penis pierced or your clitoral hood, or your clit pierced: \$25. I never realized how profound it was. What

it's saying is there is no difference and there is no shame. Whether I'm piercing your genitals or I'm piercing your cartilage it is all the same, and that is why we price it the same. It sends a message to the client, but it also says something about the piercer.

If you're straight, you're going to have to get used to handling a guy's cock, and vice versa. And even with Jim, very early on, he may not have known inner labia from outer labia, but he found out, and he didn't let it stand in his way.

I see the community as a community of educated piercers that care about piercing. The peripheral, you know like the little nail shop that was sticking people with needles, I never really saw that as the community. So the homophobia, I never saw it because they weren't piercers to me.

What you have now is the new generation, where you can get perfectly great, not just good, but great training. And it won't include anything about history, and it will certainly never bring you into contact with anyone that is queer. And so there is no challenge to that, and that's how you get homophobic statements like the one I heard a month ago. You're a professional piercer in an educated environment with queers in the room, talking this smack? Oh, and you're a person of color? That gets me to no end. The stuff that comes out of people's mouths that are hated is amazing.

So, in some ways, queer piercers are such a minority now; we're not even in the "10%".

Q: In reading Jim's book, *Running The Gauntlet*, or any of the early *PFIQ* or *Body Play* magazines, we can see body piercing started predominantly amongst the Gay BDSM/kink scene. When did you notice it start to stray away from that culture and become more popular amongst the rest of the public?

It happened in about 1993, maybe as early as 1992. It all goes back to the *Sun Tabloid* and *National Enquirer*. Those were the big ones. There were a bazillion little magazine articles here and there that piqued people's interest.

I think the celebrities had a huge impact on it too. It's like Naomi Campbell wasn't getting her navel pierced because she's getting

place that I know of that took play piercing out of the bedroom and brought it into the public space. Actually, Elayne was one of the first people to do it, if not the first. I think she should get credit for that. It's weird; I don't think of her as a performance artist at all—no offense—but she was probably the only person who could do it.

And then of course, scene piercing, as in piercing within the context of an BDSM scene.

Really early on, Jim made it his mission to educate. He would do performances and go to BDSM clubs. So even though piercing was already in BDSM circles, he would still show demos and create more interest there. When I was in LA, the public speaking was still taking place in all the BDSM groups, the

queer ones, the pansexual ones, the straight ones. Somewhere along the way Jim started getting invited to talk at schools. It's when he went to San Francisco all that got handed to me. I was asked to speak for a human sexuality course by a San Francisco State University professor. It was this huge auditorium and all these students were hearing the joys of piercing *[laughs]*. It was 1994 when we started getting into the student populations. I don't want to sound terrible, like it was an hour and half long infomercial, but on one hand it was. On the other, it dispelled so many of the bad concepts and misinformation.

At this point Paul starts to yawn, which then makes me yawn. He's been talking for over three hours. It's obvious now that we're both pretty tired. We end the interview and say our goodbyes.

I got home several days later and didn't get around to starting on this article for a couple of weeks. (I was a bit intimidated by the hours of audio I had to type out.) When I finally got around to it and hit play on the recorder, I found myself sucked in by Paul's stories and experiences all over again. The thing that still resonates most with me from that interview was a quote from Paul that has stuck in my head ever since: "As far as history is concerned, if it wasn't documented or recorded, it never happened. That person's story never happened." **P**



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