



ROCK STAR BY DAY, CEO BY NIGHT

HOW THE LEAD SINGER OF GOOD CHARLOTTE IS LEAVING AN IMPRINT ON THE TATTOO BUSINESS.

BY MIGUEL COSTA
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The wheels of time have been kind to Joel Madden from the band Good Charlotte, molding his evolution from a pop-punk frontman during the MTV generation of yesteryear to a businessman thriving in the golden age of music platforms, social media, and tattoo culture.

Early tribulations from one of Madden's first proprietary efforts with MADE Clothing caused a slight hiccup in his business portfolio. However, the consequential fallout during the 2000s helped elevate his perspective on artist empowerment in the ensuing decades. This ultimately led to transferable principles that Madden applied to his current ventures as the co-founder of MDDN artist and brand management, CEO of VEEPs live concert streaming, co-owner of *Alternative Press* magazine, and host of an interview web series fittingly titled "Artist Friendly."

His transformation toward being a "tattooee" is just as compelling. Twenty-two years ago, when he and his bandmates dropped their classic sophomore album "The Young and the Hopeless," Madden's neck, arms, and hands were practically bare. It's an obvious footnote in the band's early music videos like "The Motivation Proclamation" and "The Anthem."

Most of Madden's body is covered in tattoos now and he's the host of "Ink Master," the longest-running tattoo reality show on television. This fall, he enters his third season with the cast and crew. For some, adding more work to an already jam-packed schedule might seem exhausting, but the Los Angeles resident views his latest television gig as a departure from the hustle and bustle of overseeing multiple companies close to home.



"We film in Vancouver. I usually fly in for four or five days, shoot, and fly home for two or three days," Madden said. "There are aspects of it that aren't as flexible, but we all make it work. I do have a lot of downtime in between [filming] on set. I have a little mobile office set up, so I get a lot done with no problem when I'm there."

"The show is kind of a nice break. I get to get out of LA [and] I get to go to a beautiful place. I love it," he said. "It's a nice little thing in my year where I get to go and do something different that I actually really enjoy. It's one of the few things that I get to do that doesn't hinge on me. What's at stake are all the tattoo artists. They're all fighting to win the competition."

Job duties aside, the annual film setting presents Madden with a unique opportunity for about six or seven weeks to survey some of the world's brightest tattooists, from the tenured judges, Ryan Ashley and Nikko Hurtado to DJ Tambe, the winningest contestant in the history of "Ink Master."

Every day, tattoo aficionados in vintage, realism, traditional Americana, fine-line, black and grey, Japanese-style, and more, stimulate the mogul's appetite for new ink. His standing appointment with renowned tattoo artist Scott Campbell has all signs pointing to his sideburns and the area near his temples as the most likely destinations for upcoming pieces. This leaves little room for tweaking previous concepts with incoming body art from others. Still, the long-time ink enthusiast maintains he will likely divvy out the remaining areas of his skin that haven't been

"There's so much more to a successful tattoo career than just putting ink on people's skin. You're a creative director — you're getting opportunities to collaborate with heritage and legacy brands. You're getting all of these opportunities if you're art is good and you stand out. For me, it's a cool career choice for an artist, if they have a passion for it. TikTok, Instagram, and digital media have expanded the reach of what a tattoo artist can do, who can see it, and where they can work. I love where tattooing is at and I'm excited. It's cool to see all these new tattoo artists come up and make their own way."

While Madden views artists as the most valuable people in the landscape of tattooing, AI is an unignorable factor in how they earn their income. In recent years, the technology has spelled the end for several creatives in Hollywood and the media. Nevertheless, as someone who made a career out of adapting to change, Madden believes there is a way for the top artists to remain at the forefront of their craft in a time of exponential growth for the business.

"AI is here and I think AI will be a part of our future forever," Madden said. "As far as AI finding its way into the tattoo space? People are already using it for art. [It] isn't perfect as far as creating something that has as much edge as something that someone talented drew themselves. But I think that the really creative people will use it the best and it will give them some kind of advantage or edge that maybe they didn't have."

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reserved for Campbell's tattoo needles to his co-stars on set. In a recent interview with *Inked Magazine*, Madden stated that he wants to "get tattooed by all of the judges on the show." He also revealed that he and Tambe have been brainstorming ideas to finish up his leg tattoos.

"Ink Master" is on the shortlist of tattoo TV shows that have significantly contributed to the thriving profession since "LA Ink" first blazed the trail in 2007. Today, the major Hollywood studios, celebrities, artists, and their diverse clientele are all a part of the tattoo industry's echo system. Madden has a front-row seat as the billion-dollar market continues to unfold all around him — whether he's interacting with fellow talent on filming days, planning his upcoming tour with Good Charlotte, sealing more business deals with his brothers Benji and Josh, or interviewing an award-winning hip-hop producer on his podcast. Industrial and societal changes have ushered in a new era of visibility for the unsung heroes of the pop culture phenomenon, and several of Madden's associates have inked their way into lucrative revenue streams from this recognition.

"It's important that the artists can survive with their art, thrive, live in a world where becoming a tattoo artist is a career choice, and it is a respected line of work," Madden said. "I think that tattoo artists are some of the most compelling and charismatic artists that I've ever met and generally [they] don't get a lot of credit."

"In the last 10 years or so, the culture has shifted where these superstars in tattooing have emerged," he continued, explaining,

For Madden, doing business and getting inked by some of the world's most adaptive artists is a family affair steeped in nearly 27 years of tradition. He and his identical twin, Benji, endeared themselves to the artists and their stencils since they were teens. His 14-year-old son Sparrow is likely to get his first tattoo during his adolescence as well. Much like the Irish flag on his right arm, Madden hopes his son's introduction to tattoo culture is met with a sentimental connection. The married father of two already green-lit the upcoming affair, with a few parental provisions.

"I want him to feel like he's doing what he wants to do with his body, but I would love to be there," Madden said. "I've wrapped my head around it a little bit and thought that 16 is probably a good age. It's kind of like a rite of passage. He's going to pick it; I'm not going to pick it. I just want to help him find the right artist. If it's an artist that I love, great, but I just want to make sure he has some discernment about the artist and help him find his way without trying to control it. I tell him, 'Yo, just follow artists [on social media]. In two years, when you're ready to get a tattoo, you'll know who you want to get tattooed by. It likely won't be easy, you'll have to wait, figure out when they can tattoo you, and learn the process of it.' it's fun."

As time wages on, the prospect of a first timer commissioning a tattoo at a studio owned by Madden might not be out of the realm of possibilities. In the past, he mulled over a few offers to kickstart his own shop, but for now, his primary focus in the tattoo industry is on the future of the artists.