

# This Tattoo Machine is Off the Chain

## (Full disclosure: Apologies to my roommate ahead of time)

Erik Schmidt, Assistant Editor

People covered gauge to tibia in tattoos are — **WARNING:** terrible pun forthcoming — *colorful* individuals.

Groan inducing, yes — but truer than the blue-soaked dermis layer of infamous ink fiend The Enigma (if you're not familiar with the tattoo/sideshow icon, he's basically an R-rated version of Papa Smurf who eats fire and twirls chainsaws). Though other altered individuals obviously operate on a much less extreme plane of body modification, there seems to be a definite link between the ink and the irregular.

It's like some sort of artsy-fartsy sacrificial pact.

I should know. My roommate is a tattoo artist. He has a narwhal tattooed on his right calf and a black ring hooked in his nostril.

Don't get it twisted, though. As much as some "normal" folk will sneer or clutch their purses tight as tatted heathens stroll by, tattooers and tattooees are by no means *bad* people (full dis-

closure: My roommate is far more likely to spend his weekends playing Nintendo than causing any sort of ruckus). But they are, more often than not, *different* ones (more full disclosure: My roommate, for whatever reason, has a black and grey portrait of his former boss's ex-wife tattooed on his right thigh).

So...yeah.

These are without question unique human beings we're talking about here, ones who have had — for lack of a better term — a slight chemical imbalance since birth (even more full disclosure: My roommate spends more money on Amiibo figurines and movie posters than he does on rent).

Clearly, these are not people tethered to the ropes of reality.

This is why it's all the more surprising that they've gone so long operating machines with cords attached to them.

Well, leave it to the people who helped put a manmade vessel on a comet tearing through space to finally give tattoo artists total uninhibited freedom: Introducing the "Unchained" cordless tattoo machine from Swisstattoomachine, powered by Maxon Motors.

Unchained? Yup — this machine is literally off the hook.

Released in the summer of 2014, the Unchained took Swisstattoomachine CEO Enrico Friedli three and half years to develop. It uses Maxon's RE 13 DC motor with 2.5 W. The motor has an ironless rotor and high-power, rare-earth permanent magnets.

OK, so that's pretty cool. And there's a weird little place in my heart that sings for all the tattooed oddballs out there clamoring for a beautifully twisted world without wires. But the real question is: Is there any substance to all this style?

"It's quiet and it's long life," said In-cremotion Inc. President Dan Jones on the benefits of this type of motor for a cordless tattoo machine. "And, most importantly, it's extremely accurate."

In a business that centers on inserting indelible ink into skin, that last part seems particularly valuable. Getting a medium-sized toothed whale etched into your body is a sketchy enough proposition without having to worry about blown out lines on its jagged little horn.

According to Maxon, the Unchained hardly makes any noise and has very low vibrations. It's also lightweight, something that is important for artists that need to hold the tattoo machine in their hands for hours on end. At 140 gram, the Unchained is only 20 gram heavier than its predecessor model, which has a power cord. The number of strokes per minute can be adjusted at the device, ranging from 3,000 to 6,000. Hygiene is another added benefit, as typically the cord of a tattoo machine must be wrapped in a plastic hose to prevent any sort of contamination.

"I have a lot more freedom of movement and don't have to be careful about the power cord," Swiss tattoo artist Alena Lizier told Maxon Motor's magazine *Driven* last year.

In the same article, Friedli added:

"By their nature, rotary machines are much less noisy and produce less vibration than coil machines. This makes them an ideal choice for liners, machines used for outlines and black ink drawings. They are also reliable, durable and low maintenance. However, I think that coil machines will always find buyers, if only out of pure nostalgia, similar to vinyl records."

(Which brings me to one last bit of full disclosure: My roommate once dated a pink-haired girl who claimed that Jack White — yeah, *that* Jack White — had the best-selling vinyl record of all-time).

Turns out she was only off by about 40 million.

Luckily for my roommate, the Unchained has proven to be much more accurate. **PTE**

