



RACING EXTINCTION

Petros Ballas and his brother Panos have just one mission—to save the ocean. And they’ve recruited a team of artists to help. Rebecca Givens chats to the Crying Oceans founder about what’s happening to our oceans and how the tattoo industry intends to do something about it.



Green Turtle entangled in a fishing net and strangled to death.

What is the Crying Oceans project and how did it start?

Myself and my brother, we were brought up in Greece, next to the sea. Our memories have always involved blue waters—the beautiful Greek beaches have embedded in me a really strong sense of belonging with the oceans. We have a connection to the great liquid lakes that cover this wonderful spinning rock, a connection that runs deep in our lives, and it stings quite a lot to see what we’re doing to them.

I felt that we had been given a responsibility to take care of it all, but I knew that there was only so much I could

do on my own! We wanted to do something, we knew that people liked good clothing, and we knew how inclusive and forward thinking the underground and alternative scene can be.

Crying Oceans collaborates with tattoo artists from around the world to create the best looking ocean-saving t-shirts. 30% of all profits are donated to organisations that fight for the deep blue and money also goes back to the artists. We are already proud supporters of Sea Shepards and we can’t wait to open up and start working with even more amazing organisations!

Why did you choose to focus on the ocean specifically?

After watching the documentary *Racing Extinction* I said to myself “I need to do something”. The film left me heartbroken and devastated to say the least. As I watched, tears rolling down my cheeks, I wondered why these amazing creatures come to meet such violent deaths. The why is pretty obvious though—it comes down to greed! The great beauties of our oceans are being unnecessarily and often cruelly killed for the consumer’s whim and insatiable appetite. It’s really a pathway to self-destruction and we ought to wake up before it’s too late.



T-SHIRT DESIGN: ALFREDO PIRIGENTS



THE CRYING OCEANS TATTOO ARTIST TEAM

Not all heroes wear capes. Shout out to the best, baddest and most efficient ocean defenders on the planet...

Abel Miranda, Alex The Jem, Alfredo Pirigents, Angelianna Koroniou, Ashley Tyson, Carina Schmidt, Carolin Walch, Chloe Aspey, Christian Vetea, Dale Frame, Delphine Noiztoy, Doug Hand, Dustin S Kaiju, Eftim Rusev, Ernest Graves, Eva Szolnoki, Faye Retinioti, Gabriele Fiorenza, Hannah Flowers, Hannah Keuls, Hanumantra, Henry Hate, Immoral Youth, Irene Fraenkl-Riotti, James Robinson, Jo Harrison, Joanne Baker, Jonny Firth, Juano San, Kayne Sherwood, Kirk Budden, Lady Chappelle, Laura Firth, Liz Mason, Luke Jinks, Malvina Maria Wisniewska, Marvin Fitzner, Matthew James, Meehow Kotarski, Miguel Angel, Mike Stout, Naresh Bhana, Nick Divine, Nick Whybrow, Nikole Lowe, Paul Goodwin, Paul Talbot, Pete Goerlitz, Riley Alexander, Rob DeCor, Rose Harley, Sam Carver, Sophie Rose, Stacey Night, Sven Babuzi, Szidonia Csenge Gergely, Tom Maggot, Tzenio Pirigents, Vicky Morgan

Countless manta rays in Indonesia are being fished, hacked and chopped up for superstitious remedies or elegant gourmet dishes. Over 300 whales are slaughtered each year by so-called 'researchers' in Japanese waters in what is, if you ask me, just a well-disguised whale hunt. Of those that were slaughtered during the 2017 / 2018 season, 122 of them were pregnant—we are talking about a whole generation of whales being wiped out and lost, as females only give birth to one calf a year, sometimes every second year. There is absolutely no excuse for the slaughter of hundreds of these beautiful ocean giants.

It is a privilege to live in a country which is surrounded by sea, yet a daunting thought often crosses my mind in the midst of my peaceful surroundings... what is going on down there in the blue? Is the ocean suffering due to our indifference?

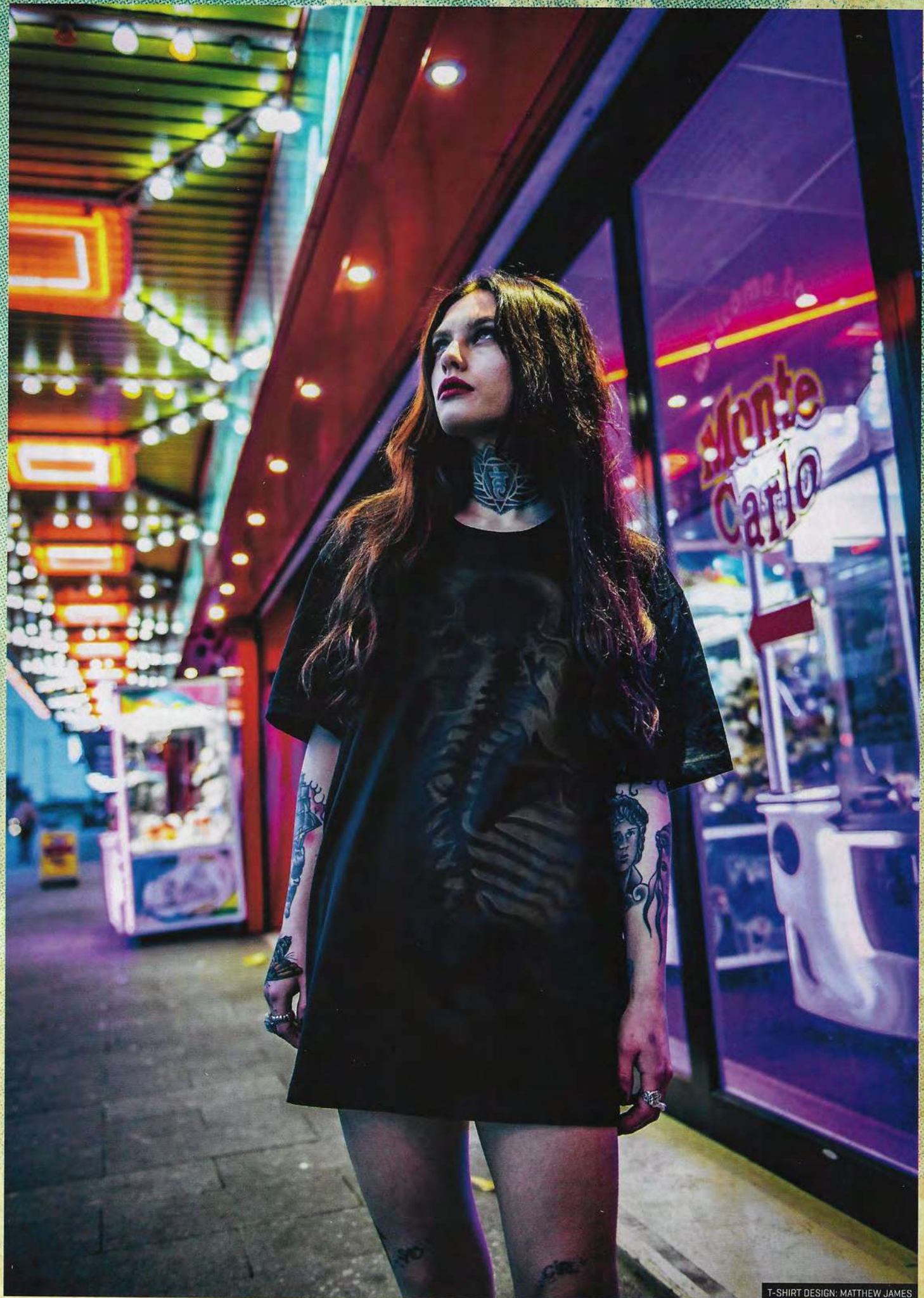
I think a lot of people don't realise how badly the oceans need looking after right now.

Yes, I agree, they don't. Maybe some people do but not enough, and I'm including myself too. For ages man has exploited the deep blues, for money, and eventually for greed. We think that its rich resources will never end and yet today we have so many species that are endangered, such as whales, sharks and dolphins. It's all down to a greedy mindset, like a person who piles up their dinner plate just to throw half away.

About 90% of all large shark species have been fished out of the oceans in the last 50 years or so. We can't begin to perceive the danger this places in



An Atlantic Grey Seal, tragically caught in remainings of fishing net in Norfolk England.



T-SHIRT DESIGN: MATTHEW JAMES



Sea Shepherd



Shark fins dried under the hot sun at fisherman village in Asia.



Dead endangered sea turtle washed up on beach with fishing net wrapped around it



Minke whale tangled up in a fishing net.



Plastic-Sea

the ocean's ecosystem. Sharks as predators contribute to the swimming formations and act as forms of camouflage for many species of smaller fish. Without sharks, this would be seriously tampered with. What's worse is the horrific way in which most sharks are fished and left to die a slow and painful death at the bottom of the ocean beds, helpless and bleeding to death. Meanwhile man sips on a soup made from its fins, in a civilised manner, paying a highly civilised price for it. Who is the beast in this story?

As we well know, where there's a demand, sure enough, there will be a supplier, especially if the demand becomes lucrative. How come shark fin trade is illegal, yet at any time one could walk into a top-notch Chinese restaurant here in London and order a bowl or two of shark fin soup?

The oceans are in danger and it needs people like you and me to do what is necessary to protect and restore them back to what we knew them to be.

Is plastic a big focus when thinking about why the ocean is in trouble?

Plastic is indeed one of the biggest issues—it really is a



Whaling in the Faroe Islands

horror show!

Just a few months ago in a canal in the province of Songkhla, a dead whale was spotted which (according to locals) just before it died, spat out five plastic bags. An autopsy was then carried out only to discover that this pilot whale had 80 big black rubbish plastic bags in its stomach. A total of eight kilos of human trash was found in



T-SHIRT DESIGN: KIRK BUDDEN

it, which is what ultimately killed this beautiful animal. I read about a marine biologist and lecturer at Kasetsart University who said that each year at least 300 sea animals including whales, dolphins, turtles and more die due to plastic. We use a lot of plastic and it must stop.

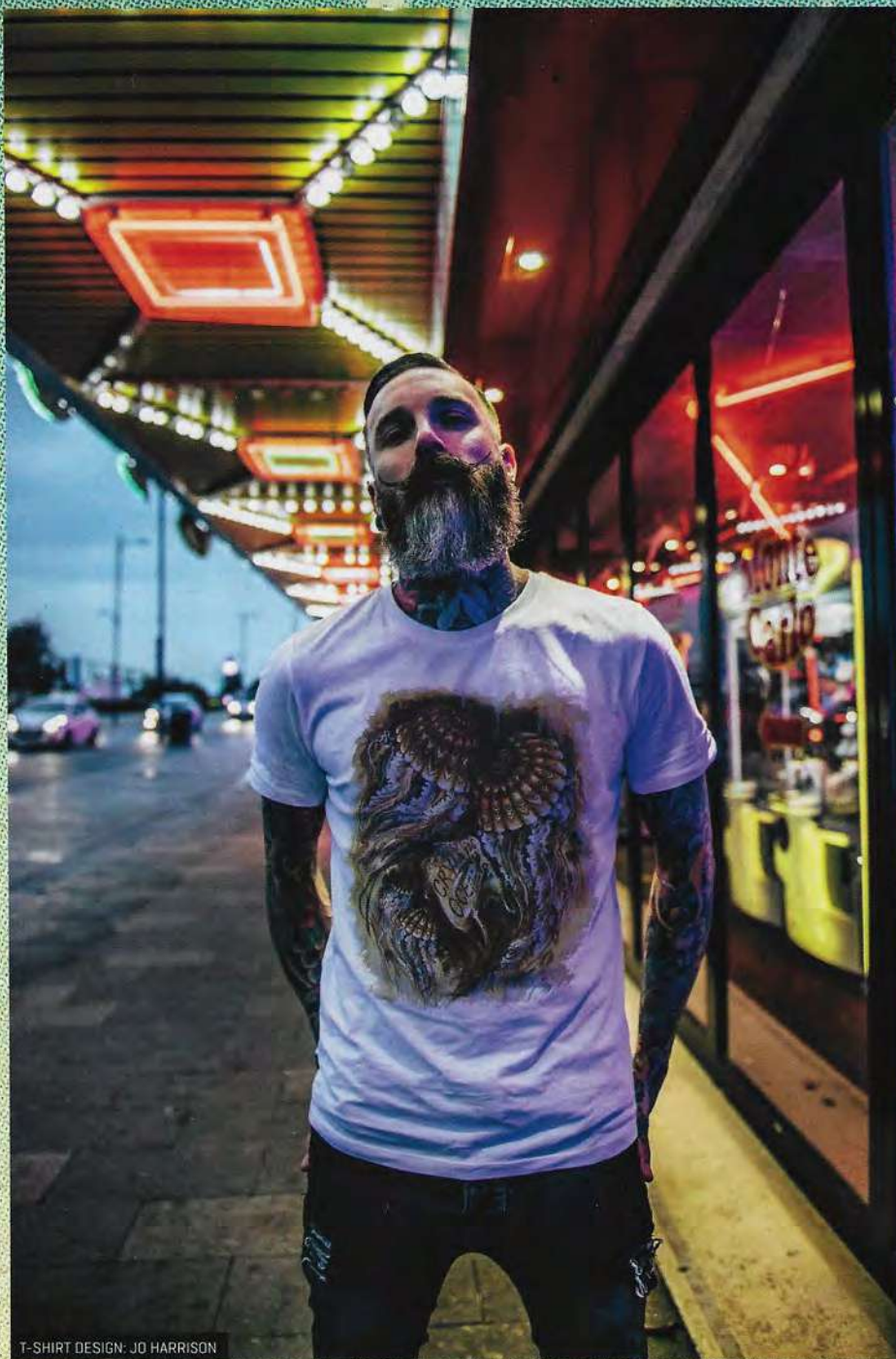
With more than eight million tons of plastic dropped in our oceans annually, is it not time we put our heads together for a solution? Next time you go shopping, whether with a bag, basket or trolley, just count the plastic items in there. You will most likely be shocked at discovering just how much of a problem we are causing for the environment.

Let's go deep into the merchandise you sell—you recently made some changes to the items, am I right?

Yes. Crying Oceans will only be using 100% organic cotton in our merchandise.

Polyester is all made from synthetic fibres and we found some brands that do use recycled plastic to create polyes-

ter clothing, which you would think is good, right? Taking plastic waste to turn it into clothing to reuse. But there are a couple of huge flaws to this process. Firstly, it encourages people to think that if you recycle you're doing a good job! Often our recycling efforts just end up in the ocean due to lack of infrastructure. The UK is currently dealing with a huge problem with waste being sent back due to it being exported illegally! Secondly, every time we wash synthetic fabrics, whether they are made from recycled plastic or brand new materials, really small tiny plastic pieces called microfibres wash off and flow down the drain. We're talking hundreds to thousands for each wash. These fibres are so tiny that water treatment filters don't catch them all, so it ends up in the ocean. And when the microfibres reach the ocean they act like sponges, sucking other pollutants around them—imagine mini bombs full of oil, pesticides and industrial chemicals that end up in the bellies of fish and eventually us. It's estimated that there are over 1.4



T-SHIRT DESIGN: JO HARRISON



million trillion microfibres in our oceans.

So, we have just recently changed our supplier and are now getting GOTS certified materials. GOTS is a rigorous certification for organic cotton material. It involves strict controls throughout the entire manufacturing process including ecological and social criteria, backed up by independent certification of the entire textile supply chain. Our new online store will be set to launch in Spring 2019.

So when up and running, where can customers expect their money to go when they buy from Crying Oceans?

We donate 30% of all profits to three non-profit organisations, 10% to each one. One of them being Sea Shepherd, who have waged a 12-year high-seas battle against whaling in the Southern ocean and have successfully saved thousands of my favourite giant mammals and brought the slaughter to the world's attention. If you're unfamiliar with Sea Shepherd then know that they are the ones



T-SHIRT DESIGN: NICK DEVINE



meeting those gross, barbarous whaling ships head on. They're the crazy guys who go into the middle of the ocean and scuttle illegal whaling ships, defending the whales with their own ships when they need to. Sea Shepherd was initially set up by Paul Watson in 1977 under the name Earth Force Society, but has now evolved into a recognisable and punk-rock ocean activist group who have also gained a great backing from the alternative music scene.



Why did you choose to get the tattoo industry on board?

I was brought up with tattoos and throughout my life people with tattoos have always been the ones who are brave enough to make a statement, even if that statement is a permanent mark on their body. We, as Crying Oceans, are trying to make a statement, we're trying to fight for

our oceans. We choose to work with the underdogs because they're always the ones to get it done. If you look at history, the biggest revolts, and the ones that formed community to fight back against oppression, always came from the ones at the bottom of the pile.

So how can our readers get involved?

Because of changing our supplier, our new store has been slightly delayed but will be launched in Spring 2019. In the meantime, follow us on Instagram @cryingoceans.team and head on over to cryingoceans.com where everything will be kicking off soon!

And if you're a tattoo artist, we would love it if you joined us! We need as many artists as possible to spread the word and fight for this cause—email lui@cryingoceans.com or DM us on Instagram to become part of the team. ▣