

# *A Real* American Cruiser

BY JULIAN "MR. J" BRAET



*A real hot rod,  
real paint —  
and a snap  
back to reality.*

I'VE DONE A LOT of work for the members of this car club. I lettered their banner(s) and I've attended their car shows. So when I got a call from their president asking if I would letter their new *hot rod*, I told him to bring it right over.

It's really great to do work for people that not only respect your talents, but are on the same page as you are in terms of what looks right on their particular vehicle.

After a brief meeting, it was decided that I would duplicate their banner on both sides of the car. This hot rod is driven to all the car shows that the club attends and is parked every Saturday night at the club's own cruise night. This weekly car show attracts about 250 to 300 hot rods, custom, muscle cars and tucks from the tri-state area, so they wanted something that would stand out. It would also be a way to show off some of my work.

At first, I thought that the size of the artwork was too large for the car, but when you see it at a show or on the road it fits just right.

All the lettering and pinstriping was done with Ronan lettering enamels, using a low temp reducer and a couple of drops of automotive paint hardener.

The brushes that were used were a 1/2" Jet Stroke lettering brush and a #6 Brown lettering quill. For

the pinstriping I used an Xcaliber 00 striping brush.

All the airbrushing was done with an Iwata Eclipse dual action airbrush at 35-lbs. psi.

This was of course a lot of fun to do. It's not often that I get to hand letter an entire job. It helps to snap you back to reality. Sometimes when you get caught up in this high-tech world of computers, you forget how great it is to get your hands dirty and get back to the real art of lettering and painting.

Of course you could take a digital photo of the banner, scan it in, clean it up, digitally output the graphics, apply them to the vehicle and walk away.

Nah, I think I'll still do these jobs the way they were meant to be done — by hand.

*Keep your brush wet,  
— Julian*

*Julian "Mr. J" Braet owns Mr. J's Signs and Graphics in Lyndhurst, N.J., and is the creator of Xcaliber striping brushes and preservative. For more methods to the madness, visit Mr. J's Web site at [www.xcaliberart.com](http://www.xcaliberart.com) or check out his three-volume Video Classroom series, Jersey Style Airbrush and Lettering. Send comments to Mr. J at [jxcal@aol.com](mailto:jxcal@aol.com).*



## A REAL AMERICAN CRUISER

CONTINUED



1

Here's our canvas. It's a 1948 Ford panel delivery van. The hot rod has had some modern upgrades, like a newer V-8 engine, transmission, etc. and the body has just been painted a beautiful black.



2

This is a banner that I created for the car club a couple of years ago, using their artwork. I will paint this on both sides of the car.



3

I created a paper pattern using the banner as a guide. I first sketch the layout using some charcoal (sticks), and follow up with a black magic marker. When I'm satisfied with the layout, I pounce the pattern using my Electro-Pounce machine. This actually burns small holes in the paper that will allow me to transfer my design to the car.



4

I clean the surface with a Windex type of cleaner first. Then I use Rapid-Prep, to remove any wax or polish before I begin to letter the car. Since I'm going to pinstripe the car also, I go ahead and prep the areas that I will stripe later. I tape the pattern to the car's side and using my pounce bag, I rub baby powder onto the pattern.



5

Here's a close-up of the pattern. You can see the tiny pounce holes the machine has made. Also you can see that there are top, bottom and center guide lines to help keep the lettering in proportion.



6

I dust off the excess powder and apply some green fine line tape to the top and bottom of the copy. I mix some white Ronan lettering enamel white with a little silver to help it cover. I also add a couple of drops of automotive paint hardener to give it some extra strength. I use high temp reducers for thinning the paint. Note: All the lettering and pinstriping used on this job is lettering enamel. The brush that I'm using is 1/2" Jet Stroke lettering brush. I'm also using my trusty mahl stick, (it's visible under my hand) to help me keep my hand off the pounce pattern.



7

I usually wait about 15 to 20 minutes before I start to airbrush. This gives the base some time to tack up. I mix some medium orange and chrome yellow together, reduce it 60% thinners to 40% paint. This is the first airbrushed color. I'm using my Iwata Eclipse airbrush at 35-lbs. psi. Note: I'm wearing latex gloves and a charcoal respirator. You also need plenty of ventilation.



8

Here I'm airbrushing some medium orange with a small amount of fire red added.



9

To finish the airbrushing, I mix some bright red and rubine red to accent the bottom of the lettering.



10

This shows the logo after I drew over it with a white Stabilo pencil (a water based crayon-like pencil). You can also see that there is some over spray around the lettering. I will let it dry and remove it later with some reducers.



11

I begin by painting the flag in first, using the same white base coat that I used for the lettering. Again, I'm using a 1/2" Jet Stroke brush and my mahl stick.



12

I finished the red and white of the flag. Next I paint in the land. The area to the left is for the stars. The custom Merc is going to be almost all white, so after the base is put on, I start to airbrush the shadows and highlights.

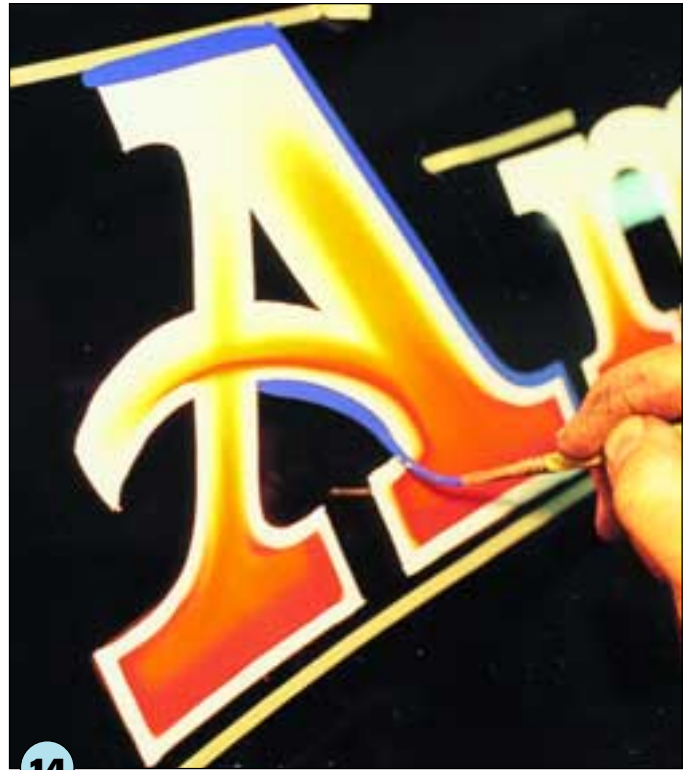
## A REAL AMERICAN CRUISER

CONTINUED



13

With all of the logo colors added and air-brushed, I paint a white outline around all the main copy. I'm using a #6 Brown Quill. You can see how this cleans up the lettering.



14

I allow the white to dry (about 2 hours) and mix process blue and brilliant blue for the final outline. I'm using the green fine line on the tops and bottoms again.



15



16

Here's some of the pinstriping that I added to the car to break up the large black areas. I used an Xcaliber 00 pinstriping brush and Ronan's white and bright red with a couple of drops of hardener for extra strength.



17

Here's the finished logo. I made another pattern and hand painted the address on in white.

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