

The Great Cover-Up

BY JULIAN "MR. J" BRAET



*But Doc,
it's only a
scratch...*

About the author: Mr. J 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, check out Mr. J's three-volume Video Classroom series, Jersey Style Airbrush & Lettering. Youse can send questions about "Joisey Style" lettering to Mr. J at JXCAL@aol.com.

THE GREAT PINSTRIPER, *Von Dutch*, got into pinstriping literally by accident.

When I say by accident, I mean that Dutch was asked by a local body shop (in California of course) to try and cover up some marks on a car that were made by a grinder and were painted over by mistake.

Dutch reportedly got out his striping brush, and to everyone's amazement he covered up the marks with some really cool designs. The owner was so pleased with the results that he had Dutch pinstripe the entire car, and the rest is history.

As sign artists, body shops, car dealers and sometimes individual car owners often ask us to bail them out by covering up some *boo-boo* or another.

Sometimes the damage is too severe for us to repair or hide, and sometimes, like this article will show, you can get a little creative and have another satisfied customer.

The owner of this brand new 1999 Chevy *Xtreme* pick-up woke up one morning and found that someone had keyed the sides of the truck. So, to say that he was upset was an understatement.

He called me up and told me about his problem, and asked if I could take a look at his truck. I agreed to take a look at it and I would make some suggestions on how I could hide the scratches.

The damage on the truck was minimal. The scratches went from the door through the cab and ended on the rear fender. The scratch on the door was the deepest and before any graphics were to

be applied I would sand the scratches down (I used 1000-grit wet and dry sandpaper). This was going to be a real challenge.

Not only would I have to cover up the scratches, but I'd have to come up with a pleasing design too.

To help me get a better feel for the pick-up, I turned to my trusty pro-vehicle outline CD by Digital Auto Library. I made a side view of the truck and printed out about five or six in wire form.

Like many other projects, I start by laying out some designs in pencil. Next, I pick one or two I like, and use some colored pencils to give it some life. These sketches are only to sell the job and use as reference material for the actual job.

Since this was a one-time deal, I didn't get carried away with details.

I showed the customer only two of the sketches. I learned a long time ago that two or three sketches at the most is all the customer needs to see. Any more than that and they become confused and will leave not feeling sure if they made the right decision.

The customer made his choice and I scheduled the job for the following week. He picked up his truck after a couple of days and he loved it. Also, he doesn't have to look at those ugly scratches anymore.

So the next time someone comes to your studio and says that he has something to hide, don't panic. Just remember how Dutch started. Whip out some paint (or vinyl) and bail them out.

Paintus foreverus — "Mr. J"



Here's our project vehicle. It's a 1999 Chevy "Xtreme" pick-up. It's lowered, has sport suspension and a lower body kit all right from the factory. Looks mint, right? Not!



Here's the culprit — a key scratch through the door and cab. It also runs through the rear fender.



Here you can see that I've already pre-cleaned the sides with Rapid Prep to remove any wax or grease. I've also laid out some blue fine line tape in 1/4" and 1/2" to get a feel for the design. I sand the scratch on the door and cab with 1000 grit wet sandpaper to smooth out the scratch a little. The 1 Shot lettering enamel will fill in what's left.



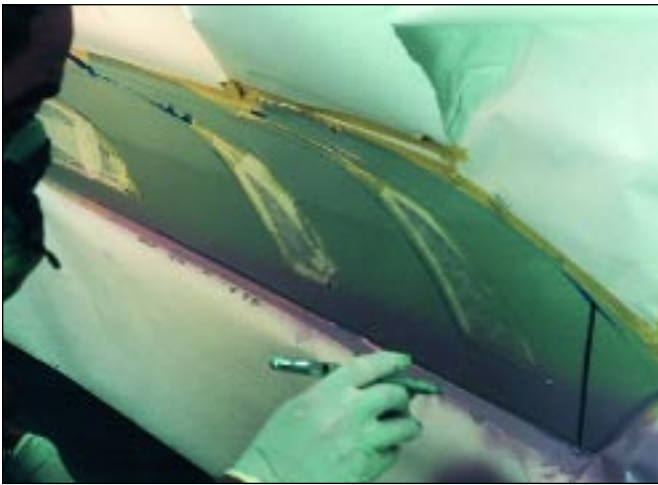
After checking the tape, making sure the straight lines are straight and the curves are smooth, I make a rubbing of the designs. Don't forget, we've got a scratch on the rear fender to hide. I'm using a stick of charcoal, but a graphite stick or a pencil will do just fine. Next I use my Electro pounce to perforate holes in the pattern. I turn the pattern over and using white pounce powder, I transfer the designs to the other side of the truck.



Now comes the hard part, taping up the rest of the truck. I used heavy bond paper (I ran out of the good auto body paper), masking tape and plastic to cover the entire truck. Don't cheap out when masking, buy the best automotive brand you can, and please, please never use newspapers.



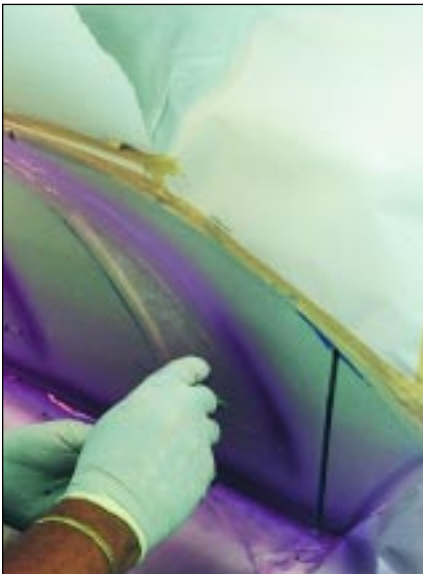
After the designs were scuffed with a 3M Scotchbrite pad, I re-clean the area to be painted with Rapid-Prep (a great water-based wax and grease remover). I'm applying some 1 Shot medium gray lettering enamel (all the paint used on this project is 1 Shot lettering enamel), to which I've added a drop of Smoothie fish-eye eliminator, and a couple of drops of 1 Shot's new hardener for extra strength. I paint this on with a 1" truck-lettering flat. Real "hi-tec", huh? You could also use a sponge roller or a sponge brush.



After waiting about 15 minutes, I begin airbrushing right onto the tacked up gray, airbrushing across the bottom about five or six inches up, using a mix of violet and white reduced with 1 Shot's High Temp reducer at a ratio of 60 percent reducer to 40 percent paint. I apply this with my Iwata Eclipse, at 45 lbs. pressure.



I am using the violet color full strength, but reduced. This helps define the shapes and will aid in the 3D effect.



For extra punch I airbrush on some "Proper Purple" to deepen the shaded areas of the graphics.



Last but not least, I add the final highlight using "Polar White" on the top edges of the graphics. (Note: you will notice that I'm wearing a respirator with replaceable charcoal cartridges. I wear this whenever I airbrush, whether it's lettering enamels or water-based paints. I also wear latex gloves.)



After the graphics dry thoroughly, I begin to pinstripe the panels with "Kansas City" teal; I'm using an "Xcaliber" 00 striping brush. I add Smoothie and a couple of drops of hardener, thinning occasionally with some hi-temp reducer.



I hand paint the 3D effect with a #8 brown lettering quill. I use some 1/8" blue fine line to keep it clean. I'm also using a Mahl stick to assist me.



The finished product looks pretty neat. I tell the customer to wait 72 hours and wax the truck by hand.



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