

Mulligan and His Van

BY JULIAN "MR. J" BRAET



Using a vinyl and paint concoction to turn heads.

IN THIS ARTICLE we'll explore the possibilities of mixing vinyl and lettering enamels together. Sounds like a Jay Lansburg cocktail.

Well, we're not really going to mix vinyl and lettering enamel together. Although, come to think of it, maybe I'll save that for a future article.

What I mean is, I'll show you how to turn an otherwise plain *vinyl-only* van lettering job into a head-turner (not a Ted Turner). By combining both vinyl and paint, you can put yourself and your client way out in front of the competition, with some great effects that I'm about to show you.

It has occurred to me while writing this article that the majority of vans that I letter are *Fords*. I'm not sure why that is. Next is *Chevy/GMC*, followed by *Dodge*. Sorry, *Mopar* lovers.

All I know is that I can still remember a couple of years ago trying to lay out these Ford vans. Whew, what a nightmare. I'm the *poster boy* for men when it comes to asking directions. (Just ask my wife.) So why should it be any different when it came to asking someone where the best place on the Ford van was to use as a straight line for laying out copy.

Needless to say, there is more than one van running around out there that has to be viewed at a certain angle if you want the copy to look level.

Enter Bob Behounek, legendary Chicago lettering artist. He figured out that the belt line on the Ford van was about the only straight line on the van that sign artists could use to lay out any copy. A tip of the old mahl stick for that one, Bob.

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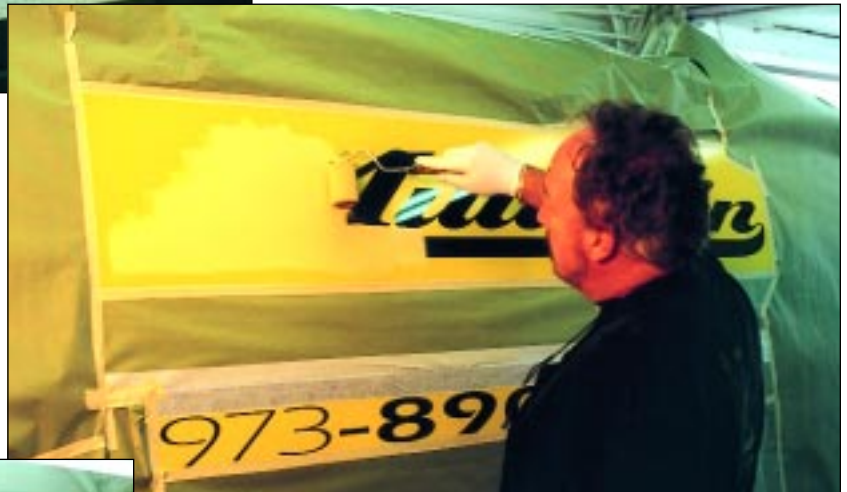
This client wanted an eye-catching logo, with a clean, professional look; something that would reflect the high quality construction his company is known for.



This photo shows the layout that I created for my client after receiving a deposit for the lettering that I will do on his new Ford vans. After a couple of quick roughs I decided on this layout. I now bring my ideas into my sign program and output it to my printer in a wire form mode. To this I'll add colored pencil and markers. I create this type of sketch for two reasons: one, to sell the job; two, it helps me visualize the finished project. I decided that because the van is green, a "gold metallic" look would really have a great impact. I show the client only this sketch and he must sign it for approval.



When laying out Ford vans I have found that the only way to keep the lettering straight is to measure up from the bottom of the band that runs down the side of the body. (Thanks, Bob Behounek.) You'll notice that I've marked 26" on the van. That number is arbitrary. I cut the paint mask for the sides and back at the same time with the plotter and apply the masks wet, using Rapid Tac, to make it easier to remove the mask after the painting is completed.



Allow the base coat at least 15-20 minutes to tack up. We will be airbrushing directly into the base color. (The paint used for airbrushing in this article is 1 Shot lettering enamel, reduced at a ratio of 60 percent hi-temp reducer to 40 percent paint.) The first color is chrome yellow, sprayed at 40 lbs. of pressure. I spray the top and bottom of the copy, leaving the middle open. I'm using the Iwata Eclipse airbrush. Also note that I'm wearing a charcoal respirator and disposable latex gloves. Note: I always keep my sketch close by for reference.

Now I'm rolling out the imitation gold lettering enamel, to which I add a couple of drops of 1 Shot's hardener and some of its low-temp reducer. I go back over the paint with a foam roller, using just the weight of the roller to smooth it out. Use only auto body quality masking paper, never use newspapers.



This next color is polar white, sprayed through the center of the copy to create our horizon line.



Now I mixed up some medium orange and a small amount of medium brown for the ground color. I airbrush this mix on the bottom edges, the area just below the white, and lightly around the letters. I am constantly referring to the sketch. (Pre-mix all the airbrush colors at once. Once you start painting, don't stop.)



You'll notice that the lettering is starting to get that 3D look. Here I'm adding black to create the hard lines of our horizon line through the middle. This is where you'll need to pay attention. Don't get too carried away with the black. Less is best.



Now we'll add some highlights, using the polar white. I airbrush the tops, the left sides and above the black horizon line. I also go back and add a couple of hot spots where I think the light would hit the edges if the letters were really cut out of metal. Just don't overdo this part!



Here you can see that the airbrushing is completed. The mask for the phone number has been removed and the 1/2" outline for the main copy has also been removed. This is done as soon as all the airbrushing has been completed. (If you wait too long, you'll run the risk of tearing up the airbrushing off the base color.) I use a #8 brown lettering quill to paint the black outline around the copy. I'm also using a mahl stick to keep my fat little hands off the wet paint.



Here's the finished black outline. The job is far from finished. While this is drying, I cut out the remaining copy in high-performance vinyl.

CONSTRUCTING AN IMAGE

This client is a master builder. He probably will only have one or two vehicles at any one time. Unlike the typical fleet owner, who is more interested in having his 10 or 20 trucks look exactly the same, this client is more interested in an image, and wants a little more elaborate look.

He wanted an eye-catching logo, with a clean, professional look; something that would reflect the high quality construction his company is known for.

After securing an appropriate deposit for both the sketch and the job, I told him I would call him in a few days with a layout. I initially made a few rough sketches of the layout.

Then I narrowed it down to one that I thought my client would approve. (I only show the client one or two sketches, it is less confusing.) The client loved this layout and I gave him a date to bring in the van. This job would take approximately two and a half days to complete.

The layout was created in my FlexiSIGN, program, and output to a Roland CAMM-1 Pro plotter. I used Spar-Cal, yellow paint mask for all the airbrushing. The remaining copy is high performance vinyl.

SignGold, supplied the 22-karat gold leaf for the shamrock.

All the paint used is 1 Shot, lettering enamel. The lettering brushes are Mack brown quills and Xcaliber pinstriping brushes.

I hope you enjoyed this article, I know that I certainly enjoyed writing it and working with this client.

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.

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I applied an emerald green vinyl shamrock, onto which I applied another shamrock cut out of SignGold's engine-turned 22-karat gold. The gold really adds a lot of class to the job. The words "Construction L.L.C." were added in black.



I knew that the black outline was not enough to carry the design by itself, so I added an emerald green outline to the outside using a cut-down #6 brown quill.



A close up of the finished lettering, with all the vinyl added. The last thing I did was to pin-stripe the van using an Xcaliber striping brush and some emerald green.

