

Make Louvres, Not War

BY JULIAN "MR.J" BRAET



How to paint cool louvres that look like the real thing.

FOR THOSE OF YOU not familiar with the term *louvre*, let me try and explain just what the heck they are. The term comes from the Latin *el openvus upus*, and means *open it up*.

No huh? All right, ya caught me; I don't have a clue as to where it came from. Anyway this ain't no stinkin' history lesson, so relax.

Here, we are talking about louvres that are used primarily in the automotive industry. The louvres are actually rectangles about 3/4" x 3 1/2".

First a cut is made into the metal (say a hood or a fender) to a length of 3 1/2". Next a male die is placed under the cut and female die is placed above the cut.

When the two pieces are pushed together under pressure, the result is a

rectangular shape, about 1/4" high with an opening at the top.

During the 1940s and 1950s, racecars had louvres punched in the hoods, fenders and anything else, to help hot air escape from the engine, etc. The *Hot Rodders* wanted to emulate the race cars of the day, so the thing to do was to have your car *louvred*. It is still popular today.

In this article, I'm going to show you how to paint your own louvres in a few steps. You can use these louvres on almost anything — cars, trucks, motorcycles, helmets and signs. You could also try some faux scoops or whatever.

The main thing is to try something new and have fun. I can't tell you how many people have asked me to do louvres on their vehicles, since I've painted these on my van. Unfortunately they want me to punch in the real ones!

They just don't get it.

Right, *Mikey*?

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.

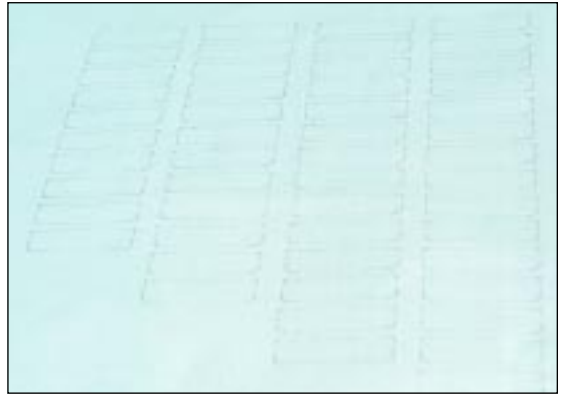


This is the hood of my Chevy Astro van. As you can see, it's quite bare. Being a "Hot Rodder" by heart, I just couldn't bear to leave the hood alone. I guess I could have just pinstriped it or added some lettering, but I wanted to show some of the different effects that could be applied to a potential customer's vehicle. I realized that louvres would be the perfect effect.





This is one of the reference photos that I used as my model for the louvres. It's the most popular style and measures about 3/4" x 3 1/2" long. There are of course other sizes and styles. (Check out hot rod and truck magazines.)



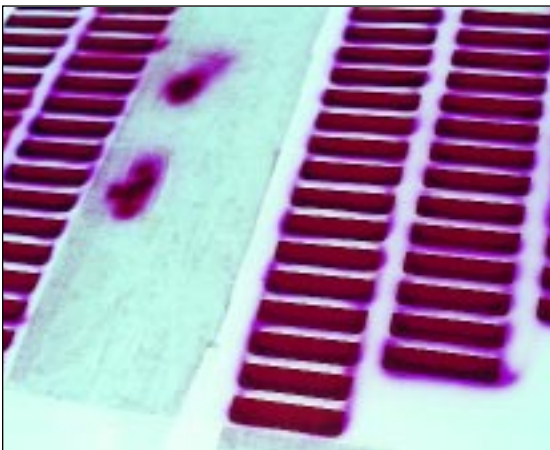
Using my Flexi sign program, I create a rectangle 3/4" x 3 1/2". I round the bottom left and right corners of the rectangle to give the louvre the right look. Next I duplicate the louvres and stack them up in rows. The first row has 16 louvres, the next 14, 12 and lastly a row of 10, with about 1" between the rows. The reason that I staggered the rows is, they usually look better. I'll add some flames later that will fit around the louvres. I pen plot the louvres on paper to help me visualize the final effect.



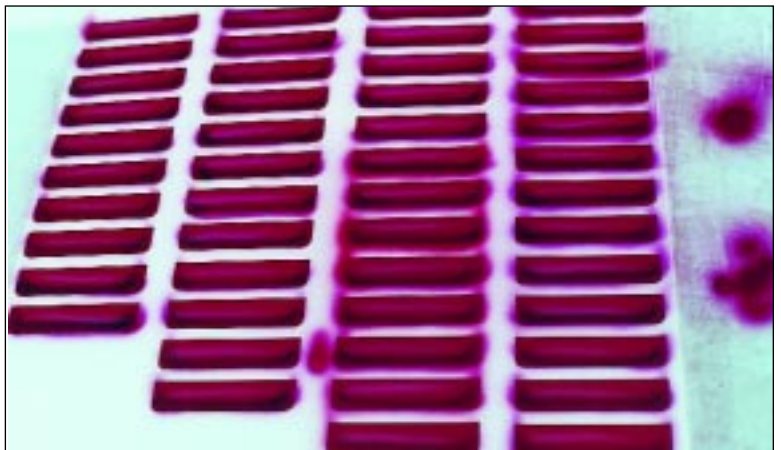
I cut out two paint masks (mirroring them) using my Roland CAMM 1 plotter. Before any painting is done, I wash the hood off with Rapid-Prep pre-cleaner to remove any wax or grease. I apply the masks about 10" apart from the center of the hood. I apply the masks wet, using Rapid-Tac to help with their removal later. You'll notice that I used transfer tape to mask off the rest of the hood. Normally I'd use masking paper, but I'll only be spraying small amounts of paint, so this will be enough masking.



This effect is so quick and easy to do, it ought to be illegal! I'm using 1-Shot® Sign Restoring Clear, with a few drops of their hardener added for extra durability. The clear used for the base is applied with a foam brush. Apply the clear as evenly as possible. Discard the brush when finished. (A foam roller or lettering brush could also be used.)

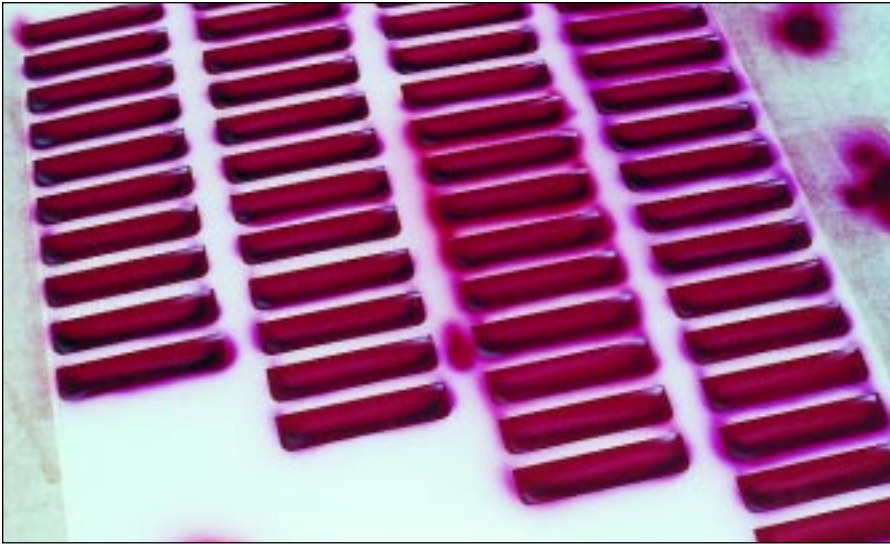


I allow about 15 minutes for the clear to tack up. Using 1 Shot maroon lettering enamel thinned with their low-temp reducer (at a ratio of 60 percent reducer to 40 percent paint), I airbrush directly into the clear on the bottoms of all the louvres to create the "shadowed" parts.

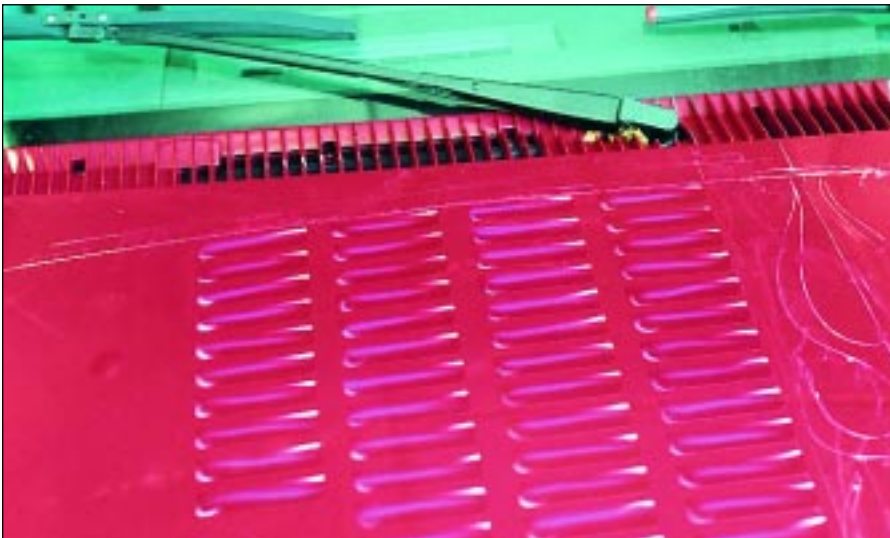


Using the same maroon that I just airbrushed with, I add a couple of drops of 1 Shot polar white to make a very subtle pink. This color will highlight the centers of the louvres. One pass across each louvre should be enough. I'm airbrushing at approximately 40 lbs. of air, and I'm using an Iwata Eclipse airbrush.

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The last airbrush effect is the addition of the highlights. These are done with the polar white. Only apply the highlights to the upper right corners and to the lower left corners of the louvers. If you place these correctly, the louvers will look more realistic. Keep it simple.



Now the masks are removed. Looks pretty convincing, right? Now I clean up the surrounding areas, checking for any over spray, etc. You'll notice the Stabilo pencil flames that I sketched out to get an idea on what the flames will look like. (You'll have to wait for the next issue to see how they turned out.)



Last, I'm adding a black "Pin-Line" to the tops of the louvers with an Xcaliber pinstripping brush. This duplicates the part of the louvre that is cut open.

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