

Vinyl's Not Final

How to make a simple truck-lettering project look great, with only a day to turn it around.



BY JULIAN "MR. J" BRAET

BOY IT'S GREAT to have repeat customers. This particular client is a pleasure to work for. Not only does he keep the jobs simple, keep his vehicles spotless, but best of all, he pays on time.

This is another one of my favorite jobs. I get to use vinyl and lettering enamels together.

Because this is a tow truck, I need to finish it in one day. Hey, it's not as hard as it sounds. If I take the time to plan out the job, I'll finish right on time.

Since I have done several trucks for this client, I don't have to go through the usual selling, making sketches and layouts. I simply have to punch in the file, cut the vinyl and paint.

My good buddy Darrell Latham of Darrell Designs designed the original layout for this job.

Originally I hand lettered the word *McGee's* in black lettering enamel on a small piece of aluminum and



scanned it into my *Flexi* sign program. After a small amount of cleanup, I saved it to a disk and created the rest of the copy, saving it to a disk also.

After cleaning off the truck thoroughly, I apply the paint mask. Next, roller-coat the base color, followed with airbrushing. The vinyl and shadows are added now. While all this is drying, I hand pinstripe the truck in white, using an Xcaliber 00 pinstriping brush.

When all the paint is dry I clean off any paint or layout marks before the client picks up the job. I tell him not to wash the truck for at least 48 hours and not to hand wax it before 72 hours. The very last thing I do is to take several photos to use for future reference.

So, remember, don't limit yourself to using only vinyl. Add some paint to every job. You'll not only create more demand for your work, you'll have fun painting. But best of all — *you'll make more money!*

Keep your brush wet.



This plain tow truck cab could use some pizzazz!



After cleaning up my original scanned artwork in my sign program, I cut two paint masks out with my Roland CAMM-1 plotter. I'm using Spar-Cal's yellow mask here. I switched to the yellow about a year ago — it's more pliable, and weeds easier than the white mask. Before any lettering or graphics are applied I clean the areas with Windex, followed by Rapid-Prep pre cleaner. I always apply the mask wet, using Rapid-Tac, which makes the mask easier to remove. You'll notice that I've used a lot of auto body masking paper to mask off the surrounding areas. There's nothing worse than spending half the day cleaning off overspray. Do not use newspaper to mask. The paper is porous and there is a danger of the paint bleeding through the newspaper.



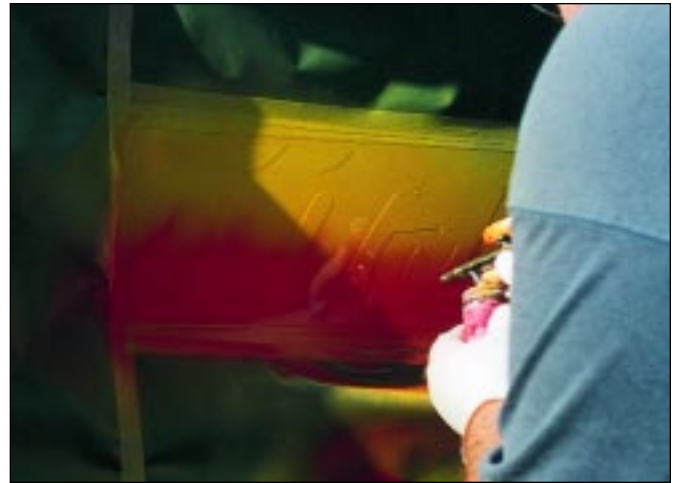
My base color for this job will be 1 Shot ivory lettering enamel. (All the painting will be done with 1 Shot.) Into an unwaxed coffee cup I mix the ivory, a couple drops of hardener and some high-temp reducer. I also use tracing paper that I buy in 8x12 pads for my pallet. You could use an old glossy magazine, but never use a phone book, the paper's too absorbent and could affect the quality of the finished project. Here I'm using a quality foam roller. A large quill or flat could also be used. After both doors are covered I go back over them using just the weight of the roller to eliminate any bubbles.

Wait about 15 minutes (depending on conditions) for the paint to tack. We will be spraying right into the ivory (wet on wet). The first color is chrome yellow; mix this at a ratio of 60 percent reducer to 40 percent paint. Air pressure is about 45 lbs. The airbrush is Iwata's Eclipse. I'll cover the entire word with chrome yellow. Note that I'm wearing disposable gloves for coating out and airbrushing.

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The next color that I airbrush is medium orange. Starting at the bottom, I spray a little more than half way up the letter. Don't bother to clean out the airbrush between colors, they're in the same family.



Next, bright red is sprayed on the very bottom and up the sides of the letters. Try not to go too heavy with the red. Keep it simple.



Wait about 15-20 minutes to remove the mask. If you try and take it off after an hour or two, you run the risk of the airbrushing actually tearing off the base color. Believe me — I've done this and it ain't pretty.



The remainder of the copy is done in high-performance vinyl. (I don't use intermediate or economy vinyl for truck lettering.) Using a #8 brown lettering quill, I paint a light gray shade on the words "TOWING" and "Local & Long Distance". This mix is white, imitation gold and some black. Again I add a couple of drops of hardener and some hi-temp reducer. (Mix your grays a couple of shades lighter than what you'd like it to look like after it dries because it always dries darker.)



For some extra color and to separate the bold outline, a mix of chrome yellow and a little polar white is applied to the outside of the airbrushed letters. I'm using a cut-down #8 brown lettering quill. (Trim the brush at the ferrule, cutting around the brush next to the ferrule. Never cut the brush at the tip.)

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The finished outline and cast shadow. I could have left this alone, but then it wouldn't have that Joisey look would it?



A nice bold outline is added to give it that extra punch, using a # 6 brown quill. That funny looking stick that my hand is resting on is called a Mahl stick; it helps to keep your hands out of the wet paint. (Threw that in for all you old-timers out there, right Raymond?)



The door with outlines and shadows.