



In past articles, the most stencils I have used were two to three. This time I opened the floodgates and grabbed a whole passel of stencils. The more the merrier, I figure. When dealing with biomechanical art, remember to stay away from anything that is not creepy or mechanical. Shouldn't be a problem here!

STENCILING TO THE BEAT OF A DIFFERENT DRUM

USING A WHOLE MESS OF ARTOOL STENCILS TO PAINT UP A DRUM SHELL FOR THE NAMM SHOW.

BY CRAIG FRASER

REMBER THAT JUST BECAUSE THIS IS AN AUTOMOTIVE COLUMN, IT DOESN'T MEAN you have to stick to painting cars and bikes. These stencils can be used for everything from body art, to wall murals, to cake decorating. Made with a solvent-proof polymer, you don't have to worry about what you paint them with because you aren't gonna hurt these suckers.

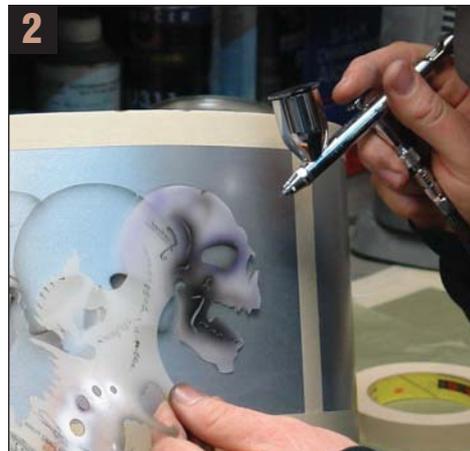
For this installment, I decided to use a bunch of stencils to show you how to create a very cool hybrid design. Also, instead of just cranking out a pretty panel for you, I worked on an actual project. And this is not your typical garden variety motorcycle helmet, bike, or car. This is a drum shell, kids!

I custom painted a drum kit for Brian Spaun, of Spaun Drums, to be displayed at the 2007 NAMM show. Originally, NAMM was the acronym for the National Association of Music Merchants. It then became the International Music Products Association, but they kept NAMM probably because it sounds cooler than IMPA. Kustom guitars and drum kits I painted for Rikki Rockett's Chop Shop Drums will also be on display at NAMM.

Spaun wanted a biomechanical design, inspired by the incredible artwork of H.R. Giger. He sent me the five-piece drum shell kit already based in a metallic silver, so all I had to do was scuff it, airbrush it, and send it back to the Spaun Drum factory for final clearing and buffing. I had already finished one drum, with one half done. For this how-to, I painted the snare. The trick was to use the stencils and then freehand airbrush to match the rest of the set. With that said, let the hilarity ensue! >>



1. After using 1-inch masking tape to frame out the drum, I started with the stencil work. For this hybrid job, I felt it was appropriate to start off with the *Frontal*, the first stencil I ever designed for Artool. I stacked the skulls, a technique that Giger seemed to favor a lot. I used House of Kolor BC-25 Basecoat black and my trusty Iwata Eclipse CS Kustom.



2. Rotating the drum as I worked, I continued stenciling with *Screaming's* side profile stencil from the same original Skullmaster set. Because there are an even number of lugs holding the heads onto the drum shells, you must be sure that any repeating sections on the drum are spaced evenly. Although the drum is set into four equal sections, the designs vary in each one.



3. With 1/2-inch tape, I masked off a bar area that passes through each of the skulls. By laying the stencil back over the taped area, I sprayed the bar's drop-shadow without affecting the underlying skull design.



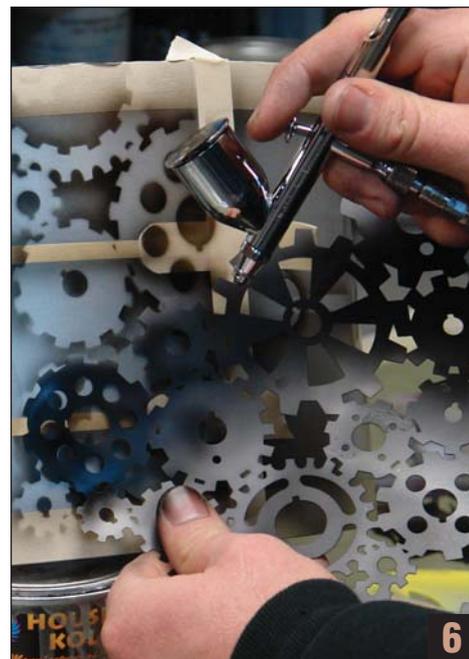
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4. The 3-D effect was accomplished by combining a little tape work with the stencils. The key to using a stencil successfully is to make sure that it's clean, does not look like a stenciled effect, and that it saves you more time than not using one. So far, so good.



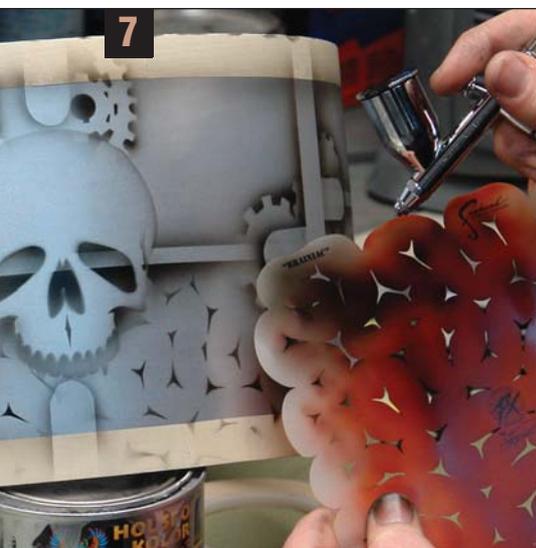
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5. Layering more masking tape, and replacing the 1-inch tape, I continued the stencil work. I switched to *Blades*, one of my newest stencils from the FX-III series. Gotta add a pinch of saw blades to the recipe for just the right amount of creep factor!



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6. *Blades* was followed by a whole lot of *Gearhead* from the FX-II stencil series. I never spray the stencil full blast when sketching out the design because it gives me more leeway when it's time to freehand the final details. Remember, I won't return with silver or white. When I airbrush the black, it's down for good, so I want to make sure I don't overdo it.



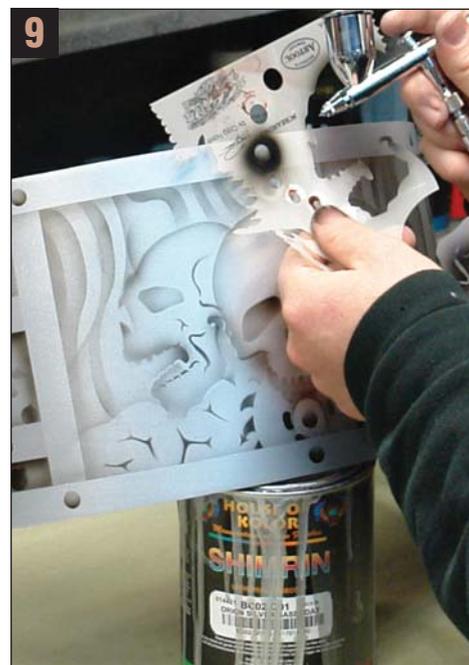
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7. Now, with enough mechanical, it's time for a bit of bio. The *Brainiac* stencil from the original FX-1 adds the perfect curvy organic look to compliment all of the rigid mechanics of the design. I left some space open for the hoses and other freehand details. It's easy to go overboard with stencils. Remember, less is more.



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8. Because I know of no hose stencils, I improvised. One of Mike Lavallee's *Tru-Fire* stencils worked perfectly for the curving hoses in the background. I just flipped the stencil back and forth bracketing the curved edge to give the appearance of flowing hoses and lines. This stencil also works pretty killer for a smoke effect, and, of course, realistic fire! Duh.



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9. Instead of digging up a circle template, I used *Screaming's* skull stencil. There are a number of different-sized circles in this stencil, and they work great for rendering rivets and screws. When spraying these rivets, I hit the bottom of the circles more to give the illusion of shadow.

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10. With all the masking tape removed and the stenciling completed, I used the FH-1 freehand shield to achieve a few straight lines and some clean edges. Although the final steps of this design are primarily freehand-airbrushed, I always use the FH-1 and FH-2 stencils to help keep the edges clean. These French-curve stencils are killer for freehanding any design. Thanks to Eddie Young!



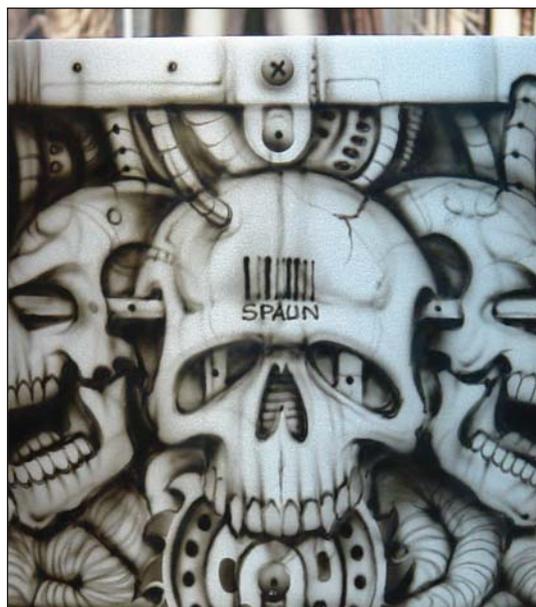
11. Now the fun part, freehand airbrushing. I added about 10% more HOK RU-311 reducer to the black to enable cleaner details and finer lines. Most airbrushers are pretty amazed at the level of detail attainable from an Eclipse CS airbrush.



12. To avoid making the design too dark, I slowly increased the intensity and detail as I worked my way around the drum. I used the other drum and H.R. Giger's *Necronomicon* book (shown behind the snare) for reference and inspiration.



13. Notice how the freehand airbrushing ties in nicely with the stencil work, and that you can barely tell where the airbrushing begins and the stenciling ends.



FINAL. As I've demonstrated, stencils used correctly save time and give your design killer continuity. And, with good freehand work, you should be able to remove the stencil's hard, unwanted edges. In fact, this technique worked so well that I used it for the rest of the drums! If you get a chance to attend NAMM, I highly recommend it. For musicians, it's an incredible experience, but for the rest of us, there's plenty of eye candy to keep us happy, too. I hope you enjoyed this installment, and I wish to extend a big thank you to H.R. Giger for originating the biomechanical style. Without it, our nightmares would have no structure, and airbrush artists would suffer for it. Until next time, keep on stenciling. ✨

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Craig Fraser, author of *Automotive Cheap Tricks & Special F/X*, has been airbrushing for nearly two decades. The owner and operator of Air Syndicate, Fraser has also been the in-house airbrush artist and designer for Kal Concepts since 1992. Located in Bakersfield, California, Kal Concepts/Air Syndicate specializes in custom graphics, automotive airbrush, and the fine art of the custom culture. Craig divides his time between working in his

shop, writing magazine articles, and instructing. He has also appeared in a number of instructional videos, and is credited with pioneering the original automotive custom paint workshop for the Airbrush Getaway more than 10 years ago. Craig works directly with a number of manufacturers to develop new and innovative custom paint products. You can check out his artwork at www.gotpaint.com.