

GETTING GRUNGY

BY MIKE LAVALLEE

Working in a custom paint shop, you get all kinds of requests—from the simple to the extremely complicated. I'm always looking for ways to take the things, which are very difficult to paint, and make them easier.

Because many textures can be difficult to pull off convincingly with an airbrush—stone, sand, rust, and metal pitting, to name a few—I recently developed one of the most useful and easy ways to produce tons of various effects that I'd like to share with you.

It's called Killer Grunge FX special effects masking spray and, interestingly enough, it comes in a can. You simply spray Killer Grunge onto a surface, apply any automotive base coat over it, let the paint flash, and, using a paper towel, simply wipe away Killer Grunge's residue. You may repeat the process endlessly to achieve various looks and effects. The can comes with two nozzles, Fat Splat (shoots big, flat splats) and Fine Splat (for finer patterns, and for a very cool effect I like to call "alien skin" or "frog skin.")

Following is a step-by-step on how I employed Killer Grunge on a project using a metal panel, paint, a tack rag, a roll of soft paper towels, and a can of Killer Grunge FX Spray.





I cut several pieces of aluminum blanks—commonly used in the sign industry—8-inches by 24-inches, scuffed them with a red Scotch-Brite pad to establish a tooth to the surface, and applied a black automotive base coat with a spray gun.

I prepared an Anest/Iwata LS 400 Super Nova spray gun with red.

Using the Fat Splat nozzle (shake the can well to maximize the full effect) I sprayed the panels. You can hit your target with fairly good accuracy, so point, aim, and shoot with impunity! To better spread the pattern I like to shake the can while spraying. Have paper towels handy at this point. Now, here's the tricky part: without hesitation, I sprayed the red over the Grunge application. Have no fear; it'll be perfectly fine. Just don't use too much air pressure or you'll disturb the pattern. I applied the red more to one end and let it just fade to the other.

Then, soon after the paint flashed, I wiped

off the Grunge with paper toweling.

Each paint type—urethanes, acrylics, etc.—carries a different flash time, so be careful. If you wipe too soon, you'll smear your paint and make a mess. Conversely, if you wait too long, the paint will dry on the Grunge spray leaving little paint skins on your project requiring repair. Test first before committing to, and possibly ruining, a client's surface.

Next, I faded the red directly over the panel's pattern.

Although typically I like to repeat the pattern over and over to achieve some really cool depth, I only did it twice for this article. I encourage you to experiment with different colors—pearls, candies, etc.—to fully understand the range of this fabulous technique.

The application of wax-and-grease remover simulates how the piece will look clear-coated. Pretty cool, right?

I shot black base coat over the bottom area to darken it a tad.



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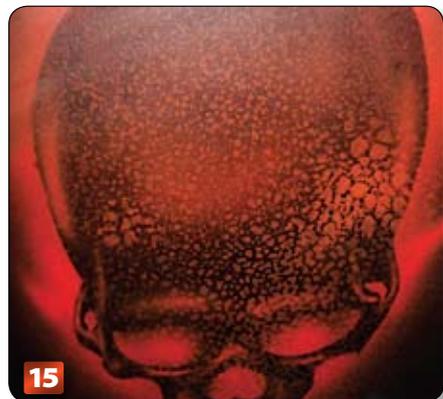
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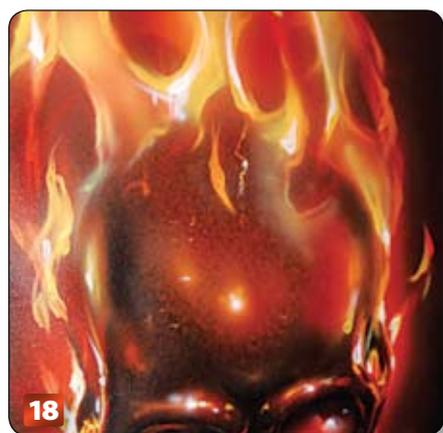
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Next, I took a skull pattern, which I love to paint, placed it over the lower, darker area of the panel, and sprayed a glow line of red around the edges, in the eye sockets, and the nose area. Also, I decided to add a few fire licks coming off the skull and up the panel.

Then, using an Iwata Custom CM Micron airbrush with red, I sprayed highlights to the skull to build shape and the light source (notice how I used the black of the panel for the dark areas of the skull? Work smarter not harder).

Next, I switched to the Fine Splat nozzle (when changing nozzles, please be sure to point the open end of the nozzle away from your face to avoid shooting yourself in the head!) and made sure it sprayed correctly.

I readied my airbrush with orange, a contrasting color.

Next, I painted the bone texture of the skull. Again, I shook the can well, and sprayed a wide, even mist over the skull. Then, I watched until the Killer Grunge FX Spray began to separate into cool little patterns. When they reached the desired size, I airbrushed the orange over the skull, only in the previously highlighted areas, and wiped off the FX Spray.

The really cool thing about Fine Splat is that its patterns maintain their general shapes as they continue to expand until, ultimately, they break apart. To achieve a smaller version of the Fine Splat pattern, simply depress the nozzle half-way.

Then, I airbrushed orange to the flames, followed by candy tangerine over the skull and fire licks.

I repeated the Fine Splat over the previous layer using a slightly different pattern. This was accomplished by waiting for the desired shape to form. Timing can be everything with this stuff.

I airbrushed a fine mist of yellow over the highlighted area, just a bit smaller than the first layer, to help build the roundness of the skull. Then, I wiped off Killer Grunge's residue.

Again, I hit all the fire licks with the yellow and airbrushed a few highlights on the skull and eyes. Then, I sprayed all the yellow that I just painted with gold candy.

I finished by adding shadows and more highlights to the fire and skull, drips to the face, and cracks to the upper part of the panel for greater dimension to the Fat Splat pattern.

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CAUTION
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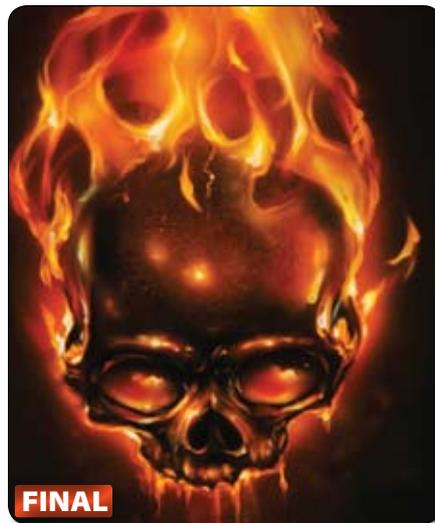
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CONCLUSION

You'll soon discover the distinct advantages Killer Grunge has over many of the Texture F/X templates out there, including its ability to marry rounded and three-dimensional surfaces. I use Grunge FX on practically everything. In fact, it becomes quite addicting when you begin to experiment with it and realize the unlimited killer results. Here's a list of effects I've rendered with Grunge: Bone texture, sand and stone



textures, rust, pitted metal, acid-eaten surfaces, certain wood textures, aged aluminum, imitation galvanized steel, alien skin patterns, detailed flower patterns, pitted skin, pores, zombie flesh, cool camouflage patterns, wicked backgrounds, awesome patterned bases for candy colors, and the list goes on.

Good luck with your Killer Grunge FX painting, and remember, if you're gonna put your name on it, keep it killer! ■



MIKE LAVALLEE

After earning a degree in Sign Painting from Boston's Butera Art School in 1979, it would be a few years before Mike Lavallee pursued his passion of working on bikes. In 1999, Lavallee opened his shop, Killer Paint in Snohomish, Washington, and has become renowned for his realistic fire technique and cutting-edge style. California was set ablaze when Mike's signature flame jobs burst onto the scene, instantly branding his technique a hot commodity. Cliff Stieglitz, *Airbrush Action's* publisher recommended Lavallee to Jesse James, of West Coast Choppers, which landed Mike his first spot on television. Appearing as a guest artist on The Discovery Channel's *Monster Garage*, Lavallee attributes a significant portion of his success to both Chip Foose and Jesse James. Since his appearances on *Monster Garage*, Lavallee, has since participated in TLC's *Overhaulin* and *RIDES*. To see more of Mike's work, visit www.killerpaint.com