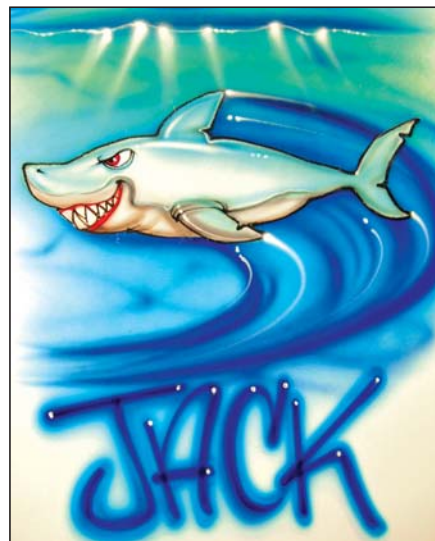
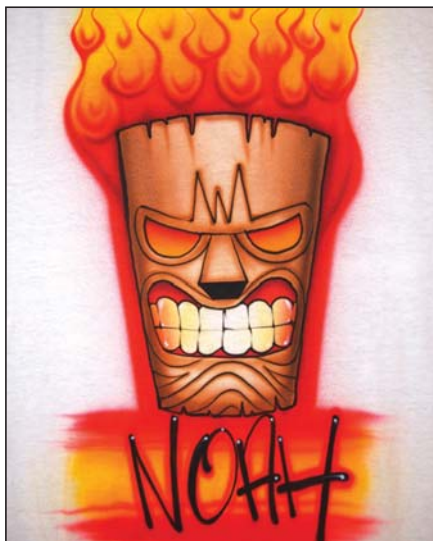
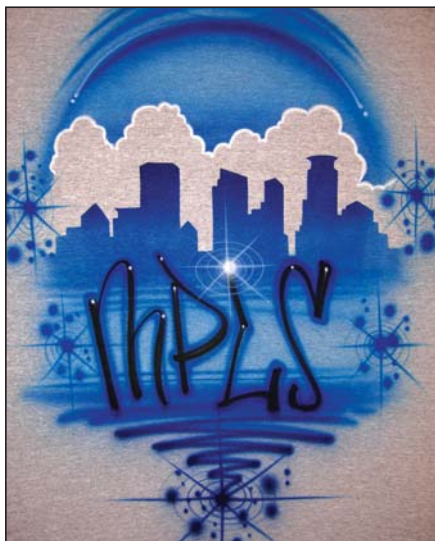


LEARNING THE ABC's OF

PART
II

Lettering



W

WELCOME BACK!

All of you have been practicing the primary script-lettering drills outlined and explained in the last issue of *Airbrush Action*—you know, the ones about consistency in height, width, angle, and thick and thins, not to mention the exercises with the e-stroke and the script alphabet. Right? >>

I'm just going to have to take your word for it and hope that you did. I'm hoping, because the next step assumes that you did practice and by now have mastered those consistencies and the self-correcting parameters I told you about. This time I'm going to build on the basics to help you

transform “blah” lettering into dynamic, crowd-gathering masterpieces! Have I hammered home the “you’d-better-know-your-basics” point? Good. Let’s get started.

In this issue, I will break down each of my most popular lettering styles, give an example of how they should look, explain how to get to

that point, and end with a quick step-by-step for one of those styles. While showing and telling, I’ll be constantly referring to those pesky little consistencies from the last issue, so I hope you paid attention. The styles discussed here are governed by rules similar to those we met last time; however, some will have their own unique rules. Following me? Good.

The six major lettering styles I use every day at work are as follows: script, print, scratch, block, “graffiti” block, and... nope, I’m gonna make you wait for it! Remember that little teaser at the end of the last issue? Something about “sales and street cred”? That’s style #6. Wait for it, people!

Since we’ve already covered the building

blocks for script, let's start with examples of lettering in a design context.

First and foremost, when lettering on shirts you've got to consider placement of the name. My rule of thumb is that the middle of the name should be roughly 6" down from the collar and centered according to the length of the name I'm also going to be showing each lettering style with a complement other than just the name itself. Let's look more closely at the examples.

>> SCRIPT

Tanisha

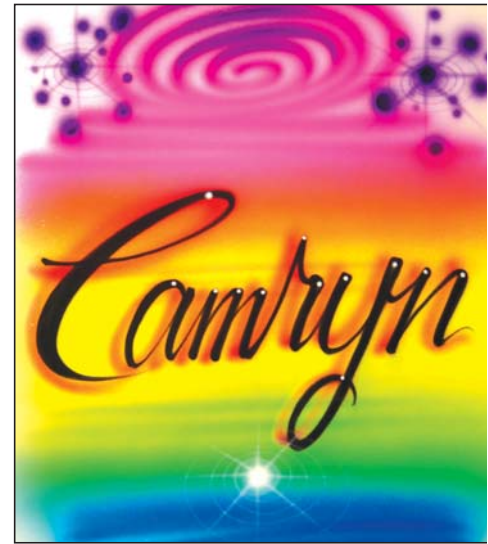
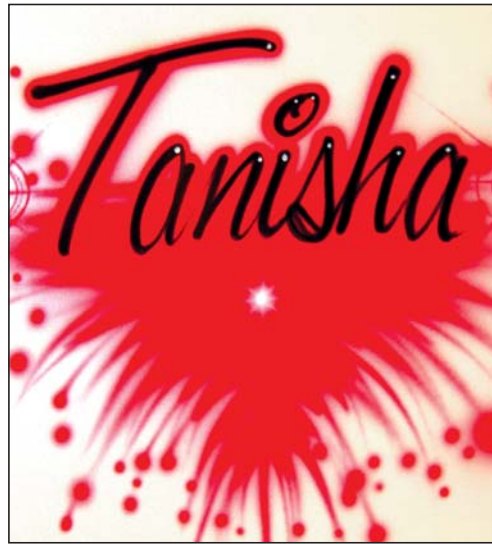
This is the most basic kind of script lettering, one name with one color—in this case Brite Red (not counting Opaque Black and White). By the way, have I mentioned the awesomeness of the new Createx Opaque Black and White? As I was writing this, I happened to be speaking with Terry Hill, who said it's the best black he's ever put into his brush. I agree 100%! Anyway, notice how I've followed our lettering rules. The splash of color also creates movement that draws the passerby into your shop. Notice that, in virtually every design, I try to create a sense of movement and excitement to trigger that elusive impulse sale. This is usually done with color plus what I like to call "flair" (a tip of the hat to *Office Space*). Flair is all of that extra stuff that really isn't the meat and potatoes of the design but rather the chocolaty dessert that makes it all worthwhile (starbursts, highlights, drop shadows, etc.)

Camryn

Here you see how a simple mixture of colors can create a whole spectrum. I start with Fluorescent Yellow for the field where the name will go. Next, I blend in Fluorescent Pink on top with a swirl, then Caribbean Blue on the bottom with a swirl. Both top and bottom are weighted with Violet, which also colors the stars. I do a somewhat fancier "C" just to mix it up a bit, while still keeping our rules in place.

Lil' Devil

In this case, the complement is a horned heart with a devilish tail. A positive stencil of the heart is laid down first, followed by Brite Red, Opaque Black, and Burgundy to complete the blends. The stencil is removed, then the heart fleshed out and the lettering



THE SIX MAJOR LETTERING STYLES I USE EVERY DAY AT WORK ARE AS FOLLOWS: **SCRIPT, PRINT, SCRATCH, BLOCK, 'GRAFFITI' BLOCK, AND... "**

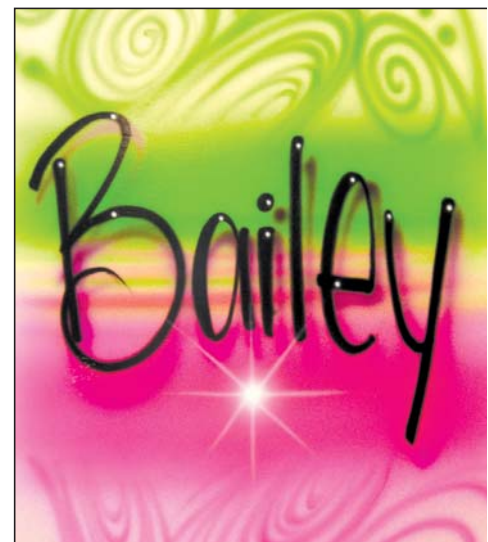
>> PRINT

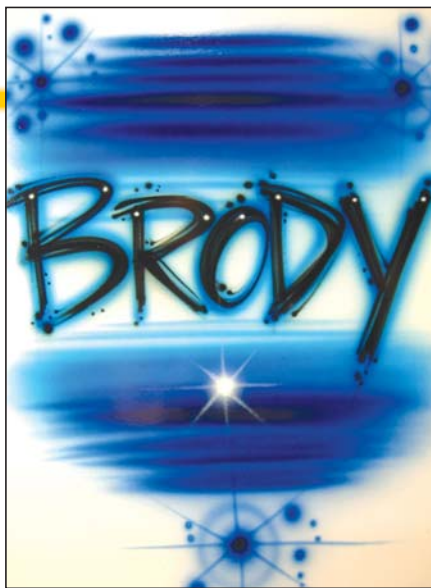
The next lettering style is print. Print is very similar to script in its general makeup with one important exception. The rules about "consistent height and angle" tend to be more guidelines than rules. Not to say that you

can't have a successful print style if you follow all the rules hardcore, but it won't be as much fun. This style definitely has more of a cartoony feel. Let's take a look.

Bailey

Here are the two most popular colors to put together this season, Fluorescent Pink and Fluorescent Green. ("Never mix pink and green together" is too much rule.) A simple blend with some random swoops and swirls is all it takes. Still, be careful not to blend the colors too much into each other or you'll muddy your design. Notice how the lettering is consistent for the most part, except that the





“e” shoots up just a bit. This is intentional, people. (Me make a mistake?!!) It’s just a style, so accept it. And the overall look is a success.

Meadow

Here we see a mixture of the print style with a cute, fat bumblebee. Like I said, print works extremely well when incorporated with a cartoon format. The outline of the bee is done first with Opaque Black, as are the motion lines (there I go again, being all movement and stuff). The action draws us around the shirt and into the name. Next, the color is added: Golden Yellow shaded with Light Brown for the bee, then Fluorescent Green around it and through the name. The name is added over the color. Highlights are the last step.

>> SCRATCH

The next style I want to explore is scratch. Some people call it “slash.” This is an effective style when trying to convey more of a “boyish” theme. Now, I don’t want to get e-mails saying that I’m promoting any kind of boy/girl agenda here. It’s just a fact. Little boys like this style, just as girls really love script. Whattayagonna do? Please continue to note that our rules are still being followed, and the consistencies are still in the forefront when executing these designs.

Brody and Dre

Here we see two very similar approaches, with the differences being the color choices and, of course, the names. I like to do my scratch style in all caps. I think that it has



more impact and seems to go better with the scratch look. The color is laid down first along with the flair. The name is then added, outlined with the same color. Super simple and effective!

Bad Boy

This is a classic use of the scratch lettering style. It fits in perfectly with the type of person I’m trying to attract. The skull is done first, outlined and fleshed out with Opaque Black. The weird edging is also done with Black (kind of a stretched membrane thingy). Lettering is then added and the color around the letters and in the iron cross on the head filled in.

>> BLOCK

The next most popular style is block. Others have referred to it as “bubble letters.” When asked if we have “bubble letters,” this is the style I point to.



Dave

The rules of consistency are a little harder to see when doing block letters. There are rules to consider, as well as the question of “Does it work?” In other words, some of our rules may be damped down or completely ignored; but if in the end it still kicks butt, you have a successful style. Remember, though, that our rules of height, width, angles, and thicks and thins are still the jumping off point when getting any lettering style going. With that in mind, we can see that this particular name follows our rules rather nicely. First I used Opaque Black to outline the name. Then I took Brite Red to do a soft circle, the stars, and the initial blending within the name. I



used Fluorescent Orange to blend even further into the name and to edge the letters. Golden Yellow finished off the inside of the name, and I ended by adding weight to the circle and the name with Burgundy. White highlights rounded it all off.

Lexi

Once again, our two most popular colors put together. Outline the name first with Black, then add Fluorescent Green to the inside (weighted with Forest Green). Outline, add the stars with Fluorescent Pink, and highlight. Voila!

Kate

Here we add another element in a beach landscape. Again, outline the name, then fill in the letters with the appropriate colors. Brite Blue gives us our water line as well as the initial blend color and our letter edging. Follow this with Caribbean Blue

blended in the water and up into the sky. Next, blend Fluorescent Yellow further up and finish it off with Fluorescent Pink. Add Fluorescent Violet as a soft circle, and highlight the whole design.

>> GRAFFITI BLOCK

Graffiti block brings us to style #5. But first, a note about the block-versus-print-or-script approach. You'll notice that when doing print, script, scratch, or the like, I'll use the color and make the design parameters first, then add the name. When doing block, I'll outline the letters first, then add color. Just a personal preference. You'll have to decide what works best for you. Onward! This is a style I've been using for the better part of 15 years. But, with me, it's ever-changing and evolving; this is my current style. To see the entire alphabet, check out the T-shirt Book

(published many years ago). It has a step-by-step and contains all the letters. Now, let's take a look at what we've got today.

Keaton

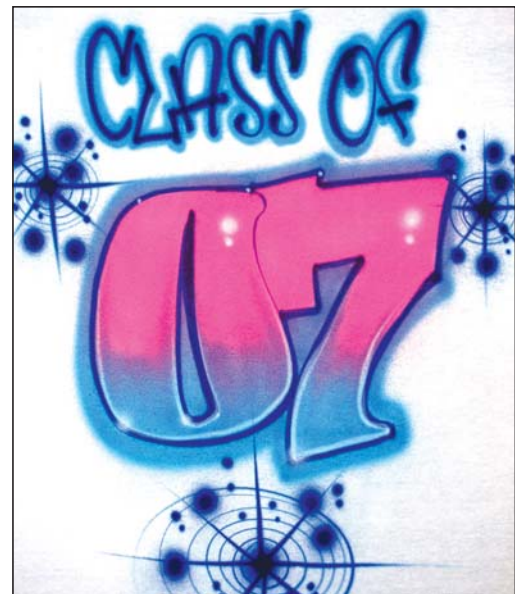
Once again, the outline comes first. Brite Red is then added in a soft circle (I'm a big fan of the soft circle), followed by the letter edging and initial blending, along with the stars. Fluorescent Orange finishes off the tops of the letters; Burgundy weights the bottoms. Highlights are then added with Opaque White. Holy Cow, is this easy! I hate to harp, but notice how all of our rules are being engaged and followed.

Vince

Here we have virtually the same process as in "Keaton," with Brite Red, and Caribbean and Deep Blues as our palette.

Class of '07

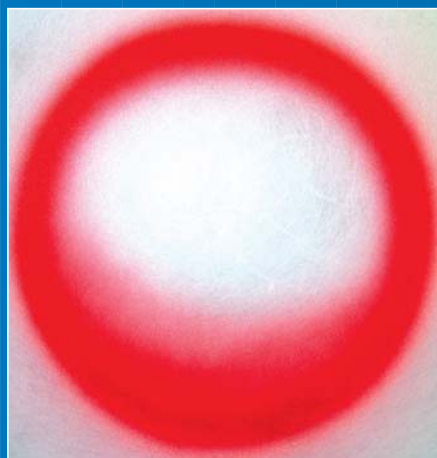
Here is a combination of two different styles, with the graffiti block taking shape in the numbers. I put this in so you'd realize that letters aren't the only things to consider when coming up with a font. Numbers are there as well. The "Class Of" and the outline of the numbers and the stars are done first with



Deep Blue. The blending and outlining of the letters and numbers is next, using Caribbean Blue. The numbers are then finished off with Fluorescent Pink, and, as always, Opaque White is used for the highlights. This design has a one-year shelf life by the way (just thought I'd better mention it). ❌

>> TAG

Now onto the most recent and often used style to be added to the Air 2B Different killer repertoire: of course I'm referring to tag. I had been trying to incorporate this style for a while when I had the fortunate opportunity to hire Tim Irwin. Not only is he an ultra-talented comic book artist (currently working with Platinum Studios), but also he was a pioneer in refining this style and bringing it to full realization. He began sort of infusing this look into some of his work several years ago. I noticed and asked if he would make me an entire alphabet, so we could do designs with it. The rest, as they say, is history. Here, now, is that much anticipated tag style in step-by-step format.



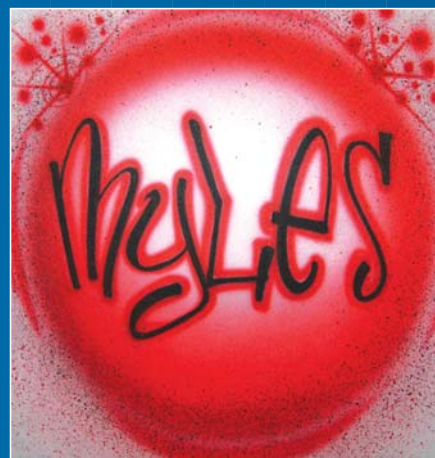
STEP #1

First, make the design parameters, again forming a soft circle with Brite Red. The trick here is to back away from the surface and use a fluid motion while doing the circle.



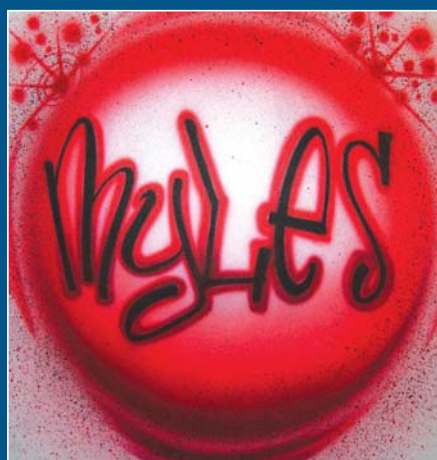
STEP #2

With the area clearly defined, use Opaque Black to do the name. The first pass is a kind of gestural drawing to get the shape right. Then make a second pass to further refine the letters by making them thicker and more crisp. Notice that our rules become a bit more flexible here. This style definitely has more of a wild approach. Just go with it and remember the catchall rule of, "if it works, it's all good." I also used Opaque Black to spatter around the name, adding texture.



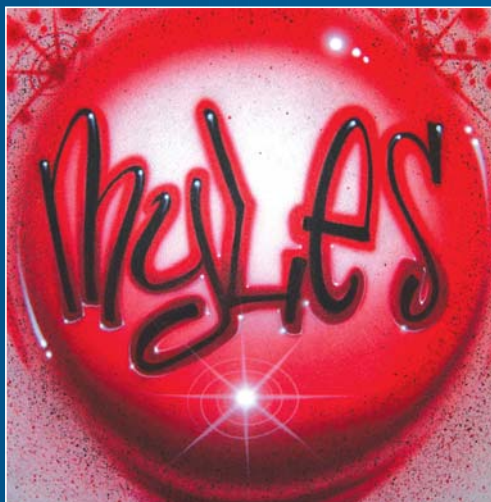
STEP #3

Grab the Brite Red again to outline the letters and add a cool flair. This might include stars and some additional texturing by spattering with the Red.



STEP #4

Use Burgundy to add weight to the bottom of the circle. This adds depth and helps the viewer focus downward through the name.



STEP #5

Finally, highlight the design using Opaque White.



Isn't it amazing how simple and quick a design can be, once you see it broken down into easy-to-follow steps?

Well, there you have it, folks—a cornucopia of different styles and compositions, all forming one awesome lettering display.

Until next time, keep practicing, keep imagining, and "Keep It Real." ✉