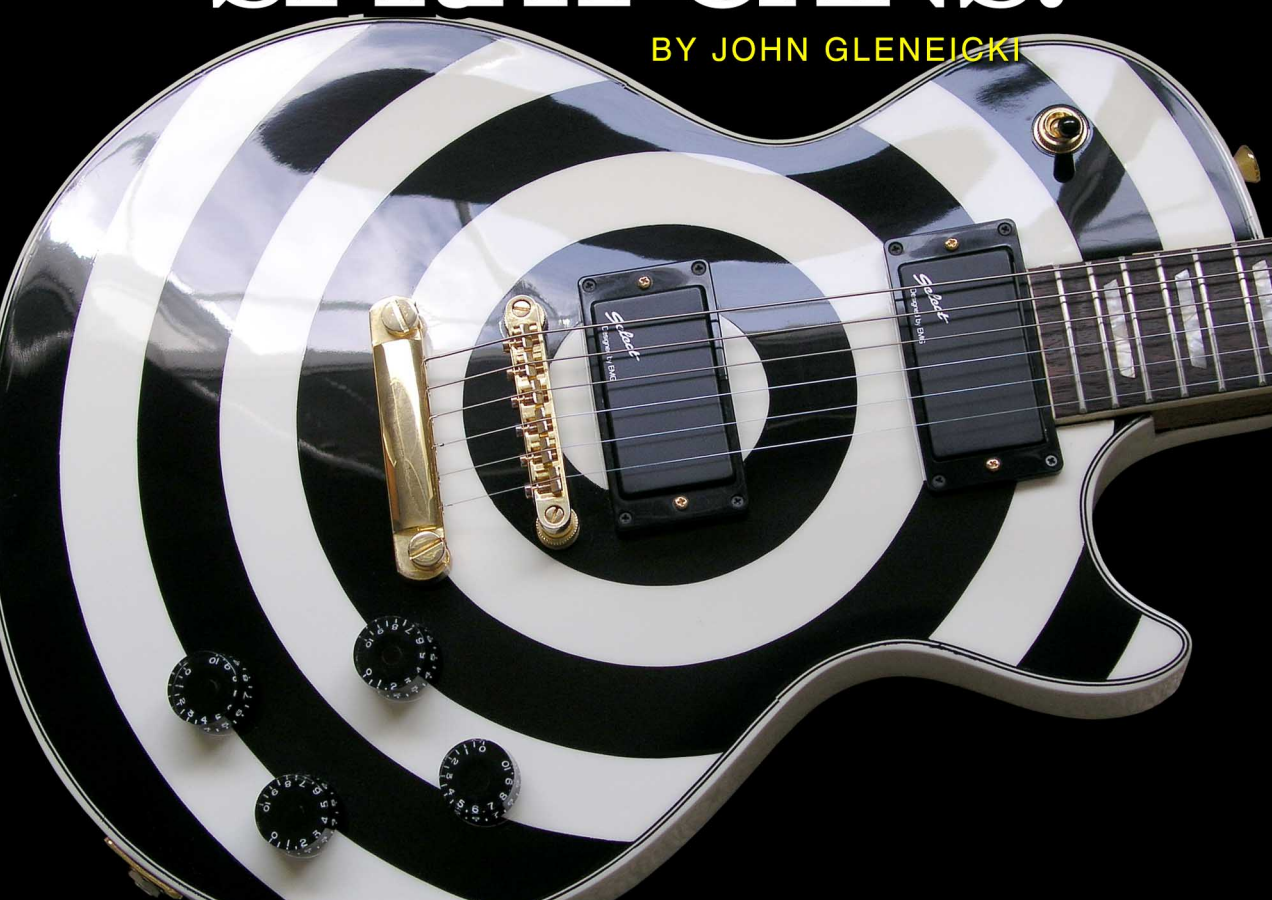
HOW TO

Create A Factory Guitar Finish With Just A Couple Of SPRAY CANS!

BY JOHN GLENEICKI



- *Step-By-Step Instructions!*
- *Easy To Learn!*
- *No Prior Painting Experience Necessary!*
- *Save Yourself HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS!*

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INTRODUCTION

Hello, fellow "axemen" and "axewomen," and thank you for purchasing my book, ***How To Create A Factory Guitar Finish With Just A Couple Of Spray Cans!***

Yes, it's true - you CAN create a guitar finish so thick and glossy-looking, you'll have everyone believing that you had it professionally done! The best part is, you don't need any expensive equipment to do it; all you'll need are some cans of spray paint and a few other items you can pick up at any hardware store.

It really doesn't matter how much painting experience you have; simply follow along with the steps that I've outlined, use the pictures as guidance, and believe in yourself! YOU CAN AND WILL DO IT!

I realize that many of you may be thinking that there's some trick to it - something that you won't be able to do. You know what I say to that? NONSENSE! Every tip and trick you'll need to know is IN THIS BOOK!

Like you, I once was very interested in learning the secrets to creating a factory guitar finish but had no idea where to begin. After several years and several bad attempts, I finally met a few knowledgeable people who guided me in the right direction. I made plenty of mistakes along the way, but hopefully, with what I show you here, you'll bypass all of those errors you may've made on your own and begin to create some real pieces of art with your guitars right out of the gate.

Maybe you've already taken a shot at painting a guitar or two. Maybe you did a good job, maybe you didn't. With what you'll learn here, there is no doubt in my mind that if you follow the steps I've laid out, you WILL do an outstanding job - better than you could ever have imagined! It's that simple.

INTRODUCTION

The guitars I chose to paint are without a doubt, some of the most famous guitar designs out there, belonging to two of the best rock guitarists ever. For that reason, I decided to use them as my project guitars.

I've seen a few bodies painted like EVH's Black and White Strat sell for $400 on eBay (just the body - no parts). As for Zakk Wylde's Bullseye Les Paul, the real deal will set you back $3000. That's A LOT of money. Sure, you could buy Epiphone's version for roughly $1000, but they use an ugly shade of cream on theirs, so personally, I'd much rather have Gibson's model... I just don't have $3000 to buy the guitar.

So, instead of spending an exorbitant amount of money, I decided to buy good used parts and paint and assemble them myself. So, on average, each guitar costs roughly $250 to build and paint. Not bad, huh?

Not only will I show you the step-by-step method I used to paint and finish all of these guitars, I'll also show you exactly where I got all of the parts for each guitar. I'll also give you a list of guitar parts retailers where you can get all of the stuff yourself.

I'll be honest - you'll have to be patient when doing your project guitars; it takes me roughly 2-3 weeks to finish one guitar. Expect to take that long, if not longer, on yours, if you've never painted a guitar before.

With that said, let me say, thanks again for buying this book. If you're anything like me, the first guitar you paint will definitely not be your last! If anything, it'll only be the start of your addiction to painting guitars!

PLEASE NOTE: This book does not discuss how to properly assemble and disassemble a guitar before and after painting; that's beyond the scope of this book. If you're new to painting guitars and require help during any phase of the assembling and disassembling, seek a qualified professional for assistance.

SUPPLIES: WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO NEED

Before you start to paint, you're going to need several supplies. Having them with you before you begin will make your job go a lot more smoothly.

FIG 1

Here's a complete list of items I use to paint and refinish a guitar. You don't need everything listed here - just 1 through 14 are the essentials. The other items are up to you. *(Most are for use with a chemical paint stripper. I recommend using sanding blocks, sanding pads, sanding sponges, and an electric sander over using paint stripper. I cover that in more detail in STEP 2: REMOVING THE OLD FINISH.)*


FIG 2

1. Primer - Preferably Krylon® *(See the next chapter for an explanation on why I suggest Krylon over other paints).* Choosing the color of primer to use depends on what color the base coat of your guitar is going to be. For example, if you choose white or a light color as your base color, use white primer. For a mid-tone color such as orange, red, or blue, use grey primer. For a dark color or black, use grey primer as well.

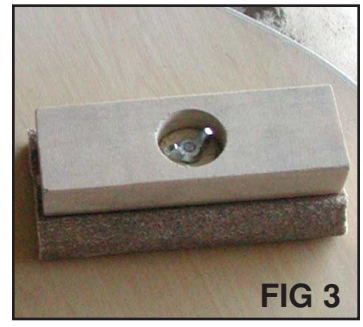


FIG 3

2. Spray Paint - Preferably Krylon® . Whatever color(s) you've decided to paint your guitar. They can be gloss or flat, it doesn't matter. However, the clear coat should be Crystal Clear Gloss. For Project ZW, I used the following colors: Ivory Gloss #1504, Gloss Black #1601, Crystal Clear Gloss #1301, and I used All Purpose Primer White #1315 *(see FIG 1- primer not shown).*For Project EVH, I used: All Purpose Primer Gray #1318, Glossy White #1501, Glossy Black #1601, and Crystal Clear Gloss #1301.

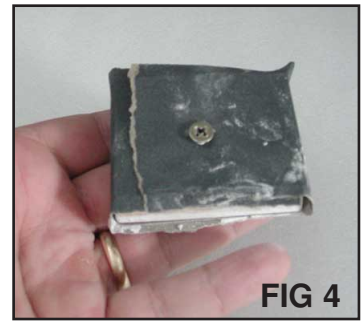


FIG 4

3. Wet/Dry Sandpaper - it doesn't matter the brand you use, just make sure you have a least 3-4 sheets of each of the following grits: 220-grit, 320-grit, 400-grit, 600-grit, and 1200 or 1500-grit *(see FIG 2)*. Also, pick up 1-2 standard sheets of sand-paper in: medium course, medium, and fine grits.

4. Sanding Block(s) - Whether you buy one or make your own, these come in handy when trying to get as flat a final job as possible. I bought the one seen in FIG 3 and use it mostly for sanding

SUPPLIES: WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO NEED

the finishes off guitars. It's big, so therefore, it strips large areas fast. For most of my wetsanding, I use my homemade block in FIG 4 *(previous page)*. It's a little smaller *(1.5" X 1.5" X .75")* and a little easier to use on the tops of the bodies.

FIG 5

5. Rubbing Compound - You'll be using rubbing and finishing compounds at the very end of this project to bring the luster back up on the guitar. The kind I recommend is 3M Perfect-It II Rubbing Compound Fine Cut - seen in FIG 5. It contains no wax or silicone and is very easy to use. Actually, I have yet to use anything that works better when buffing a body by hand, which is how I do it. I'm not saying there isn't a better product; there may be. I just haven't found it yet. The other products in FIG 5 are Finishing Compounds. They take the fine scratches and swirl marks out after using the rubbing compound. Both work equally as good, so whichever one you choose is fine. You don't need both though. If you have a hard time finding 3M Rubbing/Finishing Compounds, try **http://www.carcrazy.net**. This is where I bought my supply. Auto parts stores around me don't carry it. All they seem to have is Turtle Wax, which I don't recommend you use. It's not clear-coat safe.

FIG 6


FIG 7

6. 100% Cotton Material - Whether you use an old t-shirt or buy some 100% cotton, you'll need this for use with the rubbing and finishing compounds.You can pick some up at Home Depot or Lowe's.

7. Face Mask - Unless you love breathing in toxic material, I'd recommend picking up some simple face masks like the one seen in FIG 6. You'll still smell the paint, but at least you'll shield your nose and mouth from sucking in the particles of paint. If you plan on painting more guitars in the future, I'd recommend getting a NIOSH dual-loaded face mask.

FIG 8

8. 2"X1" Wood - *(See FIG 7)*. I use this to hang the guitar during the painting process. I cut it to about 20" long and bolt it to the guitar. I also take a file or sandpaper to all of the edges of the wood to avoid splinters.

SUPPLIES: WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO NEED

9. Hook - I mount a hook into the top of the wood so that I can hang the guitar *(FIG 7)*. Available at pretty much every hardware store, choose a large hook - something sturdy.


FIG 9

10. Masking Tape - *(FIG 8)* I recommend you use the 3M blue or green-colored 1" and 2" masking tape. These don't leave a residue on the guitar like some other tapes can . Available at most auto parts stores and/or hardware stores.

12. X-A cto Knife and Blades. When it's time to cut out the bullseye design, you'll need an X-acto knife with a sharp blade like the one pictured in Fig 10.

FIG 10

13. Bondo - This is used for filling in any dings or unnecessary holes in your project body. Available at most auto parts stores and/or hardware stores.*(see FIG 10B)*

14. Sanding Sealer. You'll be using sanding sealer to seal the grain of the wood. If you can find it in an aerosol spray can, go with that over buying it in a can and brushing it on.*(see FIG 10B)*

FIG 10B

15. Styrofoam Padding - I place a big piece of styrofoam padding underneath the guitar at all times - even while using the paint remover. Surprisingly, the paint remover doesn't dissolve the styrofoam which is great *(and scary too. Just what is this stuff made of?).* Anytime the guitar has to be laid flat, I lay it on the padding. You can probably pick up some from a packing supply store. I use a sheet that's roughly 40" X 50" and fold it several times. Each time a side gets a little dirty, I simply flip it to a new side for a fresh section to rest the guitar on *(see FIG 9)*.

16. Spray Can Holder - *(see FIG 10C)* It's not essential that you have these, but they REALLY make the painting part of the process much easier. It REALLY is like using a spray gun. I use two different brands: SPRAY GRIP by Rust-Oleum *(bought from Lowe's)* and The Original CAN GUN

SUPPLIES: WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO NEED

(bought from ACE Hardware). I like the CAN GUN model much better, so I recommend you use that one if you can find it.

FIG 10C

17. Paint Remover/Stripper - Nothing takes off paint like industrial-strength paint remover. For Project EVH, I used JASCO Paint Remover which worked extremely well. I'm sure most will work equally as well. Just make sure that the one you buy can remove lacquer *(see FIG 11).*

18. Rubber Gloves - If you're going to use paint remover, you will DEFINITELY need rubber gloves. Choose ones that are resistant to paint removers/strippers *(see FIG 11).*

FIG 11

19. Plastic Scrapers - Once again, if you're going to use paint remover, you'll need scrapers to remove the old paint. Choose a heavy plastic scraper over a metal scraper - it won't last as long, but it's close to impossible to dig through the paint and gouge wood with a plastic scraper. With metal, it's very easy. Make sure you buy quite a few. I bought a bag of three for 99 cents. At the end of the day, you'll be tossing them away because the paint remover will melt the edges on them *(see FIG 11)*.

20. Cheap Paint Brush - if you're going to use paint remover, you'll need an old brush to brush on the paint remover. Again, buy something cheap - it's going to get thrown away after you're done removing the paint *(see FIG 11)*.

21. Scrap Cloths/Clean-up Towels - Using paint remover can be messy, so make sure you have plenty of scrap cloths and towels to clean up the mess during and afterward.

22. Drop Cloths - Place a plastic or cloth drop cloth under your work area when using paint remover to minimize the mess.

WHAT TYPE OF PAINT TO USE

There are several types of paint available in cans these days: lacquer, enamel, acrylic lacquer, acrylic enamel, urethane, polyurethane, etc. Kind of confusing trying to decide which one would work on a guitar, huh?

Well, pretty much all of them will work, but what I would recommend you use is Krylon®. It's an acrylic lacquer, comes in lots of different colors, is very easy to work with, and most importantly, dries very quickly.

Actually, another key benefit I've found with using Krylon® over other paints is that I've had absolutely no problems with the masking tape and the Krylon paint. I've run into problems in the past where I had paint pull up when removing the tape using other brands of paint. When that happens, you have two choices: spend a lot of time touching it up or sand it back down and start again.

Therefore, I recommend you use Krylon paint for those very reasons. If you can find a comparable lacquer or acrylic lacquer by another brand and wish to use that, by all means go ahead. However, I recommend staying completely away from spray enamels. They're very difficult to work with due to delayed drying times, and recoating options.

I used to buy my Krylon supply from ACE Hardware, but I recently found out that Wal-Mart also carries it - and you'll pay considerably less at Wal-Mart, so I now purchase it from there. Unfortunately, both LOWE's and HOME DEPOT do not carry it.

For a list of dealers who carry Krylon paints, visit this page - **http://www.krylon.com/main/locator.cfm**

If you cannot find Krylon® paints where you live, choose a suitable acrylic lacquer spray paint. Also, for compatibility purposes, buy primer that's made by the same company that makes the spray paint you purchase.

All of the guitars featured in this book were painted with Krylon® paints and finished off with the non-yellowing crystal clear coating.

WHERE TO BUY GOOD USED PARTS

The first step in your painting project is deciding whether you want to paint your existing guitar or buy another one and use that one.


FIG 11B

This is what my Zakk Wylde guitar looked like when I received it. I paid $50 for it on eBay. You'll notice there are some images of another Les Paul copy in this section. Those images were only used because the images I took of this guitar being stripped and prepped went "Missing In Action."

If you've decided that you want to strip down and paint the guitar you currently have, then that's no problem... okay, well, maybe one problem. What will you play in the interim while your guitar gets refinished? Do you have another guitar to "cure your noodling addiction?" Hopefully, you do. This project guitar will be out of commission for a while. If it's your only axe, you may want to consider buying a good, used guitar to use as your project guitar and leave your main axe intact.

Whatever you decide, here are some options I would recommend.

Without a doubt, eBay is the best place to buy good, new and used guitars, parts, and accessories. I got the Lotus Les Paul copy *(See FIG 11B - an entire guitar with parts, although I bought all new parts for the guitar)* for $50 and the strat body for **Project EVH** for $40. I often see great deals on both necks and bodies - great stuff for less than $40 per neck or body.

If you want to start from scratch and assemble a guitar yourself rather than use your existing guitar, I'd suggest going to eBay for most, if not all of your parts. If you plan on redoing a Les Paul-style guitar, your best bet is to buy a complete guitar that plays decent rather than buying a separate body and neck. The reason is, neck joints and neck cavities really seem to vary greatly on Les Paul copies... more so than on strat copies. I've purchased three complete Les Paul copies from eBay, each were less than $100, but each had a different neck cavity, so swapping necks would take some work to file and sand to make them fit.

Be careful if you buy an old 70's Les Paul copy from Japan. Three that I bought from that era all had plywood bodies. If that doesn't bother you, then nab one if it looks like it would be a good project guitar.

Remember - all you want or need is a guitar that plays well and has a decent

WHERE TO BUY GOOD USED PARTS

neck, and hopefully has a solid wood body. It can be all beat up and scratched - that doesn't matter... We're going to fix that!

One last thing to consider if you want to buy a Les Paul copy from the 70's - it'll most likely need a fret dress. If you can find a newer Les Paul copy in a good price range, I'd recommend that you buy it rather than one from the 70's. Most of the newer copies have all-wood bodies rather than plywood.

To search for a Les Paul copy, simply type in "Les Paul" in the search dialog box on eBay, then have fun looking at thousands of guitars! Actually, you can customize your search to show the lowest-priced products, newly listed, etc. Also type in "Les Paul copy," which will give you a shorter list of guitars to look at. Sometimes, sellers don't mention that their guitar is a copy in their main description, so that's why you should try searches with both Les Paul AND Les Paul copy. *(By the way, if you're not an expert on eBay yet, trust me - you will be in a matter of days).*

One last option I want to mention if you want your project guitar to be a Les Paul style guitar: I recently found a fantastic Les Paul copy that I would highly recommend. The company that makes the guitar is called STELLAR *(http://www.stellarguitars.com)*. I purchased their Mercury 002 model in Pearl white from an eBay vendor I'll tell you about in a few minutes. I paid $185 and it is a fantastic guitar. (They're now selling for $200 but well worth the price!) It comes with all gold hardware, which is PERFECT for making a Zakk Wylde guitar. The inlays on the neck are block-shaped like a Les Paul custom, and it even has the Les Paul custom-style binding around the body. To top it off, the workmanship on the guitar is extremely good. For the quality and price, you can't beat this guitar. If you think you want to check out a Stellar guitar, visit the vendor listed on page 11 - **Imastellarseller**.

Now, if you're a "strat man" (or woman), there is an over-abundance of strat parts online. You really shouldn't have too tough a time finding two parts to use for a project guitar.

If you want to search for guitar bodies, start at this page:
http://listings.ebay.com/aw/plistings/list/category41406/index.html?from=R4

For necks, start here: http://listings.ebay.com/pool1/plistings/list/all/category41423/index.html?from=R4

For other parts and accessories, start here:
http://pages.ebay.com/catindex/musicalins.html?ssPageName=MOPS5:HMI01
- scroll down to Guitar, and below it, you'll find parts and accessories:

As a bonus, here are a few of the eBay vendors/stores I check out regularly for bodies, necks, and other parts and accessories.

WHERE TO BUY GOOD USED PARTS

1. Guitarpartsresource.com - http://www.stores.ebay.com/id=14130837 - A very good selection of bodies, necks, parts, and accessories. Very good prices, too.

2. Magic Dragon Mountain - http://cgi6.ebay.com/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewSellersOtherItems&userid=mgkdragn%40accessus.net&include=0&since=-1&sort=3&rows=50 . Another very good selection of bodies, Les Paul-style necks, parts, and accessories. Very good prices, too.

3. Quick Connect - http://cgi6.ebay.com/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewSellersOtherItems&userid=quickconnect&sort=3&page=1&rows=50&since=-1&showpics=1&stab=0 . Very good selection of parts and accessories. Very good prices, too.

4. Frankrocks - http://cgi6.ebay.com/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewSellersOtherItems&userid=frankrocks&include=0&since=-1&sort=3&rows=50 . Another very good selection of bodies, necks, parts, and accessories. Very good prices, too.

5. Custom Shop Parts - http://www.stores.ebay.com/id=30439693&ssPageName=L2 . Another very good selection of bodies, necks, parts, and accessories. They have some awesome deals on a brand-new neck and body for under $100 - perfect for a strat project guitar. Very good prices on other items as well.

6. Imastellarseller - http://cgi6.ebay.com/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewSellersOtherItems&userid=imastellarseller&include=0&since=-1&sort=3&rows=50 . This is the vendor who sold me the Stellar Les Paul copy. Pay them a visit and see what they have. If you don't see the Les Paul Custom copy, send them an email - they responded immediately and got me the guitar I wanted.

(For your information, I'm not being paid any money by these people/vendors to endorse them, so check them out if you wish. I think they're all very good sources for parts. If you have better sources, by all means, use those.)

Of course, there's always the chance that you'll find a deal at a garage sale, but I think for the time and the amount of product already available, nothing beats eBay right now for getting what you need. *(In fact, I purchased most of the parts for the Zakk Wylde guitar on eBay. For the rest of the parts for Project EVH and the Project ZW, such as screws and switches, I got them from Warmoth guitar products: http://www.warmoth.com. They have pretty much everything you need for assembling a guitar. Their prices are good on most items, but I do regularly see cheaper stuff on eBay.)*

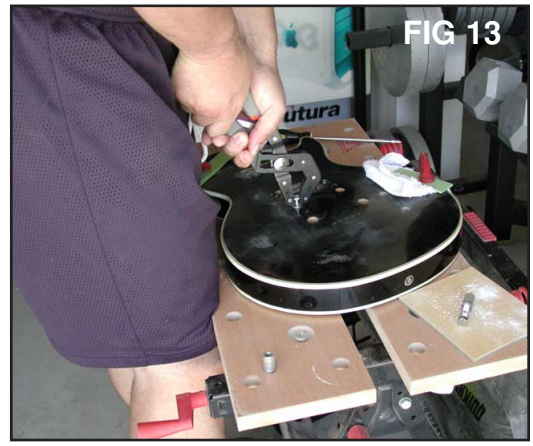
Once you've got your project guitar or parts, you're ready to begin!

PROJECT ZW

STEP 1: REMOVING OLD PARTS

Once you have your project guitar, STEP 1 involves removing all of the old parts. *(Before you do that, you may want to take a "BEFORE" photo, so you can compare it to an "AFTER" photo once it's done)*.

For the most part, removing old parts from a guitar is pretty straight-forward. However, removing parts from an old 70's Les Paul copy got rather tough, as you can see by the photos *(see FIG 13)*. It took two hands and a lot of force to pry those sleeves inside the body out! I made sure to clamp the body to my little portable work bench and to place some foam, cardboard, and a towel underneath the clamp to protect the wood *(FIG 13)*.



The guitar pictured here is not the Lotus Les Paul used for Project ZW. Somewhere along the way, I misplaced the photos I took of removing the parts from the Lotus Les Paul. However, I used the exact same method for each guitar.

Try to take extra care not to gouge the body or neck when removing the parts. I know we're giving your axe a new paint job, but still - the less prep work you have to do, the better.

If you plan on using the parts that came with the guitar once it's finished, get yourself a little rubbermaid container or a Ziploc® bag and throw all the parts in one of those for safe keeping.

If you plan on buying new parts, I'd still recommend you hold onto all of the old parts until the guitar is complete. Better safe than sorry.

AN IMPORTANT POINT:
If you ARE planning on buying all new parts for your project guitar as I did for my two projects here, have ALL of your parts FIRST before beginning the painting process.

You want to assemble the guitar with all of the new parts to make sure everything fits, lines up, etc., before painting. If any new holes have to be drilled, you want to do that in the old finish, not your new one. In fact, you want to do very little drilling or filing to your new finish - that's why it's crucial that you assemble the guitar first, get it working properly, then disassemble, and start your project.

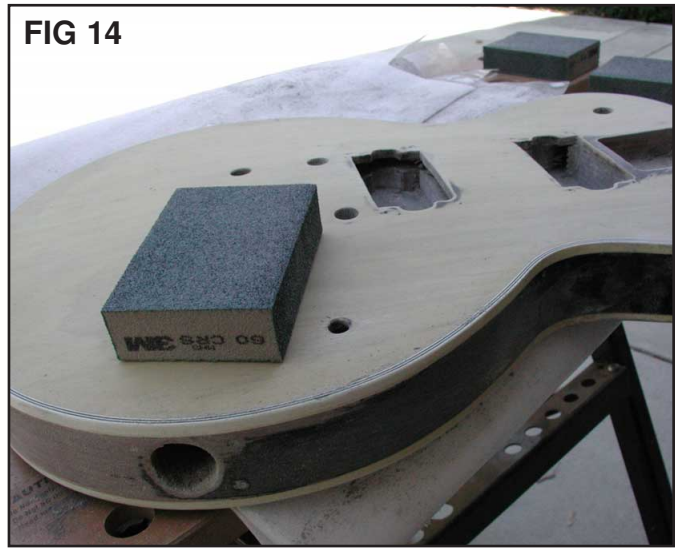
STEP 2: REMOVING THE OLD FINISH

Now that STEP 1 is complete *(all of the old parts have been removed)*, it's now onto STEP 2 - stripping/sanding the body.

There are two ways to strip a body of its finish - using paint remover, as I did for **Project EVH** *(see that section for more details)*, or by using sand paper, sanding sponges, and/or an electric sander as I did for **PROJECT ZW**. Personally, I prefer just sanding the body down rather than using paint remover. Using paint remover is very messy *(moreso than sanding)*, it's toxic stuff, and will burn your skin if you accidently get it on you *(which I did several times).* Decide which stripping method you want to use by reading **Project EVH** and proceed.

For the Les Paul body, I used two 3M Sanding Sponges - paint stripper grit *(FIG 14)*, some medium coarse sandpaper for the inside of the horn, and used that same medium coarse sandpaper for the back with a sanding block *(see FIG 15 next page).*

FIG 14



The guitar pictured here is not the Lotus Les Paul used for Project ZW. Somewhere along the way, I misplaced the photos I took of sanding down the Lotus Les Paul. However, I used the exact same method for each guitar.

Because a Les Paul top is arched, using the sanding sponges conforms to the arched top and makes sanding quite easy. However, because of the arched top, it also creates a problem: sanding the back of the guitar - how do you lay it flat? To alleviate that problem, I gathered up a few big towels and laid the body, face down, on the towels. The towels helped to create a cushion for the arched top and gave me a more solid way of sanding the back without destroying the top. If your project guitar is a Les Paul, try utilizing this same technique for sanding the back.

All-in-all, I believe it took about 2-3 hours to have the body completely stripped of its finish. By no means is it a race. Take as long as you have to when removing the old finish.

To strip your project guitar, have a good, clean, flat surface to work on. Lay the guitar body on top of the styrofoam *(or a big towel)* to protect the body from banging against the table. If you're using the sanding method, you'll

STEP 2: REMOVING THE OLD FINISH

definitely want to be wearing your face mask when sanding. This is old lacquer you're removing, so the face mask will protect you from breathing in all of the old particles.

See FIG 16 below on the typical layers on a guitar body. In almost all cases, a professional guitar is finished with clear coating. Underneath the clear coating lies the paint; underneath the paint lies primer; underneath the primer lies sanding sealer or some other sealer-type substance that fills the grain of the wood.

FIG 15

As you begin to sand through the clear coat and the paint, I would suggest that you move onto another area and do the same, removing the clear coating and the paint.

If you can carefully keep the sanding sealer that's already on the body, this will save you a considerable amount of time in the prepping stage, as it will eliminate the step where you'll have to apply sanding sealer to seal the body and get rid of the grain of the wood.

If you don't feel confident that you can keep the sealer that's already there, then

Typical Layers On A Guitar Body

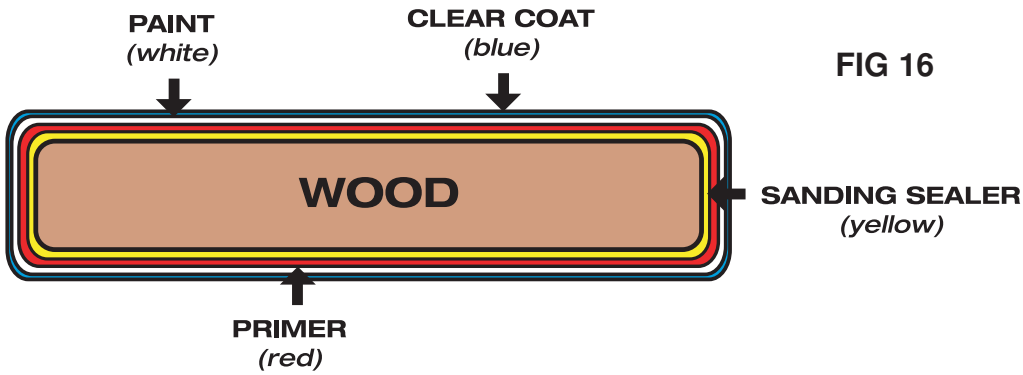


FIG 16

STEP 2: REMOVING THE OLD FINISH

don't worry about it - simply sand down to the bare wood on the entire body. When sanding, there's no right way or wrong way to sand the finish off a guitar, however, I tend to go in straight lines along the length of the body, so I suggest that if you can, try to do the same.

Sanding by hand takes a lot of elbow grease. In other words, it's hard work, so when you start to get tired, definitely take a break. There's no real hurry to get the finish off the body; just do as good a job as you possibly can. Remember, during this step, the better the job you do, the better the final outcome will be for your finished guitar. A well-sealed body makes for a more-perfect paint job.

If you have an electric sander, go ahead and use it on the back of the body if you like, as long as the arched top is well-protected with some big towels. Using an electric sander on the arched top though is tough; you'll find because you can't lay the sander flat on the body, you'll start sanding through some areas while other areas will remain untouched. The way I try to do it is by turning the sanding on an angle and just using a portion of the bottom of the sander and just doing little areas at a time. You have to be very careful doing it this way though. If you can, try to remove as much as you can by use a block and medium-course sandpaper. Use an electric sander only as a last resort *(Also, be very careful when using an electric sander on the binding - try to avoid that...do those areas by hand.)*

For the sides and inside the horn, you'll have to do all of these areas by hand. You may be able to use the sponges for some of it, but for areas where the sponges won't fit, simply tear off pieces of medium-coarse sandpaper and sand those parts by hand.

Once sanding is done and you've removed all of the old paint, go back over the entire body with a less-course grit of sandpaper - let's say a 320-grit and just make it feel smoother to the touch.

If your project guitar is a Les Paul and you see yellowing on the binding *(if it has binding)*, continue to go over those areas with the 320-grit to try and remove all of the yellowing. This is just old clear lacquer that has yellowed with age.

You'll know you're finished with the sanding stage when all of the paint has been removed and most, if not all, of the yellowing around any binding is gone *(depending on whether your project body has binding or not).* If you're satisfied with your sanding job, well done! This is a difficult step.

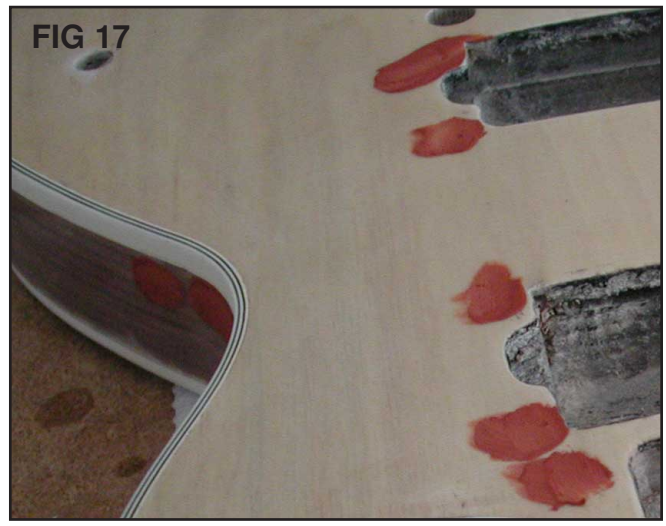
It's now on to Step 3...

STEP 3: FILLING IN ANY HOLES

It's almost inevitable that when you buy an old guitar, you're going to get something with a few dings in it.

Not to worry - those dings are easy to fix.

With your project guitar body being sanded down to the sanding sealer or to bare wood, it's easier to fix those little dings and holes.



I applied the bondo with my finger but I'd recommend that you apply it using a scraper. Simply squeeze the bondo onto the scraper and press the bondo into the holes. Simply scrape off any excess.

For filling holes and dings, I use Bondo, which is a product used on cars. I prefer this stuff over plastic wood for filling holes. Bondo sands very nicely, so I recommend you use Bondo over Plastic Wood.

To start, remove the lid from the Bondo tube and with either your finger or a plastic scraper, simply press it into the ding/hole. If you're using a scraper, after pressing it down firmly into the hole, simply slide the scraper across the body and over the Bondo to remove any excess. Work on one part of the body at a time and allow the substance to dry completely before proceeding. For instance, do all of the dings on the top of the body first, then the sides, followed by the back. Follow the directions on the Bondo container for length you should allow for drying time. *(Most likely, you'll have to wait 1 - 2 hours per section - top, sides, back - before sanding).*

Your goal is to try to fill the ding/hole as best as you can. It doesn't matter whether it's absolutely perfect; once the bondo has dried, you're going to block sand it to try to level, or even it out, so that it blends in with the rest of the body.

Go slowly and pay careful attention to the height of the Bondo; you don't want a hump where you placed the substance. You want to remove any humps so that as you rub your hand across the body, the Bondo has filled the dings/holes and the area has been leveled.

If you happen to go too deep as you block sand and accidently remove all of the Bondo from the hole, simply repeat the step again - fill in the ding, allow it to dry, and then block sand it flat.

STEP 3: FILLING IN ANY HOLES

You shouldn't be in a hurry during this step. All of the extra attention you put into this prep work will make a huge difference in the quality of the paint and finish.

Take your time, and don't settle for a sloppy job!

When you've finished, you're ready to move onto Step 4...

STEP 4: MASKING THE NECK POCKET

Step 4 involves masking off the neck cavity. It's important that you do this to prevent the sanding sealer and paint from getting into this area. When the job is complete, you want your neck to sit in its cavity as well as it did before you painted.

Keeping the area masked ensures that the area will be free of sealer and paint.

Using your 3M blue or green masking tape, simply lay down strips of tape, overlapping each strip slightly *(see FIG 18)*. I also run a piece up the side of the pocket - once again, to ensure that the neck will fit back in without a problem *(see FIG 19).*

FIG 18

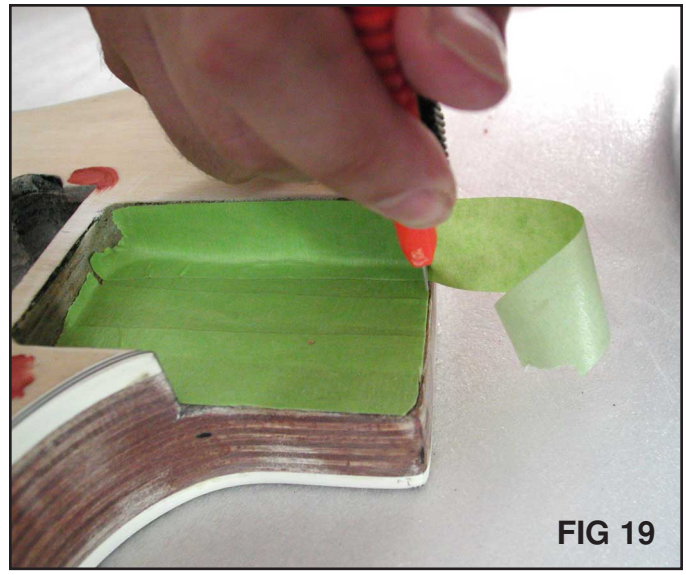


FIG 19

Once the cavity has been completely masked off, take your X-acto knife and cut the masking tape just inside the neck cavity. Cutting slightly inside the neck cavity will make it less likely that you'll pull up the finish as you remove the tape.

Once the tape has been laid and cut, it's onto Step 5 - Adding the Wooden Stick with Hook.

STEP 5: ADDING THE STICK WITH HOOK

The purpose of adding this stick with the hook to your project guitar body is so that you're able to hang it as it dries.

The wood also acts as a handle as you'll see further in the book. I hold the body with the stick and turn and flip it as I paint.

To attach the stick to the body, simply hold the stick in place with one hand while you pre-drill holes using a drill with the other hand *(see FIG 21)*.

I put two screws into the two holes on the right-hand side. Make sure the screws are long enough so that when you hold the body by the stick, it feels very secure.

The last thing you want is for the screws to give while you're painting.You want it to feel nice and secure.

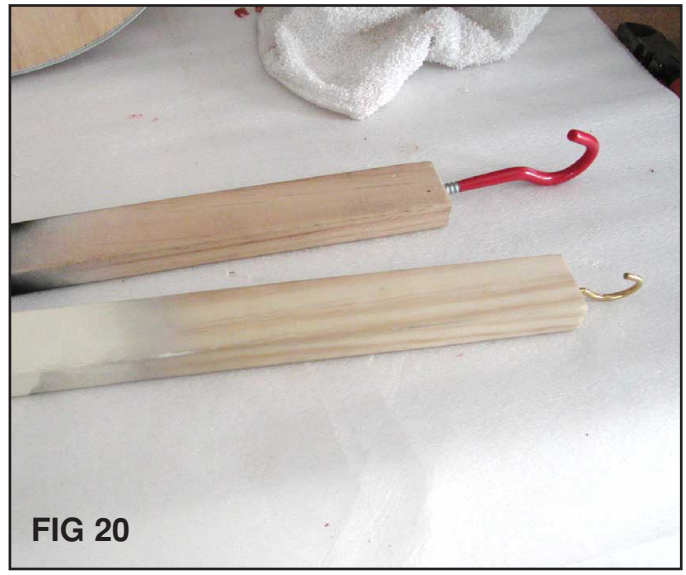


FIG 20

FIG 21

Once the stick has been securely fastened to the body, it's on to Step 6... Applying the Sealer.

STEP 6: APPLYING THE SANDING SEALER

Sanding sealer is a watery substance that dries and thickens rather quickly. If you can find sanding sealer in an aerosol can, I recommend using that over brushing it on as I did.

If you end up having to brush it on, you'll have to work fast, but don't be too worried if it doesn't appear to be going on smoothly, or it looks blotchy; what we're trying to accomplish with the sealer is simply to fill the grain of the wood. *(You won't have to apply sanding sealer if you were able to keep the sealer that was already on your project body.)*

My photo of the sealer being applied to the Lotus Les Paul went "Missing In Action," so I've used this photo instead.

The sealer dries very quickly, which is good; it means that you'll be able to apply most of the sealer in a day or two.

Apply five thin coats around the entire body *(even the binding)*, allowing each coat to dry before applying the next. I tend to hold the guitar by the stick and flip and turn it, covering the entire body all at once. You should try to do the same. If you're having a hard time doing that, simply work on one side at a time, as in Step 3 when you applied the Bondo.

If you were able to get sanding sealer in an aerosol can, your goal is the same as if you were to have brushed it on - five thin coats, allowing each coat to dry in between. *(For length of drying time between coats, follow the recommendations on the product label.)*

Once you've applied your five thin coats, it's time to get out some 220-grit wet/dry sandpaper. Using a sanding block, start sanding back and forth over one side of the body at a time. I use the sandpaper dry at this point, rather than wet. What you're trying to do during this step is to smooth out the sealer so that, in the end, your body will be perfectly smooth and all of the grain will have disappeared.

Using the block will help you to create a flatter, more-perfect sanding job. We want to remove all of the bumps and humps, so pay careful attention while sanding.

STEP 6: APPLYING THE SANDING SEALER

When you've gotten it to a point where you think it looks pretty good, you're ready to move on. However, if after sanding, you can still feel the grain of the wood, simply apply 2 or 3 more coats as you did prior. After the coats have dried, get out the 220-grit and 320-grit sandpaper, wrap them around a sanding block, and start sanding the body flat again. Your goal during this step is to remove ALL of the grain. If you do that, your paint job will be close to perfect. If you don't fill all the grain, it'll show through the paint - and there'll be no way of hiding it.

Once again, the magic phrase is, "don't be in a hurry." Prep work that's done well will make your paint job look that much more professional.

When you can look at the body and honestly say that you've done as good a job as possible filling the grain, and the body feels very flat and smooth, congratulations - that's another tedious step!

Your true reward will be an awesome paint job, not just a so-so paint job.

Ready to move on?... Step 7, here we come...

STEP 7: MASKING THE BINDING

Masking the binding is sort of a difficult step... actually, on the Lotus Les Paul, I didn't mask the binding because it only had a single strip of cream binding that wasn't worth masking. What I chose to do instead was to create a white, black, white, black binding similar to the kind found on real Les Paul Customs using a computer graphics program. After it was created, I simply printed it out on transparent, sticky paper that I laid down on the body after the bullseye design was completed.

I chose not to mask off the binding that was on this Lotus Les Paul body. Instead, I left a 3/16" border around the entire body rather than run the pattern right to the edge. Doing it like this gives the illusion that there is a binding on the body and makes the job look more professional. I recommend that, if this is your first guitar paint job, you do it this way.

Obviously, most of you would not be able to do that, so here are your choices:

If you have a body that has a white, black, white, black, white binding similar to the kind found on real Les Paul Customs, your first choice is to mask that area off using masking tape prior to painting. I'll discuss this more in a second.

Your second choice *(and the choice I recommend unless you have experience with masking and painting)* is to simply paint right over the binding, whether it's multi-colored or just a single strip, like I did for the Lotus Les Paul copy. As you can see in FIG 22, the body still looks great without a binding around it. I know the binding adds a nice touch, so it just depends on whether you want to take the time to mask off the binding or not *(or whether the binding on your body is in good enough condition to be worth the effort.)*

If you decide that you're just going to paint over the binding, then I'd suggest you leave yourself a border of roughly 3/16" of an inch around your body. Doing this will make your job look more professional, and it'll look like you do have binding around the body. In fact, after I finished removing the tape from the bullseye design, I really didn't want to use the binding that I created on the computer simply because I thought the paint job looked good enough as it was. Eventually, I did add the binding because I wanted to be able to show you what can be done if you occasionly have to improvise, but it wasn't an easy decision.

STEP 7: MASKING THE BINDING

If you've decided that you want to mask off the binding that's on your body, then follow along as I explain the easiest way(s) of accomplishing this procedure.

Masking the binding is done before spraying your primer. There are two ways that you can mask your binding: **A.** You can lay your masking tape down and then cut along the binding *(FIG 24)*, or **B.** Use 3M's Fine Line Tape *(1/4" - available at your local auto paint supply stores)* which can be molded and stretched to follow the curves of your body. Although the fine line tape seems better, it has a tendency of lifting, so you really have to be aware of that and make sure you press it down firm before spraying any paint.

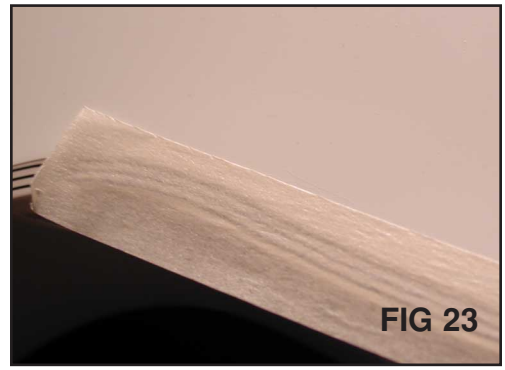


FIG 23

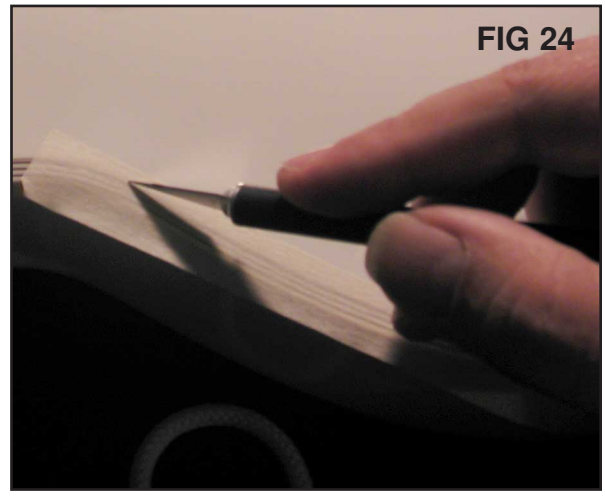


FIG 24

VERSION A: As you can see in FIG 23, you can clearly see the binding through the tape, which is what you want. Continue to lay pieces of masking tape around the whole top of the body until all of the binding is covered.

With a sharp knife, you're now going to cut along the edge of the binding so that when the excess is removed, the top of the binding has been carefully masked. Push any excess tape over onto the side, however, don't let the tape cover the unpainted wood. Stay on the binding.

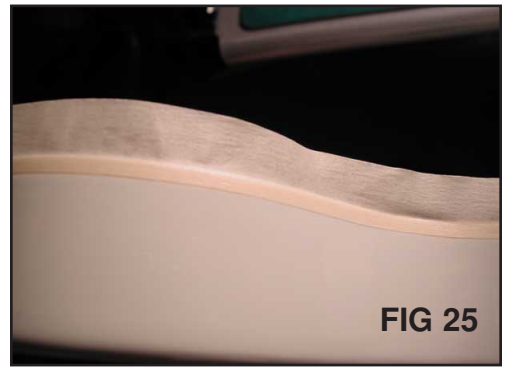


FIG 25

When the top is complete, you can now run pieces of masking tape along the edge of the binding on the side like I'm doing in FIG 25. Pay careful attention not to run the tape into the unpainted area. Stay right on the edge of the binding.

I suggest you work in increments of 6" when doing the sides. In fact, what

STEP 7: MASKING THE BINDING

might be easiest for you is to lay a strip of 6", trim the excess but leave a little so that you can flip it up onto the top of the body. This will make an air-tight masking, so no paint will be able to penetrate the masking and, get onto the binding.

Continue with this technique until all of the binding on the side has been masked off.

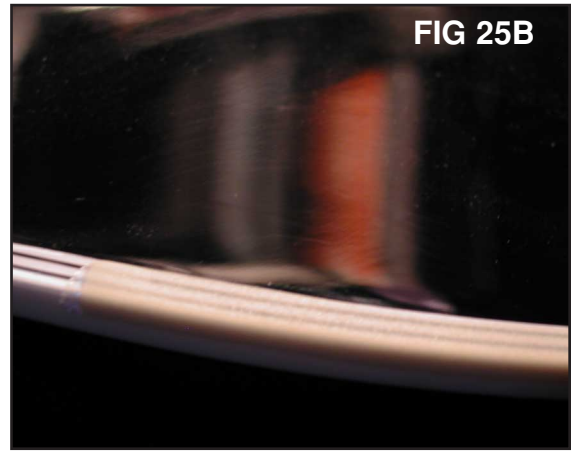


FIG 25B

You'll find that this step is not difficult at all, just a little time-consuming.

Remember - as I've said all along, there's never a hurry for doing the prep work; the better the job you do now, the better the final outcome.

If there's multi-binding on the back of the body as well, simply do exactly what you just did for the back. However, before you begin the back, be very careful not to accidently remove any tape off the top that you just labored over. Proceed with caution.

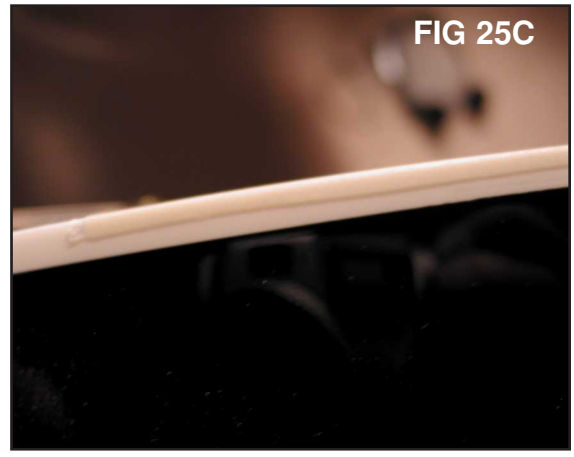


FIG 25C

VERSION B: Using 3M's Fine Line Tape is pretty straightforward - just break off pieces of roughly 6"-9", and stretch and mold it into place. I tend to always do the top first followed by the sides. As you can see if FIG 25B, it bends nicely into place. You just have to be aware that it's not a real sticky product, therefore, it has a tendency to lift. If you use this method, press down before every coat of paint you apply.

After the top is complete, you'll have to apply the tape to the sides as well. Follow the edge of the binding and then simply flip any excess onto the top to make an air-tight mask.

Once the binding has been masked and trimmed using whichever method you choose, pat yourself on the back - that was very tedious! You're now ready to move onto Step 8 - Spraying The Primer...

STEP 8: SPRAYING THE PRIMER

The best part about this step is that the most-difficult parts of this job are done! Yes, some of those first few steps are a little painstaking, but necessary.

So, you may be wondering why we're spraying primer and not jumping straight to the paint? Well, for a couple of reasons: Primer helps to bond the paint to the body. Without it, you may find that your paint is doing strange things as it hits the sealer. The primer tends to make the paint stick nicely, eliminating any "funky" patches in your paint.

Primer is also good to use because it allows you to see any flaws that you might've missed during the sealing stage. The primer acts like a sealer too, because it fills any leftover grain and/or any little dings or holes that may still be there. It can be sanded just like the sealer. You'll see what I mean after you've applied your first few coats and they're dried. You'll be able to see first-hand whether your sealing job was an excellent job or just an okay job. If it appears your sealer is uneven, sand the primer down and reapply a few more coats to help even it out.

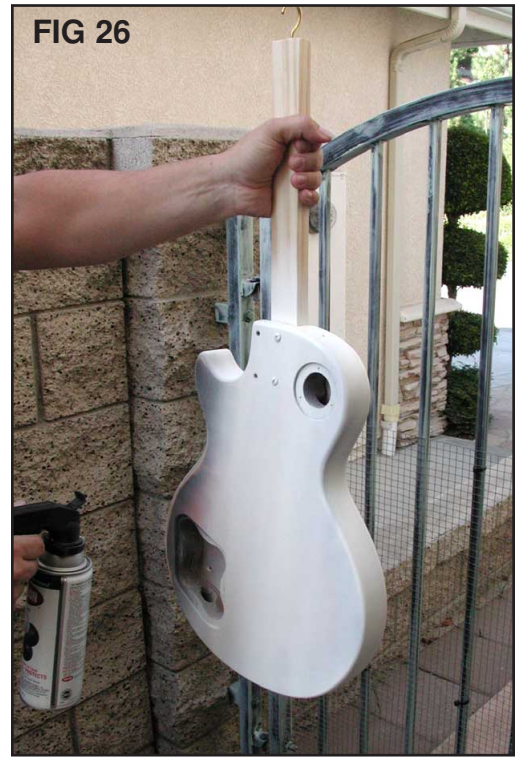


FIG 26

Here I am applying primer in an "up-down, down and up" direction. The coat prior was applied in a "left to right, right to left" direction.

Another benefit to using Krylon's primer is that it's very forgiving. What I mean by that is, the primer doesn't really run *(unless you hold the can and spray in one area too long)*. That's good whether you're a novice painter or an experienced one. The paint seems to settle and flatten out quite nicely.

It also dries very fast. You may find that after spraying the entire body, it's already close to being dried. Still, you want to give yourself at least 20 minutes between coats to allow the paint to completely dry and settle.

So, now that that's out of the way, let me discuss my technique for spray painting in general because you'll be using this technique for ALL of your spray painting, not just while using the primer. *(This explanation is assuming that you have virtually no experience with spray painting. If you have experience and want to do it your way, then by all means, go right ahead).*

STEP 8: SPRAYING THE PRIMER

The first thing you should know is, like guitar playing, technique is very important. The better your spraying technique, the better the final results. That's not to say that your painting has to be absolutely flawless - it doesn't. However, you should concentrate on trying to do as good a job as possible, applying thin coats instead of thick coats... This is A MUST. Spraying thin coats allows the paint to dry faster, and it's less likely to run.

Holding the body upside-down like this makes it easier to control when painting because most of the weight is sitting above your hand/arm.

When you're ready to start spraying the primer, you're going to be holding the guitar in one hand while you spray with the other *(see FIG 27).*

I hold the guitar many different ways while spraying - upside down, right-side up, sideways, etc. Hold it whichever way is comfortable for you. If you find that the guitar body is a little heavy for you, try painting the body with the guitar upside down as in FIG 27. This way, the weight of the body is above your hand rather than below. If this method is still too heavy for you, hang the guitar and spray sections at a time.

As I paint, I like to overlap each coat by about 50%. I start my first pass across the body, half on the body and half off *(see FIG 28 next page).* I also like to start the spray off the body and run the spray past the body *(see FIG 28 next page).* Doing this makes for a much cleaner pass across and virtually eliminates paint spatters *(the paint shooting out big drops of paint)*. As in FIG 28, I run my first pass across left to right, followed by the next pass right to left, the next left to right, etc, overlapping each pass by roughly 50%. I zig-zag my way up the entire body this way, both sides.

For the next coat, I always go in the opposite direction; for example, if I went left to right, right to left for the first coat, I'll go up and down, down and up for the next coat *(see FIG 28 next page)*; again, always overlapping each pass by roughly 50%. I feel doing it this way helps to even out any inconsistencies in my spraying technique.

When putting on all of my coats, I almost always do the sides of the guitar body first, followed by the back, and then the front. The reason I do this is that if the paint is coming out of the can in an inconsistent manner, then it'll be on areas of the guitar that aren't so visible. You can try it this way to see if it's comfortable for you.

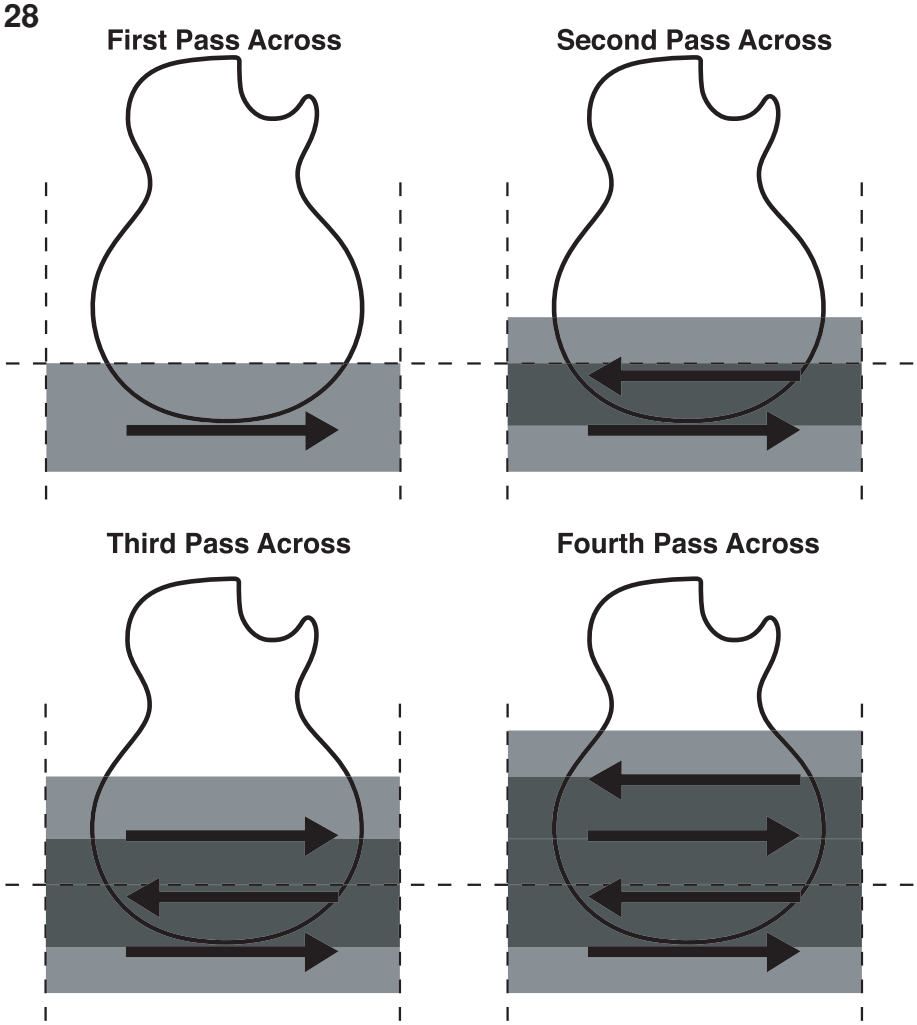
STEP 8: SPRAYING THE PRIMER

When painting the sides, I paint similarly to the rest of the body; I start the spray half on the side and half off the side, and I overlap all of the coats. For painting the bottom of the guitar, I flip the body upside down and spray two to four passes, overlapping the coats by 50%.

Another important aspect to painting is your tempo. I seem to come up with 1 - 1.5 full seconds. Each pass across the body is roughly 1 - 1.5 full seconds. I definitely don't zip across the body spraying on little bits of paint and neither should you. I allow for good coverage, and I always try to maintain a distance of about 10" from the body.

In case you're starting to worry that you're not going to do a good job, let me let you in on an important fact: when a paint job has some sort of design on it like **Project ZW** or **Project EVH**, you'll be putting on roughly 40-50 thin

FIG 28



STEP 8: SPRAYING THE PRIMER

coats of paint. If you're worried that one bad or uneven paint coat is going to ruin the job, don't worry about it - it won't!

Alright, now let's discuss the primer coats. You'll be applying thin coats of primer, allowing each coat to dry completely before applying another. In between each coat, look for little surface bumps. If you find any, which most likely, you will, sand them lightly with 400-grit wet/dry sandpaper not using any water. Your goal is to cover the entire body with solid primer and to keep the surface of the body relatively smooth. Expect to do roughly 5 coats of primer over the entire body... possibly more.

When the body has been completely covered, give it one final light sanding with 400-grit wet/dry sandpaper dry to remove any bumps or blemishes. Congratulations! - your body is now ready for your first coat of color!

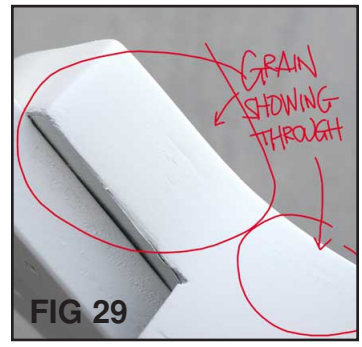


FIG 29


FIG 30


FIG 31


FIG 32

AN IMPORTANT POINT:
If you find that, while applying the primer, you didn't quite get all of the grain sealed with the sanding sealer, and the primer isn't filling the grain *(see FIG 29)*, don't be afraid to go back over the primer with some Bondo like I did in FIG 30.

Once the Bondo has dried *(give it at least 3 hours)*, sand it back down to smooth and flat with 320-grit wet/dry sandpaper and use it dry. The Bondo sands very nicely, so this should be a fairly easy fix, but still - use a careful touch. When you're done sanding the area, it'll probably look like FIG 31.

Remove any excess dust and debris on the body with a damp paper towel. Allow it to be free of any water before spraying the primer again. Apply light coats until eventually, the area is smooth and flat like FIG 32.

When you get to this point, you're ready to spray your first coat of color!

STEP 9: SPRAYING YOUR BASE COAT

Before we spray our first coat of paint, blow into the body cavities to remove any debris that may still be in there. Take a damp paper towel and wipe off the entire guitar body, removing any dust or debris that might still be on there as well. When the body's dried, we're ready to go.

Painting the **Project ZW** guitar body is pretty standard - you'll apply your lightest color coats first, saving the dark colors for last. However, for **Project EVH**, it's the opposite - Eddie sprayed black first, masked it off, and then sprayed white. *(Hey - the guy's always been unorthodox, so why should we expect anything different from him when it came to painting his axe?)*

Anyway, for this guitar body, our first coat of paint is going to be Krylon® Ivory Gloss.

As a reminder, here are the paints that I used for this body:

Krylon® - All Purpose Primer White #1315 (1 can)
Krylon® - Ivory Gloss #1504 (1 can)
Krylon® - Glossy Black #1601 (1 can)
Krylon® - Crystal Clear Gloss #1301 (3-4 cans)

Okay, as I've mentioned several times already, you'll be applying THIN coats of paint rather than trying to cover the entire guitar in one application. Don't expect your guitar to be a solid ivory color until at least your third or fourth coat. Remember - putting your paint on in thin coats allows it to dry faster with less runs, making it easier for masking off the bullseye design.


FIG 33

Here I am holding the Project ZW body after the final coat of Ivory Gloss has dried. The body has the standard "orange peel" look, but otherwise, it's relatively smooth with absolutely no runs.

Now that you've already sprayed the primer, you probably have a better feel for how to spray the sides and the bottom of the guitar. As I've said, I like to do all of the sides and bottom first, followed by the back, then the front. If you're doing it this way, continue with that order or whatever has been working for you.

Continue with the same painting technique I described in the last chapter; go left to right, followed by right to left, etc., zig-zagging up the entire body this way, overlapping each pass by

STEP 9: SPRAYING YOUR BASE COAT

roughly 50%. Your next coat should be up and down, down and up, etc., covering the entire sides, front, and back of the body this way; again, always trying to overlap each pass by roughly 50%.

Allow each coat to dry for at least an hour and a half before applying the next coat *(check your container for exact time they recommend)*. You won't have to sand between coats unless you find a bad run *(see notes below on how to deal with a run).*

When you've covered the entire body with a nice, solid ivory color, look it over for any obvious flaws or runs and handle it with the method I've laid out below. Make sure that your color is solid and that you can't see any white primer.

After you've done any sanding of runs or other touch-ups, allow the body to dry for at least three days before proceeding to the next step. This will give the paint ample time to dry and completely settle.

(If you're painting a guitar with just one color, you'll bypass steps 10 - 15.)

Dealing With Runs:
All runs should be removed as best as possible before masking your body and applying additional paint. If you find a run that looks like it may be a problem when you mask, start by taking a small piece of 400-grit wet/dry sandpaper and with a delicate touch, try to remove as much of it as you can, rubbing in a circular motion with light pressure *(no water)*. Be very careful not to go down to primer or wood. "Proceed with caution," as the sign would say. It doesn't have to be absolutely perfect; just try to level it out as best as you can.

As long as you've taken out the meat of the run, you'll be okay to move on. Also, don't worry that the paint will be dull in that area. That will be undetectable when we spray our clear coats.

Painting Outdoors:
If you live in an area of the country where you get rain and snow, painting outdoors will be difficult. You DO NOT want to be painting when it's raining or drizzling. Water hitting the body while you paint will cause air bubbles and imperfections, which may be difficult to fix. If you're scheduled to paint on a day when the weather is bad, don't paint that day. Wait as long as you have to in order for it to be clear and dry.

STEP 10: MAKING YOUR PROTRACTOR

This step could've been done earlier than Step 10, however, I've placed it here because it'll give you something to do while you let your body sit for a few days.

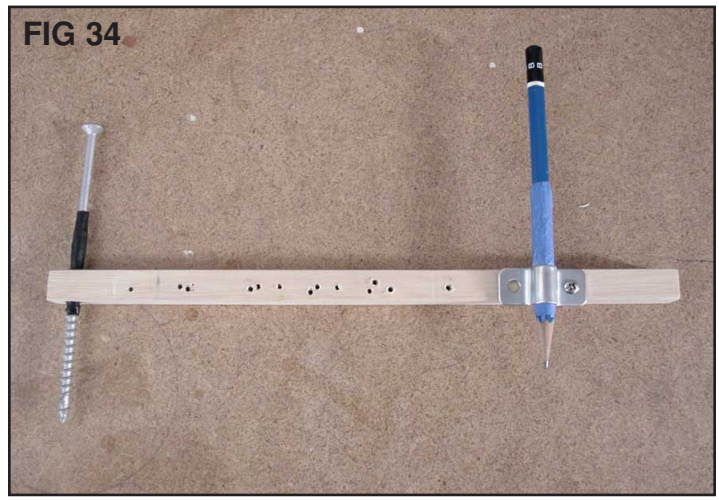


FIG 34

This step involves making a homemade protractor like the one seen in FIG 34. It's the tool that will help you get the perfect circles of the bullseye onto your body.

The protractor is made up of 5 parts. You can get four of them at any hardware store. As for the 5th part - the pencil, if you don't have one lying around your house, you can pick one up at a local convenience store.

The items you'll need to make your protractor are:

1. 1 - 4" screw
2. 1 - 1/2" Square dowel cut to 10" in length
3. 1 - Metal bracket, which holds the pencil in place.
4. 2 - small screws
5. 1- pencil

Once you have your parts, start by drilling a hole in the center at one end of the dowel right through so that the 4" screw can pass through the hole as shown in FIG 34. If it's too loose a hole, you'll have to do what I've done and use some electrical tape around the screw to make it a tighter fit. In fact, you want a tight fit... but not too snug that the screw can't rotate. The dowel has to be able to move a little inside that hole; as you rotate

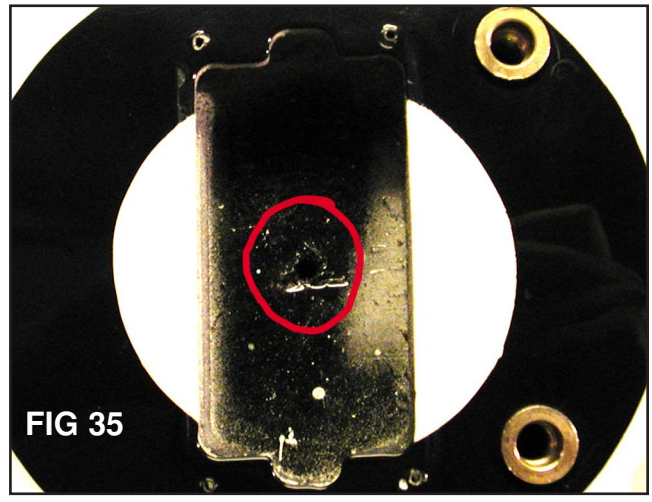


FIG 35

I forgot to snap the picture of the hole being drilled when the body only contained the base coat of ivory, so I've used this picture to show you the positioning of the hole.

STEP 10: MAKING YOUR PROTRACTOR

the protractor to make the circles, you don't want the screw rotating out of the hole holding it in place.

Also, try to make sure that your hole is in the center of the dowel - because it's a 1/2" dowel, the center should be 1/4" from either side. Leave roughly a 1/4" from the end of the dowel, too.

Second, drill a hole in the middle of your rear pick-up hole in your body as I've done in FIG 35 *(previous page)*.

Third, you're going to mark the side of the dowel with the following measurements:

1. 0" - hole for the 4" screw
2. 1 3/8" (1.325")
3. 2.5"
4. 3 5/8" (3.625")
5. 4 3/4" (4.75")
6. 5 7/8" (5.875")
7. 7"
8. 8 1/8" (8.125")

Zero represents the center of the hole you drilled for your screw. These are the marks in which your pencil should be positioned when making the bullseye pattern. The more accurately you secure your pencil to these

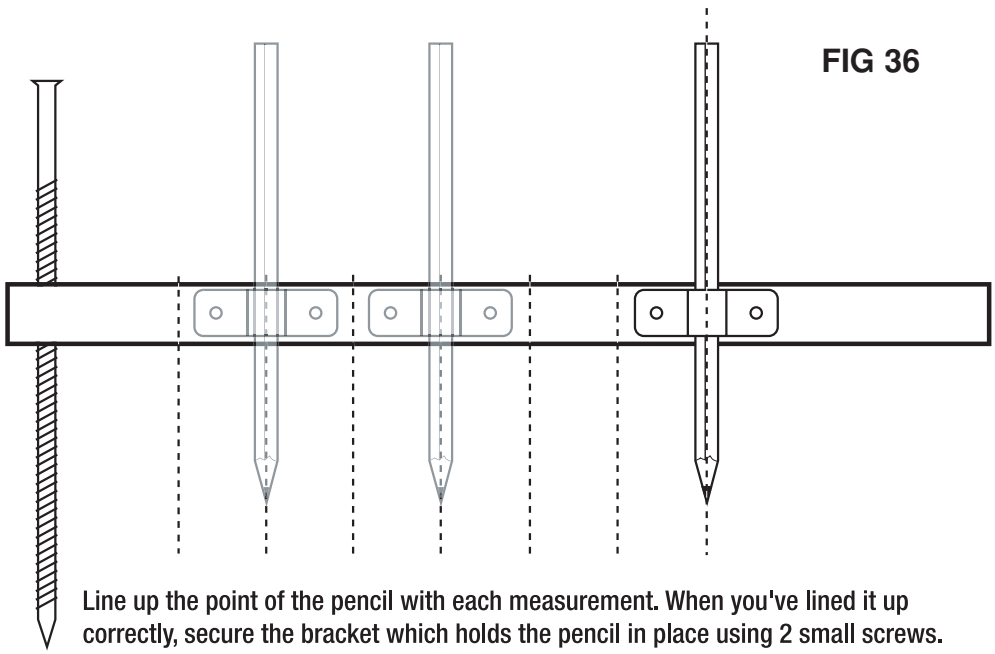


FIG 36

Line up the point of the pencil with each measurement. When you've lined it up correctly, secure the bracket which holds the pencil in place using 2 small screws.

STEP 10: MAKING YOUR PROTRACTOR

measurements, the more accurate your bullseye will be.

FIG 36 *(previous page)* shows you how to line up the pencil to the measurements. The point of the pencil should fall directly on each specific measurement. For example, if the first measurement is 1.325”, the point of the pencil should fall directly on 1.325” - not 1.4”, not 1.35”. Accuracy is crucial for this step.

Once you line up your pencil on the marks, mark the holes in the bracket so that you can secure the bracket to the dowel.

PLEASE NOTE: You don’t have to secure the pencil at this point; but pre-marking and drilling the bracket holes into the dowel will make placement easier later on.

When you’ve completed marking and/or pre-drilling all of the holes, your protractor is done, and you’re ready for Step 11 - Masking Your Guitar Body.

STEP 11: MASKING YOUR GUITAR BODY

Now that your guitar body has a nice, solid ivory base coat on it, you're ready to mask the body in preparation for creating the bullseye design.


FIG 37

Using your blue 2" 3M masking tape, start at the top edge of your body and lay a strip of tape as I've done in FIG 37. *(If you've already masked off your binding, mask right over top of that tape that's already masking the binding)*.

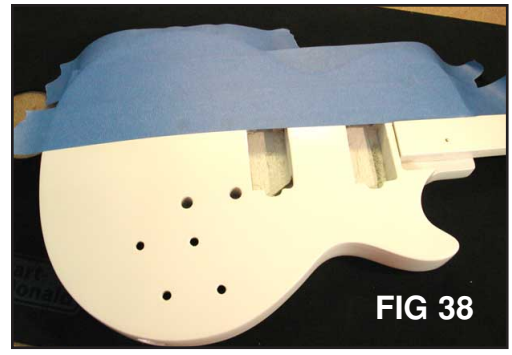


FIG 38

After your first piece of tape has been laid, follow that piece with another and overlap your first piece by about a quarter of an inch *(see FIG 38)*.

Continue laying down the tape this way, overlapping each piece by about quarter of an inch until the top of the body has been completely covered *(see FIG 39).*


FIG 39

Once the top is covered, cover the sides of the body as well as the back with strips of tape like I did in FIG 40 *(next page)*. The entire body has to be covered so that you don't get any overspray on areas that aren't supposed to be painted. *(I used a couple of pieces of paper on the back instead of using the masking tape. We're just protecting the back from getting hit with overspray, so you don't really have to mask up the entire back of the guitar; just make sure it's covered - see FIG 40 next page).*

When the entire body is covered, cut out the masking tape that's covering the bridge pick-up. This is necessary because you'll need access to the hole you drilled into the bridge pick-up hole.

STEP 11: MASKING YOUR GUITAR BODY

When cutting out that masking tape covering the pick-up hole, be careful not to remove any tape from the top of the body; cut the hole half an inch inside of the pick-up and simply push the remaining tape down into the hole *(see FIG 41)*.

Once you've completed masking the entire body and removed the masking that covers the bridge pick-up hole, you're ready to move onto Step 12 - Creating The Bullseye Design.

FIG 40

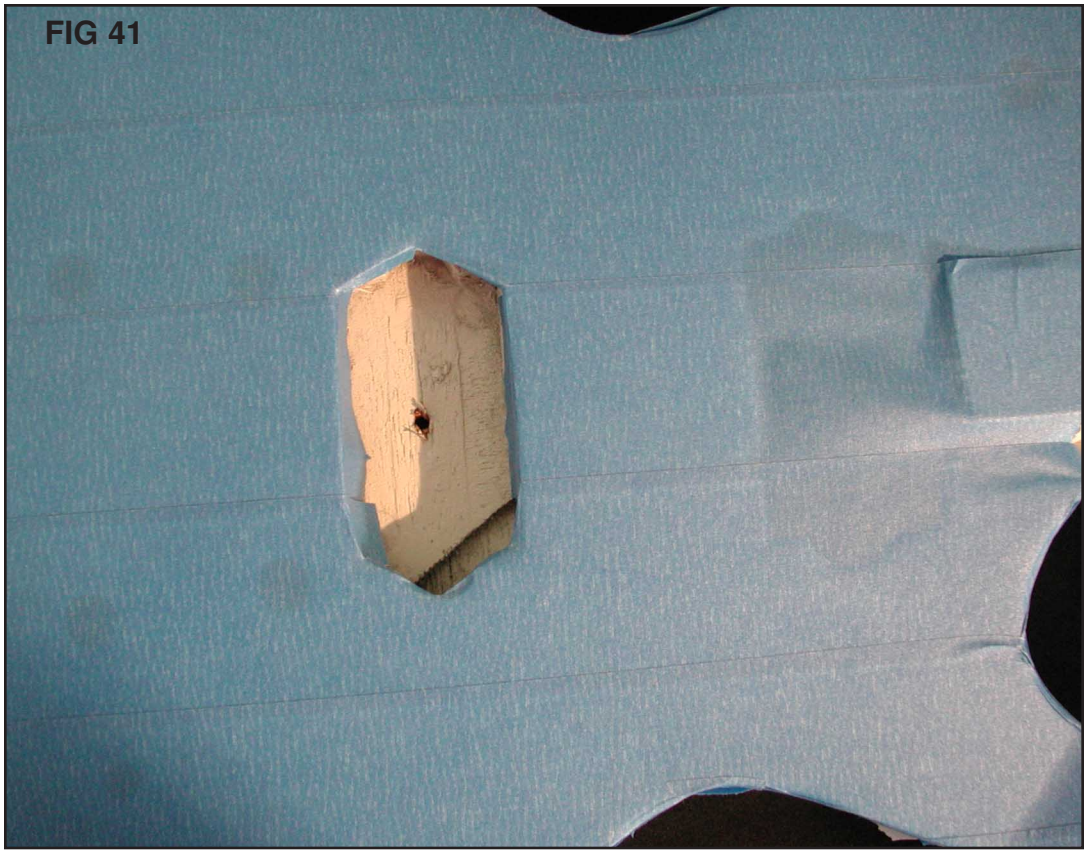


FIG 41

STEP 12: CREATING THE BULLSEYE DESIGN

If you've done everything correctly up to this point, making the circles for the bullseye design should be pretty easy, so let's begin:

Start by securing the screw inside the dowel to the hole in the bridge pick-up hole *(see FIG 42)*. With the screw now secured in place, your protractor should be able to rotate around without a problem.

With the holes pre-drilled into the side of the dowel, attached your bracket to the dowel in the first set of holes as I've done in FIG 42, insert your pencil, and you're ready to draw your first set of circles. *(As you can see, I've used some blue masking tape around my pencil to make a nice, tight fit inside the bracket. You may have to do the same to ensure accuracy in your circles.)*

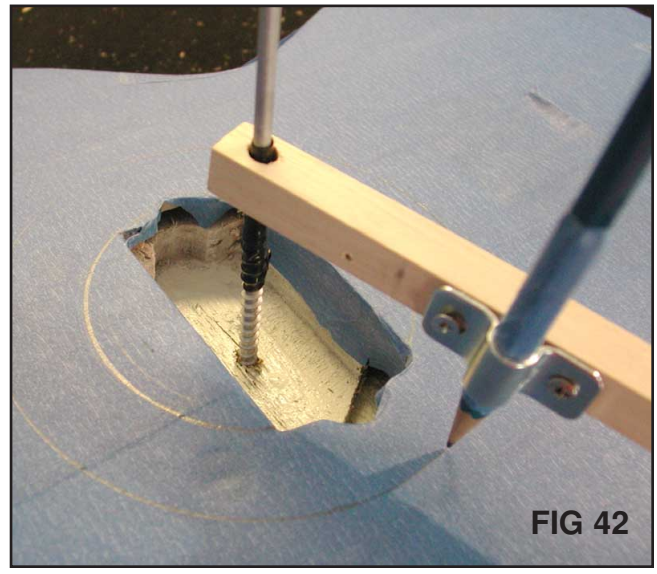


FIG 42

To get the circles onto your body, hold the screw with one hand and rotate your pencil around with the other hand. Don't press too hard to start because getting a perfect circle is a little tricky because of the arched top. You may have to move the pencil down or up inside the bracket as you make the circle(s). As I rotated and made my first circle, I'd rotate around a few more times, pressing a little harder with each pass.

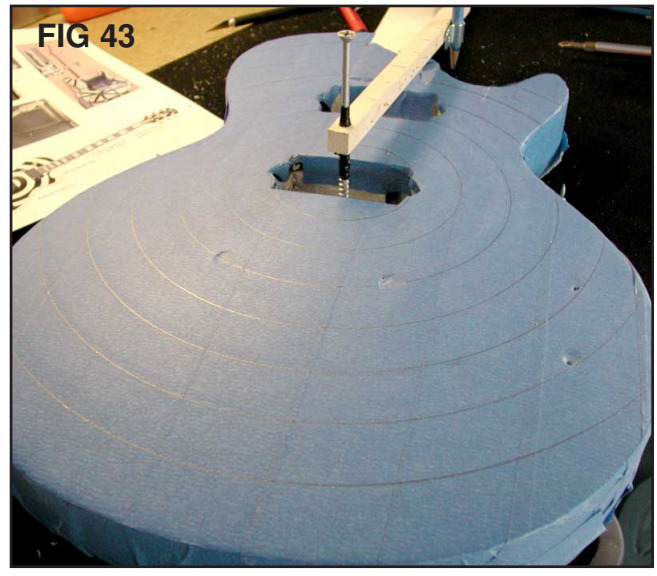


FIG 43

Don't panic if the lines don't meet perfectly the first time around; you may have to play with it a bit to get it just right. Also, don't be afraid to take an eraser and erase any circle lines that aren't close to perfect. I erased almost every line at least once. Some were

STEP 12: CREATING THE BULLSEYE DESIGN

erased several times.

After the first circle is made, you'll have to move your bracket to the next position and secure it to your dowel. Proceed this way until the entire design is complete as in FIG 43 *(previous page)*.

Once again, take your time with this... there's no rush. You want perfect circles and that may take a bit of work.

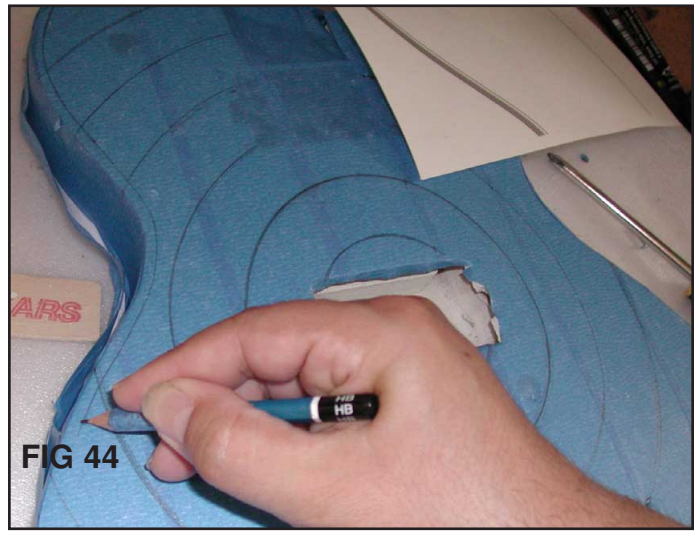


FIG 44

Once you've completed all of the circles, we're going to do one more thing. We're going to draw a border of 3/16" around the guitar to simulate binding. *(If you've masked off the binding, you won't have to do this.)*

As you can see in FIG 44, I've drawn a border of 3/16" around the entire body. When we cut out the bullseye design, we're only going to cut up to this border; not to the edge of the body. Doing it this way will make the job look so much more professional.

PLEASE NOTE: You may notice that, as you're putting down the circles for the bullseye design, they don't exactly match up with Zakk's guitar as you get to the circles on the outer edge of the guitar. The reason for this is that almost all Les Paul copies vary slightly in shape from a real Les Paul. That's why we start with the smallest circle and work our way out rather than the other way around. It's more important that the first black bullseye circle be positioned exactly where it is. As long as that one is positioned correctly, the others can fall where they do and still look correct.

STEP 13: CUTTING OUT THE BULLSEYE DESIGN

Now that your bullseye design has been drawn onto the masking, and you've drawn on a border of 3/16", you're ready to cut out the portions that'll be sprayed black.

Cutting out the bullseye is going to take a steady hand. If you've drawn accurate circles, just stay on top of the lines when cutting, and you should do just fine.

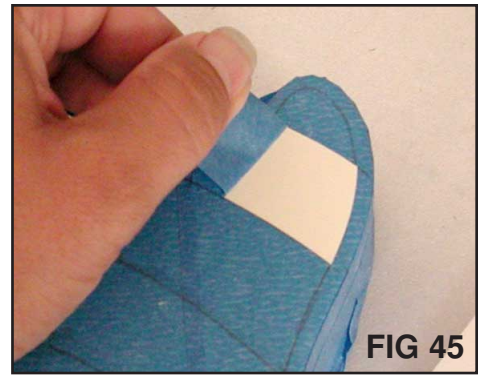


FIG 45

If you don't feel confident that you'll do a good job, ask someone you know who may be artistically inclined to help you with this step. Artists tend to have a steady hand and an accurate eye, so asking for help from an artist may be what you need to get a very precise cutting job.

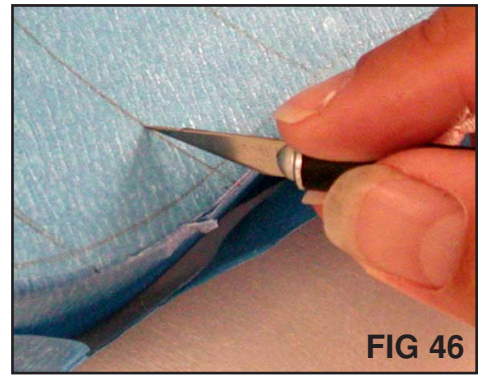


FIG 46

When you're ready to begin cutting, I'd recommend starting at the shortest lines that are located on the bottom horn as pictured in FIG 45, so you get a feel for cutting. You'll want to cut deep enough so that you cut right through the masking tape. Don't worry that you're probably cutting into the paint, too - you're not even going to see that when it's all done. Still, try to cut only as deep as is necessary.

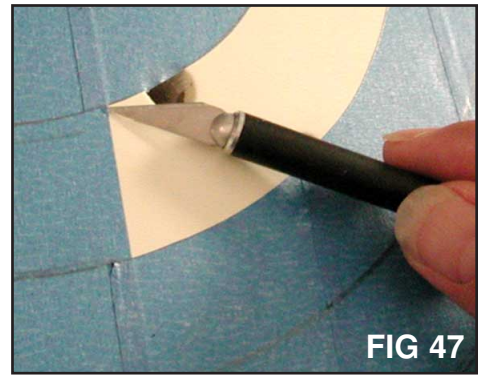


FIG 47

I'd recommend that you cut all of the lines first before removing the tape that needs to be removed. That way, the body stays "scuff-free."

Once you've finished all of the cutting, you'll have to remove what's going to be sprayed black. You'll notice that as you're removing the masking, some of the pieces won't stay together. In those instances, use the blade on your X-acto knife and, very carefully, lift the edge of the masking tape and begin removing the rest of the tape like I've done in FIG 47.

If you've masked the binding, be careful not to remove the masking tape that's on there. Cut carefully when working on the binding.

STEP 13: CUTTING OUT THE BULLSEYE DESIGN

When you've cut all of the lines and removed the parts that need to be sprayed black, your body should look like the one in FIG 48.

Once again, take your time with this step. The more precisely you cut your lines, the more accurate your circles will be. When you've completed all of the cutting, I want you to do one more thing: Pay attention to the masking that's still on the body. Look to make sure that none of it is lifting off in any way. We want to eliminate any and all bleeding underneath the masking tape, so go over all of the masking by simply pressing down on it to ensure a very good bond. Doing this ensures that no paint can get under the masking and ruin your prefect circles.

When you've completed this step, pat yourself on the back - that was a very tricky step!

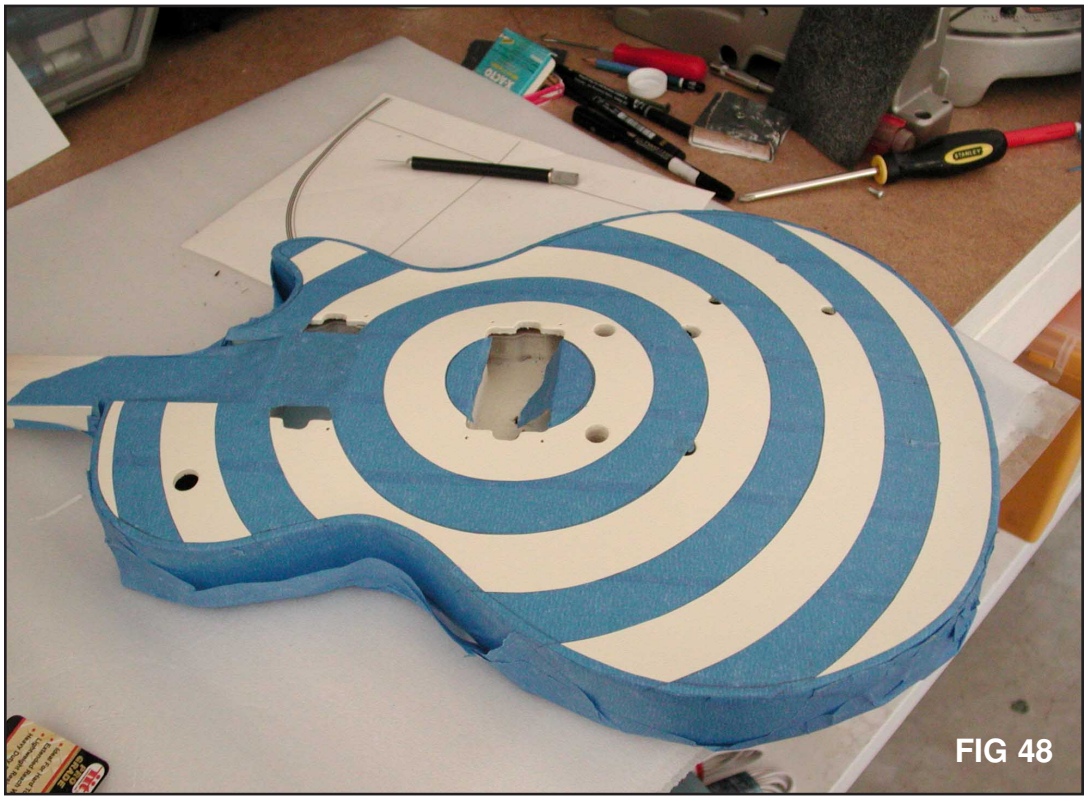


FIG 48

STEP 14: SPRAYING THE BULLSEYE DESIGN

In all truth, the hardest part of this project is now complete, so this is where it starts to get fun! You get to see your hard work come to life!

Using the spraying technique discussed in earlier chapters, you're going to put on roughly 4-5 THIN coats of black paint. Thin coats are a must as this will keep the paint from running or seeping under the masking tape. Allow enough time for proper drying between each coat. If you start early enough in the morning, you should be done by early-mid-afternoon.

After your first coat, your circles may look grey - that's okay. Once again, we're putting on thin coats, so eventually, your circles will be a nice deep black.

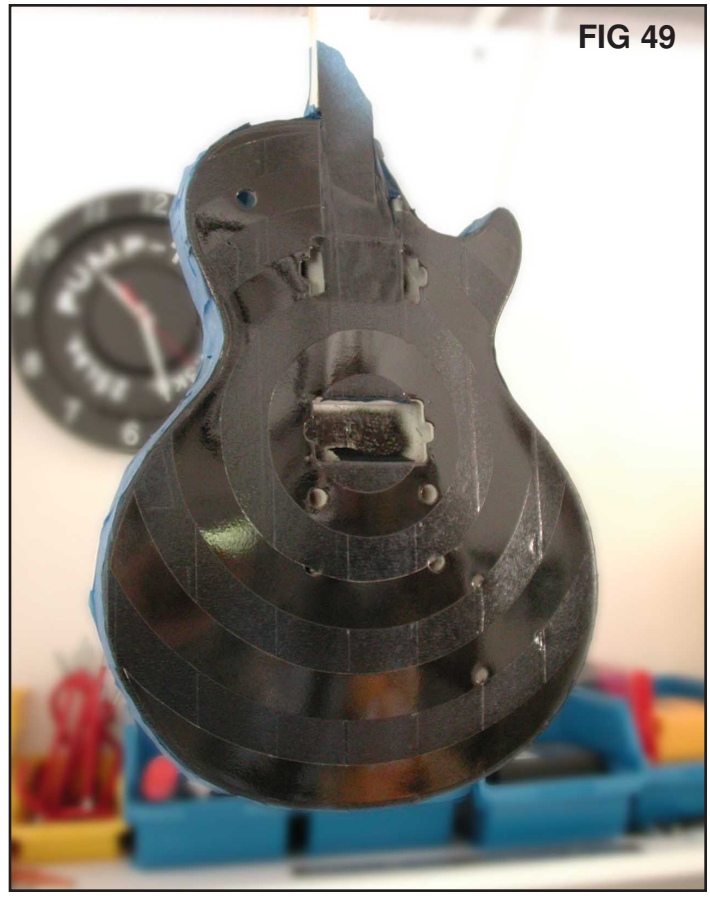


FIG 49

If it takes more or less coats than what I suggested, don't panic - just use your instincts to tell you that enough paint has been applied.

Keep in mind, though, you only want to apply as much paint as is necessary; less is more. Once your circles are a solid black, you should stop. Spraying on additional coats will just build up the paint and will make it more difficult to remove the masking tape.

When you've completed the necessary coats, let the body sit for a few hours before proceeding to the next step - Removing The Remaining Masking Tape.

STEP 15: REMOVING THE REMAINING MASKING TAPE

We're at an important step right now; as you remove the masking tape, you're going to know whether you've done a perfect job of masking and spraying, or just a "so-so" job. I'm hoping that your job is close to perfect.

Although these photos indicate that I've removed all of the masking off the back and sides of the body before proceeding to the top, I recommend that you keep all of the masking on the back and sides of the body until the top is done. Doing it this way ensures that the ivory base color won't get scuffed in any way as you remove the remaining masking from the top.

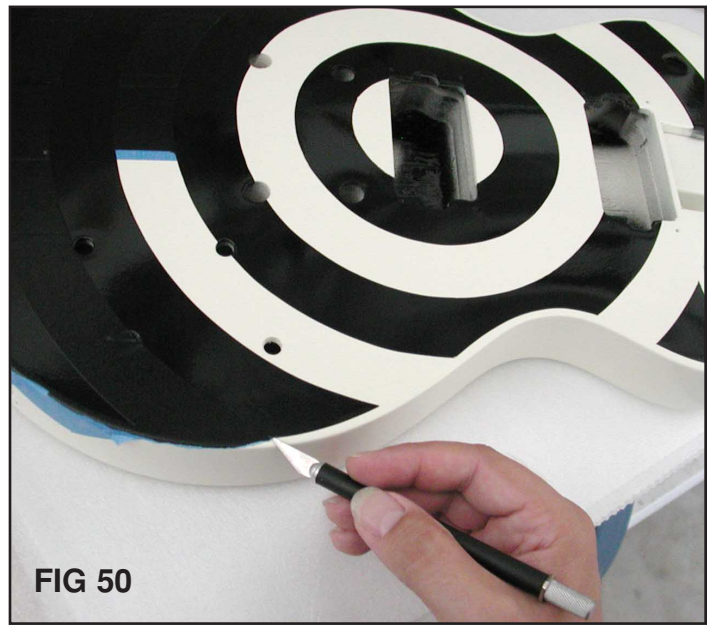


FIG 50

When removing the masking tape still left on the top of the body, I always use the edge of the X-acto blade to help me lift up the edge so that I can start lifting and removing as I've done in FIG 50.

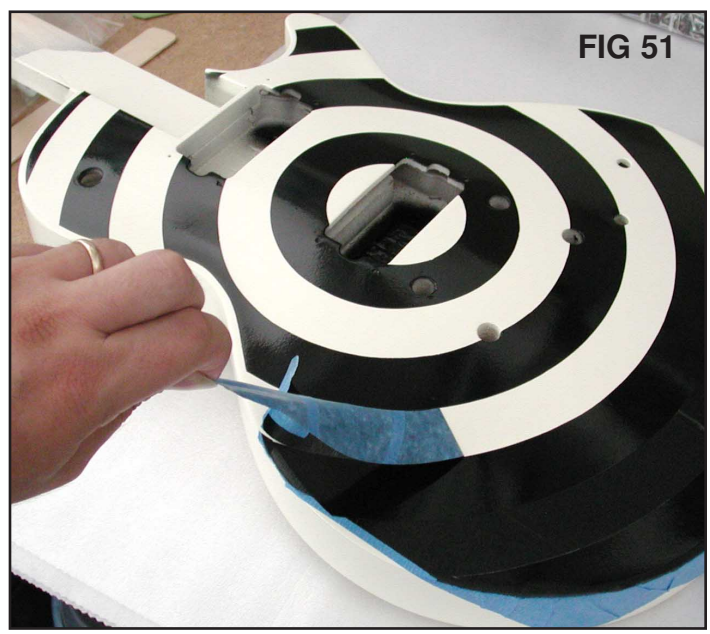


FIG 51

Once you have the edge lifted, simply peel the tape back rather than pulling up and off as I'm doing in FIG 51. This keeps the tape from pulling any paint off.

If, after all of the tape has been removed from the top, you notice that you'll need to touch up a couple of the lines, leave the masking tape on the sides and back until all touch-ups on the top have been done.

For touching up, you'll need a small paint brush and a steady hand. I didn't

STEP 15: REMOVING THE REMAINING MASKING TAPE

mention the paint brush earlier as one of the supplies you'll need because you may not have to do any touch-ups at all.

If some are necessary, then, begin by spraying the black paint into the lid of the can and use that as your touch-up paint.

Dip your brush into the lid and take little drops of paint at a time. Proceed by filling in any small areas that may need a touch-up.

When you're done with all of the touch-ups, remove the rest of the masking from the body.

Your job should look a lot like the one pictured in FIG 52.


FIG 52

Notice that, although there isn't any binding visible, the body still looks great because of the 3/16" edge we created.

Ready to move on?... Step 16 is right around the corner...

STEP 16: SPRAYING THE CLEAR COATS

As we're closing in on the end of our project, hopefully you're happy with what you've accomplished thus far. The good news is, this step is probably the easiest of all of the steps.

All you'll be doing for this step is applying clear coats - several coats... as many as 20 thin coats. You may be wondering, why so many? Well, if you look at your body, you'll notice that the black paint sits higher than the ivory base coat. To get rid of that ridge, we need to build up the clear coats so that, when we sand the body back down flat, the ridge disappears.


FIG 53

PLEASE NOTE:
You only have to put on 20 thin coats of clear if your paint job has a design to it like either Project ZW or Project EVH. If your body has just a base coat, all you'll need to do is roughly 8 thin coats of clear.

Although it may sound complicated, it's not. Once you've completed the guitar, you'll understand just how important the 20 coats of clear actually are.

Before you begin spraying the clear, have a look at the body to make sure there are no bits of dust or debris on the surface. If you find anything, carefully remove it so that it doesn't get trapped underneath the clear. Once you start spraying on the clear, anything that was on the body that didn't get removed will always be there.

In fact, before spraying each coat of clear, always inspect the body and remove any bits of debris that may've settled on the finish - that includes water or grease.

As you're already familiar with how to paint, follow the same technique you used earlier when spraying the primer and base coats. Begin by holding the guitar in one hand while you spray with the other *(see FIG 53).*

Run your first pass across left to right, followed by the next pass right to left, the next left to right, etc., overlapping each pass by roughly 50%. Zig-

STEP 16: SPRAYING THE CLEAR COATS

zag your way up the entire body and over the entire guitar. For the next coat, go in the opposite direction; up and down, down and up, etc., again, always overlapping each pass by roughly 50%.

Allow ample time between each coat for proper drying. Check the can's label for recommended drying time between coats.

When you've finished applying the 20 coats of clear *(which should take you a few days to do)*, you'll probably notice that the finish has an orange peel look/texture to it like the guitar in FIG 54. Don't worry about that - that's not how the guitar will look when you're done.

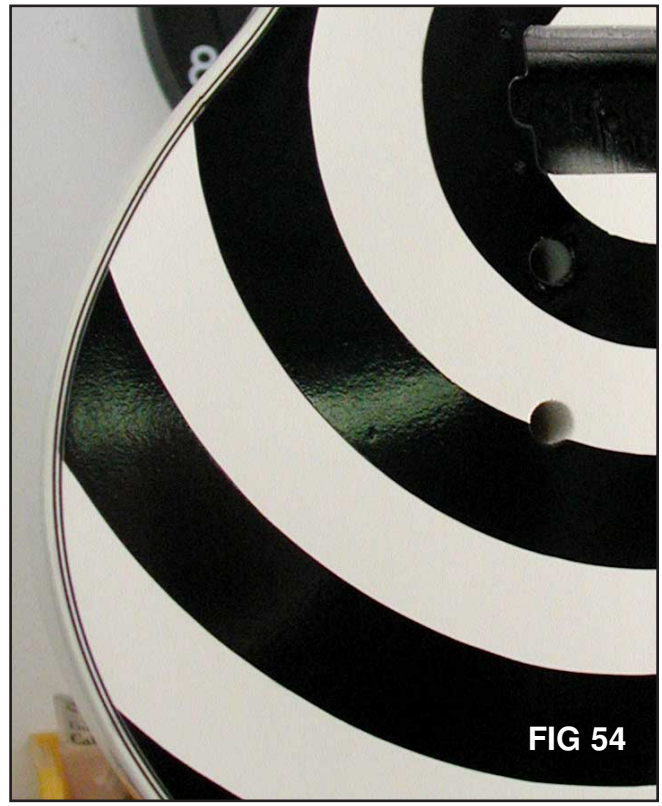


FIG 54

Here's a close-up shot of what is known as the "orange peel" look. This is typically what paint looks like when sprayed straight from the can with no sanding involved.

Also, don't be concerned with any coats that have clear overspray or that don't have a consistent look to them. All of that will get fixed during Step 19.

Step 19 eliminates the orange peel look and gets rid of all irregularities in the paint.

STEP 17: LETTING THE PAINT SETTLE

Before you begin with the all-important step of wetsanding the clear coats, you're going to have to do something even more important than that - you're going to have to let your body sit for 1-2 months without doing anything to it.

I know, I know - I realize that you're anxious to get it done. But, here's what you need to know: Paint takes time to settle and sink into the wood. Although it dries really quickly, it takes time for it to settle and harden properly.

If you were to start with the wet-sanding right away, in a matter of a few weeks, you would've noticed that the perfect sanding and buffing job you had done is no longer perfect - that's because the paint was still settling.

In other words, your perfect job would no longer be perfect.

These two bodies were back-ups I made for a series of photos I missed along the way. They are now complete and turned out even better than the first set.

As much as I know it's going to drive you crazy not being able to finish the body, try to remain strong and trust what I'm telling you. I've ruined several guitars simply because I was not willing to be patient and let the paint settle.

From what I've been told, Gibson lets their guitars sit for 6+ months before sanding and buffing.

If you can remain strong and wait out the 2 months, your finish will be that much better because of it.

PLEASE NOTE:
If your body has just a base coat and roughly 8 thin coats of clear, you won't have to let it sit for 2 months. Three weeks should be fine.

When you're ready to proceed, move onto Step 18...

STEP 18: REMOVING THE STICK

Now that you've applied all of your coats of clear, you won't need to hang the body anymore, so it's time to remove the stick.

If you look at the stick where it meets the body, you may notice that with the amount of paint that you've applied, the stick is starting to blend in with the body. Rather than have you try to yank the stick off and risk pulling off some of the finish, I want you to score *(cut finely)* the corners where the stick and body meet using your X-acto knife as I'm doing in FIG 55.


FIG 55

Go over it a few times so that when you remove the screws and stick, it separates easily from the body.

If you find that you're unable to do any work on your body for an extended period of time, I suggest that you put the stick back on and hang the body. Don't rest it against anything when you're not working on it.

This is just a precaution so that nothing happens to the finish while you're taking a break.

When you're finished, let's move on to Step 19...

STEP 19: SANDING THE CLEAR COATS

Just when you thought that spraying the clear coats was going to be crucial to the success of your paint job, alongs comes Step 19!

Yup - This is THE step that most novices have the hardest time understanding... that includes me when I first started painting guitars.

During this step, we are going to sand the body back down to a very dull, flat finish, eliminating all bumps and ridges.

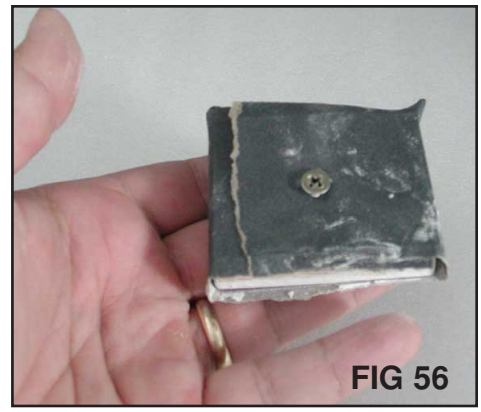


FIG 56

You may think that you're ruining your paint job by doing this; actually, nothing could be further from the truth!

If you do an excellent job with this step, your body will end up having that factory guitar finish you've been waiting for... and the one I promised you!

When you're ready to begin, start by getting out your 320-grit wet sandpaper - the one with the green back. Also, make sure you have a dish of clean water close by.

Using one of your sanding blocks with a piece of the 320-grit sandpaper wrapped around it like the one in FIG 56, dip the block into the dish of water and begin by sanding the finish in a circular motion. Your objective is to sand down the entire top of the guitar and eliminate the ridge created by the black paint. As you sand, the surface should resemble that of the surface in FIG 57. *(Try to avoid getting water in the holes that hold the studs for the bridge and tailpiece.)*


FIG 57

Work in little sections at a time. Every few minutes, stop and remove the excess water and inspect the surface. You'll probably notice areas of the

STEP 19: SANDING THE CLEAR COATS

finish that are still shiny *(probably on the ivory base coat)* while most of it will appear dull. Your goal is to eliminate all shiny spots; these are the areas that are sitting lower than the rest of the paint. As you sand, you're removing excess clear coating to help even out the finish. This is why it was important that you apply 20 coats of clear; it's unlikely that you'll sand through to the paint with this many coats of clear on the body.

When you wipe the excess water from the surface, you'll probably also notice that the surface is rather scratched. Again, don't panic - the next step will eliminate most, if not all of the scratches and will bring back the shine better than ever.


FIG 58

Continue doing small sections at a time until the guitar has been completely evened out and all shiny spots have disappeared.

The back and sides won't be nearly as much work because you'll have no ridge of paint that needs to be evened out like the top has/had.

Be very careful when sanding on the edges of the body. In fact, I recommend you don't sand them with anything heavier than the 600-grit. It's extremely easy to go through to the paint and primer and right to the wood when sanding on the edges. Because it's an edge, paint just doesn't get built up the way it does on other parts of the body. BE VERY CAREFUL WHEN SANDING ON OR CLOSE TO THE EDGES.

When you've completed the 320-grit wet-sanding, move to the 400-grit sandpaper and wetsand the entire body with this grit. What you're trying to do at this point is eliminate surface scratches and get as close to a perfectly flat surface as you can. Also, continue to do this wetsanding with water on the body. You can either dip your block into your water dish, or you can scoop water with your hand and transfer it to the body that way.

When you've completed the body with the 400-grit, move to the 600-grit

STEP 19: SANDING THE CLEAR COATS

and do the same thing again. Once you've gone over the entire body with the 600-grit, I recommend following that up with an even finer grit to help reduce surface scratches. Using a 1200-grit or 1500-grit *(whichever one you can find in the stores)* after the 600-grit will produce a nice, smooth surface with a dull shine to it that, when buffed, will give you a virtually scratch-free factory finish.

Once again, take your time with this - look to spend a good 2-3 hours doing the wetsanding. Don't work in one area too long with any of the grits; rather, move about the whole top of the guitar in small sections. Placing some water onto the surface as you sand will definitely help you to see how good a sanding job you're doing.

When you've completed the wetsanding process, you're ready to move on. Thankfully, there's no two-month wait to move onto the next step!

IMPORTANT POINT: When you begin wetsanding, if you find that the 320-grit is not evening out the paint as well as you want it to, you can switch to a 220-grit, but be very careful; this WILL even out the paint very quickly. However, it'll also be easier to go through the clear to the paint, so adjust the pressure as you use the 220-grit - you won't have to press nearly as hard as with the 320-grit. Avoid using 220-grit and the edges of the body - use it only on the top and back.

IMPORTANT POINT: Pay very close attention as you're doing this final sanding. If you see color starting to appear on your sandpaper at any time, stop immediately. Dry your guitar body off using some 100% cotton. When it's completely dried, you'll have to put more coats of clear back on the body. Look to put another 5 - 8 coats on, just to be safe. When the additional clear coats having been applied, give it at least a week before resuming with the wetsanding.

STEP 20: BUFFING THE CLEAR COATS

The beauty of this step is that if you did an excellent job with all of the previous steps, this one will be a piece of cake!

During this step, we're going to bring back the shine to our body by hand-buffing it using the 3M Perfect-It II Rubbing Compound Fine Cut.

I initally started using a different rubbing compound than the one I recommend you use. I quickly switched to the 3M Perfect-It II when I didn't like what this compound was doing to the surface. You can see in this picture that I work in an area of about 4" x 4" at a time.

You're going to buff the body in a similar fashion as wetsanding. You're going to work in small sections at a time, always trying to buff in a circular motion.

I always tend to start with the top of the guitar when buffing - probably because I'm anxious to see that shine come to life!

To start, apply some of the 3M Rubbing Compound onto the body and, using some of the 100% cotton, begin rubbing in a circular motion.You'll find that the harder you rub, the deeper the shine you'll get. Again, don't stay in one area too long; as one area starts to shine, move to another area and work that one up, too.

PLEASE NOTE: During the previous step, if you used a 1200-grit or 1500-grit to finish your wetsanding, you can use 3M's Perfect-It II Finishing Compound (Swirl Remover) and bypass the 3M's Perfect-It II Rubbing Compound (Fine Cut).

Expect your hand to get tired, so take as many breaks as possible. Again, there's no rush to get this done. *(or is there?)* If you don't finish all of the buffing in one day, put it aside until the next day.

When working on the back, hold the body upright with one hand while you buff with the other. You can also hold it in your lap as you buff; just don't rest the arched top on anything that's likely to scuff up the buffing you just completed. Same goes for the sides, too - hold the body firm with one hand while you buff with the other. If you wish, you can hold it on a firm surface as you

STEP 20: BUFFING THE CLEAR COATS

buff. Just pay attention to what you're resting it on - you do not want to scuff up or damage areas that have already been buffed.


FIG 60

Also, when you're buffing the sides, it's difficult to work in a circular motion, so I tend to go lengthwise along the side in strokes of roughly 3 - 4".

Expect this step to take at least 3 hours. If it takes longer, don't worry - it's definitely going to be worth it!

When you've buffed up the shine to a point where you don't think it could get any shinier *(like the one in FIG 60)*, congratulations on completing your first professional guitar paint job!

Give yourself a pat on the back for a job well done!

You see?... that wasn't so difficult, now, was it?

IMPORTANT POINT: Although you now have a beautiful finish on your body, you're going to have to pay extra careful attention to where you rest the body over the next few months after it's all back together. As I mentioned earlier, paints take time to cure and although you've waited at least two months to wetsand and buff, some experts have told me that paints, especially lacquer, can take as long as 6 months to a year to completely cure.

So, I would stress that you DON'T rest your guitar in a guitar stand for a few months. If you do it, you will notice the weight of the body pushing down on the foam holders will cause indents in your finish. Certain rubbers and plastics can also SOFTEN a lacquered finish. Personally, I just rest the body on the strap holder on the floor and rest the neck against a wall or bookshelf... but not in a stand... at least, not for the first 6 months.

HOW I CREATED THE BINDING AND HEADSTOCK ART

Creating the binding for the **Project ZW** guitar wasn't difficult for me because I spend most of my day doing stuff like this. For someone who has no knowledge or working experience with computer drawing programs, it would be next to impossible for them to do what I did.

So, whether you have computer drawing program knowledge or not, I still want to show you how it was done.

I began by very accurately tracing the outline of the body onto a piece of bristol board. When I was finished, I scanned the line art into my computer.

Using the scan as a guide, I once again, very accurately, redrew the outline of the body using Adobe Illustrator *(pen tool)*, so I'd now have the identical shape of my body on the computer.

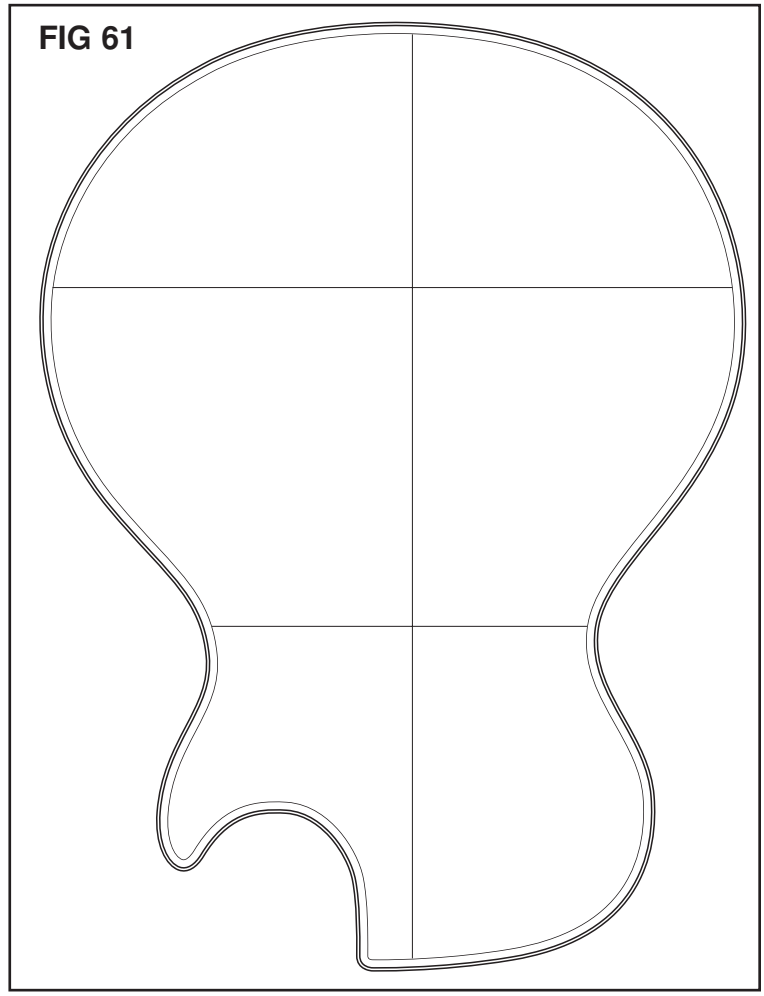


FIG 61

Working inwards, I created two black lines with space in between each line *(see FIG 61).* I made sure that the lines didn't stretch out further than the 3/16" of an inch I'd left for the binding.

With that complete, I simply printed out the binding onto several pieces of Avery transparent paper *(#8665 available at any office supply store such as Office Depot or Staples).*

Each piece of the simulated binding was trimmed very accurately *(see FIG 62 next page)* and was put on section by section *(see FIG 63 and 64 next page).*

HOW I CREATED THE BINDING AND HEADSTOCK ART

The trimmed binding was placed on after the black was sprayed but before the clear coating was done. My hope was that any flaws that would appear would hopefully be fixed with the clear coating.

When the binding was in place, I pressed down onto it to make sure that it was attached securely to the body.

From there, I proceeded to do the clear coating.

It was challenging getting the pieces to line up perfectly. In fact, if you look carefully, you'll see that mid-way, on both the top and the bottom, the pieces are slightly off. Oh well - this was tough to do, but it actually turned out better than I had hoped for.

Next up, I created an overlay for the headstock which would have the Gibson logo and the famous Gibson split diamond.

As I did with the body, I started by tracing the headstock from my project guitar onto some bristol board and then scanned that line art into the computer.

From there, I did exactly as I did with the body; I worked inwards and created two black lines that had a space in between.

To create the Gibson split diamond and Gibson logo, I scoured the web to find as good a picture as pos-

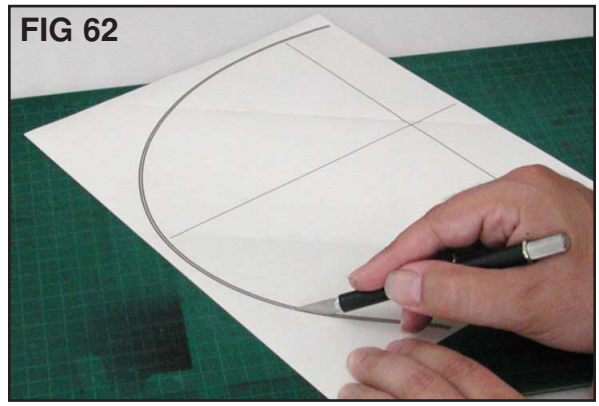


FIG 62

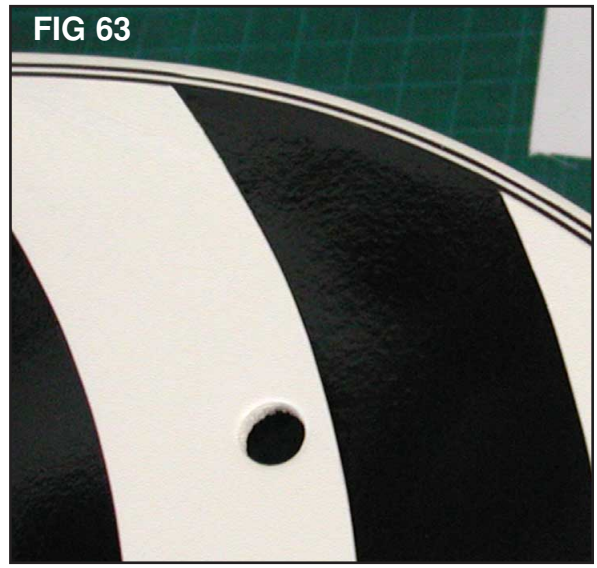


FIG 63

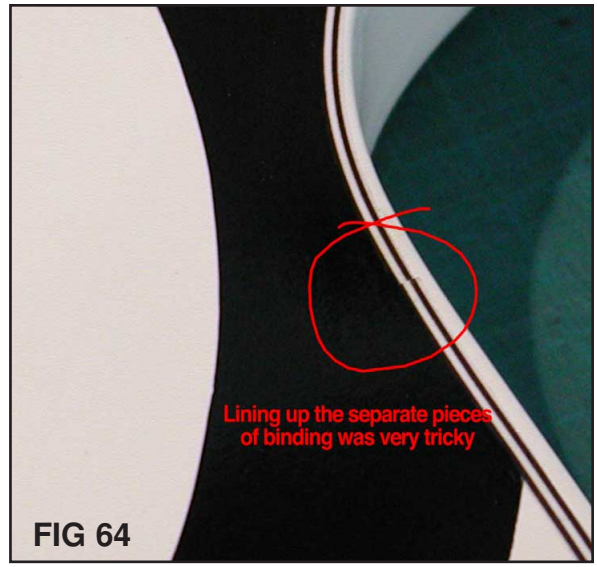


FIG 64

HOW I CREATED THE BINDING AND HEADSTOCK ART

sible that could be used as a template. When I found the appropriate picture, I imported it into Adobe Illustrator and then recreated the logo and diamond using the imported image as my guide.

Once it was complete, I printed it out onto the same Avery transparent paper that I used for the binding.

I then trimmed the art as accurately as possible so that when I laid it onto the headstock, it would line up perfectly. FIG 66 shows that the overlay turned out perfectly because I was extremely accurate in my drawing and recreating of the headstock on the computer.

Once it was in place, I proceeded to cut the holes for the tuning pegs and truss rod.

When that was complete, the neck was ready for clear coating. After clear coating was complete, the headstock was wetsanded and then buffed.

As you can see in the final pix of this project guitar, it's extremely hard to tell that this ISN'T a real Zakk Wylde Les Paul guitar!

FIG 65

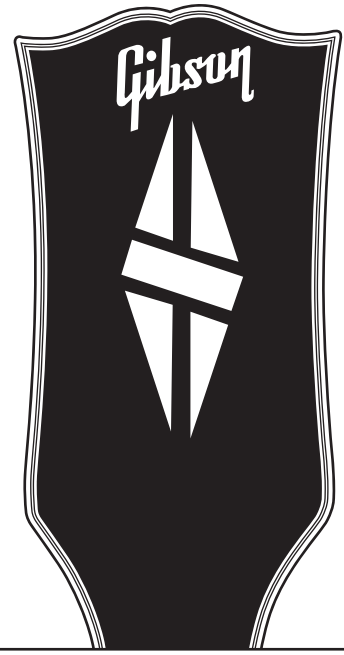


FIG 66

FINAL NOTE: Yes, I even went so far as to recreate the little Zakk Wylde emblem that appears on the back of the headstock on his guitar model. Again, I used an image as a template and simply used it as my guide to redraw it in Illustrator. When it was done, it was printed out on the transparent paper and then placed onto the back of the headstock.

PROJECT ZW: FINAL PHOTOS

PROJECT EVH

STEP 1: REMOVING OLD PARTS

Once you have your project guitar, Step 1 involves removing all of the old parts. *(Before you do that, you may want to take a "BEFORE" photo, so you can compare it to an "AFTER" photo once it's done)*.

For the most part, removing old parts from a guitar is pretty straight-forward. For **Project EVH**, I bought a body that contained no parts, so there are no photos to show you of me removing the hardware.

Still, try to take extra care not to damage the body or neck when removing the parts, if yours came with parts still on it. I know we're giving your axe a new paint job, but still - the less prep work you have to do, the better.

If you plan on using the parts that came with the guitar once it's finished, get yourself a little rubbermaid container or a Ziploc® bag and throw all the parts in one of those for safe keeping.

If you plan on buying new parts, I'd still recommend you hold onto all of the old parts until the guitar is complete. Better safe than sorry.

AN IMPORTANT POINT:
If you ARE planning on buying all new parts for your project guitar as I did for my two projects here, have ALL of your parts FIRST before beginning the painting process.

You want to assemble the guitar with all of the new parts to make sure everything fits, lines up, etc., before painting. If any new holes have to be drilled, you want to do that in the old finish, not your new one. In fact, you want to do very little drilling or filing to your new finish - that's why it's crucial that you assemble the guitar first, get it working properly, then disassemble, and start your project.

STEP 2: REMOVING THE OLD FINISH

Now that Step 1 is complete *(all of the old parts, if any, have been removed)*, it's now onto Step 2 - stripping the body of its finish.

As I mentioned for **Project ZW**, there are two ways to remove a guitar's finish - using paint stripper or sanding it off. Personally, I prefer just sanding the body down rather than using paint remover because using paint remover is very messy *(moreso than sanding)*; it's toxic stuff and will burn your skin if you accidently get it on you *(which I did several times).*

However, for this section, I'll be using paint stripper to remove the finish so you get an idea of what's involved in using this method. If you're not a big fan of sanding by hand, this may be the ideal method for you. Keep in mind that if you're using paint stripper on a body that has binding, You MUST avoid getting the stripper on the binding or it'll melt it along with the paint.

If you decide you want to remove your guitar's finish by sanding, just read through Step 2 of **Project ZW** for what to expect before you begin to sand.

So, when you're ready, let's begin stripping the guitar's finish.

FIG 1

To start, make sure you are working in a well-ventilated area, such as your garage or outside on your driveway. Remember - paint stripper is toxic stuff, so the less you breathe in, the better.

Lay down a drop cloth if you want to avoid getting the paint stripper on the floor or ground. If you're working on a portable work bench as I did, place the work bench on top of the drop cloth, so you have a good, solid, flat surface to work on, and the floor under you is protected. Place your styrofoam *(I recommend styrofoam when working with paint stripper)* on top of the table, then place your guitar body on top of the styrofoam to protect the body and to keep the paint stripper from dripping all over the place.

IMPORTANT POINT: If you can help it, avoid working in direct sunlight. The sun tends to dry the paint stripper before it can really do its work. A shaded area outside is preferable.

STEP 2: REMOVING THE OLD FINISH

Begin by pouring the paint stripper onto the guitar body like I'm doing in FIG 1.

Work in small areas at a time when pouring out the stripper. Be careful not to pour too much, otherwise it's all just going to run off the body and onto the ground. When you've got a good amount on there, take your brush and spread it around the body as I'm doing in FIG 2.

The benefit to using styrofoam under your guitar body when using paint stripper is that the styrofoam will not melt.

Give the stripper a chance to work by letting it sit on the body for at least 5 - 10 minutes. At this point, you can pick up your scraper and begin scraping off the finish. If it's not coming off fairly easily, try putting on more paint stripper. Again, allow it to sit on the body for a good 5 - 10 minutes. At this point, it should look a lot like FIG 3. The finish should be bubbling and starting to lift off.

Once again, grab your scraper and begin scraping off the finish. It should be much easier this time around; however, you'll still have to put some muscle into it to get right down to the wood.

Don't be concerned about getting the paint stripper on the wood and damaging the wood in any way - the stripper won't hurt the wood.

This photo shows how good the paint stripper works - the finish is coming right off in sheets.

Continue to pour on the stripper, allow it to sit for 5 - 10 minutes, and then continue to scrape off the finish.

STEP 2: REMOVING THE OLD FINISH

Work on one side of the body at a time. The sides will begin bubbling as the paint stripper drips down the sides. Still, focus on finishing the top or bottom first, then flip the body over and begin doing the other side.

As you continue to work away, try to keep the area clean. Every so often, remove all of the excess finish into a garbage container so it's out of the way as you work.

FIG 8 shows just how messy this type of work is, so keeping your work area clean will make it less likely that you'll get the paint stripper on you as you work.

When you've gotten the body to a point that the only finish that's left is inside the body cavities, try wrapping some old cloth around a screwdriver and using that as a tool to get into those hard-to-reach areas as I'm doing in FIG 9.

Getting inside the cavities and cleaning them out was quite tedious, so be patient when

PLEASE NOTE: If you do accidently get paint stripper on your skin, immediately wash it off with cold water for at least a minute. You should also read the product's label for more thorough first-aid care.

This photo shows a dark red substance under the paint. This was some sort of sanding sealer the manufacturer used to seal the grain of the body.

STEP 2: REMOVING THE OLD FINISH

doing this. Even though these areas will be covered with a pickguard, you still want to do the best job possible; so don't leave that old finish in there, if you can help it.


FIG 11

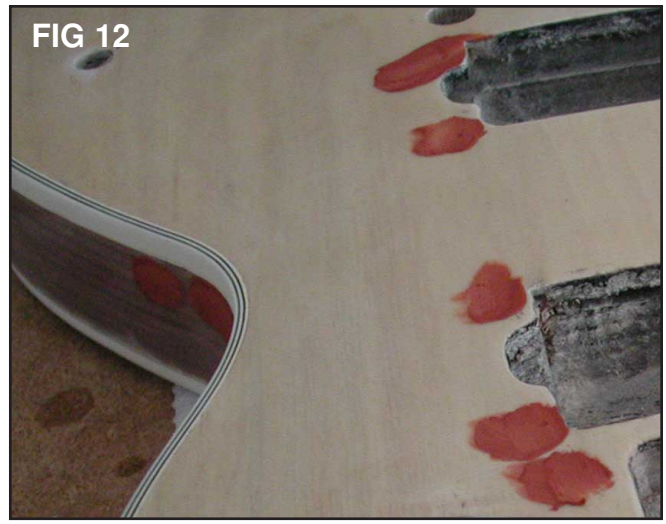
When you've reached the point where all of the finish has been removed and you're staring at a bare wood body, pat yourself on the back - that was tough, messy work.

We're now ready for Step 3...

STEP 3: FILLING IN ANY HOLES

Now that our body has been stripped of its finish, we get to see if we need to fill in any holes, like the pickguard holes.

If you're painting **Project EVH** for yourself, I recommend that you have all of the parts for the guitar BEFORE painting... that includes the new pickguard.



For Project EVH, I didn't have to use any Bondo to fill the holes, so I'm using the photo from Project ZW as an example. I applied the Bondo with my finger, but I'd recommend that you apply it using a scraper. Simply squeeze the Bondo onto the scraper and press the Bondo into the holes. Scrape off any excess.

When you lay the new pickguard on top of the body, you may notice that the holes for the pickguard don't line up. What I'd suggest you do is fill all of the old holes with Bondo and drill new pilot holes for the new pickguard. Pre-drilling the holes before painting will ensure that we won't accidently damage our finish after it's complete.

For filling holes and dings, I use Bondo, which is a product used on cars. I prefer this stuff over plastic wood for filling holes. Bondo sands very nicely, so I recommend you use Bondo over Plastic Wood.

To start, remove the lid from the Bondo tube and with either your finger or a plastic scraper, simply press it into the ding/hole. If you're using a scraper, after pressing the Bondo down firmly into the hole, simply slide the scraper across the body and over the Bondo to remove any excess. Work on one part of the body at a time and allow the substance to dry completely before proceeding. For instance, do all of the dings on the top of the body first, then the sides, followed by the back. Follow the directions on the bondo container for length of time you should allow for drying. *(Most likely, you'll have to wait 1 - 2 hours per section - top, sides, back - before sanding).*

Your goal is to try to fill the ding/hole as best as you can. It doesn't matter whether it's absolutely perfect; once the Bondo has dried, you're going to block sand it to try to level or even it out so that it blends in with the rest of the body.

Go slowly and pay careful attention to the height of the Bondo; you don't

STEP 3: FILLING IN ANY HOLES

want a hump where you placed the substance. You want to remove any humps so that, as you rub your hand across the body, the Bondo has filled the dings/holes, and the area has been leveled.

If you happen to go too deep as you block sand and accidently remove all of the Bondo from the hole, simply repeat the step again - fill in the ding, allow it to dry, and then block sand it flat.

You shouldn't be in a hurry during this step. All of the extra attention you put into this prep work will make a huge difference in the quality of the paint and finish.

Take your time and don't settle for a sloppy job!

When you've finished, you're ready to move onto Step 4...

STEP 4: MASKING THE NECK POCKET

Step 4 involves masking off the neck cavity. It's important that you do this to prevent the sanding sealer and paint from getting in this area. When the job is complete, you want your neck to sit in its cavity as well as it did before you painted.

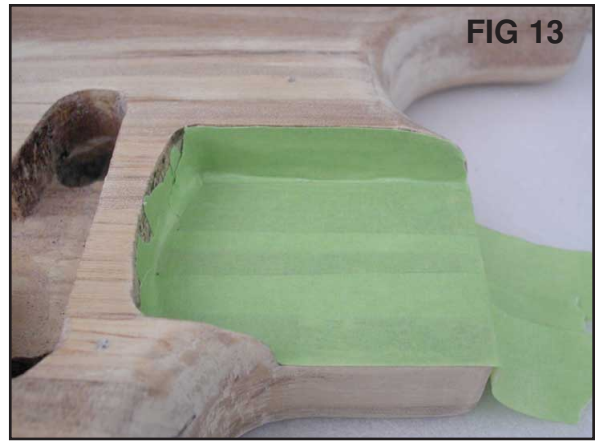


FIG 13

Keeping the area masked ensures that the area will be free of sealer and paint.

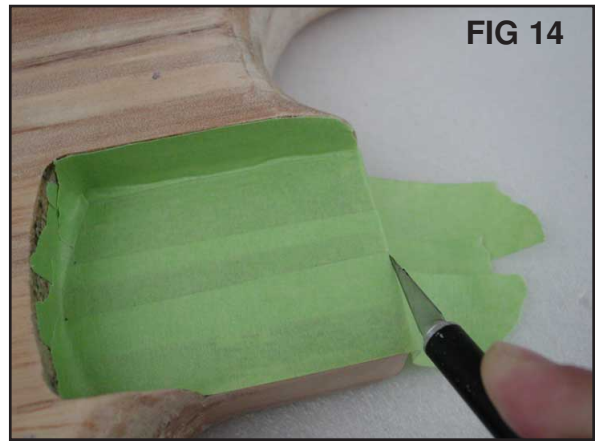


FIG 14

Using your 3M blue or green masking tape, simply lay down strips of tape, overlapping each strip slightly *(see FIG 13)*. I also run a piece up the side of the pocket - once again, to ensure that the neck will fit back in without a problem.

Once the cavity has been completely masked off, take your X-acto knife and cut the masking tape just inside the neck cavity *(see FIG 14)*. Cutting slightly inside the neck cavity will make it less likely that you'll pull up the finish as you remove the tape.

Once the tape has been laid and cut, it's onto Step 5 - Adding the Wooden Stick with Hook.

STEP 5: ADDING THE STICK WITH HOOK

The purpose of adding this stick with the hook to your project guitar body is so that you're able to hang it as it dries.

The wood also acts as a handle as you'll see further in the book - I hold the body with the stick and turn and flip it as I paint.

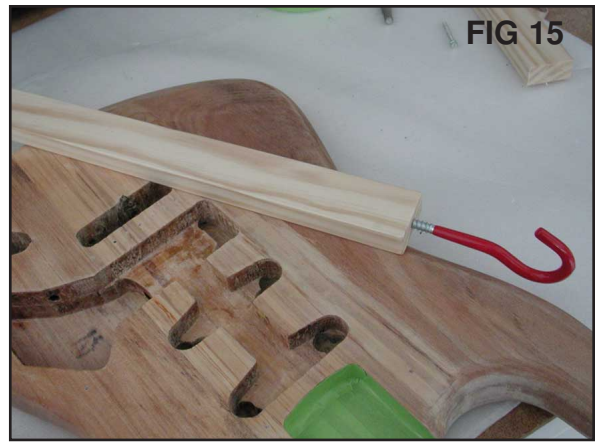


FIG 15

To attach the stick to the body, simply hold the stick in place with one hand while you pre-drill holes using a drill with the other hand *(see FIG 16)*.

I put two screws into the two holes on the right-hand side. Make sure the screws are long enough so that when you hold the body by the stick, it feels very secure.


FIG 16

The last thing you want is for the screws to give while you're painting.You want it to feel nice and secure.

Once the stick has been securely fastened to the body, it's on to Step 6... Applying the Sealer.

STEP 6: APPLYING THE SANDING SEALER

Sanding sealer is a watery substance that dries and thickens rather quickly. If you can find sanding sealer in an aerosol can, I recommend using that over brushing it on as I did.

If you end up having to brush it on, you'll have to work fast, but don't be too worried if it doesn't appear to be going on smoothly, or it looks blotchy. What we're trying to accomplish with the sealer is simply to fill the grain of the wood.

The sealer dries very quickly, which is good; it means that you'll be able to apply most of the sealer in a day or two.

Apply five thin coats around the entire body, allowing each coat to dry before applying the next. I tend to hold the guitar by the stick and flip and turn it, covering the entire body all at once. You should try to do the same. If you're having a hard time doing that, simply work on one side at a time, as in Step 3 when you applied the Bondo.


FIG 17

If you were able to get sanding sealer in an aerosol can, your goal is the same if you were to have brushed it on - five thin coats, allowing each coat to dry in between. *(For length of drying time between coats, follow the recommendations on the product label.)*

Once you've applied your five thin coats, it's time to get out some 220-grit wet/dry sandpaper. Using a sanding block, start sanding back and forth over one side of the body at a time. I use the sandpaper dry at this point, rather than wet. What you're trying to do during this step is to smooth out the sealer so that, in the end, your body will be perfectly smooth and all of the grain will have disappeared.

Using the block will help you to create a flatter, more-perfect sanding job. We want to remove all of the bumps and humps, so pay careful attention while sanding.

When you've gotten it to a point where you think it looks pretty good, you're ready to move on. However, if after sanding, you can still feel the

STEP 6: APPLYING THE SANDING SEALER

grain of the wood, simply apply 2 or 3 more coats as you did prior. After the coats have dried, get out the 220-grit and 320-grit sandpaper, wrap it around a sanding block, and start sanding the body flat again. Your goal during this step is to remove ALL of the grain. If you do that, your paint job will be close to perfect. If you don't fill all the grain, it'll show through the paint - and there'll be no way of hiding it.

Once again, the magic phrase is, "don't be in a hurry." Prep work that's done well will make your paint job look that much more professional.

When you can look at the body and honestly say that you've done as good a job as possible filling the grain and the body feels very flat and smooth, congratulations - that's another tedious step!

Your true reward will be an awesome paint job, not just a so-so paint job.

Ready to move on?... Step 7, here we come...

STEP 7: SPRAYING THE PRIMER

The best part about this step is that the most-difficult parts of this job are done! Yes, some of those first few steps are a little painstaking, but necessary.

So, you may be wondering why we're spraying primer and not jumping straight to the paint? Well, for a couple of reasons. Primer helps to bond the paint to the body. Without it, you may find that your paint is doing strange things as it hits the sealer. The primer tends to make the paint stick nicely, eliminating any "funky" patches in your paint.

Primer is also good to use because it allows you to see any flaws that you might've missed during the sealing stage. The primer acts like a sealer, too, because it fills any leftover grain and/or any little dings or holes that may still be there. It can be sanded just like the sealer. You'll see what I mean after you've applied your first few coats and they're dried. You'll be able to see first-hand whether your sealing job was an excellent job or just an okay job. If it appears your sealer is uneven, sand the primer down and reapply a few more coats to help even it out.

Another benefit to using Krylon's primer is that it's very forgiving. What I mean by that is, the primer doesn't really run *(unless you hold the can and spray in one area too long)*. That's good whether you're a novice painter or an experienced one. The paint seems to settle and flatten out quite nicely.

It also dries very fast. You may find that after spraying the entire body, it's already close to being dried. Still, you want to give yourself at least 20 minutes between coats to allow the paint to completely dry and settle.

So, now that that's out of the way, let me discuss my technique for spray painting in general because you'll be using this technique for ALL of your spray painting, not just while using the primer. *(This explanation is assuming that you have virtually no experience with spray painting. If you have experience and want to do it your way, then by all means, go right ahead.)*

The first thing you should know is, like guitar playing, technique is very important. The better your spraying technique, the better the final results. That's not to say that your painting has to be absolutely flawless - it doesn't. However, you should concentrate on trying to do as good a job as possible, applying thin coats instead of thick coats... This is A MUST. Spraying thin coats allows the paint to dry faster, and is less likely to run.

When you're ready to start spraying the primer, you're going to be holding the guitar in one hand while you spray with the other *(see FIG 27).*

I hold the guitar many different ways while spraying - upside down, right-

STEP 7: SPRAYING THE PRIMER

side up, sideways, etc. Hold it whichever way is comfortable for you. If you find that the guitar body is a little heavy for you, try painting the body with the guitar upside down as in FIG 18. This way, the weight of the body is above your hand rather than below. If this method is still too heavy for you, hang the guitar and spray sections at a time.

Holding the body upside-down like this makes it easier to control when painting because most of the weight is sitting above your hand/arm.

As I paint, I like to overlap each coat by about 50%. I start my first pass across the body, half on the body and half off *(see FIG 19 next page).* I also like to start the spray off the body and run the spray past the body *(see FIG 19 next page).* Doing this makes for a much cleaner pass across and virtually eliminates paint spatters (the paint shooting out big drops of paint). As in FIG 19, I run my first pass across left to right, followed by the next pass right to left, the next left to right, etc., overlapping each pass by roughly 50%. I zig-zag my way up the entire body this way, both sides.

For the next coat, I always go in the opposite direction; for example, if I went left to right, right to left for the first coat, I'll go up and down, down and up for the next coat *(see FIG 19 next page)*; again, always overlapping each pass by roughly 50%. I feel doing it this way helps to even out any imperfections in my spraying technique.

When putting on all of my coats, I almost always do the sides of the guitar body first, followed by the back, and then the front. The reason I do this is that if the paint is coming out of the can in an inconsistent manner, then it'll be on areas of the guitar that aren't so visible. You can try it this way to see if it's comfortable for you.

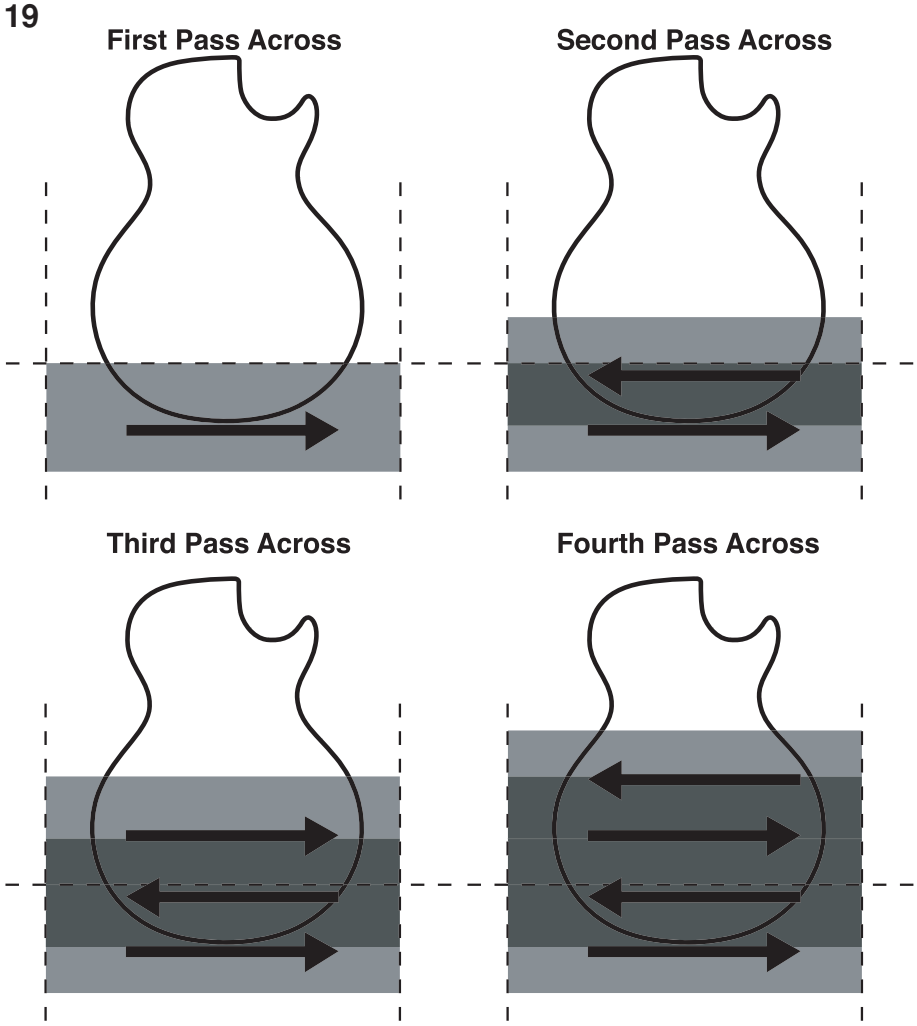
When painting the sides, I paint similarly to the rest of the body; I start the spray half on the side and half off the side, and I overlap all of the coats. For painting the bottom of the guitar, I flip the body upside down and spray two to four passes, overlapping the coats by 50%.

Another important aspect to painting is your tempo. I seem to come up with 1 - 1.5 full seconds. Each pass across the body is roughly 1 - 1.5 full seconds. I definitely don't zip across the body spraying on little bits of paint and neither should you. I allow for good coverage, and I always try to

STEP 7: SPRAYING THE PRIMER

maintain a distance of about 10” from the body.

FIG 19



In case you’re starting to worry that you’re not going to do a good job, let me let you in on an important fact: when a paint job has some sort of design on it like **Project ZW** or **Project EVH**, you’ll be putting on roughly 40-50 thin coats of paint. If you’re worried that one bad or uneven paint coat is going to ruin the job, don’t worry about it - it won’t!

Alright, now let’s discuss the primer coats.

You’ll be applying thin coats of primer, allowing each coat to dry completely before applying another. In between each coat, look for little surface bumps. If you find any, which most likely, you will, sand them lightly with 400-grit wet/dry sandpaper not using any water. Your goal is to cover the entire body with solid primer and to keep the surface of the body relatively smooth.

STEP 7: SPRAYING THE PRIMER

Expect to do roughly 5 coats of primer over the entire body.

If the body looks rough to you, don't be afraid to sand the primer like I did in FIG 20. Sometimes, wood can be very uneven, and the only way to fix it is to build it up with sealer and primer.

When the body has been completely covered with primer, look it over for any surface bumps and remove them with 400-grit wet/dry sandpaper using it dry.

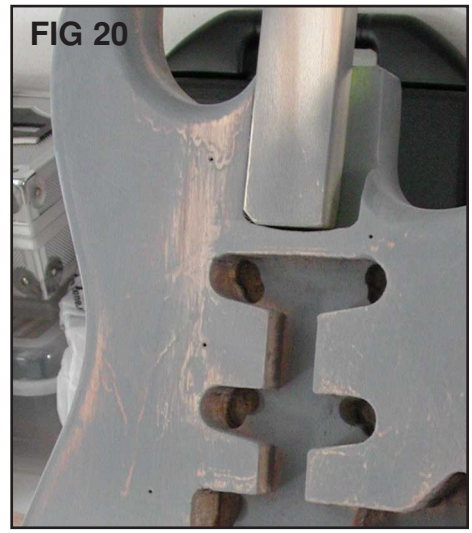
Congratulations! Your body is now ready for your first coat of color!

AN IMPORTANT POINT:

If you find that, while applying the primer, you didn't quite get all of the grain sealed with the sanding sealer, and the primer isn't filling the grain, don't be afraid to go back over the primer with some Bondo *(see page 29)*.

Once the Bondo has dried *(give it at least 3 hours)*, sand it back down to smooth and flat with 320-grit wet/dry sandpaper and use it dry. The Bondo sands very nicely, so this should be a fairly easy fix, but still - use a careful touch. When you're done sanding the area, remove any excess dust and debris on the body with a damp paper towel. Allow it to be free of any water before spraying the primer again. Apply light coats until eventually, the area is smooth and flat.

When you get to this point, you're ready to spray your first coat of color!



I did a lot more sanding of the primer on this body than on Project ZW. But I felt it was necessary in order to get a nice, smooth surface with which to work on.

Here's the finished body, sealed, primed, and ready for its first coat of paint.

STEP 8: SPRAYING YOUR BASE COAT

Before we spray our first coat of paint, blow into the body cavities to remove any debris that may still be in there. Take a damp paper towel and wipe off the entire guitar body, removing any dust or debris that might still be on there as well. When the body's dried, we're ready to go.

Painting **Project EVH** is opposite of how we did **Project ZW**; you'll be spraying black first; you'll mask it off; and then you'll be spraying the white. Normally, when painting, you spray light colors before dark colors.

Anyway, for this guitar body, our first coat of paint is going to be Krylon® Glossy Black #1601.

As a reminder, here are the paints that I used for this body:

Krylon® - All Purpose Primer Gray #1318 (1 can)
Krylon® - Glossy White #1501 (1 can)
Krylon® - Glossy Black #1601 (1 can)
Krylon® - Crystal Clear Gloss #1301 (3-4 cans)

Okay, as I've mentioned several times already, you'll be applying THIN coats of paint rather than trying to cover the entire guitar in one application. Don't expect your guitar to be a solid black color until at least your third coat. Remember - putting your paint on in thin coats allows it to dry faster with less runs, making it easier to mask off the striped design.

Now that you've already sprayed the primer, you probably have a better feel for how to spray the sides and the bottom of the guitar. As I've said, I like to do all of the sides and bottom first, followed by the back, then the front. If you're doing it this way, continue with that order or whatever has been working for you.

FIG 21

Here I man applying my first coat of color in a "left to right, right to left" manner. I sprayed the sides first, which is why you see paint around the edges.

Continue with the same painting technique I described in the last chapter; go left to right, followed by right to left, etc., zig-zagging up the entire body this way, overlapping each pass by roughly 50%. Your next coat should be up and down, down and up, etc., covering the entire sides, front, and back

STEP 8: SPRAYING YOUR BASE COAT

of the body this way; again, always trying to overlap each pass by roughly 50%.

Allow each coat to dry for at least an hour and a half before applying the next coat *(check your container for exact time they recommend)*. You won't have to sand between coats unless you find a bad run *(see notes below on how to deal with a run).*

When you've covered the entire body with a nice, solid black color, look it over for any obvious flaws or runs and handle it with the method I've laid out below. Make sure that your color is solid and that you can't see any gray primer.

After you've done any sanding of runs or other touch-ups, allow the body to dry for at least three days before proceeding to the next step. This will give the paint ample time to dry and completely settle.

(If you're painting a guitar with just one color, you'll bypass steps 9 - 11.)

Dealing With Runs:
All runs should be removed as best as possible before masking your body and applying additional paint. If you find a run that looks like it may be a problem when you mask, start by taking a small piece of 400-grit wet/dry sandpaper and with a delicate touch, try to remove as much of it as you can, rubbing in a circular motion with light pressure *(no water)*. Be very careful not to go down to primer or wood. "Proceed with caution," as the sign would say. It doesn't have to be absolutely perfect; just try to level it out as best as you can.

As long as you've taken out the meat of the run, you'll be okay to move on. Also, don't worry that the paint will be dull in that area. That will be undetectable when we spray our clear coats.

Painting Outdoors:
If you live in an area of the country where you get rain and snow, painting outdoors will be difficult. You DO NOT want to be painting when it's raining or drizzling. Water hitting the body while you paint will cause air bubbles and imperfections, which may be difficult to fix. If you're scheduled to paint on a day when the weather is bad, don't paint that day. Wait as long as you have to in order for it to be clear and dry.

STEP 9: MASKING YOUR GUITAR BODY

Now that your guitar body has a nice, solid base coat, you're ready to mask the body in preparation for painting the striped design.

In order to do a good job on this, you're going to need good photos of Eddie's guitar. I've set up a page where you can see and download images to use as reference - here's that page: http://www.paintyourownguitar.com/evh.html

This is where you're going to need a good eye to try to match his design. Don't be afraid to remove tape and lay it back down if you're not happy with its exact placement - I did that a few times myself. Also, there's nothing that says you have to do his exact design either; if you'd rather create your own design, by all means, do it.

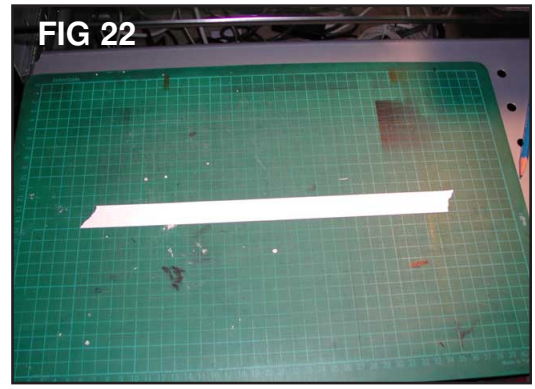


FIG 22

What you need to know before starting is that you're going to have to cut pieces for the thinner lines before placing them on the body. Those pieces should be cut on some sort of mat like the one in FIG 22. You do not want to be cutting the tape when it's on the body.


FIG 23

The cutting mat in FIG 22 is designed for this sort of thing. You can lay the tape down, cut it, pull it up, lay it on the guitar, and it'll still stick perfectly. I purchased it at an art supply store, so if you're interested in getting one, your local art store is your best bet.

If you decide not to get one, just be careful what you cut your masking tape on - it has to be a surface that will not remove the stickiness from the masking tape. An old piece of glass would probably work; you just have to be extra careful that you don't cut yourself on the edges.

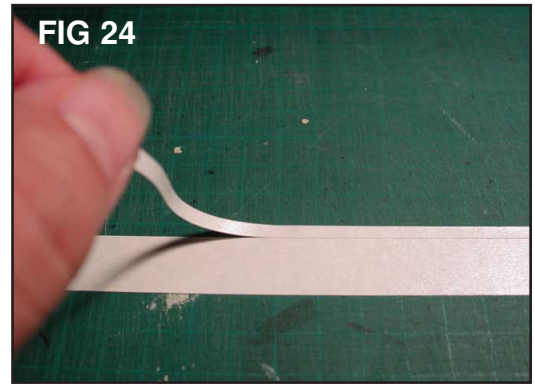


FIG 24

To begin, you'll just be using the 3/4" masking tape as it is. The best place to start is probably on the top horn *(see FIG 25)*. Begin by laying the 3/4"

STEP 9: MASKING YOUR GUITAR BODY

pieces first over the entire top of the guitar, and make sure your pieces are long enough so that you can wrap them around onto the back. They don't have to cover the entire back - just as long as there's about 2 - 3" on there; you can add more 3/4" pieces to finish a design on the back. When you've laid a piece down and wrapped it over the side and onto the back, go back over the piece and press down firmly on it, especially on the sides to make sure that there's a good bond. If you don't press down firmly enough, you will get white overspray underneath the tape, and you'll be forced to touch it up when the tape's been removed.


FIG 25

For the front of the guitar, try to be as precise as possible, unless you're shooting for your own design. Take your time with this if you really want to match Eddie's design. Again, don't be afraid to lift tape off and do it again.

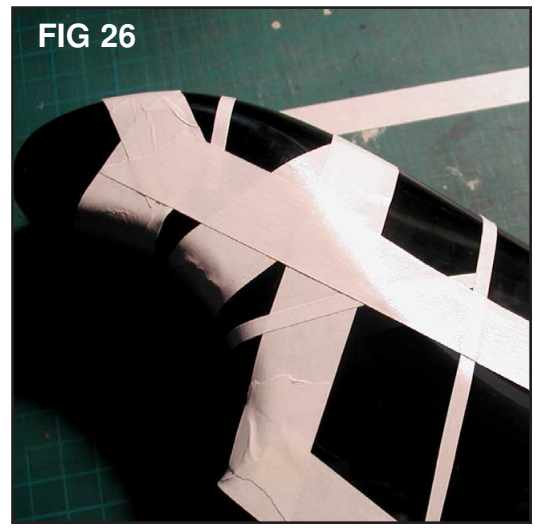


FIG 26

For the back design, I found one photo of the back of Eddie's guitar, but I'm not exactly sure it WAS his guitar - it may've been someone who made a replica. So instead, I just went ahead and created my own design *(see FIG 26)*. If you want to try to copy his exact paint job, use this photo as a guide - it's the only one I've ever seen - http://www.painty-ourownguitar.com/images/evhback.jpg

When you're ready to add the thinner lines to the body, you're going to want to cut the tape so the width is 3/16". Almost all of your thinner lines will be this width size.

To do this, I placed strips of the 3/4" masking tape approximately 12" long on my cutting mat, measured 3/16", and then began cutting the pieces with a straight edge *(or metal ruler)* into as many strips as I could get per piece. You want to cut them that long because, as you place them on the body, you want to be able to wrap the excess onto the back and create a design for the back.You don't want to be piecing two pieces together on the top to

STEP 9: MASKING YOUR GUITAR BODY

make one strip; make sure you're always using one full piece to make one line on the front or top of the guitar.

For the thin line that runs along the curve at the top, lay your piece down with one hand and mold it to the curve with your other hand. The masking should easily bend into place.

For the little odd-shaped mask that sits above the front two pick-up holes, draw the shape onto a piece of masking like I've done in FIG 27. Simply cut the shape out *(FIG 28)* and place it in the appropriate spot on the body.

When you've completed laying all of the masking tape, go back over it and press down firmly on all of the tape, paying careful attention to the sides - the tape seems to lift a little when wrapped over the side. Also, where two pieces meet or overlap, use your fingernail and press in the groove on the top piece so that, as it overlaps the piece underneath, it sits tightly on top of it, leaving no gap and allowing no paint to get in underneath.

Your finished masking job should look something like FIG 29.

Here we go - Step 10 is right around the corner.

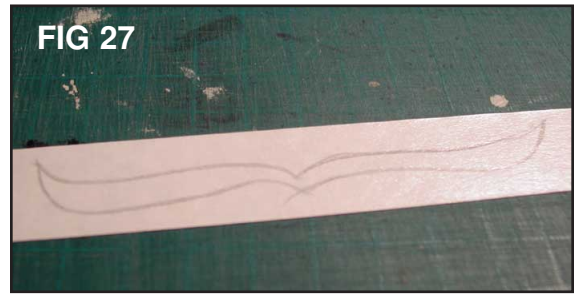


FIG 27


FIG 28


FIG 29

STEP 9: MASKING YOUR GUITAR BODY

IMPORTANT OPTION: If you're willing to spend a little bit more money on supplies, I recommend you buy 3M's Fine Line Tape - #218. You'll find it at most auto paint supply stores.

This tape is used in automotive painting and comes in several different sizes, so you won't have to cut any thinner strips for this project *(or the Frankenstrat).*

If you're planning on painting Les Pauls, this tape can also be used for masking the binding. It's flexible and is very easy to work with.

STEP 10: PAINTING YOUR DESIGN

For this step, we're going to be painting white over top of the black, so it's going to require more paint than usual to really get a good solid color.

Expect to do a good five coats of white, maybe more. Of course, they are going to be THIN coats.

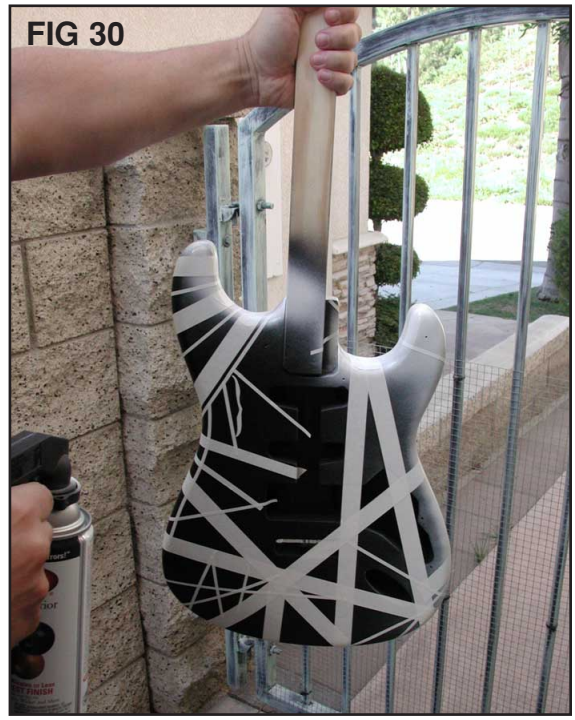


FIG 30

The thing to really watch for here is that your tape doesn't start to lift; anytime that happens, expect to get overspray underneath the tape... and therefore, touching up will be necessary.

As in FIG 30, I start by spraying the sides first, followed by the back, then the front. For these coats, I suggest you only wait about 20 minutes between coats. You want to finish all of the white in a few hours. Between each coat, inspect the masking to make sure none is lifting up. If it is, just keep pressing down firmly on it. In fact, just before you're ready for your next coat, go over the body and press down on the tape; that way, you'll have a nice tight bond just before painting, which minimizes the chances of overspray.


FIG 31

When you've completed all of your coats and you have a nice solid white, let it sit for at least 30 minutes before removing the tape. Be very careful not to touch the body where you've just sprayed the white. If it's still sticky, you're likely to leave fingerprints in the paint. If the paint is still sticky after 30 minutes *(touch the paint on the tape to test its stickiness)*, let it sit for another 20 minutes. When it appears that your paint has sufficiently dried, you're ready to move on to Step 11.

STEP 11: REMOVING THE MASKING

The problem with spraying white over top of black for this design is that you have to really build up the white to get a good, solid color. Unfortunately, it makes the lines less crisp *(see FIG 32).*

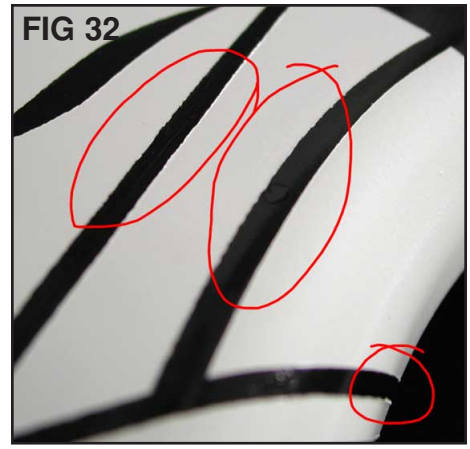


FIG 32

The good news is, after you've wetsanded your clear coats, all of this will be virtually undetectable.

Still, because of the build-up of white, it's very likely that you'll have to do some minor touch-ups. I've painted this same design four times, and each time, I had to do touch-ups - even with the knowledge I had, I STILL had to touch up!

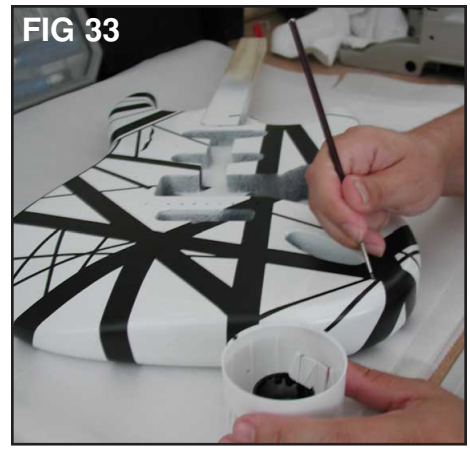


FIG 33

Anyway, don't be discouraged if and when your lines don't look real crisp. Simply get out a fine paint brush, spray some black paint into the paint lid, and with a steady hand, touch up any white that may've bled underneath the tape *(FIG 33)*. Hopefully, it won't be too bad, and you'll only have to spend about an hour on the entire body like I did.

When removing the masking tape still left on the body, I always use the edge of the X-acto blade to help me lift up the edge so that I can start lifting and removing. Once you have the edge lifted, simply pull the pieces off slowly with your fingers, paying careful attention not to hit the body with the pieces you're pulling off.

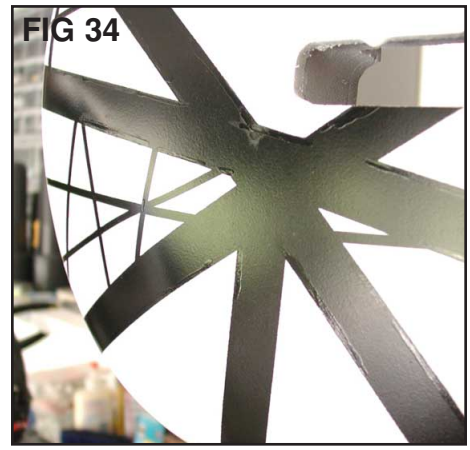


FIG 34

When you're finished touching up, your body should look similar to the one of FIG 34. You may be thinking that it looks absolutely awful. MARK MY WORD - upon completion of this job, these touch-ups will be virtually undetectable! When my guitar body was completed, it showed no signs of touch-ups at all.

When all of the touch-ups are complete, it's time to move onto Step 12...

STEP 12: SPRAYING THE CLEAR COATS

As we're closing in on the end of our project, hopefully you're happy with what you've accomplished thus far. The good news is, this step is probably the easiest of all of the steps.

All you'll be doing for this step is applying clear coats - several coats... as many as 20 thin coats. You may be wondering, why so many? Well, if you look at your body, you'll notice that the white paint sits higher than the black base coat. To get rid of that ridge, we need to build up the clear coats so that, when we sand the body back down flat, the ridge disappears.


FIG 34B

PLEASE NOTE:
You only have to put on 20 thin coats of clear if your paint job has a design to it like either Project ZW or Project EVH. If your body has just a base coat, all you'll need to do is roughly 8 thin coats of clear.

Although it may sound complicated, it's not. Once you've completed the guitar, you'll understand just how important the 20 coats of clear actually are.

Before you begin spraying the clear, have a look at the body to make sure there are no bits of dust or debris on the surface. if you find anything, carefully remove it so that it doesn't get trapped underneath the clear. Once you start spraying on the clear, anything that was on the body that didn't get removed will always be there.

In fact, before spraying each coat of clear, always inspect the body and remove any bits of debris that may've settled on the finish.

As you're already familiar with how to paint, follow the same technique you used earlier when spraying the primer and base coats. Begin by holding the guitar in one hand while you spray with the other *(see FIG 34B).*

Run your first pass across left to right, followed by the next pass right to left, the next left to right, etc., overlapping each pass by roughly 50%. Zigzag your way up the entire body and over the entire guitar.

STEP 12: SPRAYING THE CLEAR COATS

For the next coat, go in the opposite direction; up and down, down and up, etc., again, always overlapping each pass by roughly 50%.

Allow ample time between each coat for proper drying. Check the can's label for recommended drying time between coats.
When you've finished applying the 20 coats of clear *(which should take you a few days to do)*, you'll probably notice that the finish has an orange peel look/texture to it like the guitar in FIG 35. Don't worry about that - that's not how the guitar will look when you're done.

This photo really shows the build up of white paint and how much higher it sits than the black. That's why it's necessary to spray as many clear coats as you do; when you wetsand, all of this gets evened out.

Also, don't be concerned with any clear coats that don't have a consistent look to them. Any inconsistencies in the finish will get fixed when we wetsand and buff.

Wetsanding eliminates the orange peel look and gets rid of all irregularities in the paint.

STEP 13: LETTING THE PAINT SETTLE

Before you begin with the all-important step of wetsanding the clear coats, you're going to have to do something even more important than that - you're going to have to let your body sit for 1-2 months without doing anything to it.

I know, I know - I realize that you're anxious to get it done. But, here's what you need to know: Paint takes time to settle and sink into the wood. Although it dries really quickly, it takes time for it to settle and harden properly.

If you were to start with the wetsanding right away, in a matter of a few weeks, you would've noticed that the perfect sanding and buffing job you had done is no longer perfect - that's because the paint was still settling.

These two bodies were back-ups I made for a series of photos I missed along the way. They are now complete and turned out even better than the first set.

In other words, your perfect job would no longer be perfect.

As much as I know it's going to drive you crazy not being able to finish the body, try to remain strong and trust what I'm telling you. I've ruined several guitars simply because I was not willing to be patient and let the paint settle.

From what I've been told, Gibson lets their guitars sit for 6+ months before sanding and buffing.

If you can remain strong and wait out the 2 months, your finish will be that much better because of it.

When you're ready to proceed, move onto Step 14...

PLEASE NOTE:
If your body has just a base coat and roughly 8 thin coats of clear, you won't have to let it sit for 2 months. Three weeks should be fine.

STEP 14: REMOVING THE STICK

Now that you've applied all of your coats of clear, you won't need to hang the body anymore, so it's time to remove the stick.

If you look at the stick where it meets the body, you may notice that, with the amount of paint that you've applied, the stick is starting to blend in with the body. Rather than have you try to yank the stick off and risk pulling off some of the paint, I want you to score *(cut finely)* the corners where the stick and body meet using your X-acto knife as I'm doing in FIG 37.


FIG 37

Go over it a few times so that when you remove the screws and stick, it separates easily from the body.

If you find that you're unable to do any work on your body for an extended period of time, I suggest that you put the stick back on and hang the body. Don't rest it against anything when you're not working on it.

This is just a precaution so that nothing happens to the finish while you're taking a break.

When you're finished, let's move onto Step 15...

STEP 15: SANDING THE CLEAR COATS

Just when you thought that spraying the clear coats was going to be crucial to the success of your paint job, alongs comes Step 15!

Yup - This is THE step that most novices have the hardest time understanding... that includes me when I first started painting guitars.

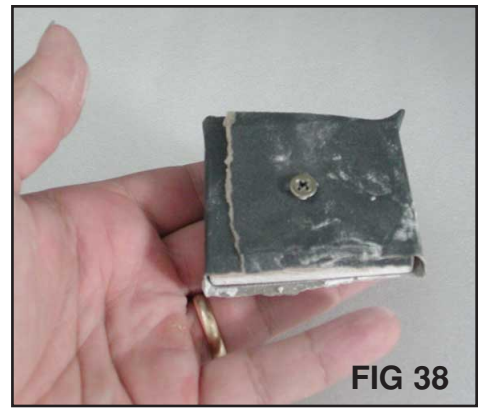


FIG 38

During this step, we are going to sand the body back down to a very dull, flat finish, eliminating all bumps and ridges.

You may think that you're ruining your paint job by doing this; actually, nothing could be further from the truth!


FIG 39

If you do an excellent job with this step, your body will end up having that factory guitar finish you've been waiting for... and the one I promised you!

When you're ready to begin, start by getting out your 320-grit wet sandpaper - the one with the green back. Also, make sure you have a dish of clean water close by.

Using one of your sanding blocks with a piece of the 320-grit sandpaper attached to it like the one in FIG 38, dip the block into the dish of water and begin by sanding the finish in a circular motion. Your objective is to sand down the entire guitar and eliminate the ridge created by the black paint. As you sand, the surface should resemble that of the surface in FIG 39 and FIG 40.

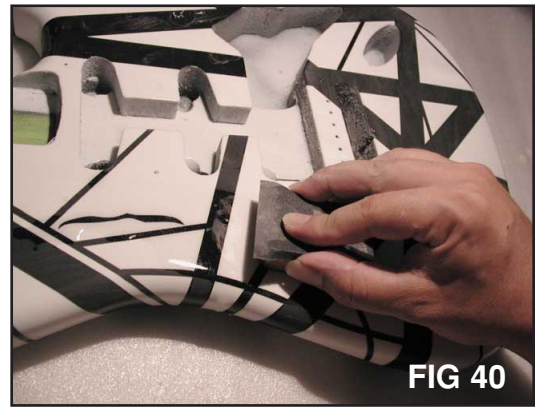


FIG 40

Work in little sections at a time. Every few minutes, stop and remove the excess water and inspect the surface. You'll probably notice areas of

STEP 15: SANDING THE CLEAR COATS

the finish that are still shiny *(probably on the black base coat - see FIG 41)* while most of it will appear dull. Your goal is to eliminate all shiny spots; these are the areas that are sitting lower than the rest of the paint. As you sand, you're removing excess clear coating to help even out the finish. This is why it was important that you apply 20 coats of clear; it's unlikely that you'll sand through to the paint with this many coats of clear on the body.


FIG 41

When you wipe the excess water from the surface, you'll probably also notice that the surface is rather scratched. Again, don't panic - the next step will eliminate most, if not all, of the scratches and will bring back the shine - better than ever.

Continue doing small sections at a time until the guitar has been completely evened out and all shiny spots have disappeared.

Be very careful when sanding on the edges of the body and I do mean, VERY CAREFUL. It's easy to go through to the paint and primer and right to the wood when sanding on the edges as you can see I did in FIG 42. Because it's an edge, paint just doesn't get built up the way it does on other parts of the body.


FIG 42

When you've completed the 320-grit wetsanding over the entire body, move to the 400-grit sandpaper and wetsand the entire body with this grit. What you're trying to do at this point is eliminate surface scratches and get as close to a perfectly flat surface as you can. Also, continue to do this wetsanding with water on the body. You can either dip your block into your water dish, or you can scoop water with your hand and transfer it to the body that way.

STEP 15: SANDING THE CLEAR COATS

When you've completed the body with the 400-grit, move to the 600-grit and do the same thing again. Once you've gone over the entire body with the 600-grit, I recommend following that up with an even finer grit to help reduce surface scratches. Using a 1200-grit or 1500-grit *(whichever one you can find in the stores)* after the 600-grit will produce a nice, smooth surface with a dull shine to it that, when buffed, will give you a virtually scratch-free factory finish.

FIG 43

At this point, the body is now perfectly flat, and the ridge that was created by the paint layers is gone, so it's ready to be buffed to a vibrant shine!

Once again, take your time with this - look to spend a good 2-3 hours doing the wetsanding. Don't work in one area too long with any of the grits; rather, move about the whole top of the guitar in small sections. Having some water on the surface as you sand will definitely help you to see how good a sanding job you're doing.

When you've completed the wetsanding process, you're ready to move on. Thankfully, there's no two-month wait to move onto the next step!

IMPORTANT POINT: When you begin wetsanding, if you find that the 320-grit is not evening out the paint as well as you want it to, you can switch to a 220-grit, but be very careful; this WILL even out the paint very quickly. However, it'll also be easier to go through the clear to the paint, so adjust the pressure as you use the 220-grit - you won't have to press nearly as hard as with the 320-grit. Avoid using 220-grit and the edges of the body - use it only on the top and back.

IMPORTANT POINT: Pay very close attention as you're doing this final sanding. If you see color starting to appear on your sand paper at any time, stop immediately. Dry your guitar body off using some 100% cotton. When it's completely dried, you'll have to put more coats of clear back on the body. Look to put another 5 - 8 coats on, just to be safe. When the additional clear coats having been applied, give it at least a week before resuming with the wetsanding.

STEP 16: BUFFING THE CLEAR COATS

The beauty of this step is that if you did an excellent job with all of the previous steps, this one will be a piece of cake!

During this step, we're going to bring back the shine to our body by hand-buffing it using the 3M Perfect-It II Rubbing Compound Fine Cut.

You're going to buff the body in a similar fashion as wetsanding. You're going to work in small sections at a time, always trying to buff in a circular motion.

I always tend to start with the top of the guitar when buffing - probably because I'm anxious to see that shine come to life!


FIG 43B

As you buff, the shine really starts to come out. You'll still be able to see surface scratches, but those will eventually disappear the longer you buff the area.

To start, apply some of the 3M Rubbing Compound onto the body and, using some of the 100% cotton, begin rubbing in a circular motion. You'll find that the harder you rub, the deeper the shine you'll get. Again, don't stay in one area too long; as one area starts to shine, move to another area and work that one up, too.

PLEASE NOTE: During the previous step, if you used a 1200-grit or 1500-grit to finish your wetsanding, you can use 3M's Perfect-It II Finishing Compound (Swirl Remover) and bypass the 3M's Perfect-It II Rubbing Compound (Fine Cut).

Expect your hand to get tired, so take as many breaks as possible. Again, there's no rush to get this done *(or is there?)*. If you don't finish all of the buffing in one day, put it aside until the next day.

When working on the back, hold the body upright with one hand while you buff with the other. You can also hold it in your lap as you buff; just don't rest the top on anything, as you're likely to scuff up the buffing you just completed.

Same goes for the sides, too - hold the body firm with one hand while you buff with the other. If you wish, you can hold it on a firm surface as you

STEP 16: BUFFING THE CLEAR COATS

buff. Just pay attention to what you're resting it on - you do not want to scuff up or damage areas that have already been buffed.

Also, when you're buffing the sides, it's difficult to work in a circular motion, so I tend to go length-wise along the side in strokes of roughly 3 - 4".

Expect this step to take at least 3 hours. If it takes longer, don't worry - it's definitely going to be worth it!

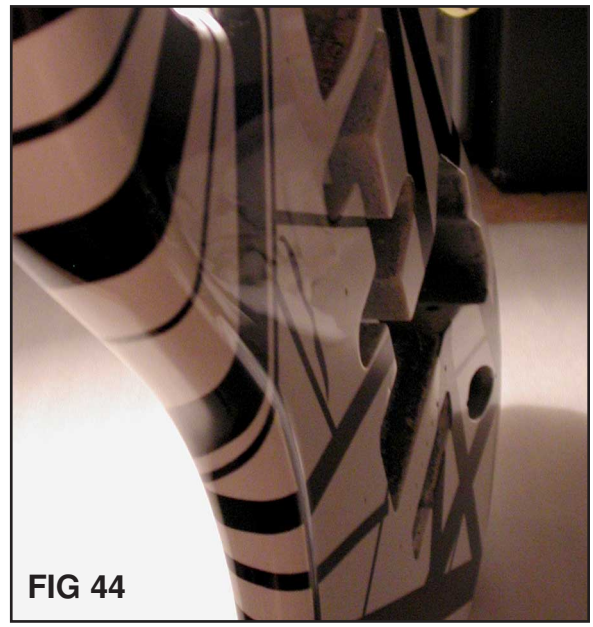


FIG 44

When you've buffed up the shine to a point where you don't think it could get any shinier *(like the one in FIG 44)*, congratulations on completing your first professional guitar paint job!

Give yourself a pat on the back for a job well done!

You see?... that wasn't so difficult, now, was it?

IMPORTANT POINT: Although you now have a beautiful finish on your body, you're going to have to pay extra careful attention to where you rest the body over the next few months after it's all back together. As I mentioned earlier, paints take time to cure and although you've waited at least two months to wetsand and buff, some experts have told me that paints, especially lacquer, can take as long as 6 months to a year to completely cure.

So, I would stress that you DON'T rest your guitar in a guitar stand for a few months. If you do it, you will notice the weight of the body pushing down on the foam holders will cause indents in your finish. Certain rubbers and plastics can also SOFTEN a lacquered finish. Personally, I just rest the body on the strap holder on the floor and rest the neck against a wall or bookshelf... but not in a stand... at least, not for the first 6 months.

PROJECT EVH: FINAL PHOTOS

PROJECT EVH2
THE "FRANKENSTRAT"

This project is an extension of Project EVH, so to fully understand the step-by-step process of producing a great finish, please read Project EVH.

PROJECT EVH2: THE FRANKENSTRAT

The Frankenstrat is arguably the most famous guitar the world has ever seen. It was the result of Eddie Van Halen painting red right over top of his original black-and-white strat.


FIG 1

From what I read many years ago, he apparently did it because a Japanese company had started producing a knock-off of the black-and-white strat. To stay ahead of the copycats, he simply decided to paint another design right over top of the original black-and-white - one that he hoped no one would be able to copy. Little did he know...

Anyway, earlier in my book, I covered how to paint Eddie's original black-and-white strat. The Frankenstrat, as Eddie liked to refer to it, is the natural progression from that one. Obviously, the one earlier in the book is easier to paint than this one, but to get to the Frankenstrat, you HAVE to paint EVH1... well, almost paint that one.

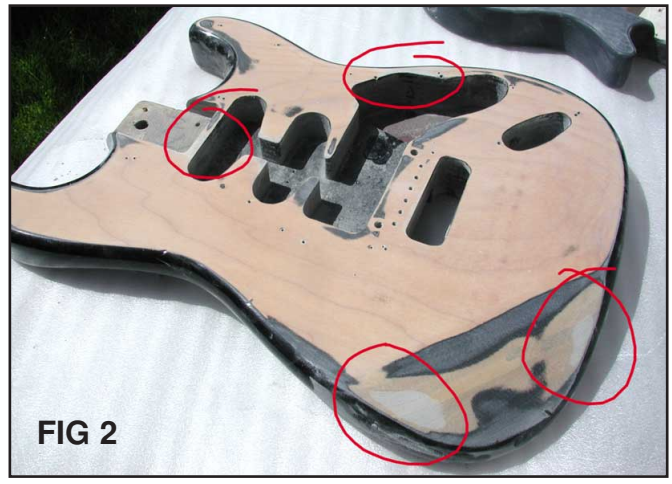


FIG 2

For this project guitar, I used a black Fender copy body that I bought through eBay for $20. *(Man, you just have to LOVE eBay!)*

So, as I stated earlier in the book, I ALWAYS prefer to sand a body down to the sanding sealer rather than paint over the paint that might already be on there. I do this for compatibility reasons. And, since I'm using Krylon® for the entire painting process, I know I won't run into any compatibility problems with the paint.

To remove the finish, I used my trusty electric sander along with some sanding sponges for the sides and inside the horns. The grit of sandpaper I used was 120. As you can see in FIG 2, I was able to keep MOST of the sealer

that was already on the body intact. I've indicated with red circles where I went through to the wood. After I completed the sanding, I went back over the areas that were bare wood with some of my sanding sealer. I brushed on roughly five coats, allowing each coat to dry before applying another one. When the sealer coats were all dry, I sanded the area down so that the grain was no longer visible and it blended in with the rest of the body.

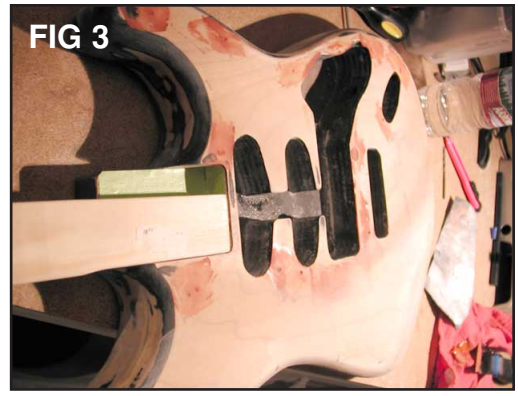


FIG 3

IMPORTANT POINT: When sanding off the finish, if you can keep the sealer that's already on the body, you'll save quite a bit of time not having to do it all again yourself.

As you sand through to the paint, you'll see the color of the paint on your sandpaper. When this happens, be cautious in that area because the sealer coat lies directly beneath it. Continue to work around the entire body, and don't stay in one area too long.

With sanding completed, it's time to move onto filling the holes with Bondo.


FIG 4

You may notice in FIG 3 that there's still some finish left on this body. Sanding through the sealer to wood is very easy, especially on the sides of the body. Therefore, in trying to avoid sanding through, sometimes I just leave a little of the finish on areas where I don't want to sand through to wood.

When I finished up with sanding the Bondo, I moved on to spraying the primer. *(I won't bother repeating myself with my spraying technique, as I discussed that earlier in the book.)* When I finished applying the primer, I noticed that some of the areas that I had filled with Bondo were not as even as I wanted them, so as I suggested earlier in the book, if you run into this, don't be afraid to go back over the primer with some more Bondo as I've done in FIG 4.

PROJECT EVH2: THE FRANKENSTRAT

When the Bondo was dried, I sanded it back down even, then sprayed primer over those areas again, and was ready to move onto spraying the black base coat.


FIG 5

It took me three thin coats of black to completely cover the body *(FIG 5)*. In fact, I just finished another project guitar, and I noticed that it took me three thin coats to cover that body as well. So, I would say that you can expect it to take you at least three coats as well, if you're doing it properly. I use the word "properly" because you have to be real careful with paint from a spray can; it's been thinned down quite a bit to be able to flow evenly, so putting it on too thick will cause it to run.

I very seldom ever get a run when using spray cans because I make sure I don't overdo it on each coat. However, when I do get a run, I hold the body in a horizontal position for a few minutes to help the paint even out. Try this for yourself if you experience a run or two.

I allowed the body to dry for roughly 12 hours before I masked it up.

For this project body, I decided to use something other than masking tape to mask the body. This time around, I decided to use electrician's tape for the masking.

As I mentioned earlier in the book, over the years, I've painted EVH1 a handful of times. Each time I painted it, I got quite a bit of bleed underneath the masking tape because of the excessive amount of white you have to spray over the black - even when spraying thin coats. This time around, I was interested in trying something different... a little experimenting, if you will.

Actually, in my younger days, I used to use electrician's tape for masking, but using this tape has both pros and cons. The one "pro" to using electrician's tape is that your lines will end up SUPER-CRISP, i.e., zero bleed under the tape.

However, The "cons" are: (1) flexible tape - hard to get a perfectly straight line, and (2) leaving it on the body for too long or using it in extreme heat will likely leave a sticky residue on the body.

Knowing that I would experience these “cons,” I proceeded to use it anyway... and take my chances.


FIG 6

It was 100+ degrees on the days I was painting this body, so I really had my concerns about a LOT of tape residue being left on the body. Thankfully, there was only a small amount in a couple of areas when I removed the tape... and, what WAS on there came off with GOO Gone®. The best part about the masking was that my lines came out more crisp than ever before.

So, if you choose to use electrician's tape for your masking, just be careful not to use it when it's really hot out *(100+ degrees)* and in direct sunlight *(if you're spraying outside like I do)*. Otherwise, the tape will most likely leave a residue. *(The residue can be removed with GOO Gone® or some other grease/goo remover like that. Still, it makes for more work and could increase the chances of you damaging your paint or interferring with further coats... just keep that in mind.)*

In FIG 6, you'll notice that the tape scheme is different than Project EVH from earlier in the book. There's a reason, so here's an interesting story:

I've been an Eddie Van Halen fan ever since he burst on the music scene with Van Halen’s debut album in 1978. I was 14 at the time.

Through my teen years, I collected many pix of my guitar hero and, in fact, had most of them plastered on my wall *(next to my Farrah Fawcett Charlie’s Angels poster! Wow, I'm old!).*

Anyway, there was one photo of Eddie in particular that struck me as very odd. He was holding a black-and-white strat with the tape scheme almost identical to the one in FIG 6. This was PRE-Van Halen 1 - obviously from the band's club days. From everything I read, Eddie only talked about making ONE guitar, so this HAD to be the same guitar. Well, I assumed he just added the other thinner black lines with paint later on.

Here's the interesting part: if you look at several different pix of Eddie with his original black-and-white strat, you'll notice that some thin lines are

missing from this photo, then they re-appear in another photo, then they've moved in another photo, etc. Apparently, Eddie just used tape for the thinner lines on his body rather than painting them on. *(A point backed up by Wayne Charvel - who helped Eddie make and paint his yellow-and-black strat in 1979.)*

So, when it came time for Eddie to paint the Frankenstrat red, he just removed the lines that were tape and just masked it up and sprayed red. That's why, when you look at the Frankenstrat, you'll notice that some of the black lines that appear on EVH1 are missing underneath the red.

Interesting story, huh?... Okay, now that I've gotten that off of my chest, what you see in FIG 6 is all you'll have to do for the first masking job.

By the way, FIG 7 shows the tape scheme I used for the back of the body. By no means do you have to do this design. Have fun with it and create whatever you want on the back, unless you want to copy Eddie's body EXACTLY. Then, I suggest you check out this image:
http://www.paintyourownguitar.com/images/evhback.jpg

This is one of the only pix I've ever seen of the back of EVH 1. If you look closely at the front of the guitar, it looks like some of those thin lines are moving or falling off... TAPE JOB!

Before moving on to masking up the body in order to spray the red, I gave the body roughly three days to dry and settle... and gave myself some time to write all of this stuff down.

While I'm mentioning "red," let me tell you what paints were used for the painting of this body:

1. Krylon® All-Purpose Primer Gray (#1318) - 1 can
2. Krylon® Glossy Black (#1601) - 1 can
3. Krylon® Glossy White (#1501) - 1 can
4. Krylon® Red Pepper (#2328) - 1 can
5. Krylon® Crystal Clear Gloss (#1301) - 3 cans

PROJECT EVH2: THE FRANKENSTRAT

When I was ready to move on to masking the body, I once again used electrician's tape. I used a green tape so that you'd be able to easily see the pattern needed to recreate the Frankenstrat design.

Masking the body took me close to two hours; I wanted it to be as close as possible to the original, so I was trying to be meticulous. If you're going to do it, expect it to take that long for you as well.


FIG 8

As I mentioned, one of the "cons" with using electrician's tape is that it's very difficult to get a straight line because of the stretchy nature of the tape. If you end up using this tape, be careful not to stretch it as you're laying it if you want good, straight lines. Rather, let it just fall naturally as you guide it into place. Also, remember that you're going to have to cut some thinner lines for this second masking. That can get tricky with this tape... keep that in mind as well.

Now that masking is complete, I worked fast so that I could minimize any tape residue that could be left on the body. I gave myself 20 minutes between each coat and made sure I put it in the garage to dry once I was finished spraying each coat.


FIG 9

FIG 9 shows the body after the first thin coat of red. The black circles indicate where you can still see the black paint underneath the red. If you look at Eddie's Frankenstrat, there are some areas that the red is not quite as vibrant as other areas; that's because he didn't care

whether you could see the black underneath the red. My guess is that he probably only sprayed three coats of red.

For my Frankenstrat, I wanted to eliminate the black underneath the red - I wanted a nice, uniform red, so that would require additional coats of red... and additional time for the tape to stay on the body.

All-in-all, I sprayed five coats of red over the black-and-white design and was successful in eliminating the black underneath - except for the black that appears with the white from the masking.

I let the body dry for about an hour before removing the tape. Normally, you should let it sit longer than that *(at least 12 hours)*, but because I was trying to avoid sticky residue, I went ahead and did it much sooner than normal.

While removing the tape, I did manage to allow some tape to hit the body and smear some red in areas it shouldn't have been, but otherwise, it turned out pretty good.

I've already sprayed my 20 coats of clear, so now I'm just waiting patiently for my two-month waiting period to be up before wetsanding and final buffing.

IMPORTANT POINT: Although I used electrical tape for masking in this project, I don't recommend you use it. Rather, stick to regular masking tape, or if you have a few extra dollars, invest in 3M's Fine Line Tape. It's the stuff many pros use.

PLEASE NOTE: If you're in need of some ideas for a guitar design other than the ones featured in this book, visit my template page - http://www.paintyourownguitar.com/templates.html

These are full-sized templates that can be used for your guitar painting projects. Full instructions on how to print and use them can be found inside each template folder.

BREAKDOWN OF EXPENSES

Project EVH - All parts were purchased on eBay unless otherwised specified.

Strat Body - $43
Neck - $30
Pickguard - $18
Pots/Wiring - $12 *(purchased from Warmoth Guitar Products)*
Knob(s) - $5
Duncan Pickup - $35
Tuning Pegs - $24
Bridge - $18
Strap Locks - $12
Input Jack - $5

TOTAL $202

Project EVH2 - FRANKENSTRAT

Same as above with the exception of a Floyd Rose licensed bridge - $55 *(bought on eBay)*

TOTAL $260

Project ZW - All parts were purchased on eBay unless otherwised specified.

Lotus Les Paul Copy Guitar - $50
Tailpiece - $13
Tune-O-Matic Bridge - $13
EMG Select (2) - $36
Tuning Pegs - $15
Speed Knobs - $10
Pots/Wiring - $30 *(purchased from Warmoth Guitar Products)*
Rhythm/Treble Switch - $15 *(purchased from Warmoth Guitar Products)*
Screws *(assorted for both guitars)* - $20 *(purchased from Warmoth)*
Back Plates - $10
Pickup Rings - $10
Jack Plate - $12 *(purchased from Warmoth Guitar Products)*
Input Jack - $5

TOTAL - $239

Paint and supplies for two guitars - $64 *(I spent more than I had to because I used paint stripper for one of the projects, which required additional supplies - gloves, brush, scrapers, etc.)*

PAINTING OTHER DESIGNS

Now that you have the knowledge it takes to create a factory guitar finish, and the knowledge to do a complicated design like Zakk Wylde's bullseye design, there's virtually nothing you couldn't design and paint on a guitar.

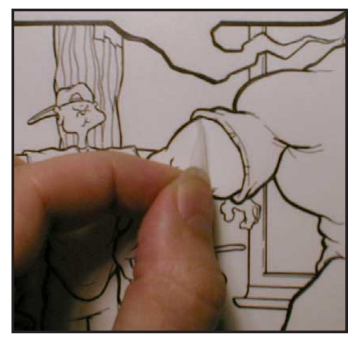
No matter what sort of design it is, it all begins by masking off the area you wish to paint and then painting each of the colors individually. Spray a color, mask it off; spray a color, mask it off... that's just the way it's done.

For over 12 years, I've been airbrushing all of my MUSCLEHEDZ® cartoons by hand. Although all of the airbrushing is being done freehand, all of the areas are still masked off so the paint stays within a confined area. This is simply the best way to obtaining a professional-looking job.

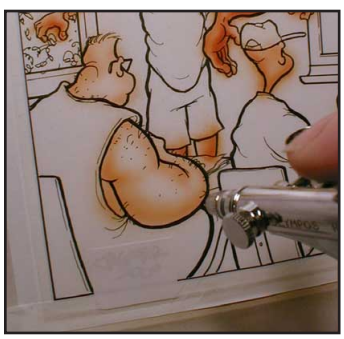
Here's a working example of how a complicated design would get done on a guitar. Although, I'm working on an airbrush board here, the technique would still be the same on a guitar.

When my drawing is complete, I lay a piece of frisket film over top of the art. Frisket film is a clear, medium-tack film ideal for airbrush masking.

With my Frisket film in place, I use an X-acto knife and cut around every line in the entire image.



When I want to paint in a specific area, I simply remove the Frisket from that area and spray my color.



I remove all of the areas that are the same color and paint them at the same time. When the areas are dry, I put the Frisket back in place and move to another area.

Looking at this photo, you'd think that the final image is going to look messy. Actually, the Frisket is protecting the entire image as I paint in specific areas.

With the Frisket in place, there's no way for other paint to get under masked areas.

PAINTING OTHER DESIGNS

As you can see, it's very much like a jigsaw puzzle; remove the frisket, paint the area, let the paint dry, and then return the frisket to its proper spot. For designing and painting graphics on a guitar, the principles are exactly the same.

Learning To Walk The Walk And Talk The Talk

I relate painting guitars with graphics on them to building a home; you don't just show up at the work site and start hammering nails into boards; that would be ridiculous. You follow the blueprints and take it step-by-step. Eventually, a home is going to be built, but before it's finished, there's a lot of prep work that must come first before putting the locks on the doors. Same holds true for painting guitars.

If you can learn to be patient and think through your designs, you will have no problem painting whatever you can come up with design-wise; it's just a matter of using what you now know and being meticulous with all of the steps involved, most importantly, the masking.

Hopefully, by doing one of these project guitars and learning some of the tricks and techniques I've showed you, you're inspired to keep painting guitars. Just remember - "Practice makes perfect," so expect to do an even better job on your next project!

Thanks again, and happy painting!

John Gleneicki

MASKING AND TRANSFERRING OTHER DESIGNS

It's likely that, after you finish painting your Zakk Wylde or Eddie Van Halen guitar(s), you may want to try to do something else. So, in this section, I'm going to talk a little bit more about masking your guitar and transferring freehand art onto your body.

For this example, I'll be using a Les Paul body design and a U.S. Flag design. The techniques used will apply to whatever design you create.

If you end up working on a strat-style body, you'll eliminate the tricky step of masking the binding *(unless you chose to paint right over the binding)*.

So, to start this project, you'll begin by preparing your design on a sheet of cardboard or bristol board *(FIG 1)* - large enough so that it covers the entire top of your guitar. *(If you can't find bristol board, you can always scotch tape 4 pieces of letter-sized paper together to make a sheet large enough. Another option is tracing paper - available in large sheets as well.)* Once your design has been drawn, put it aside and get your guitar ready for transferring the design.

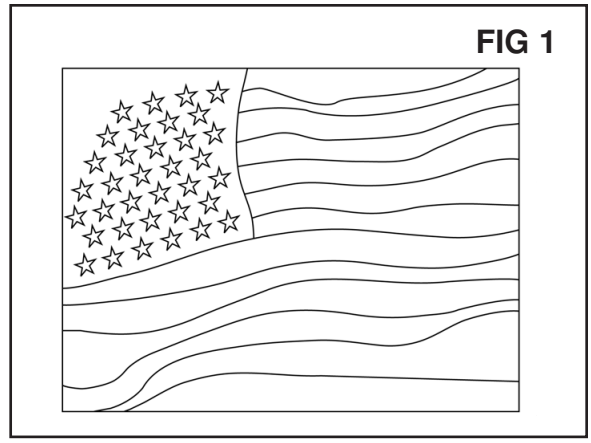


FIG 1

To quickly recap: after masking off your binding *(as you may've done during Project ZW)*, you'll spray your white primer. When the white primer step is done, you'll move on to spraying a white base coat for the U.S Flag design *(or whatever design you choose).* If you're concerned that you won't be able to tell the difference between white primer and white paint when painting your guitar(s), you ABSOLUTELY will. Primer is a flat, chalky paint whereas the actual paint will have a shine and a thicker texture to it.

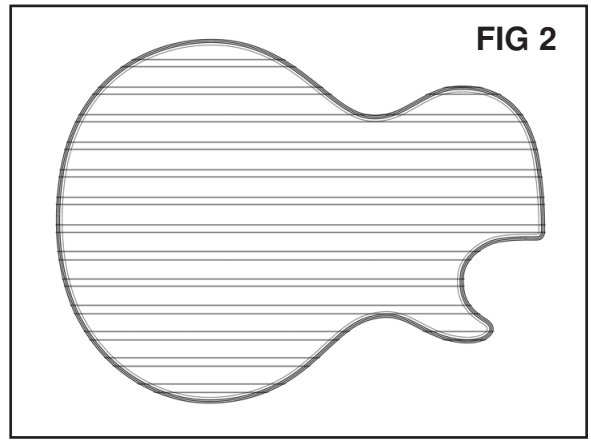


FIG 2

Once your white base coat is complete, you'll need to get your design onto the guitar. Begin by masking off the entire guitar, not just the top with 2" 3M blue or green masking tape *(FIG 2)*.

MASKING AND TRANSFERRING OTHER DESIGNS

You may be wondering how on earth you're going to get the exact design you've got drawn on your bristol board onto the guitar? You are going to use something called "graphite paper." Graphite paper is available in most art stores, and it comes in very large sheets, too - probably large enough to cover the entire top of a guitar. This special paper has a dull surface on one side and a smooth graphite surface on the other.

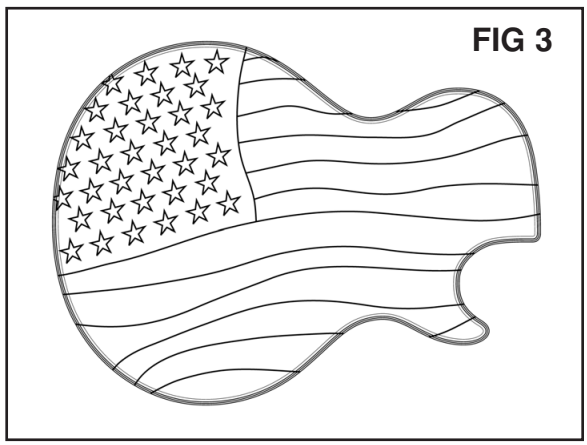


FIG 3

To get your exact design onto your guitar, simply lay a sheet *(or two, if need be)* on top of your masked guitar with the graphite surface facing the body. Lay your bristol board *(or whatever you drew your design on)* with your design on top of the graphite paper. Using some masking tape, tape the two sheets in place and wrap the tape over the sides so that's it's nice and secure. *(An added benefit to using tracing paper to draw your design on is you can position it on the body exactly where you want it because you're seeing the body through the paper. When it's perfectly in place, just slip the graphite paper underneath and you're ready to go.)*

With the papers in place, simply retrace your design, trying to be as accurate as possible with your lines *(FIG 3)*. The graphite surface on the bottom will leave graphite lines where you just drew.

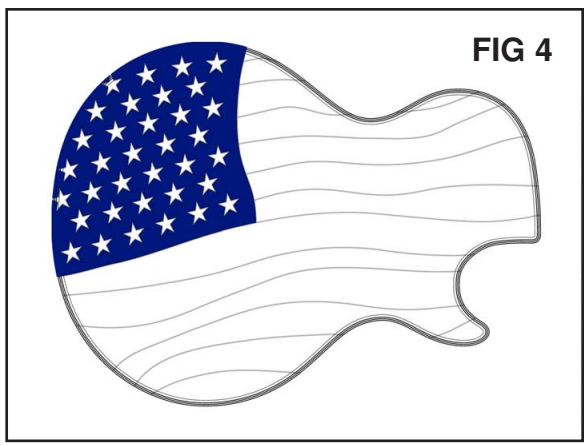


FIG 4

Before lifting off the art, lift up one edge of the art and peak underneath the graphite paper to make sure that you're pressing hard enough so that the graphite is transferring your design onto the masking tape. My advice is to press gently at first and check to see if your lines are visible. If not, adjust your pressure accordingly.

Personally, I try to use a delicate touch on both transferring the art and with the cutting with the X-acto until I find the exact amount of pressure necessary. The graphite paper can be a little messy, so be sure not to move it around too much; try to keep it in one place.

MASKING AND TRANSFERRING OTHER DESIGNS

Next, you'll do exactly what you did for Project ZW; cut on top of all of the lines that you've drawn using your X-acto knife. *(If you didn't do the Project ZW guitar, go back to page 39 and read Step 13 to understand exactly what you need to do.)*

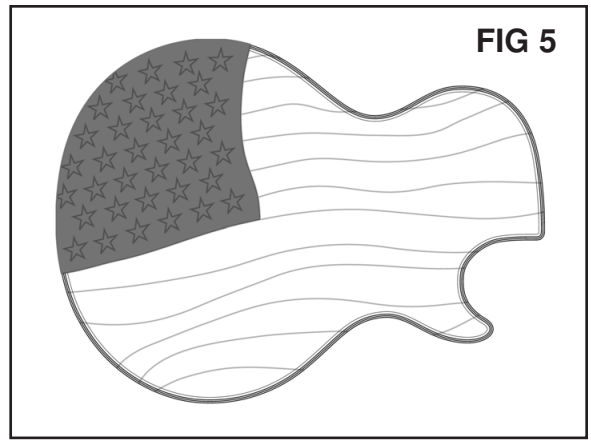


FIG 5

When your lines are all cut, begin by removing the area where you'll be spraying the blue *(FIG 4 previous page)*. When you lift off that masking, try to keep this entire piece together because you'll have to put it back in place after the area has dried. Also, remember that all of the stars have been cut out, so make sure that none of the stars have loosened or have lifted up as you removed the masking. In fact, go over all of the stars and press down on them so that you have a nice, tight bond to the guitar.

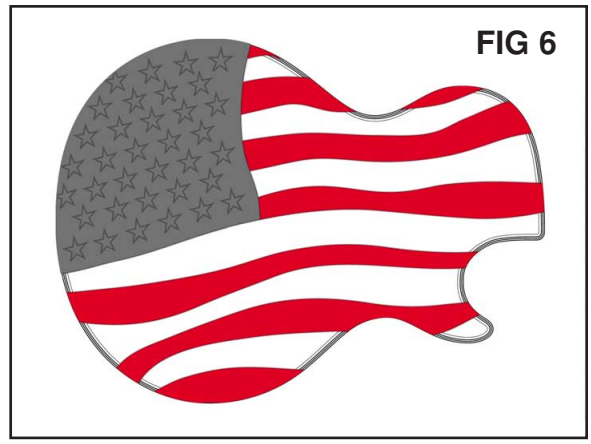


FIG 6

When the blue has been sprayed and has dried, you'll be putting the masking for that area back in place. I know it may seem impossible to get this mask back in the exact place, but here's a trick you're going to use: Concern yourself mainly with lining up the outer areas of the mask, and don't be as concerned if it doesn't line up perfectly with the stars. After the mask is in place, use some masking tape and begin tearing off pieces covering ALL of the stars over top of the freshly-placed mask. Since the stars are already white, you don't need to remove that masking anymore, so reinforcing that area with extra masking will ensure that no red paint can get in there. *(You'll be spraying red next.)* Use this technique of extra masking for any design you come up with.

With your blue area covered again and pieces of masking tape covering all of the stars *(FIG 5)*, move onto removing the stripes that'll be painted red. Once again, after you've removed that masking, press down on the masking that's covering the white stripes so that no red paint can get underneath.

If you decide that you want your entire guitar to be red instead of white *(which I think would look pretty cool)*, simply remove all of the masking from

MASKING AND TRANSFERRING OTHER DESIGNS

the body at this point, except for the stripes that'll remain white, and of course, the masking still on the binding.

With all of the masking removed, spray your entire body red. Again, only spray as much as necessary - 3-5 thin coats would probably do it.

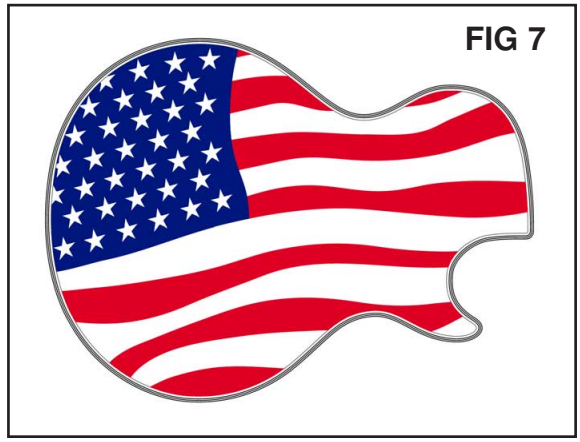


FIG 7

After your red has sufficiently dried, you can remove the masking that's left on the body, including the masking on the binding. Your completed design should look a lot like the image in FIG 7. *(You DO NOT have to paint a U.S. Flag guitar. I'm just using this as an example on how to take a design, transfer it to your guitar, and how to mask and paint it.)*

To finish, you'd touch up any areas you felt needed a bit of a fix, and then you're ready to begin spraying your clear coats.

Although I've used the U.S. Flag as my design, you'd follow the spraying order for almost any design:

1. Spray the lightest color in your design as your base coat.
2. Mask off the entire guitar.
3. Use the graphite paper to transfer your design onto the masked guitar.
4. Cut out all of the lines in your design before spraying your next color.
5. Remove areas that will be sprayed the same color and spray those areas simultaneously. To conserve paint, just spray the areas that need to be painted.
6. Place the masking for those areas back in place when the area has dried and move on to your next color.
7. Simply repeat numbers 5 and 6 until your guitar is complete.

If you can, ALWAYS spray light colors first, rather than dark. Spraying white on top of the red for this design would've led to a tremendous amount of white paint having to be sprayed to get a solid color. It just makes more sense to spray less paint. In the end, you'll also end up with a much crisper paint job.

I've done my fair share of masking and have seen several famous guitars up close. You can expect to get a very accurate job when you spend the time to be precise with your masking. However, even the best guitar paint jobs

MASKING AND TRANSFERRING OTHER DESIGNS

have lines that aren't perfectly crisp or have some bleed. One example was Eddie Van Halen's black and yellow striped guitar from his second album; I saw a second model made for him at the Guitar Center in Hollywood. The paint job was good but not nearly as perfect as I would've expected.

If guitar finishing is something you're very serious about pursuing, let me mention one other product you may want to use to help you do better jobs. It is a special type of masking paper that comes in very large sheets. I'm not sure of the name of the product or where you'd get it, but the beauty of this paper is that it's sticky on the bottom and has a surface that you can draw on on top of it. If you can find this masking paper, I highly recommend you use it. To find out who might sell it, start by calling or visiting some autobody shops. If they don't carry it, they may know where you can buy it.

Of course, the masking tape works well, and this specific masking tape - 3M, doesn't leave a residue, so it's definitely good for the job.

However, the large masking sheets would mean that you could cover the entire guitar with one sheet - no more overlapping. Removing pieces and putting them back in place would also be much easier.

FIG 8

In the previous section, I demonstrated how my cartoons are done - using something called frisket film. If you're spraying polyurethane or lacquer, you wouldn't want to use Frisket; it may dissolve the Frisket. It's best to only use Frisket film with water-based paints.

Having said that, you may be wondering - can a guitar be painted with water-based paint? The answer is "yes." I have painted guitar designs using water-based paint on top of polyurethane, but if you're going to try it, I recommend you experiment with it before doing an actual job. *(Use an old body if you have to.)* The "Yosemite Sam" design in FIG 8 was painted *(airbrushed)* with acrylic water-based paint using Frisket film as the mask. Once the design was complete, we sprayed it with polyurethane clear, and it turned out quite well. If you try this, expect a bit of a learning curve before you get great results.

MY SCRAPBOOK

Here I am in 1983 as a 19-year-old kid on stage playing my first homemade guitar. That was THE WORST paint job in the history of guitar paint jobs!

One of the many guitars I painted for other people. I just wish I had taken pictures of all the designs I did over the years.

My music room back in 1986, filled with just some of the guitars I had at the time. Not only was I painting guitars, I was painting drum skins, too.

By 1988, 5 years later, I was finally producing some decent quality finishes. The design on these guitars is based on my initials - I think I must've painted 25 guitars with that JAG design.

At the 1988 NAMM Show, Steve Lynch, guitarist from the band Autograph, said to me, "COOL AXE, MAN! CAN I HAVE ONE?"

MY SCRAPBOOK

A little piece of art I created back in 1987 of the top rock guitarists of that time. I put myself (and my band's singer) in the top left corner to see how many people I could leave guessing.

Meeting "The MAN," Steve Morse, at the 1988 NAMM Show.

Of all the guitars I painted for myself, this one had the most flawless finish, by far.

My MUSCLEHEDZ® Calendar cover for 2004.