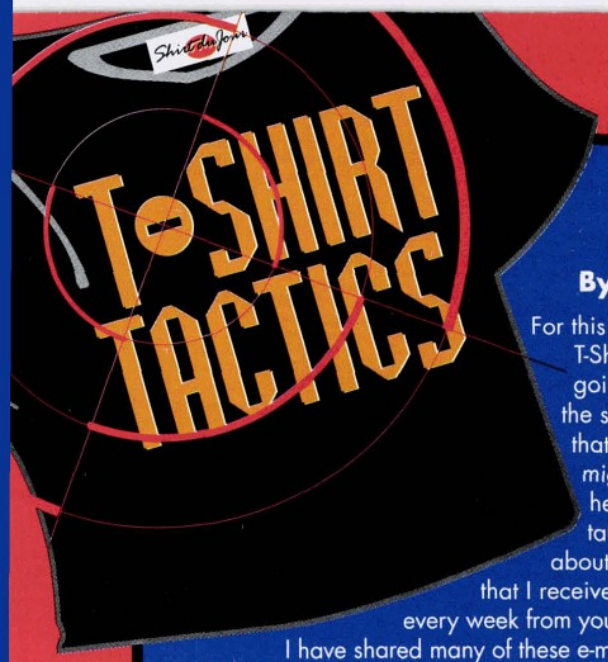


My Freaky Valentine

By Kent Lind

For this installment of T-Shirt Tactics, I'm going straight to the source of ideas that you guys might want to hear about. I'm talking of course about all the e-mails that I receive each and every week from you, the readers.

I have shared many of these e-mails in my "Question of the Day" section, but many of them aren't questions about specific technique at all. I get lots of questions about where to find that elusive lettering style. Some readers just really want to know where I come up with such weird stuff. So for this column I'm going to incorporate some cool lettering as well as some classic lettering styles, mixed with lots of crazy subject matter. Hopefully this will appease all of you out there, including those who want the super-relevant lettering stuff and those who just want to be dazzled by the "weirdness" of it all.

Of course, for many of you the hard part is coming up with the weirdness, not necessarily the lettering. Don't be fooled. Anyone can be weird, but it takes a real T-shirt freak to pull off the kick-butt lettering. So don't neglect one without mastering the other. When I say weird, I don't automatically mean something that nobody else would understand. In my book, weird (in terms of T-shirts) means anything that doesn't fall into the typical airbrush concessionaire framework (hearts, name designs, teddy bears, etc.). But at the same time, it's something that you can still market to a broad range of people while maintaining your "coolness." Don't you love how that works?

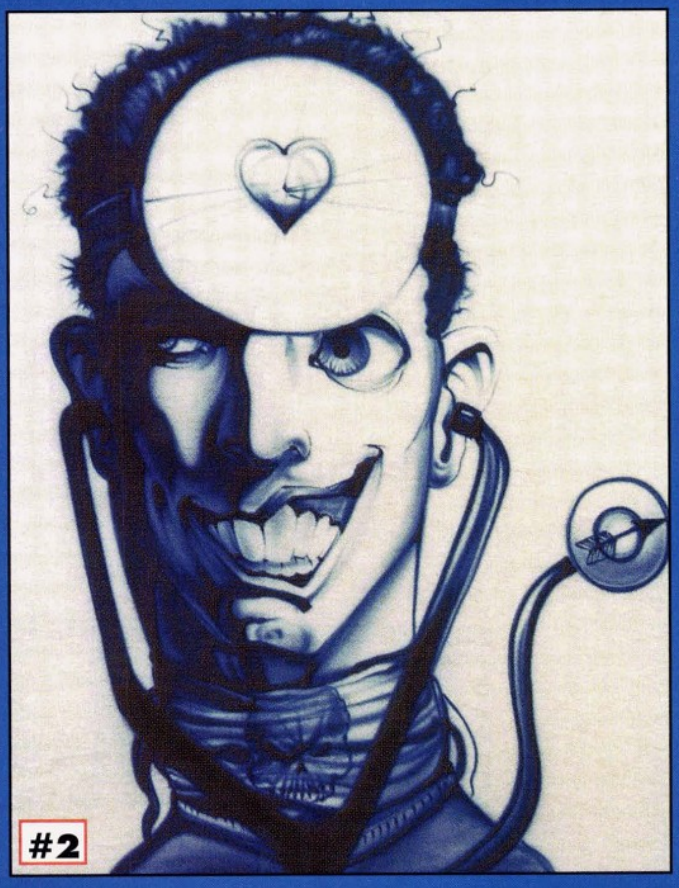
To begin, I'm just going to start to paint and see what happens. Have you ever done that? If you haven't, you should. You'd be surprised at what might pop out of your head. So with nothing in mind and no particular idea, let's head to the shirt board. First, let me start by saying that even if you're not the imaginative type, creativity is something that you can work at. Take this exercise for example. It's great for unleashing that creative bent crammed way back in your noggin right behind your grocery list and to the left of your meeting with the accountant. So whenever someone says to me, "It must be nice to be so creative," I simply smile, nod, and know how many long hours I've spent developing this "God given" gift. So like all your basic skills, practice, practice, practice! Now, where were we? Oh yeah...let's start painting.

The first thing to decide on is your palette. This might be the only time that you have to think during this entire process. I'm going with a blue palette because that's the kind of mood I'm in now. No, not sad, just blue. I happen to like the color blue quite a bit. So nobody call a counselor for me! I think I'll start in the center of the shirt and work to the outer edges. This is generally a good idea when you don't know what the hell you're going to do next. Alrighty, time to take the dive.

You can't really just jump into painting without having at least some direction. Here's my idea: This is the January-February issue, so a natural choice for me would be some type of Valentines theme. Now you all know that I'm not the typical heart kind of guy, so I need to put a new twist on things. I tried to think of images that would lend themselves to a variety of approaches. Of course, my first idea seems exactly suited for the job. I'm talking about the "Love Doctor." The great thing is how easily it fits into our blue color palette. The first color I think of when I think "doctor" is blue. Maybe it has something to do with the scrubs or perhaps the nice bluish light given off in all hospital hallways. Whatever the reason, blue seems perfectly suited for our theme. Those of you who know my style already know that this doctor isn't going to be all friendly. In fact, deviant is a better description. So armed with all this pertinent information, let's really start painting...and this time I mean it!

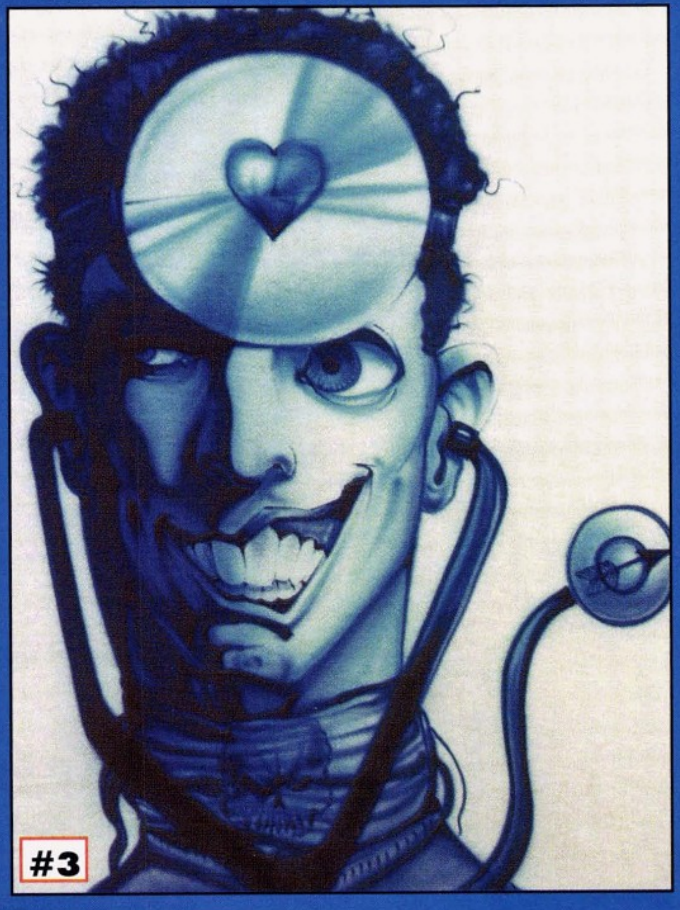


Step 1 I like to start in the middle and work my way out. I also like to start with the most interesting part of my figure—the face. At this point I'm trying to imagine what this particular Doctor is thinking as he nears Valentines Day. My guess is he's trying to come up with new and unique ways to mess with the opposite sex. That's his thing. That's what he does. I usually come up with these little stories in my brain to help me keep the feel of the design consistent. Like I said at the beginning, I'm going to keep this whole piece in the blue family so I've started off with deep blue to lay down some form and get it solid right away.



Step 2
Here's another shot of this initial character development. Notice some of the detail in the character. The heart, the arrow on his stethoscope, and the skull on his mask are all the things that give our character life and separate us from the boring, middle-of-the-road T-shirt artist.





Step 3
At this point, I move on to a different color—phthalo blue. I'm using this blue to further enhance my depth in the Doctor and to give him a more vibrant look. It really acts as a complement to the initial blue without overpowering it.

Step 4
Now I move onto the Caribbean blue using the same process as in the previous step. Again, notice how much more vibrant this additional color makes it look.

#5



Step 5
Now we need to start concentrating on the background. Let's see, what can we do? I know! Let's add one of the Doctor's "love victims" complete with that confused look of "what did I do to deserve this?" Of course, she's still hopelessly in love with our Doctor and he knows it! (Note the cocky look on his face.) I told you this wasn't your typical Valentines shirt!

Step 6
With both of our primary figures complete, let's take a look at the lettering. The most important thing to consider is what type of lettering to use to further enhance the feeling that I'm going for here. This is the tough part. I'm going to throw up a few samples and you can check them out to see which one you would choose.

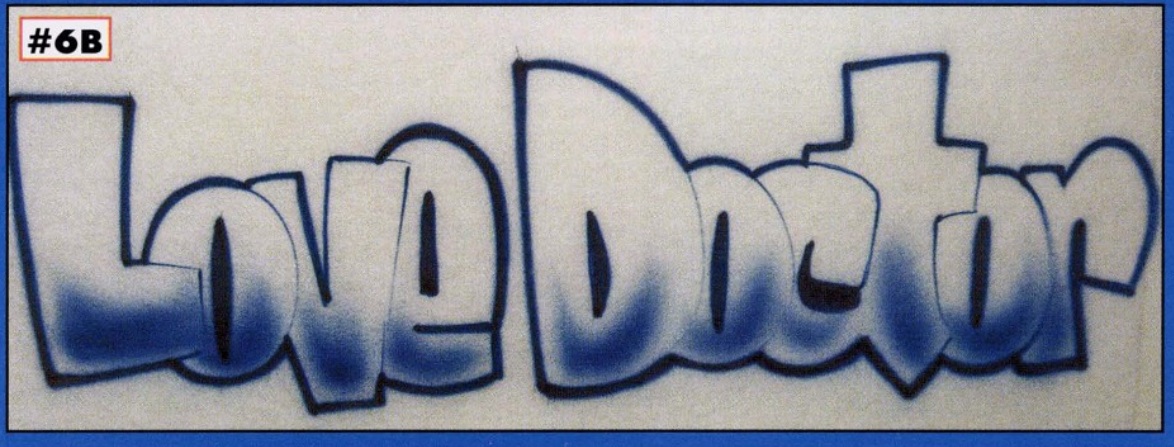
Step 6A
This first one is the most obvious. Of course, I'm referring to script lettering. It just seems to go with every situation but isn't always the best choice.

Step 6B
The next style is a block or fat style. This look takes a little bit more work, but if done correctly, it enhances a design tremendously.

#6A



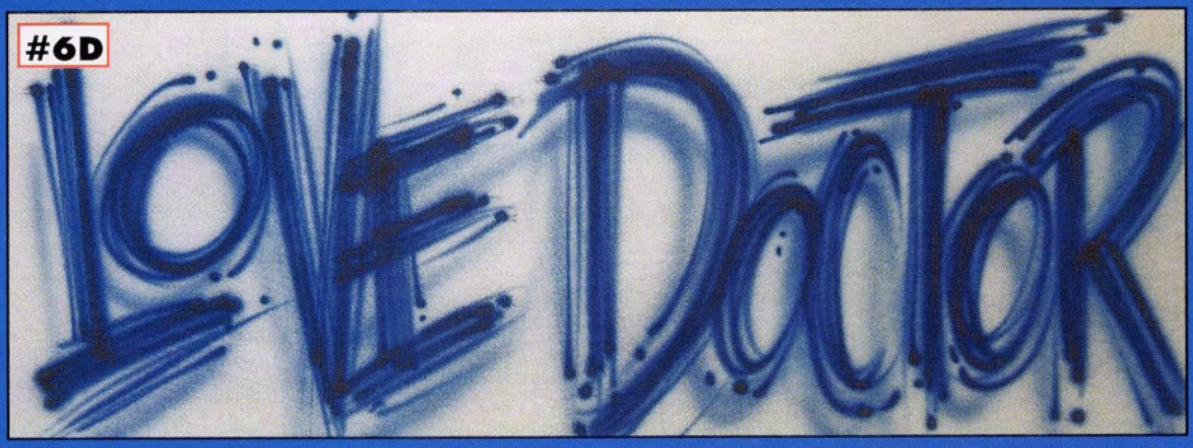
#6B



#6C



#6D



Step 6C
Print style is our next choice. It does very well with a cartoon look, but sometimes it can be too "cartoony" for its own good.

Step 6D
The last style is the slash style, the least effective for this type of design. The look we want should be softer and more fluid.

Step 7
I decide to use a combination of the script and block lettering. First I write out the entire phrase using my Caribbean blue. Then I outline it in black and start to give it some depth with the phthalo blue and the deep blue. Remember not to kill it with the black and the deep blue. Keep it vibrant and light. The last step is to highlight it with the opaque white. And there you have it. The Love Doctor is in!

This design was an exercise in creativity and composition. Exercises like this are great to just let loose, relax, and enjoy the process, which is probably the most important part of any kind of work we do. Remember that!





Shirt du Jour

These most recent pieces come to us from Bruce Young out of Highland Lakes, New Jersey. Bruce is an Airbrush Getaway alumnus from three years ago. Nice to hear from you again, Bruce! Let's get to the shirts.

Bruce sent me some samples containing wildlife pieces that he's done since the workshop. Overall, I was very impressed with his work. I remember working with Bruce at the Getaway, and he's come a long way since then. Not that he stunk before, but his improvement is quite evident. I chose two similar pieces just to show his consistency. Sometimes people will send in work with one outstanding piece and the rest don't even come close. I'm happy to report that all of Bruce's shirts are up to snuff!

First the good stuff. I have to give Bruce a hand in painting both of these babies on black shirts. I don't know what it is with you people, but you seem to like punishing yourselves by painting on black. Bruce pulls it off very well, though. I was particularly pleased with his lion. Bruce really captures the feeling of "fur" here. It's not your typical polished-looking animal; the textures are all very convincing. The color use is excellent—he uses muted tones to create perfect oranges and yellows. I think that painting on a black shirt also had something to do with this. The colors naturally come out looking a bit muted on black, so it worked out perfectly. The tiger, however, comes across a bit less natural-looking, although still very effective. Whereas Bruce used nice muted tones to create that authentic look in the lion, the tiger's colors seem a little labored. I do, however, like the differences in the two as far as color use. They are set apart nicely.

Overall, these shirts are done very well! I'm always excited to see former students' work. It's nice to know that someone was paying attention! Nice job!

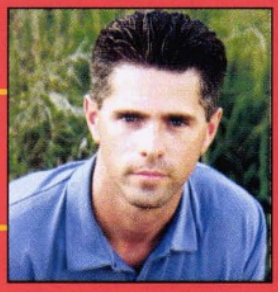
Question of the Day

Our question comes to us from Robert O'Daniel, who writes: "Kent, I just bought a brand new Hix heat press (HT 600). I've never used one before. When I get ready to heat-press a shirt, should I leave the shirt on the board it was airbrushed on or should I remove the board? What if I airbrush both sides of a shirt? Won't the paint seep through if I remove the board? Thanks again."

Well, Robert, any type of new equipment can be a bit daunting at first, especially if you've never used it before. First off, let me start by saying that the best way to set a shirt is to heat-press it. So you made a good decision on getting a heat press. Typically the press should be set at about 375 degrees and should be timed out for approximately 30 seconds. That should do the job. To answer your question, I know that many artists out there just leave their shirt right on the board and set it. Just make sure that the tension on the heat press (how hard the press sits against the bottom surface) is adjusted to accommodate the extra space of the shirt board. Personally, I've always used a sheet of thin Teflon to put in between my shirt to allow for the best heat seal. This also alleviates the problems in the second part of your question. With the Teflon in the middle, you won't have to worry about your paints bleeding through to the other side. Of course, this is true if you have a shirt board in the middle as well. You see, I like to get my shirt off the board and onto the press to dry a bit so I can go right to the next shirt while the first one is drying. Again, you could always cut yourself another board to fix this problem, but I've never been that organized!

So, you see there are many ways to solve the same problem. It just depends on what your personal preference might be. Thanks for the question, Robert, and I hope to hear from you soon!

ABOUT THE ARTIST



Kent currently owns and operates concessions at several amusement parks. His airbrush of choice is the Iwata Eclipse, and he uses Createx paint. He lives in Minnesota with his wife, Lisa (the Supreme Ruler of the Universe), their cutie-pie daughter, Sophie, and their newest addition, Cooper.

YOU'RE INVITED!

If you'd like to participate in Kent's "Shirt du Jour," send your slides to:

Kent Lind
15016 Valleyview Place
Savage, MN 55378

Or, if you'd like an answer to a T-shirt airbrushing related question, send an email to: kentlind@msn.com.
If Kent uses your artwork or question in one of his columns, he'll send you a free *Air 2B Difrent* T-shirt!