



REAL WORLD VINYL

By Rob Ivers

On a Roll

When, why and how to use roll striping

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Fashion seems to go in cycles. For example, wide ties were fashionable, fell out of style, and then came back. The same cycles apply to single- and double-breasted suits, men's hair length and women's skirts.

What about "graphics" fashion? Seventeen years ago, one- or two-color graphics and lettering were the norm. When full-color digital printing became widely available, the improved technology stood out. Today, digital printing has become commonplace, and advertising is inundated with photographic images.

In a soft economy, clients seek affordable ways to deliver their messages. To satisfy their budgetary concerns and help get them noticed, get back to basics. Simple, solid-color graphics are due for a comeback. Wouldn't it be nice, at least for some jobs, to put aside elaborate,

time-consuming designs, and forget about color matching, solvent migration and curing issues?

How I learned striping

In 1978, I started my business as R & B Stripes. The R & B were Rob and Beth, my wife. Stripes were our specialty; we applied narrow, decorative pinstriping to cars on rolls. Back then, we considered a 2-in. stripe wide. I remember when the introduction of 6- and 24-in. roll striping signified a major development. The 60-in.-wide material (and bigger) that's available today would've been unimaginable.

Vinyl cutters hadn't been invented, so we hand-cut lettering, logos and graphics. Roll striping was a life saver. Imagine having to hand cut and premask 6-in.-tall stripes for 40-ft.-long trailers!

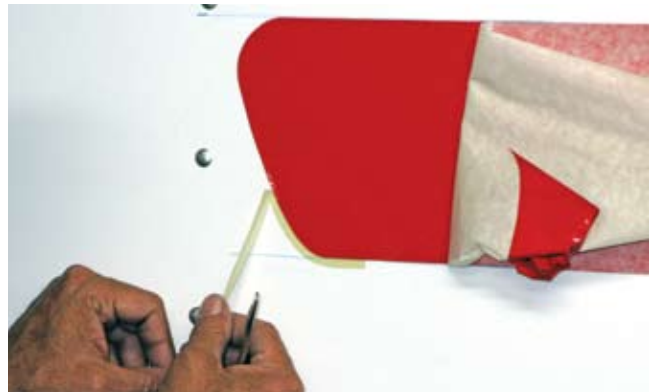
When vinyl cutters were introduced, we quickly learned that buying roll striping still offered a more cost-effective solution. We purchased premasked, ready-to-apply, roll material in many standard sizes and colors. For special sizes and small quantities, we used a vinyl cutter. It was labor-intensive, and having to trim material to size after premasking created a disadvantage. To make the stripe easy to line up and install, we'd trim exactly on the edges, which was very difficult. Many suppliers offer roll striping. To increase your profits, and offer savings to your customers, consider integrating roll striping into some of your projects.

When to use roll striping

I recommend roll striping for larger jobs that require long runs of even-



As a 30-plus-year, vinyl-graphics veteran, I remember when a 2-in.-wide stripe was considered large. Despite the introduction of vinyl cutters, I still found buying premasked, vinyl striping provided a more cost-effective solution for most graphic applications. Here, I cut vinyl for an installation on a flat, riveted surface.



To ensure accurate installations, I use Fine Line tape to help mark and install the edges.



For very narrow stripes, tack the film in place with your thumb. And, of course, remove the clear premask first. Otherwise, it will cause the film to crack.



The finished application. For customers who can't afford a vehicle wrap, or who need a cost-effective solution, roll striping provides an effective alternative.

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width, solid colors. Many suppliers convert special orders for non-standard colors and widths; it never hurts to ask. For example, I just asked Gregory for a quote on 44-in. x 150-ft., premasked rolls of cast vinyl, which I use in my PDAA Training and acrylic-application test. Its stock, 48-in.-wide, vinyl rolls cost \$388, with an extra \$90 for premask. Their price to premask the roll and slit it to 44-in. was \$560, a difference of \$82.

My other option? Buy the material and premask it using a laminator, which takes about an hour. And, because it's impossible to keep the premask perfectly aligned with the edges over a 150-ft.-long roll, I would've had to trim 2 in. off both edges, a total of 300 ft. of hand trimming with an 8-ft. straight edge. I think the extra \$82 was a bargain!

Roll products provide other advantages over plotter-cut stripes. You're able to apply long runs without a splice. Also, it's much

faster to apply one, 40-ft.-long stripe and keep it straight than piecing together five, 8-ft.-long sections.

Windows and walls offer prime striping surfaces. With one or two colors and well-placed text, your customers can turn empty space into an eye-catching advertisement. Virtually every business has some unused space that can be decorated to make an inexpensive graphic impact. For clients who can't afford to wrap their vehicles, roll striping provides a cost-effective means for an effective marketing message.

Tips and tricks

Narrower rolls generally include clear premask instead of the paper premask standard with wider rolls. Make absolutely sure you remove the clear mask! If left on, the clear mask will crack and cause the vinyl to split into hundreds, if not thousands, of little pieces.

To apply straight striping, keep

the vinyl smooth and taut, and do the longest runs possible. Each tack point potentially creates a slight directional change. Keep tack points as far apart as possible without the roll sagging. This will vary based on the stripe's width and the temperature. In warmer conditions, the vinyl tends to be softer and more prone to sagging, as do narrower material. In these situations, you'll need more tack points.

At approximately 4-ft. intervals, make small marks for your tack points. On trailers, I mark and tack at every seam by running my finger up and down where the two panels meet. Remove a few inches of liner at your starting point; leave the remaining liner on. Line up the stripe's edge with your first and second marks, and tack the exposed area on your first mark. Keep the edge on your second mark as you carefully remove the liner past that point, and tack the vinyl on your mark.

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For wider stripes, place one hand exactly above and in line with the other hand when you hold the vinyl. This keeps it taut so you don't bow the stripe. Unroll enough vinyl to reach your next mark, and repeat the process.

If the vinyl tends to aggressively adhere to the surface, due to higher temperatures or a high-energy surface, use two installers. One person can begin to squeegee while the other continues to unwind the vinyl and tack it into place. On cooler days, or when applying to sheet-rock walls and other, low-energy surfaces, one person can generally do it alone. Just tack the striping up first, and then apply the graphic.

When I'm working on a scaffold, installing very long runs, I tack what I can reach, then unroll enough slack to set the roll on my scaffold while I squeegee that section. I stay on the scaffold, hold the roll and let it unfurl, while someone moves the scaffold for the next section.

Smaller widths (1 in. wide or less) with clear mask allow you to curve and bend stripes. It takes some practice, but isn't very difficult. For straight lines, peel and tack as before, but apply the pressure with your thumb or finger instead of a squeegee. For curves, hold the roll in one hand to keep the unapplied vinyl close to the surface but not touching (hold it at approximately a 15° angle). Apply the vinyl with the thumb of your opposite hand. Create smooth curves by leading with the hand holding the roll, and pressing with the other in one smooth motion.

With double-line pinstripes, create special tips by trimming one stripe only at the endpoint (cutting through the clear mask and the vinyl, but not the paint) and then lifting the other stripe away with the liner. For simple tapers, pull it back far enough to make a smooth taper, and angle it slightly to join the other. Trim to match, and don't

forget to remove all the clear liner. Then, reapply pressure to the entire stripe using your thumb or finger (the equivalent of re-squeegeeing).

Enhance designs by removing sections rather than adding more pieces or colors. Less is sometimes more. To prevent surface damage, I use Fine Line tape underneath, where cuts will be made. It sticks well to the surface, but vinyl doesn't stick to it. After you trim the vinyl, simply pull the tape out from under the vinyl and reapply the loose edge. Fine Line is available in various widths, which makes it quite versatile. Sometimes, for critical cuts, I apply my first line, the one that I'll be cutting on to protect the surface. Then, I apply a second that's half as wide and lined up with one edge of the first piece. I use this to guide my knife for a precise cut. ■

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