

tattoo artist: making your own stencil

This past weekend, I took B.O.B. to his first punk show. We went and saw singer Mike Benker's last show with the Conformists. Mike and the band are old friends-- he's sang for the Conformists for 15 years, and we played our first show together maybe eight years back.



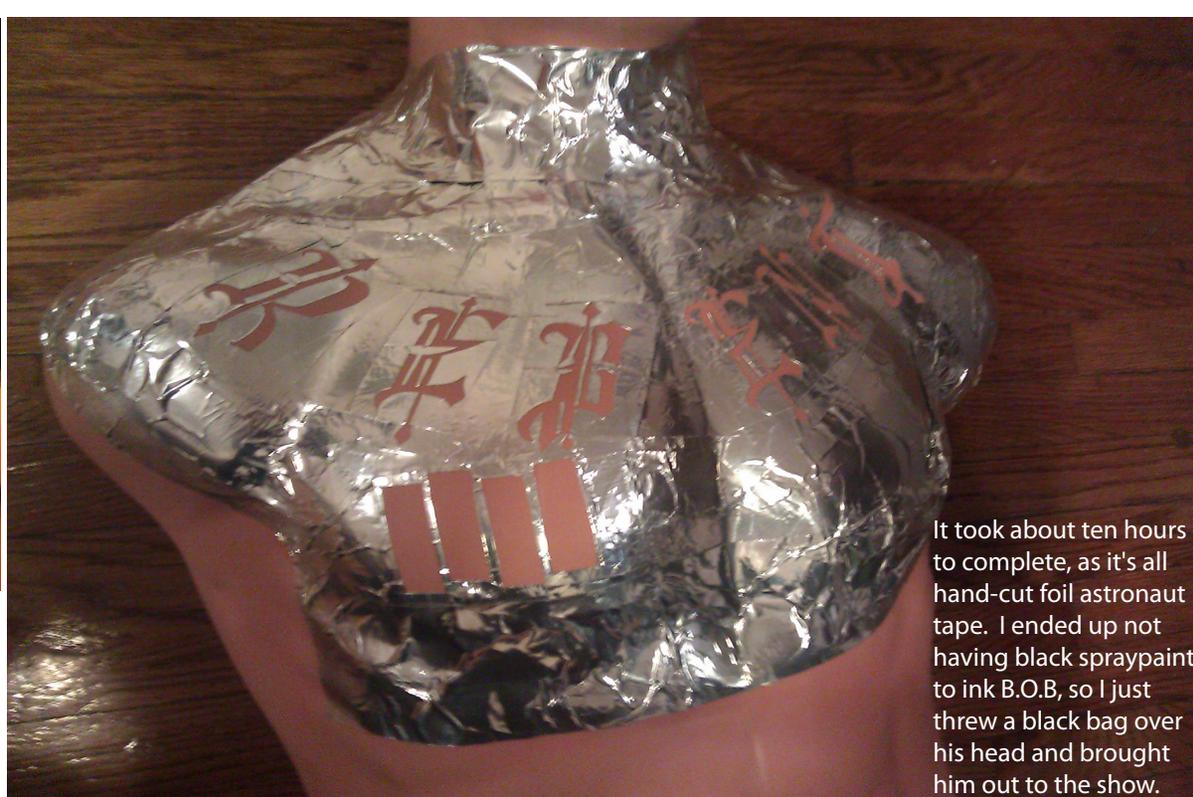
I've had B.O.B. for maybe six months. I knew I was going to tattoo him as a base design, and go from there. Up until the night before the show, I had thought I'd use Henry Rollins' tattoos, as they are recognizable and symbolic of punk, specifically his old band, Black Flag.

Black Flag was arguably the most important punk band of the American underground music scene. They helped build the word-of-mouth and diy infrastructure through relentless touring that makes up the spine of truly independent music today. Plus, Rollins has several tattoos of the Black Flag logo, which is simple, elegant and timeless in its design. It's fun to draw, and would make a simple, yet effective stencil.



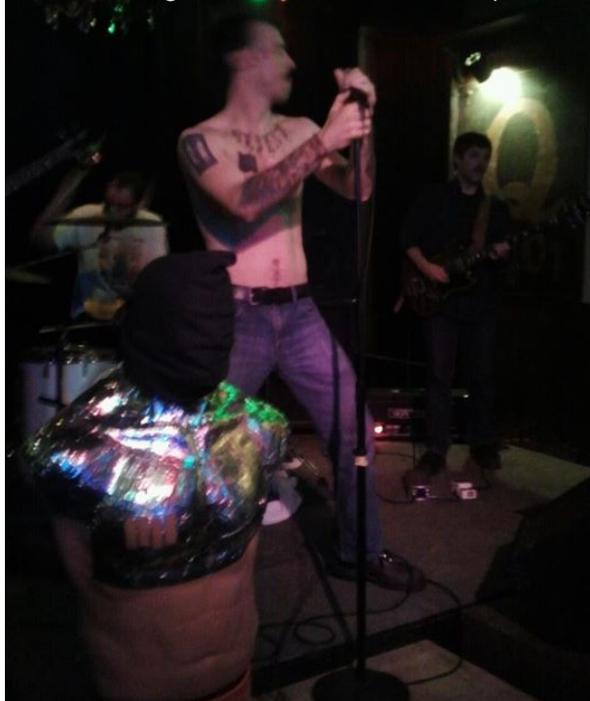
Mike's last show made me think his tattoos would be better for B.O.B.. I thought it'd be a fitting tribute to go with a friend's tattoos for his last show, as it'd be more meaningful than some cultural in-joke.

Besides, tattoos are For Life, and if I was going to tattoo B.O.B., I was going to take it seriously. To boot, Benker has the Black Flag bars on his right pectoral, so I was still going to get to do the logo.



It took about ten hours to complete, as it's all hand-cut foil astronaut tape. I ended up not having black spraypaint to ink B.O.B, so I just threw a black bag over his head and brought him out to the show.

The show itself was transcendental. The Conformists played a set that spanned their last decade and-a-half of confounding music. The audience was captivated.



To quote a friend:

"I've never seen anything like this last show, and I'm still not sure how to react or understand it, which basically means that it was a great Conformists show. It ended with something like an unscripted masque-like ritual sacrifice. It was beautiful and disturbing, and one of the most important performances I've ever seen."

B.O.B. was a hit with the band and the crowd, and the crowd and the band hit B.O.B. The tape stencil held up remarkably to B.O.B. being kicked, body-slammed, punched, and in one instance, given a vertical suplex.

I even sustained a minor head injury, which only goes to show that martial arts are dangerous, you shouldn't try this at home and that the Conformists are an inspiring band.

