

# MAKING GRAPHICS ON A MAC

By Dave Mitchell

The adoption of computer technology has given us laser-cut parts and an amazingly vibrant cottage industry of kits and accessories, as well as a convenient means by which to tackle difficult color schemes via ink-jet and laser-jet printing on tissue. Perhaps the easiest way to ease into computer graphics is through your word processing program, which provides you with a wide range of scalable type fonts. You can print these out on paper at the required size to use as a pattern for masking, or as a template for cutting out tissue markings, or you can print custom designs directly onto tissue or decal paper.

Once you have the basic technique down, a little experimentation can produce outstanding results; unfortunately, different programs may require different approaches to getting those results. I'll try here to give an outline of how one might go about creating registration marks on an Apple computer, using their word processing program, Pages.

You can do pretty much anything you want in the Apple word processing program, Pages, so open it up and let's get started. The first thing we want to do is choose a font. At the top right of the screen, look for a large letter A with the word "fonts" under it. Click on this, and the Fonts dialog box opens. At the bottom left of this box, you'll see a little graphic that looks like a gear with a small arrow pointing down. Click on this, and then click on "manage fonts" at the bottom of the drop-down box—you have just opened the Font Book.

The Font Book has three columns. In the left column (collection), click on "all fonts" to highlight it. The middle column (font) will show a list of all the fonts you have loaded on your computer; the right column will show the full alphabet and numbers 0-9 in the font currently highlighted. You'll find there are some fonts that are more useful than others, and you should know that there are other fonts available for download on the internet, but for now let's assume this is what you have to work with.

So, you find the font that works for your project; what next? Write down the name so you don't forget it, and close the Font Book window. In the Fonts dialog box, find the font you selected in the "family" column, and click on it. This will set that font as the default type for your new document. Type in your desired registration numbers—let's say NC4321, in capital letters—it should type out in the font you selected.

Now we're going to look at the various formatting tools arrayed across the top of the Pages application. You'll see a ruler across the top of the page; just above that you will see a number of small dialog boxes. Don't see anything? At the very very top of your screen, click on View and click on "show format bar". There, that's better.

We'll explore these tools going from left to right, starting with the third box from the left. This should show the name of the font you selected earlier—this is the font selector box. Clicking on this will open up a list of all the available fonts so that you can try another if you wish.

You may well ask, "Why did you have me go through all that rigamarole with the Font Book thingy if I could just select the font in this box?" Ah, because you can only see the full alphabetic and numeric range in the Font Book. When you are searching for the perfect font, you will be so glad I made you do that. You will be a pro. Okay, back to work.

Next to the Font selector box will be a box that allows you to select from a variety of standard font modifications, such as "bold", "light", "oblique", etc. Experiment with these a bit—"bold" can be very useful in particular. Next up, you'll see a window with a number in it and a downward arrow to its right—this is the font size selector. Click on the arrow, and you'll see standard choices, typically starting at 8 or 9 and going up to 44 or 288.

But wait! You are *not* necessarily limited to these sizes! Double click on the box with the number in it and you can delete the number that's there and type in whatever size you want, including half-sizes. Ah! Now *we're* getting somewhere! With any luck, at some point after exploring these options you have gotten close to the font style and size you need.

Let's go a bit further. Continuing to the right, there is a black rectangle—well, it's whatever color your typed letters are currently. This is the font color selector. Clicking on this brings up a palette of different colors. You want red lettering? Click on one of the red boxes and your type will be red. If they don't have just the color you want, note at the bottom of this palette window it says "show colors". Click on this, and try experimenting with the several different options here. The round "color wheel" is quite useful—move the slider on the right up and down to adjust the lightness (tint) or darkness (shade) of any color. Tap in the wheel itself to select different hues.

Spend some time here and get acquainted with how to "mix" different colors to your liking, because the next toolbox item

(moving to the right again) uses the same palette tools, and can be very handy. This box shows an "a" with a line across it. This is the background color selector. Click on it, and you will again see the color palette, only this time you are using it to control the background color of your type.

So, let's imagine you want yellow letters on a red background. You go to the font color selector and click on yellow. You go to the background color selector and click on red. Voila! So now, when you have a model with a red rudder and complicated fancy lettering in yellow, you know one thing you can try: print a custom decal on white tissue using the method we just described, having taken a bit of time to figure out which background red best matches the red tissue in which you covered the rudder.

I have one more neat trick to show you. Highlight the text on your page—you can do this by pressing and holding "command" and "a" on your keyboard. Now right click with your mouse—you're looking to bring up a dialog box that has, among other options (cut, copy, paste, spelling, proofreading, etc.), an option called "font", with an arrow pointing to the right. Select this and a secondary window will open with options to "show font", "bold", "italic", "underline", and ... wait for it ... outline.

For some reason, whereas all these other options are available in the toolbar at the top (just to the right of the background color selector), outline is only available here. This nifty tool allows you to create an outlined font. *Joy!* Now you can create things like yellow registration numbers outlined in black. In this case, the font color controls the outline color; the background color controls the fill color within the outline. This is all very handy for printing on tissue, where you plan to cut out the numbers/letters individually and attach them like decals to your model.

One thing you can't do in Pages (or, at least I haven't figured out how to yet) is to create a fill color that is different than the background color—so, for instance, black outlined letters with a yellow fill against a red background. Nor can you control the width of the outline.