

# What's it cost to produce this HDU hanging sign?

*A little hand work adds a weathered look*

By John Ralph

## Materials:

18-lb. HDU board.....	\$75
Paint and supplies .....	\$25
Total materials.....	\$100

## Labor:

Design and prep file ...	60 minutes
CNC routing.....	30 minutes
Carve and texture.....	90 minutes
Finishing .....	90 minutes
Paint graphics .....	30 minutes
Total time .....	5 hours

The wood-graining technique you see here is a quick and easy way to add extra dimension to signs on high-density urethane board. We used it on the private residence sign shown in these photos, but it's a technique that lends itself to all sorts of applications.

While 15-lb. HDU may be a little easier to work with because it's softer, we never use anything less than 18-lb. material on our signs. It means you've got to put a little more arm strength in it when you're carving, but the 15-lb. material just dents too easily to suit me. We've also done signs like this using Extrira [[www.extrira.com](http://www.extrira.com)] and other substrates.

Most of the texture on this sign comes from dragging and tapping with a wire brush. It ruins wire brushes quickly, but it creates a lot of really cool pores and a lot of depth.

For this project, we used our CNC router to carve the border and main copy. Then we created the weathered texture and applied the glaze. After that, we painted the lettering and artwork through a computer-cut mask.

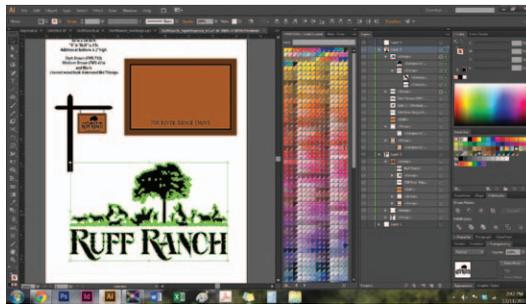
When the goal is for it to look old and weathered, is that there isn't a lot of sanding and priming involved. The sign has an aged look, but it's made not to age. We're not aiming for perfection, so that saves time. I think it only got one coat of acrylic primer before we sprayed it with Matthews paint [[www.matthewspaint.com](http://www.matthewspaint.com)] for the base coat. I

The nice thing about Matthews paint is that once it's cured, you can paint on it and apply glazes using lettering enamel. If you don't like what you're getting, just wipe it off and start over.

We also like the fact that Matthews paint out of the can is a satin, and 1-Shot out of the can is a gloss. Mixing those gloss levels together is really kind of fun. **SC**



John Ralph's shop, Quail Run Signs, is in Hamilton, Virginia.



**1. Design and prep file: 60 minutes.** We put the design together in Adobe Illustrator CS6, got the final approval then were ready to start production. I routed the face on our Gerber Sabre CNC router, the Chris McMinn handled the rest of the project.



**2. CNC cut border and primary copy, both sides: 30 minutes.** Here you can see the chisel, rotary die grinder and wire brush we used for add the weathered wood grain effect.



**3. Begin carving and adding texture: 30 minutes.** Using the chisel, Chris carved in some of the deeper grain lines, especially along the corners and edges.



**4. Wire brushing for added depth: 60 minutes** The wire brush provides most of texture on this sign. Tapping the brush on the HDU board creates a lot of cool pores to hold the glaze.



**5. Prime, paint and glaze: 90 minutes.**

Applying the primer and base coat of Matthews Paint took about 45 minutes. For the glaze, we mix dark browns and black paint with 1-Shot clear, along with some 4007 hardener. We apply it to the textured portions with a rag, then wipe it back off. That keeps it darkest down in the deeper parts of the carving.



**6. Apply the computer-cut mask and black paint: 30 minutes.** The fastest way to do all that lettering and the logo is with a big stencil. Chris cut the stencil .003 larger than the actual carved letter; the extra .003 gives us enough slop so that if we're off a small amount, it doesn't matter.