

Wraps

the West Coast Customs' Way

BY JEF WHITE



From high-profile client vehicles to its own in-house wall and floor graphics, one of the world's favorite customizers is now all wrapped up.

If there's a question whether vehicle wraps have attained the *cool* factor necessary to appeal to today's generation of drivers, look no further than one of the world's favorite customizers.

West Coast Customs—the shop behind the popular TV series *Pimp My Ride* and the new Discovery Channel Network production *Street Customs* coming this fall—devoted an entire building in its new, 25,000-square-foot Corona, Calif., facility to producing vehicle wraps, and has created a new business unit, WCC Vinyl, to meet the growing demand.

“It's turned into a pretty cool business for us, separate from the custom cars we do and all the crazy paint jobs,” says Ryan Friedlinghaus, WCC owner. “We have a separate office, and an area on our Web site [www.westcoastcustoms.com], just for the vinyl. It's almost like another business for me.”

THE POWER OF WRAPS

West Coast Customs was introduced to the power of wraps in 2005, when it blanketed a 68-foot Renegade Toterhome and fifth wheel trailer with the company's stylized graphics for a road tour promoting *L.A. Rush*, a videogame featuring the WCC crew.

The response was so overwhelmingly positive that Friedlinghaus decided to bring wrap design and production in-house soon after.



The company's manufacturer support includes media from Oracal USA and a ValueJet 1604 from Mutoh America.

The company now has two full-time employees dedicated to designing, producing and installing wraps for WCC's custom car and corporate clients. Manufacturing partners Mutoh America and Oracal USA offer products and support.

A dedicated area away from the shop's vehicle customizing bays allows the WCC wrap team to create designs for high-profile clients, from Rockstar Energy Drink to top motocross racers.

"The media, all the printers, everything is in its own contained area. The die-cutters and everything are all in there, so right now it's working perfectly," Friedlinghaus notes. "And then we do installation in a separate bay."

Adequate lighting and a clean environment help the wrap installs go quickly and smoothly. But nothing, Friedlinghaus says, is more important than talented, dedicated installers when it comes to doing wraps right.

"I think the biggest challenge of the whole installation is finding guys who really care about their jobs and do a good job with it," he notes. "It's a tough job, it's got to be perfect and it's tedious. So you have to get people who really care about what they do."

At WCC, the installers are also the designers, so they need to possess a creative streak as well.

"Our biggest thing is that we're always, always looking for new art. We like to be on the top of our game," Friedlinghaus says. "Usually, the client will come in with an idea of what he wants, and then we'll take it and put the West Coast touch on it, and they are always happy with the result."

REACHING CORPORATE CLIENTS

Known for customizing vehicles for celebrities, wraps have opened up WCC

CONTINUED



Owner Ryan Friedlinghaus recognized the attraction of vehicle wraps in 2005, after the company blanketed a 68-foot Renegade Toterhome and fifth wheel trailer with its own brand of stylized graphics for a road tour promoting L.A. Rush, a videogame featuring the WCC crew.





Wraps have helped WCC reach out to a new customer base—corporate clients looking to promote their brand with a rolling billboard.

to a whole new customer base: business clients.

“I love working with the corporate guys,” Friedlinghaus says. “The cool thing is, now that we’re working with all these corporate people—adding their logos and their style into these cars—the wraps are great because painting takes so long and is so labor-intensive. With the printer, you just design it on the computer and print it and we’re ready to roll.”

Although still a huge fan of custom paint, Friedlinghaus notes that as technology improves, the decision on whether to add paint or vinyl can be difficult at times.

“I think the vinyl actually looks better than paint sometimes, especially when it comes to the detail of a graphic on a hood or something like that,” he says. “Now you can do vinyl that looks almost like paint.”

In late July, WCC was busy customizing vehicles for rapper Snoop Dogg, basketball giant Shaquille O’Neal and *CSI* star Gary Dourdan, among others. But with vehicle wraps, everyday people also have the chance to add a West Coast touch to their personal ride.

CONTINUED



Friedlinghaus says each wrap conveys a little touch of the unique West Coast style.



Best known for customizing vehicles for celebrities and its stint on MTV's "Pimp My Ride," West Coast Customs is now making a new name for itself with the addition of vehicle wraps.



"We're into these wraps pretty big, and we will take any customers," Friedlinghaus says. "It's really more of a scheduling thing and how much time we have. But we don't try to be that shop that's so big and popular that we can't work with the *little guys*. Definitely, we love to do everybody's stuff—money is money."

Apart from vehicles, Friedlinghaus has been using wraps for another important mission. With West Coast Customs locations now in Dubai, Moscow, Malaysia and coming soon to Germany, the printed panels are used to maintain a worldwide corporate identity.

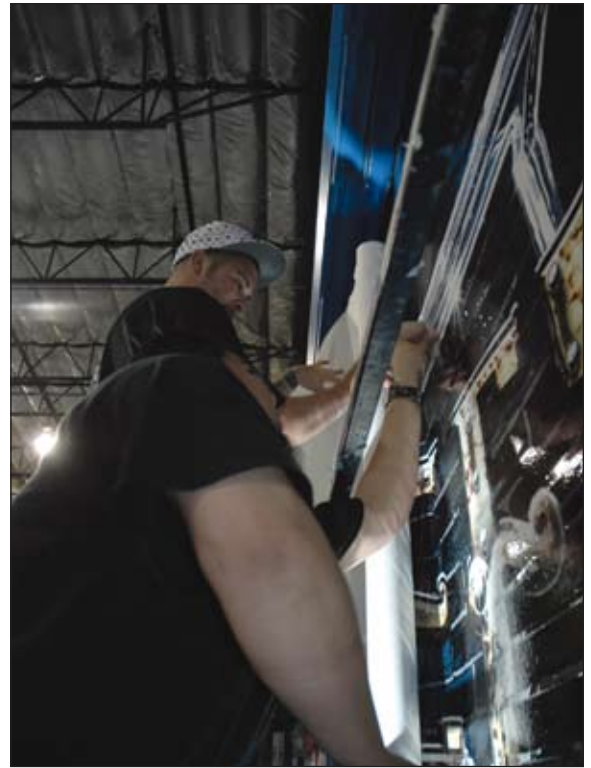
CONTINUED



WCC devoted an entire building in its 25,000-square-foot facility to producing vehicle wraps.



The company now has two full-time employees dedicated to designing, producing and installing wraps for WCC's custom car and corporate clients.



WCC Brings 'Street Customs' to the Small Screen



West Coast Customs (WCC) will be back in the cable television spotlight this fall with a new reality series, *Street Customs*.

The company, which gained worldwide attention a few years back as the featured shop on MTV's *Pimp My Ride*, will bring its unique brand of vehicle

customization to TLC, part of the Discovery Channel Network, beginning Oct. 10.

"The show features the types of crazy cars we build, and the lifestyle that we go through every day to get these jobs done," says Ryan Friedlinghaus, owner of WCC.

Each episode spotlights two projects—a full, ambitious customization and a smaller second build. Many will include celebrity car owners and all will result in one-of-a-kind creations, Friedlinghaus notes.

While nearly 84 million viewers watched the first season of *Pimp My Ride*, Friedlinghaus says he's excited about the new show because it shies away from being a scripted "fake reality."

"This time around it's a lot better because it's more of what we actually do and how we do it," he says, noting that filming has already begun. "This is more real, and what really happens every day. So it's almost like [the camera crew] isn't even around. Hopefully, it's going to be the next big show."

West Coast Customs, once the featured shop on MTV's "Pimp My Ride" will be back on TLC this fall with its new show, "Street Customs".



While still a fan of custom painting, Friedlinghaus notes that in many cases vinyl can be done quicker and less expensively on certain projects, and works particularly well when the application calls for high detail.

"It's a cool way to duplicate my (California) shop for the franchises overseas," he says. "The way my shop is now, it's a bunch of graffiti, and we've duplicated it onto vinyl where we can stick it on walls for decoration for the West Coast Customs overseas."

Much like the work he does for his corporate clients, the wraps convey the unmistakable WCC flair.

"Our design and the style of West Coast Customs is so different and unique," he says. "The coolest part is taking the vinyl—you know, everyone is doing buses and trucks and all this different stuff—and now we're doing walls and rooms. It's almost like we're using it as wallpaper. Plus, there's the whole floor graphic part of it—putting it in the floor. I think it's pretty cool to integrate it all."


We've duplicated [graffiti] onto vinyl where we can stick it on walls for decoration.

MOVING FORWARD

Car enthusiasts across the U.S. will have plenty of chances to see the latest WCC designs, as vehicles the company has wrapped will be on road tours and appearing at events ranging from the X Games to action sports shows to the SEMA Show.

Moving forward, Friedlinghaus only expects the quality and impact of vehicle wraps to increase as technology advances and WCC continues to build that side of its business.

"I think anything with computers is always going to get better," he says of the future of wraps. "I mean, working with the Mutoh product, it definitely prints a lot faster, it's a lot clearer and I think the technology just gets better and better and better. The clearer the picture and the quicker it prints, the better it's going to be."

Comments? Respond to sbcomments@nbm.com with this article's title in the subject line. 




*The Raster™ method of Braille is a licensed, patented process owned by Accent Signage Systems, Inc.

Vision Engraving Systems' new ADA Assistant features Braille fonts, graphics, sizing, and spacing guides for creating fully-compliant ADA signage, making your job easier and more profitable. Plus, our automatic Raster™ Braille* attachment makes the insertion of Braille beads a snap!

Call today to learn more about what Vision can do for you!

See us at SGIA in Orlando! Oct. 24-27, Booth #1577

Call 1-888-637-1737 or visit www.visionengravers.com 

Use FAST #229

INFORMATION AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Access FAST INFO online at www.signbusinessmag.com



See page 80 for more details.