



http://www.hedstorm.net/HAUNT/instructions/Jack_and_Dave/index.html



Jack & Dave

Our hillbilly entertainers, created from



Douglas Fir,
the Talking Christmas Tree.

Hot Glue Art



Well, they say every artist has his best medium and it looks like, at least for awhile, mine had become hot glue. Several years ago at Halloween, I asked my husband to pick up some craft temp hot glue sticks for me while he was shopping. There must have been a sale on, as he came back with several grocery bags full. Having so much to play with, I began to experiment with it.

I immediately began to make hands from hot glue. My first attempts were over wooden dowels, but it became apparent that this wasn't strong enough as the hands broke apart after a year or so and the hot glue separated itself from the dowels. It occurred to me that hot glue wouldn't separate from itself, so next I made hands completely from hot glue sticks. I've several pair that have lasted a couple of years now.

This year I attempted heads. I wanted to make heads to cover stripped down Douglas Firs and I really didn't want to try paper mache and chickenwire (because I'm *REALLY* bad with paper mache), so one night I began fooling around with an old plastic skull and I hit on this method. So far so good. Please keep in mind that this was all done "hit and miss". I hope I can write this clearly enough to be understood.

I'm quite sure there's someone out there with an improvement on this. Maybe someone is a master at making molds and working in latex. If so, I'd love to hear about it. I've never attempted it, therefore it frightens me. We fear change. This worked for me.

UPDATE: Christopher, of Lamar Manor, turned me onto Crayola Modeling Magic, an air drying "modeling clay" that dries into a soft foam. I'm thinking this might be a better way to do this. Maybe someone will try it and let me know how it turns out. Lord knows, I wouldn't suggest this hot glue method to others, it was just what I had handy at the time.

If you do want to try it, PLEASE do it in a well ventilated area. I don't want to be responsible for anyone else's brain damage and those darned bats that keep making strafing runs at my face while I'm working and drinking my coffee, don't think I didn't notice and....I...um...what was I talking about...?

HEADS

Basic Hot Glue Head

I haven't gotten any of those 4th class Bucky skulls yet, but I'm quite sure you can do the same with them as I have. I used a plastic skull I bought at Walmart several years ago as a form to make these heads. I've used the same one over and over.

- Disconnect the jaw from the rest of the skull.
- Tuck small balls of aluminum foil in the eye sockets, so they aren't quite so deep and the holes are closed up.
- Cover both skull parts in foil. This keeps the hot glue from getting into all the tiny crevices and make getting the head hard to remove from the skull.
- Cover again in masking tape. Use smaller pieces to fit around crevices and in the eye holes, etc. The reason for this step is because without it, the foil keeps the hot glue warm longer and it becomes a thinner "head". The tape also serves as extra strength.
- Here's the gosh-swell-golly fun part. Start covering each piece in hot glue. I've used both high temp and low temp. I prefer low temp as it cools faster, but either works. Remember that the jaw piece doesn't have to be entirely covered, just the outside, but you do want to make sure it's thick enough to hold its shape yet thin enough to not weigh down the mouth mechanism. After the piece is entirely covered, I put on a second coat.
- A butane torch is immensely helpful here. After you've covered the skull and jaw with hot glue, you're going to want to do any smoothing or "tweaking" of the surface while its still on the skull. (Trust me on this. I have attempted it while it was off the skull and it's a pain-inna-tuckus as it tends to collapse on itself.) A quick stroke or two over an area melts everything together nicely. It's just time consuming. You **do** want to do this, however, as if you don't there's a great probability that when you remove the head, it will come off in pieces. It won't be very strong and certainly won't last very long.
- After the head is smoothed and melted into one piece, heat the blade of an X-Acto knife and slice the head in half, down to the plastic skull. I did it ear to ear, but I don't suppose it matters.
- Pop the head off. Repeat with the jaw, which you most likely won't have to cut.

The "Fun Part"

Oh boy, you're really gonna enjoy this part. I could very well just shout "**Now make a head!**" and leave it at that, as I think that would be as much help as I'm going to be here--but we persevere. I can only give tips.

- First, you're going want to cut out not only the area around the skull eyeholes, but part of the sides of the skull--the temple area. **Save** these, even if they are in pieces, as you're going to want them later.
- Fit the face of the skull over your douglas fir, cutting away as needed. The heated X-Acto blade works like butter.
- You'll need to fit pieces of foam or something at the top of the head, to balance the tree trunk on. Keep in mind, this is the way I did it. After I was done, it occurred to me that I could have just as easily removed the eyes and mouth mechanisms from the tree, but being no mechanical genius I didn't think of it until it was too late. Mr Keeba also mentioned to me--oh, say, the day of Halloween--that he wished I hadn't build necks over the bottom workings of the tree--but I won't even go into his thoughts on that.
- After fitting the face onto the tree, I believe I put the back of the head on at this point.
- Using the pieces you cut out (the temple area--those little cups of glue) and use those, reversed, at the sides of the eyes. This is what gives mine that bulged eye look.

After this, you're kinda on your own to add scrap pieces of hot glue here and there to shape the head, using the butane and heated X-Acto knife. You'll need several large pieces of hot glue to create cheeks and jowls, etc. I made them by simply melting large splotches of glue onto an old wooden TV tray. They pop off after they are hardened. Do not do this on a nice wood surface--it WILL pop off some varnish.

I replaced the eyes with halves of ping pong balls and left them unpainted, as the Christmas lights inside made a nice pupil effect when they lit up. **NOTE: The ping pong balls are extremely flammable.** One too many close swipes with the butane and I was replacing an eye.

The jaw is attached in much the same manner as those who created animated skeletons from their Buckys. I removed the green jaw plate and hot glued the jaw piece directly to that. You'll want to adjust the tension of the jaw as needed. To do this, look at the mouth mechanism. You'll see a thin wire fitted into one of a circular series of small holes on the mechanism. Adjust tighter or looser as needed. You'll probably find yourself doing this several times as you add and remove glue, add skin and hair.

After I fiddled together a working head and neck (I used rabbit wire, cheesecloth and more hot glue), I covered mine with paint and tissue for a textured skin look. Don't forget the eyelids. After dry, I gave it all a second coat of paint, then

sprayed it with a couple of coats of clear acrylic sealer. When that was dry, I painted the entire head in a woodstain, quickly wiped it off and let dry. This gives it an aged look. Then I finished it off with another couple of coats of sealer.

The jaw movement is somewhat "ventriloquist dummy" looking, which is why I added the fake fur hair and beard. Depending upon the movement of your jaw, the beard may not be necessary. The "gypsy fortune teller" I made for the local Jaycees (see picture above) didn't need a beard, the long mustache was enough. They wanted the "ventriloquist dummy" look anyway.

HANDS

The hands are made completely from hot glue sticks. I merely cut glue stick "bones", using my own hands as a size comparison. I cut them on angles as I wanted them bent, melted them back together. The hands are pieces of several glue sticks put together, the lower arms are several full long sticks together with pieces of coat hanger between the sticks (loop left at the "elbow"). After the basic hand and arm were together, I coated the entire thing (carefully) with another coat of hot glue and smoothed it all out with the butane. Did the skin same as for heads.

More On Hands

See? I told ya I wasn't sure how much help instructions would be. Hope this was of some sort of help. Good luck!

DOUGIES FOR DUMMIES

OK, I don't understand anything about wiring, but I do know graphic programs. Mr Keeba knows all the wiring stuff, but not how to create the graphics. We sat down at the computer together and between my "no, that doesn't make sense, what does it plug INTO" questions--and his "that's so basic, everyone would know to do that" answers--we somehow worked this out without hurting each other. Much.

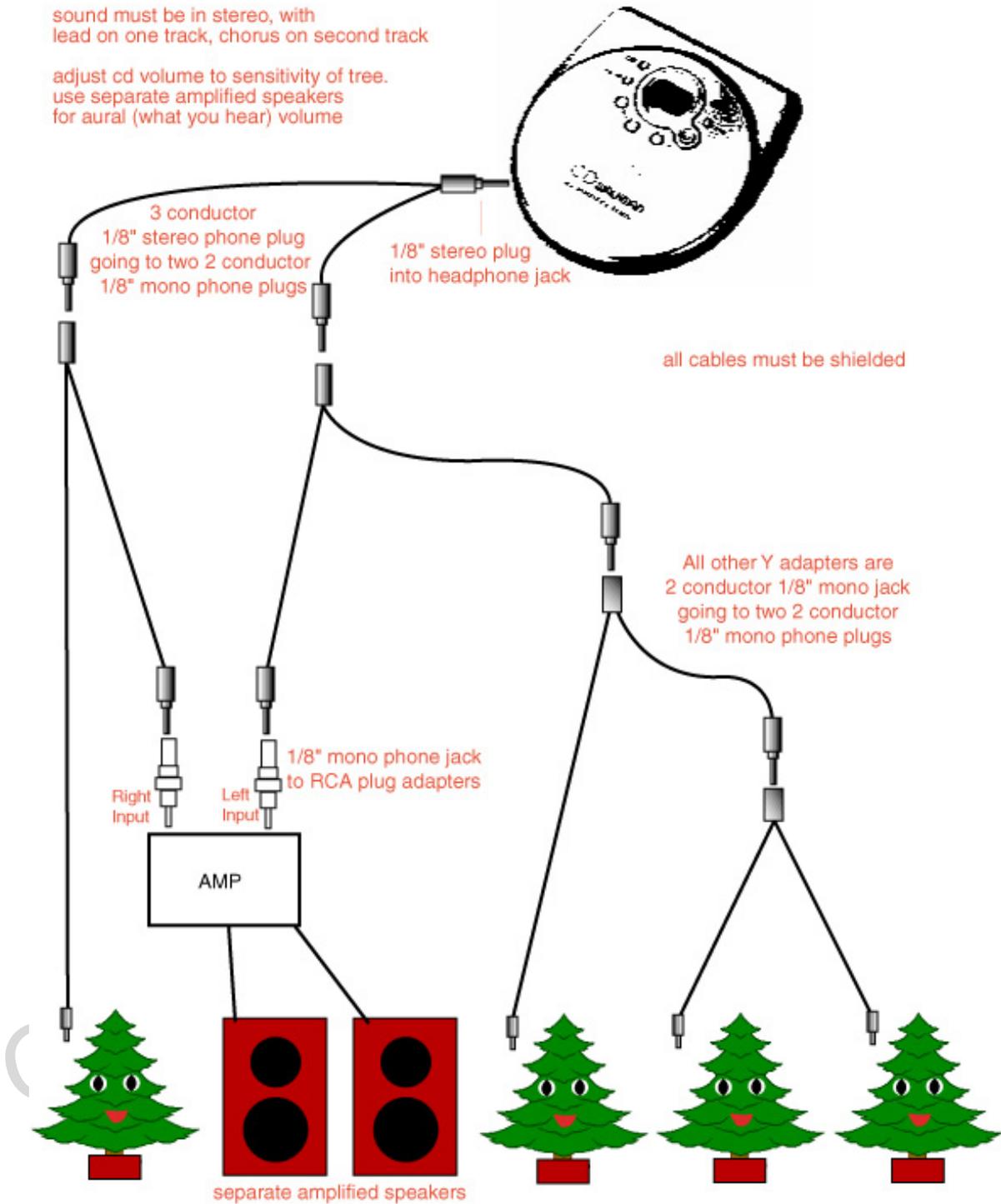
Keep in mind that this is pretty basic, obviously you're gonna have to play around with what cord lengths you have, etc. This is just one of the ways WE did it, I'm sure other's have their own ways as well.(i.e. don't email me to tell me your better way of doing this)

We did the whole amp & speaker thing because the trees have rotten speakers and if you get them loud enough to be heard (which you won't anyway), the eyes and mouths stayed open.

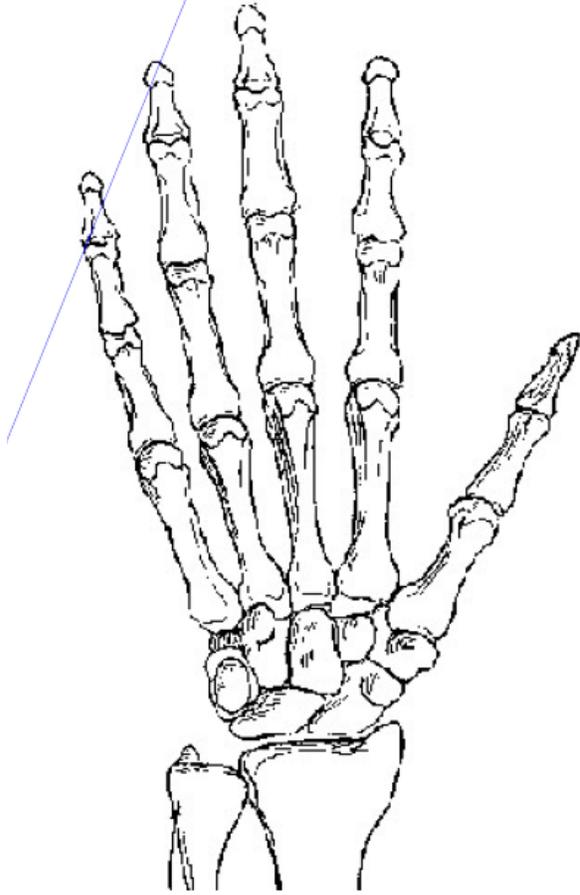
The trickiest part is getting the lead vocal on one track and the chorus on the other.

sound must be in stereo, with lead on one track, chorus on second track

adjust cd volume to sensitivity of tree.
use separate amplified speakers for aural (what you hear) volume



HOTGLUE HANDS CONSTRUCTION



Here's a sketch of the bones of the human hand. Obviously, you aren't going to recreate it faithfully (or maybe you want to try, ya psycho), but I've included it as something to work from.

The first thing to remember is *hot glue is hot!* You WILL get burned! Run! Run away from it! Save yourself!

OK, fine. You're going to try it anyway. Whatever. It's not *my* skin and I *did* try to warn you....



Hotmelt gluesticks, Xacto knife and candle.



I use an acrylic clipboard to cut and melt glue on, but old countertop works well—any flat surface the glue will not bond to. Cover with aluminum foil, if necessary.



You can peel off the foil later. You can cut the sticks straight across and fill in the joints later...



...or cut the sticks at an angle and piece them together as you want. Hold the "joint" ends in the candle flame for a second or two, just enough to melt the glue slightly, then join the ends together.



Decide which finger is which. Slightly melt each finger at the base and position them as you want them on your work surface. Hold a few seconds until set in place. Cut four slightly longer pieces to use as the bones of the hand. This area will be filled in, so you don't have to be exact.



Here's the part where you get to play. Use your glue gun and begin filling in the palm of the hand area, including the base of the fingers--so the whole thing becomes one piece.



Make sure to let it set and pry it off your work surface occasionally. Too much glue and you'll never have the strength to get it off. Trust me, I tried.



Make sure to add a thumb.



Use scrap pieces of hot glue, small disks cut from a stick or, as I've done here, a scrap of cardboard to form the web between the thumb and fingers.

Now you're on your own. It's all a matter of adding and carving off glue as you see fit. A butane torch is a great help for smoothing and removing areas. Be careful and work slowly. You can easily deform the shape of your hand by melting too much at a time. You may not want to smooth the hands much at all. The whole process of using the gun creates a veiny, string-like effect.

This is NOT a craft suitable for children!

Hot glue is HOT! Melted hotglue will take off skin, have no doubts about that. I suggest lower temp hot glue and gun--and alot of patience. I'm only telling you how I do this, I am not suggesting it to anyone, as you will eventually get burned, I paint my hands with whatever paint I have handy-- and tissue paper or paper towels. Something along the lines of paper mache or the "snot rag" technique others have developed. Tear pieces of paper towels or tissue, paint over it until you have it built up the way you want. Seal it with something or other.

Good luck. Make sure you have ice and ointment.

Obtained from
Omarshauntedtrail.com