

The Pre-Party Laminate (assembly required) By Denise Black

The shot collectors held the first pre-party before the Texas events in 2004 (thanks to JoAnn F.). JoAnn's party in Dallas started a trend that continues today in that we do our very best to throw one before every Shot Event. The laminates started in 2005 (thanks to Floyd T.), which I helped design. Since then, I've put together a design for each pre-party.

The 2008 Voodoo in the Bayou laminate is the most extravagant thing I've ever designed. I gave this particular design a lot of thought and had a few ideas of what could be done. I ended up staying with the standard type of laminate (paper based) but even with that, it didn't end up being exactly typical.

First of all, the image changed a few times (there were zombies on the first layout) and once the Voodoo Dude was chosen, he had a few makeovers too. The wording changed, then a logo got added, the print got bigger, and Voodoo Dude lost weight (he was pretty fat at one time – oops, wasn't supposed to mention that). The original concept was to have Voodoo Dude with different voodoo curses: Pins, Shots, Floods, Tees, Bears, and Sticks. So there would have been 6 slightly different laminates.

Of course, comments from the peanut gallery at work suggested I'd need to make 6 times the laminates as people would probably want one of each. I guess I talk about collecting shot glass variants a little too much with them (they think most of us are *crazy*).

Anyway, I have to BLAME a co-worker: let's call him Gregoire, for suggesting a *neat idea*. Now don't get me wrong, it was a cool idea. Creating it was something of a nightmare – the design sounded simple enough but in reality, not so much.

The design was to have options that would let the wearer choose what to voodoo (the 6 options). The first design had a wheel that you would spin with the help of a round fastener (looked like the pins stuck in Voodoo Dude), and the options would appear in the cutout (similar to the final product). There were a few challenges with using a wheel – the first being, cutting a perfect circle. Apparently, I'm not that talented. Then I found Post-It Note circles, which also happened to be the perfect size! Of course, then there was the challenge of getting the voodoo items onto the circle, then laminating it (again, cutting a stupid circle!!). And there was a lot of lamination – the front pane, the back pane and the circle wheel. I made exactly two of these and they didn't work out. The killer on this design was *the hole puncher*. I needed a small circle in the EXACT middle of the circle so after carefully measuring – guess what? Hole punchers don't extent that far. Yeah, you read that right. I don't think people consider the limitations of a lowly hole puncher. Here's a picture anyway – I ended up cutting the hole with a special knife but it proved to be too hard through the 2 pieces of paper and lamination. As it was, the words didn't come up exactly right in the window, guess the “*knife*” was a bit off.



The second design was much simpler. I had a square spin wheel that still used the round shaped fastener, one side had the words for the window and the other had printing to match the back of the laminate. It only required one lamination and it worked pretty well. I showed it around at work and it was pooh-poohed. No one liked the square spin wheel and of course, when turned, the back didn't match up and appeared upside down or side ways. (There's no photo of the 2nd version – I think a certain Gregoire stole it so it wouldn't get made). Apparently, he didn't want any credit for a crappy design. Hmph.

The second design did bring on a lot of discussion (hopefully our boss never reads this then she'd know what we really do). Now as much as there might be a hate on for Gregoire for stealing that 2nd design, he did find a way to make the final design work. I ended up using a pull strip, similar to a pop-up book, except ya know, without a pop-up.

Now just because I (or should I say Greg) came up with a way to make the voodoo words work, it still had to be built. I'll add Gregoire is truly great at ideas but not so much at helping put his ideas into reality. He's been quoted as saying he's just a theory man.

Anyway, for those interested – it is a million steps to create it. The laminates took a lot of patience and time (once I got the hang of it, about 25 minutes each – the first half dozen probably took about 40 minutes each). No 2 laminates are exactly the same because they are all handmade. They were a learning experience to say the very least.

Now the final design did go through a few changes. Paper for one. Too flimsy. The first one I created easily bent when trying to change the voodoo options. I eventually found that card stock worked well and could be printed on with a regular printer.

Voodoo Dude is made up of a front and back. It is printed on one sheet that is then cut and then folded. As the pull strip is put in between them, they needed to be attached somehow. The fold has to be as tight as possible and each one sat with weights overnight – as it would be laminated, the flatter the better to minimize air.

I'm not great at cutting circles (as mentioned) but did manage to cut out the other parts just fine.

1. A duplicate back pane was cut to half the size of the voodoo strip.

2. The voodoo window on the front pane.
3. Slit on the back pane for the voodoo pull strip.
4. The voodoo pull strip was cut with a wider bottom so that it wouldn't get pulled out of the design (good luck getting it back in otherwise).

The trick to all of this was that the slit in the back pane had to be exact so that the words on the voodoo pull strip would be centered in the voodoo window. A whole lot of voodoo and cursing went into this setup.

Gluing isn't hard but there was a lot of it:

1. With the voodoo pull strip in place, the front and back panes were glued down with special scrapbooking roller glue. This way it didn't get wet, glued faster and allowed for no glue around the slide area inside.
2. The back of the voodoo pull strip was glued on. This served 3 purposes: kept the pull strip from going too far into the design, made it heavier so that it didn't bend easily and kept the back intact when the pull strip was in the first position.

After pressing down the laminates to make sure they stayed flat, I let the glue dry for a day or more (they were made over a period of weeks). This all lead up to the weekend before I left for New Orleans. The last few steps were the biggest.

And if you don't buy a cheap a** laminator, it was time to laminate! Of course if you're as lucky as me, the lamination machine worked beautifully for all the practice ones. It even worked great for the Drinking Contest winner laminations. However, as soon as I put in the first Pre-Party laminate, it jammed and the plastic disappeared into la-la land. It jammed so bad that nothing else could go in and there is no way to take the laminator apart. A whole lot of voodoo and cursing ensued.

It was the time of day that all stores were closed and my flight was in 12 hours. So, lamination was now a no go. At least from Canada.

So, how was part of my first few days in New Orleans spent? Finding an Office Depot, cutting slits into the laminates for the pull strip and using a heavy duty laminator machine! The biggest challenge after that was punching holes at the top with the cheapest hole puncher on the face of the planet (thanks Walgreens!).

Finally, to make it all pretty (sorry guys!), I added the special lanyard. I got some grey lanyards printed with the group website – www.hrcshots.com – and added 5 white beads (can't visit New Orleans and not get beads!!!). When the white beads are exposed to UV rays they turn blue, orange, purple, pink and yellow, by the way.

And there you have it. That was the task for creating the New Orleans Pre-Party 2008 Voodoo in the Bayou laminate for 2008. Here's a picture for those that haven't seen it. (I ran outside so the beads on the lanyard would change color before scanning it).



Hope everyone liked it as much as I enjoyed creating it. Next year... not so much assembly will be required (or designed). *lol*

Cheers!

Denise