



"A COMMERCIAL ARTIST IS AN ARTIST WHOSE MAIN GOAL IS TO PLEASE THE CUSTOMER."

Roger H. Johnson

(ABOVE) Two different methods of creating the same turn produce two levels of clarity. The path at top left is reflected in the middle perspective view—it's not quite clear. By adding walls and pointers as in the top right and lower perspective view, the path becomes more apparent. (BELOW) Cone walls can make the intended path more clear.



overlooked. "I don't like courses that are between gears, where you barely have to shift up to third gear, and then there's not a good place to shift back down, or where you end up holding the car against the rev limiter," she says. It is safe to say most drivers also cringe at the thought of first-gear corners.

From time to time, there have been suggestions that the same course should be used every year at the Nationals, like at the Club Racing Valvoline Runoffs®, for example, to create a more consistent basis for car classification. When asked about the merits of a "standard" Nationals course, both Babb and Johnson are quick to reject the concept.

"Bad idea," says Babb. "Part of the challenge is figuring out how to drive a course you haven't seen before, and it should be the same for all competitors."

Johnson is even more emphatic. "Boo! Hiss! Part of what draws me to this is the creativity in designing a course, the discovery of that course and the separation of the skilled from the not-so-skilled in finding the fast line. With a standard course the fast line will sooner or later be known to everyone. What fun would that be?"

THE PRINCIPLES

Johnson goes on to describe the outlook that a successful designer must employ, to create fun courses.

"Be a commercial artist," is number one on Johnson's list of course design philosophies. He explains that an artist is, according to Webster's, "one who professes and practices an imaginative art." In Johnson's words, "Imagination is required to create a course that is interesting and fun to drive."

"A fine artist is an artist whose main goal is to please themselves, and then everyone else can like it or 'stuff it.' A commercial artist is an artist whose main goal is to please the customer, while pleasing themselves as well. Keep this in mind and your pride will not get in the way of creating something for everyone."

Babb takes a slightly different tack with her own blunt advice to designers. "Don't think of yourself as an artist, or your design as a sacred work of your masterpiece talents. Be willing to move it around for surface problems and safety, to change visuals so everyone can see where they're going, to accommodate event administration needs such as second car start points. This isn't your life's work, and you ain't DaVinci!"

Johnson's on-line course design handbook contains a wealth of other information on course design. He credits Jim Garry, Mark Sirota, Gregg Lee, Babb and Team.Net for many of the teachings. Johnson offers the following 10 basic concepts to designers:

PAUL LAGETTE ILLUSTRATIONS FROM ROGER H. JOHNSON ORIGINALS

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