

Decals - types, pros and cons

Decals are nice on a case as you can label what each button and switch does, as well as label your system with a name. I have come across a few types of decals, spent a bit of money finding out the good and the bad, here are my views:

Clear waterslide sheets

The idea is you use your computer printer to print out images, which you then preserve in a couple of layers of spray paint varnish or clear lacquer, when dry, cut out the image and put into a saucer of cold water until the plastic printed image separates from the underside, this is then applied to the case.

Pros: area around the image is clear so transparent on case. Nice for small images.

Cons: waterslide is very thin and weak, easy to tear, finished result is not guaranteed, barely sticks to surface if painted beforehand. Can be sealed better to surface by spray paint varnish but can still come off if rubbed. Larger images give a worse result. Sheets are quite expensive.

White backed waterslide sheets

As above, but the image print quality is not so good, and the backing is not clear.

Sticky glossy (or matt) label paper

Pros: Sticks fast to case, can be spray paint varnished, print quality excellent, whites and other colours show through properly, quick result. Can look striking.

Cons: Fine if the image border is cut to size without any surplus white showing through. Slightly raised above case height, but about 1/4 mm or so - not a disadvantage, can add to image of case (especially if the edges are coloured the same as the border surround for continuity). Easy to get hold of.

I find, using sticky label paper for a main logo for the system case, clear waterslide for small logos (eg volume controls, buttons) and anything in black which needs a clear backing.

Dry transfers

Sheets you press a pen onto to press out a letter onto a case. An old way to get lettering done (before computers took off).

Pros: Easy to use, maybe ok for single letter icons.

Cons: Easy to damage a case, lettering will probably not be straight or level, only a small range of typefaces and sizes available.

Stencils

You can either draw through them with a soft pointed permanent felt pen or spray paint through.

Pros: Easy to use and re-usable lettering / logos.

Cons: Needs skill, result not guaranteed, may get bleeding or smudging, takes time to set up, stencils (unless home made are only available in certain sizes.

Sticky labels

Tend to look bad.

This is how it can look by combining clear waterslide decals and self adhesive label paper, as illustration:

