

Custom Logo Mod By Allen Haid (Bigal-USA)

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If you have evolved or graduated from playing games on a store-bought computer to playing games on your custom modded or even custom built computer, this mod is for you. The thrill and excitement of booting your new computer for the first time can be felt every time if you install a custom made logo – the finishing touch that brings smiles to your friends' faces and questioning looks from your significant other.

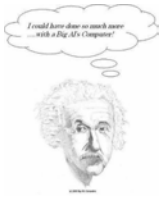
So what are we talking about? Isn't a logo that small one-inch square sticker you see on those computers sitting in the store window? Not if we can help it. We're talking about a much larger logo, something that would fit in the 3.5 inch or 5.25 inch bay of a standard computer case. Even though we will use one of these bays for our logo mod, you can just as easily build this device into a hole you cut directly into the case – maybe the front grill, or perhaps the top.

If you have a logo design in mind or even an idea for your logo, it's time to get started. First, we need something that lights up, is easy to use for our mod, and doesn't cost an arm and a leg. This something is the Thermaltake X-View bay device, which is only about \$20 US. The X-View is a 5.25 inch bay device kit with two electroluminescent panels (EL panels), one inverter, a 5.25 inch cover plate insert, some plastic strips for the panel (you can see them in figure 1), a few plastic sheets to print your own logo on, and a CD-R with a program to print pictures onto the plastic sheets. See figure 2 for a view of the back of the X-View package.

In case you are wondering, Thermaltake debuted this X-View device with an early series of computer cases, the XASER series. They used the EL panel in a vertical orientation, mounted within the front panel. I noticed these cases around 2004, but you couldn't buy the X-View kit back then. You can now, and I highly recommend you get one by any means possible. In fact, do it now. I can wait.



Figure 1 Thermaltake X-View 5.25" Bay Device



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Figure 2 Rear view shows the contents of the X-View Package

Don't get too excited about the plastic sheets and software that come with the X-View kit. We won't be using them, because I found that the inkjet printer ink doesn't stick well to this plastic, and you end up with a mess. We'll avoid the mess with another method.

Now we can start our modding. First, take the X-view kit apart and grab one of the EL panels. See how it's sized to fit a 5.25 inch bay? Grab either a 5.25 inch or 3.5 inch cover plate. I'm going to use a 3.5 inch cover plate, just to show you how versatile the X-View kit is. Look at the electrical contacts on the EL Panel. You can cut this panel down, but not beyond the box formed by the electrical contacts. See figure 3. For our sample 3.5 inch cover plate, we need to cut the EL panel down quite a bit. I had to be very careful, as one wrong cut and I'll be using the other EL panel from the X-View kit.

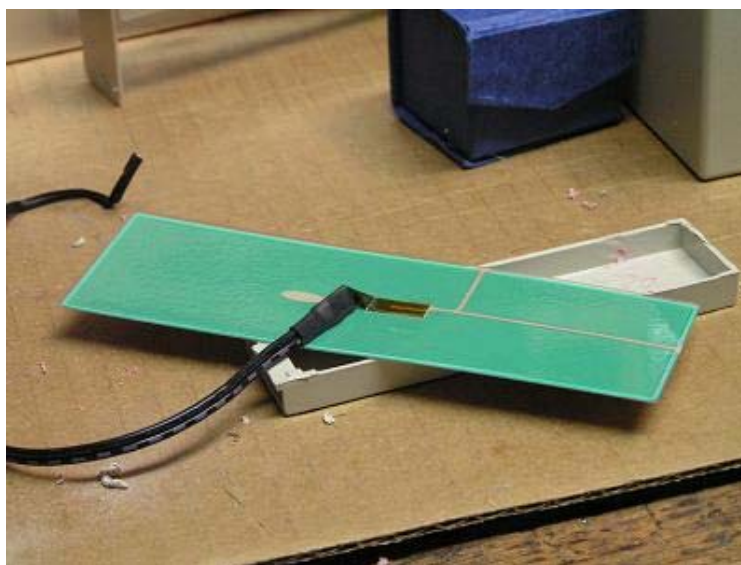
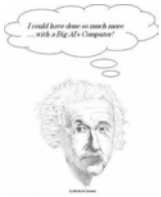


Figure 3 The EL Panel Before Trimming



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As you can see in figure 4, I have successfully trimmed the EL panel to fit within the 3.5 inch cover plate. I need to flip this EL panel around though, as you are looking at the front of the custom logo cover plate for my sample mod. So let's cut a small hole in the rear of the 3.5 inch cover plate, and fit the EL panel in there. See figure 5.

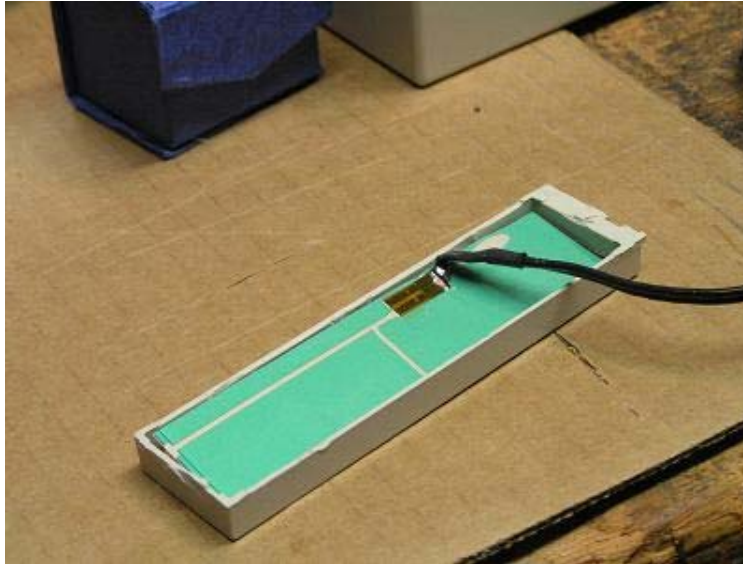


Figure 4 The EL Panel Has Been Cut to Fit a 3.5 Inch Cover Plate

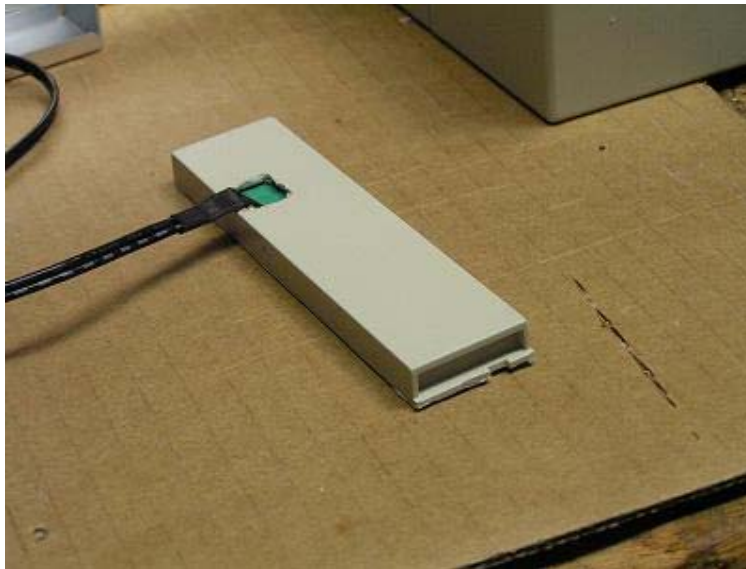
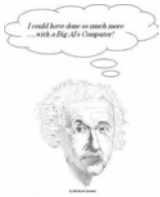


Figure 5 Hole Cut in Rear of 3.5 Inch Cover Plate

Now it's time to test the EL panel, just to make sure we didn't cut too much trying to fit it within the 3.5 inch cover plate. See figure 6. We test it by plugging the end connector into the inverter that comes with the X-View kit, and then plugging that inverter into a Molex connector from our computer. The EL panel lights up, so we can continue.



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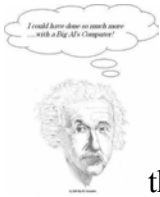
Figure 6 The EL Panel Still Works After Trimming

What about the logo? Well, our logo is going to be a stencil. The EL Panel will light up the stencil from behind, and the overall effect is quite nice. To make the logo, just print anything you want – words, a small picture or drawing, but keep one thing in mind. You need to cut out the design so the light from the EL panel can shine through. I chose to print “Big AI’s Computers” as my logo, with a black background. See figure 7.



Figure 7 Custom Stencil, Trimmed with a Razor Blade

It’s best to cut the logo design out with a small razor or knife that is very sharp. If you use a dull blade, it will catch and tear the paper. In fact, make sure your surface below



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the paper is very smooth, such as a new piece of cardboard. Don't try to use a surface that has existing cuts or bumps, as you will surely find one with your razor and the anguish of messing up a logo when you are 98% complete is nothing short of a full disaster.

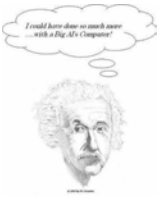
After completing the trimming of your paper logo, do a test fit with the EL panel. In figure 8, you can see how nicely the logo stencil fits within my 3.5 inch "inverted" cover plate. In a minute, you'll understand why I've designed this custom logo in this manner.



Figure 8 Test Fit of the Logo Stencil

Something is missing. You don't want your paper stencil just hanging out in the breeze, do you? If you don't put something on top of the paper stencil, it will curl up at the edges, and it's not a good idea to try gluing the paper stencil to the EL panel. So, let's fashion a cover plate – a piece of plastic to place within the cavity of the 3.5 inch cover plate. In figure 9, you can see how this piece of plastic, cut with a Dremel tool, is going to fit nicely on top of the logo and EL panel.

Hey, we are almost done. For my custom logo, I need to cut a hole in a small external drive to accommodate the 3.5 inch cover plate. You can just as easily mount this to a computer case door, or to a 3.5 inch or 5.25 inch cover plate. See figures 10-12 for the final installation steps and the completed project.



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Figure 9 Cover Plate to Keep the Paper Logo Flat Against the EL Panel

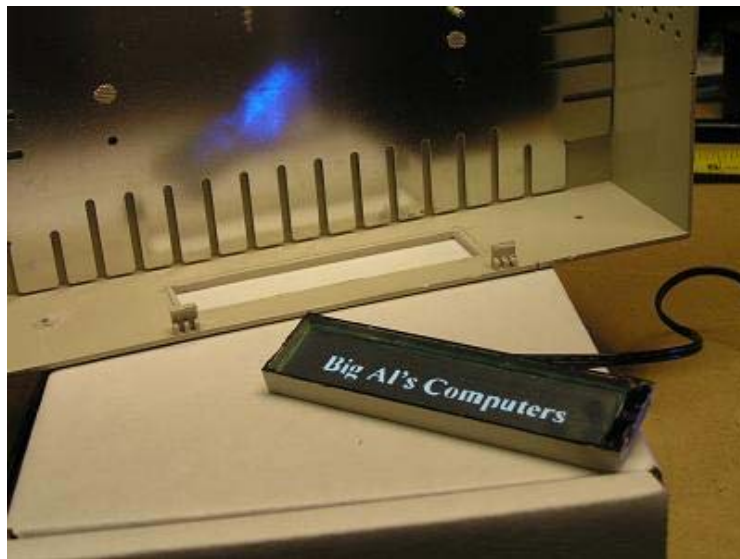
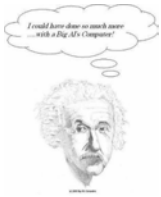


Figure 10 Fabricating the Mounting for the Custom Logo



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Figure 11 Test Fit Prior to Attaching External Drive Cover



Figure 12 It's Finished. A Very Nice Custom Logo!