SPLIT TONGUE EFFECT

Video 1 workbook

By Stuart Bray

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“For a comedy show, I needed to make a realistic, wearable tongue and I figured THAT would make a great tutorial.

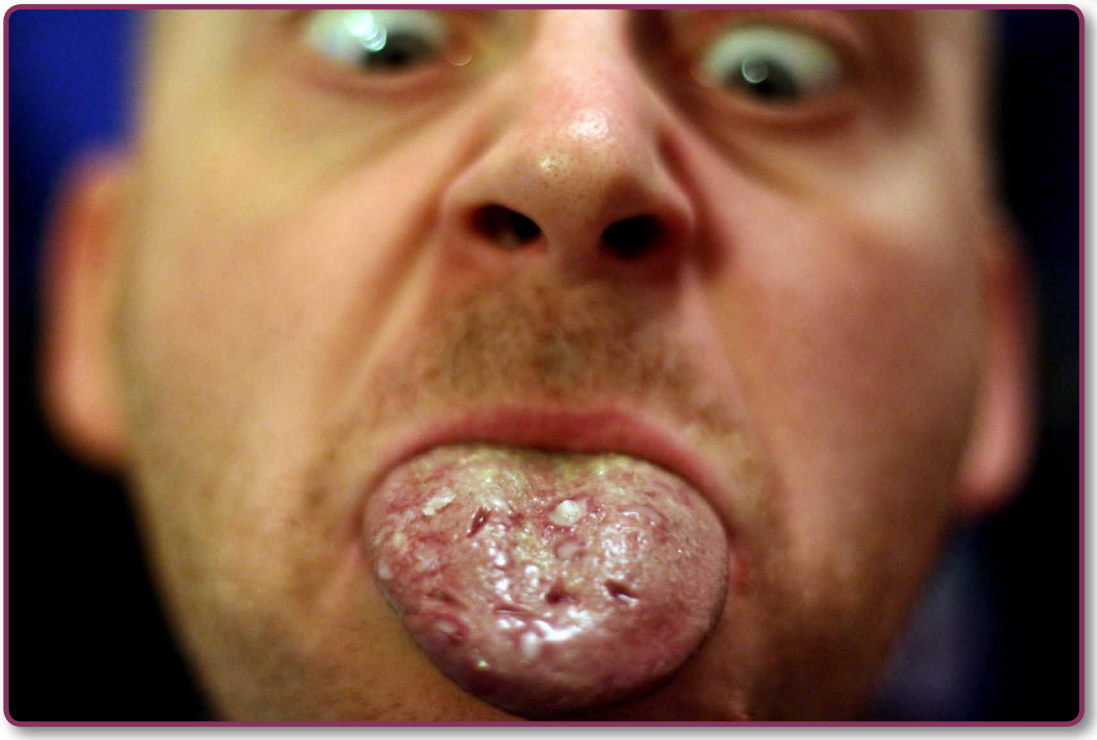
I decided to make a couple of different tongues for you - a nasty looking diseased tongue with smelly-looking goop, pus-filled sores with chunks missing from being bitten constantly.

I also though some mouth trauma would be effective, with a lacerated tongue which could be a ripped out piercing of some freaky accident. I'll leave the back story to you.

I broke this process into 2 videos. This first video and booklet focuses on the sculpting, making the mould and creating the core.

Part 2 looks at the silicone processes, from mixing the colour, casting and art finishing the final effect.

So, lets take a look at making a couple of rancid tongues.”

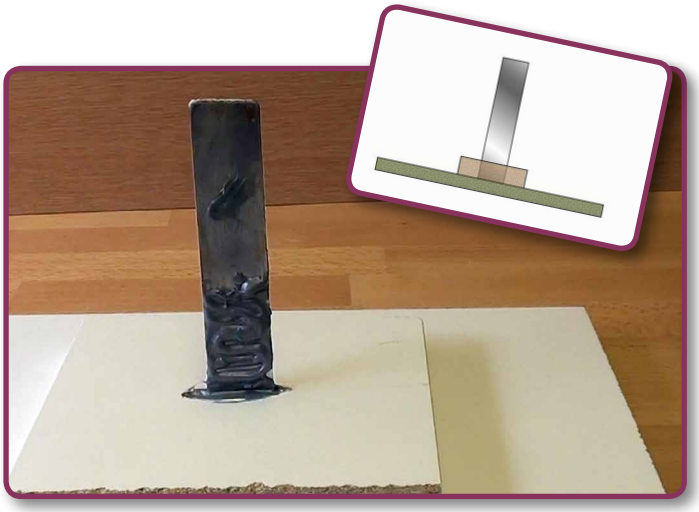


1. The Sculpt

Even though I want to create some traumatised tongues, I first need to make a normal, natural looking tongue which can be modified later to create all kinds of effects.

That way the original, basic tongue made is more versatile and can be used to create all kinds of different tongues in the future.

As with most sculpting,the first element is the armature, which is the understructure needed to support the sculpt. It stops the sculpt from sagging or distorting from under it's own weight, or if it gets knocked accidentally before it's finished.



The armature here is a simple strip of mild steel (but you could use wood instead) sunk into a block of wood which is itself stuck to a board. I glued it all with a 5 minute epoxy from a hardware store, which is easy to get, fast and strong.

While the glue is setting up, I melt some plastiline in a saucepan. Plastiline is an oil based clay and this one is a medium softness grey sculpting clay which will become liquid when melted. While molten, I can paint it onto the armature, slowly building up as it starts to cool down and gradually solidify again.

As it thickens, you can build it up to create the volume and rough shape you want. At this stage, it's soft enough to move easily but firm enough to keep it's shape. This allows me to very quickly rough out the form.

I can bend tongue easily to make it a more natural shape towards the end. Popping it onto a TV turntable means I can easily spin it around to work all around the sculpt quickly.

One of my favourite tools when roughing out is this Griffon Hook, a serrated curved tool which can do both severe and subtle carving for concave shapes.

I start by softening the surface, and carving the grooves on the underside. This is about thirty minutes in now, and the plastiline is firm enough to be smoothed down.

A coarse plastic brush such as this will refine the tool marks and soften it more. Then I carve some textured lines on he underside, criss crossing slightly as I go.

Adding thin sausages over these will make those thick veins you see underneath your tongue.

You may never see this area when it is worn, but it's a good idea to add them just in case. By blending the sausages out it makes them look more like they are under the surface.

I warm the sculpt with a hairdryer to soften the surface. This is so I can add some texture using a coarse sponge through some thin plastic wrap. This gives us a nice nondescript texture quickly and is a great starting point for realistic texture.

Next up, I want to add some wrinkles in the tongue using these silicone-tipped clay shapers. The marks they make start out looking a bit severe, but as you'll see, they soften off.

Incidentally, I am holding the board in a vice to allow me to work at this angle - this is the joy of having a solid armature underneath the sculpt.

Using a cheap bristle brush, I work the surface with some 99% alcohol. The alcohol lubricates the surface while the bristles soften the edges of these lines. Then, it quickly evaporates leaving the softened form looking more natural.

I work into these with a thin tool through some thicker plastic. I can also put some dimples like pores into it to just see how they look.

Again softening with heat, I use that coarse plastic brush to pop some more pore texture onto the back end of the tongue.

Flipping it over, I do some more of those criss-crossed wrinkles on the underside. Polishing them back with alcohol again softens everything making them look more natural.

A little more pore texture on the sides to graduate the effect, and we are nearly done with the sculpt.

One thing that helps to create a nice texture is to use the blade from a rasp or surform tool to shave down some plastiline into little bits.

These bits can then be put into a cup, and add some naphtha, commonly found as Zippo lighter fluid. Cover the blobs of plastiline and leave them covered for twenty minutes or so.

When you mix this up, it will turn into a thick liquid which can then be applied to the sculpt to create raised textures rather than just indented.

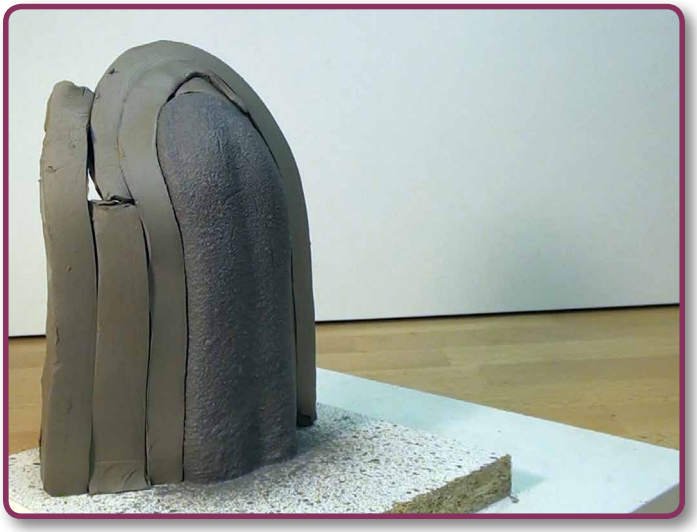
I start by flicking on a few layers. This creates the minute buds that cover the upper surface of a normal tongue.

The underside can be given some of those ghastly little nubs and nodules which you will find under your own tongue if you take a look.

There we have it, after a final coat of fine bumpiness, we can leave the sculpt overnight so the naphtha has time to evaporate and firm up before the mould is made.

2. The Mould

As with any multi-piece mould, we have to throw a wall up of some kind to enable the divided pieces to match up perfectly later. In this case I am using a grey water clay cut into 1/2" slices. By cutting it into thin strips, I can more easily bend them around the sculpt.



You can see this being done in my 'Using Fibreglass Part 1' video, where I use clay to make a mould of a full head cast.

The first strips laid against the tongue sculpt are supported from the back with sausages of clay. Later, cleaning all this off is a breeze with water, because water doesn't affect the oil based clay Laying consecutive strips, I build up a wall which is about an inch and a half wide all around.

I need to support this wall with some plaster bandage, but before I do I place some tissue on the exposed sculpt around the back half. Sticking this with water will ensure it stays in place and keeps the sculpt clean and free of plaster bandage mess.

I pop some plaster bandage on, and this piece is four layers thick, immersed in warm water and then squeezed to get most of the water out.

To further support this, I brace it with a wooden spatula, securing it at the top and bottom with a bit more bandage.

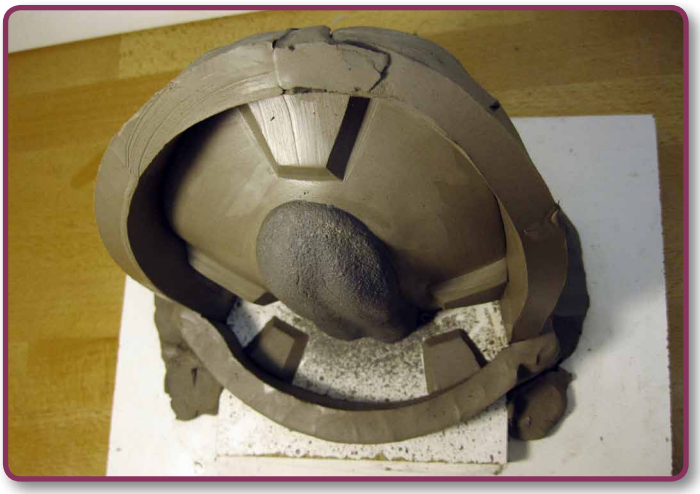
Using a flat bladed small tool, I can blend the strips together to create a flat, smooth wall, filling any holes with more clay as I go.

It is important to get a tight seal around the edge, and nudging the clay towards the sculpt carefully means clay touches all the way around but doesn't damage it. The cooled plastiline is harder than the soft clay, so the only damage here will come from my clumsiness.

A soft paintbrush with a little water can also be used to finish and create a clean join. I add some clay keys for location. *(This will make more sense later if you aren't familiar with keys and stuff!)*

I also added a low wall all around the edge to keep the plaster I am about to use all neat and square. I spray a wax release agent on the surface and allow it to dry. This will help prevent the water in the plaster from interfering with the water based clay.

Notice that I also added keys to the bottom. This is going to be for the core which we will get to after the mould is made.



Brushing the first layer on carefully will help catch all the detail. Once that is on, I plop more on using my hand, nudging out any air bubbles as I go.

I make it about an inch thick, and as the plaster sets and thickens, I can neaten the edges with a tool. I tilt the whole thing over so I don't have gravity working against me. As it thickens up, I can smooth it over with water and allow it to set up for half an hour.

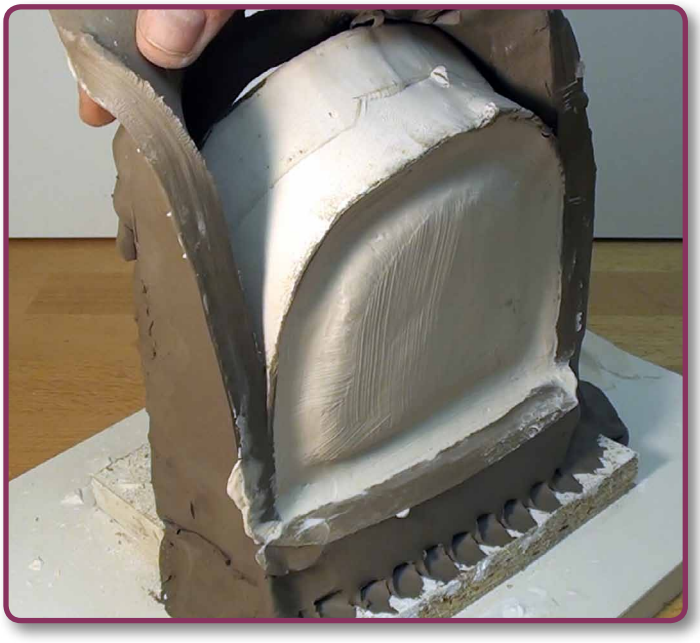
Once it sets up, you can easily pull the clay off and shave down any sharp edges. The plaster bandage should come away easy, and is pretty clean as the tissue did it's job.

The clay comes away easily and you can see how the raised keys I added earlier are now indented in the reverse side.

Once again, I add a wall around the edge and spray more wax release. Allow it to dry thoroughly, and it will stop the new plaster section I am about to add from bonding to this one.

It is easiest to lay the whole thing down and brush in again before piling the rest in as it starts to thicken slightly.

Once this has had a chance to set up for another half hour, I strip off the clay and clean it up. Doing this before the plaster has reached full strength makes it easier to do.

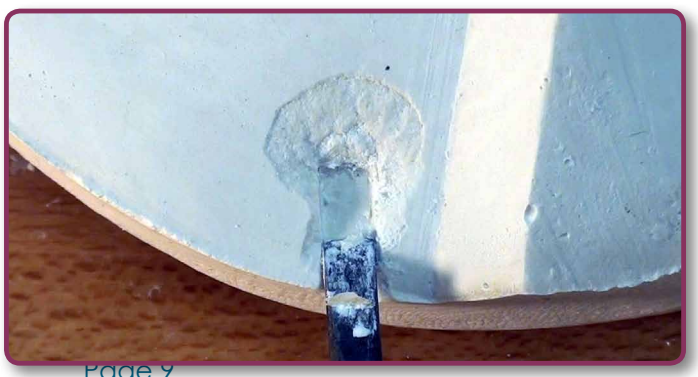


I pop a couple of clamps on there and leave the mould overnight to reach full strength before doing anything else to it.

The next morning, I open the mould up. You can clearly see the seam line between the two halves. By driving a screwdriver into this seam carefully. I can pop the two halves apart.

One side usually comes away first. This is normal, and doesn't mean there is a problem. The other side can be popped off easily from the sculpt by pushing it back.

So now we have our two mould halves. There is a little damage from the screwdriver, but this isn't a problem. The mould is made thick enough to take this.



Shaving down any sharp edges is easily done with a rasp tool called a surform. Rifflers such as these are also good for awkward areas.

I use lighter fluid again, this time to act as a solvent to help clean the inside of plastiline residue. I use cotton wool pads as these soak up the fluid and do a great job of wiping the inside without damaging the surface. Tissue would also work, but has a tendency to break up into a billion fragments.

Once it is clean, the moulding part is done. We now need to make a core so we can cast out hollow skins which can be worn over a real tongue.

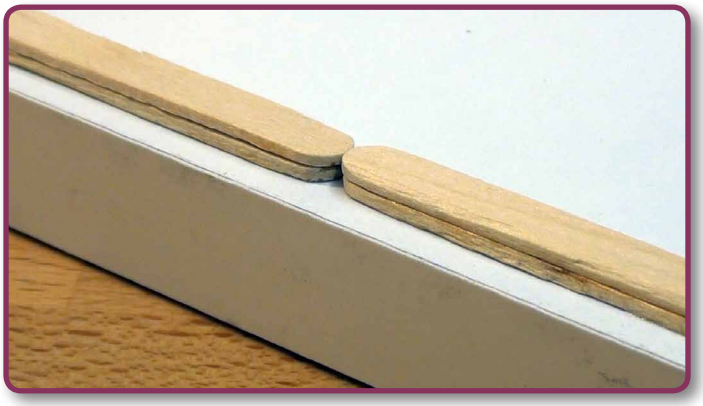
How lovely.

3. Core

A core in this case will be a slightly smaller tongue shape which will sit exactly in the right place in the mould. This will allow us to repeatedly make hollow skins the same thickness each time.

To make a core, we'll start with a simple board like this. I have super glued two rows of coffee stirrers onto the edges.

I want the skin of the tongues to be about 3mm thick, so to create the depth I used two layers of coffee stirrers like this.



Anything the right thickness will work, but these were convenient!

You can see when the mould is assembled, the seam line is pretty thin because the mould halves sit nice and tight together.

I need to lay an even layer of plastiline into each half, and using a rolling pin on a blob of warm plastiline, I have been able to quickly roll out an even sheet like this.

Laying a large piece into the tongue area, I can gently press it into place, helping it to conform accurately without denting or distorting the delicate sheet too much.

Carefully trimming the excess off with a thin bladed tool gives a neat finish.

Once both halves are done, check that the mould can still close up correctly, and then secure the two halves together with a strong duct tape or bungee cord. These methods are more convenient than clamps.

One handy tip is to use a bowl of loose gravel to support the mould at the right angle. By twisting the mould into the right position, you can leave it securely for the next stage.

A quick clay wall is added and supported with bandage like before. This will enable the core to sit

securely in place by having a decent, thick base. A quick spray of wax and we're ready to make the core.

Dropping a little plaster into the deepest part first, tap and roll the mould to push out any air you might trap, and gradually top it up until there is a nice solid block.

I leave the plaster for an hour before taking the wall away and shaving down any sharp corners. I will open this once the plaster has cooled down in an hour or two.

The mould pops open easily, and the plastiline layer is pulled away to reveal the core - the same shape as the tongue, just 3mm thinner all around!

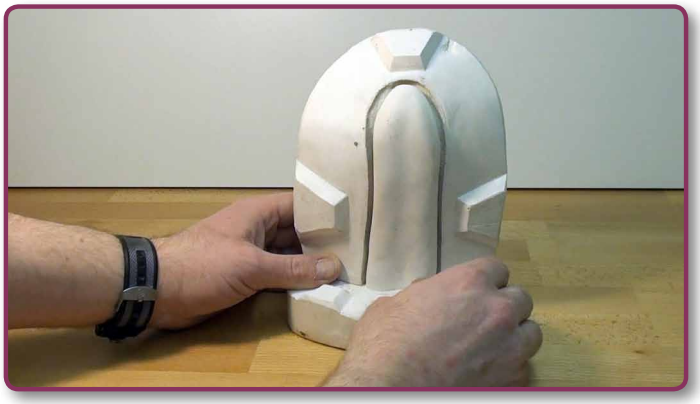
Another handy tip is if you keep the plastiline you peel off here, you will be able to use it to estimate the volume of silicone needed later to fill this mould.

The seam line in the plaster can be shaved down with a riffler or coarse sandpaper if you prefer.

There is a little plaster which spilled through the seam line and made it onto the mould surface. To stop this from being an issue, I put a thin layer of vaseline on the inside of both halves of the mould before the plastiline sheet was added.

This means the plaster here can be popped off carefully with a tool.

By popping half the mould on, you can see how the tongue core sits perfectly, floating in the middle and leaving a gap all the way around.



Drilling three holes around the base with a 6mm drill bit will allow me to inject the silicone in here and allow the air the silicone will displace to escape

So, that's the mould and core finished. This mould should be able to make dozens of tongues, so lets make a some.

Check the second part of the video and get the free workbook to follow along!

STUART

