The Bionic Gear Bag – tutorial

1. Step: Cutting and Interfacing (pieces B-L)

You find the exact measurements (fabric, interfacing, zippers etc.) in the official pattern at Craftsy:

I can't work with the original superlong tutorial in the pattern, therefore I wrote this much shorter tutorial for myself.

If you can't see the photos in this pdf very well, have a look at my site and enlarge them:

In some countries it's difficult to get the Pellon-Interfacing. Vilene G700 is the alternative.

I ignore the measurements for the Pellon/G700, I cut it exactly ½ inch shorter than the fabric-pieces.

The reason:
I sew with ¼ inch seam-allowance. That way I don't sew through the thick interfacing, only fabric to fabric.

The pieces B-F get the interfacing. In my bag the fabric for B-F is directional (the piano-keys). I put the letter of the piece on the back of the interfacing. Where the letter is, is 'up'.

It's easy to iron the interfacing to the fabric: take a damp piece of cloth, press for 10-15 seconds – that's it. It should like this afterwards:
pieces B, E and F – front

pieces B, E and F – back with interfacing

piece C – front

piece C – back with interfacing

piece D – front

piece D – back with interfacing
The 2 pieces G and the 6 pieces H don't get an interfacing. These pieces are the inner part of the 4 zipper-pockets, no interfacing necessary.

You need 4 side-pieces I, two pairs that mirror each other. The outside parts get the interfacing, the inside parts don't. 
In my example: the outside will be blue, there is the interfacing. To get the right size, I cut the interfacing exactly the same size as the fabric-pieces. Than I draw a line with a pencil ¼ inch away from the edge and cut. After that I ironed the interfacing to the blue pieces.

The inner side will be the guitar-fabric. And it is directional, so I had to pay attention how to cut the fabric.

The 2 bindings J I cut – different from the pattern – with 2,5 inch width. And to be safe: longer than the pattern says.

The 2 zipper-bindings K I cut with the width from the pattern, but also longer.

The 2 zipper-tabs L I cut as it says in the pattern.

I always buy zippers much longer than necessary (the 4 pocket-zippers and the long exterior-zipper).
2. Piece A – preparing the exterior part

Piece A, the exterior part, has to get a thick batting, the Pellon or G700 is not thick enough. You can take thin polyester, but I prefer the standard cotton batting. I love the touch of quilted cotton! It's quite thick on the bag, so there is a lot of protection 😊.

If the fabric is not directional, you can take one piece of fabric.

If it is directional (like mine, all the guitars go in one direction), you should cut and sew the piece in the middle. It doesn't have to be the exact middle, 1 inch doesn't matter. But 2 inch might be too much, the seam might show on the side.

I cut fabric and batting about 2 inches larger than the pattern says.

The reason:
I quilt piece A and the batting together, the finished piece always shrink during the quilting. Ok, it doesn't shrink 2 inches - but I want to be safe. When I made the first bag, it ended too small – I had to start all over again with a new piece A and batting. This won't happen a second time!

I use Nylon and Superior Bottom Line for the quilting, but of course you can use whatever you love.
3. Zippers

Usually I sew the zippers with the zipper on the left side. My husband is a leftie, so all zippers are on the right (when the zipper is closed).

The original tutorial for the zippers is actually a good one!

There are two steps to sew the zippers to the pocket:
- sew the zipper to the fabric
- sew the next piece of fabric to the other half of the zipper.

1. Step, zipper to fabric

- Fold the zipper in half and put a pin in the middle
- Fold piece B and put a pin in the middle on the top
- Fold piece G and put a pin in the middle

zipper

piece B

piece G
- lay piece B on the table, right side up
- zipper on top, right side down
- piece G on top, right side down

piece B, right side up
piece G on top, right side down
zipper on top, right side down

--> make sure that the pins are on top of each other
--> pin everything together with Wonderclips, take the pins out

start in the middle, put Wonderclips on the sandwich
Wonderclips are on, pins are out.

The edges of the fabrics don’t meet, the zipper is longer anyway. But that doesn’t matter, you will cut everything later.

Now put your zipper-foot on the machine and sew everything together with ¼ inch seam allowance. The stitchlength should be 2.0.

If you reach the zipper-thing: needle down, lift the foot and pull the zipper carefully behind the foot. Another option: buy the zipper much longer. Than the zipper can stay way outside the fabric and is no trouble at all. That’s what you see on these photos!

Now you are back at the iron-board: Press the seam, then fold piece G (inner part of the pocket) open and iron the seam, then fold zipper with piece G again so you can see only the right side of piece B. Iron again.

Back to the sewing-machine! Much more fun than ironing, at least for me. Topstitch that seam, stitchlength 3.0.
On the photos you see the topstitching on the right side of piece not very good (black on black), much easier to see on the back (i.e. piece G).

From now on always:
- sew the zipper with stitchlength 2,0
- topstitch the zipper with 3,0

2. Step: sew the next piece of fabric to the other half of the zipper

Sew piece C and the 2nd piece G to the zipper
Same procedure as before: fold all three parts and put a pin in the middle

piece C and the 2nd piece G  below : zipper (already sewn to piece B)
On the following photo you can see the lower part of piece C, right side up. Put the zipper on top (the zipper is already attached to piece B and the 1st G-piece), right side down. Put the 2nd G-piece on top, right side down.

piece C, right side up

2nd G-piece, right side down

And again: make sure that the pins match and fix everything with Wonderclips
Repeat these two steps again and again until the 4 zippers and all pieces B-F and G-H are sewed together. The result should look like this:

Now is the best moment to attach the first magnetic snap onto piece B. The pattern says where to place it. I take the 'female' half of the snap for piece B (and for piece I). The ‘male’ parts are for the fabric-dish.

I don't have photos, this guitar bag doesn't get a dish.
4. Pockets

Now you sew the zipper-pockets at the bottom. The pattern says how far away from the zipper you have to sew.

First you pin the pocket, so it lays neat and flat (fold exactly in the middle of the zipper). Then mark the distance with a pen. You won't see these lines later on the pocket, except for the one on piece B.

On the two photos you see line and seam on piece B.

Here's the problem:
If I mark the 4 seams and compare the bag with the pattern for piece I – they don't match. The pattern says where the seams should be – but my seams are not at these places.

My solution: I sew the first seam on piece B. I pin the 3 seams on the other pockets and compare them with the pattern of piece I. I move the 3 pinned seams until they match the pattern, then I sew.
I don't know why I have these problems. The pieces B-E are cut perfectly. Maybe the seam allowance (when I do the zippers) is not ok? Hopefully I'll figure it out when I make my third bag!

After that you trim the edges:
First (!!!) pull the zipper-things in the middle of the zipper. Lay the bag on the table, match the lower part of piece B as an orientation-line on your cutting-mat. The bag with all its zippers must lay flat. Take your long ruler and the rollcutter and cut slowly but merciless through everything (pieces, linings, zippers) – best not take your newest blade! If necessary finish the job with your scissors.

I didn't take a photo of the cutting – you can see the lines on the mat and I'm afraid the sizes are covered by the copyright of the author.

Now the bag looks already much more like a bag! The author recommends to stitch the pockets on the edges with 1/8 inch seam allowance. I think it's a good advice, this seam disappears later in the pieces I, but the bag is more stable during the next steps.
5. Preparing the side-pieces I

If you make the fabric-dish:
Attach the 2nd magnetic snap on the inner part of piece I (the one on the right side of the bag).
The pattern says where to place it.
(Sorry, no dish for the guitar-bag, so no photos. But it would be the guitar fabric for this bag).

Put both pairs right sides together and sew with 1/4 inch seamallowance – but leave the long edge at
the bottom open.
(Ignore the interface if it's uneven and sew with ¼ inch anyway.)

Join pairs       sew with ¼ inch seamallowance

Leave the long side open

Along the seam: cut a V into the 3 corners, cut small cuts along the curve.
Turn the piece inside out.

V-cuts and small cuts       turned
Topstitch as close as possible to the edge but only on the seams. Leave the long edge open.

Topstitched close to the edge

Turn again. And cut away carefully with scissors all the redundant fabric. Turn again.

Topstitch again, but this time ¼ inch from the edge of the fabric (not from the former topstitching). And this time topstitch around the whole piece.

The long edge gets the topstitching, even if it's open and not serged. That doesn't matter in this case. This long fancy seam serves as an orientation line during the following steps. This seam is one of the reasons why I prefer to sew this bag with Superior SoFine/Bottom Line. Both threads are extremely thin. During the following steps there will be so many seams on top of the fancy seam – it's good to not make them thicker than necessary!

Cut the dogear at the bottom
Put one piece on top of the pattern, the other parallel below. Mark the 4 lines with a chalk marker.

Iron the folds (blue will be the outdie, so I folded around the guitars and ironed).
6. Attaching the side-pieces I

Now comes the trickiest part. Though – it wasn’t that tricky at the 2nd bag.

Let’s start:

Take one piece I and put it along the first pocket. The fancy seam of piece I should match the pocket-seam (you see that on the left photo below). Fold and pin with Wonderclips along the fold.

Start the sewing at the bottom of the pocket, several stitches after the fancy seam. Sew in reverse until the fancy seam, but not farther! It stays open. Then forward until the top of the pocket (be careful while crossing the zipper), reverse to secure the seam and finished.
start at the fancy seam

Do the 2nd zipper-pocket the same way, but this time there is no room to wiggle! The 2nd pocket is very close to the 1st pocket.

The 3rd and 4th pockets are easy, you have lots of space to maneuver. Always start at the bottom (fancy seam) and end on top.
Do the other side, start again with the front zipper-bag. The 2nd pocket of the 2nd side is the trickiest part of the whole bag. As soon as you managed that, the rest is 'plain sailing'!

Now you have to sew the sidepieces I in a long seam (starting at the front) to the bottom of the bag. Actually the bottom consists of all the pieces B-F.

(Now is the point where you may realize that you forgot to trim the seams at the bottom of the zipper pockets. No problem, you can fix that now).
Pin with Wonderclips.

It's looking easy ...

... getting tricky ...

... still tricky ...

... and looking easy again!

It should look neat at the bottom, it doesn't look very neat at the bottom of my guitar bag.

But it looks very bag-liky from above!!
2nd side is attached
7. Attaching piece A

Now comes the big moment: is piece A long and wide enough?

I had cut it huge for the guitar bag. And it was long enough. And it was way to wide – my fault. After step 4 (sewing the pockets) I had to trim the pockets a lot, I was kind of sloppy when I sewed them.

I started trimming the right side of piece A and fixed it with Wonderclips to the bag, then sewed it (on the fancy seam again).

I carefully measured and cut the other side of piece A along the bag with the rollcutter.

And as usual fixed it with Wonderclips and sewed.
Again on the fancy seam…
8. Binding J

Prepare the side-bindings J like any other binding, fold and iron them (right side out).

Fix them on the bag and sew them on (on the fancy seam, where else). The open side of the binding joins the open side of the fancy seam.

Fold the binding and toptstitch it from the other side.

Do the same on the other side.

Now trim the front edge on piece B and the rear edge of piece F, sorry, no photo. But you see the arrows on the photo.
9. Long zipper

Prepare the zipper-bindings K like you did the side-bindings J.

Prepare the long zipper and the pieces as you did the small zipper and the pockets: Fold them in the middle, put in a pin the middle, lay them together in this order:

- binding (raw edge on top)
- piece A (right-side to the binding)
- zipper (right side up)

Sew with stitchlength 2.0 and your zipper-foot (I used the wrong foot, see the photos…).

Remember: I made this bag for a lefthanded man, the zipper-thingy is on the right. For right-handed people put the zipper-thingy on the left side.

Fold the binding and topstitch with stitchlength 3.0.
Do the other half of the zipper the same way, but open the zipper first, otherwise there is so much bag to sew around.

Now cut the zipper to the final length (as mentioned in the pattern).

Make these tiny things L. My advice: close all 4 side-seams with backstitches, otherwise the seams open as soon as you start to turn the inside out.
If you want to be perfect, cut the edge at the bottom on the diagonal (as I did on the photo, but no, I’m not perfect!).

Turn the open edge of the piece inwards (tricky, but possible), insert the zipper-ends and topstitch around everything, beware of the zipper while sewing!
Not very neat, but it was late in the evening

Now attach these tiny pieces in the middle of the fancy seam onto the fancy seam. This is the last seam on the fancy seam. It was so thick now that I actually broke the needle during this very last piece!

Done!