IMAGING TRICKS

Ageing in Photoshop

Nobody wants to grow old any quicker than is natural. But with good photos and imaging techniques, no-one is safe in *Photoshop*…

O ften photographers and digital artists are asked to improve upon the people they use in their images. Cloning out wrinkles, smoothing porous skin and re–colouring grey hair is generally par for the course. More often than not, younger is better. Magazines and advertisements sell youth as beauty — our entire culture is obsessed with looking younger than we really are.

That is why it was a bit of a surprise for one of our leading illustrators, Derek Lea, when three separate commissions from three different clients asked for something similar: ageing. The first art director asked if it was possible to photograph a woman, and then age her 30 years or so. Of course the answer was yes. Anything is possible if you have the initiative and a working knowledge of *Photoshop*, and this issue we're sharing the secrets of how these briefs were met.

After the first image was completed, a strategy was developed in *Photoshop*. Using carefully planned photography, layers, masks, channels and a handful of other *Photoshop* features, the ageing process was greatly accelerated. A highly–believable result can be achieved

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Part 1: **Preparing the first two images**

It's important to shoot the two subjects using similar lighting. You'll always have to tweak the scans to match up colour and accentuate the signs of age…

Preserve the structure

When working on ageing a face, it's important that it still looks like the same person when you've finished. A good rule of thumb is that soft areas of skin will sag with the effects of gravity. These are the areas to apply your ageing techniques; places like the bags under the eyes, jowls and so on. Leave basic bone structure alone as well as the shape of the nose and the position of the eyes. To age areas that will not sag, like the forehead and the bridge of the nose, add pores and subtle wrinkles to the skin but leave the basic shape of these areas untouched so that the structure of the persons face is still evident.
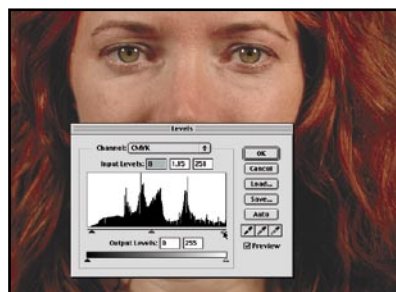
1 Open the file called woman.psd. This is the base photo for the face, so we'll need to do some basic colour corrections to get it looking good. First, make a new Levels adjustment layer and increase the contrast by darkening the darks and brightening the lights.
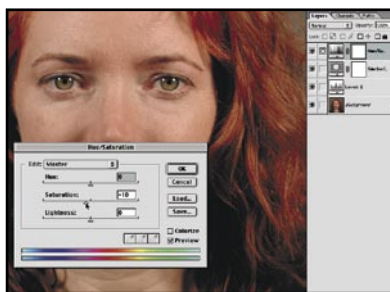
2 Create a Selective Colour adjustment layer, and add in some more black and cyan to the blacks to make them stronger in the image. Since her skin is looking a little saturated and red, create a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer and decrease the saturation by about 10.
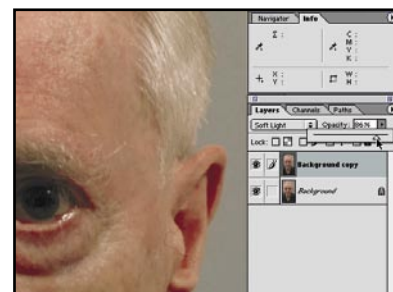
3 Open the file named man.psd. What we want to do here is accentuate the wrinkles. To boost the contrast, make a duplicate of the background layer and change the Blending mode to Soft Light. Decrease the opacity of the layer slightly to lessen the effect.
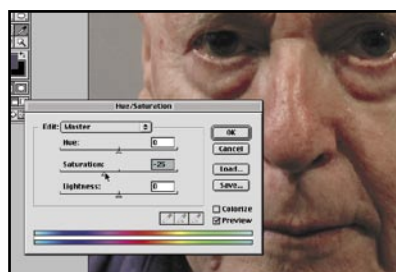
4 A side effect of using the Soft Light layer is that the saturation of colour increases greatly. Create a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer and decrease the saturation by about 25 or so. This preserves the contrast created and removes the excess saturation from the image. Create a new layer with a Colour Blending mode.

5 Reduce the opacity of the layer to around 60. With your windows arranged so that you can see the woman image, use the Eyedropper tool to sample colour from some of the areas of the woman's face. Use a large soft brush to paint with this colour on your new colour layer. This will help match the images and even-out the man's skintones.

6 Flatten the man image if you are happy with it. Select Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask. Set the amount to 130, the radius to 1 pixel and the threshold to 0 levels. This will add sharpness and definition to wrinkles and pores. Now use Image>Adjust>Selective Colour to remove some cyan and black from the neutrals.

Part 2: **The mouth, neck, and cheeks**

Here we start to add in the first signs of age around the lower section of the head. Remember, we are only doing half the face here, so you can see before and after…
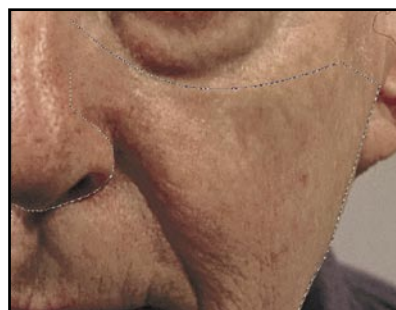
1 Use the Pen tool to draw a path around the right half of the man's lower face and neck, but leave the nose out for now. Generate a selection from the path and copy (Command/Ctrl+C) the contents of the selection into the clipboard. Now, in woman.psd select the top-most layer and paste (Command/Ctrl+P).
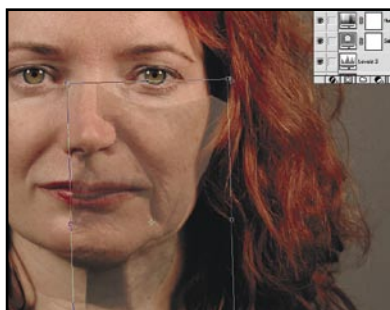
2 Reduce the opacity of your new layer so that you can see through it. You will need to position the section of old face in the appropriate area. It's a little small, so use Free Transform (Command/Ctrl+T) to enlarge and reshape the section. You'll need to enlarge it a little more horizontally than vertically, and rotate it a little.

3 Returning the layer opacity to 100 per cent shows how much difference remains between the two different skin colours. Use Image>Adjust> Selective Colour to make the old skin match the new. Concentrate on the neutrals; you'll need to pull a little colour out of each channel, keep an eye on the changes. Add a little more black and magenta to the blacks here, too.

Photographing the faces

When shooting two or more people to use in a single image, use identical lighting situations and camera positioning. Leave the lights and camera set up if you can, because sometimes you won't be able to shoot all of the people at the same time. If you must move the camera and lights between shoots, measure distances and draw a diagram of the positions of your equipment. This can save a lot of time in *Photoshop* later, trying to match up two images with varying lighting situations. Also, using a grey background when shooting is helpful later on. After your images are scanned and you want to colour match them, look at the grey backgrounds and you'll see which way the hues are shifting from image to image.

Lighting techniques

Ideally, when shooting the faces, you'll have a light on either side aimed at the subject on a 45 degree angle for an even light. Shoot the young person like this. When it's time to shoot the old person, leave the light position and distance the same, but raise the light sources up higher and aim then downward so that the lights are shining down on the face from above. This will help to increase the shadows that are created by wrinkles and bags under the eyes, defining these areas a little better.
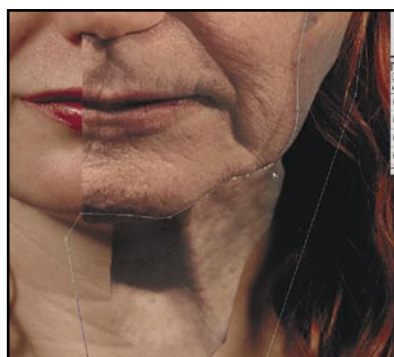
1 Save your selective colour settings, that way you can reload them when you bring in other sections of the face and use these settings as a starting point. Reduce the layer opacity again so you can see the underlying image and draw a path that follows along the old man's jaw line and surrounds the area to the right of the woman's face and neck.

2 Generate a selection from the path and return the layer opacity to 100 per cent. Choose Layer>Add Layer Mask>Reveal All and select the Paintbrush tool. Use a large soft brush with a low opacity setting and a fill of black to paint out hard-edged sections of the neck on the layer mask. Paint over the area to the right of the face in the
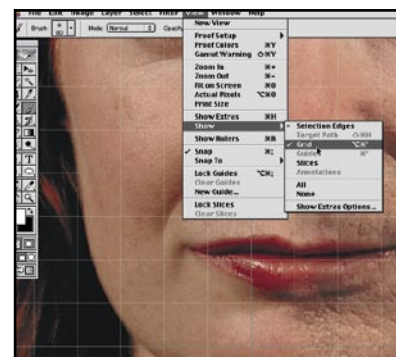
3 Invert the selection (Command/Shift+I), and use the paintbrush on the layer mask to fade out the hard edges on the face. You will need to use smaller soft brushes in areas like the lips and around the nose. Be sure to soften the area which defines the right side of her jaw. Deselect
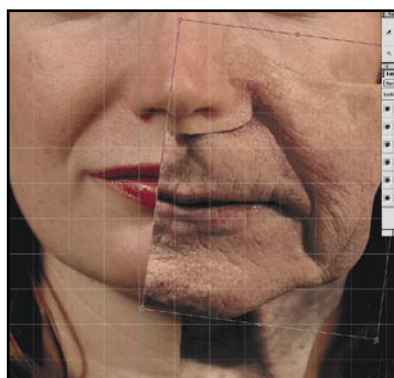
4 In order for this image to look realistic, things must match up perfectly. Choose view> Show>Grid to see how things line up. Notice how the right side of the jaw is sitting up a little higher than the left. The rest of the features match up well, so we aren't going to mess with this layer.
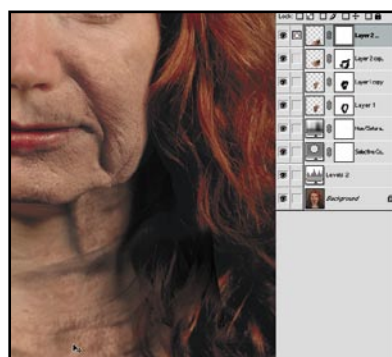
5 Duplicate the layer and disable the layer mask by shift-clicking on it. Use free-transform to move the layer down and rotate it about 7 degrees and shear it vertically about 3 degrees. When finished, click on the layer mask icon to enable it. Now paint with white on the lower right area only, to reveal it, and paint with black on all other areas, to hide them.

6 Hide the grid and open the file: neck.psd. Draw a rough selection around the neck area in the image using the Lasso tool. Hold down the command key, and drag and drop the contents of the selection into your working file as a new layer. Use free-transform to rotate, scale and position the

7 Change the blending mode of the layer to darken and reduce the opacity of the layer. Use Image>Adjust>Hue Saturation to decrease the saturation and remove some of the red. Use the cloning tool with "use all layers" deselected to pick up sections of the darker wrinkles and add them to the lacking areas of the neck.

8 Add a layer mask and paint with black, using a large soft brush on the layer, to soften the edges along the left and the bottom. Use a hard edged brush to paint out the areas which creep up above the lower jaw line and obscure the face. Duplicate this layer and drag the duplicate lower down the neck.
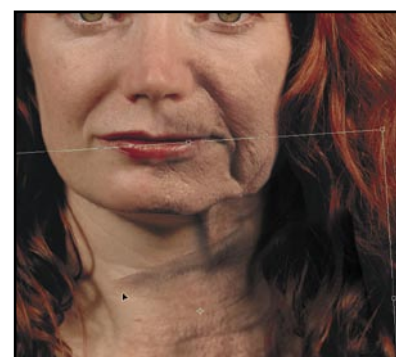
9 Use free-transform to rotate and increase the size of the layer. Since the layer already has a mask, use a brush with a white fill on the mask, to remove areas that are masked out that you want to expose. Again, use a brush with a fill of black to hide unwanted areas. Remember, the lower the opacity, the softer the effect.

Part 3: Eyes, nose, and forehead

Now let's concentrate on forehead wrinkles and pores, grey hair in the eyebrow and sagging skin around the eye; topping it off with pores on the surface of the nose…

Finding a model

You will have no problem finding a person to be your youthful model — everyone would like to think of themselves as a true representation of youth and beauty. Finding someone who is willing to model for the aged portion is the tricky part. First thing: wherever possible, use a man. The truth of the matter is that women are much more sensitive than men about looking old; it's hardly surprising. How many magazines are out there geared to women that are all about looks, exercise, fitness, fashion and make–up? Our culture preaches to women about the value of their looks, that youth is beautiful and age something to hide. Tell your model that you intend to lighten them in the least flattering way and that you are going to create stronger wrinkles with lights and digital techniques to make them look much older and weathered. That way, when they eventually see the exaggerated results, they won't feel so bad. Be understanding and polite — age is sensitive territory.

1 In the file: man.psd, use the Pen tool to draw a path around the area underneath the man's eye. Generate a selection from the path, and either drag and drop or copy and paste the contents of the selection into your working file as a new layer. Position the section under the eye and use Free Transform to adjust the size.
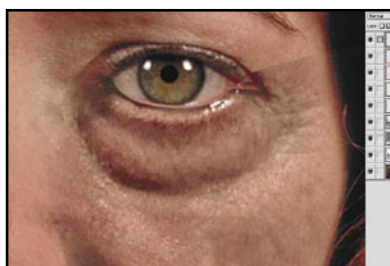

2 Use Selective Colour and load the settings that you saved previously to adjust the colour to match, tweaking it further if necessary. Add a layer mask and use a large soft brush on the mask with a Fill of black to mask out the areas on the left, right and bottom. Use a much smaller brush to carefully soften the area where the eyelid meets

3 Again in the file man.psd, draw a path around the area above the eye, including the eyebrow and a little of the area above it. Bring that part into the working file as a new layer and apply the same techniques: Selective Colour, Free Transform, and masking out hard edges.

4 Now, for forehead wrinkles, select a piece of the old man's forehead and bring it into your file as a new layer. Resize it, reposition it, and mask out the hard edges. Adjust the colour and reduce the opacity of the layer to 50 per cent. Next, duplicate this layer, increase the opacity to 100 per cent and change the Blending mode to Darken.
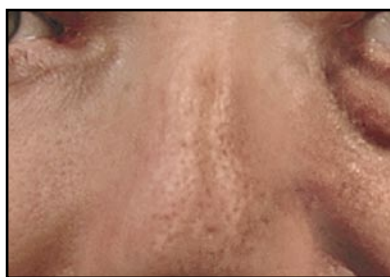
5 Repeat this process, but this time use a section of the old man's nose. We want to introduce some deep pores to age the nose. This method of stacking two of the same layers with different blending modes can effectively exaggerate cracks, wrinkles and pores in any area of the face, to increase the aged look.


6 There will still be a few smooth areas here and there. Create a new layer on top of the others and choose the Rubber Stamp tool, making sure that Use All Layers is enabled. Select porous areas in the image as origin points, then clone these areas into the smooth parts of the face using varying brush sizes and opacity.

Part 4: Grey hair

Premature grey has been taken to the extreme in the following steps. Pray that this doesn't happen to you…

1 With the base layer active, Select All (Command/Ctrl+A) and Copy. Create a new channel in the Channels palette and paste the image into it. Use levels to increase the contrast of the channel. Now, using a number of different brushes with black fills, paint out all of the image except for the hair highlights.
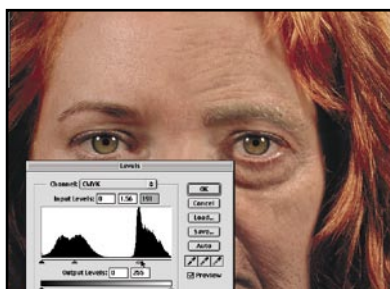
2 When finished, Command/Ctrl-click the Channel icon to generate a selection from it. With this selection active, create a new Levels adjustment layer. Brighten the midtones and highlights considerably, and don't worry too much about the hue on this layer. Now load the selection from the channel again and this time create a Selective Colour layer.

3 Strip away yellow and magenta from almost every section except the blacks. Keep going until you think the hair looks light enough. There you have it: the art of premature ageing is at your disposal. At this point, feel free to dress up the other parts of the image with surface textures and different backgrounds as we've done in the opening illustration, or have some fun with the other side of her face. ca