

Post Production Make Over



I don't want to get into any arguments with the purists about whether post work is good or bad. I don't post work all my renders, but I do use some form of post work on most of my renders. This tutorial is meant to give you some ideas of how much there is to explore with postproduction, even if you can't actually draw a straight line.

This image was never meant to be anything more than a test for some dynamic hair I was working on in Poser 5. We're going to see if we can turn it into a reasonable portrait.

Scope:

- The alpha channel (export from Poser and use as mask)
- Getting rid of that white masking line
- Use of layer blending mode
- Use of filters

Programs/Files Required

- Poser 4 or 5 p3 file for the image you wish to post work
- A 2D paint program that has layering capability

This tutorial was written on a PC using Photoshop 6. It assumes you have a basic working knowledge of your 2D paint program.

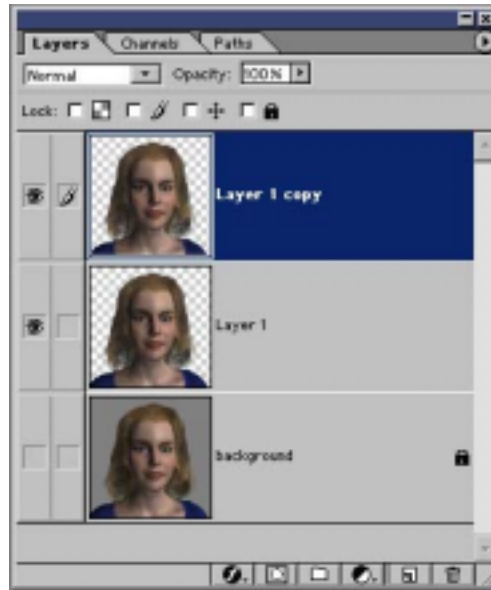
The Make Over

1. To make life easier for this exercise, delete any objects that may be behind your subject. Render your Poser file with antialiasing. We're going to want our subject on a transparent background the easiest way to do this in Poser 4 is to File-Export the image as a Photoshop (PSD) file. This automatically creates an alpha channel for the objects that are in the scene. We want to use that alpha channel to mask out the background. In Poser 5 you have the alternative of File-Export the image as a PNG. This file format automatically makes all parts of the blank background transparent.

NOTE: If you're using Poser 5 and exported a PNG file, you're ready to go to step 5... but steps 2 - 4 do contain a neat masking 'trick' to get rid of that white line most people seem to get on masked selections.

2. Open your exported image in Photoshop. You should have your Layers and Channels showing (under the Windows pull-down menu). Left-click on Channels. Select the bottom channel, the B&W silhouette labeled Alpha 1. At the very bottom of that window click on the left-most button to load that alpha channel as the selection. Left-click the eyeball open on the RGB channel and then the eyeball closed on the alpha channel and go back to your Layers window.
3. While holding down the Cntrl key, tap 'C' and then 'V' without releasing the Cntrl key. You should now have an image of your subject on a transparent background. However, if you were to put a black background behind it, you'd have the dreaded white line around it.
4. To get rid of that white line, go down to the very bottom of the Layer pull-down menu and select Matting-remove white matte.
5. Poser 5 PNG people, Cntrl-select your background layer then while holding down the Cntrl key, tap 'C' and then 'V' without releasing the Cntrl key (the background layer is a locked layer and we need to make some changes).

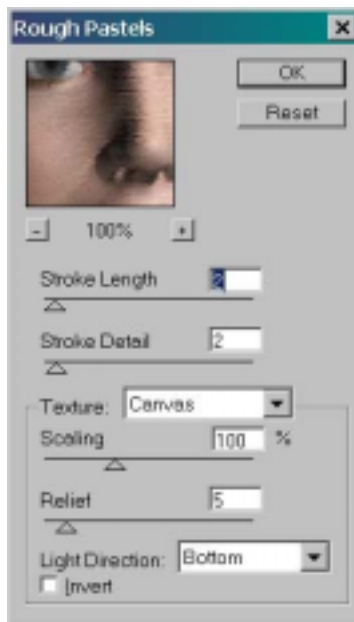
- At this point everyone should have two layers... the background layer with the original exported image and a working transparent Layer 1. Left-click the eyeball closed on the background (original) layer. Select Layer 1 and drag it down to the new layer button (next to the little trashcan). Now you have a third layer, Layer 1 copy and this is the selected layer.



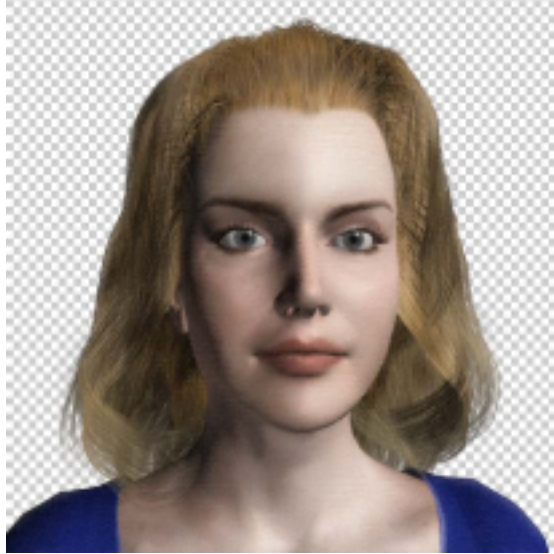
- Ok, this is where the fun begins... at the top of the Layers window, click on the little down-triangle and change the selected layer's blending mode from Normal to Screen. Now click on the little Opacity triangle and drag the slider to 50% (you can also just type in 50). On the Layer pull-down menu select Merge Visible...and you're back to two layers again with the top layer selected.
- Drag the selected layer down to the new layer button. Cntrl-click this layer to select the non-transparent areas. On the Select pull-down menu, Modify, Contract by 1 pixel.
- On the Filter pull-down menu select Distort, Diffuse Glow and a dialog box opens up. The settings I'm using here are Graininess-6, Glow Amount-5, Clear Amount-15. Make the Opacity of the selected layer 50% and merge the visible layers.

NOTE: If we hadn't done that **Modify Contract**, we'd now have a lot of white matting around the subject.

10. Drag the selected layer down to the new layer button. If the non-transparent areas are not still selected from the previous step, Cntrl-click this layer to select the non-transparent areas. On the Select pull-down menu, Modify, Contract by 1 pixel.
11. On the Filter pull-down menu select Artistic, Rough Pastels. Here are the settings I've used in this example (stroke length is 2):



12. Set the opacity for the selected layer to 50%. Cntrl-D to de-select the marquee. Merge the visible layers. At this point you should have your background (original image) layer and the layer that we've been working with. Your image probably looks something like this:



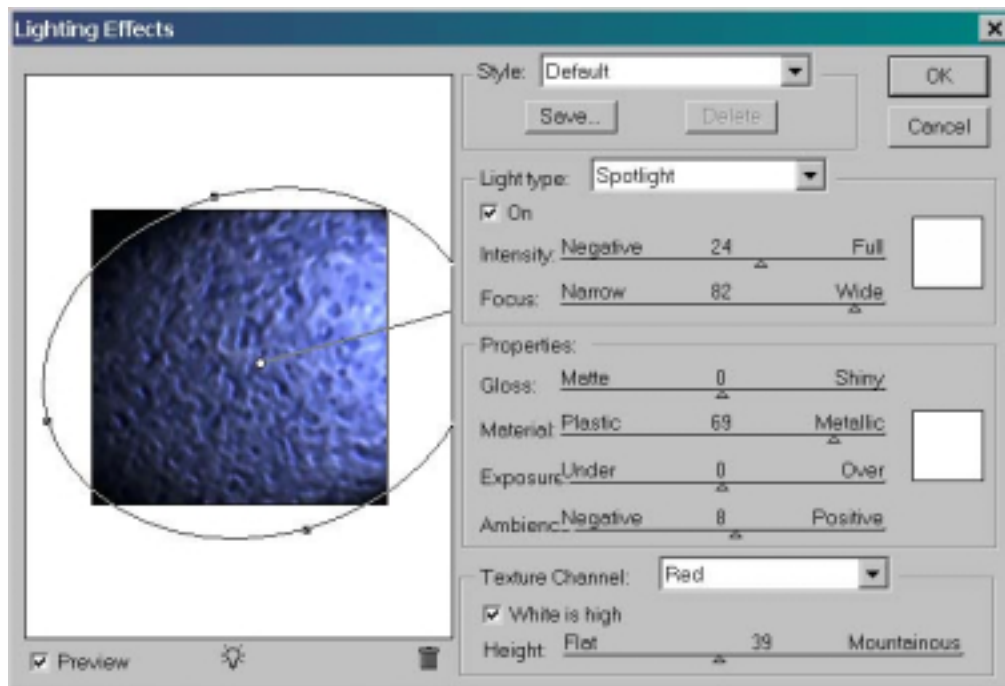
Ok... this is starting to look better. Now we're going to lay in a background to go with our reworked image.

13. Select your background layer (you don't have to click open the eyeball... we don't want that layer visible). Click on the new layer button at the bottom of the Layers window to insert a blank layer above your background layer. Both your 'worked' layer and the new blank layer should be visible and the blank layer should be selected.
14. Either select a color that compliments your image or use the eyedropper to select one of the colors used in the image. I used the eyedropper to select the blue from her clothing. Be sure your blank layer is selected and Alt-delete to fill the blank layer with your chosen color.
15. From the Filter pull-down select Noise, Add Noise. The settings I'm using are Amount 50%, Gaussian, Monochromatic.
16. From the Filter pull-down select Other, Maximum with a radius of 1. Now go back again, this time select Minimum with a radius of 5.
17. From the Filter pull-down select Noise, Median (I used a radius of 8).
18. From the Filter pull-down select Blur, Gaussian (I used a radius of 3).

19. Ok... now this is the tricky step... from the Filter pull-down, Render, Lighting Effects.

NOTE: The main thing to remember here is that we want to enhance our image, not overpower it with the background. In the dialog box, the light has handles that you can use to shape the light's direction and shape. You can also select the light, itself, and move it around. At the bottom of the dialog box you can select one of your texture channels to use as an alpha channel to create a 3D effect.

Here are the settings I used in the example:



20. Now for the final touches... we're going to lightly blur the edges of the portrait image to 'set' it into our new background. Select your top layer (the portrait one that we worked). On the toolbar, select the blur tool. The brush I used for this was a 35, normal mode, 100% pressure (all layers was not checked). Stroke around the edges of image to soften them slightly into the background.

NOTE: Brush size will vary depending on the size of your image. If you're not sure, by all means make a duplicate of your portrait layer to

test the effect of the brush. However, you only want one portrait layer 'visible' against your new lighted-background layer.

21. Select your lighted background layer. From the Filter pull-down, select Texture, Texturizer. You want to select settings that match your portrait layer as closely as possible. I used Canvas, 100% with a relief of 2.
22. Merge the visible layers (portrait and lighted background). You should have two layers... merged portrait and the locked background with your original image. The final results probably look something like this:



