



■ BY BEN WILLMORE

Emergency! Image in Distress!

A few months ago, I started the Problem Image Service, sort of an emergency room for troubled Photoshop-ers needing a place to take their ailing images. When I receive an image problem that makes for a good article, I'll feature it here. This month's image was sent in by Eric Harmon.

Eric wrote, "So I did a photoshoot with this young lady a few weeks ago and unfortunately, the day before the shoot, she went out and got herself a nice sunburn. I can't find any relatively fool-proof way to blend the sunburned portion of her body with the unburned portion."



It took only five minutes to fix Eric's image. Here's how: Start by choosing **Select>Color Range**, then click on the darkest red area of the sunburn. Next, hold Shift and click on all the other sunburned areas until most of them appear in the Color Range preview area. We had to experiment with the fuzziness setting to get a good representation of the sunburned area. Click OK, and with selection in hand, open the Info palette and choose Curves from the Adjustment layer pop-up menu at the bottom of the Layers palette. To get Photoshop to work on the correct tone from



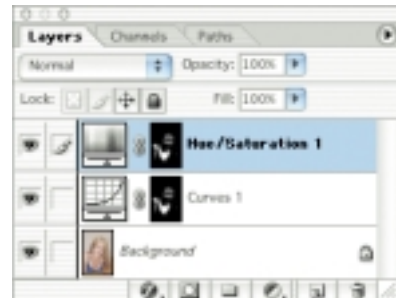
the image, hold Shift-Command (PC: Shift-Control) and then click on the sunburned area. That adds one point to each of the R, G, and B curves in the right area to affect the burnt skin. Next, move your cursor to a non-burned area and note the RGB numbers from the Info palette—that's the formula you need to use to create normal skin. To make the skin shift, choose Red from the pop-up menu at the top of the Curves dialog box (the point we added in the previous step was active by default) and then enter the number that you see in the Info palette (the readout for Red) for the Output number. To finish the adjustment, repeat this process two more times, once for Green, and again for Blue. That makes the area you were working on shift to the same non-burned color referenced earlier, which starts to make the sunburn disappear. Click OK.

At this point, the skin looks better, but it's too obvious that we've manipulated the image. The manipulated areas simply don't blend into the surrounding image. The fix is to blur (with the Gaussian Blur filter) the Curves adjustment layer, which



is the equivalent of feathering a selection. That makes the adjusted area slowly fade into the surrounding image.

This may sound like the end of the story...but that's when we noticed that the color varied too much between the brightest and darkest areas that we had adjusted. To remedy the situation, hold down the Command (PC: Control) key and click on the Layer Mask that appears on the right side of the adjustment layer in the Layers palette. That gives you a selection of the area you've adjusted, so we can limit a second adjustment to that same area. To smooth out the color, choose Hue/Saturation from the Adjustment layer pop-up menu at the bottom of the Layers palette. Knowing it was only going to apply to the formerly burned areas, we turned on the Colorize checkbox and then experimented with the Hue and Saturation settings until the color looked just right. Finally, choose **Layer>Merge Visible**, which merges the two adjustment layers we created into the original image, making the change permanent. ■



Ben Willmore is president of a training company, Digital Mastery, and author of Photoshop 7 Studio Techniques. He provides hundreds of free Photoshop tips and tutorials at his Web site. For details on how to submit images for consideration as the basis for an article, point your browser to www.digitalmastery.com/problems.