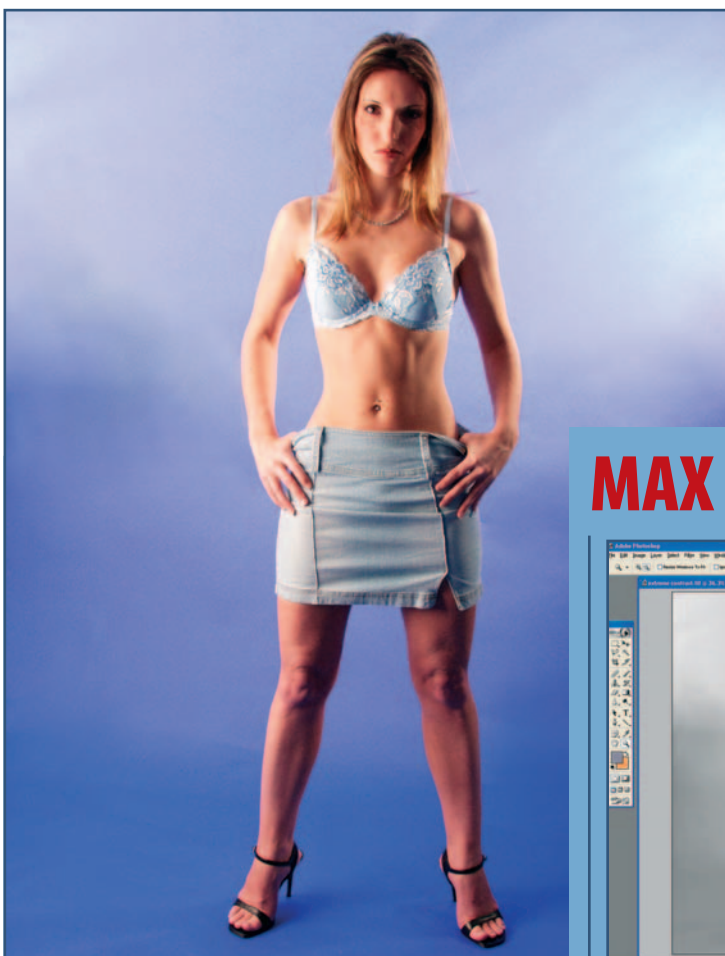


Colour to the Max

Duncan Evans cooks up portraits with extreme colour and contrast

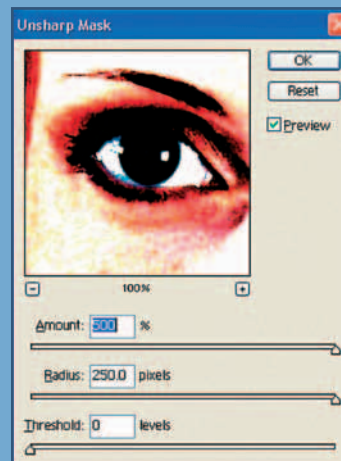
Once in a while it's good to push things to extremes. What I'm talking about are colour and contrast, but the key is to ensure that detail and character are retained. Push those colours and contrast to the max, but do it sympathetically so that it enhances the image, rather than detracts from it. Here are two examples shot in a studio with flash units but expensive equipment is not required. Either could be shot using tungsten lamps and a simple backdrop.



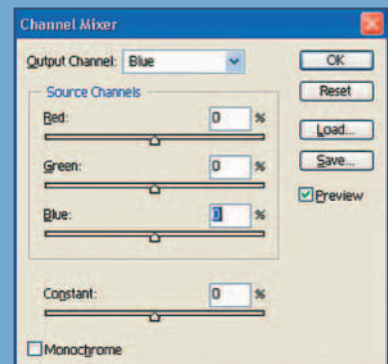
1 This is a classic black-and-white pose for chiselled blokes. Except that we're using a girl for an unexpected twist. The lighting is a main flash head with softbox to the left of the picture, which throws shadows across the torso. For harsher light use a broly or for truly aggressive light, a bare flash head. There are two bare flash heads pointing at the background behind the model to add variation in tone from bottom to top. These are set at one stop brighter than the key light. On the right there is also a very large reflector which is bouncing light back at the model to give a rounded three dimensional effect and to put some light into the shadow areas.

EXTREME COLOUR

1 The original is sexy, yet smart and that is the feel to retain. Two main lights at the front were used with a side light adding extra definition.

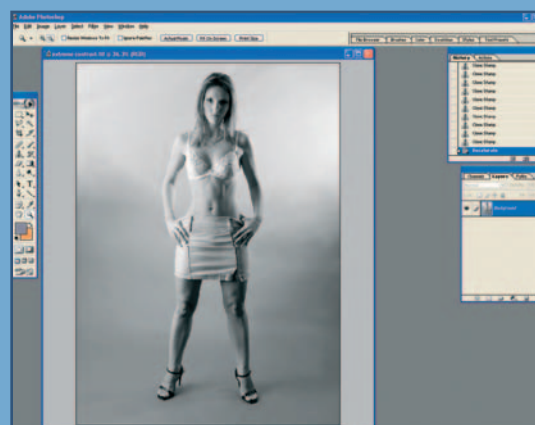


2 The first step is to use Photoshop's Unsharp Mask filter in an extreme fashion. Keep the Threshold at zero and ramp up the amount and Radius to their maximum values. This adds blackened detail around the eye in a sultry fashion and burns out detail leaving it white, which can be coloured next. The catchlights in the eye stop them from becoming entirely black.

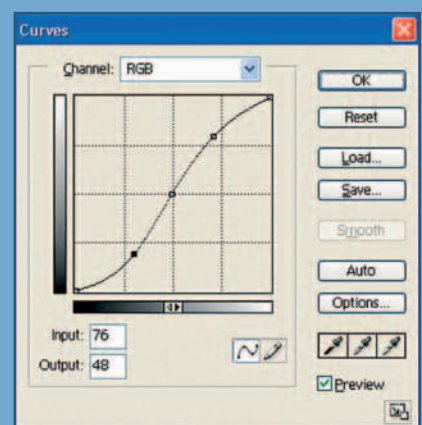


3 Now take the Channel Mixer, select the Blue channel and reduce the Blue component to zero. This turns the blue background to yellow and green, and the white out areas of the face and arms to yellow as well.

MAX CONTRAST



2 First of all some rough bits of the scenery were cleaned up and the odd blemish on the model corrected. This is the point to make sure your starting image is as clean as possible. Then the image was desaturated.



3 A duplicate layer was created. The Curves tool was used to increase the black-and-white areas, stretching the tonal range. It is important not to lose detail here. Then the Sharpen tool was used to add crispness and give a needed grainy effect.



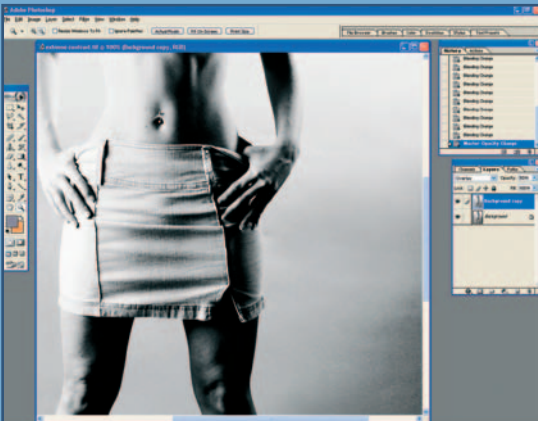
FINAL IMAGE

A riot of co-ordinated colour and sultriness. The black hat holds the top of the image together and matches the bikini top.



FINAL IMAGE

The layers were flattened and a border from Photo/Graphic Edges 6 was added. If you want to go right to the max you can increase the contrast further, but then detail will burn out and it's an effect better suited for male subjects.



4 Unsharp Mask – the standard sharpening tool – increases contrast at edges to give the illusion of sharpening. This is not the effect that is wanted. The layer's blending mode was set to Overlay which increases the contrast throughout the image. If this is too strong and too much detail burns out, reduce the opacity – here it was reduced to 50 per cent.