



In this chapter, you'll learn how to use Photoshop 7.0's new Patch and Healing Brush tools.

A doctor can bury his mistakes, but an architect can only advise his clients to plant vines.

—Frank Lloyd Wright

Retouching

The doctoring of photographs didn't begin with the advent of computers in magazine production departments. One of history's most notorious photograph "doctors" was Joseph Stalin, who used photo retouching as a way to manipulate the masses. People who vanished in real life, whether banished to the farthest reaches of the Soviet Union or eliminated by the secret police, vanished from photos as well, and even from paintings. In many cases, they were airbrushed out completely; in others, their faces were clumsily blacked out with ink.

And then there were the Hollywood photo doctors. They didn't want to get *rid* of anyone; they just wanted to make them look better. I think they actually coined the term "too good to be true." Think about it—have you ever seen a photograph of a starlet with a blemish, or a wart, or bags under her eyes, or even the slightest indication that her skin actually had pores? Of course not!

If you look at it from these two extremes, you can appreciate why the subject of retouching is something of a, well, touchy subject. If you're brave enough to bring it up at a photographer's convention, you're likely to spark a pretty lively debate. A purist might tell you that every aspect of a photograph (including the flaws) is a perfect reflection of reality and should never be tampered with. Then again, a graphic artist, who makes a living from altering images, might tell you that an original photograph is just the foundation of an image, and that the so-called tampering is, in fact, a means of enhancing and improving upon it. Either way you look at it, you can't deny the fact that retouching photographs has become an everyday necessity for almost anyone who deals with graphic images. And when it comes to retouching, hands down, nothing does it better than Photoshop.

Photoshop packs an awesome arsenal of retouching tools. These include the Dodge and Burn tools, Blur and Sharpen tools, Patch tool and Healing Brush, as well as the Clone Stamp tool. We'll get to play with all of them, and for each one I'll also give you a little bag of tricks. You'll learn how to do all sorts of neat things, including retouching old ripped photos, getting rid of those shiny spots on foreheads, and adjusting the saturation of small areas. Or, you can put yourself in the doctor's seat and give someone instant plastic surgery. Remove a few wrinkles, perform an eye lift, reduce those dark rings around the eyes, and poof!—you've taken off ten years. So let's look at these tools one at a time, starting with what I consider to be the most important one.

Patch Tool

The Patch tool is one of the most innovative yet simple tools I've ever seen Adobe come up with. The general concept is simple. You select an area of your image that needs to be touched up (maybe a blemish on skin), and then you click in the middle of the selection and drag it to an area of your image that has similar texture but with no blemishes. Then Photoshop does an amazing job of blending the second area into the first. It makes sure that the brightness and color is consistent with what was on the edge of the original selection and it blends the texture from the second area with that color. You simply have to try it to see what I mean (**Figure 14.1**).



Figure 14.1 Left: Original image. Right: After applying the Patch tool. (© 2002 Stockbyte, www.stockbyte.com)



When editing an image that is in 16-bit mode, the Patch tool will always use the source setting and the options usually found in the Options bar will be unavailable (grayed out).

Just because this tool is rather sophisticated in the way it blends with the image, that doesn't mean you shouldn't be careful when making the selection. I always try to make the smallest selection that will completely encompass the defect I'm trying to retouch (**Figure 14.2**). The larger the area being patched, the less likely it will look good (**Figure 14.3**).

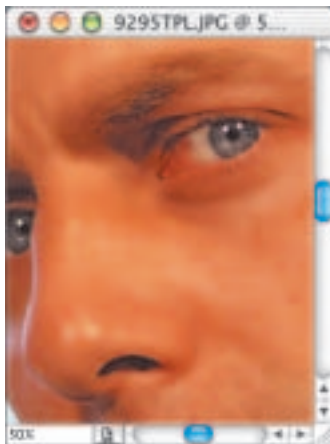


Figure 14.2 A small selection produces a nice blend. (© 2002 Stockbyte, www.stockbyte.com)

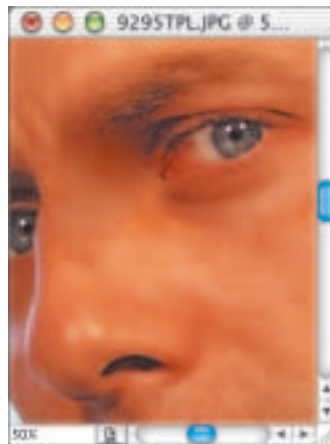


Figure 14.3 A large selection makes things look artificial.

There aren't many options to deal with when using this tool (**Figure 14.4**). The main choice is to patch the source or destination. With the Patch option set to Source, Photoshop will replace the area that was originally selected with a combination of the brightness and color values from its edge, along with the texture from the area you drag the selection to (**Figure 14.5**). Using the Destination setting does the opposite, letting you pick from a clean area of the original and then dragging it over the area that needs to be patched (**Figure 14.6**).



Figure 14.4 The Options bar for the Patch tool.



Figure 14.5 Left: Original image. Right: Result of using the Source setting.
(© 2002 Stockbyte, www.stockbyte.com)



Figure 14.6 Left: Original image. Right: Result of using the Destination setting.

If you can't find a clean area from which to steal texture, then you can select a pattern by clicking on the down-pointing arrow in the Options bar (**Figure 14.7**) and then clicking the Use Pattern button. You'll find that patching with a pattern isn't all that effective unless you've created a custom pattern for this specific purpose. Be sure to check out Chapter 15: "Type and Background Effects," for details on how to create your own patterns.

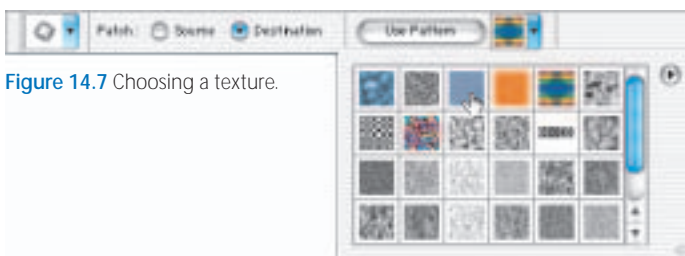


Figure 14.7 Choosing a texture.

I find that the Patch tool is best for those situations where you have scratches, blemishes, or other defects in an area that should otherwise be relatively consistent in color (such as skin). It can even maintain some of the three-dimensionality of the surface with its blending capabilities (**Figure 14.8**). But you'll find that it's not very useful when you have an area that has multiple colors bordering it that shouldn't blend together. That's because Photoshop will attempt to blend the patched area into all the surrounding colors. In that case you should either switch to the new Healing Brush or try out the Clone Stamp tool.

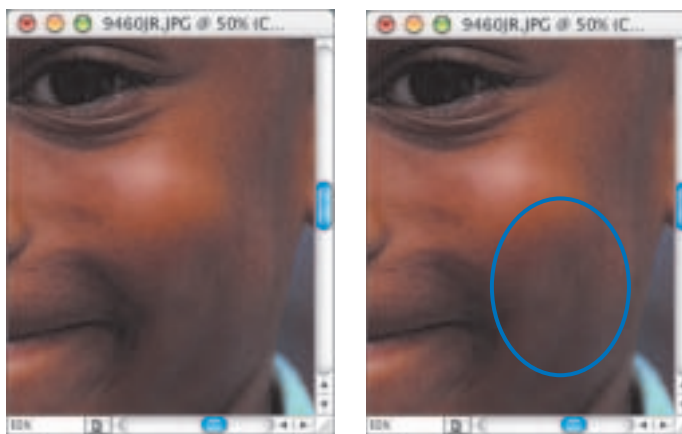


Figure 14.8 Left: The original image. Right: Result of patching small area while keeping the dimensionality of the skin. (© 2002 Stockbyte, www.stockbyte.com)

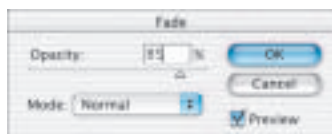


Figure 14.9 The Fade dialog box.

If you find that the end result of using the Patch tool looks a little dark, then you'll want to choose **Edit > Fade** immediately after applying a patch (**Figure 14.9**). Simply lower the Opacity setting.

Healing Brush Tool

The Healing Brush works using the same general concepts as the Patch tool. It attempts to patch a defect in your image using the texture from another area while blending all the edges with the surrounding colors. The main difference is that the Patch tool works by moving a selection, while the Healing Brush allows you to paint over the area

that needs to be repaired. To use it, you'll first have to Option-click (Mac) or Alt-click (Windows) on the area you would like to use to fix an area and then click and drag across the area that needs fixing. When you do that, be sure to cover the entire area without releasing the mouse button. Once you let go, Photoshop will check out the edges of the area you covered to make sure your "patch" blends with the color and brightness that is in the surrounding area (see **Figures 14.10** and **14.11**). You'll have to use a soft-edged brush to get a good blend (**Figures 14.12** and **14.13**). Just make sure that you choose your brush from the Brush drop-down menu in the Options bar. This tool will ignore the stand-alone Brushes palette because it doesn't work with Photoshop 7.0's new Brush Dynamics settings.



Figure 14.10 Original image. (© 2002 Stockbyte, www.stockbyte.com)

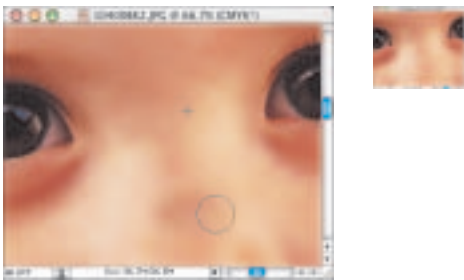


Figure 14.11 Left: While applying the Healing Brush, things don't blend in. Right: After releasing the mouse button, the retouched area blends in to its surroundings.

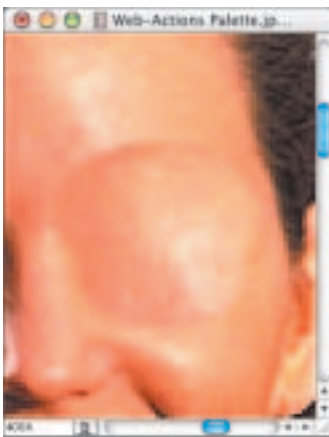


Figure 14.12 Hard-edged brush used.

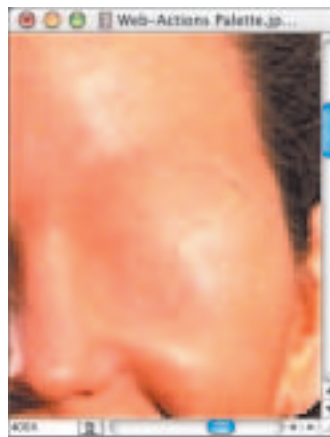


Figure 14.13 Soft-edged brush used.

If you'd rather completely replace an area instead of attempt to blend the brightness and color of the edges with the texture of another area, set the Mode pop-up menu in the Options bar to Replace and go at it. In that case, Photoshop will copy the area on which you Option-click (Mac) or Alt-click (Windows) and completely cover up the area you patch; then it will attempt to have the edges smoothly fade into the surrounding area without trying to maintain its brightness and color (**Figure 14.14**). This is the same principle that the Clone Stamp Tool uses. The only difference is that the Clone Stamp tool doesn't attempt to blend the result with the underlying image.

There are a few blending modes available in the Options bar, but you'll find out that they work a little differently from what you might be used to. Most tools would apply their general effect, and then once everything is done, they would apply the blending mode. But in this tool, the blending mode is applied *before* Photoshop does the work needed to blend the patched area with the surrounding image.

If neither the Patch tool nor the Healing Brush delivers the results you are looking for, then you'll have to switch over to the trusty old standby—the Clone Stamp tool.



Figure 14.14 Left: The original image. Middle: Result of using Normal mode (source point was an area of skin). Right: Result of using Replace mode. (© 2002 Stockbyte, www.stockbyte.com)