

The Liquify brush is a quick and efficient means of distorting an image. “The Devil,” illustrates some of its more useful effects.

BY JOHN LUND & PAMELA PFIFFNER

Liquify filter technique

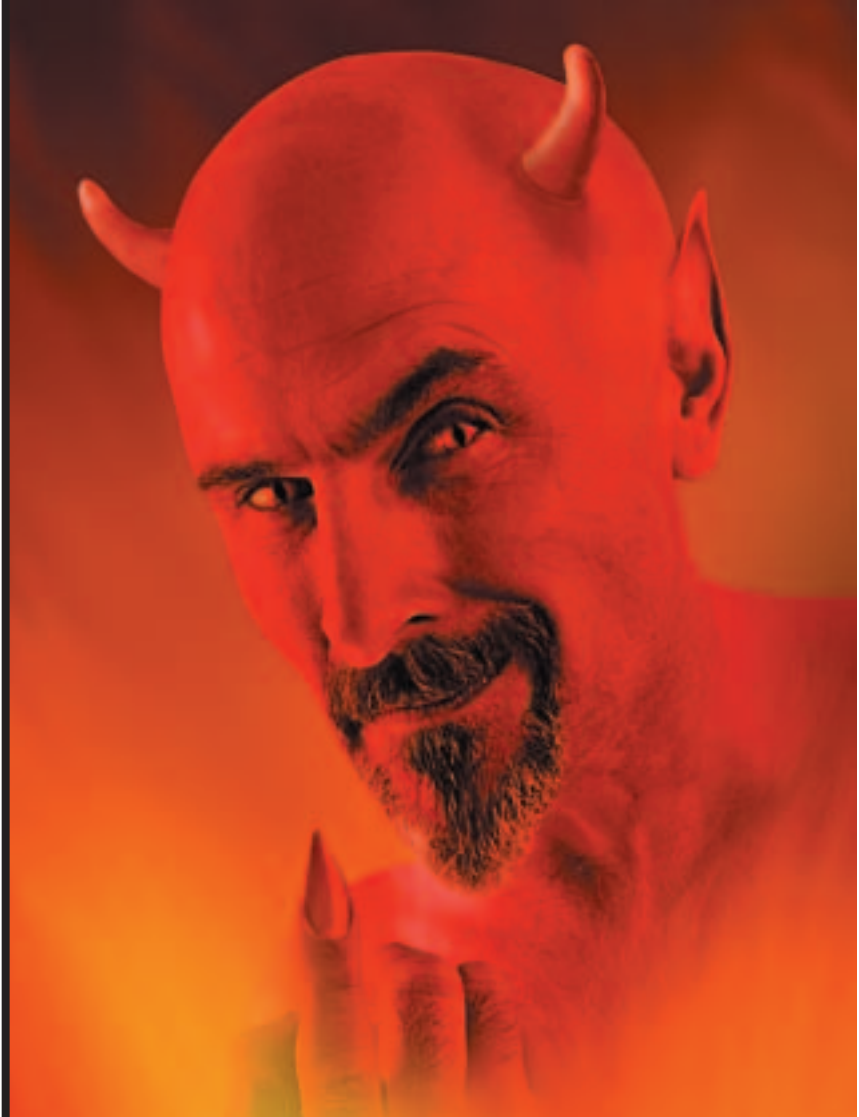
IT'S A DEVIL OF A JOB
RESHAPING NATURAL ELEMENTS

In coming up with stock photography ideas, I make it a practice to look at the opposite of whatever idea I'm working on. It was natural, then, that having just completed an angel image for a magazine assignment, my thoughts turned to doing an image of a devil. And from years of looking into the mirror each morning, I knew that I would make a very good devil.—*John Lund*

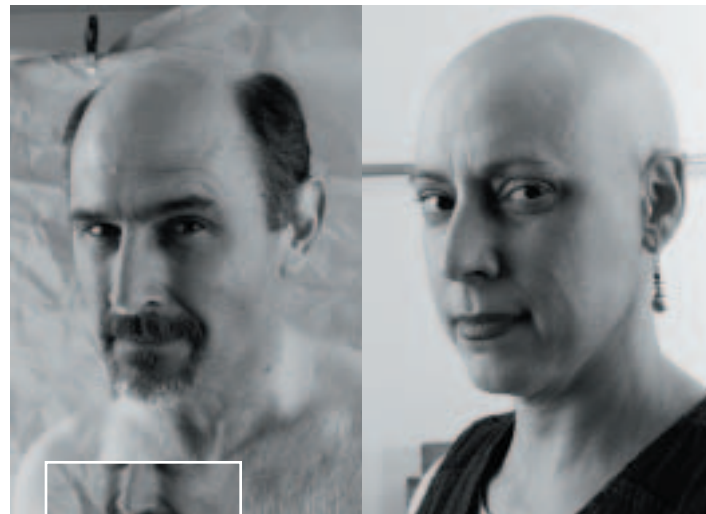
THE PROCESS: THE DEVIL'S IN THE DETAILS

Lund began by having his assistant photograph him in black-and-white mode with a Leaf DCB (digital camera back) mounted on a Hasselblad. He later added color in Photoshop. Looking into the lens, index finger pointing, Lund said: “I wanted not just an image of a devil, but of temptation itself.” (*Figures 1 and 2*).

While Lund admits that his hair is, shall we say, “thinning,” he looked elsewhere for the perfect bald head on which to affix devilish horns. He found the rounded dome of his friend Mary Liz (*Figure 3*), who had lost her hair during chemotherapy—she's just fine now, thanks.



All images ©John Lund



Figures 1 and 2 (inset): Lund begins with a devilish image of himself, “Finally, an image that suits me.”

Figure 3, right: Beautiful baldness, courtesy of Lund's friend Mary Liz.

Lund crinkled up seamless backdrop paper and lit it from underneath to create a cave-like environment. For horns, a pair of deer antlers serves. The final touch will be a shot of flames from his stock files.

Mary Liz's scalp covers up what little hair Lund has left. He selects the desired area of her head with the Pen tool, and copies and pastes it over his head (*Figure 4*). To more seamlessly merge the bald pate with his own, Lund uses the Pen tool's Paths setting to select the reshaped head and torso, eliminates the tuft of hair on the left, and brings the skull curve inside of the tip of the ear. When he selects and cuts around the head later on, he can eliminate the tuft on the right. After color correcting with Curves, he uses a layer mask to paint away the hard edges with a soft brush.

Lund cuts and pastes the antlers into place (*Figure 5*). To form the ridge of flesh, he runs the Burn tool in an arc around the base of the horn, using a series of short strokes to create a shadow, then positions a second shadow arc about a brush-width away from the first. For the highlight, he uses the Dodge tool to brush down the length of the arc between the two shadows.

To cast the horn's shadow, Lund makes a new layer, then selects the darkest color on the horn. With a soft airbrush, he paints that color in short strokes from the center of the horn's base toward the devil's eye (*Figure 6*). He uses the Smudge tool to fine-tune the shadow's shape. Finally, on the shadow layer, he sets Opacity to 62%.

Lund selects the distorted head and hand with the Pen tool, copies and pastes them into the background, then colorizes with the Hue/Saturation controls (*Figure 7*).

Lund duplicates the flame layer just in front of the background layer, then flips the flame horizontally and places it over the hand. Using a layer mask, he paints away the flames until the hand shows through. Last, he uses the Crop tool to give the flame layer a more dynamic angle to frame the devil's face (*Figure 8*).



Figure 4

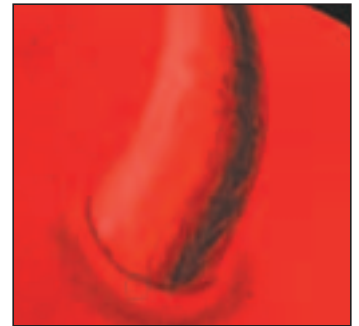


Figure 5

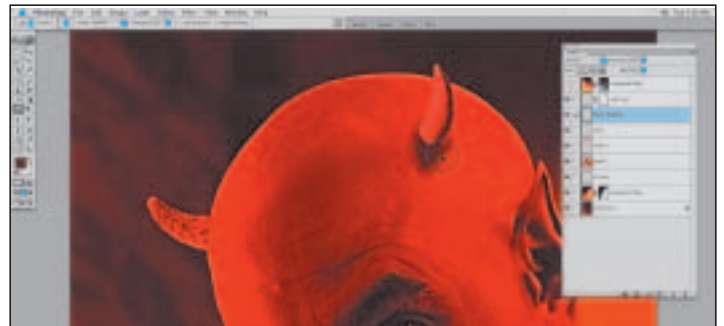


Figure 6

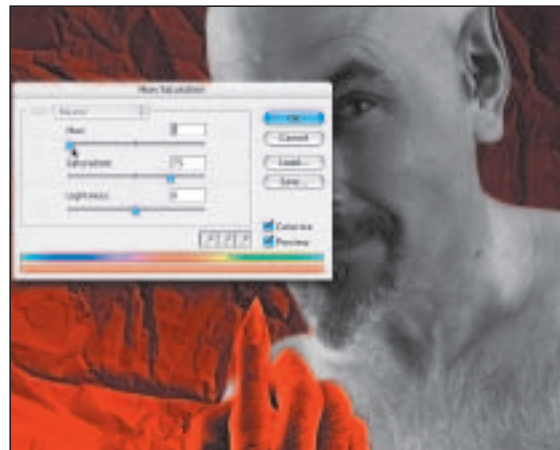


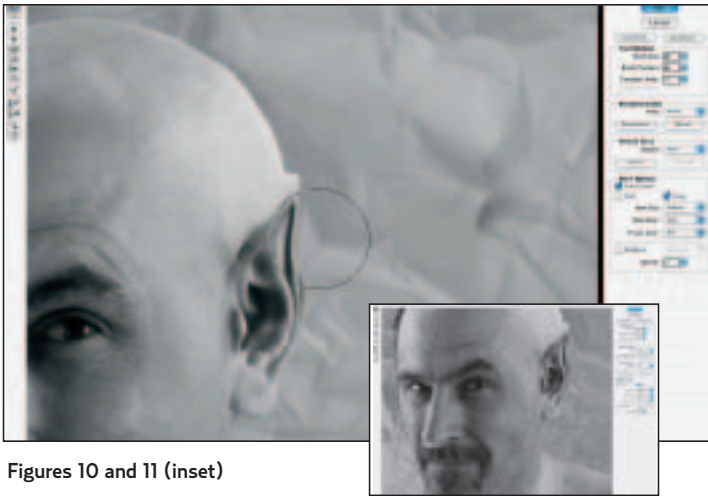
Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figures 10 and 11 (inset)

Figure 12



Figure 13



THE DETAILS:

USING THE LIQUIFY BRUSH TO RESHAPE REALITY

The Liquify brush (Filter>Liquify) is a quick and efficient means of distorting an image. “The Devil,” with its elongated visage, spiky horns, gnarled claws, and pointy goatee, illustrates some of its more useful effects. This filter, which opens in its own window, has many variables—distortion modes such as Turbulence and Twirl, tool options such as Brush Pressure and Jitter, and the ability to “freeze” areas to protect them from changes—but Lund mostly uses the Liquify brush’s default Warp tool, which pushes and pulls the pixels like dragging a finger through thick batter. He adjusts the brush size and pressure according to the desired amount of distortion and the size of the area he’s working on.

STEP 1: ELONGATING THE FACE

To lend his physiognomy a more elongated, fiendish appearance, Lund uses the Liquify brush’s Warp setting (Filter>Liquify>Warp Tool). Warp effects can be subtle or dramatic, depending on the length and force of the mouse drag, which Lund finds gives him the best control over the distortion. A couple of swipes along the jaw with a brush large enough to cover the beard (300 pixels) at a brush pressure of 50 do the trick. He sharpens the beard with a 121-pixel brush (Figure 9).

SEPT 2: AN UNCANNILY SHARP EAR

Using an 85-pixel setting, Lund again uses Liquify to stretch the ear into batlike peaks (Figure 10). With the same brush, he arches the devil’s eyebrow (Figure 11). The appropriate brush size, Lund notes, will vary according to your tastes. Larger brushes produce pronounced effects quickly, but with less precision than smaller brushes.

STEP 3: ADDING A GLINT

For a mischievous glint in the eye, Lund drops the brush size to 1 pixel to precisely distort the pupil into a diamond shape (Figure 12). With all this Liquify brushwork, Lund reduces the pressure if the brush becomes hard to control.

STEP 4: SHARPENING HIS CLAWS

Claws are essential to any self-respecting devil. Opening the image of his hand, Lund reshapes the fingers between the knuckles to create a gnarled look. He tapers the nail to a menacing tip with a few strokes of a 79-pixel brush (*Figure 13*). Again, Lund recommends experimenting to get just the right effect. Next he uses the Pen tool's Path setting to select the modified hand, selects it, and copies and pastes it into main image, onto a new layer above the figure. He positions and sizes the hand with the Free Transform tool.

STEP 5: ADDING HORNS

The devil is ready for his horns. In the first image of deer antlers (*Figure 14*), Lund makes the horn stubby by pushing down on the tip with the Liquify brush's Warp tool. He sets the brush to 358 pixels wide, Brush Pressure = 50. He applies short strokes with the same brush to contort the shortened tip into just the right curve (*Figure 15*).

Now Lund uses the Pen tool to select part of the horn. He creates a selection, and copies and pastes it into the main image as a new layer. He positions it to appear to be emerging from behind his head, and resizes it with Free Transform. He places this layer under the one containing the devil (*Figure 16*).

STEP 6: ROUNDING THE HORN

Lund repeats the process with the second horn, positioning it on the right side of the devil's head. Adding a layer mask, he airbrushes around the base of the horn to achieve the proper roundness (*Figure 17*). ■

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Figure 14



Figure 15

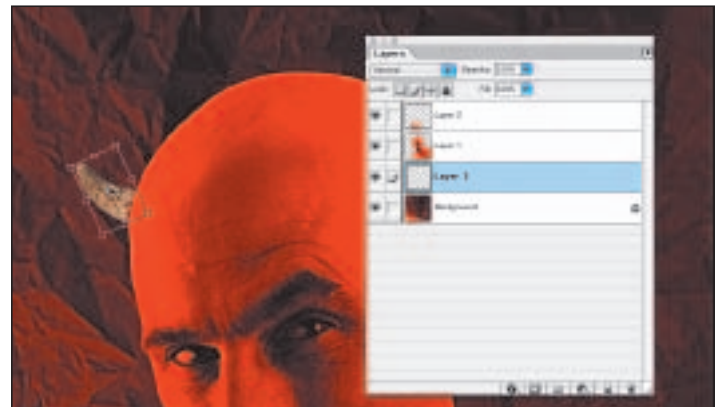


Figure 16



Figure 17