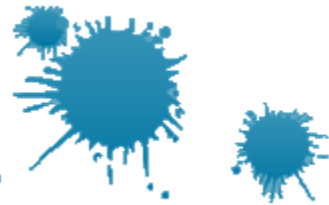


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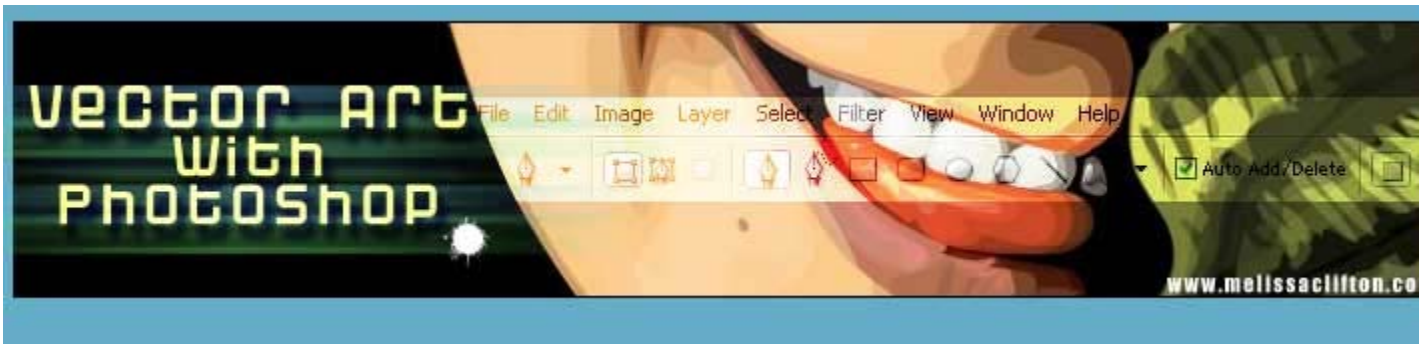
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Vector art is REALLY popular at the moment. Everyone is making vector art. It's not hard to do and you don't need to be able to draw to create. Be warned though, vector art does take a lot of time and patience. Especially if you want to create OUTSTANDING art.

In this tutorial I hope to shed some light on how to make vector art and more importantly how to make really great vector art with [Adobe Photoshop](#).

In order to even start to think about doing this tutorial **YOU MUST KNOW HOW TO USE THE PEN TOOL**. If you don't know how to use the pen tool just do [THIS TUTORIAL](#) first, (it's not hard honestly).



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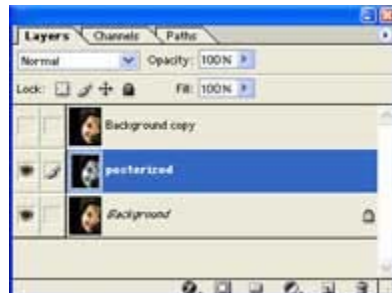


To see a better sized version of the finished vector just click [HERE](#)

I suggest you read through the entire tutorial before you begin...

The Set Up

First you need to choose the image that you are going to vector. Make sure you REALLY like the photo that you are starting with. You are going to be looking at this image for hours and essentially your vector image will be similar to this photo. Lots of people do vectors of their favourite musicians and actors as a sort of tribute. I think this is a great idea because hopefully it motivates you to actually finish the thing and do a good job. Just be careful when you are selecting the image that you are going to vector...it must be a decent size so that you can zoom in and still see lots of detail. Anything smaller than 600 x 600 pixels isn't going to be much good at all. **Bigger IS better in your selection of the photo to turn into a vector.**



Open your image in Photoshop and **duplicate the background layer twice.**

Turn off the visibility of top copy.

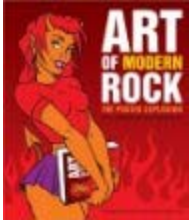
Working on the middle copy **desaturate it** (Ctrl + Shift + U)

Next **Posterize** this layer. **Image >> Adjustments >> Posterize...**

Set the level to approximately 9 and click OK.

Rename this layer "Posterized"

Your layer palette should now look like the one shown left.



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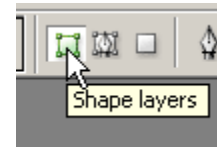
The posterized layer is only there as a rough guide for when you get stuck. (Personally I always find the nose to be a little difficult and use the posterize layer to help me). Please please please don't use it to create your vector. If you do, your resulting image will be **BLAND, BORING and LACK ANY ARTISTIC MERIT!**

Turn the **visibility ON** for the "Background copy". This way you will just see the path and colour won't get in the way.

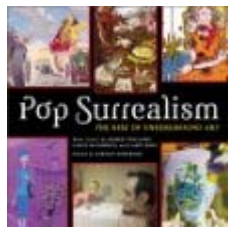
Create a new layer (Ctrl + Shft + N)

Make sure it sits below the "Background Copy"

Select the mid tone shade for skin. Grab the pen tool making sure it is set to create Shape Layers (see image below). Trace around the face making sure that you close the path..



Once a shape layer is complete I like to turn ON and OFF the visibility of top "background copy" layer just to compare the two. Your layer palette should look the image shown below. Notice that I like to lock layers once I am happy with them so that I don't accidentally move them.



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I like to **create the large blocked out areas next.**

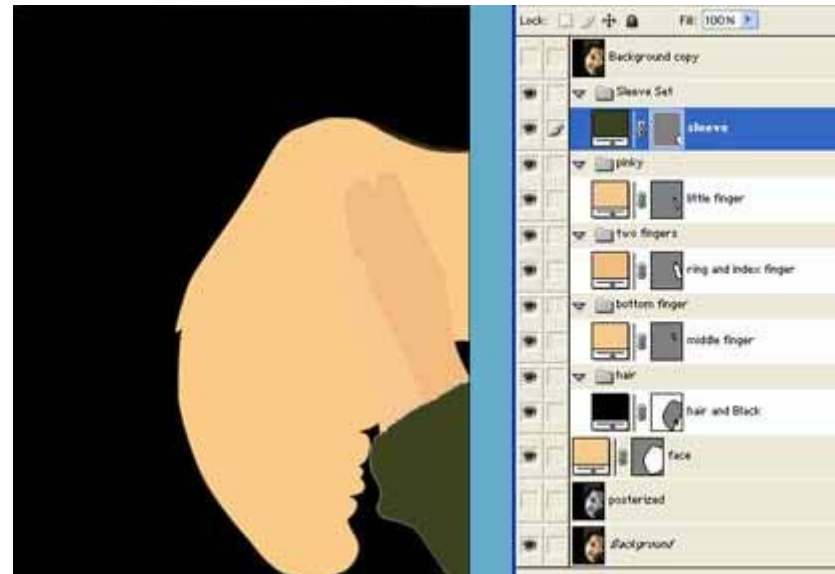
Trace the outline the hair. As a rule you should make the **initial shade (the base colour) for the hair the darkest.** You will then build up layers of lighter and lighter colours/shades from there.

Once you are happy with the layer, put it into a **set** called "hair" and lock it. I like to be organised so rather than naming every new layer in a vector I like to organise them into sets...like "hair set", "eyebrow set", "sleeve set" etc.

From the image below, you can see that I have blocked out all the main shapes and organised my layer palette.



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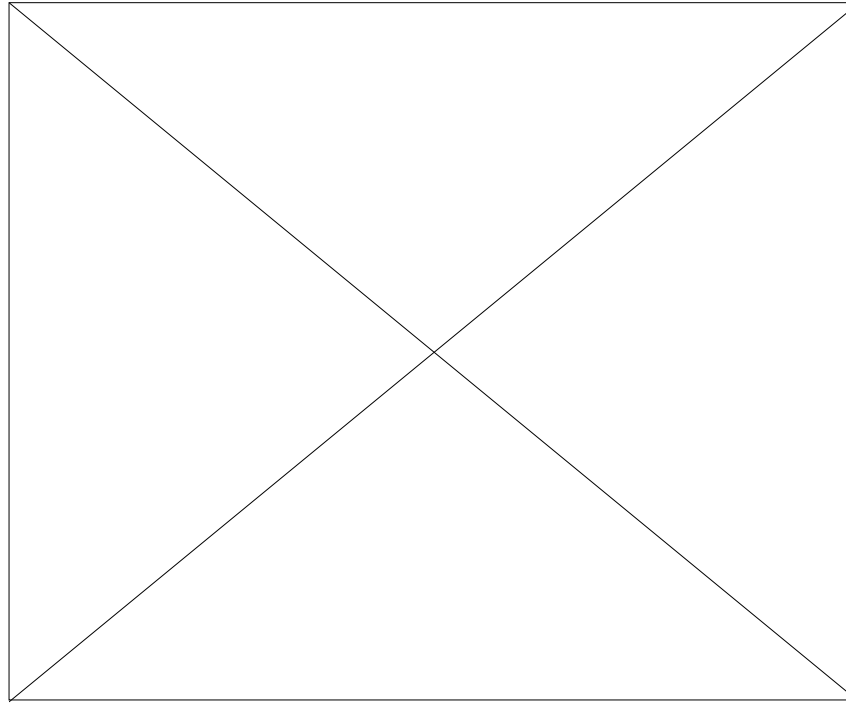
This vector is a little unusual in that her hair is going to be absolute black so I used this layer to also form the absolute areas of black on the face too.

That's the basic set up all done. Now it's time to start forming the features.

Forming the Features

There's no set order in which to create the various features. I like to work on specific area until it's done and then move on. Having said that though, I always notice a little something to tweak once I'm working on another area...

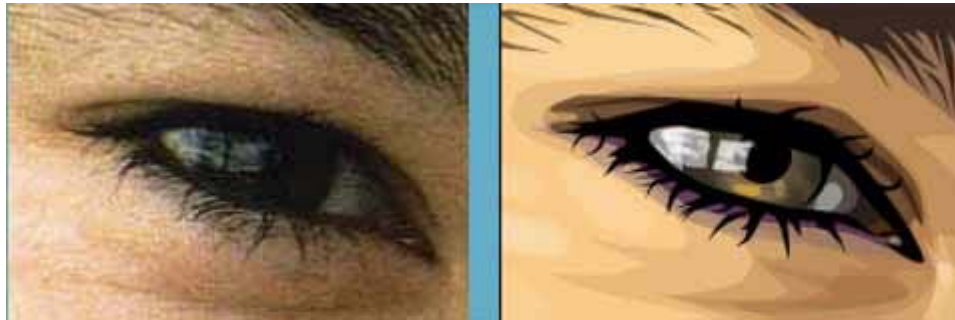
I used a grand total of 316 layers to form this Bjork vector so obviously I can't show you every step by step layer, but I did make an animated clip of the layers. It's 16 hours worth of work condensed down to 1 minute...don't blink or you'll miss some layers. If the video below isn't working try [CLICKING HERE](#) (or come back tomorrow).



What follows next is a breakdown of some specific areas with some tips thrown in. I'll start with the eyes because I always like starting with the eyes. They are definitely one of THE most important areas.

THE EYES (well actually, eye in this case)

As you see, by comparing the original photo eye to my vector eye, I definitely didn't create exactly what was in the original photo. It's very important however to pay attention to the **reflective quality of the eye**. I've used several layers here to make it look semi-life-like and I work super **zoomed in**. Also you'll notice I used a pretty vivid violet colour under the eye...this really just adds interest to the vector.



Never use pure white for the eyeball. It will just look weird! If there is white anywhere on the eye it will be in the reflective highlight.

1. Put in the basic shapes of the eye. Note I used Layer Style **Inner Glow on the iris layer**. Make sure the pupil is round by using the eclipse tool.

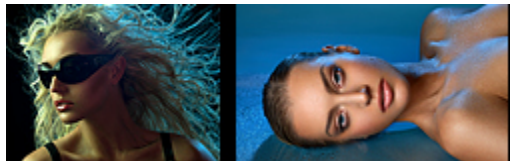
2. Add in eyelashes (mine look a bit like cockroach legs ha ha). You can create multiple paths on a single path layer. I find a faster technique for shapes like this is to just create one and then duplicate it, altering it with **transform** and using the **convert point tool**.

3. Add in the highlights etc. You can see that the highlight has it's opacity lowered so that the layers below show through. By **adjusting the opacity of your layers, your vector will have a greater complexity**...it will appear like there are more layers.



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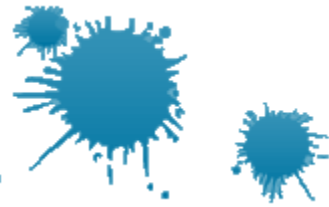
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Skin Shading

When building up the light and dark areas make sure your shape layers have a low opacity (around 15%). **By layering up the shape layers, you are going to create a more complex looking vector.**

Look at the face and start picking out patches of colour/tone and create shape layers. Pointy, funky shapes are great..you don't need to follow the image exactly. **A little abstraction from the photo is what is going to create an outstanding vector.**

Look at the layers in the image below, you can see that many of them have a low opacity and interact together.



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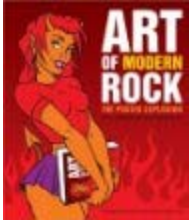


Don't get put off if your picture looks a bit terrible to begin with...just keep adding layers!



Just because you are colouring skin don't think that your colour palette has to be all the same either. Infact, the use of various colours/tones is going to make your picture go from average to great. The above image shows some of the colours I used to form the skin, with varying opacity (not including lips etc). As you can see there's a bit of variety and my final vector is quite tame.

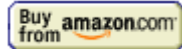
The image below shows the shape layers that form the nose.



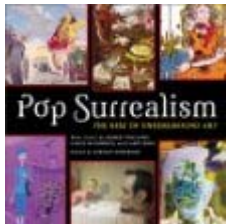
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The Mouth

Below is the finished mouth. Just like the eyes, avoid using absolute white for the teeth. You can see how the lips are made up of overlapping layers, with their opacity altered. In some layers I have adjusted the **Mode** also, just for some variety.



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That's about it. You just need to do this same procedure for the entire image. Zoom in to the photo and look for patterns/shapes and recreate them!

Don't merge or rasterize your shape layers. As long as all your layers are shape layers then you have a vector piece of art...That means you can scale the original psd up and down in Photoshop and it will remain perfect and unpixelated!! The final output will NOT BE a vector file (it will be a rasterized jpg etc), to output a vector file you need to use Adobe Illustrator.



To see a better sized version of the finished Bjork vector, just click [HERE](#)

Learn by Example

There is so much rubbish vector work on the net but rather than point out all the flaws of others work (and possibly receive hate mail) I'm going to show you what I THINK makes great art. Hopefully by doing this, you will pick up a few tips for your next vector.



The Scanner Darkly poster, shown left, of Keanu Reeves is a prime example of great vector work. What makes it great?

1. Funky Shapes

I can't stand the boring result of just using Posterize and making shape layers exactly like that. It really doesn't hold any artistic merit. Definitely create a posterized layer but only use it as a ROUGH guide for when you're a little stuck. The funky shape layers of the face, on the poster shown left, are really great. Particularly around the eye area. You can see that the artist has abstracted the form of the shape layers but kept it so you can definitely see that it is Keanu Reeves. The shape layers also follow the form nicely of the underlying facial muscles.

2. Colour

If you use the colour picker to select your vector colour palette, from the original photo, then the result will be bland and boring. Never ever ever

just use the original photo colours. Strong colours work well for vectors, as you can see in The Scanner Darkly poster. It's great to try to get some really random colours or shades worked into your vector too. That way when you look at the zoomed in region of the vector it really does seem to be a bit of a mess BUT when you look at the whole image it looks great.

3. Number of Layers

I don't see the point of creating a super realistic vector that looks pretty much like the original photo. Again I think this is boring and dull. I don't like to see 60 layers forming the gradient of a cheek. Rather, I prefer to see the vector image as having distinct layers.

In summary any vector that looks really strange when you zoom in and makes sense when you zoom out is an OUTSTANDING vector! The only other advice I'd like to repeat is to take your time.

And that, as they say, is that!

I really hope that you enjoyed this tutorial and managed to learn a few helpful tips and tricks for creating your own vector art. Feel free to [contact me via my contact page](#) if you have any questions regarding this vector tutorial.

On the next page is the [Love Your Work](#) section for this tutorial. If you achieve a great vector art piece then definitely send me a copy in an email. By having examples of your vectors on this site it will help inspire others with their vectors. Plus it will also act as a guide for those learning who are wondering how to do a certain area of their own vector.

See you next time ^__^

- Melissa



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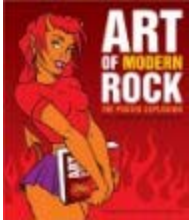


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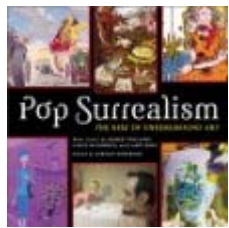
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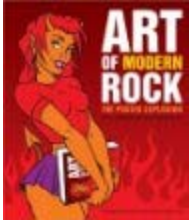
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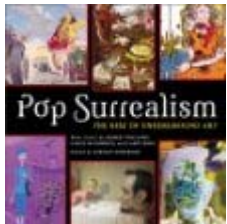
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