

Cyber SURGERY

If you're wondering what the beauty secret of the stars really is, read on...

Before



After



■■■ If you want longer legs, bigger breasts, a smaller nose and a six-pack without the pain and cost of plastic surgery, you can have it all... Yes, with just a few clicks of a mouse you can become that flawless, tanned, six-foot beauty on the cover of the latest glossy.

Like it or not, the photographs you see in magazines are touched up, enhanced and made to look literally picture perfect. You don't have to read the magazines to know that. In fact, over the past few months, the news has been brimming with stories of furious stars, an angry public and the defence stories of the publications that are responsible for portraying this unrealistic imagery. The fact is, just like the rest of us, most of the unblemished models you see on the covers of your favourite mag do have crow's feet, laugh lines and stray hairs – some of them even have cellulite!

So, what do they touch up and exactly how much do they enhance? According to an industry expert who wishes to remain unnamed, "I have done tons of touch-up work

on photographs for various publications. The amount of 'photoshopping' depends entirely on the client. As an example, we had a few underwear shots for a catalogue and point-of-sale promotion. The specific requests were to remove any crease lines from and around the armpits (completely unnatural), make the sternum area above the breasts less pronounced and hide any nipples or other body parts visible through the 'see-through' range. Other requests were to remove bags from under eyes, any wrinkles, any visible veins, skin blemishes, etc."

Another retouching expert source who wishes to remain unnamed explains what the most common enhancements to photographs are: "The basic fix-up list for most publications is: remove all skin blemishes including crow's feet, wrinkles, freckles, pigmentation marks etc.; remove any stray hairs – head and eyelashes; make the whites of the eyes white – no red veins; make the irises of the eyes larger; remove or reduce harsh shadows; soften all features; lengthen legs if it is a full-body picture and expand lips and add shine," he says.

Every day we're exposed to numerous images of perfect women with perfect skin and toned, taught bodies. What we don't realise is that apart from having their hair and makeup done professionally, these models are photographed in the best possible lighting with anywhere between 100 to 300 photos being taken. From these pics, only the top ones are selected. Before the photos are published, these 'best' shots are touched-up using the latest computer technology to remove bulges, pimples, cellulite, wrinkles and more. It's no wonder then that so many women (and men) are self-conscious about their bodies. Trying to live up to an unrealistic dream body isn't going to get us anywhere. Supermodel Cindy Crawford has been quoted saying, "I think women see me on the cover of magazines and think that I never have a pimple or bags under my eyes. You have to realise that's after two hours of hair and makeup, plus retouching. Even I don't wake up looking like Cindy Crawford." In the May issue of



After



Before

Vanity Fair magazine in 2001, actress Jennifer Aniston is quoted saying, "The media create this wonderful illusion – but the amount of airbrushing that goes into those beauty magazines, the hours of hair and makeup! It's impossible to live up to, because it's not real." Enough said.

Apart from distorting our perceptions of beauty, digitally enhanced photographs can also contribute to the large number of eating disorders among young women and men by creating these unrealistic beauty expectations. It's not only anorexia and bulimia that we need to worry about – there's also binge eating, orthorexia (obsession with healthy eating) and bigorexia (gaining too much muscle mass), among others.

All that said, it doesn't mean wanting to look good is a bad thing, but the images of flawless beauties are leaving many young girls and women in pursuit of unattainable illusions. Can anything be done about it? Not much really, but hopefully after reading this article you'll feel a little less self-conscious about your 'imperfect' body. ■

Before



After



About the photographer

Glenn Feron, an artist and illustrator, first began doing restoration on old photos in a photo lab in the early '70s. Back then he used airbrushes, paint and pencils to work his craft, but soon found a new medium in computers when they came on the scene. Glenn has worked for some of the pickiest clients in the world. His skill, artistry and knowledge of anatomy bring them back again and again. You can see his work at www.glenfferon.com.