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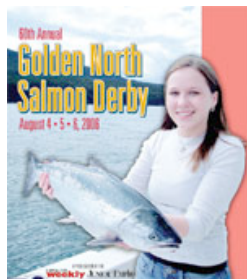
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Web posted August 2, 2006

Digital makeup makes anyone look attractive

By JASON OHLER
Tech Wit

One of my gadget-freak friends stopped me in the airport recently, ecstatic, doing the dance that only geeks can do after seeing something techno-wonderful. By the way, just a heads up for the rest of you: The dance looks very much like a cross between the cha-cha and the nervous movements of someone who has been waiting in line too long to use the rest room. If you see someone doing this, and if tech talk doesn't interest you, then run away quickly.

Anyway, having just returned from his native tecosystem (an alternate ecosystem developed by those proudly sporting propeller beanies and pocket protectors), he couldn't contain himself.

"Jason, I've just seen the next generation of video conferencing systems. The picture was so clear I could see the pores on the guy's face I was talking to! And he was 3,000 miles away!"

As I stared at my friend's face, which, in his enthusiasm, he had moved within inches of my own, exposing not only his pores but also his nose hair and a scar that looked like a wilted banana, I couldn't help but think, "but I don't want to see the pores on someone's face. Isn't that why makeup was created?"

For those of you who don't know what video conferencing is, think of it as a group telephone call in which you can actually see everyone you are talking to. Personally, I hate it. No more wearing your pajamas at work. Now, we have to dress up just to talk to someone on a computer. I knew a guy a long time ago who used to put on a coat and tie just to watch the Sunday football games on what was then one of the first color TVs on the market. It always struck me as very strange behavior. And now I was wondering what tie to wear as I sat in front of my computer.

But fear not; technology to the rescue. Thankfully for innovators, one thing has not changed and never will: All is vanity. Already in the works is digital makeup software to help adjust your image on a video conference. I used it recently with amazing results.

It was the day after my 35th high school reunion, and, like everyone else on the dance floor that evening, I had forgotten how much sleep I needed as an old person. I stayed out all night and looked like a wreck. Unfortunately, I had a video conference the next morning at 6 a.m. Like most people who are philosophically opposed to new technology (I was never going to use digital makeup for spiritual reasons), I used the digital makeup program because it promised to make me look better than I actually did, which drives a lot of innovation. I reasoned that I wasn't

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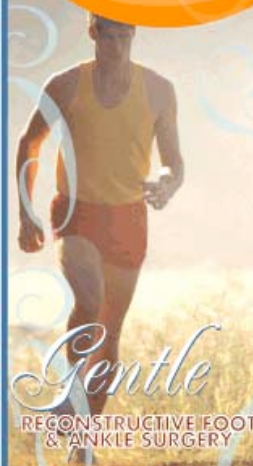
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lying; I was actually helping people by not looking ugly. Give, give, give. I get tired of it.

The before and after pictures were remarkable. Before I applied the digital makeup, I looked like something the proverbial cat had dragged in. Afterwards, I was coiffed and manicured in a suit coat and tie. There were tons of nifty extras, too, like JAM (jewelry and makeup), so that women can mix and match lipstick and earrings. For the guys there was a "power tie and serious stare" option. There is even a button you could push for "feigned attention." You can literally be asleep and not only look wide awake, but honestly interested in what's going on. And with a little bit of training, you can teach your computer to laugh at your boss's jokes. Nothing obvious. Just a subtle "ha, ha."

Anyway, for those of you worried about having your pores seen from 3,000 miles away, technology's got it all taken care of. No need to eat right, exercise, or color coordinate you clothes. The only price you pay is that you get to be haunted by the thought that you have no idea what you are looking at either.

- Jason Ohler is professor of educational technology at the University of Alaska Southeast and can be reached at jason@jasonohler.com.

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