

Becks and Fergie

A book celebrating two decades of the Premier league would not be complete without the inclusion of the most successful manager our game has ever known, the incomparable Sir Alex Ferguson and arguably the player that symbolised the games new marketability and wealth, David Beckham. Whilst Fergie is a football man in the traditional sense, it can be argued that Beck's has transcended the game, with his opulent lifestyle, pop star wife and movie star looks, he is now an icon of popular culture.



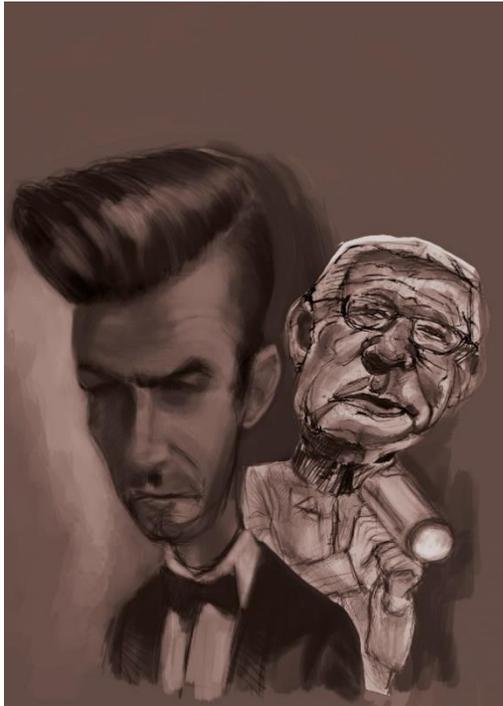
Step 1

I produced a quick thumbnail of the great men, slightly exaggerating what I saw. Exaggerating the relationships between the five basic shapes of a face, the overall head shape, the two eyes, the nose and the mouth with respect to size, distance and angle is what differentiates portraiture from caricature. The trick is determining how a particular face's relationship should be changed - each face is different. The more an artist exaggerates these relationships, the more exaggerated the caricature appears. It is not just a question of making shapes bigger, to create a dynamic caricature, reducing the size of less prominent features is also very important. The secret to a successful caricature is determined by the artist's ability to play with size, distance and angle of the shapes and through observation and draughtsmanship his ability to capture the character of the subject.

I tried to simplify the head shapes, I saw Beckham's overall head shape as a kind of upside down triangle, choosing to emphasise his quiff and forehead, and reducing the width and size of his chin. With Fergie, I chose to reduce the size of his forehead, emphasizing his more rounded head shape. His nose width was increased, to offset this his eyes were reduced. I also widened the distance between his nose and his top lip.

It really is an exercise in playing with shapes until I am happy with the result, pushing and distorting the features as far as I chose, whilst still retaining a likeness and truthfulness for the subject.

Step 2



For this exercise, I decided to work digitally, scanning in my thumbnail sketches, and using the lasso and cut and paste tools in Photoshop I was quickly able to create the composition I was looking for.

Step 3

Working on a separate laying Photoshop, I started to build up the values on Fergie, applying reds contrasting olive green to his chin and the shadows. For Becks, I quickly redrew his ear, nose and mouth areas, before painting some mid tones to his face. Darks were applied to the eyes and hair and his tux was blocked in.





Step 4

Again, at this stage I opened a new layer, this is a great advantage over working traditionally, as it allows the artist to experiment. If what you do doesn't enhance the artwork it is very easy to delete the layer and return to the original look. In an effort to create a stronger impact, I decided to darken the background to make the figures pop out. I added light to the left side of Beckham's face to increase the contrast with the background.



Step 5

For greater accuracy, I referenced hair-driers on the internet. The hair-drier is a reference to Fergie's infamous dressing room tongue lashing! Beckham's head was reshaped a little. I paint digitally, in a way that is like oil painter, in that I build up layers of lights and darks gradually increasing the opacity. I am now getting involved in detail, such as his stubble and his impressive quiff. I then moved on to Fergie, attempting to capture the grainy red texture of his famous weather-beaten nose and cheeks. I am constantly reappraising each element of the piece, redrawing areas if necessary and will only describe the work as finished when I am fully happy with it.



Step 6

Fergie's hands were painted in and the hair-drier was finished, I couldn't resist calling it *Tongue Lasher 2000!* Beckham's tux was finished off and details such as individual hairs were applied. After framing and signing the image I thought it was now complete.

However, on reflection I decided to increase the size of the hair-drier so that it appears to come out of the artwork. Using the lasso and free transform options it is possible to increase the size of the hair-drier in a few seconds. I believe this has created a much more dynamic image.