Tips on Creating White-skinned Renders for Vamps / Other Undead and Generally Unhealthy-looking Characters

A few people have asked me about getting character skin really white for that must-have undead look. I've put together some tips and tricks for both rendering and postwork that will hopefully help in these situations.

Tools Required:
- Poser or other 3D posing / rendering application, e.g. Daz|Studio
- Image manipulation programme such as Photoshop, Gimp, GimpShop etc

For this tutorial, I'm using Poser Pro, Michael 4 with Soul Hunter Bartok MAT and MOR files from Renderosity, and GIMPShop (the process is identical in Photoshop).

While the Bartok MAT is already quite pale, it can come out quite blue, depending on the light settings you use, and I often end up adjusting colours / brightness when I render with it.
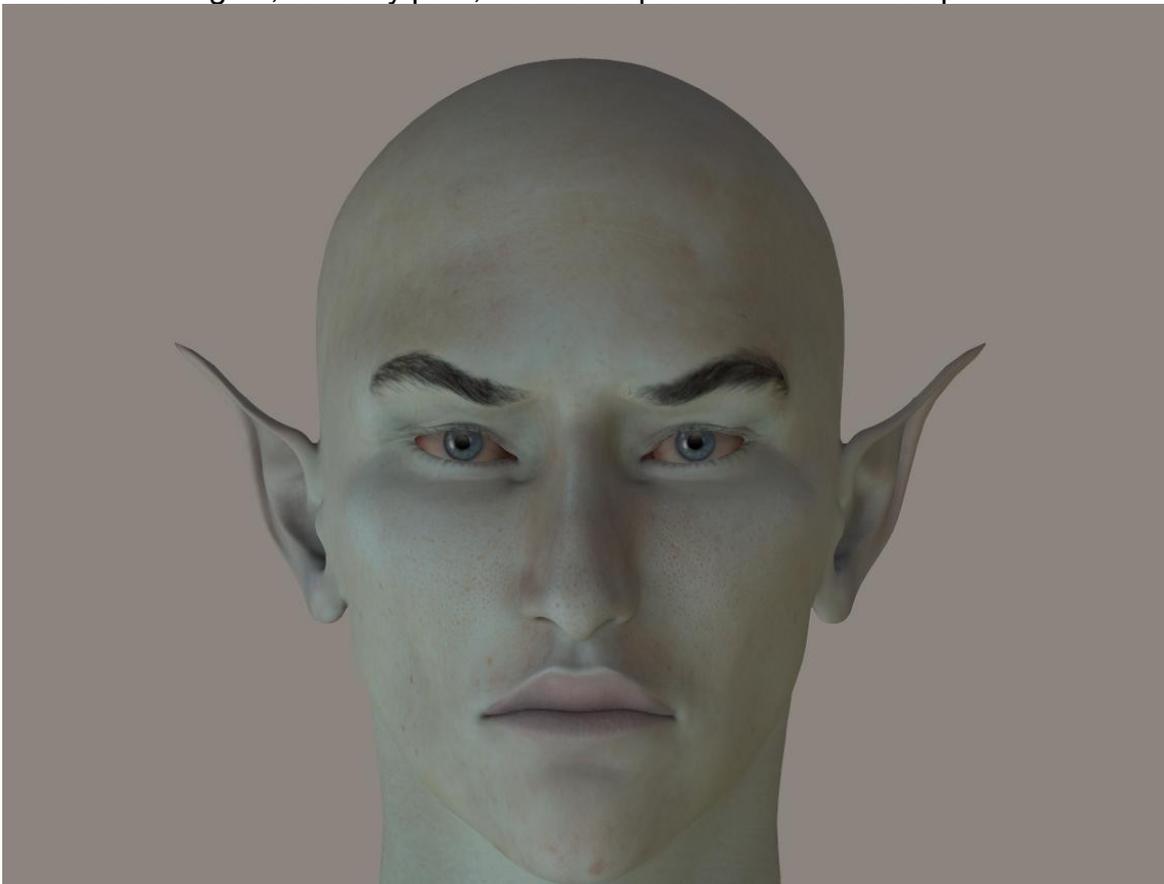
Method
1. Go into Poser and load up your chosen character model.

2. Apply your chosen MATs / Morphs.

3. Choose a light – I've used a light set that comes with Poser Pro (HDRVFX light – Albany Night)
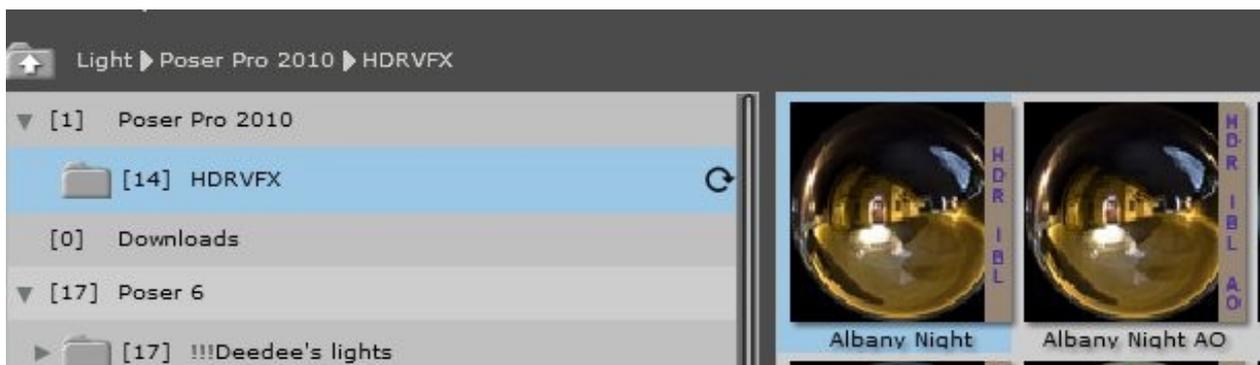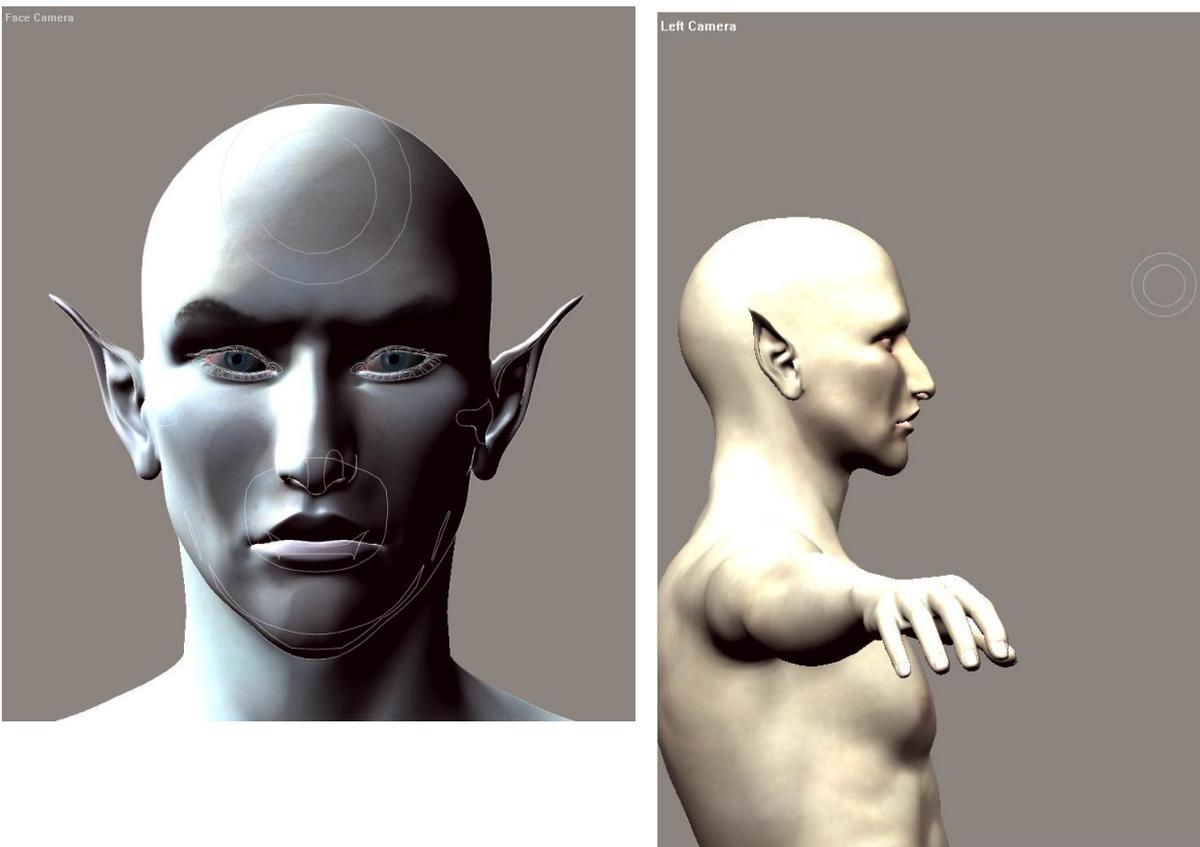
Here's how he looks on first rendering. It's fairly pale, but I'm sure we can do better!

And a face shot. Again, it's fairly pale, but looks quite human in closeup.

4. To lighten up the face, and add a bit of drama and interest, add a point light, leaving all settings on default, in approximately the location shown below.

5. It should be front and centre of the character's face, quite high up on the forehead, and a short distance away.

Here's how it now looks on rendering. A little paler, with a bit more contrast.
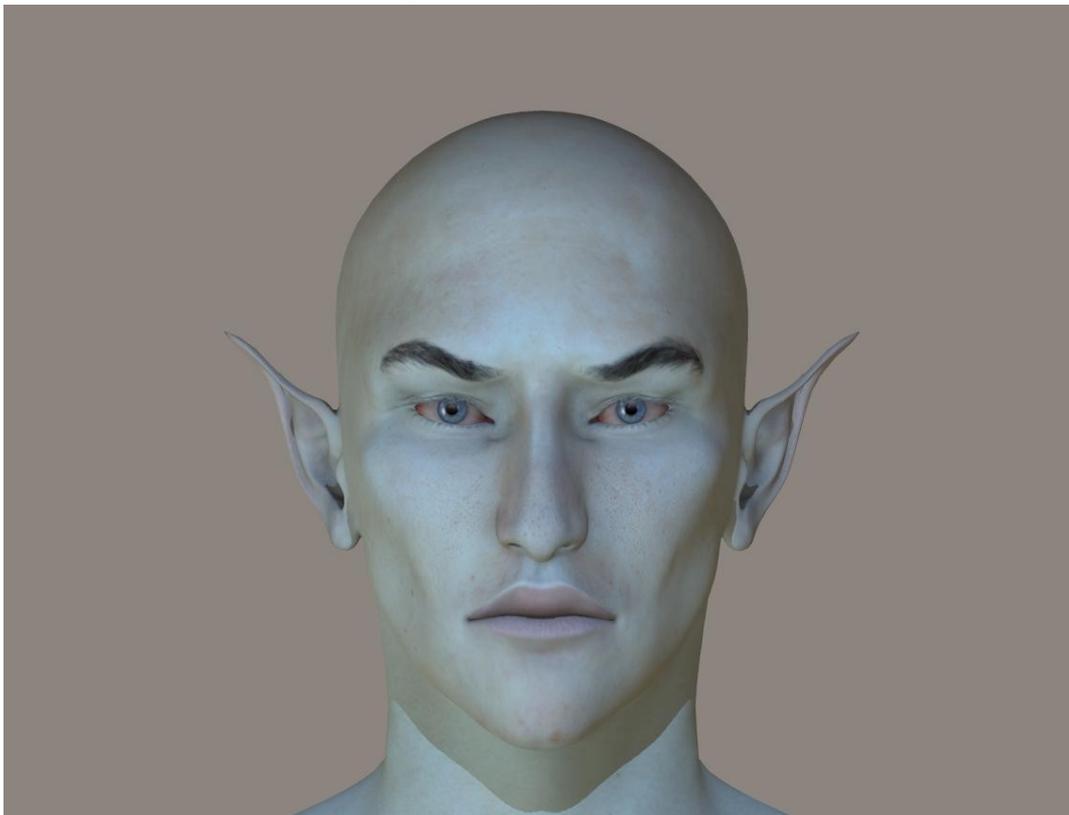
6. Play around with the light settings and get the angle you want in your 3d application, render it, then save out the image.

7. Next, go into GimpShop and add a new layer.

8. Select the head area on your original image.

9. Using the eyedropper tool, select a light colour from the existing skin tones.

10. On your NEW layer, with just the head selected as above, grab a large airbrush, and paint over the face, avoiding the eyes and lips, and putting more highlights where you want them (e.g. cheeks, forehead).

    Your image may look a little like this – but don't worry!
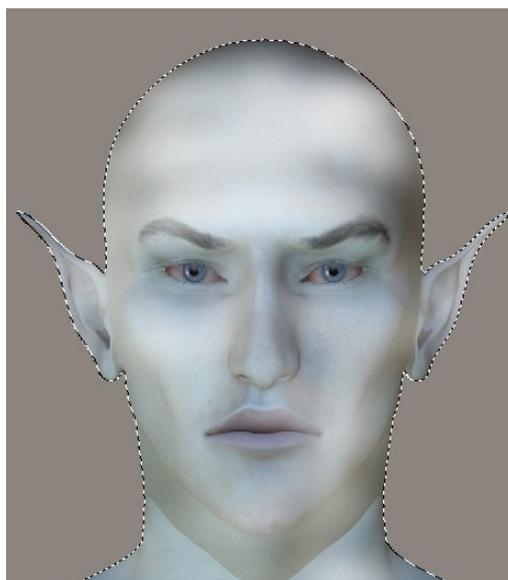
11. Next, change the layer blending mode to overlay, and your image should look more like this:
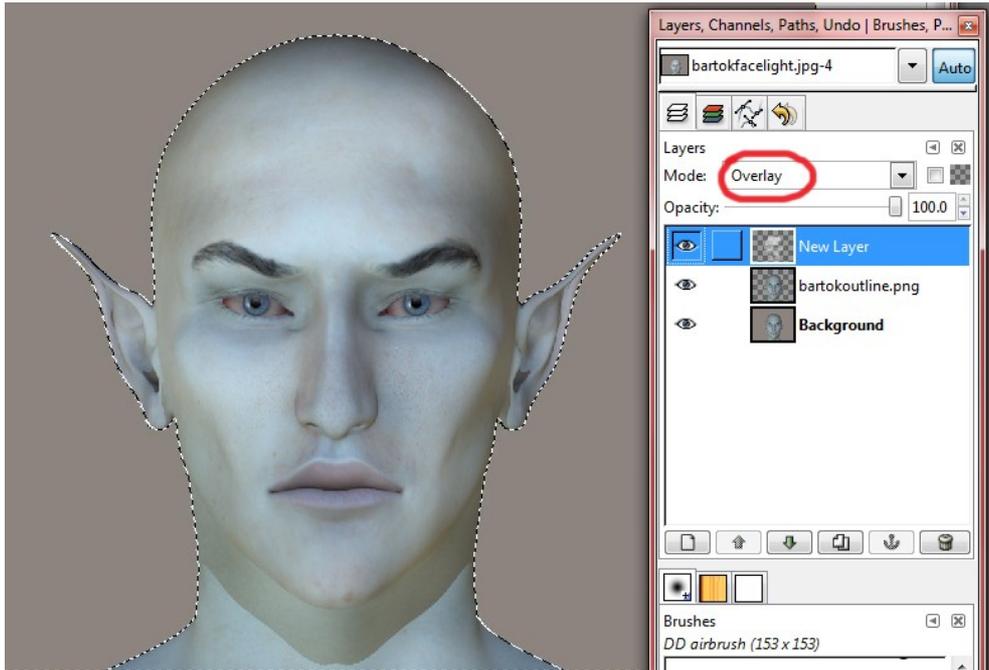

12. You can lower the opacity to decrease the lightening effect. You can also use a variety of different light-coloured tones to make the face look more realistic.

13. Deselect your selection, and finally, flatten the image (Layers > Flatten Image). I usually make a duplicate layer at this point, so that I can play around with the settings and still retain a copy of the original in case I mess things up (not that I ever do, of course...).

14. Optionally, you can now play around with the Image > Adjustments menu. Changing these settings to your taste can really make the image come alive.
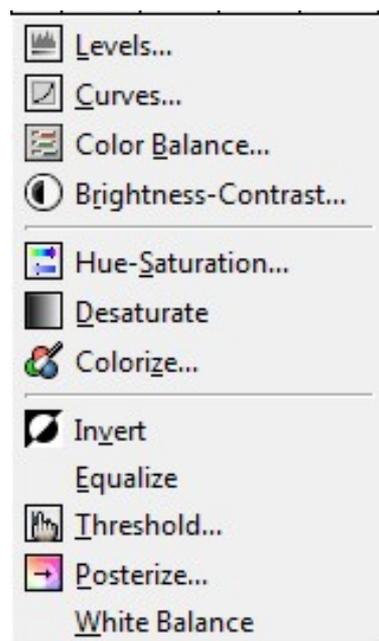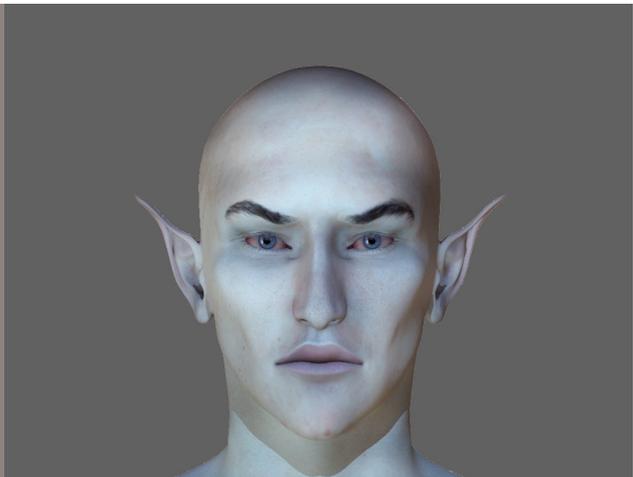

I usually play with the colour balance, the brightness and contrast, and the curves, and sometimes the Saturation controls in Hue > Saturation.

And here he is all finished and vampy!
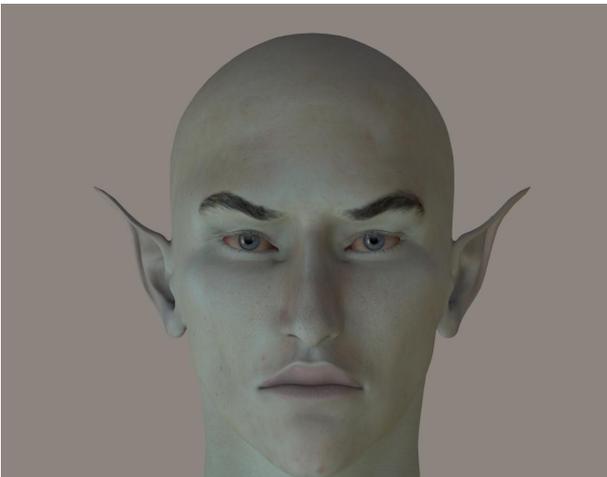
Illustration 1: Before   Illustration 2: After

Deedee, Aug '11