

Virtual Makeovers

Try a daring new look—without having to live with it forever.

By Molly Delano

Have you ever wondered how you'd look with Calista Flockhart's wispy hair? Or what bright blue eyes would do for your dark complexion? The answers to these burning beauty questions and more are right on your desktop.

Thanks to new digital imaging technology, the online beauty business is booming with the addition of interactive features like virtual makeovers.

It's as easy as uploading a photo of yourself, and then blocking out a few hours to try out everything from the ridiculous to the realistic.

Makeoverstudio.com is without a question the best site out there. The "My Studio" section offers great graphics and easy-to-follow instructions for testing out hundreds of hairstyles and colors and makeup combinations.

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You can upload a digital photo of yourself in seconds or choose from one of many models they provide.

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Makeoverstudio.com also has a "Makeover of the Month" section in which they choose a willing victim and give her several different hair and makeup looks. Each look has a "how-to" pop-up window that includes instructions for the cut, styling tips, and hints about whether or not the look is right for your hair and face type. You have to register to use the makeover features, but the process is free and relatively painless.

Emakeover.com is another virtual makeover site, but it pales in comparison to makeoverstudio.com. Grainy graphics and a touchy uploading process make it difficult to get a real sense of what you'd look like in these hair and makeup options. But once you get past the glitches, prepare for some serious fun—in addition to hair and makeup, emakeover.com also has sunglasses and goofy hats that you'd never wear in a million years. But that won't stop you from checking them out!

Probably the most useful function of these sites is seeing how you'd look with a drastically different hair length—I've always thought about cutting my medium-long hair, but after seeing these cheeks in a bob, I know it'll never happen.

You can test out tons of radical hair colors at clairol.com, and at makeover.women.com, though the image quality is poor, there are dozens of hair-dos to choose from, ranging from short to long to glamorous (try out that Rapunzel look with their step-by-step "how-to's").

Hair isn't the only thing you can test out online; there are plenty of sites that allow you to try bold makeup shades without actually buying anything. Head to ivillage.com/beauty and give their "makeover-o-matic" a whirl. Choose a model and then experiment with foundation, eye shadow and liner, cheek color and lipstick. When you're done, save your look in a "Look Book" that you can refer to before you head to an actual store.

If these sites don't quench your makeover madness, Cosmopolitan sells Virtual Makeover software (familycentral/home/cosmo2) that you can install on your computer. You'll be able to experiment for days with makeup, hair style and color, and even accessories. Try out Essence's Virtual Makeover software for women of color (littleafrica.com/essence). •



The Steamtunnels staff (pre-makeover at far left) tries Emakeover.com for some brave new looks...with questionable results. From top to bottom: Production Coordinator Tom Webb should stick with the surf bum look; Office Manager Jesse Lee is still after that perfect weekend 'do; Marketing Director Matt McRoberts has a smile on his face...and something on his head; Creative Director Audrey Borowski goes through more changes than Madonna.