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## Post Production

### Equal Effects

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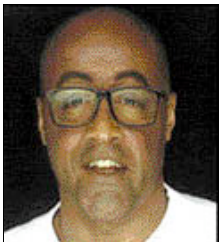


It's one of those commercials that gets everyone talking round the coffee machine the next morning. How did they do that? Was it make-up? Special effects? What?

The Commission for Racial Equality is an unlikely source of such an advert, you'd have thought, but when their latest spot "Would I be better if...?", currently airing, features a white Mel B and a black Chris Evans among others asking whether they'd have been as talented (or as annoying in Evans' case) in their new guises, those conversations were almost inevitable.



"Everyone in Britain should have the opportunity to see this advert and use it to help change public attitudes," says CRE chair Gurbux Singh. "We want it screened on TV, shown in cinemas across the country, used by colleges as a computer screensaver, shown on shop video channels, on football ground displays and so on. One of the country's leading advertising agencies backed by world class production houses have created the ad, all on the basis of pro bono contributions."



So how did they do it?

1) In all, it took over a year to put together the piece. After creative agency EURO RSCG Wnek Gosper had come up with the concept in November 1999, Beak Street-based production company RSA Films started work on a test shoot to see how much could be changed in a person's face before it became unrecognisable. The company found that, depending on the person, there were only certain elements that could be changed before the person became unrecognisable.



2) RSA then had to find body doubles for everyone (except Ken Livingstone who was simply given a wig and then made up). Most importantly, the doubles' features had to match the changeable elements of the celebrities' faces. Everyone (apart from Ken Livingstone) had a double, and in some cases two or three doubles. Director Laurence Dunmore then had to decide which aspects of each celebrity should then be altered: Lennox Lewis had his back and eyes changed, although his beard remained; Prince Naseem's hair and eyes were replaced with those of a blonde double. Says Kai Hsiung of RSA Films, "Mel B laughed at herself. She filmed the same day as Andy Cole and he was winding her up that she looked better than before."

Chris Evans proved to be a difficult person to alter: it took three body doubles to find a way of altering him without making him unrecognisable and the original scheme to make him Asian was abandoned when Dunmore decided he looked completely wrong. "Chris Evans loved the result," adds Hsiung. "He kept the make-up on afterwards so he could go and surprise a friend in hospital."

3) RSA then had to film the celebrities, some of whom could only spare half an hour including make-up time. In all, it took seven days to film all the celebrities and body doubles, although the seven days were spread from December 1999 to June 2000. David Seaman, one of the celebrities featured in the commercial, recalls "It did take a long while. I know it would." But the process did have an effect on him "I nearly walked home to see how I'd get treated."

4) The Mill then stepped in to mix the celebrities and their doubles together. Inferno operator Ant Walsham (who was also Prince Naseem's blond double) had to work closely with

~~James Madison's great country had to work closely with~~

Dunmore for every element of every face, finally having to match every frame together by eye - something that he says rapidly became a labour of love.

Eventually, after a year, the piece was ready. And if you can forget the sight of a naked Peter Stringfellow asking if he'd be even more attractive if he were black, it will have failed.

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