

**Fig. 1:**  
I've used a 25% gray to fill the areas on this cartoon that will be colored, but in the channels palette, the gray areas will be used as placeholders for selections.



**Fig. 2:**  
Notice the 'marching ants' of the active selection have been expanded into the black outlines to insure complete coverage of the area selected when filled with color.



**A**nother, slightly different method of coloring cartoons involves the use of channels. Channels have many, many uses and one of them is saving selections to avoid having to take the time to recreate them multiple times. By using channels, we can save ourselves much time and aggravation if it becomes necessary to go back at a later time to select and rework sections of the cartoon that have already been worked. The channels will help you quickly activate and isolate only the area of the cartoon that you need to alter, and leave the rest of the cartoon untouched. This is convenient if you have an area that isn't easily selected again with a single click after it's been worked on, like a gradient fill. Before moving on to the next step, open Illustrator and resave the cartoon you intend to work on with another name to preserve the original black/white version.

With the cartoon open in Illustrator, select each individual white area and fill with a medium gray. (Tip: a quick way to select all of the white areas is to select one, then **Select>Same> Fill Color**.) Make sure you use a gray that will be easy for Photoshop to distinguish from the black outline. (Fig 1) I generally use 25% black. If the value is too close, you may have to play with the tolerance settings of the Magic Wand to get your selection right. Since you're trying to save yourself time in the long run, making a good choice here will help you out later.

Save your gray Illustrator version of the cartoon and open it in Photoshop at the size and resolution you want. Now, before you start coloring the toon, open the Channels palette and duplicate a channel to use as our assistant in

making our selections. Then open the black and white version at the same size and resolution and paste it into the same file as the gray one. Once you have both versions in the same file with our 'selection' channel, you can close the black & white version you just opened.

Use layers to color your cartoon as you learned in my earlier newsletter. But now, if you need to select a certain area for re-coloring or additional work, just open the channels palette, and use the Magic Wand to select the area you want with the tolerance set high enough to select only the gray.

*"The channels will help you quickly activate and isolate only the area of the cartoon you need to alter..."*

**Select>Modify>Expand** your selection by 1 or 2 pixels to insure that selected area will extend into the solid black lines. (Fig. 2) Click back to the coloring layer; your selection will still be active, and you can change the color or rework the area however you want with no worries at all. Keep in mind that if you move either the cartoon or the channel once you begin, they will be out of alignment and your results will be less than optimum.

Lastly, always remember to save your cartoon as a PSD file before any other format in order to preserve layers and channels intact. ■