



Illustrator and Photoshop  
CS3 or later

# Make your type melt

Turn up the heat on your typography... **Steven Bonner** demonstrates a useful illustrative effect

**For a recent commission, I was asked to simulate a bar of white chocolate melting and sinking into a river of milk chocolate.** To achieve this, I used some simple techniques that could be applied to almost anything gloopy you can think of: molten lava, liquid gold, a cake mix – let your imagination run with it.

In this tutorial, I'll show you how to take a solid object and melt it into liquid using Illustrator, Photoshop and a combination of filters and hand painting to create a kind of hyper-realistic airbrushed finish. This, of course, could be used on anything from a personal flyer to a client design or illustration brief. It's a useful technique to have under your belt...



#### Steven Bonner

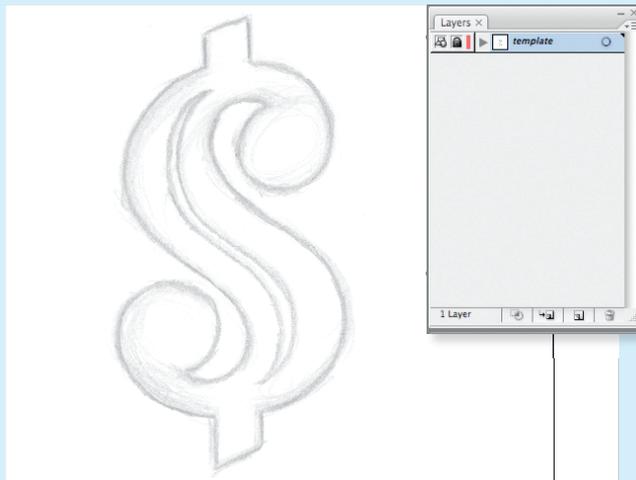
— Stirling-based Steven is a multi-disciplined designer and illustrator working for clients such as HarperCollins, Cadbury and even the Scottish Government. A love of type is a recurring feature of his work. See more of Steven's stuff at [www.stevenbonner.com](http://www.stevenbonner.com)

#### Time needed

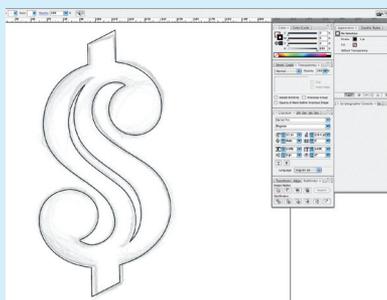
3–4 hours

#### Skills

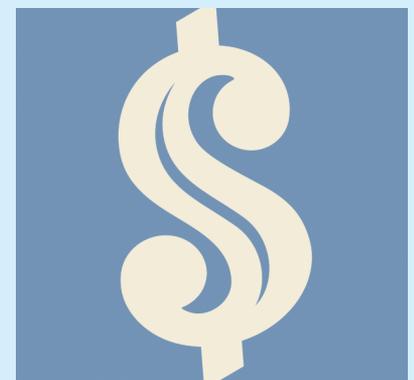
- Using Illustrator's Pen tool
- Effective use of Photoshop's Layer Effects palette
- Using shading and tone to achieve convincing liquid effects



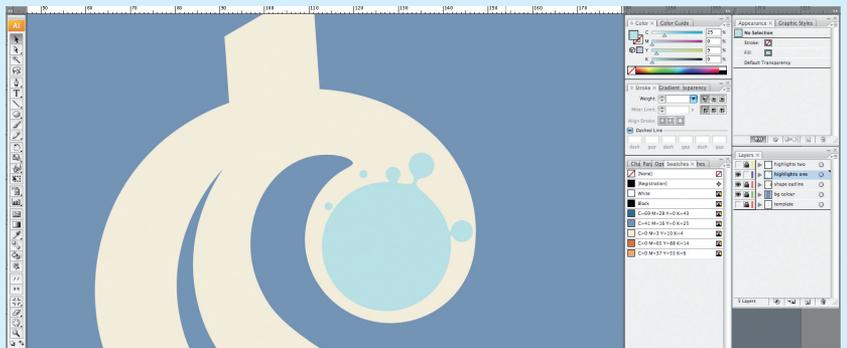
**01** — I'm going to melt a dollar sign into a pool of liquid, for no other reason than I like to draw dollar signs, and they have nice curves that we can use to make interesting areas. Sketch your shape and place it on a new template layer in Illustrator so you can trace its lines accurately. I'm using a document size of 220x300mm.



**02** — Use the Pen tool (P) to draw the shape using your sketch layer as a guide. I always look for areas in my drawing where I can use the Ellipse tool (L) to draw clean curves for me, then cut the lines where appropriate and connect them up. I find that I'll never draw a curve as cleanly as the Ellipse tool, so it's pointless not to use the software's features to my advantage.



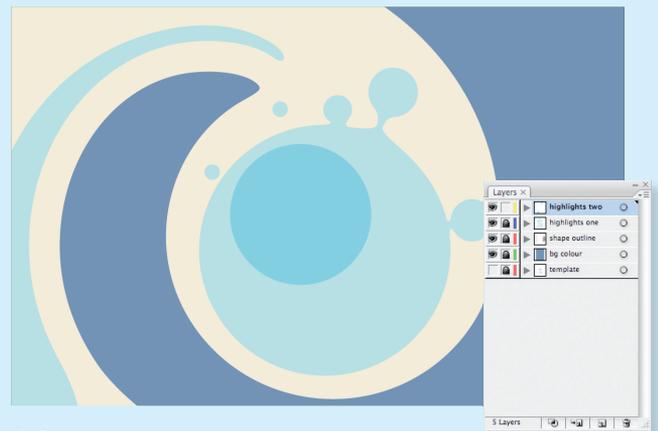
**03** — At this point it's a good idea to lay down some flat colour to make everything a little clearer. The colours don't really matter just now – just make sure there is enough contrast to enable you to easily differentiate between layers and elements.



**04** — Now we're going to start adding in the areas that will be melting. If you've ever watched a candle burning, you may have noticed how the heat burns through the solid mass and it becomes translucent in some areas which turn to liquid before others. This is what we're looking to achieve here, by creating spots or pockets where the heat has reached the surface of our shape, distorting it in the process. Draw some circles and link some of them together to show where melting areas will merge. →



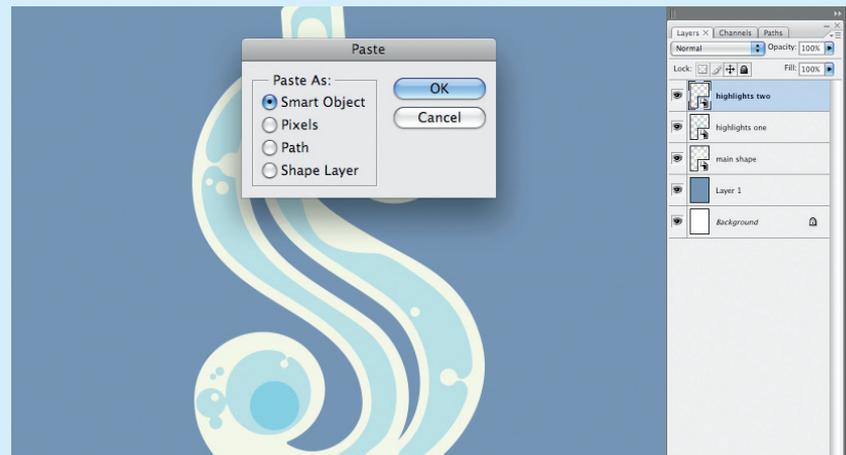
**05** Carry on building up your heat spots until you have something similar to the image shown here. On longer areas, think about where the solid may have begun to fold over on itself, and show this by creating a long even curve. Remember that heat spots melt outwards, so all your melted pockets should be smooth and even.



**06** Add another layer and create a few more circular areas where we'll add some contrasting tones later in Photoshop. This simulates heat spreading outwards from underneath and causing the shape to collapse in on itself.



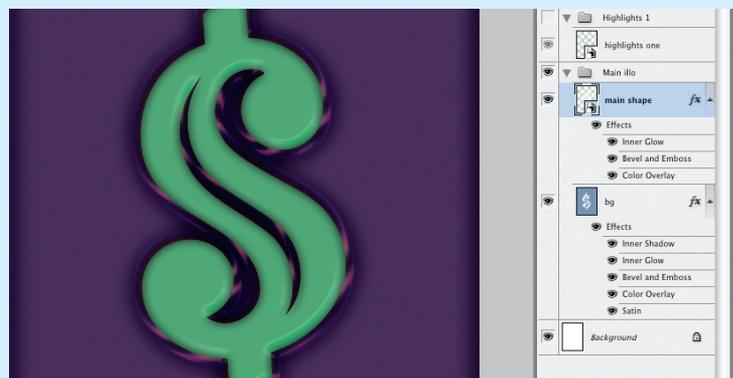
**07** Now add one more layer with some extra little splats and splashes dotted around the background. These will bring some extra detail to the area surrounding the final image.



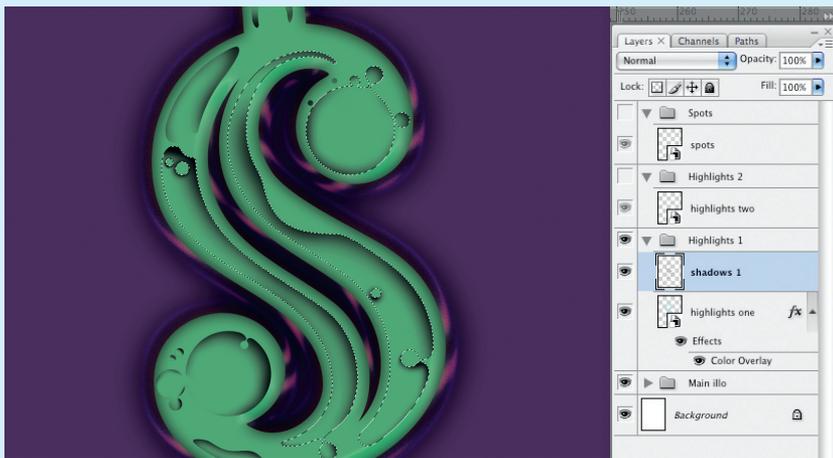
**08** Create a new document in Photoshop and paste each layer from Illustrator into it, making sure to paste everything as Smart Objects in case you need to make any on-the-fly changes as you go along. From here, put each Smart Object into its own folder in the Layers palette (as you'll be adding in more layers for each part), and it'll help to keep things nice and neat. Put the background colour layer into the Main Shape Object's folder.



**09** Use the Magic Wand tool (W) to select your main shape, then highlight the background layer and delete the selection from it. Now open up the Layer Style menu in the Layers palette for the background and apply the settings as follows: Inner Shadow (Distance 7px, Choke 34px, Size 190px); Inner Glow (Noise 17%, Size 60px); Bevel and Emboss (Depth 1000%, Direction: Up, Size 110px, Soften 15px, Shading with a double ring gloss contour using red/pinkish tones for the highlight colours). I also added a small amount of satin and set Colour Overlay to C84, M97, Y6, K1.



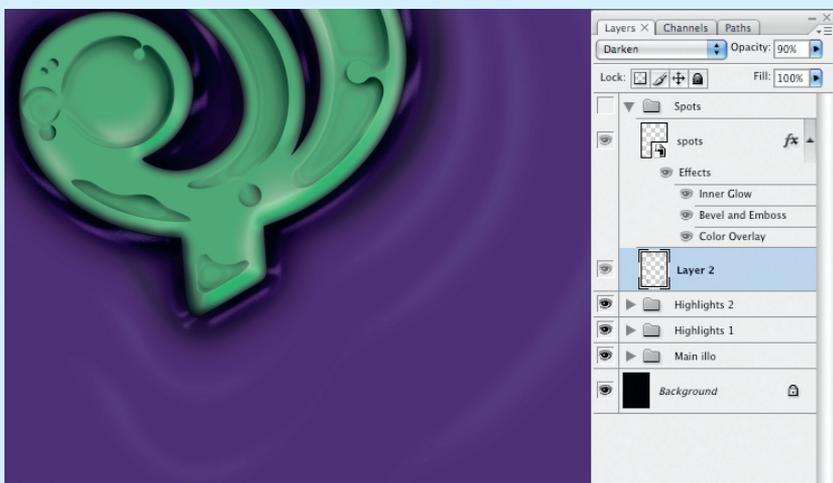
**10** Next, select your main shape layer and apply the following: Inner Glow (Choke 0, Size 68px); Inner Bevel (Depth 410px, Direction: Down, Size 62px, with light green highlights and dark green shadows). Now set Colour Overlay to C63, M0, Y68, K0. At this point you may notice some ugly white fringes around your shape. This is because of the fit between the shape and the negative space on the background layer. To fix this, simply select your background layer, go to Filter>Other>Minimum and use 8 pixels. This will add bulk to the cutout and negate trapping issues.



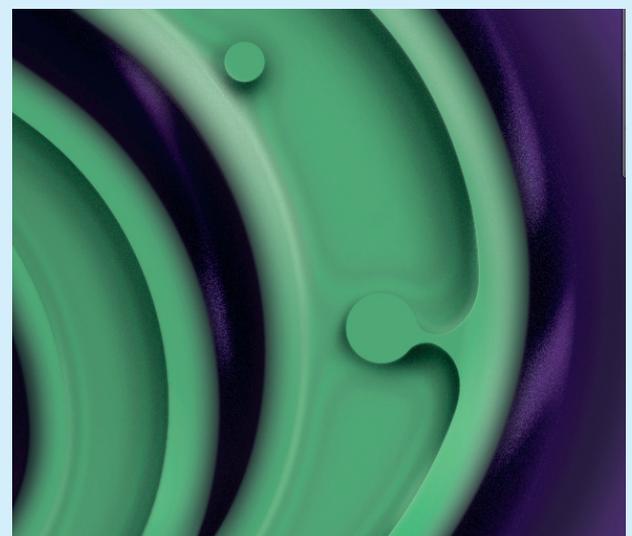
**11** Right now it's looking a bit like you got Photoshop for Christmas and went nuts, so we're going to manually add some nice shading and tones to put the natural feel back into the piece. Create a new layer above your highlights Smart Object and, using the Magic Wand tool (W), select various parts of the highlights and paint outside them using a large soft brush, creating shadows more naturally. Do this until you feel you've achieved a nice balance in the image. Just paint in black for now.



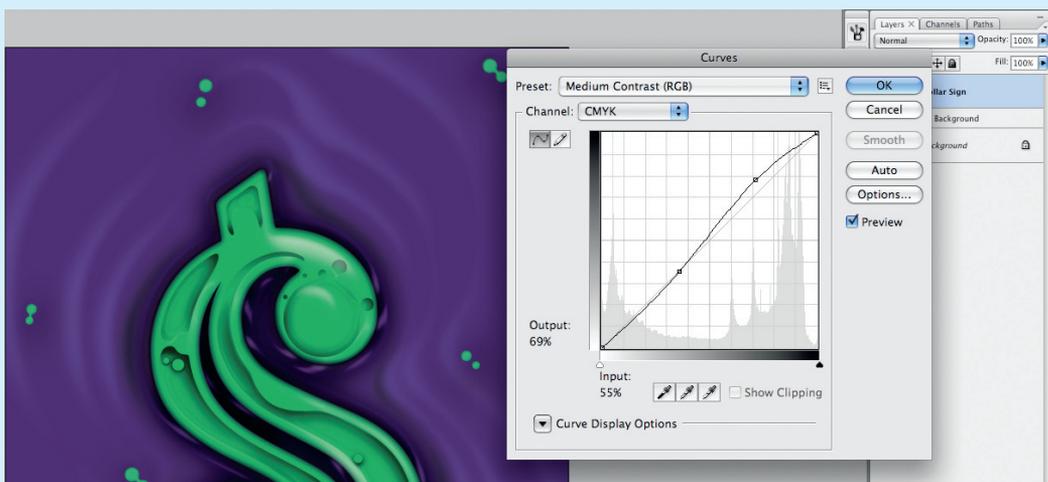
**12** Carry on painting in more shadows on other layers if necessary – I find that it's good to paint on different layers so I get more control over the blending settings I use at the end. Also add in some highlights along the edges where the light would catch it.



**13** Next we want to create some gentle ripples to simulate motion. Use the Magic Wand tool once again to select the main shape, then create a layer underneath it. Expand the selection by 100 pixels (Select>Modify>Expand...) then smooth the selection out by another 100 pixels (Select>Modify>Smooth...), then feather it by 20 pixels. Take a soft brush again, and paint in ripples outside the selection. Do this until you're satisfied with the results.



**14** For some finishing touches, repeat the previous steps with your small spots, and add some subtle noise (Filter>Noise>Add Noise) set to Monochromatic to give the piece a subtle texture.



**15** Finally, flatten the folders into layers and punch up the colours where necessary. I felt that the green needed boosting here, so I used the Curves dialog box (Ctrl/Cmd+M) to saturate it a bit more.

