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## 'FROZEN MOMENT' IS HOT IDEA: FROM TRUCK TO HAIRCARE ADS, SHOPS TURN TO TIME-STOPPING SPECIAL EFFECT.

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Time-less: Still-array photography is used most effectively "when the thing that's frozen is something that can't possibly be immobilized," says Erik Nash, who helped create Chevy Silverado spots (above). Others using the technique: Clairol (l.) and Discover Card.

Bill Ludwig, vice chairman-chief creative officer of Campbell-Ewald, has always been fascinated by "The Day The Earth Stood Still," the eerie 1951 sci-fi classic that introduced the robot Gort to the masses.

So when members of his creative department at the Warren, Mich., agency started kicking around ideas for two new TV spots introducing Chevrolet's redesigned Silverado pickup, he saw his opportunity for a homage.

"What if one day all work stopped and people went to check out the new way of getting the job done?" he asked.

The result turned out to be two spots -- "Foundry" and "Cowboy" -- in which time literally stands still, drawing the rapt attention of beefy steelworkers and cowboys to the new General Motors Corp. vehicle.

### TECHNIQUE DU JOUR

At the heart of these commercials is a visual effect that's quickly becoming the technique du jour in commercial-making. It goes by a variety of names: virtual camera, frozen moment, time-slice, still-array photography. Whatever you call it, it's become to the visual vocabulary what morphing was at the start of this decade.

Examples abound, most prominent among them the Gap's "Khakis Swing" commercial directed by Matthew Rolston. Another advertiser stopping the clock was Bristol-Myers Squibb Co.'s Clairol, which used the technique in a commercial for Nice 'N Easy out of Intuition Group, New York, and directed by Bob Giraldi of Giraldi Suarez Productions.

Fallon McElligott, Minneapolis, used it in a riveting spot for Timex Corp.'s Ironman Triathlon watches last year, as did Team One, El Segundo, Calif., for Toyota Motor Sales USA's Lexus Division. One of the latest examples can be found in an ethereal, otherworldly Discover Card spot out of DDB Needham Worldwide, Chicago.

The novelty of the technique, and its ability to stop not only time but often the wandering attention span of TV viewers, is not lost on agencies.

### COULDN'T FIGURE IT OUT

"The first time I saw it, I thought it was the coolest thing I'd ever seen," said Bill Artope, VP-executive producer at DDB Needham who worked on the Discover campaign. Even though he's a 30-year veteran of commercial production, Mr. Artope said he couldn't figure out how the effect was done.

"Everyone's got to do a time-slice commercial now, regardless of the concept," said Pamela Maythenyi, president of the Source/Maythenyi, a production database service in Boca Raton, Fla. Her company, which tracks commercial productions for agencies, gets frequent requests for information on the burgeoning technique.

Erik Nash was the visual effects supervisor at Digital Domain in Venice, Calif., on the Chevy Silverado spots, which were shot by Steve & Linda Horn Productions ("Found-ry") and Omaha Films ("Cowboys"). What gives the effect its three-dimensional look is the changing perspective on an object or objects that are frozen, Mr. Nash explained.

### FREEZING THE UNFREEZABLE

"The technique works best when the thing that's frozen is something that can't possibly be immobilized," he added.

There are several means employed to capture the frozen-moment look, and they often entail the use of sophisticated, complex and often finicky camera rigs.

One version uses dozens of separate still cameras arrayed in an arc around the object being filmed;

One version uses dozens of separate still cameras arrayed in an arc around the object being filmed; controlled by a computer, the cameras each expose a single frame of film, either in sequence or simultaneously.

Then the single frames are taken into a post-production facility where they are digitally compiled and matted together in a time-consuming and often painstaking process.

Other systems -- such as Timetrack, a patented device built by Dayton Taylor, a filmmaker who also studied engineering -- use a single piece of film that is passed through a specially built camera with multiple lenses, onto which multiple exposures are made at one time.

#### FRAUGHT WITH LIMITATIONS

Experts say that shooting in this fashion, while often producing awe-inspiring images, is fraught with limitations. First off, everything has to be pre-planned precisely.

"The alignment is critical, and minor inaccuracies in the cameras can cause big problems down the road," Mr. Nash said.

Despite this, the effect appeals strongly to creatives because the technique lends itself to visualization, said Mr. Taylor, who has seen dozens of storyboards calling for the effect.

"Like morphing, frozen moment is a concept that the mind can explore without even thinking about the technology behind how it's done," he said.

Are there more of these moments in store for TV viewers?

"Unfortunately, yes," said Campbell-Ewald's Mr. Ludwig. "Everyone's enamored of it."

#### ALREADY HAVE HAD ENOUGH

Given its status as a fast-emerging fad, however, there are those who said they've already seen enough.

"It's difficult, confusing and time consuming," Mr. Giraldi said. "It's a technique that's so out there when you see it, it has no real subtleties."

After his experience with the Clairol spot, Mr. Giraldi said he's not planning on experimenting with it again.

It's not the technique itself that leaves him cold, he added -- "I just wonder how emotional it can be."