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TM

THE CREATIVE EDGE IN COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION

# 'boards

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## THE SURREAL REALITY

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES PROVE ONE NEED NOT BE CONSTRAINED BY THE REAL WORLD

**>** Imagine if you could produce mind-blowing images that look different than anything else (and real), and produce them for the same money, or less, and in the same amount of time as a traditional commercial.

Well, it's taken tens of millions of dollars of studio money, invested in software for big budget spectacles, and thirty some-odd PhD math wizards at Digital Domain, but if the new Acura spot, "Dance", directed by Mark Romanek of Anonymous, is any indication, the CG revolution might be further along than anybody could have imagined.

In the opening shot of "Dance", a camera sweeps down and across a crater within a gray landscape in a gravity-defying move before dropping in low and tight behind a speeding Acura on a slick road.

While some people may key into the impossible camera moves and peg them as CG, few people will be able to tell that literally everything in this :30 from Ruben Postaer was created virtually – the car (a real Acura was digitized), the water, the wind, and even the landscapes, which were built using Digital Domain's proprietary software Terragen, which maps satellite-accurate real data into a CG model of the topography.

Ed Ulbrich, VP general manager at Digital Domain says that based on reference photos that Romanek found, "We could create Mark's own world. Places that don't actually exist."

In this world, the director never has to leave his chair, let alone wait days on location for just the right sunset or the clouds to pass, and there is no such thing as post-production.

"You get to control every single pixel of every

(A-B) Acura's entirely virtual "Dance".

single frame for the entire length of the commercial. And there's no such thing as no," say Ulbrich. While this new paradigm might make agencies a little nervous, it could be a director's dream.

Urged on by David Fincher and his pioneering use of digital tools for commercials, Romanek agreed to do the spot only if it would be entirely CG. This meant the car would have to look and perform exactly the way an Acura

**"YOU GET TO CONTROL EVERY SINGLE PIXEL OF EVERY SINGLE FRAME FOR THE ENTIRE LENGTH OF THE COMMERCIAL. AND THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS NO."**

would, and all elements including water, spray and gravel to name only a few, would have to interact believably with it in a complex, moving environment.

"I tell you, before this spot, and quite honestly prior to us having done the movie *The Day After Tomorrow*," notes Ulbrich, "most of those things that Mark wanted to see in this spot would have been impossible. Certainly not on a commercial schedule or budget, because of how computationally intensive it is and the fact that prior to just now the tools didn't exist." **•**

**WEB FILES**

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