

# Bill Bennett makes every frame count for Ford

The first time that Bill Bennett, ASC used the new Zeiss Ultra Prime 8R T2.8 lens was for an extreme close-up shot of a hand holding a hook that gets attached to a chain. The hook was so close to the lens that there wasn't room for a matte box. Bennett taped an 85 filter on the lens instead. The close-up is on TV screens for just a few clicks of the clock in a 30-second commercial, but Bennett explains that it is an important visual transition.

The commercial was part of a series of Ford "Built Tough" spots featuring the same three characters. Two are "nerdy guys" who drive other cars. One is "a big, fat guy" and the other is "short and skinny." The third character is popular country western star Toby Keith. In the opening shot, the two nerds are yelling at each other, bragging about their cars. It looks like they are drag racing until a wide shot reveals that a chain connects the rear bumpers of the two cars. They are engaged in a tug-of-war that no one is winning. The wheels of their trucks are spinning and kicking up dust.

There is a cut to Keith, who is leaning on a lush black Ford F-150 pickup truck. He is watching the antics of the nerds and laughing. Keith walks toward the two trucks. There is a close-up of the hook in his hand. The hook gets wrapped around the chain between the cars. The next shot shows the Ford dragging the two other trucks down a dusty country road. It fades to Keith behind the wheel with a big smile on his face. The images speak louder than words. Would you rather be like Keith or one of the fools?

The commercial was created by J. Walter Thompson in Detroit, produced by Los Angeles-based IPS, and directed by Michael Salomon. It was filmed in two days on a movie ranch near Santa Clarita, California. Bennett describes it as "canyon country ... a desert location with intersecting dirt roads and a funky gas station in the background."

**Below:** DP Bill Bennett, ASC used ARRIcam Studio with a Zeiss UltraPrime LDS 50 mm lens rigged onto a Ford truck to shoot a scene for the Ford truck commercial.

The shot of the Ford dragging the other vehicles was filmed with an ARRIcam Studio and an ARRI 435 Xtreme camera positioned for different perspectives. All other shots were made with one camera while the other one was being prepared for the next scene.



**Above:** (L to R) DP Bill Bennett, ASC and camera assistant Craig Devereux on location while shooting a scene for the Ford truck commercial.

PHOTO: BY SCOTT KASTENOFF

Bennett shot the scene of the Ford towing the two other cars at 20fps, which slightly accelerated the action. He says the effect is more subliminal than something you consciously notice. He shot the spinning wheels at 60 fps.

Bennett recorded the spot on Kodak VISION2 500T Expression 5229 color negative film.

"It was the right film for this spot," he says. "I needed all the latitude I could get. The Ford was pure black and it was filmed against the background of a light beige desert. Exteriors were filmed at the end of the day, when the sun was low on the horizon and the light was beautiful. Shots of the characters inside the cars were filmed at mid-day with the aid of bounce light and HMIs outside the windows."

Bennett suggested that Zeiss develop the 8mm lens for use with ARRIflex 35mm cameras during a meeting at the 2004 National Association of Broadcasters conference. Zeiss designers subsequently contacted Bennett several times during the next two years, asking questions about size, speed and other imaging characteristics.

"They made three prototypes until they were satisfied, using new technology developed for designing microchips," Bennett says. "I tested and purchased the first lens they sold. It has a wider angle of view than anything available with the exception of fisheye lenses. It is only about 3 1/2 inches in diameter, so it fits into tight spaces, and it has a flat field of view without distortion. It will also be useful for shots that call for feelings of extreme distance without curvature at the edges of the frame." ■



PHOTO: BY JOHN STABLE