

## Cinematographer Peter Gulla gets into “Gears” for Gatorade

“Gears”, one of the latest Gatorade spots in the company’s colorized “sweat” campaign, was photographed by Peter Gulla and directed by E.J. Forester.



NASCAR Champion Mark Martin

Shot in two days at Lakeland Speedway in Florida, this commercial was Gulla’s first collaboration with Forester. Forester was already familiar with the world of race car driving as director of the Busch Nascar campaign a year earlier. “Gears” opens on Nascar champion Mark Martin as he rests in the pits, rehydrating with Gatorade as perspiration beads on his face. During this moment of reflection, the viewer is transported into Martin’s thoughts and inside an accelerating race car, ripping around a track at a 180 mph. Here, Gulla takes us along for a behind-the-scenes ride on “Gears”.

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-Peter Gulla

This is the first Gatorade spot in the campaign to open on a sweat shot, so there was a lot of discussion as to how to handle this in an interesting manner. E.J. and I decided to take an organic approach to the pit area. A small pit was made on the track and the opening was shot at dusk on day one.



Mark Martin in the Pits

I really like what happens to film in a dusk or dawn environment. It lends itself so well to the telecine process. The tonalities are beautiful and desaturated in comparison to a sunny, high-contrast situation. I would take a breaking overcast day over anything. I love the approach of great still photographers like Bruce Davidson, Peter Lindberg and Irving Penn. They shoot in large controllable shadow areas. You can really open the day up for the director and give them maximum time with the talent that way. I spent a lot of time working with (director-cinematographer) Samuel Bayer. He showed me how important the right talent, wardrobe and art direction are, but also how light can become part of the character and environment.

“To prepare for the traveling G-force sweat shots, it was decided in pre-production to do a test to best replicate the sweat traveling across Mark Martin’s face. It was decided to shoot the test in mini-DV with a Canon XL-1 for time considerations. After many attempts, the best results were achieved in low-tech fashion. We turned the camera on its side and had the talent lay on a lounge chair. With the sweat, we wanted to use various camera speeds and originally we thought it might be interesting to use a photosonics camera at 360 frames. Then we realized that we would not get the sensation of movement we needed. Mark is supposed to be traveling 180 miles per hour, and we wanted to see the G-forces ripping across his face. We decided to keep it

between 60 and 120; and after seeing it, I think the 120-framed version worked really well.

“Once we found the right camera placement, a mixture of water, glycerin and oil was created by make-up artist Jeff Judd and applied on the talent’s face in beads. An airbrush hose attached to a small air generator was then used to blow the beads of sweat across the face. I decided to use the sky as a large reflective source. I often use large photographic backings hand-painted by an L.A. artist as my source. I don’t like using large white sources to reflect light - it never feels quite right. I like it when the light takes on the quality of the surroundings “After telecining the footage at Company 3 with Stephan Sonnenfeld and colorizing the sweat at Cerulean, I was sure someone might suggest shooting on mini-DV — everyone was so blown away with the test. I thought it looked amazing. The possibilities of mini-DV are endless, however, we did shoot on 35mm.



“Mark was only available for one day and that day was committed to doing the sweat and poor-man’s shots. In order to maximize the first day I suggesting getting Safari car mounts involved.

I was familiar with some of their recent still campaigns and knew they could bring a lot of options to the track. The Safari system was designed by Craig Hunter for the still world and is crossing over in a big way. They have designed mounts that attach to the chassis of the car and give a 90 degree rotation to either side of the mount, up to 12-15 feet away from the car.

“We used motion picture and still cameras at various shutter speeds. E.J. and I would set the still camera up and have the car travel at about 3 mph and shoot at half-second



exposures. The end result looks as though the car is going 180 mph and the slow shutter speed gave the blurred background we desired. We then turned the Safari mount crew loose to do mounts all day, and E.J. and I then returned to the infield to photograph Mark's sweat shots.

This took the burden of doing mounts off of day two and was a great way to have a big first day. Everyone was very impressed after we saw the dailies timed by Mark Osborne.

“The footage with Mark in the car had to be shot quickly. Mark had just had back surgery and was not too excited about having to crawl through the window of the car. We wanted to add a sense of movement to the static shots. My gaffer, John Rodgers, and I made wagon wheel rigs out of aluminum with adjustable 1x1 mirrors. We positioned 2K Xenons on them and spun them at various speeds focusing each to hit a specific area. This gave a very aggressive sense of movement and was a great idea through an easy solution. Even though the car never moved, it looks like he is really flying.

“Day two was a challenge because we had bleacher, performance, interior and crane shots. Gary Feil, our first AD, really optimized our day. We were able to shoot

everything in good light. The interiors were a combination of inserts done in a tent and then lit, and then actually riding with the stunt driver at 150 mph. I had a helmet on and I was wrapped in furniture pads, then wedged against the passenger door. In seconds we were driving 150 mph and I was operating off a monitor. We used the close-focus



Interiors with Close Focus Primo lenses

Primo lenses on those shots. For the end frame, E.J. wanted the car peeling away in "Top Gun" fashion. The Frazier lens was used to rotate the image as it wiped the lens.

"While doing the final telecine with Jais Thierry Lamaire at 525, I knew the spot would be great when Bill Patton and Tony Sharpe, the creative team from FCB demanded the voice of Batman from "Batman: The Animated Series" on the Cartoon Network. Jais' final telecine is amazing. I believe the great telecine artists today like Stephan and Jais are the pop artists of the advertising world. The color palette is always shifting and influenced by pop culture. They are the liaisons of that world. So much of the final look we pipe to the public is influenced by them. My hat is off to them."

Peter Gulla, Director of Photography  
Gatorade 'Gears' Spot