



What shots in films and commercials is Motion Control useful for?

A. Twin shots – an actor has to appear twice (or more) in the same scene. We have done this many times for the “Nutty Professor”, “Nutty Professor 2 “, and “The Sixth Day” with Arnold Schwarzenegger as examples.

B. Choreography of camera motion of an otherwise difficult shot. A very good example of this is the complex and precise moves of the camera in “The Panic Room”. In these shots as well – the motion control system can control the lights to dim down, flash or animate other props too.

C. Hazardous scenes with dangerous elements or location. Many times with shoot an explosion first and later shoot the actors in front of a blue screen to composite them in. One commercial we shot involved shooting the background plates on top of a very tall building in Los Angeles making it appear that a young roller skater was speeding along the edge of the building. In reality the second part of the shooting was on the ground in front of a green screen with the skater rolling along a prop piece of the roof. We have also shot a blue screen shot of tiger with one motion control pass – followed by a “live action” shot combining the actor reacting to the tiger.

D. Match shots of Live Action with Miniatures and Models. Although this is not done as much as it was a few years ago – it is still a very vital part of filmmaking. This technique was used recently for “End of Days”, “X Men 2”, “The Day After Tomorrow”, “ The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen” and more coming.

E. Removal of wires, special rigs, or an actor. Much of this has been taken over by the digital world, but we have just recently been asked to participate in a Japanese commercial with very complex “flying rigs” to make it appear the actors are almost flying. Our system will shoot this “live”, then the crew will remove all the rigging and we will shoot a “clean pass” to allow the post production group to fill in the areas covered by the rig. An extreme example was “the Hollow Man” – every scene with the invisible man had to have a background pass to allow the compositors the background to fill in.

F. Table Top Photography – We do this kind of commercial all the time. A very precise way to move both the food or product and camera in concert – many times it is a slight variation, thus the same camera programmed move can be used many times. This has let commercial directors show a food product going from frozen to steaming hot as the camera is moving.



G. Combine Time Lapse and Live Action – These “impossible shots” are a classic example of combining several different frame rates – and creating a sometimes beautiful if not eerie shot. A creative director can combine various lighting techniques to create a unique vision for a client.

H. Music Videos – This is one area of filmmaking that is constantly looking to create a “look” that has never been seen before. We always meet with young directors who want to take a chance and go for that wild edge. These are some of the areas that motion control plays a pivotal role in the field of cinematography. The challenge is always there – the commercial world needs something funny, visually stunning to catch your eye and make you remember their product. The Movie world raises the bar on visual effects with almost every feature – the one shot that takes your breath away and has everybody dazzled but believing that “impossible shot they just saw.