

Analyse the techniques used in the 1996 Levi's 'Riveted' advertisement.

Advertising is bringing information to people. It takes many forms, from displaying the product in a shop window to showing a television advertisement or sponsoring an F1 car. Advertising is mainly used to 'sell' a product, but it can also be used to spread diplomatic propaganda or to raise public awareness about a particular health issue. A very popular advertising medium is television.

Many advertisements on television show celebrities enjoying a luxurious life after using a product. This format, though successful, is starting to bore the general public. In the hope of cashing in on this need for diversity, many directors are experimenting with different formats that stand out from the overload of information that is the media of these times. One such director is Steve Ramses with his 1996 Levi's 'Riveted' jeans advertisement.

The advert is the story of two convicts who are running from the 'authorities' through a sequence of five different environments. These are a snowy woodland, a derelict refuge, rapids and a train tunnel. The convicts, a white man and a black man, are both wearing Levi's jeans, though the audience doesn't know the brand till the end, and are handcuffed together. As they run through the different scenes the jeans are subjected to vast amounts of abuse, yet they survive.

Before the audience is taken to the woodland, we are shown two sequences. The first is the flexing hand and the exhausted face of the coloured convict while he is on the train. This shows us that the rest of the advertisement is a flashback; the fugitive's recollections of the chase. By showing us that the convicts escape, Ramses discharges the tension that would otherwise be built during the chase. Thus allowing the audience to concentrate on the jeans' punishment throughout the advertisement, instead of fretting over the fugitives' fate.

The second sequence shows us the 'authorities' getting out of their van and beginning the chase. I am undecided as to whether the word 'authorities' is the best word that could be applied to these people, as they appear to me to be more of a lynch mob than law enforcers. The men that form the mob are unshaven and badly dressed, they are carrying guns and using unnecessarily aggressive and brutal dogs. As the gang gives chase, we are given the false impression of a gunshot. The audience is shown a man holding a gun, a release of smoke and then the impression that the camera lens is cracked. Ramses did this so the audience was aware that the 'authorities' were fully prepared to use their weapons; this, along with their appearance, gives us the idea that the mob is overly violent, thus making the audience hope that the convicts escape the mob's clutches. Ergo pace is built with immediacy. This would start to build tension if we had not already been shown a shot of the safe convicts at the advertisement's commencement.

The first arena is the snowy woodland. The woodland itself is deciduous; full of trees that lose their leaves in winter, and so is now leafless, and ergo appears lifeless. The black tree trunks and bare branches against the white backdrop of the snow make for a very bleak and hopeless place thus making the woodland a greater danger for the convicts as they are less likely to escape a bleak woodland than a green, summery one. The fact that the entire advert is filmed in monochrome only helps to further enforce the almost evil presence of the woodland. The advert is filmed without colour for several other reasons. The first is to give us the idea that the jeans are for all people groups, not just Caucasians. The use of both a black actor and a white actor enforces the universal appeal of the jeans. The use of monochrome also puts into the audience's mind the idea of a clearly defined good and evil, right and wrong. Because the mob is so obviously evil that only leaves the convicts to be the 'good guys'. Ramses wants to give the convicts this status for two reasons. The first is that we know that the 'good guys' always win, again removing

any tension that may have, or will be, built. The second is that we naturally, as humans, don't want evil to prevail and so we, the audience, begins to empathise with the convicts.

Now that there is sympathy in our minds, we are given a 'point of view' shot through one of the convicts eyes, thus encouraging the empathy to expand. The shot is taken with a hand held camera, or 'body camera', to give us the impression that we are running with the convicts. The shot shows the convicts, and ergo us, running through the tightly packed trees and seeing little except the black trunks and the white snow. This somewhat hostile environment shows us the danger that the fugitives are going through and so we, the audience, want them to escape and be safe. The camera looks back on the mob and then the view changes to an 'over the shoulder shot' from the back of the mob. We can see the dogs straining at their leashes, which are made from chains, and wanting to be free to 'hunt' the convicts, in effect, the metal chains are saving the fugitives. The mob is running just behind the convicts and the danger is very real to both the fugitives and the audience. The camera changes again to a top-down view over the running convicts. The most obvious thing that we see is the black metal of the handcuffs that chains the two convicts together. This is made easier to see by the white snow backdrop and the monochrome filming. The chain is in the middle of the screen, so that the audience's eyes are drawn to the metal shackles. Next we are shown a shot from the front of the convicts and we see the black man turn to look at the mob. As he does so, he stumbles and falls to the ground. The white man, to whom he is chained, drags him along for a short distance before slowly assisting him to his feet so they can continue on their passage to freedom. The handcuffs that chain them together ensure that they either both survive or both get caught. During the time that the black man was down, his jeans dragged in the snow. This sequence is taken in slow motion so that the jeans have to endure the stress for longer in the audience's mind. The jeans ability to survive even this prolonged suffering means that they are very strong and durable. Ergo the audience starts to want the jeans because if they can survive this punishment, they should be able to survive anything that the average person can put them through.

A derelict shack is the jeans' next challenge. As the fugitives approach what appears to be a place where they can find refuge the pace of the pursuit increases. To the front of the hut are several mean looking objects. These include a rusting chain in the snow and an axe with its head in a short upturned log. Both of these ensure that the atmosphere becomes quite menacing. Just as the convicts are about to enter the hut, a violent, black dog appears in the doorway. We see several extreme close up shots of the animals gnashing teeth, all of which are taken from a low camera angle. The low camera angle puts the audience beneath the dog, Ramses wants the audience there so that the dog has power over us. This automatically makes the animal a lot more dangerous to both the audience and the fugitives. The later quickly shy away from the refuge as they see the danger and they run off to the left of the shack.

As they are leaving one of them strikes a pair of old, yet still sharp meat hooks. The audience is not shown the actual contact but we do see the hooks swinging as the men run away. This is yet another danger that the jeans have survived and in the next shot we see that they are not even slightly damaged. These jeans definitely are very durable.

After traversing a short woodland path the fugitives find themselves at a ravine with a river in it. The convicts turn to see the mob hot on their tail and decide that the only thing they can do is to jump into the river. We are shown them jumping in from above so that the jump looks further, vertical distances always seem longer when viewed from above. As they land, the camera, and so also the audience, joins them in the water. We soon find that the river is not calm but rather 'white water' or 'rapids'. Several times, the camera goes underneath the water and so we know that the convicts are experiencing the danger of drowning. Here we see an 'over the shoulder shot' of the 'authorities' looking down at the convicts. They decide not to enter the water, suggesting that their clothes, not Levi's jeans, are inferior to the convicts clothes. The mob runs alongside the river, at the top of the ravine walls, and in doing so give the fugitives a little bit of extra time.

They're going to need it. In the rapids the two men get tossed about and drawn under the water several times. The camera, which is rigged to the bottom of a bungee rope (a 'bungee camera'), bounces in and out of the water with similar frequency to that of the convicts.

Rapids are found when a river runs over barely submerged rocks at high speed. They are, by very nature, dangerous as anyone who traverses them is likely to hit one the numerous submerged rocks. However the convicts manage to miss them all; the jeans stay undamaged. This is no doubt more out of luck than the jeans' interference but the fact remains that the convicts crossed an inherently dangerous area safely while wearing Levi's jeans.

The water in the rapids undulates and could be seen as simulating a washing machine. The fact that the jeans come out unharmed shows that they will survive, and won't shrink, in the wash. This would appeal to mothers and wives who want easy to wash clothes for their children and husbands respectively.

The convicts emerge from the river, unharmed. At a place where the ravines banks are less steep and continue running. This shows that the jeans are still versatile, and maybe still comfortable, while wet. As they run the mob finds them again and continues the pursuit. Very soon the convicts find themselves at a railway tunnel. They run onto the tracks and head through the tunnel.

As they enter the tunnel they hear the 'hoot' from a train that they turn to see is following them. They have a lead on the steel behemoth but not a great one. The camera is in front of the fugitives and looking back at them. We see the train enter and the men look back. Then we are given a 'point of view' shot from the convicts' eyes. As the steam train rushes in the smoke from the train's funnel all but blocks out the light leaving only the train's small and dim headlight. This cutting out of the light symbolises the cutting out of the convicts' hope. Their only chance is to reach the end of the tunnel before the train. The likelihood of doing so is small, like the train's headlight.

They manage the woodland. They get out of the tunnel just before the speeding train. With the black man slightly in the lead, the convicts head slightly off the track and then run parallel with it until the train catches them up. As the train leaves the tunnel a great amount of steam and smoke leaves with it and billows up. It looks almost like the whole advert has a sigh of relief, as does the audience, that the train did not kill the convicts in the tunnel after all their work. As the train's second boxcar reached the fugitives. The black man extends his arm out to grab a hanging chain. This shot is an extreme close up and taken in slow motion so that the agony and the effort of the reach are both increased. As he grabs the chain the frequency of the shots increases exponentially. The man clambers onto the wooden top of the boxcar but the white man can't get a hold of the chain or the boxcar and so it is now the black mans turn to help the white man. Here we see a 'point of view' shot from the black man showing the dragging white man and the speeding gravel underneath, if the white man falls, the fugitives will both die. As the black convict drags up his comrade, first by the handcuffs and then by his jeans, we realise that they are finally safe. The moment the white man gets a secure hold on the boxcar, the frequency of the shots slows down a lot as though the race is now over. The pair of them roll onto their backs in the centre of the boxcar and we see top down view of them exhausted but safe. Here we are shown the same shot of the black mans face that we were shown at the beginning informing us that the flashback has ended. Both of the convicts sit up to see the mob emerge from the tunnel and realise that they are now free. The mob stops and stares after the train while realising all their effort was in vain. The convicts smile and lie down again. The final shot is from above and shows the fugitives catching their breaths. Over this image the audience is shown the Levi's symbol with some text stating that the jeans are 'riveted together for extra strength'.