



FIGURE 12.26 WorldCom: An excessively low and wide-angle shot of a man on a scooter.



FIGURE 12.27 A wide-angle lens distorts the hood of an Infiniti car.

Editing. The first thing one notices about the editing of many commercials is its speed. The editing in commercials is typically paced faster than that in soap operas, sitcoms, and prime-time dramas. An average, 30-second commercial contains 30 or more separate shots while a typical 30-second conversation scene in, for example, *As the World Turns* has approximately 10. Or, put another way, the average length of a commercial shot is one second or less, while the average shot length in narrative programs clocks in around two to three seconds. Rapid editing serves as a hailing device because each shot quickly presents new information for viewers to absorb. Additionally, viewers are constantly adjusting to different framing, composition, and camera angle. Each cut is a potential disruption as we instantaneously move from one camera position to another and new visuals are thrown before our eyes. This visual disorientation is used by commercials to jolt us into gazing at the advertised product.

Commercials, even narrative-based ones, are also not bound by the rules of classical, continuity editing and its pursuit of an invisibly seamless style. Jump cuts and breaches of the 180 degree rule abound in TV ads. A commercial for Aetna U.S. Healthcare illustrates the commercial's flexible use of continuity editing (and also alternates color with black-and-white). It tells the story of a fabric company providing choices to its customers — which it offers as a metaphor for the new choices this HMO will offer its clients. In 30 seconds, the commercial presents 30 shots, some even less than one second long.

Its final eight shots are shown in Table 12.6 and on pp. 402–403. As you can see, the camera hops from the owner at one time/location to another — from sewing to talking to sorting to smiling to examining. If this editing were used in a conventional segment from a narrative program, it would seem weird or disturbing, but it works well in this commercial because it (1) effectively conveys the spirit of this business and the value of free choice, and (2) its editing style differentiates it from the narrative program it interrupted.