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## Research Paper

The el camino symbolizes change and freedom and independence through the lens of automobility by firstly being a trendsetter for car-truck conversion vehicles but also through advertisements for the el camino itself and how they present it as both a future and a pastime of automotive culture. This is especially significant given that the chevrolet el camino was being manufactured during a period of time that I like to call the “dead era” of the automotive industry as far as design intelligence, structural integrity, and overall power and uniqueness of automobiles that were being made and manufactured at that time. During this time in automobile history, specifically toward the middle to end years of production of the el camino, a lot of cars were being made that did not live up to their potential, many of which never became such a classic icon as the chevy el camino has in recent years. I will use these ads and further research of the el camino to prove why this particular chevy phenomenon is a symbol for many significant concepts. I will take into account both the uniqueness of the el camino as a car-truck combo and the fact that the el camino broke through numerous barriers to become one of the very few relished automobiles from its era. The el camino is significant because of 5 main factors: its symbolization of independence, its symbolization of freedom, its unique and trend-setting characteristics, its contributions to automotive culture, and the overall greatness of the car itself given the incredibly low level of automobile manufacturing during its time period. I will take all

of these factors as well as maybe a couple of other interesting concepts into consideration as I research the el camino and the advertisements representing it in great depths.

I would first like to look at the symbols of independence embedded in driving an el camino by relating this to the hightail it advertisement for the car. In the hightail it ad, an el camino is seen driving off into the open country with no civilization in sight, going down some pretty mountainous roadways which not only speaks to the utilization of the el camino as a durable car alternative but also shows the onlooker that the chevrolet el camino is something even more special. This ad shows its viewer that the el camino can be taken to great lengths and can be used by the consumer to find independence on the road by taking it anywhere they want without fear of complications. Independence is also seen by the el camino in the 1977 el camino commercial in that it gives an alternative option to automobile drivers other than cars, trucks, or motorcycles and fills the role of a utility vehicle which symbolizes the automotive industry expanding its horizons and veering away from being dependent on different vehicles to perform different tasks by manufacturing an automobile that can be used to do all of those tasks by itself. The El Camino can sometimes be seen as a catalyst for change within the automotive industry through breaking the barriers of being dependent on certain automobiles for the above stated automobile-specific tasks and really inspired a creative spark in a time period of car culture that really did need that boost of motivation. This can be seen as a significant effect of the power of the el camino by showing the cultural changes that it brought with its invention and the independence achieved through creating it.

The el camino also represents freedom through the lens of automobility by showing how traveling in it can be used as a method of exploration. In the final countdown advertisement there can be a lot of freedom symbols seen that would associate themselves with being in and driving a

chevy el camino. This ad is mainly an advertisement made to appeal to the viewer with how it looks, not what it can do for them but by digging deeper one can find the relation to freedom through what the el camino lets its driver accomplish and where it can take them to, but most importantly how it can change their lives. The el camino lets its driver experience a calm ride with more horsepower than the average automobile of its era and also has the luxuries of being a durable utility vehicle (especially given that the el camino was not intended to be a particularly powerful automotive). This just adds more opportunities and freedom to do much more with the car than one can with many other cars. With this said, the el camino also lets the consumer do with it what they want as far as power wise by including both v6 and v8 options which can be seen in the 1977 chevy el camino commercial featuring singer Tom T. Hall. This represents freedom by giving the consumer free range to do whatever they want to make this car perform the way they would like and this includes the horsepower but it also includes the freedom to make various mechanical and electrical adjustments to the vehicle that its owner sees fit. Turning an already efficient manufactured automobile into a project car has arguably never been easier with any car other than the chevy el camino and this freedom of the owner of this precious automobile to fix it up however they want really speaks to the integrity and historical significance of the el camino to automobile culture and shows what kind of lengths to which freedom can be achieved through automobility. At the risk of being accused of going off on a tangent about the car instead of how it is represented I must also add that the freedom achieved through owning and driving an el camino has also gone to greater lengths throughout recent years with technology allowing it to support possibly up to a 12 cylinder engine with dual port electric injection which really helps to turn this already astounding vehicle into a truly astonishing 10-second car and this relates to the advertisements by showing that the el camino

can be used for so much more than just a way to get to and from one place to another and all of the adjustments that are able to be made to fit the needs of its consumer shows just how much freedom the structure of the el camino allows for. I am relating all of this to various advertisements but most importantly I am relating this variability in adjustments that can be made to the car to the 1977 commercial with a lot of my insights coming from knowledge of the car itself.

The el camino has many unique characteristics but what I would specifically like to hone in on especially within the advertisements is the car-truck combination that I have previously stated. This car-truck combination has allowed the el camino to expand into greater depths of greatness by widening the horizons of its usability as a low riding car that can also store up to 800 pounds of materials in the bed and can pull trailers and boats while all-the-while maximizing its horsepower as I have mentioned numerous times and will keep mentioning throughout the paper, all of which is seen throughout the 1977 el camino commercial stated above. Also, the el camino's car-truck convertibility adds even more to its uniqueness when think about pulling trailers and boats as with its car-like characteristics it has one of the greatest turn radiuses for a truck that can handle that much towing capacity and as such requires less torque to move heavier loads than most other vehicles, ironically while also maximizing torque output due to its muscle car-like capabilities.. This can all be seen in the advertisements but mostly in the have all the fun advertisement which depicts an el camino towing a rather large speedboat and also the commercial made by chevy. These advertisements do a great job of understanding automobility and representing the car as it shows the unique features of the car while also relating that automobility is all-encompassing and not just about cars and road travel but what cars can do for people, what it lets them accomplish and how automobility can relate to everyday life.

What the el camino has contributed to automotive culture is absolutely substantial as far as productiveness goes. I am going to speak on my articles for a moment because it is hard to leave out the growth of this particular automobile and how it was utilized differently in each of its 6 different generations. Starting with generation one that did not last long and had a production of less than 50,000 vehicles, the el camino was meant to be a competitor to the ford ranchero as a car-truck combo and although most of my ads are about later generations of the el camino it is interesting to point out that the first gen el caminos represented classic cars better than any other generation. The second generation of el caminos looked absolutely nothing like the first gen and was built almost as a compact car, very heavy on the bottom, and much shorter than the first version but stocky enough to put a v8 in and have hp output up to 375. Given that the 4th, 5th, and 6th generation el caminos were mostly a bust and represented the decline and eventual end to the production of the el camino I will not talk about them too much but I would like to take some time to talk about the 3rd generation of el caminos and all of this is being related to my article about the 6 generations of the el camino for further reference. The third generation of el caminos is absolutely the best generation, as it says in the article this was an absolute beast of a car and it represented automotive culture in a brand new light. For starters, this version of the el camino was much lighter than the second generation, it was built on an expanded base so it was longer than the previous generations as well but the most fascinating part about this generation of el caminos is that this was the only generation that I would say really falls into the category of muscle cars. At one point, this car was one of the best sellers that chevy had, and for good reason given that instilled in it was the most powerful engine ever made by chevy and it could put out up to 500 horsepower. This relates to automobility by showing how the el camino has changed the way automobiles are built and used for especially given the vast

number of different uses that the el camino had over the years and how it changed how people travel and use cars.

Lastly I would like to speak on the fact that the el camino shined out when few other cars did. Granted at the beginning to middle of its production there were still some good cars like the chevy nomad, the chevy corvette, the ford gt40, the shelby cobra, the ford mustang, the camaro, and the pontiac gt0 but none of these cars incorporated quite the same elements as the el camino did. The closest relatable car to the el camino as far as cultural icon worthy, if we take into account the fact that the chevy corvette of today has no relation to what it once was, is the camaro. Besides these two automobiles almost every other vehicle made between the late 1960's and early 1970's seemed to stay frozen in time in their period and faded away when daylight broke on the new era. This and the article about the 6 generations of el caminos is instrumental in producing the point that the el camino had to break through the barriers of being produced during dead end era of automobility to become a modern classic as it is today. Most of the other vehicles made during this time period besides insignificant mainline trucks and cars common in every era of automobility, only lasted a couple of years tops and hardly ever made it to a second generation. The ones that did stick around were usually weeded out by better and more advanced vehicles and those were then struck down in the next couple of years as well and the cycle just went on like that, but the chevlet el camino stuck around because of its usage and just how much it gave to automobility and the combination of things it could do that went out of the realm of just normal car or truck-like features. The el camino can be understood as one of the great cars through the lens of automobility by showing that it allowed for all types of experiences and milestones to be achieved and hardly ever had any concept flaws that stopped it from performing an intended purpose.

In conclusion, the el camino is very culturally and historically significant to automotive culture based on these advertisements and articles and just how useful it was. The el camino allowed for travel and car experience like no other while also incorporating truck-like features. The el camino was one of the best producing and completely unique cars ever made and that is part of the reason why it is such a relished classic today. But in the end it never really is about the car, its about what it represents, what it can do for you, where it can take, and what it can help you accomplish and I believe I have represented that the el camino does that quite well.

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I HAVE ACTED WITH HONESTY AND INTEGRITY IN PRODUCING THIS WORK  
AND AM UNAWARE OF ANYONE WHO HAS NOT signed Ayden Smith