



© General Motors

# Driving it Home

“Don’t lean on the door!” was a familiar call from my father, as we hurtled through country lanes in his 1933 Talbot 75. Rolling around on its carpeted floor, my sisters and I paid little attention. The doors did, on occasion, fly open – nothing tests a big sister’s reactions quite like the sight of tarmac and a tumbling sibling.

Memories are often interspersed with cars, sometimes defined by them: travelling on Europe-bound holidays with the car rammed to the brim; your first set of wheels; the car you buy when you secure your first well-paid job... then sell when you have your first child, to replace with an estate with a wipe-able interior. Ask what people would do if they won the lottery and nine times out of 10, there’s a car on their hit list. Aspirations are littered with them, statements made with them and history defined by them.

That so many children, adolescents and grown adults pine after cars, despite often never seeing them first hand, is the result of a long history of car marketing and advertising. The first print, and photographed, car advert was in 1898 for the Winton Motor Carriage, with the strap

line ‘Dispense with a Horse’. Throughout the early 20th century, the horse metaphors continued. The ‘horseless carriage’ was not the common form of transport and became the subject of ridicule – motoring on roads not fit for purpose. But it wasn’t long until things changed – in 1908, Henry Ford produced the Model T, nicknamed Tin Lizzie. The Model T was the start of the automobile’s conversion into a symbol of mass production. The advertisements that followed told the story of the economic, political and social history of those years, perhaps more so than any other form of advertising. It wasn’t far into the 20th century before we started to see the recurring images of a happy middle-class family, attractive men and glamorous women. ‘If you want that life, buy this car’ was the message. Car companies started to sell a lifestyle.

Wanting to explore the later years of a century of car advertising, up to today’s Aston Martin DBS, we spoke to prestige car photographer Tim Wallace, who counts Aston Martin, Jaguar, Land Rover and Morgan among his clients. >>

Emma-Lily Pendleton talks to Tim Wallace, the prestige car photographer, about a century of car advertising and the story behind the images that document our social history

---

Pontiac’s 1983 ‘We build excitement’ campaign builds on the mantra that sex sells, but moves away from the earlier sexism seen in car advertising with the confident power of its leather-clad model.

## Selling Cars

"It's interesting that in the illustrations that came first, they had carte blanche – they could create anything," Tim says of early to mid-century car advertising. "But, still, the adverts were often based on selling the idea that it would improve your lifestyle. Even the big cars, it was very 'happy family' orientated, especially in the US. Our side of the pond it was more 'go faster' and 'power, power, power'." The difference between the US and European adverts is interesting. In Chevrolet's 1972 advert, the car is parked on the beach, the parents accompanied by their children – the perfect family. In MG's 1974 'You can do it in an MGB' advert uses a very different tact; it makes good use of the idea that sex sells. Not only will this car make you sexy... but it can be used for multiple purposes! Are things different now? "My job is to sell you cars that you want but you don't need and, maybe, can't afford," says Tim, who is best known for his Aston Martin campaigns. "I expect that the brief for say, Porsche, for a photographer in the 60s or 70s would be the same as today."

## Things got Smart

However, looking at the adverts from each decade, it's evident that an increasing amount has been demanded from car photographers. Advertisers have become noticeably more in-tune with what the consumer wants. Following WWI a car couldn't just be reliable and fit for purpose, it had to be exciting or make promises of social advancement. Women were featured behind the wheel, to communicate how easy the car was to drive and marketed at them as the power of persuasion behind their husbands' purchases. Vehicles were pictured parked outside country homes, or perched on cliff tops, like the 1991 Corvette advert titled 'Some things in life are memorable. Others are unforgettable'. Messages were clichéd, some outrageous and others genius – Volkswagen's ad agency, Doyle Dane Bernbach, created one of the best-known ad series of all time in 1959, featuring the Beetle. The ads had no women, stables, country houses... no background at all. Against a white background, one read, 'Think Small', another just, 'Lemon'. Everyone else was thinking big: power and wealth. It marked another turning point for car advertising. Things got smart. "In the 1970s some of the most intelligent car advertising campaigns launched. I don't know what happened, a creative team touched by aliens? There was iconic car advertising everywhere. They set a benchmark and it was a big turning point. The one that everyone would remember would be the woman in a fur coat throwing her keys. She'd been married and



© JDHT



© British Motor Industry Heritage Trust

Above: Many adverts during this period were aspirational, and none more so than this 'Some day, some day' advert. Illuminated from the inside, the car is pictured as the motor of a young boy's dreams.

Below: This 1974 MG advert features an innuendo that's typical of the era – if you buy this car, perhaps you could be as lucky as this man...



# Chevrolet. Building a better way to see the U.S.A.

**Your new Impala. The farther you go the farther you'll want to go.**

Impala is that comfortable. We built it so you can go a lot of miles on it without getting a bit of miles out of you. There's power door, disc brakes to do your heavy duty work. There's an automatic transmission on all V8s to do your thinking. There's a power window in the most of your trunking.

There's an improved flow-through power windows system for bringing in outside air even when your windows are closed. Even when your car is stopped. (Bring something about the air inside an new and improved pollution controls.) There's a computer rate that every approach now-when want to start. And back again. Because of a big coil spring at each wheel. An electronically with more. A long, breaking 113.3" wheelbase.

There are also certain modern accessories like shock absorbers, fully treated and suspension bearings are essentially novel to each other. And, oh yes, there's another kind of Impala number. Knowing that, traditionally, at trade-in time.

It's worth more than any other car in its field. It's all standard on Impala. All because we want you see Impala to be the very best car you ever owned. This talk to your Chevrolet dealer. He's got a lot more to tell you.

© General Motors

Above: Chevrolet's 1972 advert, 'Building a better way to see the USA', sells the American dream of the nuclear family. The ad, shot in south Miami, Florida, sells not just the car, but the fulfilling sun-kissed lifestyle the customer is buying into with the Chevrolet brand.

divorced and she gets into a VW, 'because it's the only thing that's reliable in her life'. In another, a man loses money at a casino and gets in a VW because 'it's the only thing that's reliable in his life'. They're clever." It was during the 70s that they started to play around with the image a car portrayed. Rather than the car being sexy, it made you sexy. This trend continued into the 80s and early 90s, with cars being sold on the premise that they'd improve your status in society. Following this, we saw the emergence of our current market, driven by efficiency and economy. >>

**"For pity's sake, John, buy the wretched thing."**

We'd like you to test drive a Jaguar XJ6. But first we ought to warn you that it can be a very persuasive experience. So you might start out with no more than a hankering for the car and finish up well and truly bowled over by it. However if you're willing to take the risk ring 020-334-3118-E41112 and we'll arrange for a car to be brought round to your house. But take your wife, too. So you'll both be in the same boat.

**Jaguar XJ6**

One drive is worth a million words.

© Porsche AG

**Kills bugs fast.**

Right: Working from just the strap line, Clint Clemens created this ad in 2005. His car rig invention revolutionised car advertising.

Left: This 1972 XJ6 advert takes a different tact, focusing on a man's hankering for the latest Jaguar release.

## Clint Clemens

The digital revolution and development of CGI has changed things for advertisers. They know better now than ever how to deliver effective adverts, and there's a way that they can get it without a photographer – with a computer generated image. In a return to the freedom that illustrations offered, anything can be achieved with CGI. But can you tell where it's used and where it isn't, and are people yearning for the 'real deal' that a photograph offers? "A lot more CGI goes on than you think," says Tim. "I think it's very prevalent and not just for the things you'd think it would be, like a car on the moon. It can be just a car parked outside a house. It's almost become a way of life."

Tim references commercial photographer Clint Clemens as revolutionising car photography, and inspiring him to become a car photographer himself. Clint photographed many memorable car campaigns from the 80s and 90s, including Porsche's famous 'Kills bugs fast' poster of a 911 Turbo. Shot from behind, the car is pictured racing down a road, complete with blurred background. It's been reported that he was merely given the slogan and told to illustrate it. Images of a sharp moving car with a blurred background are familiar... but started with Clint, who pioneered the technique. In 1980, Clint designed and patented the rig to capture these shots on his film camera. It's also reported that he invented the system that would allow him to drive the car and, while looking at a video screen, remotely trigger the camera at the critical moment. Car companies clamoured to feature the product of his designs and, for around a decade, Clint dominated the market and revolutionised car advertising. It was reportedly following a magazine feature that his previously unpublished rig designs were pictured, and unceremoniously copied. It marked the end of Clint's monopoly of the market.

## A Changing World

"Clint's work back then was very dynamic," says Tim. "The movement you saw in those early illustrations was moving into photography." And it's a style that we're still seeing today. "You've got different areas of cars. If, say, I shot a Porsche, as Clint was commissioned, we'd look to have similar things: focusing on it looking dynamic, sporty and on the engineering. I would have the same brief then as now. If it was for a modern family car, it's going to be a family on the beach – it's about how many kids you can get in the car. There's no real power distinction, no making it look like it is moving at 100mph. The likelihood is it's going to be by the beach with everyone laughing and a cow in the distance! If you photograph a family car interior, it will be brightly lit and displaying its multiple cubby holes and plentiful space. However, if you look at a Porsche or a DBS, you're paying a lot of money for the leather in the seats. The >>



© DDB, Volkswagen UK, Volkswagen AG and Volkswagen of America.

### Think small.

Our little car isn't so much of a novelty any more.  
A couple of dozen college kids don't try to squeeze inside it.  
The guy at the gas station doesn't ask where the gas goes.  
Nobody even stores at our shape.  
In fact, some people who drive our little

Bever doesn't even think 22 miles to the gallon is going any great guns.  
Or using five pints of oil instead of five quarts.  
Or never needing anti-freeze.  
Or racking up 42,000 miles on a set of tires.  
That's because once you get used to

some of our economies, you don't even think about them any more.  
Except when you squeeze into a small parking spot. Or renew your small insurance. Or pay a small repair bill.  
Or trade in your old VW for a new one.  
Think it over.



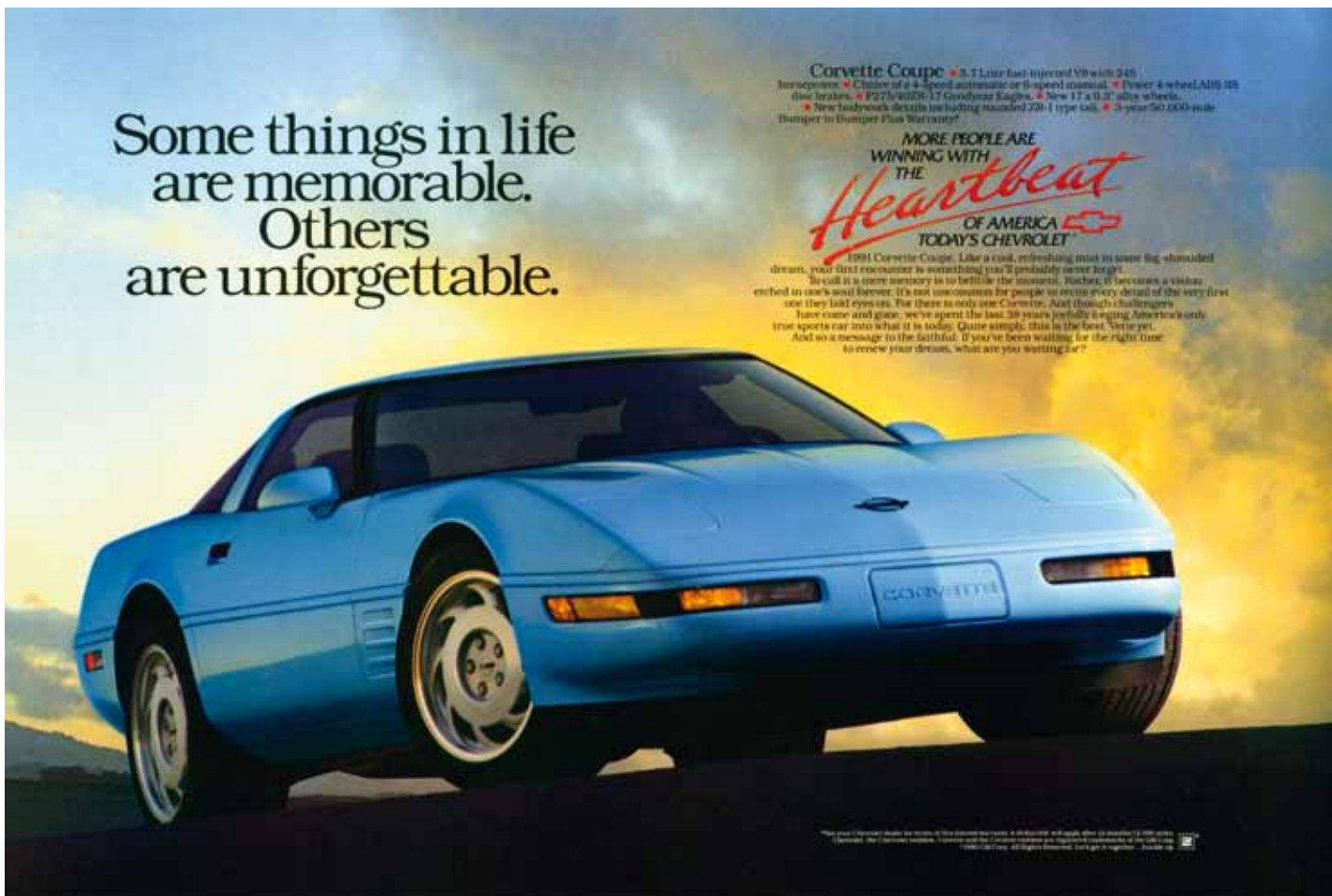
Above: In 1959, Doyle Dane Bernbach created the iconic 'Think Small' campaign for Volkswagen, which stood out from the 'think big' consumer mentality of the 50s and 60s.

## Fact

It's estimated that between 80-90 per cent of adverts now contain some form of CGI.

Now with reality-based visualisation (RBV), brands like SpheronVR have created a product able to measure real-world luminosity values in a 360-degree shot, meaning that photographers can shoot on location, minus the car, and a CGI version of the car can be added in once the image is processed.





Above: Some of the many clichés include cars pictured parked outside country homes, or perched on cliff tops, like the 1991 Corvette advert titled 'Some things in life are memorable. Others are unforgettable'.

advert's got to make the hairs on the back of your neck stand up." It's this insight that starts to alter the way you look at car adverts. "It's about doing it in the right way... not just taking a good picture. If you stick a Ferrari outside a stately home, it says 'too much money'. Put it in a steelworks with sparks flying off the floor and it says 'great engineering'. It depends which part of the market you're working for. Briefs are driven by the market." Looking back, there was more of a marked divide between the early and mid-century car adverts in Europe and the US than there is now. "Stateside, no matter what type of car it was, it was about improving your life, chasing the American dream," says Tim. "On the European side, we were getting better engineering and better build quality... we were more about speed and luxury. A lot of people went to watch racing over here."

But nowadays, whether it's here or abroad, if you're trying to sell a prestige car, you use the same tactics: "You've got to justify it with immense engineering, the fact it's sexy, that it sounds amazing. It won't work to say it's quite economical and your wife can have it in any colour!" A part of what's changed is how the client perceives the customer's needs. "Manufacturers before did a lot of guess work and their decisions were heavily influenced by the social and economic climate of that time," explains Tim. As recently as three years ago, at the height of the recession, you'd find advertisements focusing on value. "It wasn't so much about them being cheap," he says. "It was just focused on what you got for your money. You didn't have many prestige manufacturers really pushing advertising a few years ago either."

## Computer Vs Camera

Perhaps tellingly, the hero of car photography, Clint Clemens, is now pioneering in a different market – that of CGI. So is this an indication of where things are moving? Tim doesn't think so. "What Clint created for Porsche was very different for that era. A lot of his work was for America and if you look at the adverts around that time, his definitely broke the mould. They weren't at the beach – he had them thrashing through the mountains. He created images that they probably thought were only possible with an illustration, but with an image you get to see what it actually looks like! I think people were fed up with seeing illustrations." It's a situation that Tim thinks may be mirrored in today's computer generated image era. People want to see the real thing, he says. "A lot of feedback I hear is that, if I'm going to spend that much, I want to see what I'm getting for my money. They want to see the car they're going to buy. It's like a Kindle and the book – people still want books. If clients suggest CGI and there's no reason why we can't do it as a photograph, I question it. There's a big divide opening up between graphics and photographs."

Without a doubt, many things have changed: cars in their engineering, fuel and design, and photography has changed from analogue to digital, among many other things. But ultimately, car advertising has stayed the same – it's always been about the sell, it's just how they're going about it that's changed. So the next time you're flicking through the pages of a magazine, enjoying the latest motor release, maybe you'll look at it a little differently. Perhaps you'll take moment to appreciate the skill of the photographer, while picturing him hanging from the boot of a chase car. These are the images forming the next generation's childhood memories.

Right: An image captured by Tim Wallace for a Porsche advertising campaign. The image is a familiar one, with the car sharp and background blurred, as was common after Clint Clemens' 2005 invention of the car rig.



Benedict Redgrove's clients include VW (an advert from his 2007 campaign is pictured above), BMW, Audi, Toyota and Honda. His photographs feature both the complex engineering behind the cars he's commissioned to capture, and the finished product – all in his strong, clean style. "I suppose it has evolved with the times and the press legal requirements," he says, reflecting on how car advertising has changed. "Things like showing hands on the steering wheel, seat belts being worn first in the front and now in the back. In some countries, you have to show the car parked in a marked bay when it's stationary. The advent of the rig in the 80s made sure that all car ads for a long time were just blurry rig shots. Then the different school of imagery moving from the glossy American look to the more subtle German aesthetic, which has ironically now gone more towards the old American look – very over-retouched with ultra-HD images looking too sharp for their own good. The paintwork on the cars themselves has changed and forced different types of lighting to be used in order to show them off. There are different lighting techniques needed and it's very time consuming and can look rather unnatural, in my view. It's never seen in that way in the real world.

"If you look at the 60s advertising, it was very simple and straight: 'Buy this car because it will make you happy', 'buy this car because it's sexy and fast' or 'buy this car because it has good space'. Then in the 70s, they started to play around with the image it portrayed, rather than the car being sexy, it made you sexy: 'Buy this car it will help you move ahead of the others'. The 80s and the 90s were also very status driven. In the late 90s, they started talking about efficiency and that is pretty much where we are at now. Efficiency and economy are the buy words now: green credentials, family space and town driving. Sometimes I am asked to make them look bigger, stronger, squarer, rounder... hide a certain design detail or exaggerate it. The locations used will always have a bearing on the mood of the ad, what they are trying to say about a car and its target market. You don't want to make it look unattainable, out of the reach of the audience you are trying to tempt: more masculine, more feminine, with a 20-35 age group or 40-60, empty nesters, urban families. There is a car for every single niche market now, and sometimes they are even inventing new markets with the development of a new model." Read more about Benedict Redgrove in our sister title, *Professional Photographer* magazine, on sale on 7 May. [PM]



© Tim Wallace

## A Short History

**1886** – Karl Benz invents the first modern automobile – The Benz Patent Motor Car.

**1908** – Henry Ford designs a car for the masses – nicknamed the 'Tin Lizzie', the Ford Model T meant that owning a car was no longer exclusively for the wealthy elite.

**1915** – Theodore F. MacManus designs the ad 'The Penalty of Leadership' for the Cadillac Motor Car. This style of atmosphere advertising attempted to create the impression of a high class and quality brand image with the tagline 'That which deserves to live – lives'.

**1924** – The Ford sells its ten millionth Model T.

**1950** – Chevrolet sell the American dream with its Corvette and Bell Air Sport Coupe ad campaign, telling the people of suburbia 'Chevy puts the purr in performance!'

**1969** – The Mini, created back in 1959, shows off the cult status its image has achieved by becoming the poster boy for the film *The Italian Job*.

**1980** – Clint Clemens patents his invention of a rig that attached a camera to a car to allow the capture of blurred moving backgrounds.

**1984** – Audi launches its 'Vorsprung Durch Technik' campaign in the UK, playing on the stereotype of meticulous German efficiency.

**2005** – Clint Clemens' ad for the Porsche 911 Turbo, 'Kills bugs fast'.

**2011** – Showing it's a big money industry, General Motors spend \$3.59bn in advertising, placing it fourth in Advertising Age's annual media report, followed with a close sixth place by Toyota, spending \$2.86bn.

**2014** – Maserati spends an estimated \$17m on its 90-second Ghibli ad in the American Superbowl.