



# COUGAR

how a classic **movie** became a classic **tv ad**



born to be **wild**

*Life is an open road. An uncharted highway of twists and turns that fire your dreams and sharpen your senses until, suddenly, your wild side ignites.*



### **The call of the wild**

When Ford decided to make a commercial featuring the new Ford Cougar, it quickly became clear that there was only one person who embodied all the right characteristics.

Dennis Hopper.

Today, he's known as a supremely charismatic actor or as a fine artist.

But in 1969, he produced, directed, and starred in one of the great American films – *Easy Rider*. The film that was the first to show the desire of youth to break away from the mould, do their own thing, and stamp their independence on their own lives, *Easy Rider* created many of the great icons of the day: icons which, almost thirty years on, are still instantly recognisable. The power of Steppenwolf's *Born to be Wild*. The style of the Harley-Davidson. The freedom of the road.

Today, like Dennis, there are a select few who take pride in breaking away from the mould from time to time. They like to relive their youth. They love to be spontaneous.

And, like Dennis, under a cool, stylish exterior the Ford Cougar has hidden depths waiting to be discovered.

That's why we put the two together. And why we let Hopper meet Hopper. Here's how we did it.





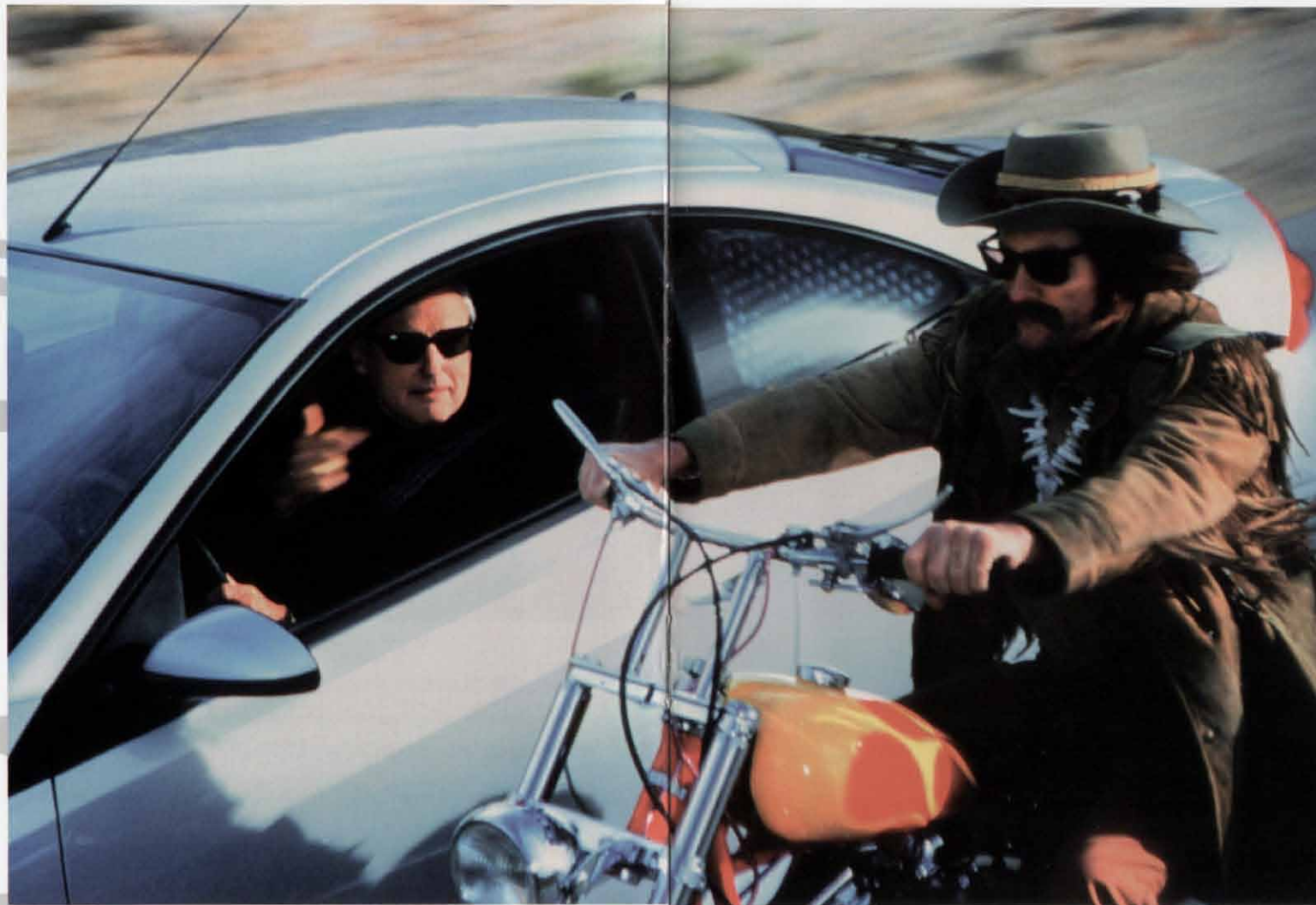
### Extracting the essences

The commercial is only the visible tip of an iceberg of research, dating back to Ford's decision in 1988 to create a new sports coupé. That research showed the existence of a new type of driver: one who looks for a car that will complement his or her own passion. It was this discovery that enabled the Ford Cougar – and the ideal qualities that the commercial needed to embody – to take shape.

Continuing the cinematic theme after the highly successful use of Steve McQueen and Bullitt for the Ford Puma launch was a natural step. But the film we chose had to include all of the characteristics which our research showed the Ford Cougar and its drivers were likely to possess – confidence, self-assurance, and originality – and had to have a credible central character to whom the audience could relate. *Easy Rider* and Dennis Hopper were the obvious choices.

### Hopper meets Hopper

*Dennis Hopper is at a gas station when the sight of the Billy Bike conjures up the open road. Later, he is driving his Ford Cougar along the highway when he is joined by the Billy Bike. Amazingly, it is ridden by his younger self, who rides alongside for a time exchanging glances. They pull into a cafe. The waitress catches his eye and he realises that, despite the years, he's still the same at heart. He drives off, and this time, when his younger self joins him, he uses the modern power of the Ford Cougar to pull effortlessly away.*



### The idea behind the advertisement

The idea behind the script, the chance meeting of the two Hoppers – one from today, the other the youthful 'wild child' of the 60s, both realising their dreams on the road, both still the same person at heart – perfectly illustrates the two sides of the Ford Cougar driver. But making the scenario into reality presented technical problems. How could the youthful Hopper appear on screen with himself?

Ford wasn't prepared to compromise with the use of doubles. It had to be the real thing.

There was only one way to do it, and it needed innovation.

### The Billy Bike

*Less familiar than the 'Captain America' bike ridden by Peter Fonda in the same film, the Harley-Davidson 'Billy Bike' ridden by Dennis Hopper in Easy Rider is named after the character he played in the film. The Billy Bike was specially modified in late 1960s style but is based on the 'panhead' engine and frame last produced in 1965 for bikes such as the Electra Glide. Its modifications include a rigid frame without suspension, a bobbed or 'bobtail' rear fender, extended forks, a banana seat, a peanut gastank with flames, risers on the handlebars, and a cissy bar (a passenger grab rail at the rear).*





The chain of events that made it all possible.

**1969** Dennis Hopper writes, directs, raises the finances for, and acts in *Easy Rider*. The final film cost \$501,000 and has to date grossed a staggering \$19.1 million.

**1969** Dennis Hopper wins Best First Work at the Cannes Film Festival.

**1969** National Society of Film Critics Awards USA. Jack Nicholson wins Best Supporting Actor and Dennis Hopper wins a special award for director, co-writer, and co-star.

**1970** Academy Awards. *Easy Rider* is nominated for Oscars in Best Writing, Story, and Screenplay based on material not previously published or produced.

**1970** Academy Awards. Jack Nicholson nominated for Best Supporting Actor.

**1970** Golden Globes. Jack Nicholson nominated for Best Supporting Actor.

**1988** Ford management decides the company will need a new sports coupe for the 21st century and commissions designers to start work on the design. The project's working title is SW164.



**1991** A review of design concepts is held in Detroit where the first sketches and ideas are reviewed.

**1992** A design concept is agreed upon and finalising the exterior lines begins.

**1993** Approval of design concepts: MC2 car developed.

**1994** Full scale clay model is made and wind tunnel testing takes place in Detroit Research and Development Plant at Flatrock.

**1997** 'Ford Cougar' selected as the name for the new car, drawing from the name's long history and heritage with Ford. Young and Rubicam, one of Ford's advertising agencies, is tasked with coming up with the creative treatment for the launch of Ford Cougar.

**1998 January** Defining research findings and building the Ford Cougar Brand essence.

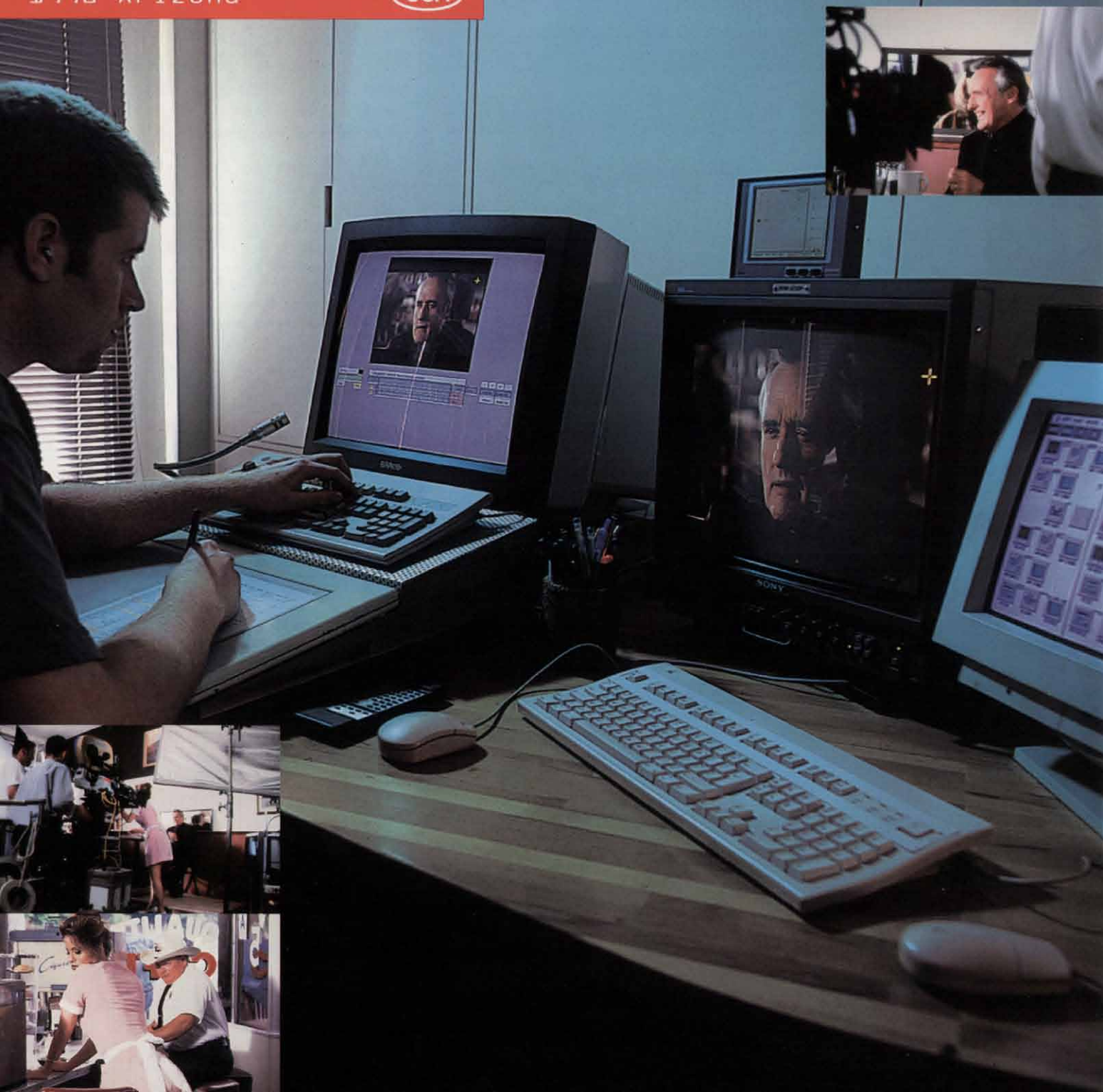
**1998 February** Developing creative proposals.

**1998 April** Researching. Presenting to client. Pre-shoot preparation. Production of storyboard version of commercial. Planning.

**1998 June** On-location shoot. Post-shoot editing. Completion of final version.

**1998 December** First showing on television.





### Easy Rider – the movie.

*Written, directed, and performed by Hopper, Easy Rider is the embodiment of a decade when the prevailing conventions and morality of middle America were questioned. The story's two central anti-establishment characters Billy (Dennis Hopper) and Captain America (Peter Fonda) relinquish their 'normal' lives and set off on their Harley-Davidson motorbikes in a cross-country odyssey to discover America. Along the route the film records how the pair are alternately welcomed and despised simply because of their attitudes and clothing. The sweeping shots of Arizona's Monument Valley are ideal in showing just how petty these human quarrels are and yet how important it is to make a statement of individuality. Easy Rider is a cult movie which, together with a timeless soundtrack featuring classics such as Steppenwolf's Born to be Wild and If Six were Nine by Jimi Hendrix, champions a cultural belief that life is to be lived to the full. It laid down the blueprint for a steady stream of road movies, few of which come close to matching its quality.*

### Following in Hopper's tracks

In order to recreate not only the visual style but the precise shots of the original movie, we had to start with a storyboard which looked at it in immense detail. Only then could we work out exactly where to place the camera so that we could perfectly match the lighting and scale, where Dennis Hopper should look, even where the car should be.

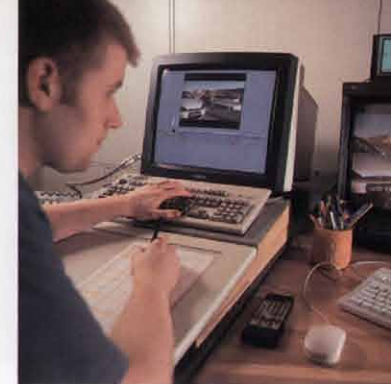
A hard task, but it didn't break new ground as much as our truck trailer did. We built a whole air-conditioned editing suite on board so that we could ensure that everything was perfect from the start of shooting.

And then we added Flame.

Flame – Mobile Computer Synchronisation System is a state-of-the-art program created to perform the type of special effects work that the commercial needed. Flame, which provides 8 bits per channel colour depth at a resolution of up to 2000x1558 pixels, has been frequently used on Hollywood blockbusters, but had never had to work in the Arizona desert on a commercial.

The Flame system was linked up to two viewing screens which enabled us to shoot Hopper in the Ford Cougar and then merge it to the original footage of *Easy Rider* whilst actually on location. In that way, any slight differences could be spotted and corrected immediately.

To achieve the level of matching a commercial of this standard requires infinite patience as images are closely examined, any blemishes are repaired, the shadows are checked against the sun position and corrected, and the actors are cut from one scene and repositioned in another. All on a frame-by-frame basis.







Each night, after a full day of shooting, our specialists would spend hours working on creating the seamless bond between the two images. Then, when the close work had been completed, the full commercial was shown to make sure that it ran smoothly at normal speed and that it matched the soundtrack.

To achieve so much in so short a space of time demands massive amounts of equipment. Although much of it was hired in the United States the unit still had to take 20 crates, weighing over 15 tonnes.

The shoot took seven days to complete and was shot entirely on location in Arizona with a crew of 45 which included make-up artists, camera crews, lighting, electricians, directors – and assistants – and of course the most vital of all, the caterers. It used over 12,000 feet of film, but the final 30-second commercial only used 2,500 feet.

Find out more on: [www.ford.co.uk](http://www.ford.co.uk)

It's wild.



### Steppenwolf

*John Kay, born Joachim Krauleday in East Germany, spent much of his early youth, after his escape to the West, listening to Armed Forces Radio and dreaming of the life that could be found on the other side of the Atlantic. His dream came true when he was 14. His family made their way to Toronto, and he started to play acoustic sets on local radio while attending high school and learning English.*

*On leaving high school, Krauleday – or John Kay as he was now known – joined a local blues band called Sparrow and moved, first to New York and then to San Francisco, where the band split in 1967. Within a couple of months, Kay had shifted his attention to Los Angeles, turned what remained of Sparrow into Steppenwolf, and secured a recording contract. The first two albums came out the following year with some success.*

*It was with the release of Easy Rider and its two Steppenwolf tracks – Born to be Wild and The Pusher – that Steppenwolf hit the big time. Their fifth album, appropriately titled Monster, became their biggest selling record, and they built up a large following, drawing particularly from the motor-biking fraternities. By 1972, however, Kay had decided to go solo, and the band split, only to reform in 1974. A second, longer-lasting break came in 1976 but, following the appearance of a number of bogus bands cashing in on the Steppenwolf name, Kay reformed the band yet again in 1980. In 1997, the band celebrated its thirtieth birthday with a major tour.*



### Dennis Hopper – actor, director and screenwriter

*Born Dodge City, Kansas 1936: moved to San Diego. First acting job at La Jolla Playhouse, San Diego. First break came with a part in Rebel Without a Cause, 1955. Studied under Lee Strasberg, the master of method acting, for five years.*

*Has made over 90 films and over 150 TV appearances. Major films as an actor include Apocalypse Now, Blue Velvet, Hoosiers, Hang 'em High, Rumble Fish, Cool Hand Luke.*

*Films directed include Easy Rider, Colors, The Last Movie. Has had over a dozen exhibitions of his paintings.*

*Awards include:*

- Easy Rider: Best Screenplay, Oscar nomination  
Best New Director, Cannes Film Festival*
- Hoosiers: Best Supporting Actor nomination,  
Golden Globe awards*
- Blue Velvet: Best Supporting Actor nomination,  
Golden Globe awards  
Best Actor nomination, Montreal World  
Film Festival*
- Paris Trout: Emmy nomination*
- General: Won Best Villain, MTV Movie awards.*



**Illustrations, descriptions and specifications.**

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