

20th Century Classic Cars

100 Years of Automotive Ads

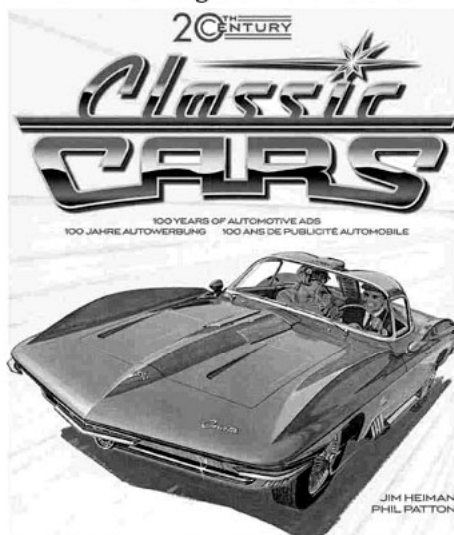
By Phil Patton. Edited by Jim Heimann.

Approximately 960 color and black-and-white illustrations.
480 pages. Taschen. \$39.99.

If hearing the phrases “Somewhere west of Laramie” or “Think small” makes your pulse race as much as hearing the engine of a GTO or a 911 Carrera, “20th Century Classic Cars: 100 Years of Automotive Ads” is for you.

Phil Patton, a frequent contributor to these pages, and Jim Heimann, executive editor of Taschen America, take readers for a brisk spin down a Madison Avenue memory lane, automotive division. They offer a retrospective, a decade at a time, of the special brand of hucksterism that sold Americans everything from Acuras to Zephyrs.

For instance, those who believe celebrity endorsements are a recent development can see a Buick ad featuring cast members of the film “Gold



Diggers of 1935.” And fans of “Mad Men” will chortle at ads like the one with this headline: “She’s married — She’s happy — She drives a Mercury.”

The book is well organized, and the color photographs are beautiful. Alas, the look back is confined to print ads; examples of commercials would have provided a more complete picture of how cars are peddled. And as much fun as it is to pore over wide-track Pontiacs and ill-fated Edsels, the author and editor have made some curious decisions.

There is only a tiny version of the famous 1915 Cadillac ad, “The penalty of leadership,” rendering the text unreadable. And the Volkswagen Beetle “Lemon” ad is mentioned but not included (although there are other Beetle ads like “Think small”). Still, this is a worthwhile addition to the library of anyone interested in autos, ads or auto ads.

STUART ELLIOTT