

# : Head out on the highway... looking for adventure and classic ads

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

14 Feb 2017

In the ad world, the Super Bowl weekend in America – the biggest annual sporting event in that country – is a huge deal. Brands spend tens of millions of dollars making the commercials, which will be flighted during the hours-long Super bowl spectacular. They then pay even more multiple millions to buy the air time.

If it's done right, people will talk about your brand for years to come – and there have been many famous [Super Bowl commercials](#) over the years.

For Mercedes-Benz, to quote a line from the 60s classic Steppenwolf song *Born to be Wild*, there was no alternative this past Super Bowl weekend than to: “fire all of the guns and explode into space,” with its commercial for the AMG GT Roadster.

The car is what they call in the trade a “halo model” – the top of the tree when it comes to price, performance and sheer bling. Mercedes would be the first to admit that, even in the US, land of long highways and cheap gas, they will not sell many of the Roadsters. But that's not the point. The point is to showcase the brand as funky, as edgy and to make it stand out from the rest.

I reckon they did all that – and more – in the ad.

Firstly, continuing in the vein of “Go Big or Go Home”, Merc's ad agency engaged the services of The Coen Brothers, the American filmmakers renowned for their dark, wild, different movies.

And what they came up with is artistry.

It pays homage to one of the iconic movies of rebellion, freedom and motorised machinery, the 1969 film *Easy Rider*, which starred Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper as chopper bike-riding rebels who hit the road in search of adventure and freedom.

So, we see those survivors of that era (and walking away from all the drugs, violence and crashes is some kind of achievement) gathered together in their favourite roadside bar. Outside, their “hogs” still send a message to the world that they're rebels and not to be messed with – the receding hairlines, wrinkle and paunches notwithstanding. There's a shrine to *Easy Rider*.

One grey, grizzled biker goes to the jukebox to put on some music, and the only selection available is Steppenwolf's *Born to be Wild*.

As the music reminds them that, perhaps once they were a "true nature's child and born, born to be wild", an angry comrade tells them they've been "blocked in".

There is no worse insult to a biker – many people have died for less; so out they charge, to see a gunmetal silver Mercedes-Benz AMG GT Roadster parked behind their irons.

But before they can whip out the chains or knives, the owner of the car, with a huge leather American flag sewn into his leather jacket, arrives.

They're stunned when they see it is the real Peter Fonda, looking none too worse for wear despite being in his 70s now.

He gets in and drives off and, down the road as he puts foot, he throws the two-fingered peace sign.



Screen grabs from the ad.

It's a classic ad because it showcases the whole Merc brand, but it also says to the sort of people who can afford the AMG GT, and who are probably, ah, shall we say "mature", that being a little bit wild is not the preserve of youth.

I am sure the ad will flight here sooner or later so it gets a pre-emptive Orchid from me.

Talking about cars and ads, someone with a naughty sense of humour has been at work on behalf of Joburg radio station Hot 91.9. On Jan Smuts Avenue, on the corner of Republic Road, is what looks like a second-hand car dealer. It is packed to the brim with Ford Kugas, perhaps sent there by a local Ford dealer or perhaps bought up at bargain prices because of the tendency the cars have of catching fire...

On a Kuga closest to Jan Smuts, there is a Hot 91.9 sticker... with bright orange and red flames. I don't believe it's a coincidence – not when the station is run by the mischievous likes of push-the-limits Darren Scott.

It gets you noticed, guys, which is the point of marketing. So an Orchid for news-driven advertising.

Sometimes, you can have too much of a good thing. That is particularly the case in advertising, where a commercial which is cute, different and amusing the first few times you see it can, after overstaying its welcome on your TV screen, make you want to scream.

Such is the case with the black-and-white-spots for MiWay Insurance featuring Mpho "Poppo" Modikoane in the lead role.

The worst is when he and his lady, Tumi, giggle away in their open-top Merc sports car about how in tune with each other they are... and how they finish each other's sentences.

AAAAARRRRRRGGGGHHH! That's what you hear in our house when it disturbs our viewing. Ditto with the other silly ads, from him being drunk and driven home to sky-diving out of a plane in some not-very-good CGI (Computer-Generated Imagery).

C'mon MiWay – spend a bit of money and make some fresh ads. Otherwise you run the risk of annoying potential customers. When something's past its sell-by date (as these dates are), then retire it. It's hardly classic advertising in the first place.

An Onion for bringing tears of anger to my eyes...

For more of Brendan Seery's writing, see: [www.orchidsandonions.net](http://www.orchidsandonions.net)

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## ABOUT BRENDAN SEERY

Brendan Seery has been in the news business for most of his life, covering coups, wars, famines - and some funny stories - across Africa. Brendan Seery's *Orchids and Onions* column ran each week in the *Saturday Star* in Johannesburg and the *Weekend Argus* in Cape Town.

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