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Top Gear

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Oricarmi

Not so much the ancient Japanese art of paper folding, more the cornflakes-packet school of cut-out-and-bend. That's the Ford Cougar's New Edge design and to prove it we've turned our long-termer into a cut-out-and-keep model



Someone in the design department at Ford must have spent a very happy childhood munching on Curly Wurlys and cutting up the backs of cornflake packets. What other reason can there be for a spate of cars that come from the 'crease along dotted line and fit tab A into B' school of design?

Ford call it 'New Edge' but we all know it's really cornflake-packet cardboard car technology. And no current Ford demonstrates it better than our Ford Cougar long-termer, a car so smattered with folds, creases and, well, squiggles that in seven months and 8,173 miles of squiggle-spotting, there always seems to be a new contour or clashing shape popping up that we haven't laid our eyes on before.

There, we've only just noticed the little slash that runs all the way from the sill down to the back wheel arch.

Now all that would be fine if it was only the deeply controversial styling, which split the office 50:50 between love-it and hate-it extremes. However, in the Cougar V6 24v VX – to address it properly – form does very definitely come before function. As you'll find out for yourself, when you follow the instructions to build your own.

One thing we're all agreed on here is that the Cougar never left us grinning in the same way that our old Puma long-termer – or even our current humble Focus 1.6 hatch – could make us. The Cougar's a capable coupe, certainly, yet the sensations of driving enjoyment are too often lacking.

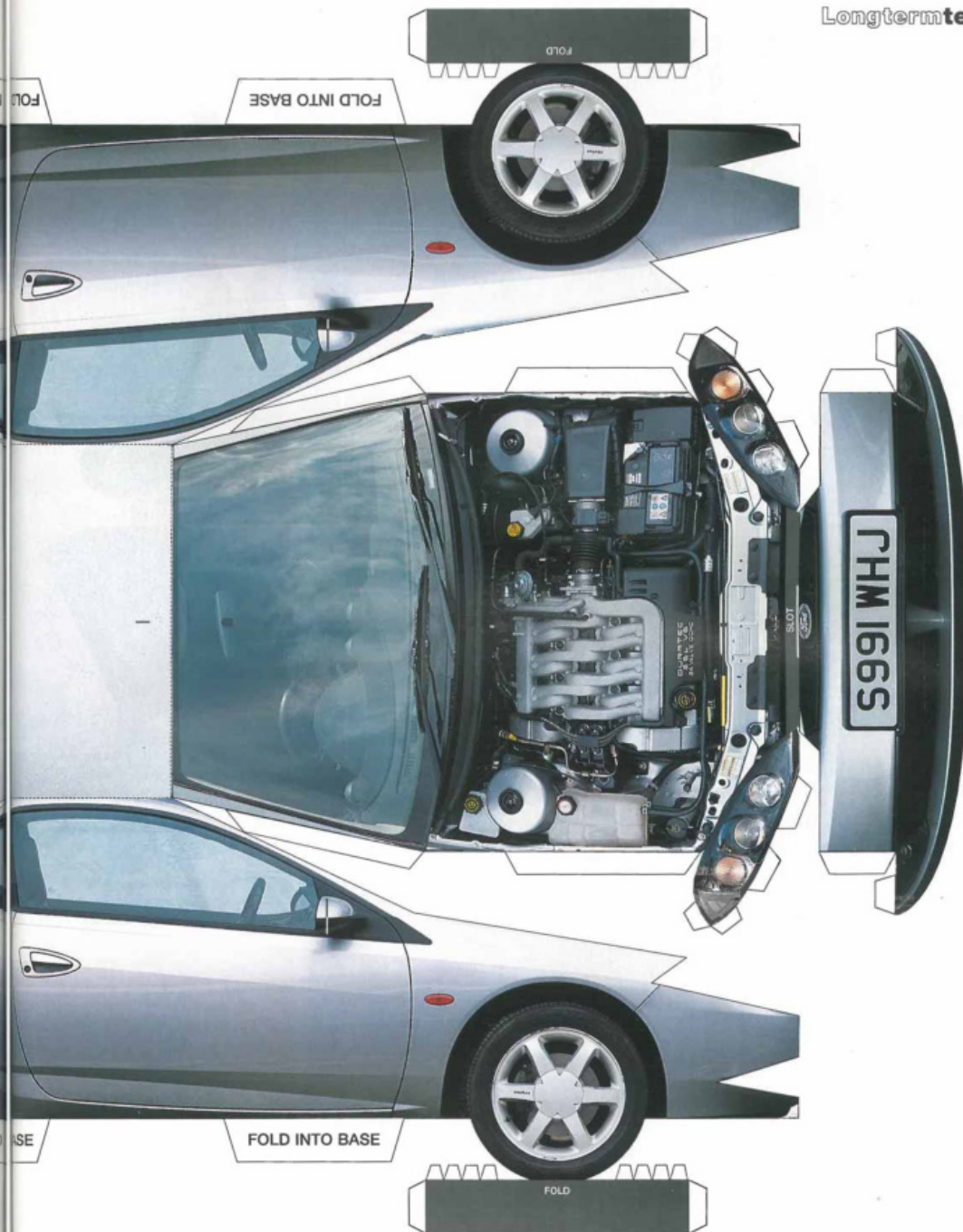
Big, open swoopy roads are where its Mondeo-derived chassis felt happiest, whooping along with lots of grip and a very neutral balance through corners. The 2.5-litre V6 engine offered plenty of urge and at least proved sufficiently growly for a car that has so many logos of roaring cats pasted all over it. Sadly, it also proved to plug unleaded at a fairly wincing rate of just 23mpg, returned over a complete mix of

Photography Paul Debois



Cut out main body assembly as a single unit. Crease and fold all tabs on body and wheels and fold join between bodysides and roof. Carefully fold top and bottom of front and rear windscreens, then gently fold line along the length of each body side (immediately under windows) for full New Edge effect. Finally apply glue sparingly to tabs and hold until set

Longtermtest



REAR

LONG-TERM FORD COUGAR

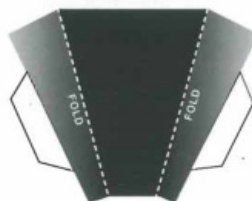
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1:15 SCALE

FRONT



Cut out Cougar floorpan, left, and carefully cut neat slots for the wheels and bodysides as shown. The Cougar floorpan is Mondeo-based, so our 1:15 scale model is actually longer than that of a similar scale Mondeo estate



Cut out front seats, top, and fold to shape. Carefully press seat backs into slight convex shape to copy over-bolstered lumbar region of original car's seating. Cut and fold console and tunnel pieces to shape, above and left. Slot and glue all into interior base unit, right

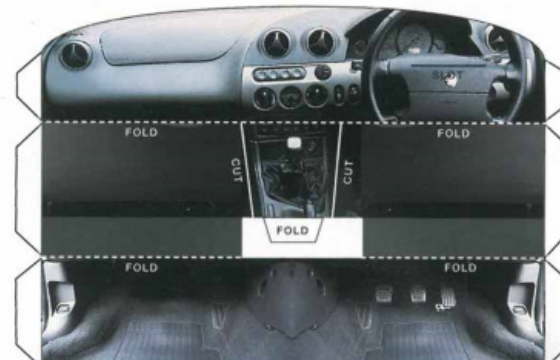
driving styles and road conditions.

Lazily roaring along motorways is where, ultimately, the Cougar proved happiest, the V6's relaxed manners compensating for the slight lumpiness over poor surfaces. Indeed a long, fast 1,281-mile schlep down to the Geneva Motor Show and back was where we came to finally appreciate it the most.

Does all this sound like we're being negative? At £22,000, this top VX-spec Cougar is, it has to be said, pretty excellent value for money.

Standard inside are a respectable six-disc CD-changer, a fast-acting heater element for the windscreen, seat-mounted airbags plus some overly-shiny dark grey leather facings for the seats. The driver's seat also has cunningly hidden electric controls on the front face of its base, right next to the switch for the seat heater. Over-cooked bums have been the frequent result.

There's also a dash-mounted button for traction control, though with the squirming from the front



Longterm
test

Cut and fold dash and doors as shown to form interior: note that dash panel slots into door sides, and centre instrument panel folds to meet console in floorpan



that results from switching it off, it stays on pretty much all the time.

Also included but not necessarily wanted inside are a frantic mish-mash of conflicting textures and lines that make up the dashboard - though at least the rather cheap-feeling trim remained totally rattle-free. In fact the car held together well in all respects, and proved utterly reliable in our, albeit brief, time. Sadly, it's still one Cornflakes-packet model we won't be in a great hurry to cut out and keep ☐ *More Cougar cut-outs over-page*

Cut out carefully round rear seat headrests and fold along dotted lines to form rear seats. Fold up seats carefully as there is not much space in this area. Note that headroom will be very limited when body is towered into place - this is a design feature and not a modelling mistake. Area behind rear seats forms parcel shelf in front of boot (see over page)

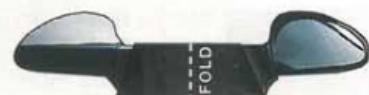
Crease and fold sides, front and rear up to form boot, which slots in under parcel shelf. Note: boot lid is short, giving slot-like entrance



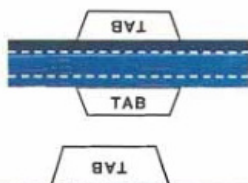
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Finishing details are rear wiper, above, glued below rear screen, front wipers, below, fitted at base of windscreen and roof aerial, folded, glued and slotted into roof in position marked. Door mirrors (l and r) are glued and slotted into doors in positions shown



Warning triangle box, right, sits on boot floor, slotting into carefully cut slits as marked above. Bonnet, right, slides into slots left in main body behind strut mounts. Leave unglued to allow for removal to reveal Cougar's 2.5-litre V6 engine



DOTTED DATA

Model	three-door coupe
Engine	2.4-litre 24v V6, 168bhp
Performance	0-60mph in 8secs, 140mph
Combined/test mpg	29.4/23.0
Price	£22,000
Value now	£19,500
Current mileage	8,173
Faults	none, save for Miss Day trying to fold in the non-folding door mirror and floormat left in Alpine snowbank (don't ask)
Rivals	Alfa Romeo GTV, Fiat coupe, Honda Prelude, Peugeot 406 coupe

UHU OR NON-UHU?

We'd buy one because	growly engine, well equipped, comfortable cruiser
We wouldn't because	Etch-a-Sketch looks, big outside but small inside, over-fussy interior, uninspiring to drive