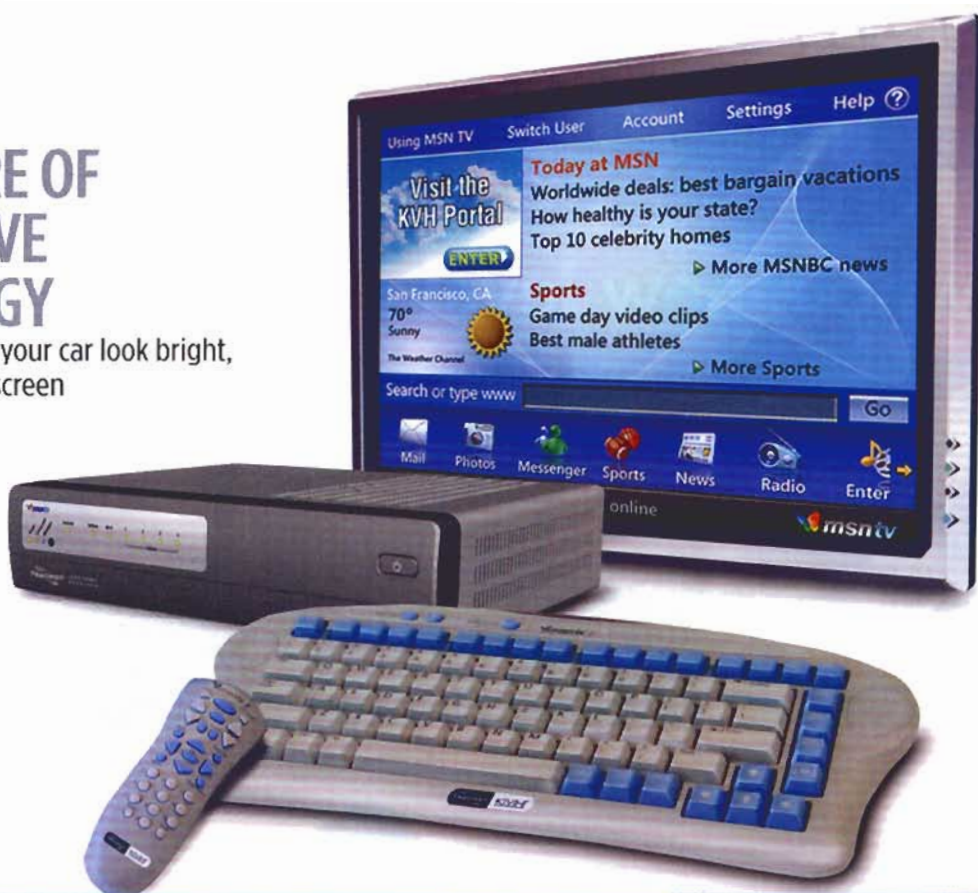


[HOT PICKS]

THE FUTURE OF AUTOMOTIVE TECHNOLOGY

High-tech devices for your car look bright,
right down to the TV screen



ou're driving down a road that you've traveled a thousand times. Your car starts to fishtail because of icy road conditions, but you press on since it's only a few more miles to your house. Suddenly, an oncoming car swerves your way and you can't react in time to avoid it. Your prayers are answered as both cars somehow just miss each other.

All this happens so quickly that most drivers wouldn't notice how technology helped avoid a tragic accident. Both cars were able to send collision avoidance signals to each other thanks to vehicle-to-vehicle (V2V) communication technology. V2V enables a vehicle to detect the position and movement of other vehicles up to a quarter-mile away.

V2V technology, developed by General Motors, enables vehicles to anticipate and react to changing driving situations and then instantly warns drivers with chimes, visual icons, and seat vibrations. If the driver doesn't respond to the alerts, the car can bring itself to a safe stop, avoiding a collision, according to GM.

But safety isn't the only thing driving advances. From digital television to voice-activated GPS navigation systems, new automotive technology is allowing carmakers to offer more options to attract consumers. We'll look at innovative devices that are making the road a smoother and more entertaining drive.

IT'S SHOWTIME

By installing a TracVision A7 mobile satellite TV system, car passengers can have the same digital television entertainment they enjoy in their homes. A mobile satellite system developed by KVH Industries, TracVision utilizes a 12-volt mobile receiver, a 5-inch screen, and an integrated GPS system. This car TV offers in-motion reception of up to 185 channels of DIRECTV service.

For passengers seeking high-speed Internet access, KVH offers TracNet 100, a mobile Internet system with MSN TV service that features MSN Web services such as MSN Messenger and MSN Mail. For more information on these offerings, go to www.tracvision.com and www.kvh.com/kvhinternet.

EASING THE FUEL BURDEN

In the coming years, hybrid technology will play a significant role in improving the fuel efficiency of cars being offered to the public by bringing the benefits of battery-powered vehicles to conventional gas-powered cars and trucks. Hybrid engines are capable of driving at low speeds on an electric motor, reserving the gas engine for higher speeds. At the same time, this technology offers a solution to air pollution and oil dependence.

According to J.D. Power and Associates, U.S. consumers are expected to purchase approximately 350,000 hybrid vehicles annually by the year 2008. Trucks are predicted to account for about 64% of those sales.

NO MORE ROLLOVERS

Rollover crashes are one of the most significant safety problems for all classes of light vehicles, especially light trucks (pickups, sport utility vehicles, and vans), according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Now, automakers are installing electronic stability control systems, designed to improve a vehicle's handling and help avoid rollovers. Already available in many new car models, this technology helps drivers maintain control of their vehicle.

Here's how it works: When the car begins to spin out of control, brakes installed specifically for anti-rollover are activated to resist the rotation from occurring.



HIGH-SPEED INTERNET (L) AND SATELLITE TELEVISION (R) MAKE THE JUMP FROM HOME TO THE CAR.



YOUR DIGITAL COMMAND CENTER

The Pioneer AVIC-Z1 is bound to turn your car's dashboard into a digital command and control center. This all-in-one navigation and multimedia AV receiver with DVD uses a 30GB hard disk drive to deliver information, entertainment, and convenience.

The large 7-inch screen features touch-panel and voice-activated access to a GPS navigation system, which includes spoken street names (not "Turn left," but "Turn left on Springdale Avenue"). Other attractive features include an XM Satellite Radio tuner with NavTraffic to hear traffic condition updates (\$2,250; www.pioneerelectronics.com).



BLUETOOTH IS DRIVING THE FUTURE

Today, Bluetooth wireless technology is most often used to facilitate a hands-free car phone system. It allows drivers to make voice-activated calls anywhere while keeping their hands on the wheel. But car designers are finding new places to put Bluetooth technology. For example, rearview mirrors featuring Bluetooth technology display caller identification as calls come into a mobile phone. The driver answers the call with a push of a button on the rearview mirror. For more information about this technology, visit www.bluetooth.com.



AVOIDING TRAFFIC JAMS

The Garmin StreetPilot 2730 is one of the latest devices featuring the XM NavTraffic service. Powered by NAVTEQ Traffic, the service has become the industry standard for nationwide satellite-based data traffic information. Several automobile partners have adopted the XM NavTraffic service as part of their in-car GPS navigation systems to provide drivers with traffic conditions.

While the technology is already standard on the Acura RL and Cadillac CTS, new additions for 2007 include Lexus, Infiniti, and other Acura models. For the aftermarket, additional devices with XM NavTraffic are available from Pioneer and Alpine (www.xmradio.com/xmnavtraffic). —Eric Butterman