



Showing Off Some Options

Reinventing the Family Road Trip, with a Little Help

by Nick Kurczewski

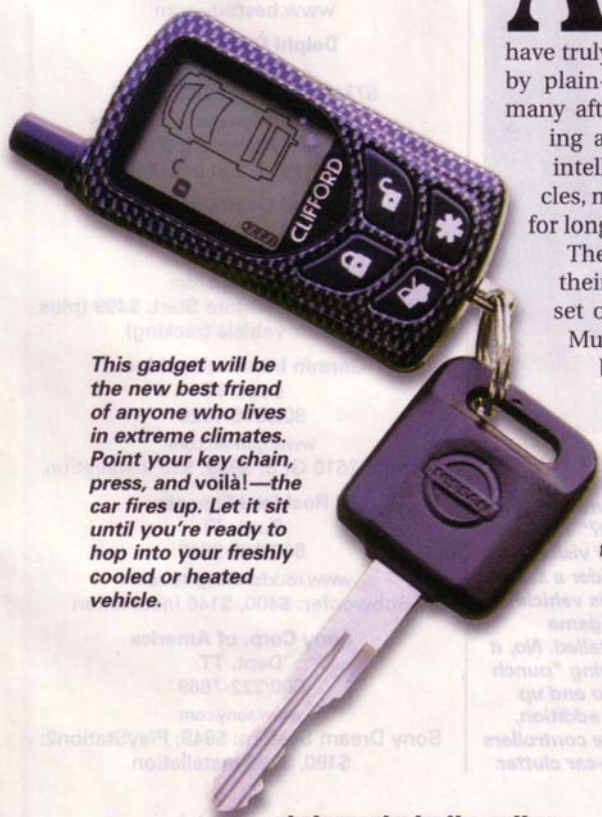
Ah, the joys of the family road trip—getting lost, dealing with screaming kids, and the constant search for a good radio station. Now that SUVs have truly taken over the role once held by plain-jane wood-paneled wagons, many aftermarket suppliers are jumping at the chance to help owners intelligently customize their vehicles, making them more comfortable for long hauls on the highway.

The folks at Best Buy have packed their version of a smart but cool set of add-ons into a 2003 Nissan Murano. These are some of the best tools to help avoid another round of “99 Bottles of

Beer on the Wall,” and you won’t have to sacrifice the kids’ college funds to buy them.

True, a backseat jacuzzi or helipad might be more exciting additions to a standard sport/ute, but this Murano’s mods are intended to make your SUV a nicer place to spend long hours on the Interstate. Leave the wacky graphics, coffee-can exhaust tips, and 24-inch spinners to the kids who don’t know any better.

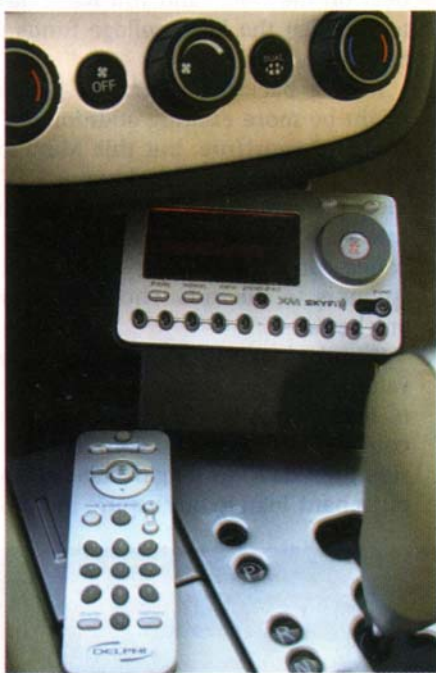
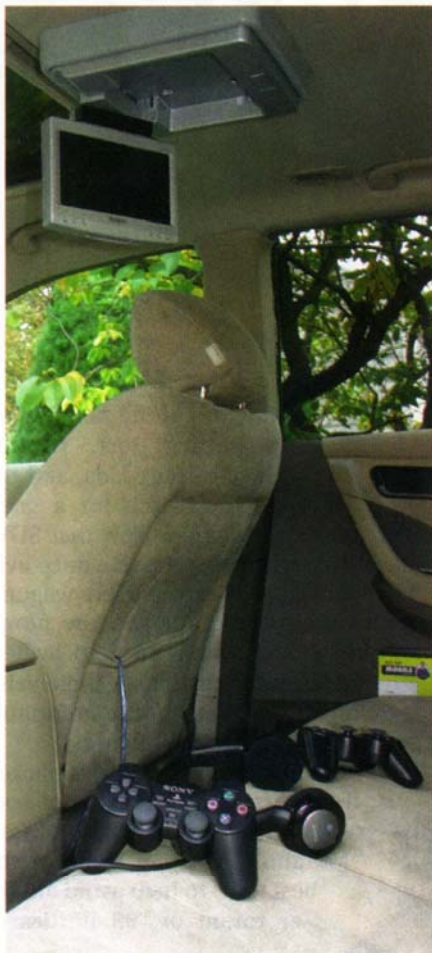
If you’re looking for convenience and value with an edge, take a look at some of the options listed. In the long run, you might even save a buck or two, considering you’ll no longer have to take out a bank loan to buy aspirin in bulk.



This gadget will be the new best friend of anyone who lives in extreme climates. Point your key chain, press, and voilà!—the car fires up. Let it sit until you’re ready to hop into your freshly cooled or heated vehicle.

A global positioning system could save a friendship or keep you out of divorce court. It could even save you from getting to know the scenery a bit too well. Garmin’s GPS is clear, simple to use, and a good deal less expensive than many of the big-buck sat/nav systems that automakers sell.





When on the road, there's no better way to sample the local culture than by listening to what's on the radio. Unfortunately, that often means losing a signal five minutes after finally finding something that doesn't sound like a banshee shriek. Digital radio guarantees a steady supply of first-rate crystal-clear tunes to help the miles go by.

An overhead video system works wonders at keeping those in the back seat entertained and, most important, less likely to ask, "Are we there yet?" However, if you'd rather not sacrifice rear visibility for entertainment's sake, consider a set of headrest-mounted screens. This vehicle sports a PlayStation2, but any game system is a breeze to have installed. No, it doesn't have the charm of playing "punch buggy," but you're less likely to end up with a sore arm afterwards. In addition, wireless headphones and game controllers are a great way to minimize in-car clutter.

This option is all about you, the driver. (Why should passengers have all the fun?) The Bose stereo in this Murano is already potent, but adding some Rockford Fosgate know-how will make a good thing better. You'll score big points with your kids and friends, but your neighbors might not be as happy.

SOURCES

- Bak-Talk Parking Detector System**
Dept. TT
888/325-5756
www.americandealerservices.net
Micro 3 Bak-Talk parking detector system: \$495 (depending on vehicle)
- Best Buy Co. Inc.**
Dept. TT
888/237-8289
www.bestbuy.com
- Delphi Corporation**
Dept. TT
877/463-3574; 800/852-9696
www.delphi.com/products/consumers
Delphi Satellite Radio: \$159 (head unit w/modulator), \$30 installation
- Directed Electronics, Inc.**
Dept. TT
760/598-6200
www.clifford.com
Clifford Security/Remote Start: \$499 (plus \$60 for vehicle tracking)
- Garmin International Inc.**
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800/800-1020
www.garmin.com
Garmin 2610 GPS: \$949, \$30 installation
- Rockford Fosgate**
Dept. TT
800/366-2349
www.rockfordfosgate.com
Subwoofer: \$400, \$140 installation
- Sony Corp. of America**
Dept. TT
800/222-7669
www.sony.com
Sony Dream System: \$949; PlayStation2: \$180, \$200 installation