

Technology companies vie to bring Web to cars

January 28 2011, By Mark W. Smith

As drivers grow unwilling to unplug from the connected world during their jaunts across town, technology firms are racing to bring the Web into the car.

Others are offering innovations to keep us safe while we use those new services while barreling down the highway at breakneck speeds.

The connected car was a central theme at the recent [International Consumer Electronics Show](#) in Las Vegas, where automakers and aftermarket manufacturers showed off the latest [innovations](#) for the vehicle.

Here's a sampling of the best from the showroom floor:

TIWI

The tiwi is a small computer that parents can install on the dash or windshield of a new teen driver's car, tracking his or her every move.

Parents have access to a Web portal that grades the teen on things like braking, turning and speed control.

"It knows the posted speed limit on every street, so if you break the speed limit, it talks to the driver and tells them to slow down," said Andrew Watson, director of marketing.

Parents can get text-message alerts if the driver is going too fast, not wearing his or her seat belt or leaves a specified geographic area, among other things.

The tiwi (rhymes with kiwi) also contains a modified cell phone that allows the teen to make a one-button phone call (the parents get to choose the number) and allows the parent to call into the device using a standard phone number.

It picks up automatically, sending the parent's voice directly into the car, no questions asked.

But can the teen outsmart the unit by unplugging it?

"When they unplug it, it'll send a text message or [e-mail](#) to the parent to let them know that they did it," Watson said.

The unit costs \$299 with a one-year service deal, with a monthly fee of \$30.

DRIVENTALK

The BHF-2000 from DriveNTalk is among many products that use an FM transmitter to connect to your stereo and Bluetooth to connect to your phone, allowing you hands-free access to your phone while driving.

It's definitely one of the sleekest and most fully featured, though.

The BHF-2000 slips onto your visor and allows you to use voice commands to send and hear text messages and answer incoming phone calls. It also incorporates gesture control, allowing the driver to turn up the volume with an arm-swipe to the right, or down with a swipe to the left.

It also contains small solar panels for charging on the fly.

Pricing and availability have not been set.

ANTI SLEEP PILOT

Created by a Danish firm, the Anti Sleep Pilot was born after Troels Palshof, now CEO, fell asleep at the wheel.

Palshof created a gadget that tells the driver when to pull over or stop for a break.

The light-up puck sits on the dashboard and will beep and glow - the driver's signal to tap the device quickly. If the driver lags too much in response, the ASP will glow red and beep loudly, telling the driver it's time for a break.

The device is personalized to each driver's body mass, the time of day, their work schedule, sleep patterns and so forth.

The ASP will be available in the U.S. early this year for \$250.

PARROT ASTEROID

The Asteroid from mobile phone accessory maker Parrot installs in the dash like a car stereo, allowing access to Internet radio, voice commands for stereo and phone control over Bluetooth.

To access the Web, consumers must plug in a USB modem that they have bought separately from any number of wireless carriers.

Parrot's North American headquarters is in Southfield.

The Asteroid will launch first across Europe and will be available in the U.S. in the second quarter. Pricing has not been released.

TOYOTA ENTUNE

Taking on Ford's Sync in-car multimedia system, Toyota has announced Entune.

The new software pairs the customer's mobile phone with an in-dash touch-screen panel that allows the driver to access services like Microsoft's Bing Internet searches, OpenTable for restaurant reservations and Pandora for streaming music.

Entune also lets the driver use voice commands to control the multimedia system.

If a driver receives a text message, it can be read aloud. The driver can then send one of 15 automated text responses.

Toyota says the Entune system will be available as an option on select models this year.

ONSTAR REARVIEW MIRROR

In an effort to extend its OnStar subscriber base beyond General Motors car buyers, the automaker announced an aftermarket rearview mirror featuring the in-vehicle safety service.

The mirror will be sold at Best Buy for \$299 plus an installation fee.

Rates for connectivity on the mirror will start at \$18.95 a month.

In recent months, OnStar has offered access to Pandora online radio,

Stitcher podcasts and voice-activated use of Facebook. Subscribers can verbally update their Facebook status and listen to news feed messages.

An Android mobile app will allow owners to remotely activate all functions available on a key fob, along with some voice-control texting functions.

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