



FOR THE MOTORIST

When it comes to technophobia, my wife wrote the manual.

Computers and word processors? They'd never replace a good secretary. Fax and e-mail? No match for post and postman.

As for cars... Air-conditioning? Who needs that in England? CD system? Nothing wrong with the tape player. Satnav? Doesn't he write a lot of FT features?

It is in respect of the last - satellite navigation - that my personal senior management has done a skidding U-turn on the road to Damascus.

Nowadays, for the woman whose relationship to my once-pristine road atlases matched that of Genghis Khan to the fine arts, happiness is keying into the satnav the many obscure destinations she visits in the course of a business life.

Satnav systems should top every driver's Christmas list. Already, with the demise of map-snatching spats in lay-bys, they must have saved more marriages than any guidance council.

It has taken 10 years, but awareness of their abilities is at last becoming more widespread. Indeed, luxury cars not fitted with it at the

factory are now worth notably less at trade-in time. The take-up on humbler cars remains much less, partly because many drivers are still not aware that, however many instructions are ignored, satnavs will keep recalculating to get you there regardless (although not always by the most efficient route).

Partly, it is cost - typi-

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..... cally between £1,000 and £2,000 for an integrated system. One answer is a portable system, easily transferable from car to car and powered by the cigarette lighter socket. Depending solely on satellite signals, they are not quite as accurate as built-in units, which in addition use motion and other sensors. But for most drivers, the better portables will work well enough.

Probably best known is

John Griffiths chooses some presents that have the potential to save marriages

the Garmin Streetpilot 2620 (around £730). It has its own two-gigabyte hard drive loaded with maps of the UK and Continent, plus 5m points of interest such as hotels, restaurants and petrol stations. Its controls are easy to use and the temporary mounting leaves no scars.

You can go cheaper: around £450 gets a Navman iCN 510. But its memory is

much smaller and it relies on plug-in memory. Cheaper yet is HP's TomTom 3 navigator software for the iPAQ 1710 pocket computer. Software, computer and car mounting kit are about £300. But it's all a bit fiddly.

Another approach is Trafficmaster's Smartnav. At around £550 including installation, you get no visual display but a button to connect you via mobile phone to an operator.

You speak your destination, it is downloaded into the on-board unit and turn-by-turn instructions follow. But there's a subscription to pay: around £120 annually.

In performance terms, integrated satnavs are hard to beat. VDODayton pro-

vides aftermarket systems from around £500 to £1,500. The MS4200RS, around £800 including fitting, replaces the in-dash radio/CD (it has its own radio and CD). It offers simple road diagrams accompanied by voice instruction in place of fancy maps, plus traffic jam avoidance scanning (TMC).

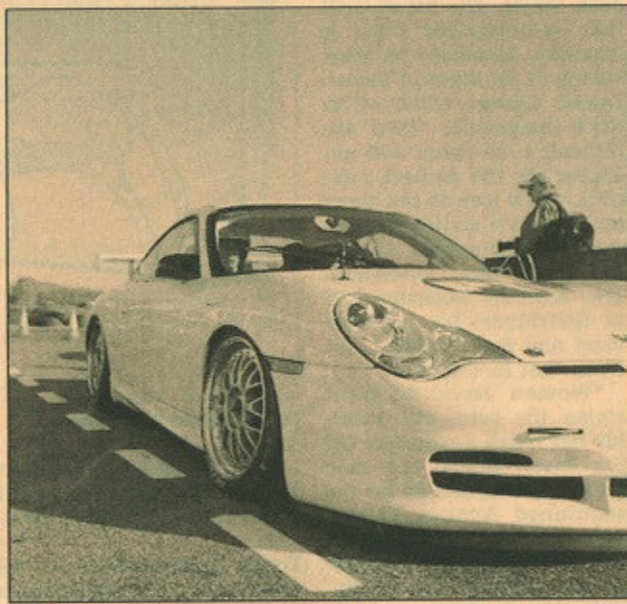
Already got one? Then how about:

● Brands Hatch gift vouchers (£145-£180, 0870 850515) for your armchair Schumacher to sample track driving for real, not pretending on the way to Tesco.

● Advance tickets - now the only way to get in - for motoring's most magical event: Lord March's 1950s/60s-themed Goodwood Revival Weekend on his Sussex estate (Sep 16-18, 2005). From £20 for basic admission on Friday to £154 for a weekend ticket with grandstand seat (www.goodwood.co.uk). Or the Festival of Speed at Goodwood House (July 8-10; £20-£132), Britain's fastest garden party.

● Membership of Damon Hill's P1 International Club. Pay an annual subscription and drive all the cars of your dreams - Ferraris, Bentleys - for as many days a year as you can probably find time to drive them.

The snag? It's £2,500 joining fee plus £10,000 or £12,000. Sounds ludicrously expensive - until you factor in that to own a supercar will cost twice as much in depreciation alone.



This is what you could drive as a P1 member