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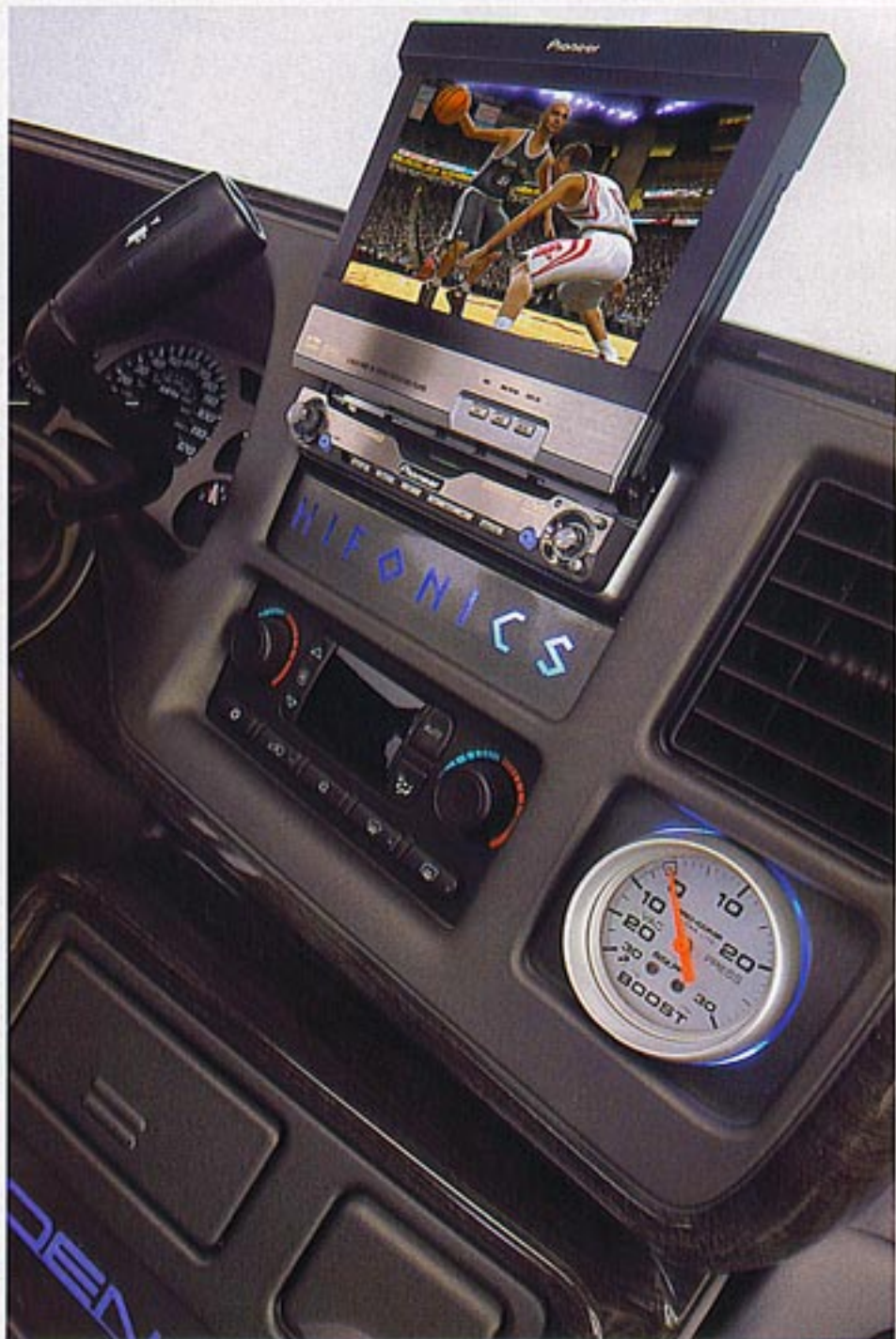
STAGE CRAFTED

Glenn Grozich took his time mapping out the system that would go into his 2003 GMC Denali. It took over a year and a half to get everything done, but it was worth the wait.



BY DOUG NEWCOMB • PHOTOS BY CARL EDWARDS

ROME WASN'T BUILT IN A DAY, so why should a bad-ass mobile-entertainment system be any different? The system in Glenn Grozich's 2003 GMC Denali took over a year and a half to get to where he wanted it. It's not that the system is super-elaborate and took all that time to install; it just took time for everything to come together. "It was definitely a work in progress," recalls Sean Young, co-owner of Sound Decision in Montgomery, Illinois, who, along with his partner Brian Mobley, designed and installed the system. "It was done in stages," he clarifies. The SUV was bone-stock when Grozich rolled it into Sound Decision, looking to do it up. "Round 1 was putting in a head unit, four speakers, a rear video system, and a basic install in the back — just a square sub box upholstered in vinyl and



Tower of power: Glenn Grozich's 2003 GMC Denali (above left) has enough audio power inside to "knock the breath out of you," says installer Sean Young of Sound Decision in Montgomery, Illinois.

By the dashboard light: The 6.5-inch screen of a Pioneer AVH-P6500DVD DVD head unit pops out of the dash just above a neon-lit Hifonics logo (right); below and to the right of it is a similarly lit Auto Meter gauge for a Whipple supercharger.



some amps," Young details. "Round 2 was rebuilding the front door panels, and Round 3 was doing the whole rear cargo area of the truck and adding on to the center console. All told, it took about a year and a half for the system to get to where it is now," estimates Young. "We just did a little here and a little there. He talked about getting the back done with fiberglass for a whole year before we actually did it."

And no one was more surprised — and pleased — than Grozich when all was said and done. "I never expected it to go this far," admits the 20-year-old business-administration major at Lewis University in Romeoville, Illinois. "I just wanted something that stood out, something that was different from everybody else. I don't think I could've done any better. I think Sound Decision has the finest craftsmanship in the Midwest. They helped me with everything, and when I had a misconception about something, they took the time to explain things to me."

Although Grozich, whose father owns the aftermarket parts company Billet Specialties, occasionally enters car shows, he says he couldn't care less if he wins trophies. "I built this system because I like it, and that's the only reason," he confirms. "I just did it to drive it."

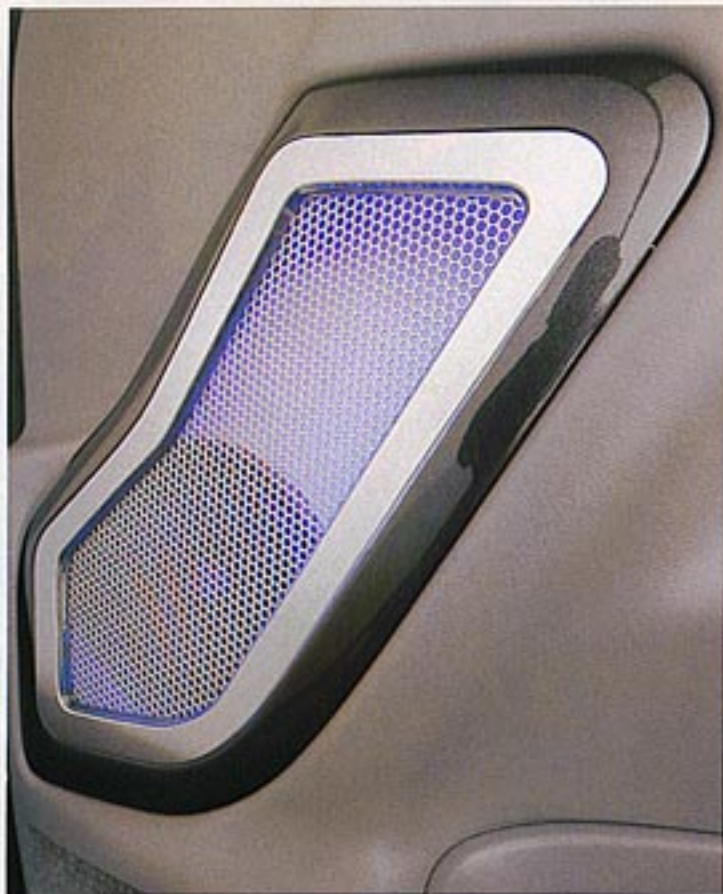
BLUE SCREEN

The liberal use of cool blue neon throughout the system is one thing that makes it stand



Skins game: The SUV's seats were reupholstered to include ostrich-skin inserts, while the owner's first initial marks the headrests (top); in the lower section of the dash is a neon-lit Denali logo.

High lights: The tweeters from a Focal 165 V2 component speaker set were mounted in factory tweeter locations in the A pillars after the opening was widened and the tweeters' grilles were spray-dyed (bottom).



Guest speaker: To accommodate — and show off — a 6½-inch midrange from a Focal 165 V2 component speaker set, the stock speaker location in each front door was rebuilt, lined with white laminate, topped with an aluminum grille, and highlighted with neon (left).

Family affair: The Denali rolls on 24-inch Billet Specialties wheels (full disclosure: Grozich's dad owns the company) and the exterior includes such embellishments as Escalade rear vents (below).



apart. Just below the Pioneer AVH-P6500-DVD 6.5-inch monitor/receiver in the dash, for example, is a Hifonics logo made from neon-backlit ¼-inch Plexiglas. A similarly made Denali logo is lower down in the center console, and below and to the right of the head unit is a neon-lit Auto Meter gauge for a Whipple supercharger strapped to the engine.

The highlighting extends to the front doors, where a 6½-inch midrange from a Focal 165 V2 component set shines in see-through enclosures. The doors' factory grilles were removed and the stock locations behind them were resculpted using ¼-inch medium-density fiberboard (MDF) and auto-body filler. The speakers are secured inside the new cubbies, which are lined with white laminate and topped with aluminum grilles with brushed aluminum, fiberglass, and Plexiglas trim. The 165 V2 set's 1-inch tweeters are installed in the A pillars. "You've got factory tweeter locations there," says Young, "but it was too shallow, so we trimmed some of the metal around it. The Focal tweeters are black, so we spray-dyed them the same color as the interior."

Another Focal 165 V2 component speaker set resides in the rear doors, but the mids simply fit in the factory locations in the lower sections, while the tweeters were set in the upper front corners. "We did the same thing there — spray-dyed the tweeters," confirms Young.



Extended play: An Icon-TV 15.2-inch monitor flips down from the ceiling, which was wrapped in ultra suede (left); Sound Decision added on to the center console so that it continues to the back of the vehicle.

Cubiform: A section of the stock center console was reformed to house a Nintendo GameCube (below), which took the place of the rear-seat heater switches.



An Icon-TV F152WIR 15.2-inch monitor flips down from the ceiling to give the rear-seat passengers a panoramic widescreen view. "The whole headliner is wrapped in ultra suede," notes Young, "as is the bevel for the monitor."

Gaming options are within reach courtesy of a Nintendo GameCube situated in the center console between the front seats. "We built on from the rear of the factory console back," says Young. "So now the console continues through to the rear of the vehicle." The Denali's got more game thanks to a PlayStation 2 unit installed inside the added-on console behind the driver's seat, facing outward. Also in the back part of the center console between the ostrich-upholstered seats is a Stinger SC201DT 1-farad capacitor displayed in a neon-lit cubby that's surrounded by more ostrich hide. Just in front of the cubby are switches for rear heated-seat controls, which were relocated from where the GameCube is now.

POUND FOR POUND

One of the things that Grozich wanted to see in the rear cargo area was lots of cool



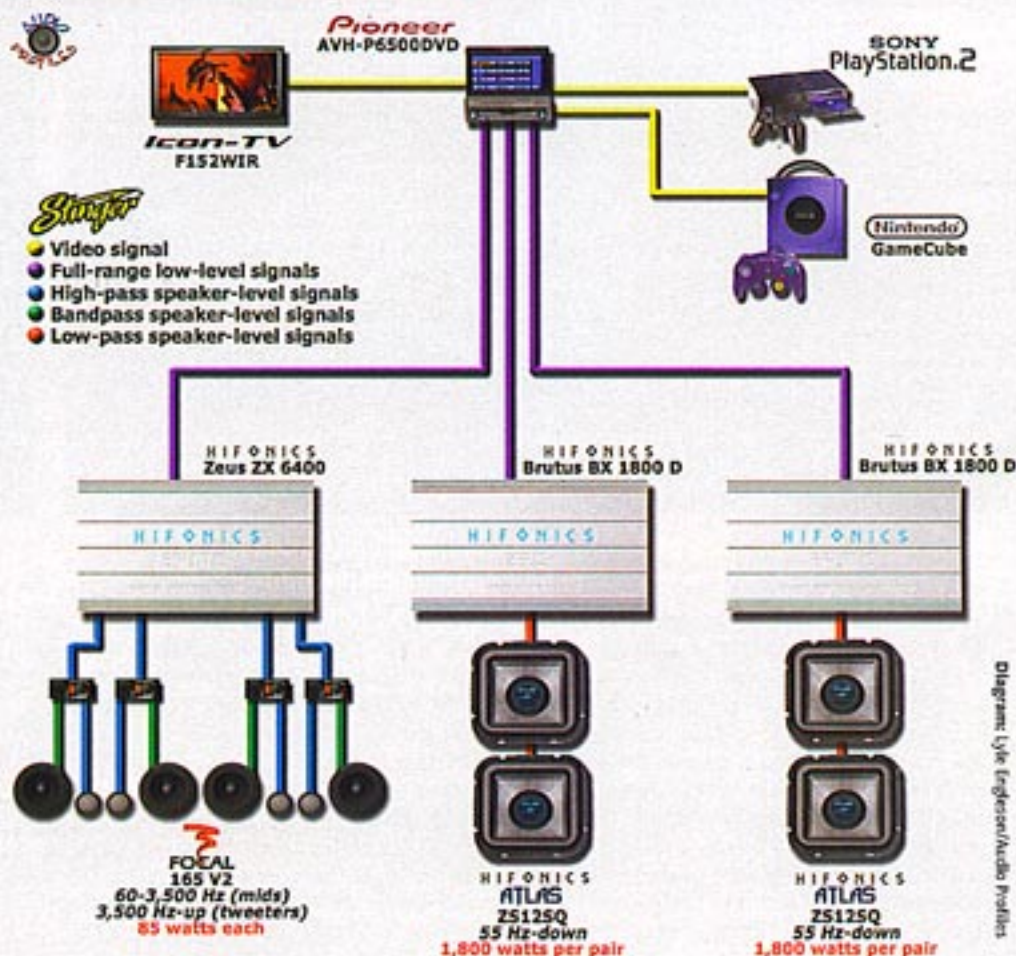


Fuse-lage: At the far end of the added-on center console is a Stinger fused power-distribution block with an LED readout (above).

Hidden power: In the center console between the rear seats is a Stinger 1-farad capacitor in a cubby surrounded by ostrich-hide upholstery (left).

curves — and he wanted to hear a lot of pounding bass, too. "I knew I wanted four 12s, and I wanted a lot of contour, so obviously there's lots of fiberglass work," says Grozich. "I looked at a lot of the celebrities with their crazy cars, and I wanted something at that level." Two pairs of Hifonics Atlas ZS12SQ 12-inch subwoofers in a ported box gave him the bass he was looking for. "The thing is painfully loud," Young admits. "It'll knock the breath out of you. It also has a good balance with the mids and highs, but he wanted it to pound." A massive enclosure with a total of 6.5 cubic feet of air space that was built using 1-inch MDF and a lot of fiberglass gave Young and company plenty of room to supply Grozich with the shape he was looking for.

Between the subs are the amplifiers that light them up: two Hifonics Brutus BX 1800 D monoblocks (1,800 watts x 1 into 1 ohm). Each amp sits on a pedestal made from 1-inch MDF that's reinforced with steel and finished in texture coating. A 1/2-inch Plexiglas base underneath each amp rocks the requisite blue neon. Another Hifonics amp, a Zeus ZX 6400 (85 watts x 4 into 4 ohms), is at the very back of the cargo area, mounted in the same fashion as the other two. "I wanted the amplifiers in the foreground and the subwoofers in the background," says Young. "I wanted the amps to sort of float to give them some depth. Plus,



Float on: Grozich wanted "a lot of contour" in the rear cargo area (right), so Sound Decision fabricated a curvy subwoofer box for four Hifonics 12-inch subwoofers out of wood and fiberglass, and "floated" three Hifonics amplifiers on pedestals between them.

Pounding pair: Two pairs of Hifonics Atlas 12-inch subwoofers (bottom right) gave Grozich the bass he was looking for. "He wanted it to pound," says installer Young.



that was the easiest way to squeeze four 12s in a ported box in the back of that thing. We also custom-made the end caps for the amplifiers out of MDF and auto-body filler."

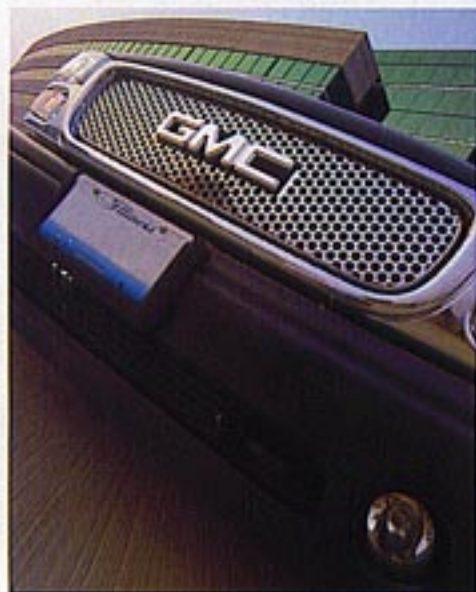
Behind the pedestal for the Zeus amp is the curvy port for the subwoofer enclosure. It's made out of 3/8-inch Luan and lined with aluminum, and on top of it is a Billet Specialties logo. "Glenn brought me that and wanted it to fit into the install somewhere," says Young. "So we floated it on a pedestal about an inch and half off the box." On each side of the rear cargo area are

two lighted logos trimmed in brushed aluminum: another one for Billet Specialties and one for Sound Decision. "We modified the factory panels and added on to them with MDF and auto-body filler," says Young, "and we brought them flush against the enclosure." All wiring for the Denali system is courtesy of Stinger.

RAD RIDE

The SUV's performance mods — a Whipple supercharger that soups up the stock 325-horsepower VORTEC V8 engine with an additional 100 horses and a Corsa cat-back

exhaust — were performed by celebrated rod builder Rad Rides by Troy in Manteno, Illinois. The truck was also dropped 3 inches with a Belltech kit and, of course, a bunch of Billet Specialties aluminum dress-ups grace the engine — a fuse-box cover, windshield-washer and oil filler caps, a master-cylinder cover. The exterior also received a few touch-ups, namely Escalade rear vents, clear front-corner lenses, and an aluminum GMC emblem from Billet Specialties on the front grille. The Denali rolls on (what else) Billet Specialties SLX46 24-inch wheels wrapped in BFG 255/44/24 rubber. You can obviously



tell our boy has a need for speed as well as bass... What else can you say about a guy whose other modes of transport are a 2004 Subaru WRX STi and a Ducati 748 bike? "Now, every penny I get goes into the STi," he says. "And everything I put in that car went into the motor. It has about 400 horsepower to the ground."

The Denali, however, is for when Grozich wants to go out riding on the town with his bros — "My friends all think it's crazy," he laughs — but it's no surprise that they all want to jump in the SUV when it's time to cruise. "And I'm always the one driving," Grozich laughs. You know, some things never change. **ME**

Emblematic: An aluminum GMC emblem from Billet Specialties is attached to the front grille (above).

Super power: A Whipple supercharger boosts the Denali's stock 325-horsepower VORTEC V8 engine an additional 100 horses (above right).

SOUND CHECK & VIDEO CHECK

STEALING MY GIRLFRIEND'S Mazda Miata for the day, I dropped the top and made the 45-minute drive from my home in Naperville, Illinois to Montgomery to conduct the S&VCheck on Sound Decision's latest creation. Even though it started raining halfway there, dampening the joy of an open-air cruise, I wasn't going to let the weather in any way compromise the experience I was about to enjoy. Upon entering the Sound Decision show room, I was greeted by co-owner Sean Young, who brought me into the install bay for my first look at the Glenn Grozich's 2003 GMC Denali. The truck's stance was certainly impressive, especially with the support of 24-inch Billet Specialties chrome wheels.

I started off with "After Midnight," a track by the McNeely-Levin-Skinner Band, from the *Sheffield Drive* CD (Sheffield Lab), and immediately discovered issues with the imaging. This track has a banjo at right of center, guitar at left of center, with a lead female vocal in the middle, but all three images were directly in front of me. Stage height and listening position were very good, especially considering the fact that the stage height was almost eye-level — and I'm 6'4". Switching to the main title from "Superman" from *John Williams Greatest Hits: 1969-1999* (Sony), I was pleased with the tonality of the system. The midrange was solid, with the brass section sounding very realistic and not overpowering. The highs and the midbass were a little soft, but Sean was able to bring up some of the highs with a little tweaking of the Pioneer AVH-P6500DVD head unit's EQ. The subbass was spectacular, allowing me to almost "see" the timpani player. Discovering an area in which the Denali excelled, I switched back to *Sheffield Drive* to play "O-Daiko" by Kodo. This track features the playing of huge Japanese drums, which was recreated accurately and effectively. As the drumhead was struck, I could feel the mallet make contact with the drum skin and the skin move. Impressive!

I decided to play some popular music, since Sean explained that

the system was primarily designed for the street and not the show circuit. I switched to "Without Me" from *The Eminem Show* (Aftermath/Interscope), which quickly made me want to back the Denali out of the bay, hit the hood, and pimp the system. Since Sean was sitting next to me, I decided to move to the VideoCheck instead.

Choosing between the Pioneer DVD head's 6.5-inch screen in the dash and the 15.2-inch Icon TV overhead was a pretty easy decision, so Sean and I climbed into the second row of seats for proper viewing. I decided to start with a Japanese anime DVD by inserting *Initial D* (TokyoPop), and I was quickly drawn into the race scene, where Tak proves that the skills of the driver matter more than the car. The picture was a little grainy — a result of some video noise — but that didn't diminish my enjoyment.



I then switched to *The Last Samurai* (Warner Bros.) and cued up Chapter 36, "The Final Charge." As Tom Cruise drew his sword, the ringing metal sounds lingered in the vehicle as the battle ensued. The video noise was again evident, but was quickly overlooked as the "new guns" were loaded and aimed at the approaching samurai. The gunshots were clean and concise and didn't blend together, making for a realistic finish to the final charge.

The system was definitely intended to be played loud and clean. I was impressed with the clarity, especially at loud volumes. Most systems have trouble at loud volumes, but this system was built with the street in mind. The bass was solid and the clarity of the highs made for an enjoyable time. I still wish I had taken the Denali for a spin on the streets, but at least I still had the drive back in the Miata — and the sun was out... —J. Mykel Hill

J. Mykel Hill is the sales and installation manager at Circuit City in Naperville, Illinois; a judge in SLAP, IASCA, and USAC competition; and was a sound-quality judge at the 2003 SLAP Nationals.