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all-digital interaction reduces noise pick-up and eliminates the need for bulky signal harnesses running throughout the vehicle. The 3 Audison amps—a VR-206 (front), LR-230 (rear), and LR-1140XR (subwoofer)—were powered by a single 4-gauge StreetWires cable run from under the hood and terminated at the battery.

Behind the amp rack, the StreetWires 4-gauge power cable was divided by a StreetWires distribution block so that each component on the rack was fed by a stable source. The speaker wires were terminated at the amps and run to their proper destinations, following the same game plan utilized with the BMW install. Even though the stereo system in the Expedition is larger and more complex, the signal wiring is greatly simplified by the design of the Alpine Ai-Net components, which all plug directly into the Alpine processor located behind the amp rack.

Both systems are excellent examples of how a well-designed amp rack can make the most efficient use of limited space.

The only RCA-style signal cables used in the entire system went from the amps to the processor, both of which are located within the left quarterpanel.

Venne fabricated the amp rack for the Expedition out of 0.5-inch MDF, and covered it with trunkliner even though it would be completely concealed by the interior trim panel. Ford provided an access door for a storage box that we eliminated; however, we kept the door, which allowed us to make some amplifier adjustments even after the system was completed—and, of course, to show off the installation. Once assembled, the entire rack was hidden from sight by putting the quarterpanel back in place.

To the music. For starters, I cued up The Beach Boys' classic *Pet Sounds* (Capitol) and enjoyed the sweetness of track 8, "God Only Knows." I know the focus and placement of this old analog recording very, very well, and was satisfied with the Expedition's reproduction of this Brian Wilson masterpiece.

Next, I marveled at the midbass and kick-drum tuning evident on "It's Love," track 2 on *Faith, Hope, Love* by King's X (Atlantic). But the caper came with the

devastating natural piano timbre on "She's The One," track 5 on World Party's *Egyptology* (The Enclave). Midrange and upper midrange were especially good with this track. In short, it gave me the chills.

Total time for this rack install: 9 hours. Cost: About \$900 for parts and labor (not including the car-stereo components).

ALTHOUGH THE SYSTEM DESIGN IN THE BMW was vastly different from the layout in the Expedition, both vehicles are excellent examples of how a carefully designed amp rack can make the most efficient use of a limited space. These 2 ergonomic and fully functional rack jobs are also fine examples of an installer's creativity and craftsmanship. ■



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