

# Automotive Toys

*What to do when your Turbo's in the shop.*

BY PATRICK BEDARD

• Ever get the feeling you don't know what to do with your hands? We'll tell you what. Have fun with them. Play with stuff. You'll be glad you did.

In case you don't know what to play with, here is our list of the Ten Best Toys for car guys. Some of this stuff isn't cheap, but we take our fun seriously. Fun is the spice of life. "Fun," as Aristotle once said, "is fun to have."

## The Amazing Shiftomatic

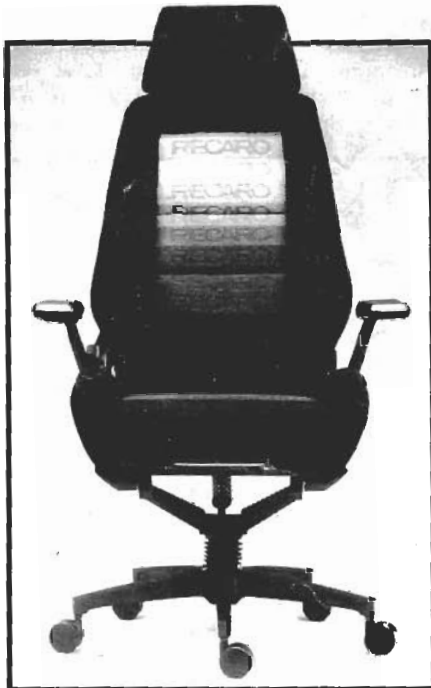
Billed as "the consummate gift for the closet race-car driver," we think this is perfect, provided he (or she) plans to stay in there and keep the door shut. That way, no one will ever know.



A sturdy chromed-steel lever links the shift knob of your choice (Porsche, BMW, Ferrari, Humber Super Snipe, etc.) to an industrial-strength toilet plunger. The manufacturer claims that the same air molecules used in the ground-effects side pods of today's Formula 1 cars will suck the Amazing Shiftomatic down to any smooth surface—your desk maybe, or the top of the family Maytag. The rest is up to you. Only \$19.95 from Kingfish Productions, Inc., Castle Road, Piermont, New York 10968. Owner's manual included. Specify if you can't drive a stick shift.

## Recaro Office Swivel

Whether you're an on-the-move executive or just another breathless aficionado with a firm grip on your The Amazing Shiftomatic, Recaro will get you through the day. The same combination of firm cushions, high side bolsters, and reclinable backrest that has made Recaro the hot seat for cars is now available for your office. The extra Recaro caster



(most office chairs have only four) provides added traction on slippery tile floors. The rugged coil-spring suspension lets you tilt back and cruise through conferences. Heavy-duty swivel built to take repeated spin-outs. Wall contact not covered by warranty. Full list at \$931 from Recaro U.S.A., Inc., 1152 East Dominguez Street, Carson, California 90746.

## ColecoVision Turbo

All the joys of being A.J. Foyt without ever leaving your TV set. Your car won't handle worth a hoot. Other damn



fools keep driving right into you. You finally get runnin' purty good and then *pow!* Just like real racin', in other words.

Turbo plugs into the ColecoVision Video Game System. It comes with a steering wheel, a shifter, and a foot-pedal accelerator. You get the overhead

view. The road scrolls toward you—highways, city streets, night scenes, tunnels, and snowscapes—while you try to pass cars, avoid oil slicks, and keep between the shoulders. The inevitable crashes sound like death and destruction. But tell Mom not to worry, no one has ever been trapped in a burning ColecoVision. Too cheap to be real racin', at \$60 for Turbo, \$200 for the player; from Coleco, 200 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10010.

## Bearcat 100

This is a scanner. You know what that means: up to sixteen radios in one. Just tell it which sixteen frequencies you're interested in, and it'll keep sorting



through, waiting for somebody to talk, at which time it locks onto that conversation. You can hear airplanes, firemen, the highway patrol—particularly the highway patrol.

The Bearcat 100 is special because it's small. And has its own batteries. So it'll go *anywhere*, even places it's not supposed to go (don't make us draw you a picture, for chrissake). And it's programmable. No crystals. Just punch in the frequencies you need as you move from one jurisdiction to another. Then you can listen to all sorts of timely conversations as you go, particularly timely if they happen to be talking about you. Better than a friend in high places for \$449, from Electra Company, 300 East

County Line Road, Cumberland, Indiana 46229.

**Porsche Design Titan Chronograph**

This is the top of the Porsche Design line, bringing *superleicht* racing technology right to your wrist. All the normal displays—date, day, hour, minute, plus stop functions for hour, minute, and second, not to mention the integrated tachymeter—are packaged in a case of solid titanium to make this the lightest

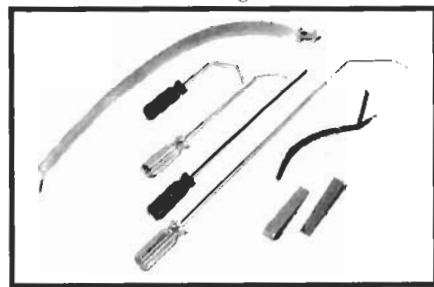


chronograph on the road. Low unsprung weight prevents annoying "watch float." No false moves, even

when you steer crazily through the esses. Nothing hugs your wrist like this Porsche. The unique extra-wide stop and start buttons are easy to find in the frenzy of competition. As always, the Porsche Design label is your assurance of extravagant pricing. While they last, \$1950 from Schaffhausen Watch Corporation, 580 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10036.

**Lockout Tools**

Okay, let's say you're locked out of your Pinto. No sweat. You take number 32545—that's the real long one with the screwdriver handle—stick it between the glass and the door skin, and go down six inches. Now turn the point to the rear while holding the tool vertical-



ly, and slide it along the gap until you touch the rear of the door. Then pull up to unlock.

This kit of eight separate tools will unlock over 99 percent of all cars, claims its manufacturer. It comes with a booklet that shows up to six ways to unlock each car without damage.

Okay, let's say you're locked out of a Porsche 930 Turbo, a pretty black one just like you've always wanted. No sweat. You take number 32526 and . . . A steal at \$24.95 from Steck Manufacturing Co., Inc., 1319-25 West Stewart Street, Dayton, Ohio 45408.

**Opisometer**

Nothing takes the curves like an opisometer. And nothing else can report back the exact distance between point A and point B, no matter how



curvy the road between. It's as easy as one, two, whee. Just spread out the map. Roll the opisometer's precision distance wheel along the route. Convert map distance to actual distance using the scale of miles, and there you have it. Now you know exactly how far you are from civilization.

Great for parties. Find out which of

**Ten Best All-Time Fads**

• A fad has no socially redeeming value. By itself, it's just cultural baggage, a form of self-expression. Yet over time, such baggage can change the perceptions of an entire culture. And so fads explain a lot about how a utility device known as the automobile has been transformed into another form of self-expression—the object of love and hate known as the car. Here now, a list of the ten great automotive fads of all time.

**The Muffler Cutout:** It started with bypasses, went to glass-pack mufflers, and now finds expression in dropping the muffler in favor of the catalyst. But the thought remains the same: the sound of speed is as important as speed itself.

**The Street-Rod Look:** The first Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby was a Ford Model T with the fenders stripped off. The end of World War II gave us the chopped-and-channeled Mercury with fender skirts, curb feelers, and white sidewall tires; the Sixties gave us the bracket-racer with its jacked-up rear end. Anti-tampering laws and smog checks conspire against Saturdays at the speed shop, but there are pockets of resistance in small-town America where the street rod still lives.

**Tail Fins:** From 1949 to 1961, fins were what we had instead of aerodynamics. Like streamlined modern architecture, fins were an exuberant expression of an age with boundless faith in the future of things mechanical.

**English Sports Cars:** These cars taught us that driving is better than riding. They also led to the development of the cocktail party, which is where we discussed whether a true sports car was allowed to have synchromesh in second gear.

**Bumper Stickers:** The car as a form of political self-expression appeared in the Sixties with "Another

mother for peace," but by the late Seventies had degenerated into "Honk if you love Jesus" and "Road racers go in deeper and come out harder." Fortunately, a political renaissance appears to be at hand with such sightings as "The Moral Majority is neither" and "Support your right to keep and arm bears."

**The VW Beetle Look:** Like the Model T, the Beetle reaffirmed the integrity of basic transportation, even when bedecked with flower decals and a nosegay on the antenna, or when serving as the underpinnings of a plastic Ford GT40.

**Ralph Nader:** Fortunately, the man who gave us the car-as-public-enemy now admits, "There hasn't been a significant piece of safety legislation passed since 1969."

**The Ghettocruiser Look:** "Diamond in the back, sunroof top, digging the scene with the gangster lean," goes the song. These were fantastic exhibitions of automotive style designed strictly to be admired by pedestria. The Ghettomobile also spawned the Pimpmobile, with its Continental kit and forty-eleven television sets in the back seat—the ultimate expression of the automobile as home (and office) away from home (and office).

**The Boogie Van:** The van deserves more credit for the sexual revolution than *Playboy*.

**Seventies Style:** Who is responsible for the opera window, as well as its fellow travelers, the carriage light, the glowing targa band, the half-vinyl roof, and the vertical rear window? Personally, I blame Richard Nixon.

Fads are funny. On the one hand, they are the stuff of which the J.C. Whitney catalog is made. On the other, in automobiles, as Tom Wolfe says, "classes of people whose styles of life had been practically invisible had the money to build monuments to their own styles." —Michael Jordan