

# How To Choose the Right Detector



On rainy days or when we're starved for laughs, we sometimes stop by the car audio section of a retailer to check out their radar detector display. If we're lucky enough to spot a passing sales associate we're fond of asking him or her to explain the differences between various models. The results are generally nothing short of hilarious. Inevitably the poor dear is reduced to reading off the features listed on each box with absolutely no clue how to choose a good one over a bad one. Which begs the question: If the people who sell these things are powerless to pick a winner over a complete dog, how can the average consumer be expected to make an informed buying decision? Okay, read on and we'll tell you.

## What type do I need?

Aside from the traditional corded, dash-mount detector, there are two other types: remote and cordless or battery-powered. Remote radar detectors are a niche market, higher in price (\$300-\$1,600) and too specialized in design to enjoy a wide following in a market where the typical detector sells for barely over a hundred bucks.



Remote models like Escort Passport SR7 have only a small control/display unit in the cockpit. For the ultimate in concealment, the display can be replaced by single multi-colored status/alert LED built-in to the dash

But for those who feel the need for a built-in detector, highly resistant to theft and, equally important, to official notice by uniformed gents packing guns and badges, there's no substitute for a quality remote model. The downside to a remote is that once it's installed, it remains in the car. No moving it from one vehicle to another.

Those who frequently drive different vehicles, particularly travelers who often find themselves in rental cars, not to mention anyone looking for freedom from a dangling

power cord, a **cordless detector** is the answer. They look much the same as a corded model, less the power cord, but are substantially different in design. That's because battery life is a major issue and demands power-saving measures. In essence the detector has a duty cycle in which it's shut down for a percentage of the time. You won't notice this but the truth is, to extend battery life a cordless is sometimes resting and not looking for signals. Net result: less sensitivity. The Escort Solo from the late 1990s, for instance, had barely one-fourth the Ka-band radar warning range of the Passport 8500 model. The new Escort S2 Solo has dramatically closed the gap, but no cordless detector can be



Escort Solo S2

expected to approach the performance of a good corded model—at least not if it's expected to have decent battery life. Decide for yourself if you really need the absolute maximum radar warning range or if cordless operation is more important.

## What should I look for?

A detector's attributes fall into two categories: performance and function. Of the two, performance is the more important. One of the