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SPORTS, LUXURY AND CLASSIC CARS SPECIAL ISSUE



## 35 GREAT MACHINES

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# The Time Machine

The Becker JetVan keeps movers and shakers connected in transit.

BY BRAD A. GREENBERG

**W**HEN MERCEDES-BENZ RELEASED the second-generation SprinterVan last year, after spending \$2.4 billion on its development, Howard Becker had a new toy to play with. Having converted SUVs and vans into armored limos, Becker had already transformed the original Sprinter into a leather-trimmed corner office on wheels.

"Everything we learned in 2005 and 2006 make up a gestalt," says the owner of Becker Automotive Design in Oxnard, Calif. "And we've been able to apply that evolution in luxury to the 2007 [model]."

Behind a 3.0-litre, 6-cylinder diesel engine, the new Becker JetVan boasts independent rear suspension, electronic aviation blinds, an S-Class exterior makeover, HDTV, high-speed Internet and mobile office technology and Crestron software—a \$60,000 interior-control system that affords touch-screen access to climate, lighting, doors, seats and all audio-visual elements (iPod, satellite radio, CD, DVD, front and rear TV, front and rear camera and comput-

er access). Alone, each addition would be a luxury; together they transform the work-in-transit experience.

With Internet access and infinitely more class and comfort than any cubicle, I could have written this article on a keyboard remotely connected to an onboard computer and a 32-inch LCD monitor, e-mailed it to my editor and then squeezed in a nap, plus massage, in a \$6,500 leather recliner, before being dropped off at home. Except the chauffeur is not included.

But this is not a problem for Becker's clients—a list he says contains "more billionaires than millionaires." He's sold about 20 JetVans in the past year, with prices ranging from \$250,000 to \$400,000. "The only thing they can't afford to lose is their time," Becker says.

That's why the JetVan offers the privacy of a limousine, from tinted windows to the rear partition, but also connections for incessant communication with the outside world. Suddenly, an hour-long drive becomes a chance to brush



up on meeting materials, refine a speech or just relax.

The aesthetics appeal more to the prudent than the flamboyant. Aside from the Mercedes-Benz logo, the JetVan's exterior resembles an ambulance, cargo van or family wagon. Becker delivers S-Class style by replacing the stock black bumper with one that matches the body and swapping the grill and lower fog lights with those used in the popular sedan series.

Sleek and understated, the JetVan is modeled after the Gulfstream G-IV and G-V interiors, and it feels like a private jet—from leather seats, maple woodwork and aviation-composite paneling to a ceiling high enough to allow one to walk from the backseat to the refrigerator and liquor rack under the front TV.

With seating plans that accommodate between four to seven rear passengers, high-speed broadband access and a camera for video conferencing as well as the ability to idle quietly and comfortably for hours, the JetVan can easily

double as an impromptu boardroom.

"We're not trying to compete with Bentley; we're not trying to compete with somebody's home or private jet. But we are trying to keep them in their own element," Becker says. "It's about moving people in comfort and style." □

*Becker Automotive Design, [www.beckerautodesign.com](http://www.beckerautodesign.com)*

