



Escalating Luxury

Becker's Cadillac Escalade ESV caters to comfort and productivity.

BY CHRISTIAN GULLIKSEN

HOWARD BECKER wasn't happy when he learned of Ford's decision to phase out the massive Excursion—his favored platform for ultra-deluxe limousines. Not only did it provide ample space in which to create a mobile office, it drew less attention than a Maybach or a Rolls-Royce. "My customers have the Bentley, Lamborghini and Ferrari in the garage," says Becker. "But for going into the city, to meetings or the airport, they want a more discreet form of transportation."

Fortunately, Becker found a desirable replacement for the Excursion in the recently redesigned Cadillac Escalade ESV. "They improved the

dashboard and every aspect of the car," he says. "The doors close better, the styling is better and the ride is so good we didn't have to change anything." The car's chrome roof rack even helps disguise the extra 4 inches of headroom Becker often endows on his Escalades.

He has built a reputation among security-minded clientele, and available features include anti-grab door handles, composite run-flat inserts for the tires and various forms of on-board emergency equipment. The Escalade ESV's light-duty chassis, however, means those in need of armoring at the assault-rifle level should consider alternatives like the GMC Denali,

which can handle the extra weight.

Inside the cabin, Becker pays close attention to seat design. "Normally, your body is trying to counter being thrown around," he says. "Your muscles flex, and when they have to react for an hour at a time, fatigue builds up." Becker's chairs use three layers of high-density foam and springs to minimize this effect, and further dampen any vibrations. "We hope to reduce stress in a commute to the maximum degree," he adds. "If I can give my customer more energy and more rest, then I've grabbed the brass ring."

Becker's Escalade ESV—which starts at \$125,000 and rises to

\$225,000—has a feature normally reserved for ultraluxe hotels and private residences: a Crestron center with one-touch commands for everything from the satellite television and radio to the HD DVD and Blu-ray players to the cabin's lighting and climate control. "The marvelous thing is there are no more multiple remote controls," he says. "And it's so intuitive that it confuses no one at all."

For all the Escalade ESV's entertainment options—delivered with 5.1 Surround Sound—Becker says his clients are more likely to use the technology for work-related purposes. Likewise, they appreciate the



car's Internet connection, which uses aircards from two separate providers for nearly uninterrupted broadband coverage. So, if the signal weakens with one service, the other fills in.

"Some people leave their offices earlier now because they can accomplish on the way home what they used to have to be in the office to

do," says Becker. "The hour driving to the office and the hour driving home can be fully productive. It's gratifying that we're not just building a pretty environment—it also has functionality." □

Becker Automotive Design, 805.487.5227, www.beckerautodesign.com