Smile, and make sure your seatbelt's done up!

The tech story you're about to read focuses on a very clever piece of kit from Digital Logistics - one which we feel – has benefits far beyond its initial intended applications.

We first encountered Digital Logistics through its hero brand of hands-free phone applications – Parrot.

If your vehicle does not have a proprietary Bluetooth system built in, it is quite likely you'll have heard of Parrot - certainly the car distributors in this country have.

Parrot systems have been adopted by major automotive distributors as interim measures while the factory installs hands-free phone systems as standard equipment.

We've used Parrot systems and found them to be exceptionally good, even for (unofficial) motorcycle communication applications.

And then we found Digital Logistics supply sound deadening systems too, making them pretty much the go-to guys for in-car audio/phone systems as far as we were concerned.

It seems however, Digital Logistics is not content to play with stuff for our ears. The company has introduced a line of visual electronics for the auto industry.

We'd like to know how long before car manufacturer's cotton on to this little gem.

Before they do, we'll tell you about the Digital Logistics solution to vehicle and staff security and safety, because we think the system is so good, and so affordable, everyone should have one.

Basically, we're talking about a car camera – a two way camera, with lowlight capability.

No, wait, it's a two way camera with low light capability and a recorder.

Well, actually it's a two way camera with low light capability, a recorder and GPS.

Come to think of it, it's a two way....oh forget it. Let's just look at the gadget, shall we?

This is the Autoview drive recorder system, a spinoff if you like, of reversing camera technology, which is where the brand first found fame.

Digital Logistics can supply Autoview reverse cameras and sonar systems as well, but we like the Drive recorder system better.

About the same size as a typical aftermarket navigation system, the Autoview device likewise sticks to your windscreen. From here, one of its cameras –and a microphone - records events happening inside the vehicle.

At the same time, the device is looking out through the windscreen at things going on outside the vehicle, though there is no microphone for this, which is just as well!

The Autoview uses its two cameras to record the indoor/outdoor action on an SD card, like the kind you'd find in a digital camera or cellphone.

The Autoview camera shown here, starts recording by driver activation, so you'll want to make sure your seatbelt is on, 'cos the camera don't lie!

Seatbelts are only part of the picture though. The camera is also recording your speed via the GPS system and its monitoring conversation as well. If you're a bad singer in the car, you might want to remember this.

So, you're driving along, both hands on the wheel, at the speed limit and thinking about how good a driver you really are, because you're on the automotive equivalent of Candid Camera.

No jumping orange-nearly-red lights; all turns signalled; all Stop signs stopped at; all pedestrian crossings paid attention to. It is truly amazing to see just how many bad habits we pick up when nobody's around to watch, but the Autoview doesn't let you get away with anything.

But it doesn't let anyone else get away with anything either. Maybe you'd like to *555 the car which just swerved over three lanes and cut you off, but darn, didn't get the number plate!

Back at your office though, there's a good chance you'll find it on the recording. Yes, the camera really is *that* good.

The advantages to having one of these in a fleet vehicle are blindingly obvious. You can keep an eye on your fleet assets, and you are protecting your drivers at the same time. Perhaps some of your drivers could benefit from some driver training? The Autoview camera can tell you.

Well, it's all fine and dandy having a recorder, but what about the playback? Here's where the SD card comes in.

The standard Autoview SD card holds 16GB of data, and you'll be surprised how much that is in camera-speak.

Autoview thought some fleet users may want a little more, so the system can accommodate a 32GB card if required.

At any rate, the SD card can be read quite simply through a reader, which many modern laptops or computers now have. Failing that, an electronics supplier will have one which plugs into a USB port.

Before you read the SD card however, you'll need the Black Box software which comes as part of the Autoview package. It takes very little time and space (8.66 megabytes) to install.

Once it's there, your PC/laptop can read the captured data from the SD card and display it on a split screen – one for the in-car cam, one for the exterior cam.

Now, if you have the Internet open, the Autoview system also interfaces tidily with Google maps, allowing you to see where your car(s) were and what direction they were travelling in on a handy satellite map which can be overlaid onto the screens.

You can turn the map on and off using the MAP button on the Black Box display. Vehicle speed is

also displayed under the camera images and on the left, you'll see a G meter, which tells you things you might need to know in the event of a collision event.

You can store the data to a hard drive, capture images as still shots or print them using a standard printer and you can password protect the Black Box setup so that only you can access it.

Now, some might be thinking at this point that the Autoview is yet another 'big brother' device, just like a tracking system.

In fact, it is designed first and foremost to protect the driver of the vehicle in terms of their personal security. It can also be used as a safe driving instruction tool as well as a fleet protection asset and at $599 plus GST, we reckon it's a smart investment for any fleet user.