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SHOCK AND AWE FEATURES ABOUND IN TODAY'S MOTORHOMES (Published in the August 2005 issue of Inside Columbia.) - 8/1/2005

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SHOCK AND AWE FEATURES ABOUND IN TODAY'S MOTORHOMES

COLUMBIA, Mo. – If you haven't looked inside a motorhome lately, you are in for a shock. Today's top-of-the line motorhomes carry more electronics than the Starship Enterprise. These 40-foot monsters sport two or three flat-screen TVs, surround-sound acoustics, satellite receivers, DVD players, On-Star navigation systems and rearview videocameras that watch your home's end and sides when backing up.

One unit offers an exterior entertainment center that pulls out from the side of the vehicle so that, even around the campfire, you won't have to miss your favorite sporting event. And you won't have to reach far for ice cream either; the pullout extra refrigerator/freezer solves that problem.

The Travel Supreme Select and the American Coach Eagle by Fleetwood at Loveall RVs offer 500-horsepower diesel engines on Freightliner truck frames. Sensors abound, telling you when your tires need air, for instance, and you can even get a tool that automatically inflates them.

Usually, Loveall's carries between 200 and 300 units, said President Dave Duffy, and 40 percent of sales come from the Internet. "Our vehicles sell all over the nation," he said. "We don't custom-order many units. Most people want to come in, see them, touch them, feel them and drive them off."

Priced between \$450,000 and \$475,000, the vehicles' interiors look like luxury homes, with porcelain bathrooms, ceramic tile, granite countertops and stainless steel appliances that would proudly grace the grandest of kitchens. Slide-out sides, which first appeared in 1997, push out to increase the floor space in the living and bedroom areas by about 6 feet, and a mechanical system levels the vehicle automatically for optimum sleep.

In the bedroom waits a king-size bed for the weary traveler, whose clothing is tucked away in a cedar closet. Soiled clothes are laundered in the combination washer and dryer that, no kidding, first washes, then dries them. And the "hydrohot" system, which uses the engine to heat water, eliminates those forced short showers that result from a tiny water heater.