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## Product Reviews



### Audible Data Acquisition

These days, it seems like everyone and their sister is using some sort of data acquisition system in an effort to reduce lap times. Modern data acquisition systems come in all shapes, sizes and levels of complexity, but for the most part they share a similar method of operation: Set up your acquisition system, turn some laps, come off the track, and finally download and interpret the data. Seems like five simple steps, right?

There's no question that these advanced systems can work absolute wonders for the success of a racing effort, although too often we see people failing to take advantage of this information—issues range from perceived complexity to information overload.

If we pared down a data acquisition system to one of its simplest purposes, we're just trying to understand how hard the car is turning, correct? The Fast Line Track Pro is designed to do just that and really only that.

It works by interpreting data from internal sensors and then translating that info into a numerical value. Although a little hard to describe, it's very easy to use. Simply mount the sensor using the included bracket, plug the unit into the nearest 12-volt power source—a cigarette lighter socket works well—and start driving. We used the optional FM modulator to broadcast the data through our car's stereo speakers, but the sensor comes with an 1/8-inch stereo headphone jack to provide an array of hookup options.

At first it was a bit disconcerting to hear the computer-generated voice spewing numbers over the radio, but we quickly adapted to the rhythm and were able to begin interpreting the data. As we entered each turn, the Fast Line Track Pro would begin to enunciate a numeric value for the turning force. For instance, a simple square corner might be described as "3...3...3...3..." A more severe bend driven in the same manner might sound like "5...5...5...5...5..." Nothing to it, right? Here's where it gets interesting: A particular turn on track could sound something like "4...5...7...8...5...3...3..."

So, now that we have this real-time feedback regarding our turning force, what can we do with it? Since every corner and every car is different, the actual numbers are arbitrary. The important data is in the progression of the numbers. If you were to turn in early and correct your line mid-turn, the report would reflect the drop in cornering force as you adjusted your steering angle. The number sequence would also denote a loss of traction.

Once we had familiarized ourselves with the system's description of a good turn, we could use it to monitor our performance. We could also use it to compare different lines, similar to taking segment times.

While it's a bit unconventional, we got a kick out of the way that the system delivered data. Being completely audible has obvious advantages on-track, and driving improvements could be made during a session, not afterward. Dead-simple installation is also a big plus, as the system can be easily moved between cars.

While we don't see the Fast Line Track Pro as a replacement for a more traditional data acquisition system, it would make a lot of sense to use the Fast Line in conjunction with another setup. The Fast Line Track Pro is exclusively available from the Innovative Automotive Products Web site, [fastlinetrackpro.com](http://fastlinetrackpro.com). The unit lists for \$399, and the FM modulator is another \$49.

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