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Why is my car making that sound? A new AI tool for dealers can answer that



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AutoSonix has developed an AI-driven tool that can assess and diagnose car systems through sound. (STOCK ADOBE)

MH By **Mark Hollmer**

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Service technicians for decades have assessed the health of vehicles by listening to the rumble, roar and sputter sounds they make. Now, artificial intelligence can do the job for them.

AI is helping technicians diagnose vehicle problems by listening to engines, water pumps and exhaust systems — a potentially transformative advancement for dealerships struggling with a shortage of qualified technicians.

Technology company AutoSonix developed the platform, which could revolutionize how quickly and consistently technicians find and assess vehicle problems.

The platform extracts diagnostic data from mechanical sounds and turns it into a "measurable metric," said AutoSonix CEO Tom Allen.

The company, based in Whitehall, Pa., is preparing to bring its AI-driven diagnostic platform to dealership service departments after testing it at vehicle auctions. The tool could be especially valuable for technicians who lack the years of training needed to diagnose problems by ear.

Dealer principals and general managers got a first look at the National Automobile Dealers Association show in Las Vegas in February, though the 2-year-old, 15-employee company continues to refine the product for use in service departments.

The company has not finalized dealership pricing, Allen said.

Its utility could come in handy during the ongoing auto industry technician shortage. The industry needs to replace close to 76,000 technician positions each year, but only 39,000 people graduate annually from technical colleges and training programs, according to NADA.

AutoSonix device lends an 'ear'

AutoSonix's battery-operated device "listens" to sounds made by engines, water pumps, exhaust pipes and other parts, and analyzes the data to come up with an assessment. A downloadable app guides users through the process, while designated



The AutoSonix device is about the size of a typical computer mouse. (AUTOSONIX)

employees can access the sound data and vehicle history records via a web browser.

Rather than focus on speed, Allen said the platform enables a more thorough intake process that evaluates multiple vehicle systems simultaneously.

Josh Musser, an owner of Trucks & Auto Auctions in Pasco, Wash., said the AutoSonix device shows promise. His company, based in Nampa, Idaho, sells about 60 cars per week and has used the tool for about a year in an ongoing pilot.

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"It's making it easier for me to verify issues and to be more confident on cars with no issues," Musser said. "It's definitely saving time from having to verify and double-check" a vehicle's systems.

Experienced technicians can typically diagnose vehicle systems with a stethoscope or their own ears, said Mark Harris, owner of Flagstaff Chevrolet and Winslow Ford in Arizona, and a former training center instructor.

Still, Harris said, the tool would be useful.

"I could have a B or C technician working on an engine and be able to use this product and not have to worry about calling the shop foreman over or a tech over for their opinion," Harris said.

AutoSonix's tool, about the size of a standard computer mouse, learns with use.

"AI keeps listening and adding to its knowledge base and only gets better with time," said Saeid Safavi, the company's chief technology officer.

AI in the service bay

Other AI tools in service departments include UVeye's vehicle inspection technology to visually spot tire leaks, sidewall damage and uneven wear along with body dents and scratches. UVeye raised \$191 million in an equity and debt financing in early 2025, with Toyota's investment arm contributing. Hunter Engineering Co., of

Bridgeton, Mo., makes diagnostic scan tools and autonomous alignment and tire inspection equipment that integrates with technology such as UpdatePromise's Harmony AI fixed ops platform.

Digital oscilloscopes such as Pico Technology's PicoScope remain standard diagnostic tools. General Motors requires its dealerships to use a branded version.

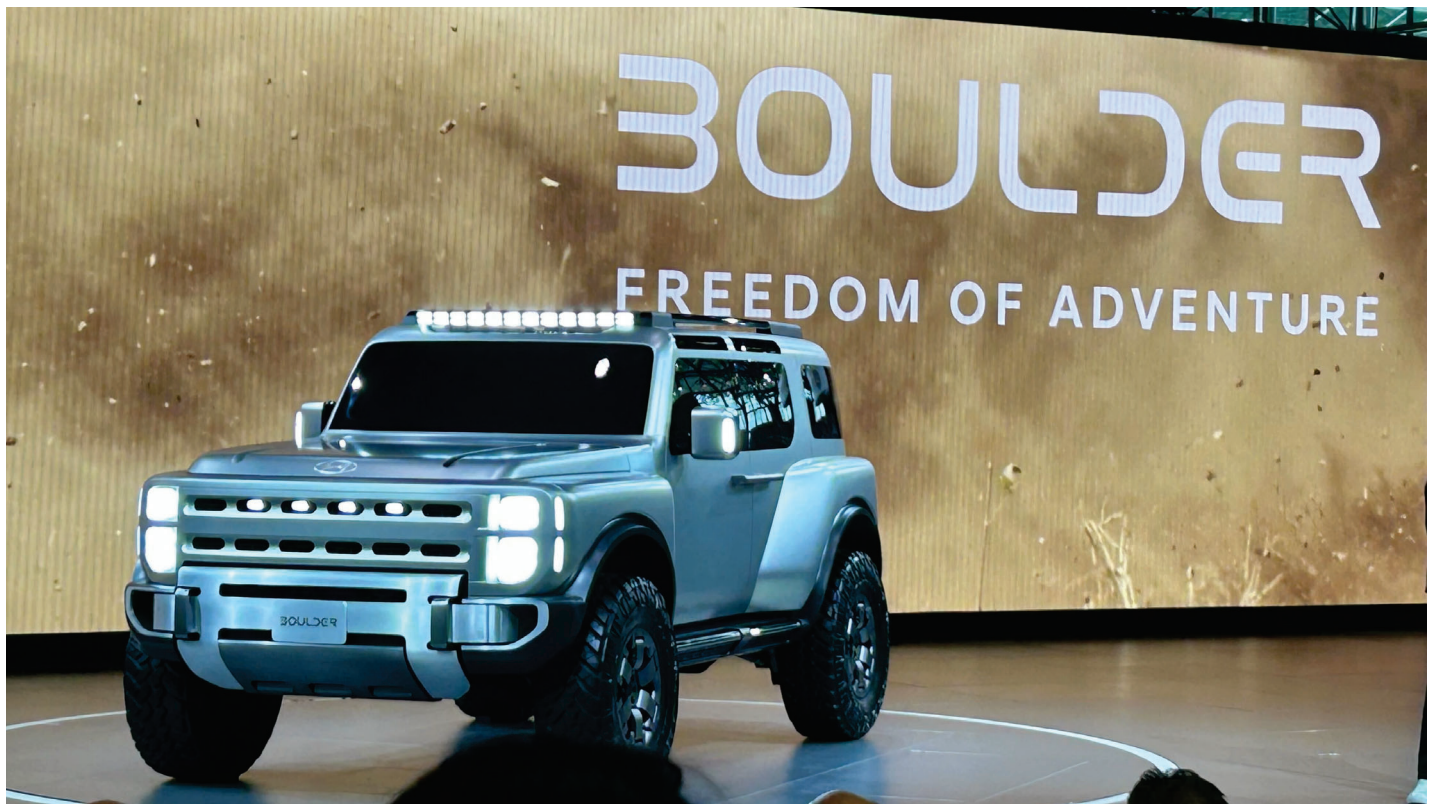
While a PicoScope helps identify what is broken, AutoSonix focuses on whether systems are functioning properly, identifying any issues in that context and then taking action based on the data the company's device produces, Safavi said.

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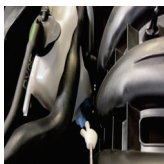
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