

A Great Escape

Ian Lamming assesses the appeal of hybrid motoring Prius-style

I'M not allowed Thin Lizzy in the car so the irony of Jailbreak blasting around the interior of the Prius+ hasn't escaped me.

Live and Dangerous, Phil Lynott resurrected from the afterlife and the seven seater Toyota converted into a veritable auditorium makes the day one of those seminal moments to be relished.

The fact that the journey ends at a very tidy motor cycle dealership in West Yorkshire, Allan Jefferies, and involves the test riding of a very nice machine, namely the BMW R Nine T Scrambler, makes a special day even better.

Air guitaring my way through a classic rock album, this is the life and the Prius is so easy to pilot I could be sitting on the sofa watching the journey played out on an Imax cinema screen.

This type of vehicle, namely an MPV, should not be this good to drive. It's a toss up as to whether I go to West Yorkshire on my existing bike. But the weather is iffy and so are the roads.

The easy option, the very easy option, is to take the extended Prius, hence the +. It's the right decision because when I get to the dealership I'm fresher than a daisy and able to enjoy the test more than ever.

The first Prius appeared in 1997 and it has been polished into a true gem, from the second you press the start button to be greeted by a 'ready' in green, push the stubby lever into D and depress the throttle, only to swish forward in complete silence.

It floats sublimely protecting occupants, or in this case, just me, from the harshness of life.

Weather, potholes and traffic do nothing to adulterate the experience. The 1.8 litre petrol engine dips in and out when necessary. It's hard to tell, especially when Phil gets into full voice and Brian Robertson and Scott Gorum play ping pong on electric guitar.

Starship interior still works well and the touchscreen couldn't be easier to work. The fact that Thin Lizzy is blaring through the speakers is proof of its connectivity.

Live and Dangerous actually sits in a secret corner of my iPhone and is playing via Bluetooth.

Sensors, lasers and cameras watch the car's every move and are capable of slowing, speeding up and stopping to keep Prius occupants safe and fatigue-free. There won't be such luxuries in the saddle of the test bike.

The journey back is not simply the former's equal it is probably even better. Pink now blasts around the interior reflecting my rosy mood – I've ordered the Scrambler, which is great, and my day out of jail is complete.

Fact File

- Toyota Prius
- Engine: 1.8 petrol plus electric
- Power: 98+81BHP
- 0-62mph: 11.3secs
- Top speed: 103mph
- Combined: 64.2 MPG
- Transmission: CVT
- CO2 g/km: 101

