



Above: the author rides a trike on his third birthday in 1967



HARLEY-DAVIDSON 2023 FREEWHEELER, FROM £31,495

According to Anthony Hart, sales manager at Plymouth Harley-Davidson, the Freewheeler and Harley-Davidson's other three-wheeled offering – the more opulent, £38,795 Tri-Glide Ultra – are proving to be a hit with people for whom motorcycling (due to injury or other health problems) might no longer seem like a viable option. This was exactly what caused sculptor Vanda Pelly to convert to three wheels more than 20 years ago.

“I had a motorcycle accident in Florence that resulted in the loss of a leg, meaning I could no longer ride a normal motorcycle,” she explains. “There was no way I was going to give up the freedom of riding, so I did some research and discovered a German

firm called Rewaco that makes sensational trikes, which are beautifully balanced and very easy to handle.”

Pelly found her Rewaco so easy to handle, in fact, that she shipped it to Australia – complete with a Little Guy caravan – and spent a year riding 24,000 miles around the country, travelling most of the way with a stray dog she picked up early on in the journey. Now aged 77, Pelly confines her triking to local runs near her Gloucestershire home or up to Scotland to see her son, and even uses the 1,500cc automatic machine for the occasional supermarket trip.

While the classic trike configuration combines one wheel at the front and two at the back, there are several high-performance models that do things the other way around.

The \$68,999 T-Rex RR from Canada's Campagna Motors, for example, is more of a three-wheeled car than a true trike, although it's powered by a 1,441cc, 208-horsepower Kawasaki motorcycle engine that gives it bike-like acceleration and a top speed approaching 150mph.

Similar performance is available from the American-made Polaris Slingshot, which, like the Campagna T-Rex RR, places driver and passenger side-by-side car-style, while the latest Spyder RT from another Canadian firm, Can-Am, places driver and passenger fore and aft, and starts at £31,907.

Both can be driven on either a car (if the driver is over 21) or motorcycle licence – but you'll need a full version of the latter in

order to drive what is possibly the most futuristic take on the three-wheeler theme currently on the market.

That's the bizarre-looking Yamaha Niken GT, a fully fledged, 890cc sports touring motorcycle costing £16,210.

That just happens to have two wheels upfront. ■ HTSI

I last rode a trike when I was four. It was a blue Raleigh Lion with a detachable trunk for long-distance tours, some of which took me as far as my mother's greenhouse, occasionally to the end of the drive and, once, tantalisingly close to an actual road.

By the age of five I had graduated to a proper two-wheeled bike called a Triumph Convertible (convertible because it had a bolt-on crossbar) and turned my back on three-wheelers for good. At least I thought I had, until Harley-Davidson recently offered me a fortnight's loan of its craftily named Freewheeler, a luxury trike powered not by feeble, four-year-old legs but by one of Milwaukee's finest V-Twin engines, with 114 cubic inches of capacity. That's more than 1.8 litres, so as big as you'll find in some of today's premium saloon cars.

Despite having ridden motorcycles for longer than I care to admit, I was plagued by feelings of trepidation during the journey to collect the Freewheeler – in photographs, it looked wide, heavy and ungainly. But the only thing, actually, that surprised me was the rapidity with which it can shoot backwards when using the electric reversing gear.

For anyone looking to experience the impressive torque and famous throb of a Harley-Davidson V-Twin engine without having to heave a heavy two-wheeler onto its stand or hold it upright at traffic lights and junctions, the Freewheeler is definitely the way to go.

Despite the extra weight of the wide, car-type rear wheels, the trike

MOTORING

## SECRETS OF A BOY RACER

As Harley-Davidson releases a sporty three-wheeler, Simon de Burton offers his take on the trike

offers thrilling acceleration and a top speed that's more than high enough to lose your driving licence.

There are advantages when carrying a pillion, too: no need to worry about balancing the extra weight when travelling at low speeds, and passengers who might ordinarily be nervous on a conventional motorcycle seem to find the Freewheeler confidence-inspiring – and even relaxing. Some also see a bonus in the fact that the third wheel negates the need for either rider or passenger to wear a crash helmet – although having had my own head saved on more than one occasion by even the cheapest of helmets, the idea of not using one while on a trike seems like madness. (In the UK you have to be over 21 with a full car licence to get behind its wheel.)

I found it fun and convenient to use (like my old Raleigh Lion, Freewheelers have a useful “trunk”), although, if pushed, I can't say I'd ever choose a trike over a regular motorcycle as long as I remain sufficiently fit and confident on the latter.



REWACO GT 2024 Touring, from €27,300



YAMAHA Niken GT 2023, £16,210



POLARIS Slingshot Roush Edition, from \$37,349



CAN-AM SPYDER RT, FROM £31,907