

Harley-Davidson's LiveWire is more electric motorcycle than I'll ever need

There's not a *lot* I can tell you from the 20 minutes I spent riding Harley-Davidson's first electric motorcycle this weekend at the Formula E race in Brooklyn, New York. One thing I can tell you, though, is it's certainly more electric motorcycle than I'd ever need.

That may not be the case for you, and if you have any interest, you should try to ride one at a dealer when they arrive later this year. There's a very good chance that my needs and desires are much different from yours. For instance, I have a motorcycle license, but I don't own a bike. I enjoy riding motorcycles and motor scooters (especially electric ones) around New York City, but I rarely leave the city with them. I simply don't spend a lot of time on two-wheelers, and so the LiveWire – as exciting as it to ride – is faster and more capable than what I'm looking for.

Any modern electric vehicle will feel quick when you accelerate from a dead stop. But this is particularly true of the motorcycles and scooters I've ridden, like Zero's electric two-wheelers, or the BMW C Evolution. The LiveWire is also quick off the line, especially in Sport mode. But it might have those others beat once you're up to speed.

The Verge

Every time I turned on to one of the long straightaways of Formula E's Brooklyn circuit, I raked the throttle and was greeted with giddy acceleration. What sets the LiveWire apart is that acceleration almost never quits. As 50, 60, 70 miles per hour ticked by on the small digital display between the handlebars, the motorcycle never let up. If there had been more room to run, I likely would have cracked 100 miles per hour before thinking about whether I really wanted to go that fast.

The LiveWire competently handled that speed thanks to a pair

of fat, wide tires that kept it glued to the asphalt (save for the few times I popped over the grates and manholes scattered throughout the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal's parking lot, which is where the circuit is laid out). Those tires handled the circuit's many tight, twisty corners, too, easily letting the bike lean farther than I was comfortable with.

What's funny is I much prefer the look that Harley-Davidson settled on for the LiveWire, especially compared to the more street bike-style prototype the company rolled out five years ago. It's sleeker and more refined, and the fit and finish is at the level you'd expect from a production Harley-Davidson bike. Curiously, the LiveWire branding is practically nonexistent. I could see people who aren't familiar with motorcycles easily mistaking it for a traditional bike.

The digital screen was responsive, the buttons all felt solid, and nothing rattled on the bike. The whine of the electric motor sounded more raw than I expected, especially considering Harley-Davidson made a big deal about creating a custom sound for the bike a few years ago. That sound will turn some people off, no doubt, though some will probably come around once they ride the thing.

LiveWire was clearly built for dynamic riding – the kind I'll probably never need. I'd be interested to try it in the city and on the highway, especially to put the company's new claim of 146 miles of range to the test, though the \$30,000 price tag would be a non-starter even *if* I was interested in it. Riding Harley-Davidson's first electric motorcycle this weekend was a good reminder that motorcycle companies are going to build some really outrageously fast machines as they adopt and evolve electric technology. Millions of riders will love that, but I'll be happier with something a little more practical.

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