

Honda CR-Z

Road Test

By Jim Mc Cauley

The best solution is often the most straightforward and this is where Honda scores in their approach to hybrid technology. Like its other hybrid vehicles, the CR-Z sandwiches a slim-line electric motor between the engine and gearbox with the supporting battery pack taking up minimal room on the boot floor. The badging

explains its function – Integrated Motor Assist – in which the motor is used to complement the engine's power output. In this case the 1.5 litre engine on its own produces 114PS and 145Nm of torque but with additional input from the electric motor, total output rises to 124PS, and more significantly total peak torque is now 174Nm. The result is a 0-62mph time of 9.9 seconds and a potential top speed of 124 mph, yet the official combined cycle fuel consumption is given as 56.5 mpg. Styling-wise, the coupé lines of the CR-Z hark back to those of the CRX from the 1980s but are more aggressively

balanced with bold side creases giving the design an impatient thrust.

While you will find four sets inside, the reality is than only the front ones are practical and the limited rear room will cater for just the youngest of children, but it does extend the car's practicality compared to a strict 2-seater. And if there is no need for the rear seats, then a simple one-tip backrest extends the boot space into a useful load area.

On the road, the engine revs freely to its red lined limit with the electric motor seamlessly supplementing the power under acceleration. Unlike full hybrids, the CR-Z does not run on electric power only at lower town speeds and the electric motor works only in conjunction with the petrol engine.

A short-shift 6-speed gearbox adds to the sporty nature of the car as does the direct steering and low-slung seating position. And the car's response can be altered by the driver with a choice of two other driving modes in addition to the default Normal setting. The system alters the behaviour of the hybrid drivetrain and the power steering assistance as well as the throttle mapping between the three modes. Sport



selection provides a sharper response, more electric motor input and increased weight to the power steering while Economy prioritises fuel economy by relaxing throttle response.

The selected mode is indicated by the instrument lighting which changes from blue in its Normal setting to red for Sport and green for Economy. Instrumentation is clearly represented in 'floating' displays with the central cowl containing an analogue rev counter with an inset digital speedometer, while internal trim and additional features



depend on specification level.

All models come with six airbags, active headrests, climate control, Vehicle Stability Assistance and Hill Start Assist as standard while 'S' grade adds electric windows, heated door mirrors, auto-dimming rearview mirror and gearshift indicator to advise on the most economical shifting pattern. Among the additional equipment on the Sport trim are reversing sensors and multi-function steering wheel, while the GT features leather front seats and door trim, glass sunroof and automatic headlights and wipers.

Driving in Normal mode the test car averaged 43.4 mpg, indicating that to close the gap on the official figure, the car would have to spend most of its life in Economy mode.

With a CO2 emissions of 117 gms/km, the car is in Band C for annual car tax of £30, and on the safety front it has the maximum 5-star EuroNCAP crash test rating.

This top of the range GT version costs £20,425 while in the ABI 50-category listing it is in Group 17E for insurance.