

Gadgets, gizmos and goodies!

We've all gone gadget mad! Phones are cameras, music players and can even be fitted with satellite navigation! PC's play DVD's and act as TV receivers! It seems the more gizmos and goodies something has, the better.

I've got a "gadget" that's an imperial/metric ruler, and includes a pair of scissors, nail file, tooth pick, large steel pin, pair of tweezers, and biro and it's the size and shape of a credit card! I've never used it – but then that's the thing about gadgets – you want them but rarely use them!

Personally I've never been that good with gadgets. I'd been driving the Griff for 12 months before I realised it had electric mirrors (well I hadn't needed to adjust them, had I?), I often put the central locking on when I mean to open the boot, and I still haven't mastered which side of the heater switch to press to change the controls (not that it matters as it doesn't work anyway, except in summer!).

I remember on my driving test, in the days when you went "Ooo! Look!" when you saw another car – not another TVR, it started to rain as I got into the Mini I had borrowed. Thinking: "I'll show the examiner I know what I'm doing!" I immediately switched on the wipers. Thirty minutes later, I was still driving but trying to distinguish what the scratching was. Then I realised the rain had amounted to about 3 spots but the wipers were still on! (I failed!)

My last company car had "Rear Parking Assist" with audible alarm, as you approached anything, but it didn't stop me reversing (quite quickly as it happened) into a lamppost. Actually I don't think the lamppost was there when I started my manoeuvre – but that's another story!

Don't get me wrong – I do like my "toys" on the company tin top – like the on board computer, the cruise control and the ability to turn off the anti skid option (not sure why I would want to do that!), but they are not vital. Most of what is now standard on current rep-mobiles don't even figure on my Griff, like ABS, Traction Control and rudimentary extras like Power Steering!

Just over a year into my Griff ownership I decided I fancied the host of Leven Technology add on goodies. Took me back to my early youth when I put silver tape around the roof of my Austin A30 to make it go faster! So I made a list of the "bits" I needed and, casually, checked how they fitted. The first one I asked about was the indicator stalk.

"You start by sawing off the old one," said the Leven guy. Saw off the original one? Me? Not likely! If I did that it would end up with the new one not fitting for some obscure reason, that could only happen to me, and leave me with the shortest indicator changer in history. It was at this point that I decided to keep my car original!

I was fascinated to read the article in February's Sprint called "David and Goliath", about the 546 Bhp Griff. Fascinated but totally befuddled! Things like the carbon fibre triple removable roller ignition ECU thingy went so far over my head it wouldn't have mattered had I been on a stepladder! It was only when the author said, "...and

not forgetting a deluge of shinybits...” that he started to talk my language! I can understand “shiny bits”!

But what gadgets would you like on your TVR?

My first choice would be an automatic hood! I was in Florida a few weeks ago and hired a Chrysler Sebring four-seater convertible – well you have to cruise Ocean Drive in a ragtop and I couldn’t afford the Ferrari! Just a pity I didn’t have the Tiv with me – that would have turned a few heads! To open or shut the hood was two clips (reachable from the driver’s seat) and press a button! Excellent!

Then I get home and struggle to remember the right series of moves just to get the Griff roof out of the boot – and that’s before I try to manually remove it from the bag and then get the positioning right – by which time I’m soaked!!

The Sebring had another nice option – the Homelink Universal Transceiver. It operates the garage door, house security lighting and gates. I think it even has an option to prompt the dog to bring your slippers to the door and light your pipe!

Not that a garage door transmitter would benefit me – the only way to open our doors, once the key has been turned, involves a good shoulder charge! Difficult to emulate electronically!

I’m sure in due course we will see lots of other gadgets and gizmos appearing on cars, like a back massager in the seat (why not? – you can have it on armchairs) and perhaps a system where the speed of the engine, the weather and road conditions are fed into a computer chip, which measures how far you are from the car in front, using infra red, then flashes a warning when you’re too close for the normal stopping distance. Actually I want one fitted looking backwards so when necessary it will flash a warning to the idiot behind, saying, “Back off bird brain – you’re too close!”

Some of the James Bond gadgets could be quite useful when you see some of the numpties on the road – like rocket launchers, machine guns and oil sprays! Actually I created my own petrol/oil spray last August when the petrol pipe sprung a leak. I had brother John behind me in his Tuscan (for once – he’s usually ahead of me!) and when we stopped to try and locate the smell, we found black gunge all over the front of his pride and joy.

So, for the rest of the journey I did what any brother would do, to avoid any further damage – I overtook a Porsche and pulled in front of that!!

But there are two gizmos I REALLY want! One is a revolving number plate (a la 007) so that I can change it when going through speed traps – it obviously needs to use the signal that Road Angel picks up so it can automatically change before you hit the trap, and then change back after!

Someone has one on a Tiv in the West Midlands – although it’s a bit “low Tech” as you have to manually pull a lever, which drops the rear number plate on two hinges, exposing a new number plate that reads “BOLLOX”. Activating the switch again repositions the real plate! Cool!

The other gadget I want is quite simple. All I want is a switch that activates a magnetic force field all around the car! That'll stop Doris Datsun opening her car door into the side of the Griff, or the man in the hat (it's always a man in a hat) reversing into my front in a car park.

I might just add a little power circuit to it as well, to stop the greasy fingered, ice cream eating kids who insist on touching the car – or is that getting a bit too much?

Oh well – dream on. For now I'm going to make a concerted effort to find out how to switch OFF my TVR radio. On is fine – but for the life of me I can't find out how to switch it off! And you think I'm joking? No chance!

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