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Honda Civic 1.0 VTEC Turbo EX – Road Test

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LAST POST SOUNDS FOR THE BRITISH BOLT HONDA CIVIC HATCHBACK

David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) reports...

When the 10th generation Honda Civic hatchback was introduced in 2017 Honda proclaimed in their presentation material that, "The all-new Civic Hatchback is to be built in Europe and exported globally, Honda's UK plant in Swindon continues key role in Civic production, €270m investment in new production technologies and processes and we have a long-term commitment to manufacturing in the UK and Europe".



The UK market has been the largest for Honda sales in Europe accounting for over a third of their 100,000 new cars sold in the EU.

OK the World changes, sales rise and fall, the public globally now seems to want SUVs rather than conventional hatchbacks and saloon models, electrification and hybrid are fashionable words and yes Brexit has put spokes in many wheels. So Honda will close its Swindon Plant in 2021 with the loss of thousands of direct and indirect jobs and move production of the next generation of 'electrified' Civics back to Japan.

The production at Swindon Plant for European markets of their CR-V SUV and Honda Jazz supermini models also ceased a while ago to accommodate production for global sales of the Civic Hatchback and Type R models. So the UK facility became 'a one trick pony' operation although it also has an engine production facility there as well supplying engines for the Civic and other Honda models assembled worldwide. That facility closes as well as does the Civic Saloon production factory in Turkey.

The current Civic Hatchback and Type R models will be the last British built Honda passenger cars for the foreseeable future unless they can be encouraged to change their minds once Brexit is sorted or hopefully the sale of new cars Worldwide quickly picks-up.



The current C-sector five door Honda Civic Hatchback range has models priced from £19,000 to £28,590 and they are available with 1.0 litre VTEC 129 hp and 1.5 VTEC 182 hp turbo petrol engines and a 1.6 i-DTEC 120 hp turbodiesel diesel engine. There is a comprehensive line-up of specification levels depending on the engine choice, and these are S, SE, SR, Sport Line, EX, Sport, Sport+ and Prestige. Over and above these core Civic Hatchback models are the high performance 2.0 litre VTEC 320 hp Type R and Type R GT versions, priced from £31,525 and £33,525 respectively.



With no estate car variants available for the 10th generation Civic range Honda introduced towards the end of last year, the four door Civic Saloon range remains, priced from £19,600 to £27,850. This lesser-selling line-up only has SE, SR and EX spec levels and only the 1.0 litre VTEC petrol and 1.6 i-DTEC turbodiesel engine options.

Although current sales fads favour SUVs and Crossover models of all sizes there is still a demand for mid-sized family hatchbacks, saloons and estates. The competition for the Honda Civic is strong as it competes against such models as the Ford Focus, VW Golf, Vauxhall Astra, Peugeot 308, SEAT Leon, Skoda Octavia, Kia Ceed, Hyundai i30, and if you want to move more upmarket then the Audi A3, BMW 1 Series and Mercedes A-Class are contenders in this sector.





What the latest Civic offers is a more striking exterior edgy design; very sporty, long low and wide with sharp styling lines, wide wheel arches and its coupé style side silhouette. The steeply raked tailgate gives access to a wide boot providing 478 litres (16.88 cu.ft) of conventional boot space, but fold down the 60/40 split rear seats and this goes up to 1,245 litres (43.97 cu.ft). But it has two design drawbacks, the load floor is not completely flat and the steep rake of the tailgate limits carrying tall items, boxes etc, towards the rear of the boot space. With its lighting bar spoiler positioned across the lower third of the tailgate window rear visibility is not great and neither is rear quarter visibility, due to the steeply sloping rear coupé style rear roof section. Whilst rear seat legroom is acceptable, headroom certainly is not for adults even though the front and rear seats are positioned low in the bodyshell. As a six-footer I also found headroom through the front doors limited as well.

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But once in the driving seat all the controls, gearlever and steering wheel came to hand very well and the low seat position made me feel part of the car in keeping with its exterior sports styling attitude. The major disappointment was the 7.0-inch centrally positioned touchscreen. It looks an aftermarket fitment, not very integrated into what is a very modern, clean-line fascia panel. Annoyingly some of the air and heating distribution controls are integrated within the touchscreen which is not user friendly. Fortunately adjusting the temperature can be done via a conventional knob. The sound system volume has to be adjusted by a steering wheel mounted button or via the touchscreen, again not user-friendly. I couldn't honestly say the interior quality of the Civic is class-leading, it's no more than OK, it has areas of cheap looking, scratchy plastic trim, all adding to the list of



compromises which include limited rear seat headroom and an old-fashioned touchscreen system.

Specification wise all versions have Honda SENSING as standard. It's their suite of safety functions that use camera and radar technology. The system includes Collision Mitigation Braking, Lane Departure Warning, Traffic Sign Recognition and Intelligent Adaptive Cruise Control. My test drive model was the Civic 1.0 VTEC Turbo EX five-door Hatchback, priced at £24,330. With the demise of diesel car sales and the 1.5 litre petrol only available in a small number of Sport or Prestige equipment levels, the 1.0 litre petrol engine will be the most popular choice and the mid-range EX spec level looks to be the better value spec level.

The EX specification includes heated front seats, opening sunroof, smart entry with push-button start, Blindspot Monitoring, Cross Traffic Monitor, leather upholstery, Adaptive Damper suspension settings and 11-speaker audio system. Carried up from the next lower SR grade are items such as 17-inch alloy wheels, dual zone climate control, rear parking camera, rain sensing wipers, Honda Connect with Garmin sat-nav, DAB radio, Apple CarPlay and Android auto connectivity and app integration with internet browsing, alloy pedals and most versions have an Econ driving mode setting.

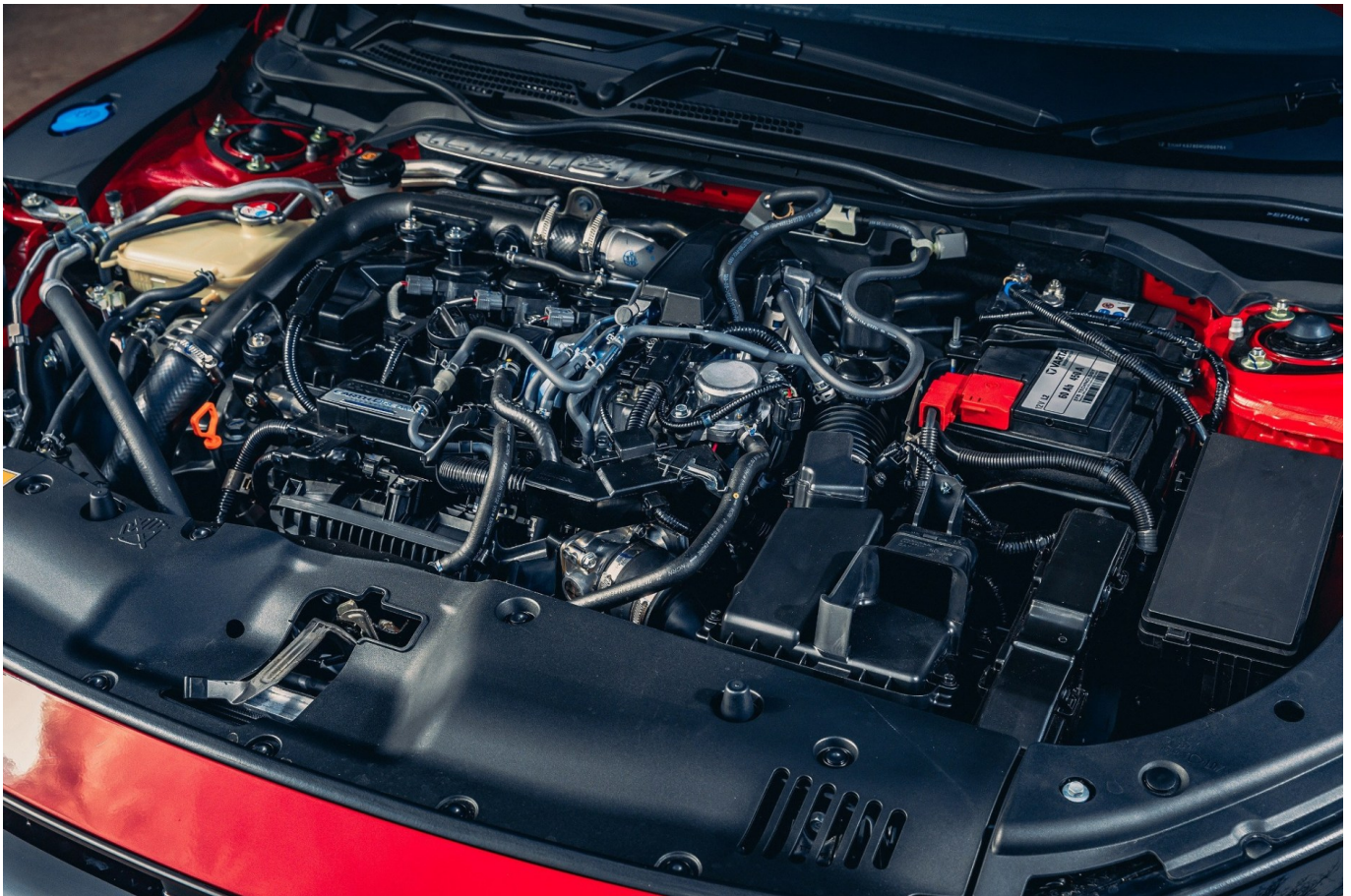
It's a well-equipped package all wrapped up in a distinctive, you could say aggressive, sports exterior styling parcel. Certainly people either like or dislike its exterior looks, if a bland appearance is your choice of motor the Civic is not for you.

This latest generation Civic bodyshell is claimed to have a 52% increase in torsional stiffness than the last generation and its handling felt taught, agile and well-balanced with plenty of front end cornering grip and very good feedback through the well-weighted steering. However even on the Comfort setting the suspension errs towards the firm side and the noise intrusion into the cabin from the tyres was high.

The new 1.0 litre triple cylinder 129 hp turbocharged petrol engine uses VTEC variable valve timing technology so it has the usual Honda free-revving nature, but strangely it is



red-lined at a relatively low, for a modern petrol engine, 5,500rpm. It was quite easy to hit the rev limiter in second gear for brisk acceleration from low speeds such as overtaking slow moving traffic and you do need to fully use the six speed gearbox to get the best response from this engine. It produces 200 Nm (148 lb.ft) of torque, good enough, but only from 2,250 rpm and above so it has a fairly narrow powerband. Top speed is a healthy 126 mph with zero to 62 mph taking 11.2 seconds.



This engine has a three-pot growl tone which is characterful but feels less refined than the Peugeot/Citroen 1.2 litre, three cylinder, 130 hp PureTech turbo petrol unit. The six speed manual gearbox had a short throw gearchange and was precise to use. There is also a £1,400 CVT auto transmission option available with this engine.

My manual gearbox test car had the new WLTP Combined Cycle fuel consumption figure of



45.6 mpg and during my test drive week my overall real-life figure was 45.2 mpg – but over 47 mpg was easily achieved on long runs. With CO2 emissions of a low 110 g/km First Year VED road tax costs £150 and then £145 Standard rate for year two onwards. Company car drivers will pay 26% Benefit-in-Kind tax and insurance is Group 15E. Warranty is three years/90,000 miles.

VERDICT

Look upon the latest and last British built Honda Civic Hatchback range as an alternative choice in the mid-sized family car sector due to its sportier edgier exterior styling. It has some advantages in some areas over the competition and it's good to drive, but also some disadvantages or shall we say quirks such as the aged infotainment/touchscreen system.

For: Distinctive sports edgy exterior styling, well-equipped, nice to drive with sharp handling, good real-life fuel economy, good warranty, an alternative to so many other 'samey' looking models in the same sales sector.

Against: The last generation of Civics to be built in the UK, old fashioned touchscreen and infotainment system, some cheap-feel plastic trim, restricted rear seat headroom for adult passengers, limited rear visibility, high road and engine noise intrusion.



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Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Honda Civic 1.0 VTEC Turbo EX manual Hatchback.

Price: £24,330.

Engine/transmission: 1.0 litre, three cylinder variable valve timing turbo petrol, 129 hp, 200 Nm (148 lb.ft) at 2,250 rpm, six speed manual.

Performance: 126 mph, 0-62 mph 11.2 seconds.



Fuel consumption: WLTP Combined Cycle 45.6 mpg (45.2 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 110 g/km, VED road tax £150/£145, BiK company car tax 26%.

Insurance Group: 15E.

Warranty: Three years/90,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,518 mm (14.82 ft), W 1,799 mm (5.90 ft), H 1,434 mm (4.70 ft), boot/load space 478 to 1,245 litres (16.88 to 43.97 cu.ft), five doors/five seats.