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Latest Honda Civic Type R – Road Test

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The model year 2023 Honda Civic Type R...



...Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency) gave it an airing.

Every now and again a car comes along which immediately turns heads, raises eyebrows and the game; then becomes a standard setter or cult model for many years, such as the Honda Civic Type R.

Now a quarter of a century on from its introduction it is still one of the fastest cars on road, has been a podium contender in the very tough British and European Touring Car Championships over the years and just very recently it retook the lap record for a front wheel drive production car around the demanding Green Hell of Nurburgring Ring.

Those inspired engineers at Honda haven't rested on their laurels and the latest version of this unashamedly sporting super hatchback is more powerful, quicker, more sophisticated, sharper dynamically and even more pleasing to drive than ever. It is a supercar in a track-suit.

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For MY23, the £47,645 car has been given a host of electronic changes to sharpen the handling, improve the engine's breathing and power output, with a more rigid chassis, lighter weight bonnet and with more intuitive steering and gearbox. For private track days you can dial in specific settings and handling features.

Visually it has smoother lines and more useful body openings for performance enhancement but it retains a big rear spoiler and the triple pipes exhaust remains a familiar if rapidly disappearing feature for following drivers.



Wheels are now 19-inch, an inch smaller than before, which also improves the profile appearance a smidgen.

Under the new aluminium bonnet the familiar red rocker cover stands out and tops a very beefy 16-v 2.0 litre turbo-petrol engine, with a massive power increase over the previous generation Type R. It crackled into life before settling down to a smooth burble, more in keeping with a six-cylinder engine.

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The gearbox is a conventional six speed unit with traditional long-travel clutch easing selection and a flick of the wrist operation through the narrow, short gate, and you need a



positive push to prevent wrong-slotting. The ratios give quick getaway and permit very rapid, safe overtaking while long journeys are covered quietly and in a relaxed if not very economical manner.

Underfoot, the brakes with their distinctive red callipers are well up to controlling the power and you can effect a smooth and rapid stop with modest pressure and no drama. The parking brake also held on a steep test slope.



The steering has been worked on and the balance is probably perfect for any enthusiast, just enough weight to feedback what's happening at the front end while it's light enough to wiggle around town and park in busy streets.



Secondary controls are grouped on the column and wheelspokes, a panel to the right of the driver and on the central console and below the infotainment display in the centre of the fascia. Everything came to fingers and hands without a second glance except for the toggles operating the air vents which are masterpieces of design but stretch out along the whole width of the fascia. The heating and ventilation worked very well and kept the interior and windows clear and fresh.

The multi-purpose infotainment display looked a little dated but it worked quickly and clearly and was compatible with Apple and Android phones and apps.

The selectable display in front of the driver changed with Comfort, Sport, Track and R+ settings selected through the central screen and it was very clear whatever was dialled up.

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Overall we saw just under 30 mpg during our test but it could be eased up a bit on a light throttle or dropped down very rapidly when the power was used. However, the Honda Civic Type R is about enjoyment not economy and the smiles per mile were high.

Figure hugging front seats in red and black securely located occupants but the two behind had less shape to support them on the offset split back pair, separated by a rigid drinks console.

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On our test's dry roads the grip was uncannily good, more in keeping with a performance all-wheel-drive rival and some would find it hard to believe it was only pulled along from the front pair of wheels. But it has a 'trick' differential to help with adhesion however some more circumspection might be considered on damp or wet surfaces.



The way it went into corners, held its line and then accelerated out was remarkable. Even lifting off mid-corner was comparatively drama-free.

You can see where to place it in traffic or turns but reversing requires more care even with the clear image from the rear camera. Wipers and wash were very good and the headlights were extremely bright at night, long range and widespread on dip.

You won't buy the Type R for its peace and quiet, which are there to be found however, but rather the noise from the engine and exhaust which can lift hairs on arms in a way few other cars do. It is an aural experience which comes to life under hands and feet.



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VERDICT

The car is well into the expensive class to insure and tax let alone pay for but it repays dividends in driving pleasure.

Sadly, the Honda Civic Type R as we have experienced and know it, is facing a tougher rival – the future and electrification low emissions requirements. But I would not be too surprised if the hedonists at Honda have a cunning plan to keep the future Civics' ev-power coming probably with four-wheel-drive.

For now though, I would urge you to go into your Honda dealer and order the current Type R before they are all gone. Very quickly too.

For: Very good performance, excellent handling, strong brakes, highly stable, lots of tech for enthusiasts, roomy cabin and boot.

Against: Firm ride, restricted rear visibility, low economy, tight fitting front seats for some users, only four seats, high registration and tax costs.



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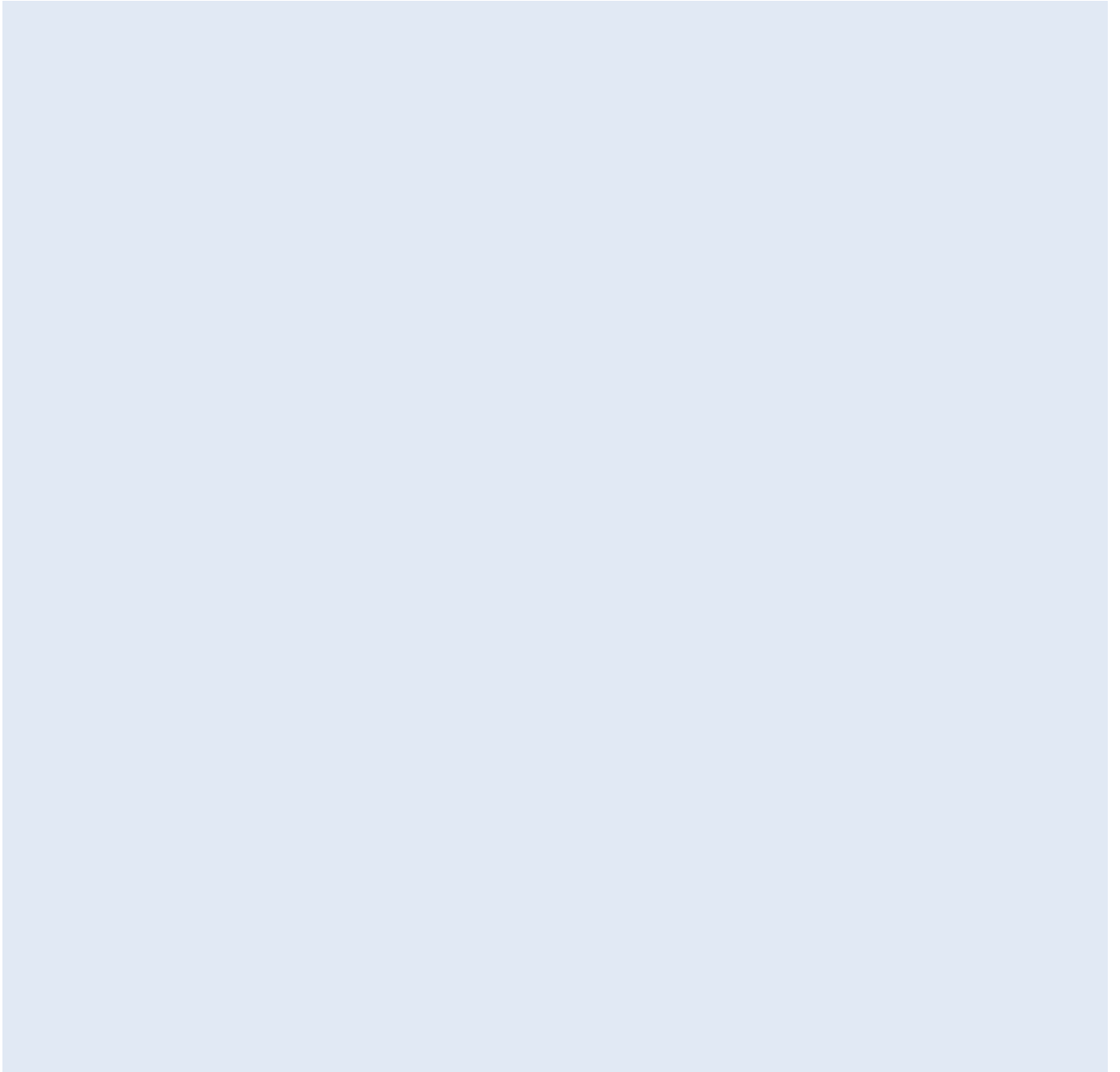
FAST FACTS

Model: Honda Civic Type R



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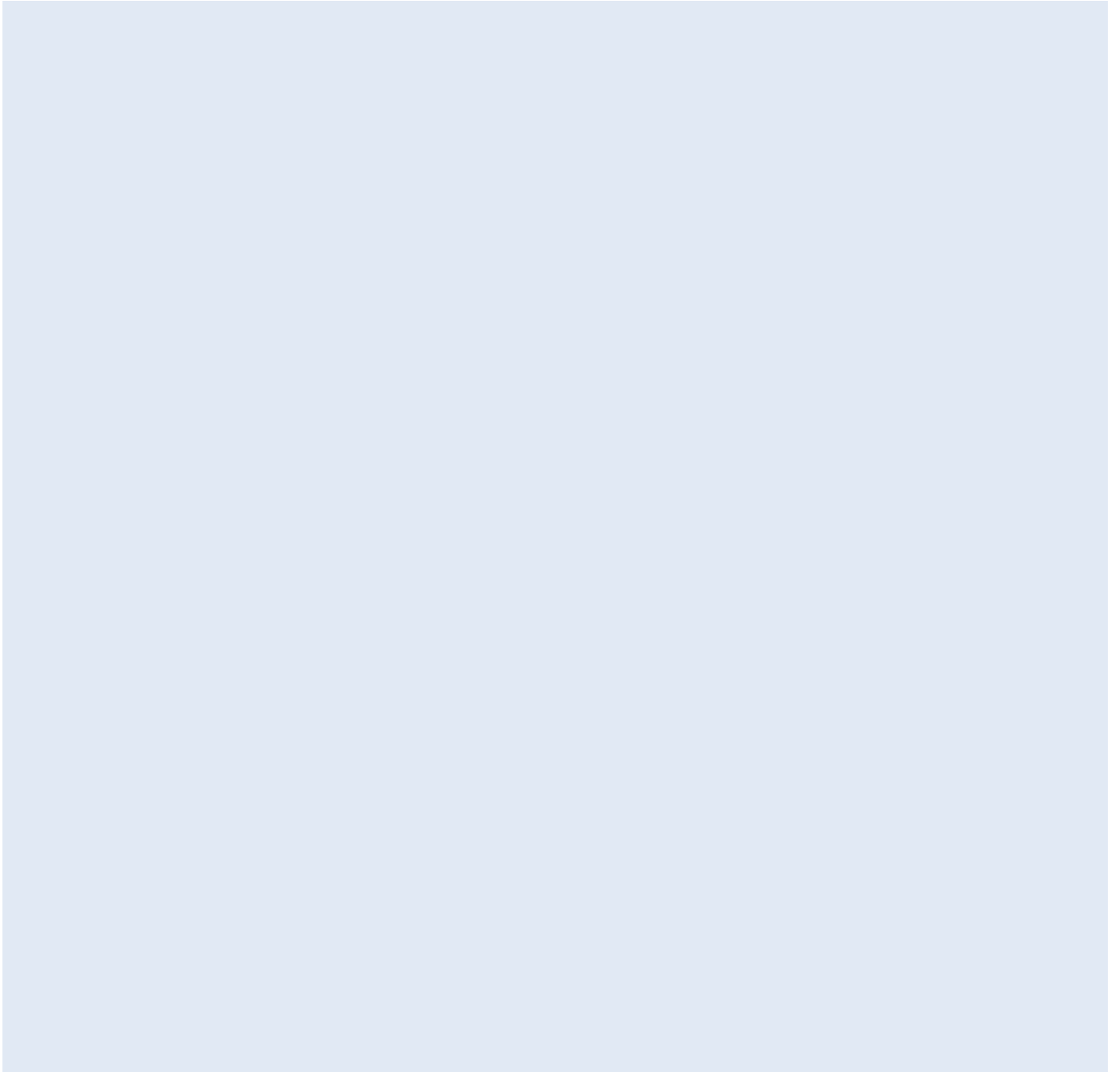
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Price: £47,645

Mechanical: 329 PS 4 cyl 2.0 turbo-petrol hybrid, 6 speed, front wheel drive

Max Speed: 171 mph

0 - 62 mph: 5.4 sec

Combined MPG: 29.9

Insurance Group: 43



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CO2 emissions: 186 g/km

Tax costs: Bik rating 37%, VED £1,040FY, £570SR annually for 5-years

Warranty: 3 years/ 90,000 miles

Size: L 4.60 m (15.09 ft), W 1.89 m (6.20 ft), H 1.41 m (4.63 ft)

Bootspace: 410 to 1,212 litres (14.48 to 42.80 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,429 kg (3,150 lb)