New Honda NSX Road Test

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Author: Robin Roberts

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By Robin Roberts and Miles Better News Agency.

It’s the supercar of the moment. But that moment has lasted a long time – three years in fact.

The new Honda NSX two seater coupé was announced three years ago and the first UK owners will get behind the wheels of their state of art supercar just about now.

Only a handful will be introduced over the coming months and just two dealers will handle the aftersales and servicing for the 100 NSX models to be delivered over two years, with orders for a further two years.

Those first owners had to put down £5,000 deposits and have been carefully checked to ensure the NSX gets into the right hands of an enthusiast who will appreciate this modern supercar for what its worth.

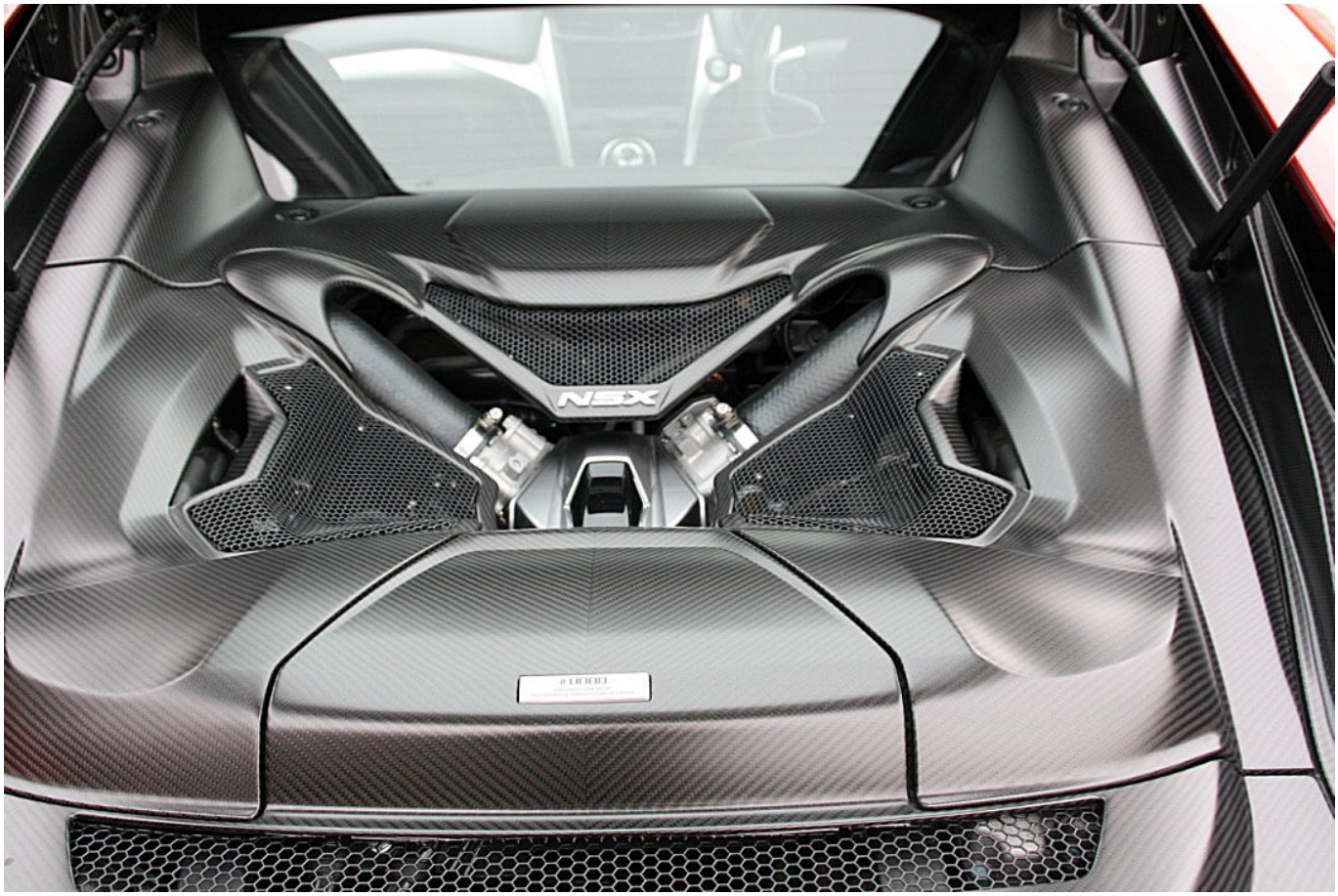
And its price is probably a lot less than you might think. At around £144,000 on UK roads it undercuts a McLaren, matches some Porsches and even Aston Martin models. But there the brakes go on in the rarity race because the Honda NSX is far more exclusive.

Taking its name from the company's supercar of the 1980s, the new model is very different and it's built in America with a lot of Japanese engineering input.

Under the sculptured lines of this mid-engined rocket is a very beefy 3.5 litre V6 with a turbo-charger on each bank of cylinders and no less than three electric motors to add punch and grip when needed.



NSX Direct Drive Motor & Twin-turbo V6



It turns heads every time you go out, makes passengers in other cars take pictures and even stops cars if you are lucky, as I was on my road test and wanted to pull out into two lanes of heavy traffic. To me, that is the mark of a true supercar – it stops other traffic in their tracks.





Replacing a planned V10, the 3.5 litre V6 unit develops about 500 bhp, enough you might think, but hang on this is the NSX and it comes with a 47 bhp electric motor/ generator positioned between the engine and the gearbox. Together they work through a nine-speed dual clutch automatic box to send their combined power to the back wheels.

At the other end 26 bhp electric motors on the front wheels provide a sort of 4×4 system. Unlike conventional hybrids, this Honda uses electricity to spark speed not supply subtle city driving.

The two-seater cockpit has conventional doors and once you slip inside, the big wrap-around seats are immensely comfortable, supporting and adjustable.

It is more of a fighter plane cockpit than conventional supercar, with everything angled towards the driver and immediately to hand.



Changing those modes makes the virtual instrument display alter as appropriate and it all looks very busy and needs familiarisation to take in at a glance. It has a chunky steering wheel and the feel through the system is very good, it responds quickly, there’s no kick-back or heavy handedness about it and it’s not too light either.

Underfoot, the big Brembo brakes needed only modest pressure to bring about a rapid stop and the electric brake held the car on a slope we found for the test.

The nine-speed transmission is a very smooth-changing piece of kit going up or down the box, with plenty of torque available thanks to the electric motors, and the top ratio gave it a very long-legged performance for touring.

Switch to manual mode and the system is still creamy in character and you can play at being an F1 driver until you hit traffic and then swop back into the selfless setting.

It’s not particularly noisy but rather more refined in sound quality when you push for power and that’s down to the V6 engine with its electric assistance.

The handling is similarly sophisticated so the Honda NSX turns into corners with confidence and control, stays put and on a chosen line and then rockets out of a bend as you ease down the pedal. There was no vice in its nature, just virtue.

The ride was firm, sometimes hard over bad bits of tarmac due to the 19 and 20-inch tyres, but most of the time it was compliant and composed. You could certainly go hundreds of miles in a day without getting shaken to the core as in some rivals.

Avoid the Sport+ and Track modes if you want to enjoy the best British roads as they do considerably tighten the system. But on the right roads or a circuit…..

Living day-by-day with the Honda NSX means you would soon adjust to overcoming its blindspots over the shoulder and when emerging from junctions because it is low and the bodywork wraps around the cabin. There was no opportunity to test lights or wipers.

Over a mixture of main roads, motorway and country lanes we averaged about 34 mpg, not brilliant but considering the power potential it was a good, reasonable return. It’s close to 1.8 tonnes, after all.

Not that it felt heavy when it came to handling. It had an agility that belayed its weight.

VERDICT

The latest NSX is one of the finest supercars for your money today. It’s different, desirable and truly never gave us a moment’s concern.

For: Refinement and sophistication, interior comfort, acceleration, handling, rarity value.

Against: Luggage space, visibility, firm ride.



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

Honda NSX 3.5 litre V6 hybrid two seater coupé. Price: £143,950.

Mechanical: 500 bhp 3.5 litre V6 petrol engine with 73 bhp triple electric motors, nine speed dual clutch auto, 4WD. Max. torque 550 Nm (406 lb.ft) between 2,000 and 6,000 rpm.

Performance and fuel consumption: 191 mph max, 0-62 mph 2.9 seconds, 34 mpg,

Emissions and taxation: CO2 emissions 228 g/km, VED road tax £885 First Year rate and afterwards £500 per annum. BIK company car tax 37%. Insurance group: TBA.

Warranty: 3 years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions: L 4.49 m (14.73 ft); W 2.22 m (7.28 ft); H 1.21 m (3.97 ft). Kerb weight: 1,776 kg (3,915 lb). Boot space: 110 litres (3.88 cu.ft).