

Honda Civic could singlehandedly have others in the industry (notably the domestics) wondering why they ever abandoned a category as mainstream as the sedan. Of course, it has to do with beancounters seeing more profit per unit in other formats. But that's where the customer comes first with Civic (see lineup pricing at right).

Honda keeps things famously simple. Once you have decided which model you want, the trim levels each speak for themselves—any further options are seldom, if ever, needed.

That said, Honda Civic—which has received an overall refresh this year—is so immensely popular, it has generated ten different versions, based on four powertrains and two body types. Variables speak for themselves—sedans or hatches, wide-ranging powertrains including hybrid and high performance, and the Civic Si and Type R also differentiated by manual-only transmissions.

Our chart breaks it out pretty clearly—best all-around purchase and fuel economy; a full core range of super-high-mpg hybrids, then two performance levels, each quite distinct.

Sounds easy so far, but from this point, you are

faced with a few key tradeoffs—simple decisions for some, more complex for others.

The Civic Si—which we are driving here—has more horsepower than base versions (200 hp, versus 150). The hybrid, despite a lower-powered ICE engine, does match that, 200 hp combined, but the drives and personalities are different.

Ours is the Si Sedan HPT, its only difference being high-performance summer tires. But Honda's preference for trims, not options, explains that.

Weighing in at just 2,952 lb, our Si still achieves almost 30 mpg city and almost 40 mpg highway, and at about just \$30 grand, is priced lower than all but the lowest of the hybrids.

This is where the toughest purchase decisions may lie, out of the whole lineup—similar power, very different fuel mileage, and considerable overlap in prices. But the clearly distinctive manual transmission, personalities of both style and finishes, as well as the driving itself, bring focus.

If there is one thing that dominated our drive notes—and there is—it's the manual transmission's rev-matching feature. Not unique to this vehicle, to us it is a compromise for the seasoned

shifter, for the sake of newbies (in itself a very worthy goal). Well, Honda seems to have maybe gotten the memo. They seem to have made great strides at making it something a real shifter can live with more than in the past. This does not guarantee simplification—there are still tech rules of engagement—which on the one hand shows they've thought it through, though there seem to be a batch of algorithms attached, unlike with a pure mechanical manual. Give it a try.

All in all, that was the only digression from a fine and pure driving experience—"no further questions, your honor," in our notes. There is no question the roads are full of Civics galore, and we're pretty sure they are all happy with what they have, plain and simple.

Out of all the Civics, if the 6-speed manual is what catches your eye, you're down to two immediately. We would love to drive them back to back. Clearly one is more affordable (for both purchase and fuel economy), the other more powerful. For many, the Type R's power may be a handful, on a front-drive basis, and its styling more aggressive. Try them both. You'll know which one is yours. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	.....Alliston, Ontario, Canada
ENGINE/TRANS BUILD	.....US / India
PARTS CONTENT	.....US/Canada 55%
ENGINE	.....1.5L 4-cyl turbo, 16v DOHC VTEC
HP/TORQUE	.....200 hp / 192 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....10.3:1
TRANSMISSION	.....6-spd manual
DRIVETRAIN	.....FWD
SUSPENSION	.....F: MacPherson strut, 27.0x4.5 tubular stblzr bar; R: multilink, 18.0 solid stblzr bar
STEERING	.....dual-pinion, var-ratio elec pwr steering
BRAKES	.....F: 12.3 vented; R: 11.1 solid
WHEELS	.....18-in matte black alloy
TIRES	.....(HPT) 235 / 40R18 95Y summer
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....184.0 / 107.7 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....na
TURNING CIRCLE	.....38.1 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....37.6 / 37.1 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....42.3 / 37.4 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....14.1 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....2952 lb
WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION	.....F/R: 60/40
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....reg unl (prem rec'd) / 12.4 gal
MPG	.....27/37/31 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	\$30,250
PAINT: Urban Gray Pearl	.....455
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1095
TOTAL	\$31,800

2025 HONDA CIVIC LINEUP

LX	.....150 hp 2.0L ...32/41/36	\$24,250
Sport	....." 31/39/34	26,250
Sport Hatchback	....." 30/38/34	27,450
Sport Hybrid	.....200 comb hp hyb ...50/47/49	28,950
Sport Hybrid Hatchback	....." 50/45/48	31,150
Sport Touring Hybrid	....." 50/47/49	31,950
Sport Tour Hyb Hatchback	....." 50/45/48	33,150
Si	.....200 hp 1.5L turbo / 6MT... 27/37/31	29,950
Si HPT	....." " " "	30,250
Type R	.....315 hp 2.0L turbo / 6MT ...22/28/24	45,895

Power, economy ...and gears!

BY JOE SAGE

