

An Honest Look at the 11th-Gen Civic Si

Honda's Civic Si has a long and storied history, with 2024 marking 40 years of production in one form or another. Introduced with the third generation Civic in 1984, this sport-injected variant quickly became a favorite among enthusiasts for its agile handling and peppy performance. Over the decades, the Si badge has adorned various Civic body styles, from hatchbacks to coupes and sedans, each iteration refining the formula of an affordable, fun-to-drive compact car. Through ten generations, the Civic Si maintained its position as an accessible performance option in Honda's lineup, consistently delivering an engaging driving experience without sacrificing the practicality that made the standard Civic a household name. Does the eleventh generation measure up?

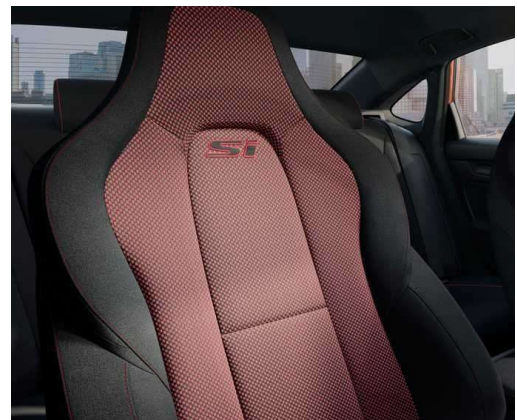


2025 Honda Civic Si

A Few Gripes

In comparison to its early predecessors, the newest Civic is enormous. While it may officially still be in the “compact” class, calling it that seems like a bit of a stretch, as its dimensions are uncomfortably close to many mid-size sedans. This has alienated some long-term fans, but was a necessary concession to practicality—these cars frequently assume multiple roles outside of sporty driving, including that of family hauler and Costco runner.

This means the cabin is plenty spacious inside. I am, however, having a difficult time understanding all the media praise heaped on these front seats. They're well-bolstered, but the fabric that helps hold you in is also slightly itchy, and there's virtually no lumbar support. Because they're busy pretending to be racing buckets—leaving room for a helmet, but without holes for a harness—there's no head support. This can be forgiven in a car like the Civic Type-R, which has proper racing buckets that are far more comfortable.



Once inside, the sound of the doors closing is a bit tinny and cheap. Some might consider this to be an acceptable compromise for weight savings, with luxury sedans at the opposite end of the weight spectrum being built like battleships and suffering greatly for it, but tighter tolerances would have been welcomed.

The above are minor annoyances compared to my single biggest issue, which is the gearing. The first three ratios are too short. This both handicaps Honda's marketing (requiring an extra shift to 60 mph and 100 kph) and makes city driving more of a chore than it should be. It's also less than ideal for autocross. Granted, shorter gearing is just plain better in the twisties and on some short tracks, but most enthusiasts don't commute via canyon road.

Speaking of gearing, Honda *still* hasn't quite perfected their second gear syncro. While it is worlds better than twenty years ago, acquiring a car with a transmission that never grinds that particular throw is a roll of the dice, and they tend to get worse over time. With that said, it is still one of the finest manuals available—nearly the equal of the S2000 and the best from Porsche and Mazda.

What Did Honda Get Right?

The cockpit design and function are stellar, with physical climate controls and a responsive touchscreen. The dashboard accents look genuinely cool and unique, and will likely age well. Intuitive vent direction controls that (by accident or by design) *look like tiny shift knobs* are a nice touch. Even the center console finish is superior to the faux-luxury piano black used in the Acura Integra lineup, which share the same chassis. The only change that could possibly improve the cabin ergonomics would be to move the volume knob from the infotainment screen to just aft of the shifter, but the fact that I need to get that nit-picky shows how much thought was put into it.



Even though it has almost become a meme at this point, I couldn't bring myself to consider the lack of power a downside. At this price point, it's adequate for a car that is this genuinely useful and fun to drive. The available 200 horsepower and 192 pound-feet are frequently compared to

the output of purpose-built sports cars like the GR86/BRZ as well as more expensive (and in many cases, less practical) hot hatches. However, that ignores the fact that this is a sporty *economy* car and priced accordingly, and in that position, it contrasts nicely with its slower siblings. The Si's unfortunate reputation is also partly a result of the aforementioned gearing. When a potential buyer sees a 7-second 0-60 time but doesn't bother to do the math, "slow" is an effortless conclusion. The reality is that this car's power-to-weight ratio isn't far removed from that of the Volkswagen Jetta GLI, a direct rival which is not known for being a slow car. While the higher displacement gives the GLI a distinct advantage at speed, the edge it has in the 0-60 sprint is primarily due to longer gearing.

Yes, Honda could have installed more resilient engine internals, a stronger clutch, and slightly bigger brakes, bumping horsepower to 240 or more. After all, Toyota's GR Corolla manages to pull 300 horsepower out of 1.6 liters—but at a starting price of more than \$36,000. All the changes needed to maintain safety and reliability at higher power levels would have taken the Si firmly out of its economy car niche. The performance line Honda draws for this model has been fairly consistent over the years, even if some of the reasons remain a mystery.

The 1.5-liter turbo may not have the character of its predecessors (the glorious naturally aspirated K-series motors), but it does have several advantages, namely extraordinary highway fuel economy and a much more useable torque curve. After a 100-mile road trip with virtually no city driving, this writer looked down in amazement to see an indicated average of 46.7 miles per gallon. Gas mileage in the city is a different story. Matching Honda's claimed 27 mpg figure required constant focus to optimize gear and throttle inputs, and 24-25 mpg was much more typical in my testing.

With a 200-pound passenger and a full tank, an Si of old sporting an otherwise-amazing K20 motor tends to fall on its face—in other words, VTEC goes on vacation. There is no such issue with the newer engines, and this Si feels quick enough around town with or without passengers. Or at least it does after the heartbeat spent in first gear. Sport mode simply turns up the volume of artificial engine noise piped into the cabin and greatly increases throttle sensitivity, nearly turning it into an on-off switch. While this can occasionally be entertaining, it's best experienced in small doses.

Lightness is everything, and 2,952 pounds is almost strangely light for a modern sedan of this size. Combine that low weight with an extremely quick 11.46:1 steering ratio, relatively flat cornering, and a borderline-magical limited-slip differential, and the Si becomes a nimble, rewarding car that is nearly as much fun to drive to the grocery store as it is on a mountain road. One passenger voiced this superbly following a 90-degree bend—a bend taken without much haste, I might add—"it's like being on Mr. Toad's Wild Ride." It was even better from the driver's seat.