

Fine-tuned factory tuner

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IS FOUND IN THE DETAILS OF THIS ALREADY CAREFULLY CRAFTED SPECIAL PURPOSE CIVIC

BY JOE SAGE

The purpose-built Type R is no ordinary Civic, its largely perfected specialty build changing only conservatively over time. Though it feels eternal, Type R first arrived in the US in 2017; we drove it here for a week in 2018 and have had seat time at regional comparo events.

Changes are equal parts basic Civic and Type R-specific. In 2019, updates included physical buttons and knobs for controls, updated connectivity tech, and Sonic Gray Pearl as a new Type R paint.

For 2020—which arrived late in the year and carries forward to 2021—updates are more extensive. Suspension is upgraded with dampers for improved ride comfort, stiffer rear bushings for better grip, and revisions to the front suspension and steering. Brakes have new two-piece rotors and pads designed to reduce fade and improve high-speed braking efficiency. Interior upgrades include a new Alcantara-wrapped wheel and a new shifter with shorter throws and a restyled knob. Type R now also bears a Honda Sensing suite of safety and driver-assist tech, making these standard equipment on all Civic models and trims. And again there's a new color: Boost Blue.

Here we're driving a new 2020 model in 2021, a fleet inventory timing quirk. Honda revealed it to us at an early sneak peek in Paradise Valley in October, where we learned that both are identical, after a late-year launch of the 2020 model, though price is up \$900 for the 2021 model (so you may

want to check your dealer's inventory, as well).

Well built, tight in your hands, the Civic Type R is goal-oriented, equally ready for a major rally, a quick smile, or even just solid daily duty that's several cuts above. It's a flat-out great car.

In line with its soul and its market, Type R is a manual shifter, which is not absolutely a given, and which gratifies us. It also remains a front-driver, also not a given, which still always kind of surprises us, as an all-wheel-drive setup seems it could work well in such a car—but in this case is surprisingly not particularly needed. All traces of front-drive twist are erased, while a substantial distribution of its light weight toward the front mitigates the other inevitable front-drive fact of physics, acceleration inherently shifting weight (and traction) away from front drive wheels, which you don't particularly feel in the Type R. Suspension, while of rather standard high-performance design, is perfectly allocated and balanced. What we have not done is to put the car in a crisis handling situation on a track, but generally assume it won't have problems here, or it would not have developed its reputation and record this fully.

Someone not familiar with the Type R (but maybe familiar with a few big-wing-bearing Saturday night do-it-yourselfers), might get one look at its complex shapes and various parts and think it's just cobbled together from loose ends, for appearance's sake. They would be mistaken. Not only does each carefully weighed part serve a purpose, but this is one of the most solid and tightly built machines we've driven, noticeable from the get-

go. The thing is put together like a fighter jet, its mix of shapes far from random, each element contributing to its rock solid planted nature on the road. Cool as the car is, no part is frivolous. And it's all assembled with precision and strength.

The manual is a six-speed, with gearing quite tight—you'll find yourself at high revs in third gear in the low 30s and ready to shift higher still, a formula that delivers solid torque at all speeds.

Under \$40 grand is a heck of a deal for a car with this much spirit and performance. The Type R's list of inclusions (see sidebar) is extensive and on target (though we would accept a pound or two for power seats, if just to fine-tune perfect foot position). We could live without the newly added intrusive driver assist features on such a car, but Honda wanted the simple full-lineup bragging point.

All this adds up to on very special car. But wait—there's one more thing...

Track-focused Type R Limited Edition

A street-legal track-focused Type R Limited Edition this year is 46 pounds lighter (18 via BBS forged aluminum wheels, 28 by deleting rear wiper, tonneau cover, rear heater ducts and some insulation). Gearing and fuel mileage are unchanged. Only 600 will be built, at a price of \$43,995.

In just one model-exclusive color, the Limited Edition has a contrasting gloss black roof, mirror caps and hood intake, with a dark chrome Civic badge on the rear hatch. You may especially like the color: in line with past Type R Limited Editions, its paint is Phoenix Yellow. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

PLANT	Swindon, Wiltshire, England
ENGINE / TRANS	USA / Japan
ENGINE	2.0L turbo 4, 16v DOHC VTEC
HP/TORQUE	306 hp / 295 lb-ft
DRIVETRAIN	FWD, helical limited-slip diff
TRANSMISSION	6-spd manual, rev-match
SUSPENSION	F: dual-axis MacPherson strut, 29.0x5.0mm tubular stblzr bar; R: multi-link, 20.5mm solid stblzr bar
STEERING	dual-pinion variable-ratio EPS
BRAKES	power-assist vented F: 13.8" two-piece; Brembo 4-piston aluminum calipers; R: 12.0" solid
WHEELS	20x8.5 alloys
TIRES	.245 / 30 / AR20 90Y max perf summer
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	179.4 / 106.3 in
TURNING CIRCLE	39.5 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	39.3 / 37.4 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	42.3 / 35.9 in
CARGO CAPACITY	25.7 / 46.2 cu.ft
WEIGHT	3122
WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION	61.9 / 38.1 %
FUEL CAPACITY	12.39 gal
MPG	22/28/25 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE (2020)	*\$37,895
CHAMPIONSHIP WHITE	395
TYPE R INCLUDES:	Red Honda H badges front/rear, Type R badges front/rear; LED headlights, foglights, brake lights; underbody spoiler kit w red striping; wing spiler; body-color roof-mounted vortex generators; aluminum hood; center-mount triple-outlet exhaust; fin-type roof antenna; rear window wiper/washer w heated zone; remote entry and hatch security; power side mirrors w integrated LED turn indicators; body-color door handles; Type R serial number plate; Alcantara@18 wrapped steering wheel; sport pedals; aluminum shift knob; dual-zone auto climate; exclusive high-bolstered sport seats w red/black suede-effect fabric & double red stitching; 540-watt premium 12-sprk audio; and more.
DESTINATION CHARGE	*995
TOTAL (2020)	*\$39,285

*Prices shown for 2021. Ours was a 2020 model. The two are said to be identical.

