

Hang on tight!

BY JOE SAGE

The stage was set for this by having had the 2023 Acura Integra's prior top build, the 200-hp A-Spec with Technology Package (ours with the six-speed manual available only on that trim) a year ago, and its performance cousin, the 315-hp Honda Civic Type R this spring (see both at lower right).

Now, Integra brings back the Type S for 2024, in its longstanding role as a sportier and more powerful alternative to its siblings, while also a more refined premium badge alternative to Civic Type R. The fourth Acura Type S adaptation brand-wide in the past two years, this Type S is identified as the most powerful, best performing Integra ever.

After its absence of almost 20 years, the new Integra—earlier predominantly a small two-door coupe—comes solely as a five-door liftback (looking much like a sedan, though with more cargo volume). For 2023, Acura had offered the same 200-

hp turbo-four across the Integra lineup, all shifting via CVT with the exception (as on ours) of that six-speed manual option on the top A-Spec Tech trim, topping out at \$35,800 (with either transmission at the same price). A-Spec Tech for 2024 is up just \$700 as of now, while the Type S sits well above that—its 320-hp 2.0-liter turbo and other performance bits move its price up nearly 40 percent above the top A-Spec. Great news for shifters: Type S, its enthusiast mission in mind, is manual-only.

Some brands dislike cross-badge comparisons, but Acura themselves present key points distinguishing Integra Type S from Honda Civic Type R.

Though sharing hardware, Acura Integra Type S and Honda Civic Type R are developed by wholly separate teams, with different performance targets aimed at different buyers, generally favoring street for the Type S and track for the Type R. The

Acura has a different throttle map from Honda, with noticeably more torque at half throttle. Suspension tuning and damping are more compliant for Integra Type S—its top Sport+ drive mode comparable to Civic Type R's middle Sport mode and Acura's Sport more like Type R's Comfort. Integra Type S wheels are lighter than either the A-Spec or the Civic Type R. A high level of sound deadening as in other Integra trims remains in the Type S, while reduced in the Honda to shave weight. Despite this—and other premium content including heated front seats, power driver's seat and more advanced displays—the Integra Type S weighs in at only 31 pounds heavier than Civic Type R.

While high horsepower plus a manual transmission sounds glorious, the 320 horses in the Integra Type S are quite a lot for a front-driver. Even the most seasoned stick jockey may want to ease into their first clutch release, to gauge its feel, which may continue for several more shifts and turns. The power itself is welcome, able to easily come out tops on merging freeway ramps, though you may feel more front-drive torque steer than we've

encountered in awhile. This surely required more hands-on, feet-on management as paired with our otherwise favorite feature, its manual shift.

We generally turn off rev-matching, finding it may be helpful for a new manual driver but runs interference on a seasoned shifter. However, we hadn't particularly noticed it our first couple of days, not as over-the-top as some. It seems well calibrated "right out of the box," so that's to the plus.

We also accepted its default drive mode as delivered until, on a long drive in the countryside, we pulled over to investigate preferences—aiming to turn off rev-matching. We were already in Sport. We found the Individual map previously set to an odd mix of Sport+ and Comfort, so we changed all to Sport+ except one setting to Sport. Rev-matching is not part of these profiles, however. Instead, we found that in with driver assistance systems—lane keeping, collision warning, blind spot and so on. That in itself says a lot, reinforcing our thinking that it is indeed a helper feature, not a performance feature. We now had rev-matching OFF—no helping wanted, thank you very much.

We resumed our drive still in Sport—powering through and hugging our road's challenging hilly curves, with no torquiness here. And yet the pow-

ertrain still seemed to blip up and power down through shifts. Our change of settings was very focused, so we can only speculate that either there are other factors for this in the powertrain beyond the transmission, or it may just never totally give up trying to interfere with human intent.

Of note, we pulled off the road for photos at that point, set in Sport+, and it exhibited maximum front-drive torquiness again, reentering the road.

(Note that you cannot try different modes while driving, for immediate comparison—you must stop and put it in Park to access the settings.)

Despite having much lower fuel mileage ratings than the 200-horse Integras, Type S has the same 12.4-gallon tank. Ultimately, we found it neither wildly fuel-economical nor wildly thirsty, but the numbers indicate you'll experience the difference.

The car is surely the sum of its parts. While neither more-than nor less-than others in the broader Acura-Honda family, it's interesting to see how the parts—quite similar in some ways, distinctly different in others—fall together in each.

Acura Integra Type S is an enthusiast machine. We've concluded its intent is not to take over total control; rather, you will be applying it. And really, that's exactly what an enthusiast driver seeks. ■

(Below right) Comparisons are natural against the 2023 Honda Civic Type R (see our May-June 2023 issue) and the 2023 Acura Integra A-Spec with Technology Package and 6-speed M/T (see September-October 2022).

We've seen pearlescent white paints anywhere from the luster of an old styrofoam hamburger box to creamy off-whites, but our sample's Platinum White Pearl is a crisp, pure refrigerator white.



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	.....Marysville, Ohio
CONTENT	.....60% US/Canada / 15% Japan
ENGINE/TRANSMISSION	.....USA / Japan
ENGINE	.....2.0L turbocharged 4-cylinder, dir inject DOHC 16v VTEC
HP/TORQUE	.....320 hp / 310 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....9.8:1
TRANSMISSION	.....6-spd manual w rev match control
DRIVETRAIN	.....FWD
SUSPENSION	.....F: dual AXIS strut, 29.0x5.0mm tubular stblzr bar; R: multi-link, 20.5 solid stblzr bar
STEERING	.....var ratio EPS rack & pinion
BRAKES	.....F: 13.8x1.05-in vented, Brembo 4-piston alum calipers; R: 12.0x0.36-in solid
WHEELS	.....19x9.5J alum alloy
TIRES	.....265/30ZR19 93Y summer
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....186.0 / 107.7 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....4.0 in
APPR / DEPART	.....10.9 / 13.5°
TURNING CIRCLE	.....39.7 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....38.6 / 36.4 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....42.3 / 37.4 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....24.3 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....3219 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....93 oct prem / 12.4 gal
MPG	.....21/28/24 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	.....\$50,800
PREMIUM PAINT: Platinum White Pearl	.....600
WHEELS: 19-IN COPPER ALLOY	.....2186
CARBON FIBER TAILGATE SPOILER	.....950
PREMIUM CARPET FLOOR MATS	.....240
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1195
TOTAL	.....\$55,971

2024 ACURA INTEGRA LINEUP

Integra	.....200 hp / CVT	.....\$31,500
Integra A-Spec	.....200 hp / CVT	.....33,500
w Technology Pkg	.....200 hp / CVT	.....36,500
w Technology Pkg	.....200 hp / 6MT	.....36,500
Integra Type S	.....320 hp / 6MT	.....▼ 50,800