

Hard Act to Follow

Ian Lamming is won over by the tough new Honda Civic

STARING into the face of the new Honda Civic it becomes a battle of wills; just who will blink first?

It's me because this is one tough looking car and not one I would want to arm-wrestle.

Civic has had many shapes, forms and visages over the years and the latest is definitely the most aggressive yet.

With angular lines and more intakes than an F1 race car you would swear that this must be the Type R, but it's not, in fact it's far from it.

It may look like an automotive equivalent of Micky Rourke but this EX is powered by, on paper at least, not just a modest plant but a tiny one.

Three cylinders, 988cc, surely, will not pull a chunky, wide, long and low slung, coupe-esque hatchback at anything more than pedestrian pace? Wrong again. Honda has bolted a turbo on to this triple and it shoves out a healthy 129PS, not so far off Type-Rs of yesteryear.

Like the back street terrier the Civic is, it snarls too, especially when threaten by seemingly more powerful cars. The three-cylinder growl gets into full swing thanks to the

CVT gearbox. Floor the throttle and the rev needle heads straight for the power-band and stays there while the gearing catches up and speed rises. It is rorty, it is swift and characterful.

The interior is sporty too with well designed dash and controls, excellent leather seats and the best ride ever, whose firmness can be changed at the press of a switch. Either setting is superb, the softer remaining sporty and controlled, the harder sharper still but still compliant.

If you want to cruise, Civic is happy to take the strain and relaxed motoring sees economy rise into the upper 40 miles per gallon.

The Honda gets touch-screen infotainment and the latest hi-tech connectivity. There are heated seats, satnav, cruise control, smart key and starter button. The 17in wheels look just the ticket and fit the overall sporty look.

New Civic does catch the eye and you find yourself staring in its direction. Bit like the tough guy at the bar. You don't want to look but you can't help it; you just pray the hard man doesn't fix your gaze and stare right back.

Fact File

- Honda Civic 1.0 EX CVT
- Engine: 988cc petrol turbo
- Power: 129PS
- 0-62mph: 11 secs
- Top speed: 124mph
- Combined MPG: 56.5
- Transmission: CVT
- CO2 g/km: 114

