

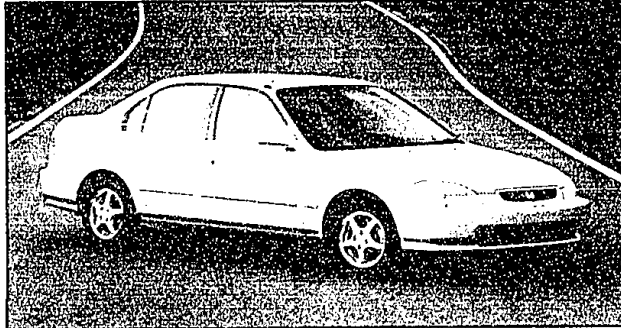
Suburban Observer & Eccentric Automotive Showcase

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CARreport

Redesigned Honda Civic goes where it hasn't gone before

By Anne Fracassa
Avanti NewsFeatures



EAST LIBERTY, Ohio — Slipping behind the wheel of the redesigned Honda Civic, you almost have to get out and make sure you're in the right car.

Yep, it's a 1996 Honda Civic. But like no Civic has been before, it's roomy. It's got a functional back seat. The doors sound solid when you close them. And, hey, it's even kinda cute.

Not small cute. The Civic has always been known as a "teeny weeny" car. Make that really teeny. Remember the Civic CRX? Man, that was small.

This new Civic is now in its sixth generation — Honda started selling the Civic here in 1972. And now, all these years later, the company's East Liberty plant is the largest single producer of Civic worldwide.

A little more about East Liberty — Honda's only



ROAD TEST
By
Anne
Fracassa

automaker (and East Liberty is the only auto plant in the world) to accomplish completion of a running model change in the midst of a plant production increase of more than 30 percent.

To effectively ramp up production of the 1996 models, while completing orders for the 1995 Civics, East Liberty was producing both 1995 and 1996 model Civics on the same line, at the same time.

By late September, Honda had finished its 1995 run and

began exclusively building 1996 Civics.

By the end of this month, the plant is expected to be building around 800 Civics a day for us here in the U.S. market and for export to Japan and other countries.

That translates in 265,000 domestically earmarked Civics for the 1996 model year, with 40,000 more being exported.

Back to the car. Enjoying its first major makeover since the 1991 model year, the Civic is still classified as a small car, but it's really bigger, quieter, faster and more fuel efficient than it has ever been. It's also more distinctive in styling.

Three models are available this year: A sedan, coupe and hatchback. All three have aerated styling, stiff bodies, better engines than their predecessors and new transmissions.

Now this is cool: The Civic EX coupe is available with a

new, innovative automatic transmission Honda calls CVT — Continuously Variable Transmission.

What Honda has done here is melded the fuel efficiency of a manual transmission and the performance of an automatic.

What this means is that it's totally shiftless. You stomp on the gas and the rpms rev up without ever having a shift-back on the car. There's never an interruption of power, either.

This feature is a little unnerving because you expect to feel the car shift up a gear. But it never does.

The Civic is also available with an improved 5-speed manual and a new 4-speed electronically controlled automatic on most models.

The automatic features Honda's grade logic control for smoother shifting when climbing or descending hills. Anti-lock brakes are standard on the EX sedan and are optional

on the other models. The Civic EX is also powered by a high performance 127-horsepower VTEC engine. The Civic EX coupe has an improved VTEC-E engine with 115 horses that promise a whopping 39 mph in the city, 45 on the highway.

Altogether there are three 1.6-liter 16-valve engines available. The new 106-horsepower engine is the first production gasoline engine to meet California's low-emission standards.

Air conditioning and remote entry system are also standard on the EX models. Standard on all models is an AM/FM stereo and clock. The stereo is prepared for a security system.

Instrumentation is laid out well. The speedometer has a 247-degree sweep that's neat. All other instrumentation — including a tach, coolant temp and fuel-level gauge — is backed by a soothing blue background.

Seating is comfy in front — with enough leg room for anyone under 6-foot-2. The back seats, again, are functional for normal-sized people. Just don't push the seats all the way back. You'll fit, but the knees will touch the back of the front seat.

All in all, the new Civic is a "small" car that's fun to drive, easy on the pocket and easy on the trips to the gas station. Thumbs up.

1996 Honda Civic
Vehicle class: Subcompact.
Engine: 1.6-liter high-output SOHC 16-valve 4-cylinder.
Mileage: 38 city / 45 highway.
Where built: East Liberty, Ohio, and Alliston, Ontario, Canada.
Base price: \$9,950.

Preventive Car Care Can Save Lives

(CCC) — Accidents directly attributable to neglected vehicle maintenance (worn brakes and tires, poor vision, loose steering, etc.) could be costing the American public billions of dollars annually. This statement, from the Car Care Council, is based on a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimate of \$137.5 billion annual cost of vehicle accidents. Subtracting a third which are D.U.I.-related driver impairment, this still leaves an accident tab totaling more than \$90 billion.

Five to fifteen percent of this cost might be averted through periodic inspection and maintenance of vehicles; according to industry estimates. Even the more conservative figure, which would place a \$4.5 billion price tag on mechanically related accidents, stresses the need for greater concern for safety maintenance.

Beyond the economics, concludes the Council's statement, is the impact of personal injury, loss of life and property. Consider that for every American lost during the 42 days of Operation Desert Storm, several more died on our nation's highways because of accidents due to a vehicle failure. Both types of losses are tragic and unacceptable, and certainly the latter is preventable.

3000155.DXC Car Care Council

If you'd like to see a particular model tested or if you have a car question, send Anne Fracassa a message at AVANTI 1054, Avanti's America Online mailbox... Or comment through the Internet at AVANTI1054@aol.com. Anne Fracassa is senior editor of Avanti NewsFeatures.

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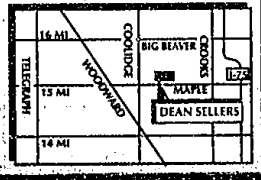
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