One soon realizes what a great compromise has been rendered here. The Civic is a slick, easy-to-drive car that is still rewarding for the sporty driver. It has amazing stability and allows serious corner speed for a modestly shod, softly sprung mass-market car.

Sure, there are some aspects that niggle. That bobbed nose looks overly short from some angles, particularly since the overhang at the back is so large. Also, thanks to the adoption of those struts up front, the cowl is higher than in Civics of yore, and since the windscreen has a fairly severe rake, the sightline across the base seems substantially higher than before—a potential disadvantage there for Jennifer if she’s short in the torso.

HONDA CIVIC EX COUPE

Type: 2-door, front-wheel-drive, 5-passenger sedan

Estimated price as tested: $17,000

Major standard accessories: power steering, windows, locks, and sunroof, A/C, cruise control; tilting steering wheel; rear defroster

Sound system: Honda AM/FM-stereo radio/CD player, 6 speakers

ENGINE

Type: 1.5-liter, 4-cylinder aluminum block and head

Compression ratio: 9:1

Fuel: unleaded

Air-fuel ratio control: electronic

Valve gear: variable-valve timing and lift

Power (SAE net): 110 bhp @ 5800 rpm

Torque (SAE net): 114 lb-ft @ 4800 rpm

Redline: 7500 rpm

DRIVETRAIN

Transmission: 5-speed manual

Final-drive ratio: 4.41:1

Gear Ratio: Mph/1000 rpm Max. test speed

I 3.46 5.1 134 mph (6800 rpm)

II 1.87 8.5 58 mph (6800 rpm)

III 1.24 12.8 87 mph (6800 rpm)

IV 0.97 16.4 112 mph (6800 rpm)

V 0.76 21.0 127 mph (6000 rpm)

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Wheelbase: 104.3 in

Track, F-R: 57.9/67.9 in

Length: 174.7 in

Width: 87.5 in

Height: 55.1 in

Ground clearance: 6.1 in

C/D TEST RESULTS

ACCELERATION

Seconds

Zero to 30 mph: 9.1

40 mph: 4.3

50 mph: 6.0

60 mph: 8.4

70 mph: 11.5

80 mph: 16.0

90 mph: 21.5

110 mph: 36.1

Street start, 5–30 mph: 9.8

Top-gear acceleration, 30–50 mph: 1.3

30–50 mph: 1.26

Standing 1/4 mile: 16.7 sec @ 84 mph

Top speed (drag limited): 127 mph

BRAKING

0–60 mph @ impending lockup: 186 ft

Fade: none light moderate heavy

HANDLING

Roadholding, 300-ft-dia skidpad: 0.78 g

Understeer: minimal moderate excessive

FUEL ECONOMY

EPA city driving: 32 mpg

EPA highway driving: 27 mpg

C/D-observed fuel economy: 31 mpg

INTERIOR SOUND LEVEL

Idle: 43 dbA

Full-throttle acceleration: 79 dbA

70-mph cruising: 72 dbA

70-mph coasting: 71 dbA

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Ground clearance: 6.1 in

Curb weight: 2675 lb

Weight distribution, F/R: 59.1/40.9%

Fuel capacity: 13.2 gal

Oil capacity: 4.4 qt

Water capacity: 5.3 qt

CHASSIS/BODY

Type: unit construction

Body material: welded steel stampings

INTERIOR

SAE volume, front seat: 48 cu ft

rear seat: 35 cu ft

luggage space: 13.8 cu ft

Front seats: bucket

Seat adjustments: ...for a tall seatback angle, height

Restraint systems, front: manual 3-point belts, driver and passenger front and side airbags

rear: manual 3-point belts

General comfort: poor fair good excellent

Fore-and-aft support: poor fair good excellent

Lateral support: poor fair good excellent

SUSPENSION

F: 1.3 and, strut located by a control arm, coil springs, anti-roll bar

R: 1 trailing arm, 1 lower lateral link, and 1 upper lateral link per side; coil springs; anti-roll bar

STEERING

Type: rack-and-pinion, power-assisted

Tums lock-to-lock: 3.8

Tuning circle curb-to-curb: 34.1 ft

BRAKES

F: 10.3 x 0.8-in ventilated disc

R: 7.9 x 1.4-in cast-iron drum

Power assist: vacuum with anti-lock control

WHEELS AND TIRES

Wheel size: 6.0 × 15 in

Wheel type: cast aluminum

Tires: 185/70R14 Firestone FR690, P185/65HR-15

Test inflation pressures, F/R: 30/30 psi

CAR and DRIVER