

more passive safety features—like all the Civics, the Si is crammed with airbags—plus selective reinforcement of the already seriously stiffened body shell of the new coupe. The Si also has a solid front anti-roll bar (it's hollow on the EX coupe), a bigger rear bar (0.7 inch versus 0.4), and a 17-inch wheel-and-tire package, the biggest ever offered on a U.S. Civic.

The standard tire is a Michelin Pilot HX MXM4 all-season, with the option of a new Michelin Pilot Exalto PE2—same size, at 215/45R-17, but with lots more grip. There will also be an 18-inch Yokohama option, but it wasn't available for our preview drive.

Stiffer chassis, firm suspension tuning, and bigger footprints are key elements in what Honda calls “razor-

like handling,” but how about power? Honda has upped the ante with a new 2.0-liter DOHC 16-valve *i*-VTEC four-cylinder engine that bumps horsepower from 160 to 197 at 7800 rpm. This is a refinement of the K-series four employed in the Acura RSX Type-S, with a balance shaft and other tweaks. Mated with a new six-speed manual transmission (the shifter has

migrated back down from the dashboard), it delivers enough punch, Honda tells us, to hustle the coupe to 60 mph in 7.3 seconds. That's quicker than the hatchback Si and similar to the '99-to-'00 coupe. But it's almost a second slower than the last RSX Type-S we tested (“Cheap Speed, Round 23,” *C/D*, September 2005).

Never mind. What the new Si will