



Above and Beyond - 1996 Honda Civic Turbo

Commissioned To Transform This '96 Civic Into A 750hp Drag Racecar, Je Import Performance Took The Project To Even Greater Heights, Smashing The Target By Over 100 Ponies. James Evans Of Je Gives Us The Back Story On How The Shop Hit Its Marks With A Combo Of Prelude Power, A Fat Turbo, And A Bottle Of N2O.

By Bob Hernandez

Photography: Henry Z. DeKuyper

Many of us have known the pain of paying for shoddy workmanship. Ask around-horror stories of consumers getting ripped off by shops are not uncommon among automotive types, especially where engine work is involved. Indeed, that's how this 1996 Civic DX hatchback ended up on the doorstep of JE Import Performance in Baltimore, Md. The owner got a raw deal with his H-series swap and turned to JE for the assist. JE was only too happy to oblige.

Now 12 months, \$30K, and countless dyno hours deep into the combo race/street car, the Civic is just about set to be unleashed on the world of drag racing. We caught up with shop owner and project head James Evans, who gave us the quick and dirty version of how this hatch came to be.

Honda Tuning:: I know the owner of this Civic wants to remain anonymous for the story, but when he brought the car to you, did he have any idea what he wanted done?

James Evans: The owner lives in North Carolina and someone down there did a really poor job at putting the motor in; it was barely running. He brought the car to us on a trailer and basically told us to get this thing running. We found a bunch of problems that required the motor coming out, and it kind of snowballed from there. Before we knew it, he was asking for 750hp, and we went above and beyond that.



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We've had the car for a year, and recently the owner told us he now wants us to build him a 1000hp turbo K-series in another hatchback. The guy completely blows me away, but I'm not going to complain, you know?

HT:: Was he basically rubber-stamping every one of your suggestions? **JE::** Yeah. Along the way he'd check in, and we'd come up with ideas. As soon as he decided he wanted to make it into a pretty fast drag car, we immediately told him what he's going to have to do for a turbo and stuff like that. The fuel system was a bit of a learning process on this car because everything we tried wasn't enough. Because of the nitrous and amount of boost we're running, we ended up going with a monster 1,000hp setup just to get enough fuel.



HT:: What was the issue you were running into that you had to come up with something so elaborate?

JE:: Just fuel starvation, even on the dyno. At high RPM, the pump couldn't keep up. We went through the highest flowing Walbro and Bosch pumps. Then the lines weren't big enough to carry sufficient fuel. We ended up switching to an Aeromotive pump, which uses a -10 AN port-most guys that are running over 700 horsepower are using lines roughly that size, especially with nitrous. The nitrous needs that extra burst of fuel.



HT:: You guys used ERL Performance for sleeving the block. How did you hook up with them?

JE:: I met Sean Ragains [from ERL] at a road race, and then he stopped by the shop. We were using Golden Eagle before, and he was telling us how [Golden Eagle was] sleeving blocks, and asked us to give ERL a try next time. Since we're on the East Coast, it's just easier [for us] than sending [blocks] all the way out to Golden Eagle in California. (ERL is based in Indiana.)

HT:: You also mention a custom valve job on the tech sheet. Any details you'd care to share with readers?

JE:: It was along the lines of a 5-angle valve job. It might not quite be a 5-angle; the machinist we used [for the valve job] does his own little tweak on that.

HT:: The crank triggered, distributor-less ignition you list-was that a custom job?

JE:: We had to make the bracket that holds the trigger, but it's an Electromotive Tec3 system, which has the distributor-less ignition with just a crank trigger and individual coils.



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HT:: All tolled, how much time have you guys spent on the build so far?

JE:: About a year. We started in April 2005. The owner didn't want to dump a bunch of money into it all at once, so it has been an ongoing project. It also came at a time when we were moving from our old shop to the new one. That didn't help move the process along.

HT:: JE makes a business out of building and tuning cars. Was there anything especially troublesome with this one?

JE:: Getting the custom fabrication done, that was a little time consuming. None of it was really a pain in the ass. The problem was the fuel, having to repeatedly take the car off the dyno to redo the fuel setup. But none of it was really difficult. We spent a lot of time tuning with the Electromotive.

HT:: Do you prefer the Electromotive? Are you normally an AEM or Honda guy?
JE:: Actually, I personally do a lot of Honda, and I'd say the shop does a fair amount of AEM. We wanted to try something different, for our own education, and we heard good things about the ignition setups on the Electromotive system. I was actually pretty pleased with the way it all turned out. Once we did a base map tune, the first run we pulled on it was perfect. It's got a wizard feature that sets it up, whereas in most other systems that setup wizard is worthless. With 1000cc injectors, it took a little bit of work to get the motor to idle with a decent air/fuel ratio. Those big injectors don't like to open and close very quickly at low RPM.



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Evidence

On the bottle, this JE-built Civic puts down 852 horsepower and 627 lb-ft of torque-hot damn!



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Stance

Prepped to optimize traction, JE set up the EJ chassis with Progress race series custom shocks and spring rates and a custom Pro Fab traction bar. The shop also installed a custom rollcage for rigidity and driver protection.



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Resistance

The full complement of rotors and

calipers has been switched out for GS-R issue, front and rear. Calipers have been loaded with Hawk pads, and Motul RBF 600 fluid is pushed out to each corner via Goodridge lines.

Rims & Rubber

Tucked into the forward wheelwells are Mickey Thompson slicks, sized 24.5/9/13, wrapped around 13x8 Weld wheels. For daily driving, the hatch rides on Rota Slipstream rims adorned in Hankook rubber.

Fashion

Outside

Outward cosmetic tweaks are mostly functional-Seibon front lip, a modified bumper that can accommodate the intercooler, and rolled fenders for the massive slicks. Speedesign Custom Graphics handles the Civic's sparse decals.

Inside

Essentially everything from behind the front seats back was removed-mostly paneling and carpeting-for the sake of weight reduction; the car now weighs 2140 pounds. JE then hooked up an AEM Uego wideband meter and Autometer oil pressure, water temp, and boost pressure gauges to keep tabs on engine performance. Unexpected JDM flair, namely the Bride seats and Takata harnesses, gives the cabin some street cred.

