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Fun drive: Honda S2000

There is something about taking part in car events that get the blood pumping whether it be auctions, exhibitions or club runs. I remember the first time I completed the London to Brighton run – sadly, not in a vintage machine – and I have always wanted to take part in the Saturday night ritual that was the Chelsea Bridge classic car cruise. But there is always one burning question that has to be answered: “What car should I drive?”

This is even more difficult for the motoring journalist as we have access to a wide choice of cars. There are always the obvious selections but I like to be different so, step up the Honda S2000.

You probably weren’t expecting me to say that. And you’re also wondering why I might choose this modern two-seater sports car over anything else. Well, let me enlighten you...

The Honda S2000 may be a new car – it’s only been around since 1999 – but it has a heritage dating back to the first cars Honda ever built, the S360 and S500, in 1963.

The S360 never went into production but the S500 did, if only until the following year. After this unsteady start Honda went on to much bigger and better things including the likes of the legendary NSX supercar and, of course, the S2000.

There have been some updates to the original version of this little sports car including improvements to the suspension, chassis stiffening, body rigidity, steering response and the addition of advanced ABS. In 2006 the range was ‘refreshed’ with a drive-by-wire throttle and VSA (Vehicle Stability Assist) and at the beginning of this year the S2000 got re-tuned dampers, up-rated springs and thicker anti-roll bars to give it greater stability and bring it in line with its Japanese counterpart, the S2000 Type S. These changes were also designed to make the car less “edgy” but Honda had to be careful not to take all the fun out of the driving experience.

Despite all this technological progress the S2000 has retained its good looks; OK, they have altered somewhat over the years but, in my opinion, all for the better. The



Soper of Lincoln to show motorists how to lower fuel bills and CO2 emissions

See the World Green Car of the Year 2008 at Soper of Lincoln

With petrol and diesel now costing well over £1.00 per litre, drivers in the Lincoln area are being given the opportunity to find out just how fuel efficient their cars are at a special BMW EfficientDynamics Open Weekend at Soper of Lincoln, on Roman Way, South Hykeham.

Over the weekend of Saturday 31 May and Sunday 1 June, Soper of Lincoln will carry out a free Efficiency Check on any car to assess its fuel consumption and CO2 emissions and, if necessary, show the owner how he or she can improve fuel efficiency.

Drivers will also be introduced to the award-winning BMW EfficientDynamics technologies, a collection of innovative measures that together reduce fuel consumption and CO2 emissions while improving the performance and driving pleasure for which BMW is renowned.

BMW EfficientDynamics technologies include Auto Start-Stop, which stops the engine whenever the car comes to rest and is taken out of gear, restarting the second the clutch is depressed, and Optimum Shift Indicator, a small visual display on the instrument cluster that shows the optimum gear for any driving situation.

Visitors to Soper of Lincoln over the weekend will not only be able to see how their own cars compare (in terms of fuel efficiency, performance, residual values, etc.) to a new BMW in the same sector they will also have the opportunity to test-drive models equipped with BMW EfficientDynamics technology for themselves.

Andrew Tullie, Dealer Principal, said: "As well as the environmental benefits, EfficientDynamics can save drivers hundreds of pounds per year in reduced fuel and road tax costs. For example with CO2 emissions of just 119g/km, the 62.8 mpg BMW 118d falls into Band B for Vehicle Excise Duty - just £35 per year. Moreover, from October 2008 the 118d will also benefit from a 100 per cent discount on the London Congestion Charge, available for a small annual fee via Transport for London. Little wonder, perhaps, that the BMW 118d was recently voted World Green Car 2008 at the New York International Auto Show."

Further information on the EfficientDynamics Open Weekend can be obtained by calling Soper of Lincoln on 0845 123 9919 or visiting www.soperbmw.co.uk.

removable hard top; but it really takes two people to lift it off. Luckily, my neighbour – a Mazda MX-5 owner – was on hand. The hard top has four locks that have to be released and an electrical cable (for the heated rear windscreen) needs to be unplugged before it's free to remove. It is a fairly straightforward operation once you get the hang of it. Of course, you then have the problem of storing the hard top. Honda sells a hard top stand and cover for £750 but as I didn't have one of these I had to make do with a wooden pallet in the barn. Once the hard top is off the electrically operated soft top comes into play; it does require a manual effort to lock it into the closed position however.

Inside the S2000 there is space even for the taller driver like myself although there's no adjustment in the steering column. Surprisingly, I didn't find this a problem even though it did obscure the very top of the LED display; I managed to remain comfortable behind the wheel even on longer journeys. There are a couple of storage spaces but they're not huge; the boot will take a couple of medium-sized travel bags though.

The S2000 remains fun to drive despite Honda's improvements in handling aimed at making it a bit of a softy. For the real purists perhaps it has lost a little bit of its raw excitement but it still has the power to thrill. For those not familiar with high-revving VTEC engine it may take a while before they get to experience what this car can do. Just push the S2000 hard, bend the rev counter and you begin to feel the true power of this car. And on the way you can listen to the engine's well-crafted audible growl.

If you're thinking of taking the S2000 on any tarmac that is less than smooth you might be in for a bit of a hard ride. Of course, the benefits of this means that cornering is sharp and precise, so you have to be prepared to give and take a little.

What you get, though, is a car that accelerates smoothly and, once the revs are high enough, gives a superb driving performance; the S2000 will also remain perfectly flat at speed in the corners and produce the kind of noise you might expect form a much bigger engined car. And it's a convertible too!

Tony Meredith

beautifully swept front wings and the sharp-angled headlamps of the current S2000 cut a remarkable sight on any road. And, as I couldn't manage to take this car on the Chelsea Bridge cruise I was determined to have a parade all of my own around the Lincolnshire countryside.

I suppose parade may not be the most accurate description but I certainly managed to get some exciting driving in and for once the sun shone so I was able to get the roof down too – although not without some help.

Honda provided me with an S2000 GT model that, for the price of £29,150, comes fitted with a