

# HONDA S2000 EDITION 100

VTEC, 9000rpm and an open-top, NOW is the time to buy the S2000... but, what's it like?

Words: Matt Bell



**N**o matter what I say in this piece, the one thing you need to take away from this is that this nutter revs to 9krpm. When we talk engines, the F20C has to be up there with one of the best ever made. For over 10 years it held the record for the highest power output-per-litre for a naturally aspirated engine... right up until some chaps from Maranello built the 458 Italia.

When you're in the mood, there are few engines that will impress you as much as a VTEC motor. OK, you've got to rev the nuts off 'em to get anywhere, and in doing so you make a song and a dance everywhere you go, but that's the joy of the S2K. Besides, it's one of the strongest blocks out there, so adding in some forced induction will ramp up the torque.

For a car that was styled in the '90s, the S2K has held up its end of the bargain in the looks department. It still looks contemporary, appealing and intriguing all at the same time. That elongated bonnet adds to the allure of this car. It also means that they could mount the engine as far back as physically possible to help with weight distribution. That also helps front-

end turn in to make it razor sharp... but more of that later in a minute.

Inside the S2K has started to look a little dated. The one positive from that is that '90s Japanese interiors focused on the driver. The entire dashboard and switches are pointed towards the pilot. It's a driver-focused car after all, so why wouldn't you want the switches pointing your way? Unfortunately that design has been forgotten over recent years, with infotainment screens pointing straight towards the rear, rather than towards the person most likely to operate them.

Where the interior is let down though is the stereo. This is a 2009 model, yet we still use the original radio without auxiliary or Bluetooth connectivity? Strange. And just makes things a little 1999.

There is another downside. At 70mph, the wind noise, even with the roof up, is horrendous. Without auxiliary, on long journeys I used headphones (the terrible ones you get with the iPhone) and even on full volume I was struggling to hear the music over the wind noise. I spent about 20 minutes on the road trying to work out whether the roof was open slightly or a window was down. It's actually that bad.

There is a solution though, there's a GT hard top, available. OK dine, you'll want the top down in the summer, but over winter it could be a welcome addition.

The seating position is quite simply, sublime. You sit nice and low, meaning your legs can stretch out towards the pedals, rather than all cramped up. There's a good level of adjustment too and headroom isn't really an issue.





## THE DRIVE

There are few cars that make you think about what you're doing quite as much as the S2K. On AD08Rs in the wet, the snap oversteer is exciting and a little unnerving. On your way to work before the coffee has had a chance to filter through your body, suddenly sliding isn't how you want to start your day. After a quick trip back home to change you know what, you then chuck it in, pin the throttle and have some fun. It's not a difficult car to slide or control when you're in the mood for it. But you better be in the mood when you go for a drive, if you're too generous on the throttle in any corner you'll enter snap oversteer.

While 240bhp isn't the be-all to shout home about these days, it feels strong here. Rev it past 6k rpm and you slide past VTEC. It's fairly aggressive in its application here, and you really feel it change cam and pull strongly. But oddly, the second pull, past 7500/8000rpm is arguably more satisfying, you almost feel it want to rip your teeth out. This is intensified by the scream being emitted from both engine and exhaust. It's a satisfying noise that would only be improved with a full exhaust swap.

After a week or so, you'll be saying exactly what I said, it needs a helping hand. Some supercharging wouldn't go amiss here... In truth you get tired of having to bang it off the limiter in every gear to get somewhere. Some torque wouldn't be unwelcome either.

When you've had chance to warm the tyres up you can really start to enjoy the thrills of the S2k. If anyone has visited the East coast of the UK around the Cromer region, you'll know that the coastal route, at the right time of the day with limited traffic is a sublime piece of road. Couple this with the roof down, head phones in, and nothing but seamless corners with minimal traffic, it'll easily be one of the drives of your life. It's only made better by clinging on to gears in the S2k. This is when that engine makes sense, you can keep it right in the heights of its power band by switching between 2nd-4th. Thanks to the enormous front end grip, you can be generous with entry speed too; it feels darty, precise and agile.

You never really want to stop bashing it to be honest. Once you slow down and enter back into reality you almost thank it for its pleasure, but immediately want to wring its neck again. Thankfully the F20C is a strong unit that doesn't mind a touch of abuse.

## FAST FACTS

■ Up until the release of the Ferrari 458 Italia in 2009, the F20C used in the S2000 held the title for the highest output (per litre) for any naturally aspirated engine. It held this record for a whole decade!

■ Want to go forced induction? Plenty of applications have seen north of 400bhp without breaking a sweat. You'll need to upgrade the clutch, but you're good to go otherwise. You may want to upgrade the brakes at the same time mind.

■ The Edition 100 we've borrowed here was Honda's 50th birthday present to itself. As the name suggests, just 100 were made for the UK market. They were all finished in Grand Prix White, with graphite alloys, and had a plush red leather interior. There's also the inevitable plaque to mark which 'number' you've bought too.





## VERDICT

You may have guessed at this point that I'd fallen in love with the S2k's character, so much so that I was convinced it would be the car I'd buy next. It's a car that you could live with day-to-day and not be frustrated. Yeah, the cabin gets a bit boomy at speed and you constantly have to be changing gear to get the best, but it has character, and that's something which is escaping from newer cars.

It's a car that's similar to an Elise in its focus, albeit not quite as razor sharp. And that's no bad thing. It's far easier to live with, and comfier, not to mention easier to get in and out of. The engine is far superior too. Its snappy nature can be fixed with some modifications, or you can simply keep it and drift about everywhere.



## VALUES

NOW is the time to buy one. I can't shout about that loudly enough. Prices are at the bottom and they won't be lowering, in fact, they're already starting to rise. This is a proper sports car that is gaining modern classic status very quickly. And plenty of car magazines are doing a good job of boosting values by raving about how good they are. Shit, I've just done exactly that, I do apologise.

Early cars are the cheapest at around £5-£10k, while later cars, with updated damping rates, are £10k upwards. The car you're looking at here is an Edition 100 model, which will see you pay over £20k. OK, yes it's more of a collectors car this one, so values will always reflect that. But,

in truth, you'd be wasting your money if you opted for a special edition model right now. Stick to a regular S2K, modify it, and you'll never be disappointed! \*

## FACT FILE

**Engine:** 1997cc, four-cylinder with VTEC

**Power:** 237bhp @ 8300rpm, 153lb ft @ 7500rpm

**0-62mph:** 6 seconds

**Weight:** 1260kg

**Transmission:** six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive

## POTENTIAL

The S2k is crying out for modifications, this engine is a peach and can take most things that you throw at it. If we had one, here's what we'd do...



### »» COILOVERS

With some examples now 20 years old, it will be time to freshen up the suspension. A set of coilovers from BC Racing will drop the ride and sharpen up the handling to help cure some of that snap oversteer. [www.bc-racing.co.uk](http://www.bc-racing.co.uk)



### »» WHEELS

If there's one thing that upsets us about the S2k it's the wheels. We don't like them. So, the first thing we'd do is replace them. A nice set Rota Slipstreams is an all-time classic for Hondas. We'd stick to in 17-inchers on this one. [www.rarerims.co.uk](http://www.rarerims.co.uk)



### »» SCORPION EXHAUST

As said earlier, the S2K always sounds incredible with a slightly louder exhaust. Scorpion produce a system that's not over-the-top-lairy but loud enough to impress, and we're also big fans of the Skunk2 item. Lovely. [www.tegiwaiimports.co.uk](http://www.tegiwaiimports.co.uk)



### »» AEM INTAKE

Hondas respond remarkably well to intake upgrades and the S2K is no different. These always sound superb too! The K&N FIPK is easily one of the best in the business, with proven gains across that mahooosive rev range. [www.knfilters.com](http://www.knfilters.com)