

When the Corten-Miller brothers told me that they paid just £150 for the Civic currently strapped to their chassis dyno, I couldn't help but feel a pang of jealousy. How come I never seem to stumble upon these kind of bargains? In mitigation, though, the M-reg Honda was a bit of a shed that required a few hundred quids' worth of work just to pass an MoT, and had an engine bay covered in more dust and detritus than the cyclonic innards of a Dyson. In that case, why even bother counting out the cash?

Probably because of the convenience. Being situated just 20 minutes from Cadwell Park (aka the 'Mini Nürburgring'), the guys were on the lookout for a cheap track day toy until they discovered this Civic languishing a few hundred yards down the road from their Lincolnshire

premises. Cheap, convenient and with a gamut of tuning possibilities, the ESi model was the right car at the right time.

However, a project car for a tuner is a different animal to that belonging to an enthusiast. If Joe Public buys a Civic for track day use, spends a bit of money in the necessary areas, and then rolls into the paddock with an essentially sound but ratty-looking car, nobody bats an eyelid. If anything, respect is offered to the guy for indulging his passion on a limited budget. But it's different for a tuner; there is a reputation to consider, appearances to be maintained. The car becomes a reflection, not of the individual, but of the business behind it. For this reason, brothers Ben and Tom soon realised that they would have to carry out more than just a few quick repairs, drop a peppier engine in and take to the track.

So first off, it was back to basics as the engine and drivetrain were pulled out. The interior was then removed, suspension unbolted and the Civic rendered as a bare shell. "There's not one part on this car that hasn't been removed and then either refurbished or replaced," said Tom. "When it was all stripped down, we didn't want to just throw it all back together."

It's safe to say that the plan for a supposedly cheap track day toy went the same way as the knackered parts that were coming off the EG5 – straight into the bin. After seam welding the monocoque, it was despatched to the paintshop. When the shell came back in all its Championship white splendour, the chaps were left reassessing their project aims once again.

In terms of pure mechanical grunt, the original horsepower goal soon moved from a 200bhp output provided by a normally aspirated B16A2 in place of the ESi's factory

