

Palace Coupe - 2009 Infiniti G37

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Readers often ask why it is that car reviews are overwhelmingly positive almost all the time. The answer is simple: car companies don't send their dogs to reporters. They know which cars are hot tickets and those are the ones they make available to the press. They would be silly to give us the loss leaders and keep their hot rods under wraps.

So it's no surprise that I'm going to tell you how great the Infiniti G37 is – it is great, and there's really nothing I can find that's wrong with it, except that I have to give it back tomorrow and I want to keep it forever.

The G37 is the latest coupe based on the platform most commonly known as the Nissan 350Z. This one has a 3.7-liter V6 engine, however, and makes 330 horsepower and 270 pound-feet of torque. The cars come with your choice of a new 7-speed automatic transmission or a 6-speed manual. With the automatic transmission, the G37 gets 18/24 MPG, and with the manual, a very attractive 17/26. The really distinctive thing about Infiniti is that they're still the only Japanese premium manufacturer who will give you good old fashioned rear wheel drive - Acura and Lexus do not.

Inside, the car is everything you love about Infiniti. Nissan gets the luxury level just right in the Infiniti brand – there's wood, and it's nicely done. All the modern technology is there – backup camera, nav, hands-free cell phone, great stereo with iPod and MP3 ports in addition to a 6-disc changer. Heated leather seats, paddle shifters, and zone climate control – it's all there. And Infiniti has kept with their signature feature – the tasteful analog clock right in the middle of the dash.

Outside, the Infiniti is a handsome car – it looks subtle, elegant, powerful, and sexy. I first described the G35 sedan as a James Bond car, and I've never had a reason to revise that estimation. This car says you're comfortable in your skin, have nothing to prove to anyone, and that you enjoy comfort but demand power and handling as well.

About the only criticism I can make about the G37 is that its 4-seater designation is strictly fantasy, unless the people in the back seat have no legs. Consider it a two-seater with a nice convenient space for your briefcase or purse. The trunk is a standard serviceable size, so overall, you've got decent luggage space. But really, this is a sports coupe we're talking about, not a client-hauler. For that, you'd want the sedan.

I have to mention how quiet and solid the G37 is on the road. I don't know exactly what it is that automakers are doing these days, but cars today are quieter inside and offer a ride that Cadillac designers of the 50s could only dream about. Yet they're solid and connected to the road. Infiniti is in the forefront of this design movement. Surely some of it is related to the weight of the vehicle – even a "subcompact" like the G37 (no joke, the EPA says it's a subcompact) weighs in at 3600 pounds before you put people in it. That's comparable to a big car of bygone decades, and it helps when you're designing a smooth ride. The amazing part is that a car this heavy corners like a race car and takes off like a scalded dog when you put your foot down.

As tested, with all the nifty technology stuff, the G37 comes in about \$45,000, but the base price is just \$34,900. Infiniti will also offer the G37x with All Wheel Drive this year, and a convertible model, so you've got a lot to choose from. The bottom line on the G37 is that it's a wonderful, solid car. The consumer evaluation sites give it high marks, and in my opinion, the car continues to be a big winner for Nissan/Infiniti.