

TEST DRIVE: INFINITI Q50S 3.7

Q the technology

Jan Tegler
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Take a seat behind the wheel of Infiniti's new Q50S, depress its push button ignition and the first impression one gets can be summed up in a single word – 'technology'.

The 'Infiniti InTouch' dual display that comes to life in the Q50S 3.7 makes its presence known immediately. Presented in slick smartphone-like fashion, the centre console-mounted flat panel screens are flag-wavers for the high-tech theme that permeates the luxury brand's successor to the outgoing G37 sedan.

Recast as a 'Q' model to bring it in line with the rest of the maker's alphanumeric offerings (Q60, QX70...) the new sedan houses its technology in a freshly sculpted body. Sleeker and more modern than its predecessor, we think it's the best looking iteration of Infiniti's entry-level sedan yet.

What's underneath has changed as well, although less in North America where petrol-powered versions of the Q50 carry the same drivetrain – a 3.7 litre V6 and seven-speed automatic transmission – as the G37 sedan. In Europe, Infiniti understandably offers the sedan with a diesel power-plant, a 2.2 litre four cylinder direct-injection turbo diesel with six-speed manual or seven-speed automatic transmission, to be precise. A 3.5 litre Hybrid V6 is available on both continents.

Added high-strength steel and a redesigned rear suspension are also part of the new package but otherwise the Q50's unibody is much the same as the older variant. That's positive though, as the new car largely improves on its historically solid driving dynamics.

INSIDER KNOWLEDGE



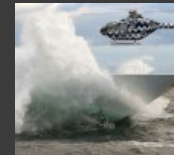
I once had to design a dining room table 'strong enough to dance an Irish jig upon' ... That was quite an unusual brief!

David Linley - bespoke furniture designer

20 AUGUST 2011

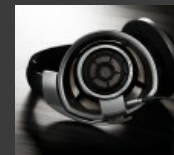


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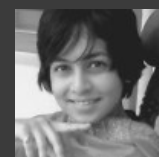
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Missing from our tester's options was Infiniti's somewhat controversial Direct Adaptive Steering (DAS), a technologically-advanced steer-by-wire system that could almost drive the four-seater itself via numerous sensors.

But reviewers far and wide have lamented the DAS' relative lack of communication with the driver. Though the complaint may not resonate with all buyers, we think talkative steering is a critical element in any car. The hydraulic unit we drove was adequate, but even this conventional arrangement didn't deliver a huge amount of feel in the Q50S. Something of a shame as the new model's chassis is good, producing crisp handling with mild oversteer when prodded.

Power from the 3.7 litre six is satisfying and suits the chassis well. Producing 328 horsepower and 365 Nm of torque, the Q50S dashes to 100 km/h in just five seconds with thrust available for passing in any gear, particularly in the seven-speed automatic's Sport mode.



The eight-way adjustable power/heated leather front seats we sat on provided good support and complimented the "Kacchu" aluminium trim in our car's interior well. Rear seats are comfortable as well but headroom is limited by the sloping roof-line. Overall, the cabin has a high quality feel with fit and finish worthy of its competition (BMW 335i, Cadillac ATS, Audi S4).

This brings us back to the Infiniti InTouch dual display. The system is impressive and it earns good marks for user-friendliness, but there comes a point where so many options for connectivity become somewhat bewildering. Did we mention it was smart phone-like?

Melding seamlessly with any smartphone via Bluetooth, the Q50S also opens up to a plethora of other services through Infiniti's own "InTouch Apps". Access to email, navigation, Pandora internet radio, Facebook via touch or voice command and even a quick search on Google are all possible from the driver's seat. One can also monitor the car itself with the Driving Performance app which offers digital gauges and customisable displays, including a G-force meter.

The Q50S is fundamentally a vehicle designed to take you to from point A to point B, but it is a brave new world after all. 'Q' the technology.

See more on the Infiniti webpages



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