

Upbeat killer

BY JOE SAGE

For about as long as we can remember, the automotive cognoscenti have regularly posited whether this-and-such new sport sedan might be the elusive “3-killer.” That bar may not be as high as it used to be—competition has become broader, deeper and generally stiffer over the years—but that phrase still popped into our heads as we took delivery of this car. This high-powered, performance-sprung, powerfully braking, rear-drive Infiniti four-door could be just that machine.

But wait, what’s this? The car arrived with a bundle of summertime goodies—sunscreen and such—with the prominent message, “Good vibes only.” Well, then, hmm. Maybe killing is in bad taste, so how about just some good ol’ friendly competition?

We don’t have any particular beef with the 3



Series. But the concept makes a point—one that stuck with us for our full week with the car.

Infiniti Q50 is a wide lineup, from the 208-hp

rear-drive 2.0t at \$35,640, to the 400-hp AWD 3.0 twin-turbo Red Sport at \$53,350 (AWD is available on any model, at \$2000). Our sample is top-everything except AWD—but its rear-drive status is still a significant advantage in a performance car.

It’s common for an up-badged car to have sporty style points, less common to deliver on performance. For looks, the Q50 Red Sport 400 has quilted leather seats, dark chrome interior highlights, aluminum-trim pedals, gloss black mirrors and red “S” badging. But it also has that twin-turbo powerplant, powerful sport brakes and a full range of safety and driver assist tech. It combines performance and style with staggered 19-inch wheels and tires (on RWD models) and red painted calipers.

All Q50 powertrains run through a seven-speed electronic automatic with dual transmission coolers and manual shift mode; Sport and Red Sport 400 add magnesium paddle shifters. Gear selection uses a lateral acceleration sensor to detect changes such as hills and turns. Sport mode provides more aggressive driving.

Four-wheel vented discs on the Sport and Red Sport 400 have upgraded rotors, and 4-piston front and 2-piston rear calipers. Wheels are staggered—19x9 front and 19.9.5 rear, with all-season runflats (AWD models are 19x9 front and rear).

Is our good-vibe Q50 a killer? In price and power, the top “regular” 3 Series costs more and has less power. There’s no M sedan, but an M coupe costs almost 40 percent more for just 25 more horses. Advantage: Q50, which also has the benefit of being less ubiquitous. High-powered, relatively light-

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	3.0L alum alloy 24v twin turbo V6
HP/TORQUE	400 hp / 350 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	7-spd auto, sport mode, rev match
ALTERNATOR	170A
DRIVETRAIN	RWD
SUSPENSION	F: indep dbl wishbone w stblzr bar; R: multi-link indep w stblzr bar
STEERING	rack electronic power
BRAKES	F: 14.0x1.3 4-piston vented power assist; R: 13.8x-.8 2-piston vented power assist; foot operated parking brake
WHEELS	19x9.0 front / 19x9.5 rear alum alloy
TIRES	Dunlop F: P245/40R19 / F: P265/35R19
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	189.6 / 112.2 in
TURNING CIRCLE	(RWD) 36.7 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	5.2 in
HEADROOM (F/R)	(w moonroof) 39.5 / 36.8 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	44.5 / 35.1 in
CARGO CAPACITY	13.5 cu.ft
WEIGHT	3840 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	prem unl / 20.0 gal
MPG	20/26/22 (city/hwy/comb)

RED SPORT 400 INCLUDES: sport front fascia & rear bumper, leather seats w thigh extension & power lumbar, around-view monitor, alum accent pedals, rear sonar, magnesium paddle shifters and more.

BASE PRICE	\$51,350
DYNAMIC SUNSTONE RED	800
SENSORY PKG: Bose 16-spr surround sound audio, power tilt-tele wheel, seat-mirror memory, advanced climate control, enhanced interior ambient lighting, auto-dim side mirrors w tilt	2650
CARBON FIBER PKG: decklid spoiler, side mirrors	1520
WELCOME LIGHTING	465
ILLUMINATED KICK PLATES	485
CARGO PKG: mat, net, hooks, first aid kit	270
DESTINATION CHARGE	995

TOTAL **\$58,535**

weight and rear-drive (or AWD)... reasonably spacious, well outfitted and fairly priced... the Q50 Red Sport 400 is red hot. We hated to see it go. ■

