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## New car review: Nissan Maxima 350L

By *Liz Dobson*

Large cars are about as politically correct as admitting you smack your kids on the hand now and then, or you're a member of a gun club. If it's not small, a hybrid or a totally recyclable smartcar then you may as well change your name to Osama Bin Laden and be done with it. But when it comes to Nissan's large sedan, the Maxima, it's worth being picketed by greenies as the 2009 model is one of the best cars of the year.

The Maxima has evolved from a moderate sized sedan to a beefed up sizeable saloon. But Nissan is taunting those greenies by pricing the Maxima from \$43,495 for the 250-L and \$46,995 for my test vehicle, the top of the range 3.5-litre Limited.

For about the same price, you'd get the Honda Civic Sport or a Mazda3, both considerably smaller sedans.

The souped up 350-L has a dazzling array of standard features – intelligent key, sunroof, six airbags, leather seats, TSC and VDC, audio and cruise control on the steering wheel, a sexy boot lip spoiler, and six disc stereo.

But take away the toys and you still get an impressive large sedan.

Loaded with kids and gear for a weekend away, I took the 350-L from Auckland to Taupo, and after many years of many road trips in many vehicles, the Maxima provided one of the best rides ever.

There were the 17in wheels, the Xtronic CVT transmission and torque of 326Nm that gave the oomph when needed but it was the smooth ride due to the D-platform the Maxima shares with the Murano SUV that provided the driving refinement.

There was legroom galore, a huge boot and a car that is easy to drive – and despite its size, simple to park and manoeuvre. This was one smooth operator that deserves more respect in the market than it's getting.

**FACTS:** 3.5-litre, priced from \$46,995.

**BUYERS:** Sales reps, lifestyle block owners, Waikato farmers

**COMPETITION:** Price-wise, sits with the Civic and Mazda3 but size-wise the Toyota Camry, Holden Commodore, and Ford Falcon. ☺

