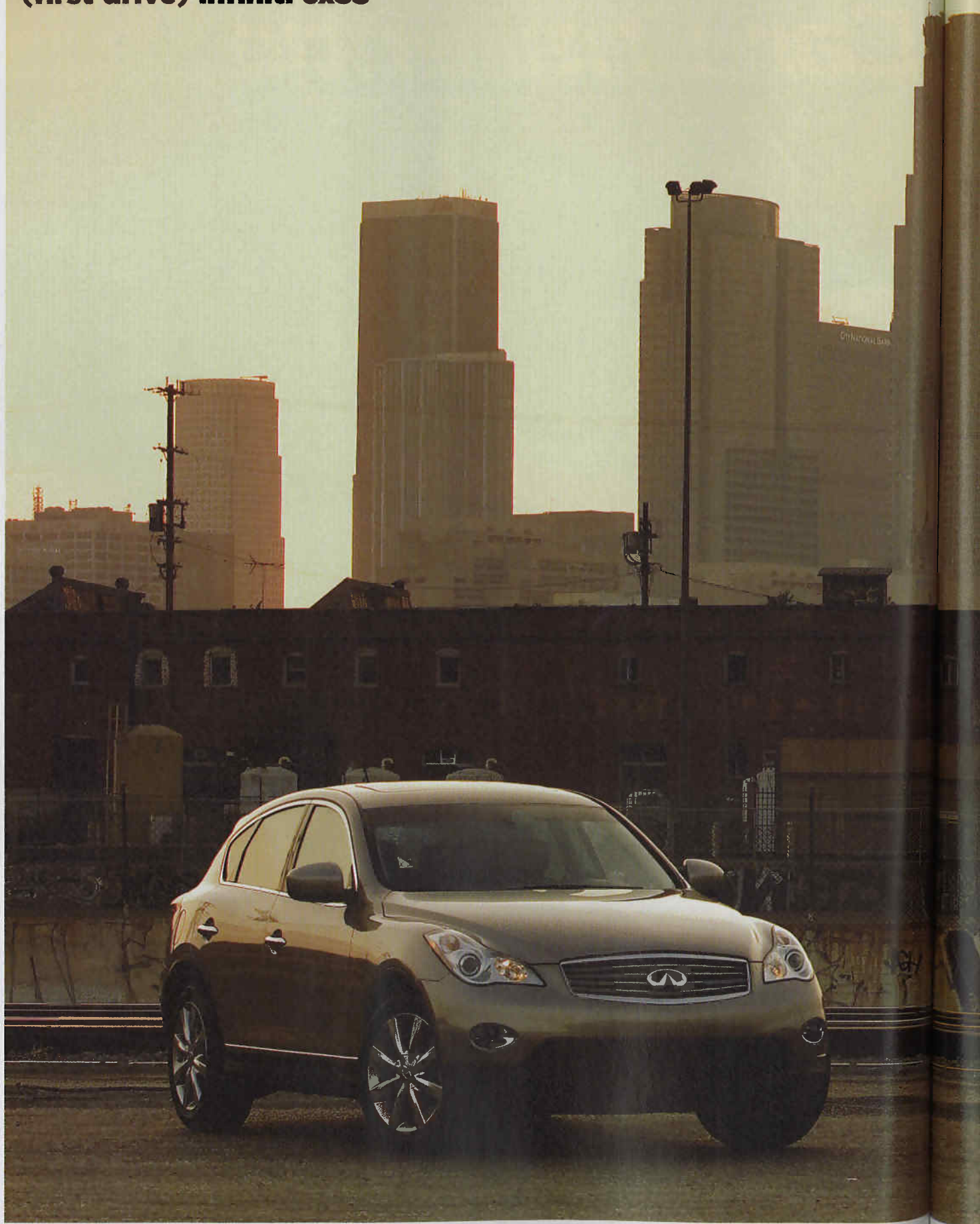


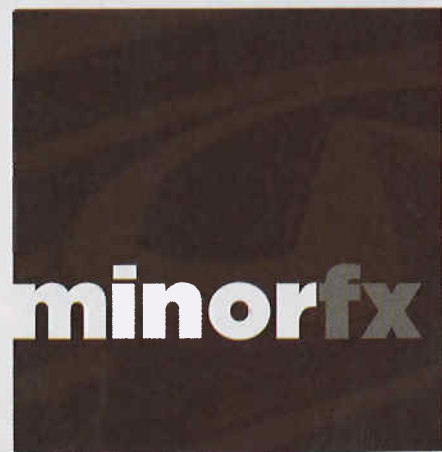
(first drive) infiniti ex35





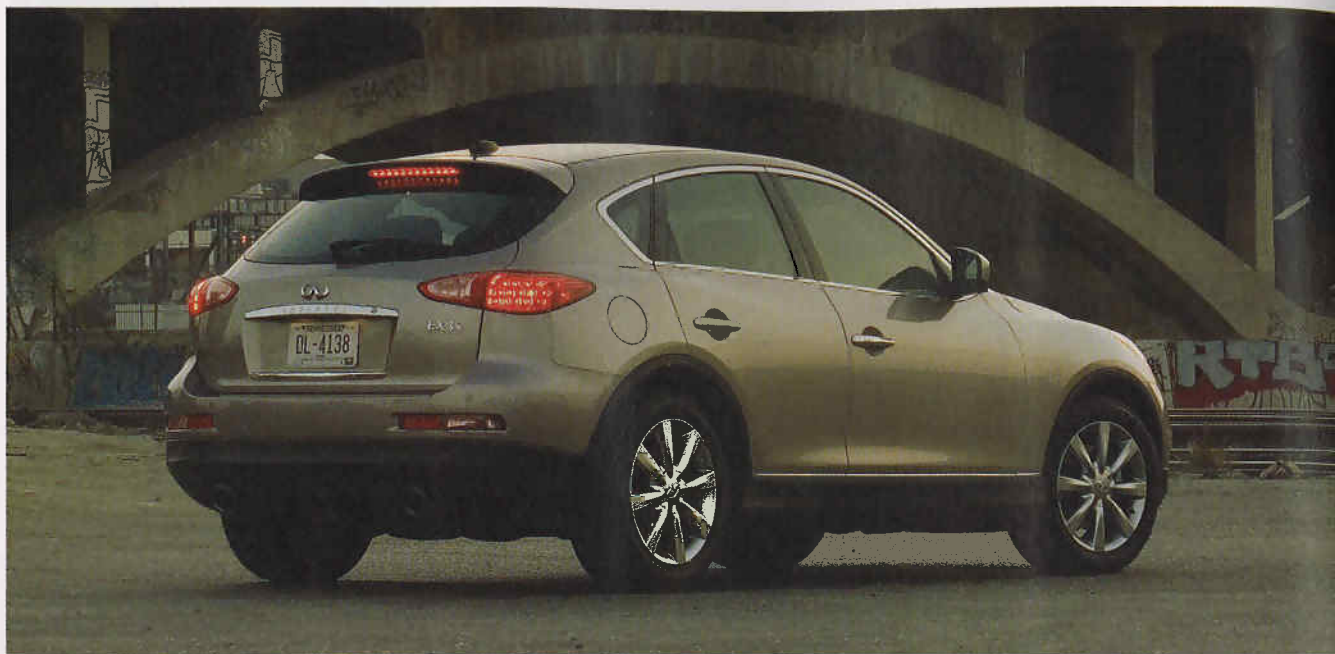
BRINGING
SPORT
AND STYLE
TO THE
COMPACT
CROSSOVER

■ words **ron kiino**
■ photographs **julia lapalme**



minorfx

(first drive) infiniti ex35



EVER SINCE Nissan introduced the front-mid (FM) platform back in 2002, it's been the automaker's saving grace, underpinning a host of significant vehicles—namely, the iconic 350Z sports car and Infiniti's core models, the G and M sedans and the FX

sport/utility—and catapulting the brand back to competitive excellence. For Infiniti, this robust, adaptable architecture has garnered not only high praise (we declared the new G37 coupe superior to the benchmark BMW 335i in an August comparison test) but also

strong sales (the G and the FX represent the brand's top-selling car and sport/utility) that resurrected the make and kept it from swirling down the drain.

So imagine our delight when Infiniti announced at last April's New York auto show that, beginning late this month, it would start selling a fresh FM-based sport/ute combining the style of a G coupe with the utility of an FX sport/ute. Naturally, our anticipation was high, especially since picturing this chic crossover was as easy as staring at the handsome EX Concept slowly pirouetting on the turntable.

Built by a company devoted to style, the new EX35 embodies plenty of it, evidenced by an arching, coupelike roofline, a double-arch grille, L-shaped headlamps, and aggressive proportions highlighted by a long hood, short overhangs, and a rearward cabin. The EX measures 182.3 inches long (1.6 inches longer than an Acura RDX), 71.0 inches wide (2.6 narrower), and only 61.9 inches tall (3.3 shorter), and as a result looks more like a G35 hatchback than an FX wannabe. Indeed, the EX isn't even as tall as Volvo's new XC70 wagon, which stands 1.2 inches higher. However classified, the EX is nevertheless a sleek, muscular vehicle, certainly with its "Fluid Finish" paint job. Codeveloped by Nissan and Nippon Paint, this new technology consists of an elastic self-healing, scratch-resistant resin that's applied to the paint and, depending on temperature and scratch depth, can repair itself within a week. No shortcomings here, but the EX's style and size do have theirs: Rear-seat legroom, at 28.5 inches, pales to the 37.7 in the RDX, and the meager 16.8 cubic feet of cargo volume



LUXE ELITE interior and Around View Monitor distinguish EX from other CUVs.

