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2009 - Mitsubishi Galant 4dr Sedan **Distinctive looks and great value.**

Overview

The Mitsubishi Galant stands out in a world full of competent four-door sedans in a couple of ways. From the outside, it has a distinctive look that won't get lost in a parking lot. And when it comes time to sign the contract and make the monthly payments, the new owner should appreciate the solid value represented by the Galant and its healthy complement of features, all at an attractive price. The midsize Galant is offered in a range of trim levels, with a four-cylinder or a choice of two V6 engines, a long list of standard equipment and some worthwhile options.

It also includes all the expected safety features today's buyers want. It delivers responsive performance, crisp handling and notable fuel efficiency, in a tidy, yet roomy package. Last redesigned for the 2004 model year, the Galant was substantially upgraded for 2007. Changes for 2009 are, for the most part, in the areas of upgrades to features and some option packages. For 2009, the Sport Edition and Sport V6 trim levels have 18-inch alloy wheels and appropriate suspension enhancements. Bluetooth availability has been added, and the navigation system, available on the Ralliart trim level, includes a rear-view backup camera integrated into the display. There is also the availability of remote start.

Model Lineup

The Mitsubishi Galant is available in four trim levels; the ES, Sport Edition, Sport V6 and Ralliart. The Galant ES (\$21,249) and Sport Edition (\$22,999) are powered by a 160-horsepower, 2.4-liter four-cylinder engine and come standard with a four-speed automatic transmission.

Mitsubishi's Sportronic system, which allows semi-manual shifting when desired, is standard on all Galants. Standard equipment on the ES includes air conditioning, height-adjustable driver's seat, height-adjustable steering wheel, power windows, mirrors and door locks with remote keyless entry, 140-watt six-speaker AM/FM/CD stereo, rear-seat heater ducts, carpeted floor mats, an engine immobilizer, cruise control, and anti-lock brakes with Electronic Brake-force Distribution. Standard tires are P215/60R16 all-season radials on steel wheels. Optional on the ES is the Accessory Leather Seating Surfaces package (\$1,399). The Sun, Sound, Leather and Blue Package (\$2,750) includes a Rockford Acoustic Design Audio System with 360 watts and a six-disc CD changer, Sirius Satellite Radio, sport steering wheel with audio controls, heated front seats and side mirrors, power driver's seat, fog lamps, automatic climate control, HomeLink, theft deterrent, P215/55R17 tires on 17-inch alloy wheels, and other convenience and trim features. The Sport Edition adds automatic climate-control air conditioning, a power sunroof, fog lamps, 18-inch alloy wheels with P235/45R18 tires, power and heated driver's seat, auto-dimming rear-view mirror with HomeLink, and a color-keyed rear spoiler. Optionally available on the Sport Edition is the Accessory Leather Seating Surfaces package. The Sport V6 (\$24,999) is powered by a 230-hp, 3.8-liter V6 with a five-speed automatic transmission with the Sportronic feature. It is basically the same trim level as the Sport Edition, but the instrument panel has white-faced gauges with orange lighting, and the front brakes are larger. In addition, the Sport V6 includes the 360-watt Rockford Acoustic Design Audio System. Optional on the Sport V6 is the Accessory Leather Seating Surfaces package. The Ralliart (\$27,649) is powered by a 258-hp, 3.8-liter V6 with the five-speed Sportronic automatic, a sports suspension and upgraded brakes.

The Ralliart has a unique look inside and out. Upholstery is perforated leather, and the pedals are aluminum. Generally, all of the equipment that is standard on the other trim levels is also included with

the Ralliart, and optionally available is a DVD navigation system with a seven-inch touch screen and a rear-view camera (\$1,700). Safety features include dual-stage front airbags, side-curtain airbags, front seat-mounted side-impact airbags, four-wheel disc brakes with anti-lock (ABS) and Electronic Brake-force Distribution (EBD), and a tire-pressure monitor.

Walkaround

The Mitsubishi Galant makes a strong styling statement. Not everyone agrees on the success of the design, but there's no disputing it's different. The front end has an outline of chrome around the grille and distinctive headlamps that cover the forward edges of the front fenders. In profile, the Galant's long, wedgy stance avoids the boring box-on-box look commonly associated with conservative midsize sedans.

The roofline picks up from the graceful sweep of the hood and arcs cleanly over perfectly proportioned side windows. Door handles integrate nicely into the design while providing an easy grasp. Wheel arches are mildly blistered and boldly circular, wrapping concentrically around the tires. The deck lid seems somewhat truncated, as if it were abruptly chopped off; the aerodynamicists argue this works well in a wind tunnel, but it can be a bit of a visual hiccup.

The Ralliart is distinguished mainly by its larger wheels and tires.

Interior

The Galant has a roomy, comfortable interior. The seats are supportive without being overly firm. A dead pedal is provided and positioned well, giving the driver a place to brace the left leg when cornering or for reduced strain on long trips. Roominess is comparable to that of the Chevrolet Malibu and the Nissan Altima, placing the Galant among the roomier sedans in the class.

Visibility is good all around, notably to the rear quarters, thanks to slim C-pillars, and the high beltline gives passengers a secure feeling. The Galant is easy to operate. Controls are right-sized and easy to use, with knobs, buttons, and rocker switches galore. The heating and air conditioning controls are big and easy to operate, even while wearing gloves, but the air conditioning indicator can be difficult to see in bright sunlight. The dash has a certain clinical look, but is friendly to the eyes.

Keyless-entry controls are integrated into the key, eliminating the need for a separate fob. The quality of materials is quite good. Each door has a storage pocket, and two medium-size cupholders are molded into the front center console rearward of the shift gate. The Ralliart has perforated leather-trimmed seating surfaces, along with heated front seats and automatic climate control.

The Rockford Acoustic Design audio system features a linear eight-channel amplifier that produces 360 watts continuous at less than 0.02 percent total harmonic distortion (THD). A dedicated channel drives each loudspeaker. The rear seat in all Galants is roomy, though the seating position is low and the bottom cushions could offer more thigh support. Rear-seat passengers enjoy decent headroom in spite of the dramatically sloping roofline. The trunk is slightly on the small side, and the trunk opening is a bit restricted. In addition, the Galant's rear seats cannot be folded down to extend cargo space.

Driving Impression

The Mitsubishi Galant delivers a smooth, quiet ride, thanks at least in part to its stiff platform, wide stance and long wheelbase. Minimal noise leaks into the cabin, just a slight rumble from the tires and a discernible whistle from the mirrors at highway speeds. The 2.4-liter four-cylinder engine develops 160 horsepower at 5500 rpm and 155 pound-feet of torque at 4000 rpm, competitive figures for the class. It features Mitsubishi Innovative Valve timing and lift Electronic Control (MIVEC), which switches between two cam profiles for optimum power, response, and efficiency at high and low engine speeds. It's a

sophisticated setup. The four-speed automatic transmission shifts smoothly, although it does hunt a bit in hilly territory. In the normal mode, it shifts automatically. With the Sportronic feature, it can be switched into a semi-manual mode. It will not shift up or down automatically when in the manual mode, so the driver has full control over shifting. The V6 in the Sport V6 model makes freeway merging easy, and passes on two-lane roads are completed without drama.

It's rated at 230 horsepower and a substantial 250 pound-feet of torque, so the Sport V6 Galant gets away from intersections and up hills with a welcome response. Premium fuel is recommended. The V6 models come with traction control, which can selectively apply the brakes at one or more wheels and/or reduce engine power to control wheelspin on slippery surfaces. It's especially useful in the rain, but even in dry weather can eliminate annoying screeches when taking off from intersections.

The five-speed automatic transmission with Sportronic also features a manual override. For its size and heft, the Galant feels decently planted on all but the most twisting roads. The Ralliart handles well, with crisp precision, and rides quite nicely. It features higher-rate springs and shock absorbers, along with a 21-mm rear anti-roll bar. The Ralliart V6 uses the MIVEC system and a slightly higher compression (10.5 vs. 10.0:1) to boost its output to 258 horsepower at 5750 rpm and 258 pound-feet of torque at 4500. It's a smooth, powerful engine.

Mitsubishi says it develops 220 pound-feet of torque at just 2000 rpm, which makes for a smooth, responsive engine when riding around town, yet it's not annoyingly jumpy with an overly sensitive throttle, as some performance cars can be. Mitsubishi claims the Galant Ralliart can sprint from zero to 60 mph in about seven seconds, which is a fine performance. Brake feel is solid and reassuring.

Anti-lock brakes with Electronic Brake-force Distribution (EBD) are standard on all models; the EBD proportions braking pressure between the front and rear wheels depending on how the car is loaded, and adjusts stopping pressure dynamically as weight shifts forward under hard braking. The idea is to send the brake pressure to the wheels with the most weight on them, which is where it can do the most good. This gives the Galant stable braking performance.

Summary

The Mitsubishi Galant represents a viable alternative among midsize sedans. It does everything you would reasonably expect of it, rides well, is roomy and comfortable, and is enjoyable to drive. It's also very price-competitive and offers a wide array of features, both standard and optional, that make it a solid value for the money. NewCarTestDrive correspondent Tom Lankard reported from San Francisco, with Mitch McCullough reporting from Los Angeles.

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