

This is the letter that I sent to MR. Pine to comply with this site's requirements before I posted.

He returned my email in about an hour, expressed his sympathy, but let me know that since he was unable to do anything personally, that he had forwarded my letter and wished me luck.

This letter explains everything that happened. Please post as much as you can

Hello Mr. Pine.

I am writing you pretty much just to dot all the I's and cross all the t's before I post a report.

Considering what has already happened, I doubt very much that the outcome will change, but here is the review.

In early October, I bought a dodge magnum R/T from Gary Mathews dodge on Ashland city highway. My salesman was Christopher Poe. Let me first off say that I was highly satisfied by my purchase experience. Chris was excellent, helpful, and direct. I had talked with him once, and when I returned with a check, and my maximum price, he got me out the door with it in less than 3 hours. The only problem that I had was that he never told me that when I had warranty coverage work, rentals were not covered. However, when I brought this concern up to him (when I found out about it) he promised that should I need a rental car, he would take care of it. The reason why this was important to me will be explained later. He has also on occasion price matched with other dodge dealerships so that I could keep my business strictly with Gary Mathews motors.

Now I will tell you of some of my problems with the service department. please understand that some of the problems within the time frame of others, so some of this will be completely linear, and some will be afterthoughts, backtracks, and recaps.

After I purchased the car, I started having a few problems. This I expected. I even discussed this with Chris before I bought it. I new that there was no way that DCX could shake all the bugs out of a new platform before it came to market. That's just the way it is. So when the problems arose, I took it to Gary Mathews service dept. Within the first month, I noticed a sharp right pull. I had also heard that there was a recall for camber alignment bolts. I took my car in, and asked that the recall be done. When I came back, I was informed that the car was aligned, and tires rotated, but that I did not need the bolts due to the construction date on my car. Though I was skeptical, I went on my way.

Fast forward about a month or so, and I am preparing to leave for a trip from Clarksville to upstate NY, by way of Nashville I-40 to I-81, about 1200 miles of nonstop highway driving. Somewhere around the middle of December, I stop by to get my 6k services done. I then leave the next day for this trip.

While up north, I put a few hundred miles on the car, and then return. I stop at a rest stop on the way back, about 10 days after the service, to notice that the outside edge of my tires are feathered and worn so badly that the outside tread lines are gone (Contiseals). I call from right there to tell them the problem, and am told to bring it in when I get home.

I get it in for its nine 9 service maybe 2 weeks or so after it left for its 6k service, and advise them of the tire and alignment issue (right pull is still

there. They told me it would track, but after a week or so, I knew it wasn't tracking, it was still pulling). When I return to pick it up, I was told two things that just floor me. One, the car needed new camber bolts and that they had been installed and the car aligned, so I shouldn't have any more problems. When I asked if those were the same camber alignment bolts that I told them I needed in October, all three of the counter people looked at me like I was speaking Greek, then proceeded to have no memory of the incident (strange though, they know me by my name and car). The other thing that they told me was that the wear on the tire was caused by low pressure in the tires, which were at about 10 and 15 psi all around. This really irritated me, as I have been building cars for street and strips for more than a decade and knew this to be a bold face lie. Neither of the back tires had the abnormal wear, and low tire pressure is very easy to see (tread wear on both the outside edges). but I couldn't get angry at my service rep, Kathy, as when I took her outside to make her look at the tire, it became obvious that she had no clue about tire wear, and was just repeating what she had been told (although, I did get angry about having to give an oral report on tire wear to a dealership employee to get warranty work done). At that point, I felt lucky to get the worst tire replaced. Tires rotated car aligned, I'm out the door. I know at least one of my tires is headed for a very early grave, but I'm pretty sure as long as the car is fixed, I should have an easy 6-8 months on the bad tire, and at least 15months left on the others.

Now here's where it starts to go really downhill. A few weeks later, I hit a nail. A lot of r/t owners had already let me know that the "self sealing" facet of the tire was bad, but now I got to see it myself. Backing out of my driveway, I hit the nail, and the tire deflated like a balloon. No biggie, I have dealership services, which means that repair is covered by the Krexx roadside thing. I put the spare tire on, and limp the 1/4 mile down the hill to the dealership. After a leisurely 2 hour wait, my tire is fixed (no plug, they said they had to break it down from the rim and patch it) and I'm out the door. Now keep in mind that since my last fateful trip to the dealer, I have included my magnum in my Saturday morning ritual of tire pressure along with my other four cars, because I'd be darned if they were ever going to try and run that game on me again. Well by the time Saturday had rolled around, I had driven 60 miles a day to work and back, made a trip to Nashville and one to Louisville or Memphis that week. When I checked the tire that they had patched, the first thing I noticed was that the tread was all the way down to the wear bar. When I put the stick gauge on it, it went off the end. So I grab a dial gauge, and it read 67 psi!! Having worked in a NY state garage doing tires, the reason was simple and clear. The tire bead had been set with higher pressure, and never brought back down before they put it back on the car!!!

So first I talked with...I believe his name was David. He was one of the service reps. The service manager wasn't there on the day I went in, but I was told I could speak with him, and it would have the same effect. I told him of the problems with the tires (and of the other problems which I will get to in a minute), and most importantly the latest issue, and how I was quickly losing faith in their dept.

I told him that I would be taking my tires to an outside shop, as well as the alignment, as I had absolutely no faith in them for that any more, but that I was just there to give them a warning that they needed to wake up and get their service techs under control if they wanted to keep my business.

He thanked me for bringing my concerns to his attention, and I went on my way.

We have a local firestone that I take all my cars to for a lifetime alignment. It's the one on riverside, and right now I currently have my three street ready cars on their books (the magnum just got done in the last week). I would be happy to give you their number so you can check this for yourself. I consider that to be a very worthy purchase, and usually recommend it whenever I sell a car.

I trust them, and was waiting anxiously for them to get the new specs in for my Magnum (the only reason it wasn't done right after I bought it). As I was pricing tires and waiting on the new specs, I watched my tires accelerated wear and became more and more upset over the money that I was spending on a car that was less than 8 months old. The more I thought about it, the more I came to realize that if you spend over thirty thousand dollars on a car, you shouldn't have to spend close to a thousand dollars on it right afterwards. Especially not on something that you've taken the car in for before, and for something that dozens of other magnum and 300 owners have been complaining about for months.

Also, I took it in for either its 9k or 12 services, and used the drop off. There were a few minor warranty things that I listed on the drop off car, as well as mentioning in fairly straightforward print that the right pull was still there, please take care of it. When I came to pick up the car, no mention of the right pull issue was made, and when I asked, I was told no one knew anything about it

So this time I write a letter to DC customer service. They respond by asking me to call. When I call up, they point the finger at the dealer and tell me to deal with them, or go to the next closest dealer, thirty miles away. When I return to the dealer, I talk with the service manager, who tells me a few things (on my first visit). Most of these I can recall pretty much word for word, as they are burned into my memory like watching a car wreck.

a) "As far as the over inflated tire goes, I know that the service tech could not have put the tire on like that. Before he can balance the tire he has to let the extra pressure out. I'm not even going to speculate how the extra pressure got in your tire"

This first comment spoke volumes. With his demeanor, and those words, this is what I heard.

"You have no proof that our guy did it. You're either lying or my guy did it, but there's no way I'm going to even admit that was a possibility because that would mean we should replace your tire". I mean really, how does almost an extra 40 psi get into a tire?

Next as I was telling him about taking Kathy out to show here the tire and explain the tire wear. He breaks in as soon as I say her name, and says....

b)"we're not going to talk about Kathy. At all. This is about your tires."now I could see if I was speaking badly of her, calling her names or saying that she was a bad employee. (I do think maybe she is a little under qualified for the position, but never said it before.

I learned quickly that the counter people seem to be more customer service reps than anything else, and stopped expecting them to know anything about the cars). But I never said anything of the sort, nor did I even intimate that I would. He simply interrupted in the middle of my sentence to tell me that.

What he did, was tell me in one short sentence that the reputation of the staff was more important than the job they were supposed to do, and that I better not have any problems with them.

The third thing was also irritating.

c) " I don't know what the decision will be, but I want to make sure we're clear. If we do align the car again, when you take it off the lot, we're done with it. If you have any more problems, you're going to have to take it to another dealer."

He seemed disinterested in the rest of the conversation, but when it came to that part, his attention was all there. I understand at a certain point, the dealership has to throw up their hands and concede defeat. Every shop has had a gremlin that bested them, and had to send the car somewhere else. But before he talked at all of anything they could do, he immediately went to what they couldn't/wouldn't do. And there wasn't any mention of trying something different, or any other possible approaches.

Just the fact that if they didn't fix it this time, they were done, and I shouldn't come back. That makes a customer feel really great.

There was other small talk. I asked about seeing the district service manager as none of my concerns up to this point had been resolved in house. He advised me that the district service manager never spoke with customers and that he would deliver my concerns to DC and the service manager and whatever decision they made, that would be it. There was also talk about the oil used in my car, to which he responded that there was a TSB that allowed them to use different grades other than the one the oil cap and owners manual specified. Since then I have gotten the TSB's, in full, and the only one that deals with oil viscosity is quite clear. TSB 09-015-04 dated November 4, 2004 states that vehicles with the 5.7 MDS system must use 5w-20, and that failure to do so may cause improper operation of the MDS (please note that the must is in big bold print on the TSB as well. So why do all my service tickets say 5w30? I was told they could and that they do it because bulk oil is cheaper. But at 40 dollars for an oil change, and a TSB saying MUST use 5w20...but that part is of small consequence. By itself, I'd let it go. But it's just another piece of the story.

Anyway, back on track, and long story short, I was advised by phone a few days later that my request was denied, that my tires and alignment were my own problem. When I advised the service manager that meant the dealership would never see a dime of my service or sales money ever again, he said that was fine. (Keep in mind that there was no profanity or yelling, I said what I said like I was telling him that I would be in tomorrow for services, and he responded with the same nonchalant air.) I then hung up the phone and have not been back.

Since then Firestone has received their specs. I had the car aligned, and a week later put on new tires. And guess what. The problem is gone. funny thing was, while it was the camber that pulled it, it was the toe being set almost 3 times its max limit that shredded the tires. They pulled most of the camber out on the first run, and then when I had tires put on, they pulled the rest out while it was hanging. The car now has normal crown sensitivity. Right pull is gone, and 500 miles later, not a bit of feathering. I will attach a scanned copy of the original alignment. Amazing how a proper alignment and camber bolts in October could have prevented all this.

Now that was the tire saga. I told you that in its entirety to keep it together. But there have been other smaller issues that have plagued my relationship with your company along the way.

One day around Oct/ Nov, I'm clued into the fact that some magnum owners are having problems with their fog lights. It seems that on some of the earlier builds, there is a problem with the fog light lenses developing striated cracks. I go check mine, and sure enough, there are what look to be cracks all over my fog lights. I take it to the dealership, and the first thing I am told is that its not going to be covered, I've obviously been driving on gravel roads. I'm also told this must be the case as they have never seen any of the other cars do this.

At this point, I was smiling and congenial on the outside but boiling inside. Not only was this during the hemi shortage when r/t's were on a months long waiting list, but they had just come out. Even now, I've seen only a few in the whole area. I wanted to scream "of course you've never seen it; you've barely sold any of them!" But I didn't.

What I did was take the car home, and washed and waxed it till it shined. I then got the names, VIN's and dealerships with numbers of the other owners and took that back to the dealer. First I made them come look at the front end to tell me how enough gravel could hit my fog lights to cause that many cracks without causing a single chip in the paint, or even a scar on the fog light backings. I then gave them the list of the magnums and dealerships and invited them to call them to verify. I got my fog lights, but if I hadn't been willing to battle for them, or been in contact with enough people to prove my case, I would have had to eat 400 for the new lights, and god knows how much to put them in, on a car not even two months old.

Next comes the lower engine shield. There is a plastic plate on the bottom of the engine to protect it from road debris and channel air to cool the xmsn fluid. One day on i-24 going from Wilma Rudolph to fort Campbell, I oblige a friend's request, and run it from 70 to 120 and back again. as I bring it back down, I immediately know something isn't right, but cant tell what and don't want to clue my friend in that there might be something broken on the brand new car I've been bragging on for the last few weeks.

But when we get to work, the problem is obvious. Something is dragging. And at this point, has been for the better part of ten miles. when we get to the parking lot, I head to my place right off the asphalt on the far back end of the parking lot (people around here seem to ding doors all the time, and at 7 months, I'm happy to report my almost neurotic parking habits have kept my baby completely ding free) get out and look under the car. Sure enough, the front of the plate blew off. I called from work, and was told to bring it in. I bring it in and am told that it's destroyed, and since I've been driving around on it like that, obviously on gravel roads (what is it with this gravel road thing? I haven't been on a gravel road in years, nor would I in this car at all) that it would not be covered, and it would be 124 bucks to order the part.

Now at this point, I do get irate. No cussing temper fit irate, but I do get irate. After a short call to DC, they agree to fix it.

Fast forward to march 26th. I've got the car in for 12k services. About a week before, I'm again on i-24, and again take it up to about 120. This time the engine cover did not rip off, but after that I notice that it would rub on things it never did. When I reached up under the bumper, it felspongy. I did

not however, put it on a jack to get all the way under and inspect it. So when I take it in, I tell them the same, and could they please look at it while it's up there. Later I am told that they looked at the engine cover, no problems.

A week later, I am on the highway at the speed limit, and my cover starts flapping. This time I go straight to the dealer, and sure enough the cover is screwed up. Not dragging, but came loose to flap.

Not only was I angry that it wasn't fixed the first time, but now I was out of work for something that should have already been taken care of. The kicker to this story? This weekend I came due on my 15k services. While I was still waiting for my cabin filter to arrive, I decided to go ahead and do the oil change (I had the first four done at Gary Mathews, but since the tire issue, I haven't been back)

What should I find when I get up under the car, but that one of the front bolts for the cover is NOT the right bolt. Takes a half a second to put two and two together. The new bolt has not only a smaller head with a torx fitting, but the washer is half the size it should be. The washer that keeps the oversized whole in the engine cover from slipping off the bolt! Next up, even though the cover has large print in 3 inch letters saying torque to 35 in lbs, I found drag torque ranging from 10 to 60 in lbs!

Ridiculous. But that last part I take with a grain of salt as I simply try to clean up the mess Gary Mathews motors has made of simple maintenance. Things like that and the oil drain pan bolt torqued down to about 50 ft lbs (DC manual says 27)

Anyway, on to the little issues. These may be a part of most dealerships, but so far as I've seen, overall, the service dept here ranks second only to the Mitsubishi dealer down on riverside. Those guys were so awful I started dealing with Hayes out of Nashville till they changed ownership. As chance would have it I've been to the parts dept at Mathews vw/kia and always found them to be top notch.

Anyways....

I could bring the car in without notice, or make an appointment days ahead, for the crack of dawn with understanding that I need to bring it in without waiting all day. Even a 3k service would take hours.

For a few of the warranty issues, the car would sit for days because parts were ordered. One time it was almost a week when I called, to find out the parts wouldn't be there for a while, and it was just sucking up space on the dealer lot, but you've got a rental, right? Sorry guys, but I didn't buy a magnum hemi to be stuffed into a stratus coupe (incidentally, just an awful car. my wife and I felt like canned lunch meat in that thing) and then finding out one time after taking time off from work to drop the car off on a weekday because they only do services on Saturday, that they put my parts on Saturday morning, thanks a bunch. looking over my shoulder at days of sitting time when I listen to the service rep saying their bad, I don't actually have rental comp, but since I'm dropping it off waiting on parts(cold chills) could they give me a ride somewhere?) Oil on the engine shroud, grease mark on the ceiling, dirt on the leather (ok, it's white leather; I can't hold that against anyone. I can barely keep that stuff clean),

asking a question and getting vacant looks, everything I mentioned above, and other things that I can't remember the details well enough to justify.

When I bought the car I was happy. I loved that car, I loved telling people that I loved the car, and convinced at one of my coworkers to buy one (from Sisk though, sorry. he lives in hoptown). This car costs more than double what my last car cost, and I didn't bat an eyelash when I signed the check. I loved the car when I bought it, and still do. And for the longest time, I tried to brag not only on the car, but on Gary Mathews as well. I would gloss over certain things thinking that it wasn't that bad, and nothing was perfect. When coworkers and friends would clown me about all my trips to the dealer, I reminded them that this was a first year production, and that there were bound to be small issues, that

I bought the car knowing that, its a sound car, a beautiful car, and the beginning of the new trend of "classics" 20 years from now(which I still believe. little things like the change to prop rods from hood struts, or my r/t cupholder with no door that they changed halfway thru first year production will serve only to make my baby more rare). I played up all of the strong points and downplayed the bad. I love having people stop me at gas stations, and the Pennsylvania trooper that pulled me over just to look at the car...even if it was 30 degrees out.

But now when people ask about my baby, the story has changed. I tell them I love the car. But I also tell them I wouldn't recommend it due to the way I have been hung out to dry by DC and Gary Mathews. I tell them about how getting anything fixed is a battle, and how most of my trips there are unpleasant.

Is it easy to say such things? No, not at all. You may think it's easy to bash a company out of hand, but not so. I spent so much time talking up the car and the dealership, that now I look like a fool.

And even without that, no one wants to admit that they gave thousands of dollars to a business that turned around and treated them badly. It makes a person look very bad. I have not only time and money by dealing with this dealership; I have also lost some credibility with my friends and family.

This was the first DC product I ever bought. While I consider the DSM (mitsu) motors to be stout, for some reason they seemed not to last too long when placed in a DCX vehicle. I'd worked on enough stratus' and seebrings to loath them altogether, and the 420A engine that they put in the eclipses was the worst things ever to hit that platform. Some of the things that convinced me to give DC another look was when I heard about them cutting ties with mitsu and working more with MB. While the WAG has had some problems in the last decade, I still think German engineering is some of the best. And this car seemed to herald in a new age of Chrysler.

Now understand that I feel that way about the car. But due to the problems with DC and the dealer, this will probably be the last DC car that I purchase. And it will definatly be the last one I purchase from Gary Mathews motors. While my wife still wants a charger, my issue with the magnum has given her pause for a year or so to see if there are similar issues, and maybe to buy one used from somewhere else. I feel bad about depriving Chris repeat sales as he was outstanding at his job, but Gary Mathews will not see another dime of my money. I have started ordering most of my maintenance parts from Sisk in Hopkinsville and the rest of my parts come from the dealership running the Mopar Super Center out of PA.

As I stated before, I don't expect you to do anything. I expected somebody to do something on all the occasions leading up to this point. I have already eaten the almost 700 dollars for new tires and alignment that I shouldn't have had to. I just hope that you take this as a wake up call. as well as posting on the dodgram.info website, I will also be sending a letter to the BBB, the consumer advocacy office on post, and wherever else that may be appropriate. Seeing as I have now placed this on the back burner, it may be a week or two before I get to it.

Sorry if the letter was so long. I just wanted you to get the full gist, and apologize for any eye strain you may have gotten in the process.

Sincerely,
Jesse Vanfleet

Clarksville TN 37040

P.S Its been about a week or more since the first time I tried to send this email to you. Since then

I have put a grand total of just under 1000 miles on the new tires, including a trip to Louisville. I still have no more right pull, and for the first time since I owned the car, no abnormal wear on the tires. None. So please do not respond with the "extra camber in turns" or the "high performance tires do this" comments that some of my friends have been hearing from their dealerships. It simply came down to getting a proper alignment.

You're more than welcome to call firestone to check on the validity of the alignment spec I am sending you, or even inspect the new tires I have on the car in person. It's up to you.

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