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Whatâ€™s Behind the Parts Put Into Your Car?

Itâ€™s no secret that more and more of the stuff we buy is being made cheaply overseas (China to name one). Iâ€™m not knocking all overseas manufacturing; certainly many countries and companies produce high quality premium goods. Iâ€™m talking about poorly made overseas â€œreplacementâ€• part automobiles and trucks.

I recently had the opportunity to look at two water pumps for the same car. One was the factory original equipment replacement and the other an inexpensive auto parts store replacement. The parts store pump had obvious indications of low quality in the housing casting. The water inlet and outlet necks had visible voids in the castings and there was some kind of discoloration in the aluminum at spots that I couldnâ€™t tell if it was corrosion or a materials issue.

We disassembled both pumps and right away found another differenceâ€”the bolts. We were taking the parts store pump apart and one of the bolts holding the impeller cover in place snapped off when we started to unbolt it. Looking at it we could see that the bolt had been over tightened when it was installed and was just waiting to fail. That would have been unpleasant when it failed miles from home somewhere, and given Murphyâ€™s law you know that that would have occurred at the worst possible time.

We tested and compared the materials of the impeller, housing and bolts of the two parts. The factory part was better on all fronts. The bolts were better made and harder, the housing was free of visible defects. The parts store pumpâ€™s impeller had two slightly nicked vanes. Would these have hurt anything in real world usage? We canâ€™t say for sure, but we can say they are indicative of an overall lack of attention to detail and quality with which we werenâ€™t satisfied.

I recently took my Infiniti G35 to get serviced at an Infiniti Express Service dealer. I needed an oil change and was in a hurry. I liked the idea of Infiniti factory certified technicians using genuine certified parts on my car. Plus, Infiniti Express Service claims they do a full vehicle inspection, change your oil and filters, wash your car and get you out of there in under an hour. And they are price competitive with cheapie oil change places. I had to check this out.

During the inspection the service technician brought me the air filter that was in the car. I had driven through a lot of dust while working in Las Vegas recently and it was clogged and needed replacement. The technician showed me the OE Infiniti replacement air filter he was going to put into the car. I asked to look at it for a moment. The last oil change I had was done at one of those quickie oil change places and they had put in the air filter. I looked at the generic air filter and the genuine Infiniti air filter side by side. The filter material was obviously of much lower quality on the generic one, it looked like large particles of dirt would easily pass through. Part of the filter media was pulling away from the rubber frame of the filter. Apparently, the glue or bonding material used to hold the media to the frame was insufficient on the generic one, and this created a small hole where unfiltered, dirty air was passing through into my engine.

The genuine Infiniti air filter was equipped with a sturdy and dense filter media, and the bonding between the media and the air filter frame was obviously heavy duty and robust. I felt good about this part going into my car.

The world is changing, even the automotive service world. If you havenâ€™t considered your vehicleâ€™s

dealership for service and repair, there are a lot of good reasons to reconsider.

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