

Success built on shocks

BY HONG BOON HOW

IN his younger days MPD Auto Centre Sdn Bhd technical director Richard How loved to experiment and race radio-controlled cars.

To him, a radio-controlled car was a miniaturised Formula One racer, where the suspension settings can be altered to give better cornering or straight-line stability to suit the track circuits.

How, who hails from Ulu Yam, Selangor, learnt through trial and error the importance of correct camber, castor and dampener settings to yield the best handling.

In fact, he was so serious about the hobby that he was crowned the Malaysian radio controlled car champion from 1990 to 1992.

Back then, How was just an automotive mechanic who learnt the trade working at repair shops.

It never occurred to him then, that the experience he gained from toying with radio-controlled cars would form the foundation for his new business.

Having saved some money, How and his brother decided to set up a business to produce serviceable shock absorber and suspension components in 1999 and the Titan brand was born.

"At that time, there were many big companies producing shock absorbers for the original equipment and replacement markets," How said.

He said it would have been an uphill battle against the established companies had they offered a similar product to theirs.



How: 'We even have our shock absorbers installed in cars used in the local drifting competitions'

"So, we decided to go into the niche high-performance mono tube shock absorber business because such products were rare locally," he told *StarMotoring Magazine* in his workshop in Pandan Mewah, Ampang.

With no formal technical training, How started taking apart performance shock absorbers to find out

what made them tick.

However, in the first one and a half years of the operations, Titan shock absorbers were mainly sold to close friends.

"We encountered all sorts of problems then. Some told us that the shock absorbers were too stiff or soft, while others complained about hydraulic oil leakages.



A MPD Auto Centre Sdn Bhd technician grinding a Titan shock absorber component.

"We viewed the complaints as blessings in disguise as it enabled us to find out where we went wrong."

The company went back to the drawing board and redesigned some of the components. Better materials were also used subsequently and the company started selling its products to the public three years ago.

"Now, the quality of our products has improved significantly and we are using components made by reputable automotive component producers from Germany, Japan and Italy.

"We even have our shock absorbers installed in cars used in the local drifting competitions," he said.

Besides shock absorbers, How also sells Titan performance pillow ball mounts.

How said the main advantages of Titan shock absorbers over standard OEM types were that their dampening rates could be tuned to individual customer preferences.

Whether a customer wanted a firmer suspension which makes for sporty handling in his car or a more comfortable ride was something he could tailor quite precisely.

Every shock absorber has a life span. While other shock absorbers

are usually discarded when they reach the end of their service life, the Titans can be serviced and put back to use for a small fee.

He said the hydraulic fluid used in shock absorbers would thin out and lose its viscosity index after years of use.

"Although the oil has thinned out, the rest of the shock absorber body will still be in good condition. Why replace the whole unit?" he said.

"In the long run, customers will be able to save money as servicing their shock absorbers as it will be cheaper than replacing them with brand new ones," he said.

His Titan shock absorbers can be custom built to fit almost any type of car or sports utility vehicles, ranging from Proton, Perodua to Japanese and European makes.

Most of How's customers are from Malaysia although a number drive all the way from Singapore to change their absorbers.

He also accepts Titan shock absorber trade-ins from customers who are changing cars and want a matching set for their new wheels.

Contact MPD Auto Centre at tel: 03-42979878 or visit <http://titansuspension.com> for further information.