Grumpy Old Mechanic – “Because They Can…”

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Why do Car Manufacturers Employ Such Weird and Wonderful Fasteners, When Nuts and Bolts WithTraditional Hexagon Head Profiles (etc.) Worked Perfectly Well?

“Because They Can”, of course…

Our Grumpy Old Mechanic has been having a(nother) moan this week, due to the fact that in order to work on modern vehicles he needs to have at his disposal a wide range of various different types of spanner (all of them costly), to suit the huge number of similarly various fasteners encountered on modern vehicles. The same problem affects do-it-yourself mechanics too, of course.

“Why”, he asks, “Do they keep on re-inventing the wheel, when in most circumstances a conventional hexagon-headed nut/bolt assembly would have worked perfectly well?”.

Almost certainly in some cases this is done to discourage those other than franchised dealers to carry out any requisite work on the car or van in question, but whatever the reason, it can get very frustrating if you own such a vehicle.

Our Grumpy Mechanic cites just one example, in the shape of a Vauxhall Movano 2.2 DTi van (with a Renault-derived engine), on which the new owner wanted to change the engine oil and filter prior to a long continental trip. The first problem was that the sump plug featured an indented square of unusual dimensions, and no local tool stockists could assist with the correct size/profile sump plug removal tool. In addition, the oil filter casing needed to be opened up in order to extricate the renewable oil filter element. This proved impossible using all available conventional tools, due to the very large diameter of the filter housing and the ‘user-unfriendly’ type of end cap employed.

So the van’s owner gave up and this engine may well have been forced to run on old oil for another few thousand miles, had it not been for our Grumpy Mechanic, who came to the rescue with his wide range of ‘special’ tools that are ‘must-haves’ in his workshop.

Alas, whether you are a professional mechanic or maintain your own vehicle(s) at home, there is usually no alternative to playing the car makers’ games and equipping yourself with the special tools required. In many cases local motor accessory shops can come to the rescue with helpful, good quality sets of tools enabling a variety of fasteners to be tackled with confidence and ease! For example, the small set pictured was obtained from a local branch of Halfords and proved to be invaluable for coping with Allen keys and other fasteners found on a Peugeot. Without these the owner would have been stumped!