

MotorAge Top Shops 2007

Photos: Stewart's Automotive/Jayson Carpenter

- 1** Technician Mike Macias updates Lamborghini stock exhaust to Tubi exhaust.
- 2** Checking codes on a 2002 Bentley Arnage T.
- 3** Technician Paul Fletcher adjusts suspension for larger wheels on a Range Rover.
- 4** Apprentice Technician Matt McCormick checks the status of the readiness monitors on a Range Rover.
- 5** The exterior of the shop offers a nice backdrop for the 1963 Jaguar XKE.



STEWART'S AUTOMOTIVE

Great Expectations

New customers at Stewart's Automotive in Sacramento, CA, can be excused if they think the shop is going to the dogs because it is, quite literally. Greeting customers as they pass through the doors are the shop's furry goodwill ambassadors, Rover and Savannah. Neither dog is on the payroll (although they are quite well cared for), but their job still is quite important: Shake customers out of any angst they may have over repairs, and prepare them for a repair experience beyond their greatest expectations.

Certainly, customers everywhere share some misgivings when it comes to turning their cars over to a shop. According to owner Stewart Rosen, his customers have some "very high expectations" to go along with those fears. That's

thanks in large part to their choice in vehicles — European makes such as Ferrari, Jaguar, Land Rover, Maserati, Rolls Royce and Bentley, whose repair are Stewart's specialty.

Rosen meets these expectations by running an operation that offers everything a European dealership does. His shop utilizes the same factory test equipment as a dealership (for all his advertised brands), allowing him to perform every type of diagnostic service on-site. All his technicians are ASE-certified and receive significant on-the-job and dealer training. Thanks to these factors, Rosen says he has never had to tell a customer he can't perform a certain repair or service.

Away from bays, Stewart's strives to provide an equal-to- or better-than-dealership experience in the customer service

SHOP TALK

Name Stewart's Automotive
Location Sacramento, CA
Number of Shops 1
Years in Business 15
No. of Employees 7
No. of ASE-certified Employees 4
Sq. Footage 12,500
No. of Bays 14
Weekly Vehicle Volume 40
Average Repair Cost \$750
Annual Revenue \$1.565 million



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Motor-Age Top Shops 2007



- 6** Mike Kjerulff inspects an engine check light with a Ferrari tester.
- 7** Fletcher checking a land Rover for the infamous rear main seal leak.
- 8** Fletcher shows off his trusty Land Rover diagnostic tool.

department. All work is scheduled as quickly as possible to avoid having customers wait (something they might be forced to do for long periods at a dealership). Rosen says the shop attends to even the smallest aspects of the customer experience: Customers can opt for courtesy rides to and from work. Every repaired vehicle is delivered freshly washed. Customers also receive regular service reminders.

The better-than-dealer-level service is important to Stewart's customers because many buy their vehicles from lots hours away. Traversing such a distance for service (especially with a vehicle in need of repair) is an inconvenience some customers won't suffer. Instead, they take their business to Stewart's and pay for work rather than having it performed for free under warranty.

While some customers choose Stewart's as a convenient alternative to distant dealers, others are willing to travel significant distances and avoid dealers to do business with the shop. Customers now come from as far away as Las Vegas and Oregon for Stewart's services. This trend has helped convince Rosen to redirect his marketing efforts away from local print media and instead to the Internet and word of mouth, which now draw increasing numbers of clients.

Regardless of where they come from,

KEYS TO THE SHOP

Regardless of where they come from, Rosen says his customers learn one important lesson about service: Quality repairs need not cost a fortune, even on some of the most expensive production vehicles made today.

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Rosen eventually would like to spread that same message from other locations. Before expanding, however, he says he'd need certain assurances. Any future location would have to deliver the same level of dedicated, personalized service. Rosen says his dogs would have some input as well. Turns out they have their own expectations.

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