



GJD: What are some of the challenges in terms of buying parts for an amp builder?

BM: Well, let me give you an example. I just bought a batch of caps and used them in one of my client's new amps. After I finished building it, the amp just didn't sound right. I was scratching my head and could not figure out what was wrong. Then it dawned on me. Maybe it's those new caps. Sure enough, I swapped them out and the amp sounded great. As I mentioned earlier, that kind of stuff can make you crazy. I try to make mental notes of what caps sound good with each specific application. In other words, a cap that doesn't sound good in one amp might be perfect for another.

GJD: What else can you do to help you go about tweaking with different parts?

BM: Well, doing one tweak at a time makes a huge difference. I constantly have to remind myself that one change affects the entire circuit. So, I don't like to make two separate changes at one time, if I really want to know what is going on. If someone chooses to do a bunch of mods at once then they can't really know what mod did what. So as I said, you are better off doing one mod at a time. Your experience of mods and your retention of all that stuff is how you grow as an amp builder. You also need to make smart purchases. I try to buy things that I will use. I mean, I'm running a business and all these choices can make or break your profit margin. Each amp I build is custom tweaked for that client, but I can't go too crazy or I'll end up losing my shirt. I guess the whole economic side of this biz is another topic for another day.

GJD: What are some challenges in term of dealing with your clients?

BM: That's a great question. Most of my clients live far away and they tell me what they want in their amp. I have to turn their words into tone. As you can image, sometimes it can be really hard to determine what the sound they hear in their head, especially if there is no solid reference. If I guy says that I want to sound like such and such, that can be tricky, because the client might not have the toneful hands of a legendary player that he wants to sound like. Ultimately, you are going to sound like you. I mean their words might make sense to them but it might have a totally different meaning to me. I guess that is why I have my one free re-voicing option for my clients.

GJD: Can you please expound on that a bit more?

BM: Sure, if a client buys an amp from me and they like it but still are not totally stoked, then they have another option. They tell me how they want it to be different and send it back to me. I re-voice the amp based on the information they give me and send it back to them. All I ask is

that they cover the shipping costs both ways.

GJD: Wow! That's way more than fair.

BM: I think it really gives them peace of mind when buying an amp.

GJD: Okay, let's shift gears a bit. Say someone brings you an old Tweed Fender amp that isn't working properly. How do you fix it while still maintaining the original tone?

BM: First off, I try to use components that are available or I might even have something custom made. So if the old Fender has a bunch of bad coupling caps and I replace all those with new parts, it's not going to sound the same. The new parts might be more reliable and be closer in measurement but as we know that doesn't always cut the mustard. I might spend extra time finding those "period correct" parts and really test those parts to get the amp real close to the original sound. But that can be a lot of work and cost the client a lot of money. I have to say, that's one of the many reasons that I now prefer building my own amps because it's a much different story when it comes to parts. Since I stock multiples of the same parts, a replacement part allows me to retain the original tone and I don't get nutty over it.