GJD: John, let's go back to pots for a minute. What about the taper of a pot; are they all pretty much the same?

JS: No actually they are all quite different. You can order different tapered pots. They run 10%, 20%, etc.

GJD: What does that percentage mean?

JS: Here is how it works. If you have a 1 meg pot with 10% taper you will have 900K on one side and 100K on the other side when the pot is in the middle.

GJD: What pot taper do you prefer in your guitars? Or is it all custom?

JS: Usually the standard CTS pots are 10%. The volume of the guitar is going to be more towards the end of the rotation; hence most of the volume is going to come at the end.

GJD: So what factor helps each guitarist decide what is right for them?

JS: Well there are a lot of factors. The length of the cable from the guitar to the amp, the amount of gain you are using, if you roll off your volume, etc. This all helps determine what works best for each player.

GJD: Are there any little tricks that you do with the standard pots to help achieve more optimal overall performance?

JS: Yes, we can install a cap and resistor across the volume pot to maintain a pleasing amount of high-end when you turn the volume down. In other words, as most of you know, many times turning your volume down on your guitar reduces your high-end.

GJD: What about some of your artists that we talked about last time like, Scott Henderson and Mike Landau?

JS: They actually both prefer it with no cap and resistor mod. They like it darker because they use pedals with their sounds as they are turning down their volume. So they will use that so

called “tone loss” as a tool in their tone toolbox. Scott actually never runs his guitar volume on 10. He’ll use a pedal for more gain and then back off in the other direction.

GJD: What about if a player is taking a different approach and uses a volume pedal as opposed to his volume pot to reduce his volume? Does that work differently?

JS: You caught me a little off guard on this one. I’d have to do some measurements to really give you an accurate answer.

GJD: Well, in your opinion, what might happen?

JS: You’ll probably have a little less loss with the volume pedal because of a shorter cable run between the guitar and the pedal. Actually, it’s not so much the pot but the capacitance. Also, the output impedance of the pick-up really makes this a complex equation.

GJD: That a whole other discussion in itself…