



GJD: A lot of people have the opinion that lower output Humbuckers are most “toneful.” For example, someone like Mike Landau, who is known for having great tone, doesn’t use high output pickups. So, what are your thoughts about this?

JS: With a lower output pickup you can get more dynamic frequency response. You get more low end and more top end. The more you over-wind a pickup the more you start accentuating certain midrange frequencies and your tone becomes darker. Bear in mind that this is only true if we are talking about all other variables maintaining the same relationship.

GJD: Can you be a little bit more specific?

JS: Yes. This is only true if we are talking about using the same wire and you are just going to put more turns on the same bobbin. There is also a point of no return where you are putting too much wire in the pickup and you start to detract from the output.

I mean you can’t just wind more and more turns to achieve more output.

GJD: Is there a trade-off with this?

JS: Absolutely. If you go one way it’s too clean and you can’t really make that up, if you know what I mean. As I said before, if you go too far the other way, it’s gets too muddy.

GJD: Would you also agree that in a lot of cases your pickups need to make sense with what amp you are using? So, if you are using a low output pickup and a really high gain amp, that might not always be the best match.

JS: Yes, in most cases I would agree with you but let me break it down even further. For example, I had this guitar that was a solid quilt maple body with a Brazilian rosewood fingerboard, and you might think it would be a really bright sounding guitar but in fact, I would call it a clear sounding guitar. And I could get away with putting a much higher output pickup in this guitar as compared to let’s say a Les Paul guitar.

GJD: So it's about balance in the overall picture.

JS: Yes, you kind of need to choose the pickups for the woods of the guitar and you also have to think about the scale length. Shorter scale length means more midrange.

Also, as you mentioned the right amp, speakers, pedals, etc... needs to be considered.

GJD: So, what about a situation where someone has their overall setup sounding pretty good but it is a tad bright and that person doesn't want to change the pickup.

JS: Well there is an easy solution for that one. Just putting a pickup cover on that pickup will make the top-end a bit sweeter and that should do the trick.

GJD: What about your Artist Series pickups?

JS: For example, the Doug Aldrich pickups have a lot of output. I sent the pickups back and forth to Doug until he was happy. Keep in mind that I also modded his amp to have a lot of gain and we needed to find this perfect match. With Mike Landau's pickups, we started out by trying to match his pickups from an old Strat that he loved. We kept doing it until we had the exact sound and then we tweaked it a little more. So you might call it a vintage pickup with a little push. We also have a cleaner version of that pickup called the Classic. I think what happens in this industry is that nothing is good or bad, it is what we grew up with and that is our benchmark.

GJD: That brings up another point. You hear a lot of people say, "Why aren't there any new revolutionary pickup designs?" Can you give me a simple response to that.

JS: Sure. It's simple... it wouldn't sell. People wouldn't buy it. People's ears just get used to those certain staple sounds from days gone by. Frankly, the "old sounds" are great and ultimately that's what people want. I think that's true in just about every aspect of the music industry.