

## THE FOUNDATION

I would like to cover what I like to call the Foundations. These are topics that I feel are very important into making you become a good musician and are sometimes over looked.

### 1. **Warming up before you play**

It is very important that you get the blood flowing in your hands and fingers before you start to work on anything that requires a lot of technique. This is just simple thing as shaking you hands up and down, Stretching your fingers and simply just playing simple guitar chords. You should do this first whenever you pick the guitar and have not been playing.

### 2. **Hand Position**

The thumb placement on the neck is very important. You should always have your thumb sort of anchored in the middle of the back of the neck. This is very important because when you are playing scale lines and runs that you will need your left hand to stretch for your thumb placement will be a crucial role in your ability to play the lines in the proper way and with the right execution.

As far as your picking hand is concerned, you need to anchor it in some way. I rest my right hand on the bridge of the guitar. By doing this not only is the placement right but this helps with muting the strings. This is very important when playing at high volumes.

### 3. **Holding The Pick**

There are a lot of ways for guitar players to hold their pick. It is my opinion the proper way to hold the pick is with the bottom of your thumb and the side of your index finger. Your hand should be in almost a fist position. If you look at some of your favorite guitar players who have great technique and speed such as Al Dimeola, John Petrucci, Paul Gilbert, etc... this is the way they are holding the pick.

### 4. **Confidence in yourself and having a good attitude (Have Fun!!)**

It is very important that you have confidence in yourself as a player. I am not talking about having an ego, that is the wrong attitude. As a musician and performer you are going to need confidence to be able to go on stage and perform in front of people. I had an instructor in college and I will never forget this exercise he would make me do. I am sort of a shy person and a little introverted, well especially when I was younger. My instructor Joe Carbone, said to me, Balducci " how good of guitar player are you? I was not sure how to respond and I said " I am ok" Joe said, know that is not what I want you

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to say, I want you to say I am fucking great!!!! So he asked me again and I responded I am fucking great!! He said that was better but every time I pass you in the hallway and I ask you that question you better respond with I am fucking great and you better say it like you believe it. You must make sure you have confidence and you must believe in yourself whether it is in music or anything else in your life.

### 5. **When on stage you should only be concerned with the music and emotion.**

#### **(Don't sweat the small stuff)**

This is a very important topic and having this attitude will have a dramatic effect on your performance and how you feel when you play a live show. This is not easy and it must be practiced and learned just like with any other technique.

I used to be so worried about small little things when I played; these things get in the way of you playing your best. Such things as worrying about if you sound good, does your amp sound good, is there enough people at the gig, does the crowd like my guitar playing, will they like my songs, does my hair look good **etc etc etc....**

**All** these thoughts going through your head just get in the way.

**What really changed me** and the way I think about performing was going out on the road and doing some opening spots for **Richie Kotzen**. Richie is such a great guitar player, song writer, singer etc... that is a given.. I have been a fan for a very long time. But what effected most was his attitude towards playing, he did not do long sound checks. He does not sue really any effects. He just plugs in his guitar and just plays and lets the music take over and has fun and enjoys the moment.

This is not easy to do and I suggest you try and get yourself in this frame of mind whenever you perform. I started to do this at practice and slowly adapted it in my live performance. You should not be thinking about anything when you perform live, you need to have a free mind and think about the notes, Steve Vai said he becomes the notes when he plays. When you are able to get to this state is the best feeling in the world.

I cannot do it all the time, **but when I do I call it getting in the zone.** When I am in the zone I end up playing my best and I enjoy it so much better.

I recommend a book for you to get and it covers a lot of this thought process and even has a CD with meditations on it to help you.

The book is called Effortless Mastery by Kenny Werner.