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BLOG:

3 PILLARS OF THE PRODUCTIVE PRACTICE

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3 Pillars of the Productive Practice

Today I want to share an idea that I've found very useful to free myself from several concerns and common worries when it comes to study music, specially my instrument, the Guitar.

INFORMATION OVERFLOW

It's no news that the internet brought us to a new era, an era in where all the books and methods of wherever you want to learn, are just a click away. I firmly believe that this has created a generation of Super Musicians and at the same time one batch of frustrated musicians that seem to be lost, that tend to accumulate information and don't know where to start digesting it.

One of the question that we, guitar players, tend to ask the most is "What to study?", the big majority has an enormous amount of books (legal and downloaded), have seen countless instructional videos and they are trying to divide their time in a very "unrealistic" way like "time juggling" if you will, trying to learn how to play jazz like *Joe Pass* and at the same time trying to have the technique of *Guthrie Govan* and write and compose like *Hans Zimmer* before the middle of the year. :P

For a long time, I was like that, in fact, I still have a lot of information that I highly doubt that I will ever get to read on a lifetime. For years, i spent time designing and following unrealistic routines where I divide my time on every guitar technique (legato, tapping, alternate, picking, sweep picking you name it!) also every style I sort of like (jazz, country, rock, metal, latin, etc) while trying to compose music and apply some theory trying to keep myself productive... but it was all the opposite, I ended up doing 30 mins of this, then 30 mins of that.. without spending too much time in just one thing, if I did so, then I felt that if I spent lot of time trying to play jazz then I was losing "my rock chops" or my technique, and also the opposite: if I spent lots of time crafting my technique, then I will lose the ability of playing changes and so one... "if you don't use it, you'll lose it"

MEMORY, CURIOSITY AND PRODUCT.

Then, *What to do?*, it seems that there is so little time.

Which direction I should take? Should I focus on just one thing or several things at once? Well that's a difficult question to answer, I think that this goes with every person, with his capacities, patience, concentration and ambition.

Thanks to the self-observation I discover that in my study routine were 3 basic needs that I needed to satisfy: Work on my Memory, Please my curiosity and feel productive.

THE 3 PILLARS:

Thanks to Teaching I could understand a little bit more the labyrinth that seems to be studying and instrument, even more the guitar which is a 6 string (or more) monster . I came to the conclusion that in order for me to "Feel Good", to feel that I'm taking steps on the same direction I have to do basically 3 activities, each activity has lots of variations, material and proposes that has to go according to the Goals each person has. (*Defining specific GOALS should be your most important task before designing a study routine*)

Based on this simple principle, a productive routine could be just 3 hours, one for every activity.

1. TO REVIEW – MEMORY

Playing an instrument is a kinesthetic and visual activity, which means that we depend on both: our Muscular and Visual memories to play more fluently. The things we studied last week, if we do not review them, can be easily forgotten if you don't cultivate the habit of the Review. Here is where I review all the general vocabulary of music such as: scales, triads, 4 or more note arpeggios, licks, sequences, solos, chords & voicings, etc. Just try to review everything you've learnt (*could be a big request, so you should create a system, a catalogue if you will, for all the things you know and review them as so*) As you learn more, there will be more to review, so my advice is to vary the "thing" you review each day, rather than trying to do everything, everyday..., think of it as a Gym Routine, one muscle every day: Monday – Scales, Tuesday – Triads, Wednesday – Solos... etc.

Suggested Time: 50 minutes – Vary content every day

Suggested Material: Triads (every type), Scales (every type: Pentatonic, Major, Minor Harmonic, Minor Melodic), Chords (Drop 2 & Drop 3 and its inversions on every string set)

2. TO LEARN – CURIOSITY

Curiosity, the capacity of amusement, the knowing that there is ALWAYS something to be learned, (*qualities that are related with humility*), are stimulus needed to grow as a musician (*an as an artist*). At the beginning of this blog, I mentioned the feeling of “to much to learn”, I think, that feeling is necessary, it was *Pat Metheny*, that once said, that no matter how many prizes and mentions he get or how many records he make, he will always have the feeling that he needed to get home and study something!!, that there’s (and there will be), ALWAYS something new to be learn, that’s a beautiful thing to keep us going, we should be friends with this feeling, we need to learn to cohabitare with it rather than trying to satisfy it. Deep stuff.

My advice is to pick a book or a method and just stick with it until you are done. Also the habit of transcription counts as learning, as long as it goes with some sort of Analysis of what you are transcribing. Also what I like to call “JUST F#%&! LISTEN”, just sit there, leave your phone/instrument/pretentions away, close your eyes, and play a record, I think musicians are often the ones who do not listen music closely, without doing anything else, we are always practicing! And that’s simply not right.

Suggested Time: 50 Minutes

Suggested Material: ANYTHING GOES, from instructional videos (the ones from REH and Hotlicks was the first ones I study) any Harmony Book (Jody Fisher, Walter Piston, Ron Miller), Transcribing Great Solos (Charlie Parker, Coltrane, Evans, Pass, Etc) Listen to a whole album without doing anything else.

3. TO CREATE – PRODUCT

Wayne Dyers said that the simple fact of “create” is a human necessity, and I couldn’t agree more, to create is to make “something” with all the stuff we are “Reviewing” and “Learning”, it’s a powerful way to show our subcontinent that all the time we are spending on that other 2 activities (*reviewing and learning*) has an utility, a propose, and this has a strong impact on our self-motivation.

TO CREATE, could be from improvise something with the vocabulary and concepts we know and are learning, to compose and write music out of nowhere.

The simple fact of TEACHING, is also creating, I even feel that this 3 activities are strongly involved on teaching. As we teach we review what we know, also we learn new ways of expressing our self and lots of times we get some cool ideas out of a student question or insight, and also the act of sharing is giving all that info a deep propose: is useful for the person that is learning, then is making me, useful.

Suggested Time: 50 min

Suggested Activity: *Improvise – Compose (write music) – Teach*

Keep It Simple!

In conclusion, I no longer worry, I just study and teach based on this 3 simple concepts:
TO REVIEW, TO LEARN & TO CREATE.

I think they are crucial for keep things fresh on my mind, eyes and fingers (to review), stimulate curiosity and keep our self humbles (to learn) and put all that information to use to express myself and feel productive (to create)

I hope you enjoyed it! This was very useful for me so I just wanted to share it

Leonardo