

AG 107

Blues and Beyond

'Technique Time'

by Adrian Whyte

Sometimes I forget just how much work I did purely on my technique. Scales, exercises, picking, scales... it's endless. A lot of minimalists may argue that it's not so much about technique and that it's not worth getting into. "You know, just feel it man, just play what you hear". Well when the time comes that you hear something and you can't execute it, you are going to sound silly or be sad that you couldn't do it. Even if you don't like to sound too neat and tidy, messing up your playing is much easier than tidying it up on the spot, so it's worth getting your chops up so that ultimately you can play with the most intention possible, even if you are approaching things with a touch of simplicity.

All exercise are recorded at 80 bpm with a 4 beat count in. I highly recommend using a metronome to see how far you can push the speed of these ideas before your speedo maxes out.

Ex 1

Standard practice here. Is that a pun? Maybe. I don't even know anymore! Simply utilising each finger in one position and playing across the neck, this is a simple exercise to improve your dexterity and get all your fingers working.

Make it neat and tidy, and then push yourself with a metronome. Use the finger tip on your index finger to mute the previous string or lay your palm in a muting fashion on the lower strings as you move down. I haven't included all the notes coming back because it's pretty darn self explanatory! Alternate your picking religiously. Economy picking is for cheap skates, and I believe it's a more complex system. Although, in fairness, if you practice any particular method of picking you are likely to reap the benefits. I just prefer the simple alternate approach, because I'm a simple guy.

Ex 2

This is a deceptively hard exercise, especially when executing it with a blues scale. Roll the fingers when crossing adjacent frets. For example, if using the 7th fret on the third string followed by the 7th on the 4th string, roll the third finger over both. This kind of movement sounds really cool at high speeds, and is cool for bursting little passages when you wanna burst someones head in the front row, master exploder style.

Ex 3

This one is all about hammering on and pulling off. Take note of the picking advice, and .. hammer, and pull off everything under the slurred lines. Get it fluent and you'll find it simple to speed up as it's not hard work for the right hand.

Ex 4

A lot of the coolest fastest licks are simple things played really fast. Guys like Dimebag Darrel and Buckethead are two generally good examples. I mean, heaps of guys use a repeated legato idea to play flashy licks, these were just the first two that came to mind. Practice the hammering and pulling at low speeds in the right proportions, smoothly before speeding up.

Usually the written part is tricky, trying to fit in all the tips and ins and outs, but ultimately these exercises are fairly fundamental. Don't mistake that for meaning they are simple- you can never get too good at anything technical without the need to practice faster again or even at slower tempos!

Having said that, do everyone a favour and don't show us how fast you can do them in soundcheck - the goal of good technique is to give you more control over the interesting stuff you do, not to show everyone your guitar athletic ability. Really, who's more popular? Ed Sheeran or Yngwie Malm..., Malmstein.. Mal, oh I don't even know his name.

