Day 5: Backing Track Beastmode
→ Playing along with your favourite songs and utilising Pressure to Get Results FAST!

Welcome back guys! So how are you feeling now you're on Day 5 of the Guitar Bootcamp? Hope you are learning a lot and feeling inspired to keep going with your Guitar journey and making sure that it sticks as a part of your life and daily routine.

Today we are going to start to explore one of the most important concepts around what makes a Guitarist grow and get results fast. We are going to be deep diving on using Backing Tracks and harnessing pressure as a tool to activate our subconscious brain and our hands. This is something that is missing from most Guitar players practice routines and why there is such a big divide between an advanced or professional player and the rest of the Guitar playing population and its the secret if you really want to explode your growth on the Guitar but also really have fun and a sense of achievement and fulfillment on your Guitar playing journey.

So if you really want to start getting results you have to start playing to backing tracks. Backing tracks put a pressure on your hands and is the closest way to emulate playing with other musicians and a band and the benefits that professional musicians get from playing with others. I'll tell you a story here to help show you why this is so important. Every band and project I've been involved in, we jump in rehearsal rooms and play for sometimes months whatever set list we are working on for an upcoming show or tour. Ever heard the expression the first is the worst? Well it applies to Guitar and gigs as much as most other things in life. We always found that our first show was the worst. We had nerves and our hands were a little shaky and unsure resulting in some fumbles for

the performance. But what we always found without fail was that after this first show, the second show was super tight. We were always all relaxed and in synch as a band and could then just actually enjoy the gigs and performing.

Why was this? Well the secret is actually the pressure. The pressure of that first show activated something deep inside of us as a band and individually as musicians as well and the body responds to that pressure and adapts to it on a deep level. It then allows the hands to take over and take charge rather than the brain. Cool right?! So I've learned as a musician that I can take advantage of this effect and emulate it with backing tracks in my personal studio and then I've taught this system to my students to help them take advantage of this effect as well and I'm going to teach it to you as well today.

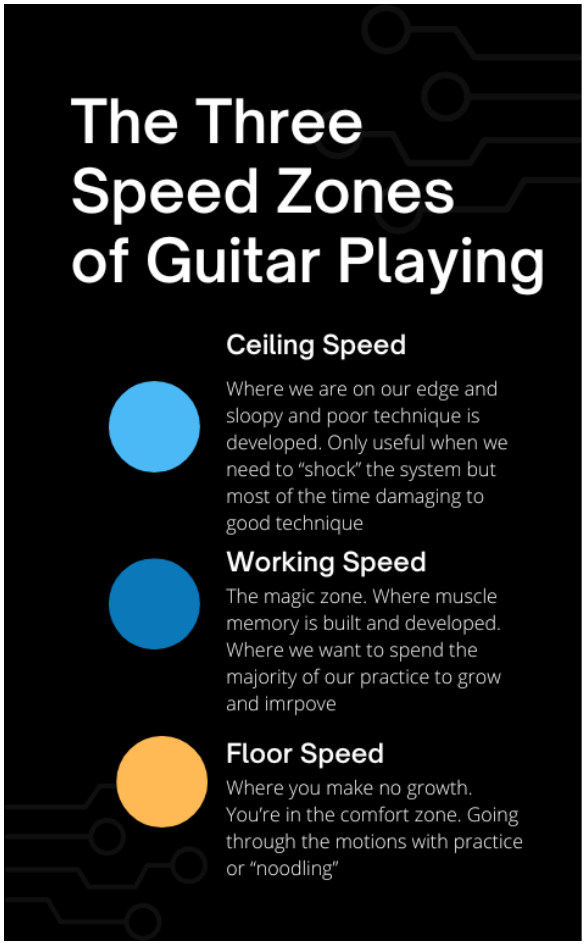
So the first thing we want to do is load up YouTube and grab one of your favourite songs. For the purpose of this lesson, let's grab a Metallica video and look at Enter Sandman because its a song pretty much everyone knows.

Now if I throw down the gauntlet and challenge a student as part of their homework to play along with the song, what most people do is just play along with the song at the original tempo. But here is where the secret sauce is, there's a little function here on YouTube called Playback speed. You open this up and bring the speed down to a comfortable speed at which you can play along with the track. You should still be stimulated and challenged by it and feel a sensation of focus when playing along, but if you are focused you should be able to do it or just do it.

THis is the process I still use to this day, even when I'm learning something super crazy and complex like a Necrophagist solo. I simply slow it down to a manageable speed, put in the work and then slowly build up the tempo over time until I can play it at full speed or in some cases even faster if I really want to challenge myself.

So you can start to do this as part of the final "performance" part of your practice routine that I spoke about yesterday. After you've done your technical work and then your knowledge work as part of your practice routine, chuck on the songs you are working on at slow tempos and work through playing along with the backing track. It will activate something in your subconscious and your hands will start to get into shape fast! But its not easy and you are going to experience the cold water effect. Its hard to jump into a cold pool of water but once you are in its refreshing and invigorating. If you try and dip your toe in and don't fully commit you just make the whole process harder than it needs to be, so make sure you jump in, strap on in and ride!

So this brings me to my next point which is understanding speed and the 3 different speed zones in which we can play as a Guitarist and where we need to be to get results. I have a diagram which I will walk you through which outlines the 3 different zones and what happens in each of these zones, where most Guitarists actually make mistakes by playing in the wrong zones and how to navigate this to get results and speed boosts fast.



Ok so with that explanation, and yesterdays lesson, can you see how most people spend their practice sessions PLAYING Guitar and Not actually PRACTICING. Part of Practicing is not only focus, its actually playing in the right speed zones to activate growth so that the hands lock in and get faster.

So here is your homework for today's task. Load up a tab of a song you've wanted to learn. Analyse the techniques used in it and use the previous Lesson on Day 3 to practice the techniques that are present in that song. Then slow down the song to a manageable tempo and try and play along to it. It might take you a few days or even a week to get the hang of it, but you're now practicing like a Pro and we can start to make progress and actually measure our results objectively and see if you are improving or not based purely on speed.

And remember, Challenge Vs Fun…..this is the challenge part but if we combine it with songs you enjoy, we have the Fun part handled too. This will keep you stimulated and engaged on the Guitar longer term and set up a great relationship for you to really kick ass and succeed.

The final concept to understand in regards to backing tracks now is the two streams of practice once you are starting your journey of playing along with backing tracks:

- Continuous Practice
- Isolation Practice

Continuous Practice is where we learn the softskills of performance. We play along with the tracks and we allow the tracks to push us, and just like being in a band, there is no stopping if you mess up. You can't allow yourself to do this. You have to get back on the horse, recover and get back into the groove of the track. Plenty of musicians make mistakes live. Its one of the reasons why live music is special. You can find countless videos of top level professional musicians from high level bands making mistakes live. Its ok to mess up! Its not ok to not learn from it.

So this then highlights weaknesses. You take note of your weakness from your Continuous Practice with the backing track. Maybe its a technique, maybe its a fast section, or a tricky passage of music with heaps of notes. You then take that tricky part and apply Isolation Practice to it. Isolation Practice is like the gym, we want to do Sets and Reps on a difficult part. And we want to workout with that part. Repetition, repetition, repetition! Thats name of the game here. It allows the hands and brain to learn what we are asking of it. You have to slow things down here to manageable tempos in your working zone on the part you are Isolating, and then ALWAYS ALWAYS ALWAYS put it back into circulation with one last playthrough of the song to test it.

If you do this process correctly, your practice will become more self guiding. Your Continuous Practice will tell you what you need to isolate and work on and will highlight flaws and things that you need to focus on to continue to improve as a player!

Ok so that's it for today's lesson. Make sure you tune in tomorrow because I have an exciting day where we're going to be practicing together and putting all of these concepts I've taught you today about speed and speed building and playing along with tracks into practice and practical application. We're going to work through some of the exercises I've given you the last few days and speed build them! See you then.