

MODERN ROCK GUITAR/ VARIOUS TIPS

By jeff kollman

Below is sort of two different articles combined. One is based on Modern Rock Guitar and the other is various tips and tone.

Gear to use...

Les Paul type Humbuckers, Strat for the rage against the machine vibe. I use a Les Paul with a coil tap for thinning out the tone for mellow passages. You should also have a mod called "High pass Filter". When you turn your volume down, the low end tapers off without losing the sizzle on the top. Get strap locks today for that Les Paul. While I'm ranting.... A speaker cable is for the speakers, and the instrument cable is for the guitar. Don't complain about the noise if you don't get this one right.

Effects include whammy (Dimebag, Tom Morrello, Vai.) I'll use the whammy just to put a 5th harmony above or below my single note riff. Sometimes I'll use an octave below. Wha, Delay, Volume pedal for dynamic expression... swells... Try the cry baby with the sweepable frequency on the side to choose the wha tone. More unique sounding. It's not as traditional.

Try running your delay through an effects loop for smooth delay. Try distorting the delay for more dissonance and twisted sounds. Distorting the delay could mean putting the delay before a distortion pedal or distorted amp. I use this for textures of a Radiohead vibe. U2 guitarist The Edge uses his delays as a rhythmic theme to his style. His delay is as loud as the guitar, and is adding a 16th note to his 8th note rhythms.

Strings...

Depends on tuning...

Lower the tuning, heavier the string. 10 to 52 gauge. I use light top heavy bottom.

Amps... Bogner, and VHT. Try to find an amp with a clean channel as well as the heavy. I prefer the Krank amps Mesa stuff... Tube amps are better. Hand wired is even better. Remember, the less gear you take to the gig, the better off you'll be.

Tuning...

Many of the new heavy bands tune to 430 (down a 1/2 step) and ten drop D which is really d flat / C#.

I tune standard, then drop the E to whatever.... D, C#, C, or B. One of my favorite's is the A to G, and the low E to C

There's the 7 string guitars... Korn etc... they then drop low B to A. Great for them, not for me. Below low b on guitar becomes inaudible. Try taking a 6 string guitar and switch the strings to B 1, F# 2 D 3 A4 E 5 B 6
This is essentially a baritone guitar. You can find them as well... Ibanez, Yamaha... etc... The advantage is the fingerings are all consistent with standard tuning. You'll just have to transpose down a 4th with your thinking.

Tone...

As far as tone goes, It's as important as the guitar ability and song ideas. Spend some serious time finding your tone. It starts at your fingers.

Experiment with everything imaginable from effects and the order of effects to amps, guitars, pickupscables, string even picks.

(Picks make a huge difference). Remember that you'll start getting signal loss with too many effects. I use the Bradshaw switching system with pedal loops as well for less noise and more pure tone.

Better pedal companies make true bypass pedals so that you are bypassing the circuitry of the pedal if you are not using the pedal. My signal chain into a clean amp generally is

Guitar, Volume, wha, distortion a, distortion b, compressor, delay 1, delay 2, into the amp. I plug my tuner into the tuner out of the volume pedal so that I can tune with the Volume pedal down. No one hears me, but the tuner is always on. You should then have a voltage regulator /spike protector for your power source. The more expensive Furman one is nice. Around \$500.00. You don't want fuses blowing on gigs. With this chain I would use an old hand wired Fender twin. Good clean power. I then get my distortion through the pedals.

Tone continued...

The other setup would be getting the distortion from the amp. Instead of pedals, I use a Krank amp or the Bogner stuff. For this setup, run the delay through an effects loop. If you run it before the amp, it will distort. I use the distorted delay for more dissonant ideas. If you have no fx loop, you can get a line out from the head installed if there currently isn't one and run to your favorite, delay / reverb then into a clean power amp or direct into the board.

How to Practice

Tools... a quiet room for concentration // A stereo to play along with recordings.// A metronome or drum machine. The ability to program it if needed.// Good lighting // a music stand // an amp with 2 inputs to jam with others. You need to jam with others.

A unit to record your song ideas. 4 track. Dat. Mini disc.... Computer .. whatever... and patience!!!

You need to practice a new idea slower than you would like to get it mastered then speed it up. Always play with time. Say a metronome or drum machine.. Don't rely on your foot for time. In the intermediate stages it's important to learn songs and mimic your favorite players. How about copying the vocal melodies on guitar. Great for phrasing and ear training. Learn to read music. This will help you learn to count time, thus helping you to communicate your ideas to the rhythm section of the band. They know how to count time. The guitarist is the illiterate one. This is due to playing patterns and reading tablature. (TAB). If you absolutely will not read on a regular basis, you should at least understand how to count time, and get into a bit of theory. Guitarists like Van Halen, and Eric Johnson claim they can't read. But they can see the notes on the neck. They understand time and they have a grasp on theory.

TAB AND PATTERNS

I don't want to harp on the negative, but tab is a pacifier for the beginner. You can't master tab reading, nor can you understand how to play the rhythm of an idea by looking at it. It's there for the guitarist who doesn't want to think. As far as learning a scale, do not write a scale out on paper with dots. Write it out with the names of the notes. No wonder you can't see the notes on the guitar neck. Example.... Your trying to master the key of a minor... so think of the notes a b c d e f g a. No # or flat notes. Then draw at least 15 frets out on paper and insert the note names with a few fret markings here and there. Then try to improvise with the information in front of you. This helped me the most with visualizing the scales on the neck.

CHORD PROGRESSIONS

D Minor key: 1 6 7 3 would be Dm / B flat major / Cm / Fm

Key of C minor: 1 3 4 6 would be Cm / E flat Maj / Fmin / A flat Maj

Try the same progression with a flat 2 in place of the 6th. go..... This is the kind of language you the guitarist needs to understand in a band rehearsal, songwriting, or sitting in on a live jam situation.

An understanding of your key signatures and visualizing the scales will be crucial in these situations as well as improvising.

Modern rock guitar requires great muting technique, rhythmic syncopation, the ability to play power chords (try thr 5th below as well), and for some harmonic ear candy on the top , try 2 note harmony ideas like minor and major 2nd's through the scale of the key that you are playing in. Sometimes thirds sound too pretty... ex (brown eyed girl). I love the sound of stacking 4ths. It's great for vocal harmony as well as guitar. (Alice in Chains harmonies have 4ths as well as intricate counterpoint). I got my 4th harmony ideas from

studying jazz and implying it into heavy situations. Keep your mind open to many styles of music. Many heavy guitarists I find have a closed mind to jazz or classical or even Latin for example. I've stolen Afro Cuban rhythms and incorporated them into the heavy, Check out Sepultura "Roots". Its Ultra heavy with Brazilian rhythms.