

THE MYSTIC ART OF SELF-DISCOVERY, VOLUME I

MIND OVER METAL

THE MUSICIAN'S GUIDE TO MENTAL MASTERY



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Edited by Kate Westin.

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In honor of all that have spread truth,
dedicated to all that seek it,
may peace and harmony be with you
along the pathway
of your journey!

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Preface

Welcome friend, to a journey that I hope will last the rest of your life, a quest that will drive your inner spirit to command every essence of your being to work for the purpose of your deepest inner desires. To give you a place to start, let me tell you how I came to embark upon this quest that has changed my life and compelled me to write this book.

I guess it all really started when I was about eight years old and my cousin took me to see *Star Wars*. I was so intrigued by the concept of “The Force” that I refused to let go of the notion that it (or something like it) did, indeed, exist outside of the fictional story. I was, at this age, very intent on becoming a great warrior of some sort, and one that would fight to express this great energy of the Universe.

Around the same time, I became a young budding musician, starting first with piano, then trombone and over to the drums, and finally discovered my real gift was for the guitar—a much more suitable weapon for a young warrior. I immediately immersed myself headfirst in the instrument and literally spent days perfecting a single technique or phrase. I would learn the most impressive techniques from each of my favorite players and then try to write my own material infusing all the various tricks in an effort to “know everything there is to know about the guitar.” Well, I think this is where I got a little sidetracked.

At this point in my life, I had decided, with all absolution, that I was going to dedicate the rest of my life to playing music and writing my own original material. The element I was missing was self control. See, I had the passion of Joe Satriani, the over-the-edge creativity of Steve Vai, and the speed of Yngwie Malmsteen, but my work had no true direction. I would write something trying my best to write like someone else, or I would write about a popular topic that

I had no real emotional ties to, and what would soon follow was a feeling of emptiness that crept its way into my heart. I always thought to myself, "But I have what it takes to make it big, and my songs are way better than that guy's." But, you see, I was looking *outward* to find other sources for my inspiration, all the while drifting farther away from my own *inner* self-expressive nature.

This, my friend, is the pitfall I hope to help you avoid by sharing my life experiences and the knowledge to which they have led me. Music is an art and the truest form of personal self-expression, but before you can truly express yourself, you must look deep inside to discover who you really are and work as hard as you can to cultivate that person.

Mind Over Metal is a philosophical approach to music that I began to develop a few years ago when I discovered that "The Force" I believed in really does exist. Although it's written from the perspective of a heavy metal musician, the concepts and spiritual truths that lie within can be applied to **any** style of music or instrument.

In 1995, I was introduced to the art of Aikido and the concept of *Ki* or *Chi* energy. I immediately began to study all the philosophical avenues of Aikido and every other style of martial arts that injected the concept of channeling this internal energy. As would most people stepping into the world of the martial arts, I started to study the works of the late Bruce Lee and soon began training in his art of Jeet Kune Do. This art stresses formlessness in an effort to adapt to all forms, to have no style but learning skills from several different styles, yielding personal growth and strengthening the will of the human spirit. It also stresses the importance of letting go and allowing your intuitive nature to take control. Because of my training experience, I now look at my approach to music in an entirely different light.

On the spiritual side of my upbringing, I was raised in a Christian home, and was also taught by my grandfather many of the great Native American traditions of the Cherokee and Choctaw Indians. After many years of studying several different spiritual concepts and beliefs, including Taoism, Zen, Psychic, and New Age practices, I was introduced to the Sufi message of Hazrat Inayat Khan, a great mystical teacher who promoted oneness and the idea of finding one's own note within the music of life. I have since continued to study and practice the traditions of the Sufi Path, and recently have begun my training to become a healer.

The knowledge and wisdom of the great Mystics and Saints from ALL cultures and walks of life have been passed down the generations by so many different channels of communication. It is my hope to offer a glimpse into the vast and tremendous world that awaits you when you start to look within and discover exactly who you are and what your individual talents can offer this ever-expanding Universe.

Introduction

Mind Over Metal is a philosophical approach to musical mastery for the aspiring musician. Derived from concepts taken from many realms of philosophy, spiritualism, martial arts, and several other avenues of self-discovery, *Mind Over Metal* offers deep insights that will allow you to unleash your primal essence and achieve mastery in the complex art of music. This book has been crafted in a fashion that will awaken your mind to the potential within you to become a MUSICAL MASTER!

The only way one can venture into the universe that *Mind Over Metal* explores is to have an understanding that, above and beyond **all** of your goals of achievement (fame, fortune, getting laid, whatever), your *most important* goal should be to approach music with the hope of learning more about yourself and your own level of creativity, and to discover a way of expressing that through your art.

When listening to a lot of today's music, it becomes apparent that artists are less in touch with the expressive nature of music and have, instead, allowed the "sound of the day" to be accepted. When I first began to write music, it was common knowledge that each new work you put out had better show a strong evolutionary and musical growth when compared with any of your previous work. Today, it's pretty obvious that a lot of meaningless music is marketed and sold simply to make money; but, as musicians, we should really focus on remaining honest to ourselves instead of writing something to please someone else. Today, the most successful bands are the most expressive bands. They defy the "sound of the day." They are nothing more than themselves. If you give your all, with sincerity in your heart, you'll achieve a much greater, richer level of success, and be able to hold your head up in ten to twenty years when you reflect back on your proudest moments as an artist.

The idea stemmed from my interest in the study of internal energy, known as *Chi* (Chinese) or *Ki* (Japanese). I had always felt a spiritual connection with music. I felt I was given a specific vision of what I was to contribute to the world of music and entertainment and began to embark on a journey to be a “metal master,” so to speak. It was then that I began to study a lot of different material on self-discovery and internal power.

A few years ago, my journey began to unlock a much deeper dimension in my music, and I reached a level where I felt I had become “one” with my art. As a band (Kurai), we had achieved a “oneness” in our music that changed our sound and the attitude of our approach forever. It was then that I really felt a duty to take my understanding of art as a tool of expression to a much higher level. I have dedicated many years since then to exploring my own limitations by way of studying music, mysticism, meditation, philosophy, and training in the martial arts, and have found a connection between the power that music has given me and the power I have discovered within myself. It is due to the profound feeling of enlightenment I received from these next few years along the path that have compelled me to share with you the ideas in this book.

There is a primal essence and power in heavy metal music that is unparalleled by any other style of music today. When you connect the true essence of your own primal voice with the creative powers of the mind, you become not only a master of your art, but also a master of your LIFE! This book is meant to explain that connection. I am, in no way at all, trying to instill in your mind that my methods or concept of music or spirituality are “the way.” Everyone has to find his or her own path to travel where they can be themselves, and that is my hope for you. I offer to you *Mind Over Metal*—use it wisely, and become your own musical master!

CHAPTER I

Shining Light on the Dark Ages

The History and Evolution of Metal



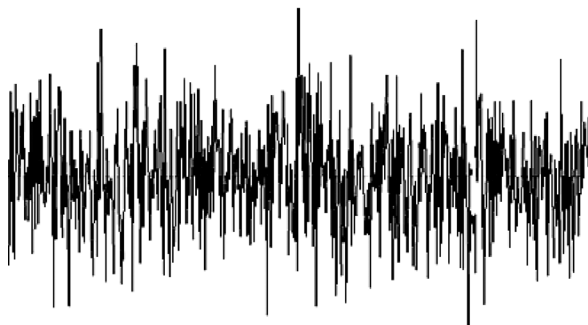
Throughout time, music has been an ever-changing, evolving art form. It has embraced and expressed the cultural and life views of many tribes and nations, and the world views and beliefs that make them unique. From the very beginning of creation, music and sound have played an important role in molding and shaping the voice and expression of basic human and animalistic communication.

Sound is one of the first senses that helped us develop our concept of the environment and the world around. We distinguish the different vibrational impulses that we perceive from the very moment we are born. Sound is vibration and vibration is life. Sound itself is living, and when we look at how sound reaches us in everyday surroundings and, furthermore, how it has been implemented into music, we realize that all life *is* music and music *is* life itself expressed!

There are many theories as to how life was formed or created, all of which involve sound and vibration. Take, for instance, the big bang theory of evolution; there was supposedly a spontaneous explosion of energy, which vibrated throughout the universe, moving particles of matter into a creative life-bringing motion. Then there is

the theory of creation, which is a creative breath of life breathed into the dust of the earth, creating man and the rib of man that gave life to woman. Whatever your personal view or belief of life's humble beginnings, one truth remains evident throughout: life is born of vibration.

All vibration carries within it a frequency of sound. Some vibrations are inaudible, but many are detectable by the human ear. If you look at the insect and animal world, you see many examples of the living vibration of sound.



Here we see a visual representation of sound in the form of a wave. As changes in pitch and volume occur, the vibrations increase and decrease, forming an invisible wave that we hear as sound.

All people carry their own frequency of vibration, and this frequency resonates throughout our bodies and touches us somewhere deep within. This is why each of us is drawn to a particular sound and style of music, and why what brings satisfaction to one person's ear may be pure racket to another's.

"It is the state of vibrations to which man is tuned
that accounts for his soul's note."

—Hazrat Inayat Khan

So, with this in mind, let's think for a moment about what draws many of us to be moved and uplifted by the ferocious and sonic onslaught of heavy metal. For many, it's the release of a frantic energy that we build up inside of us; for others, it's the raw power and passion behind the music. Metal has often taken a great deal of criticism for its dark and largely misunderstood lyrical content, but, in fact, metal has long been one of the deepest and most spiritually uplifting forms of art and has touched the hearts and minds of millions worldwide.

Oftentimes, metal is credited for having parallel roots to classical music, because no other subsequent style has displayed as much form, phrasing, and dynamics the way metal has. Classic metal masterpieces such as Metallica's "Master of Puppets" were even written with authentic classical arrangement formats in mind (in the case of "Master of Puppets," it was sonata allegro form), so it's no great mystery why heavy metal music has made such a huge impact and continues to be a dominant force in the music industry.

Yet, there is a great mysterious element to metal music. There has always been a deep mystical element present in its sound and presentation, and some of the greatest philosophical questions and concepts have been poetically expressed through this art. It is this mystical element beneath the music that is the *real* connection between the music and the listener, and the driving force that draws us to an experience with each listen.

There is no denying that metal has long been an art form hell-bent on delivering the purest expressions of the soul, whether it's the spiritual and mathematical concepts presented in progressive metal, the incantations and mythic chants of black and gothic metal, or the ever-pervading questions and commentary of life and death expressed in death metal.

Over the past three or four decades, heavy music has seen many different levels of evolution. In the mid 1960s, there was a big influx of blues-based rock bands hailing from the U.K., many of which were developing stylistic elements like loud distorted guitars, power chords, and up-tempo rhythms that would later become the hallmarks of heavy metal music. Artists such as The Kinks and The Who started experimenting with feedback and created the now infamous "wall of amps" that paved the way for a new level of intensity in rock and roll. By the late '60s, songs like Steppenwolf's "Born to Be Wild" and Iron Butterfly's "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vidda" introduced rock radio to a beefier sound and lengthier song format. In 1969, the world was introduced to Led Zeppelin, who have come to be one of the most influential bands of all time, especially among metal artists.

The '70s kicked right in with the emergence of Black Sabbath and Deep Purple, two bands that have long been hailed as the originators of heavy metal. In the mid-'70s, metal was in full swing, with bands like AC/DC and Judas Priest hitting the scene followed by the "New Wave of British Heavy Metal" (NWOBHM) that gave us bands like Iron Maiden and Motorhead, among many others. By the late '70s, a new crop of rising stars such as KISS and Alice Cooper emerged that created a larger-than-life theatrical element, including stage makeup, that would lead the way for the dramatic music of the 1980s.



THE SIGN OF THE HORNS

Also known in Italian as *cora* or, *mano cornuta*, the **sign of the horns** has often been mistaken as a demonic symbol relating to satanic music. It is, however, identical to the *Karana mudra* of Eastern religions. Ronnie James Dio later popularized it when he was a member of Black Sabbath. It lives on as a symbolic statement of rock 'n' roll, particularly among heavy metal and hard rock bands.

In the early 1980s, a whole new conglomeration of young rockers, such as Ratt, Motley Crue, Quiet Riot, and Van Halen, dominated L.A.'s famous Sunset Strip, MTV, and radio waves with their glam-rock imagery, technically proficient musical skills, and anthemic vocal melodies. Also rising in the mid-'80s was an underground insurgence of thrash metal—a meaner and faster sound that gave us legendary bands like Metallica, Megadeth, Slayer, and Anthrax. By the late '80s, heavy metal was in full effect and taking the world by storm!

By 1990, metal was growing, expanding, and branching off into numerous sub-genres. Florida's Chuck Schuldiner opened the door for a more grim and morbid musical genre with his band Death, and was later recognized as the "father of death metal." Bands like Queensryche, Fates Warning, Dream Theater, and Tool led the pack in the evolution of progressive metal. Yngwie Malmsteen paved the way for the neo-classical shredder movement, and later bands like Pantera (featuring the late guitarist Dimebag Darrell) would carry the torch for a whole new generation of shred-heads!

From the mid-'90s to the early 2000s, metal continued to take on new forms and intense progression with bands like White Zombie, Marilyn Manson, and Slipknot. They took imagery and shock to new heights alongside a rising crop of nu-metal bands like Korn, Limp Bizkit, and Linkin Park, which infused hip-hop and DJ influences with a down-tuned heavy edge.

Moving from the year 2000 to the present day, metal music retains a strong presence in emerging bands like Opeth, Gojira, and Lamb of God, and has never lost that underlying mystical element that draws in listeners for a truly transformative listening experience! Looking at the past progression of this art, we can now envision our own evolution and transformation as metal musicians and draw influence from the wealth of talent that has led us to where we are today.

In the pages that follow, you will learn how to attune yourself with your own vibrational frequency, infuse your music with depth and power, and become a TRUE metal master!

CHAPTER II

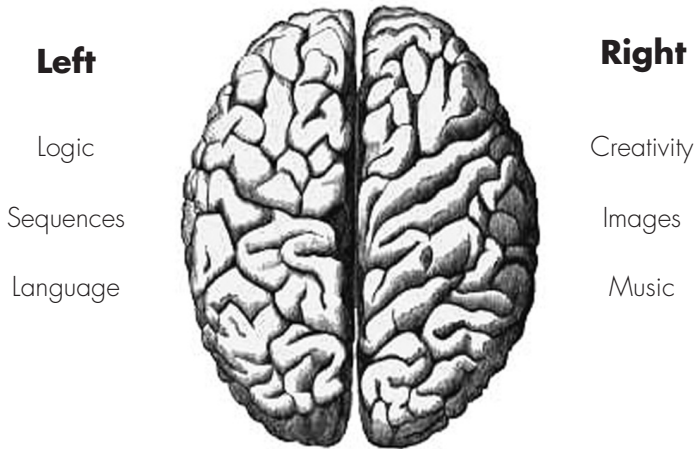
Mind Control

Unlocking the Power of the Mind



Let's start off by exploring the mind. Most of us have a dual conception of the word "mind": first, we think of the mind as the brain, and second, we think of the mind as our conscious self. Looking at the brain, we must look at what the brain consists of. We have two separate hemispheres of independent function. One side is analytical and the other creative, both dwelling within one mass of tissue. Inside this tissue is the presence of energy, which is emitting electrical impulses throughout the body's nervous system. So the brain essentially consists of energy that vibrates at certain frequencies and connects to every cell of the body.

BRAIN HEMISPHERES



The conscious self is the experiential side of the mind. What we know in our mind is what we have experienced or been exposed to in some form or another. The feelings and emotions we experience in life trigger the same electrical impulse at the thought of reliving the emotion once more. Whether it is misery or ecstasy, once a feeling has been experienced, it only takes a thought to bring it back. The mind is the instrument upon which every note of experience has been played. Every vibration of light, sound, and sense that you have either experienced or envisioned has been recorded in this space we recognize as *the mind*.

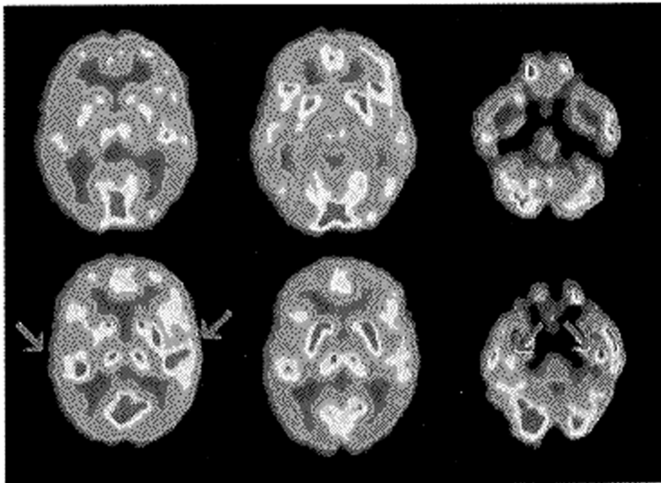
We now have a very brief concept of what the mind is in its completeness. Knowing that all the feelings you have experienced, both good and bad, have been recorded in your head and can be played back automatically, let's look at the main functions of the brain as it relates to your creativity. Your mind takes in images, sounds, smells, feelings, and deep impressions from an enormous amount of incoming experience. *Music, people, nature, art*—whatever the medium for output, your mind receives **plenty** of input! And from this we form thoughts in our mind. Every thought takes on a life of its own, because thoughts are something we create, and this creative energy becomes a powerful vibration that can manifest into reality. Let's use the example of music: you hear a song and it awakens a feeling, and that feeling makes an impression upon you, and that impression becomes a thought; and as that creative energy builds, you can either sit on that thought and internalize it or take action and express it, breathing LIFE into it!

To interject a scientific perspective on how sound vibrations are reflected in the mind, take a look at the diagram on the next page, which shows the level of brain activity brought on by both visual and auditory stimulation. We see that visual stimulation induces brain activity in a concentrated area surrounding the eyes and pituitary gland, but auditory stimulation engages many areas of the entire brain.

Visual stimulation



Auditory stimulation



With this in mind (no pun intended), there has to be a realization that your mind can infuse creativity with a thought. That thought can be brought to life by expression. When expressing the uncomfortable impressions that life makes upon us, we have to be aware that the mind houses such a creative force. The key, then, is to find a way to control one's thoughts and focus on your TRUE desires.

This is what the masters refer to as "mind control." I remember, as a young lad, starting to read ninja magik books and studying the concepts of hypnotic mind control, and the truth of the matter is that REAL mastery of the mind always refers to gaining complete control

over your OWN mind and harnessing that creative power to create your own reality and fulfill your purpose in life. To gain control over your thoughts, you have to recognize which impressions in life are of value to you in your quest and determine whether they warrant spending your time and creative energies on giving it a second thought! By seeing in your mind what you envision as the purest expression of your true self and igniting THAT impression, your vision begins to focus on the reality you wish to create.

We have been created individually to express our unique qualities. The mind is flooded with everyday impressions of all kinds, so staying focused on your individual expression is the challenge. As an artist, your individuality is a gift, and, in popular society, it's all about being able to "conform to the standards." When all we want to do is express ourselves through our artistic passions, we tend to take critique and criticism very much to heart.

Mind has a huge power over musical expression, but my goal is to help us separate the "over-thinking element" of the mind to make room for pure creative expression to charge forth.

"Over thinking, over analyzing, separates the body from the mind."

—Tool (*Lateralis*)

Although thinking is one of your most valuable tools in life, it can become a barrier that may stunt your personal growth. It's important that you don't become lost in thought, because over-thinking can pull you farther away from your intuition, and this is completely counter-productive. Learn to control your emotions, surround your true feelings with positive thinking, and stay focused on the means needed to achieve your higher purpose.

Let go... let action draw from the power of your positive thoughts and give life to your plan. Glorify these new positive emotions that you will experience. Now that you have completed the circle, stand in the center of it, and let it be a staple that holds together the many pages of your personal growth. Life is the spiral of spiritual achievement toward a level of awareness that will continue to move in either direction from which it was motivated.

When you approach art with positive thinking and a strong passion to be your best, you can develop your own levels of E.S.P. Now, the textbook definition of E.S.P. is *extra sensory perception*, but, in the artistic sense, I am referring to it as *extended sense perception*. The difference is that *extended sense perception* recognizes that the ability to expand the senses already exists within us; it is not found, but fine-tuned. Therefore, when the senses are fine-tuned and working for your greater good, your sense perception becomes extended or rather expanded. Through dedication, practice, and the realization that the mind, body, and spirit all work in conjunction, you can see and feel abilities within yourself that you would never have dreamed possible.

"Don't think... FEEL. This is what is known as emotional content."

—Bruce Lee

The way to really master music is by letting go. Music is the voice of your emotions; therefore, asking yourself "What do I want to say?" and answering by trying to pull that emotion out of your instrument is a half-hearted attempt to capture the true emotion you are trying to convey. Rather, one should answer the question "What am I trying to say?" with the purest sense of honest emotion, which comes from a non-thinking mind. If you keep from mentally attaching yourself to the thought of your message, you leave yourself free to feel the song, and that is what you are trying to say.

In martial arts, the concept known as *wu wei* or *no mind* is the idea of training your action to follow thought, which then reaches a level of proficiency in which the action happens all by itself and the thinking element is no longer needed to achieve the desired outcome.

There is an age-old story of two monks, a student and teacher, walking towards their destination and discussing the vows they must adhere to on the journey. One of these vows was that there be no contact with women. As the men came to a shallow ravine, there was a woman there struggling to make her way across it. The teacher set down his things, picked up the woman, and carried her across to the other side of the ravine.

The two men continued on their journey, and the young apprentice could not stop thinking about how his teacher had betrayed his sacred vow by carrying the woman through the water. Finally, the question burned so deep in him that he asked his teacher to explain himself. The teacher replied to him, saying, "I left that woman by the side of the river an hour ago. Why are you still carrying her?" The teacher knew the appropriate thing to do, so he lent a helping hand, and then did not dwell on it.

Such is the case in any action where one desires to make a choice. When faced with an issue, most people dive deep into contemplation, and sometimes worry or stress out. All that thinking will provide you with several options, but we are looking for the right option. By attempting to approach the situation with “no mind,” you’re left to *feel* your truest feelings, and all your answers lie therein.

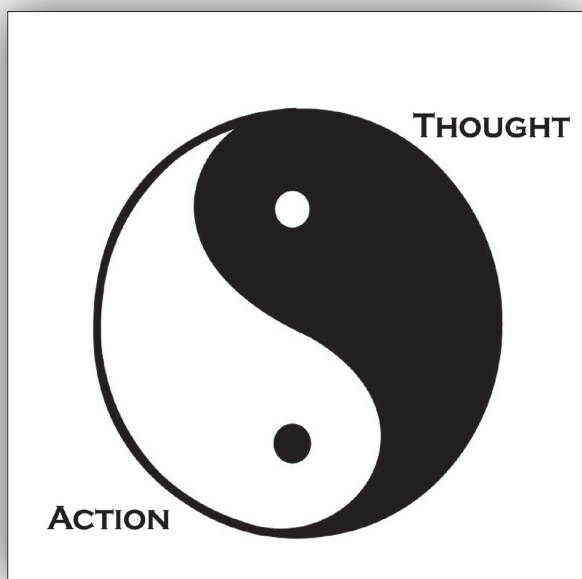
“Do, or do not—there is no try.”

—Master Yoda (*The Empire Strikes Back*)

Learn to control your emotions, and they will become a great asset to your life. There is a famous quote from Master Yoda in *The Empire Strikes Back* that has become a well-known mantra in many schools of music, martial arts, and other processes of learning that require practice: “Do, or do not—there is no try.”

For us as musicians, that means letting go of your thoughts and allowing the music to carry your action. Action follows thought, and thought follows emotion; therefore, be in control of your emotions. In other words, do not cling to emotions that do not have a positive place in the achievement of your goals.

To visualize this more clearly, we can refer to the principle of the yin and yang, in which all individual paths are contained in one constant whole. From this idea we realize the need to detach ourselves from emotions that do not serve our higher purpose or allow us to express our vision in song. Out of emotion is born thought, and out of thought is born action; that action, in turn, creates yet another emotion, continuing the cycle.



Through this, we can see that by entertaining a negative thought, or by continually vocalizing the lack of faith in ourselves and the world about, we are actually breathing life into that negative thought or simply making an issue out of something that is not *really* an issue. From this, we set the wheel of action in motion. That means no more saying “I suck” when you make a mistake or find yourself in a slump! The more you knock yourself down, the lower you’ll go, and all the progress you’ve made so far to raise yourself up will be reversed!

Out of this action, a new emotion is experienced. The new emotion further engraves those feelings of negativity into your thoughts, and the cycle continues until negativity rapidly overcomes your life. Do you now see the monster you can create with negative thoughts or feelings? Follow what you feel, but only that which is important to the *real* you and your purpose in life. This will put you in control of your art, and you’ll be well on your way to becoming the master of your mind!



CHAPTER III

Conjuring the Spirit

Awakening the Spirit Within



There is a spirit of intensity in heavy metal music that most people equate with “attitude” or “aggression,” and although the music is aggressive and much attitude is present, I like to think of it more as having “spirit.” You have heard people talk about a song as really “embracing the spirit of rock ‘n’ roll,” so

equate that to *awakening* or (to sound a bit more dark and brooding) *conjuring* the spirit of metal.

To awaken this musical beast within us, there are three basic components to make up the one all-pervading spirit of metal. For the sake of creating a visual concept of three ideas that make up one connective musical force, I think of the Holy Trinity in which you have the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost that, when combined, create the essence of God (or universal consciousness). So, let’s think of this as the “Not-So-Holy Trinity of Metal.” In our metal trinity, we have Rhythm, Coordination, and Self-expression. These three combined musical components conjure the spirit of metal and awaken the Metal Gods to unleash the power of your musical beast.

Rhythm

"Rhythm is the basis of life, not steady forward progress. The forces of creation, destruction, and preservation have a whirling, dynamic interaction."

—Kabbalah

Let's start with rhythm. One must establish one's own rhythm and attune that rhythm with the music of life. Technically, we are speaking about rhythm in terms of speed and time structure. More importantly, "rhythm," in the purest sense, means "the flow" of the piece, or even more so the way YOU flow with the music and or musicians in any given situation. The rhythm of a song can change a thousand times, but if your own personal rhythm is set and established, you'll always flow with the music.

Let's look deeper inside the concept of rhythm. It basically starts with a pulse or a heartbeat. And what is a pulse or heartbeat, but a vibration? **Everything** starts with a vibration, and **all** living things are born from a vibration. The simplest example, to better understand the concept of life beginning with a vibration and establishing one's own rhythm, is the breath. Each breath gives off a vibration that infuses LIFE into your body. That, in turn, pumps a beat through your heart that sets the body in rhythm and harmonizes the senses. By identifying the pulse or vibration of our breath, we can connect with the internal rhythm of the soul, and by disciplining ourselves further by controlling the breath, we can reach past the limits of our mind and find a place of stillness where the music will flow effortlessly.

There are all types of rhythm that have different effects on different people by way of the speed of the vibrations they produce. It's like someone passionate about opera who suddenly hears some Pantera at full volume; the effect would be beyond just a thought of distaste and more of a FEELING that transforms the vibrations into a feeling of discord.

Coordination

"Music is given to us with the sole purpose of establishing an order in things, including, and particularly, the coordination between man and time."

—Igor Stravinsky

Coordination is the next component of our trinity. Coordination, as we see it here, has several open-ended meanings. Obviously, we have coordination of the hands (for guitarists), the lungs and diaphragm (for singers), and the overall coordination of our technique, phrasing, and all other expressive tools. When playing in a group or even with just one other person, coordination is vital between you and your musical counterpart. Most importantly, we have to coordinate our musical ideas with our truest effort of self-expression.

Let's examine this point for a minute from another perspective. When you look at your instrument, think of it as a tool of expression and be mindful of the process. You learn a song, and then you coordinate your memory with the movement of your hands and play

that thought, feeling, or memory on your instrument. It is the tool that converts that thought, feeling, or memory into an audible essence of your own inner being and your true expressive self. Now think of your whole body as the instrument, and tap into **all** of that energy, and all the vibrations of your attunement to your inner rhythm, and all of the **oneness** of your being, and imagine that resonating through every pore of your body! YOU are the instrument!

From a modern perspective, if you were, in essence, a computer, then you'd be the computer, the hardware, the software, the programmer, the network, the Bluetooth, and all that jazz wrapped into ONE! To just simply view yourself as just the player of the instrument is severely selling yourself short. So, the idea is to find your own rhythm and become attuned with that inner nature—then coordinate **all** your faculties to GIVE EVERY BIT YOU'VE GOT! After all—it's about expressing *you* and finding that place within where you no longer sing the song, but *the song sings YOU!*

Self-Expression

"If you copy, then it is not self-expression."

—Michael Schenker

The final step in conjuring your metal spirit is *self-expression*. Self-expression means simply identifying who you really are and what you live your life for, and then using all your talents, knowledge, and intuitive feelings to convey *all* your thoughts and feelings to others in the purest and honest sense. In most cases, by expressing ourselves to others, we better ourselves and learn more about the people we are.

Have you ever had a great show that you later listened to on tape or watched on video that blew you away because you had put on such a stellar performance and then walked away feeling like you really showed the audience “this is me, and this is what I REALLY DO”? This is what we live for: to identify with who we are and find some way to be that person all the time regardless of other people’s thoughts or opinions of us or our work. Or, perhaps, you’ve never had that “killer” gig, and you always feel you fall short of your and other people’s expectations of your abilities. If this is the case, you may have lost sight of your purpose or reasoning for playing the instrument.

Self-expression has many faces and many names, and yet knows no boundaries or limits. If you feel it, express it—but express it so others experience the same feelings and emotions that brought the song to you when you wrote it. Self-expression is truly knowing the self and expressing it.

When my friends and students ask me how long I practice each day, I say, “all day, everyday,” meaning that everything in my life will eventually be brought out through my music. Or, rather, my knowledge of life’s experiences will, at some point, be expressed in my music. I also tell people that, when I was 17 to 19, I practiced 6 to 8 hours a day, and sometimes would play from morning to late evening only stopping to eat and take care of all necessary bodily waste disposal.

These days, with all of life's responsibilities, it's not so easy to fit in a solid six to eight hours of physical practice; but now, with a clearer understanding of the power of self-expression, I practice with the concept of practicing like a warrior preparing for battle. This is my training, and your dedication to training leads to an even more powerful level of understanding of yourself and what your music really means to you.

Two hours of pure, **honest**, self-expressive practice is really much more valuable to your growth as a musician and artist than spending eight hours half-heartedly practicing the same scale patterns over and over at ten different speeds. This is not to say that the mechanics of music mean nothing; it just means that being expressive is more important than mechanical. Playing expressively will only further enhance your mechanical abilities.

Now that you have explored the three components of the Metal Trinity, you have awakened the Gods of Metal and have been given the power to unleash the beast within. Go forth and conquer!

CHAPTER IV

The Warrior Within

Embracing Your Individuality



A Sioux Warrior

What is “self-discovery”? The name implies a journey or a quest that will end in the finding of a personal treasure buried deep within oneself. This is esoterically correct, as self-discovery becomes a journey and the jewels we unearth do come from within. So often though, our tendency is to get stuck on the concept of the journey, always seeking another map leading to the treasure, ready to cast off for shores beyond the farthest horizons in search of it. But self-

discovery really simply means self-realization, and to find it, you need look no further than yourself. It is the realization of who you are and for what reason you were given this talent and desire to express that which you are.

We have all been uniquely created and each embody our own essences, strengths, and weaknesses. The realization of the nature of our own uniqueness leads us to a fuller understanding of self. In the realization that we are all created so that we may express our individual uniqueness, we come to appreciate the unique qualities of others, thereby creating more harmony in our lives. It is by each individual's expression of his or her own being that the whole creative force of life manifests itself in this world. Without the expression of your own individual spark, the fire of your desires will never burn and our world would become cold and stagnate.

"He who knows others is learned; He who knows himself is wise."

—Lao-Tsu (*Tao te Ching*)

Life is blessed with variety, and each of us is moved to action by a different means than is someone else. This is how the great symphony of life is composed. Each of us carries our one pitch, or our own note, and we are strung together in a harmonious balance, our note becoming an integral part of the music of life. We would not be graced with so many wonderfully unique genres of music had it not been for someone taking a chance to express an idea by putting his or her own spin on that which had brought inspiration to them. So, it is by this expression of individuality that the creative energy of our world expands.

Self Realization

"After Self-Realization, one does not regard any other gain superior to Self-Realization."

—Bhagavad Gita

Another point of view to consider when examining the idea of self-realization is to pick apart the words and dissect their meaning. "Self" is a word used to describe our own individualism or what we recognize as our own being. Generally, our view consists only of that which we can experience, such as the legs we stand on, the hands we write with, and the eyes with which we see. So we recognize these individual parts as one whole SELF. As you begin to explore this notion of self further, you take note of your connection to a *greater oneness*, or a "higher self," as it is often referred to. This feeling of connection leads to a realization and a broadening of your conception of the real meaning of "self."

"Realization" is the awakening of a certain level of understanding in which something that had been unclear has revealed its secret, and the mystery behind it has been exposed. It is the act of knowing what is real and aligning one's vision with each new truth as it is unveiled. So, in essence, one could say SELF-realization is looking at life through the REAL EYES of the self! By finding that deeper connectivity to the creative essence that makes **you** a unique individual, you will give your life and your art a new purpose and a desire to express it by simply living up to the highest conception you have of yourself.

So, how do you go about realizing your own self? It begins by studying your own nature, such as your habits, your ideas, your dreams, and desires, by clearly understanding what you wish to achieve, and identifying the habits you have adopted that keep you from reaching that goal. With this understanding, we can re-sculpt our lives to express who we really are.

"Don't compromise yourself. You are all you've got."

—Janis Joplin

To fully express yourself, you have to know yourself. Unfortunately, most people identify themselves as how they are perceived by others. We have become so consumed with our appearance to others that we take drastic measures to appear as we assume others wish us to appear. By viewing yourself through the eyes of others, you become detached from your intuitive voice that is calling out for you to fully express the majesty of your being.

This is an art form by which we cultivate our individuality, so to punish yourself for not living up to someone else's expectations or raising your own expectations to please someone else is completely counter-productive. You may as well put down the guitar and walk in the other direction, because that's literally what you would be doing to yourself—walking in a completely different direction than the "real you" wants to go. By learning to control your thoughts and focus only on that which will aid in the fulfillment of your purpose, you will tune your mind, body, and spirit to the frequency of your divine self.

"The really valuable thing in the pageant of human life seems to me not the state but the creative, sentient individual, the personality; it alone creates the noble and the sublime."

—Albert Einstein

Self-discovery is also a process of cultivation, which is the same thing we are doing as musicians every time we practice. We are cultivating our creative expression and perfecting the techniques to perform them in a way that will project that creative expression through our art. This is the ultimate aim of a martial artist as well, so let's take a moment to compare these two forms of artistry.

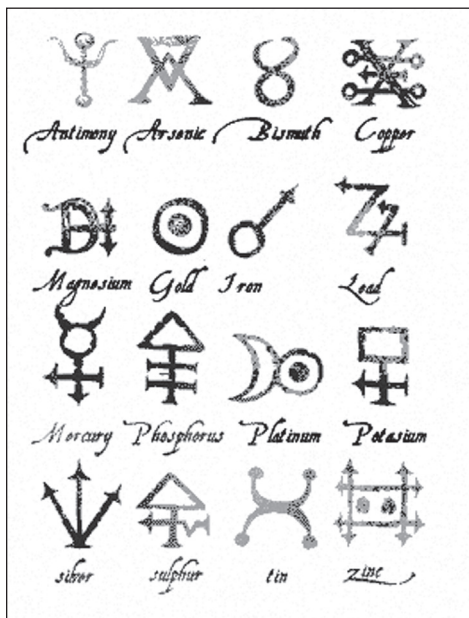
In martial arts, there is a warrior mentality present. That mentality is to be aware of your opponent and to be prepared to intercept the energy of their attack and counteract it in a way that you use its force against them. It is the same with music; you can learn to gracefully use the energy of each musical technique to create your perfect masterpiece.

Through your experience as an artist, expressing yourself begins with knowing yourself. Through this process of self-discovery, you will unlock hidden potential within you that will be transmitted through your art, infusing it with a great power and presence.

CHAPTER V

The Alchemy of Artistry

Transforming Your Rock into Metal



These are some of the many alchemical symbols associated with the base metals and minerals that were used in combination to create a formula for transformation.

Alchemy has been described as many things throughout the ages. It has been associated mostly with the transformation of base minerals and metals into gold. But alchemy has also been viewed as a philosophy, mapping out the ability for one to transform one's life by connecting to the transformative elements of the Universe.

"Alchemy is the art of manipulating life and consciousness in matter, to help it evolve, or to solve problems of inner disharmonies."

—Jean Dubuis

Much can be written about alchemy in relation to music, for it has long been a part of philosophies like Shamanism, Healing, Spirituality, Eastern Philosophies, and others. There are so many studies about the chakras, elements, solfeggio frequencies, and music and sound therapy that the resources are limitless. My intention is to give you a slight glimpse of how sound, vibrations, and energy all carry a power within them. When amplified by our musical expression, this power can transform our lives and have a deep and meaningful impact on all who listen.

Music has a profound physical effect on the mind and body of the listener. We often feel moved and emotionally stirred or charged by a particular sound or melody. Whether it's the hard-edge rhythm we bang our heads to, the aggressive tempos we stir up mosh pits with, or the searing melodies that put us in a trance-like state, heavy metal has many prime examples of how music moves the listener.

On a deeper level, music has a metaphysical effect on the body. This effect is carried to us and through us by the frequencies and vibrations of sound. They are then transmitted throughout our bodies by the electrical impulses that affect various areas of our nervous system, and a chemical reaction to these impulses then drives the momentum of our physical reaction to the sound.

"Through pride, we are ever deceiving ourselves. But deep down below the surface of the average conscience a still, small voice says to us, something is out of tune."

—Carl Jung

Whether it's due to a harsh sound, something that sounds "off" to us, or just a vibe we get, sometimes it is very apparent that we are "out of tune" with our current surroundings or situation. This is easily explained by understanding how certain frequencies of sound and vibration affect different areas of the body and build either a tension or create a release in our minds.

Tuning the Seven Energy Centers

The metaphysical body, or our underlying spiritual essence, is comprised of seven energy centers that are often referred to as *chakras*. These seven chakras are located at different points from the top of the head and moving down the spine to the base. Each chakra affects a different physical or emotional aspect of the body. Each chakra is also affected by a different note in the musical scale. Also, as the chakras connect through their respective vibrations, a channel of creative energy is created. This channel of creative energy houses the particular physical regions of the body that experience the effects of harmony, melody, and rhythm.

The first area of the creative energy channel feels the effects of harmony. It begins with the *crown chakra* at the top of the head, which resonates with the note B. This is followed by the *brow chakra*, which resonates with A, and the *throat chakra*, which resonates with G. Metaphysically speaking, these three notes have an effect on the spiritual aspect of the individual. The last note along the harmony channel of creative energy is the *heart chakra*, which resonates with the note F and affects both mental and spiritual aspects.

The next section of this creative energy channel is melody and consists of the *solar plexus chakra*, which feels the effects of the note E, and the *spleen chakra*, which is affected by the note D. This section of the creative energy channel has an effect upon the mental, emotional, and physical realms of the body.

The last area of this creative channel of energy is associated with rhythm and consists solely of the *base chakra*, which is affected by the note C and impacts the physical essence of the body.

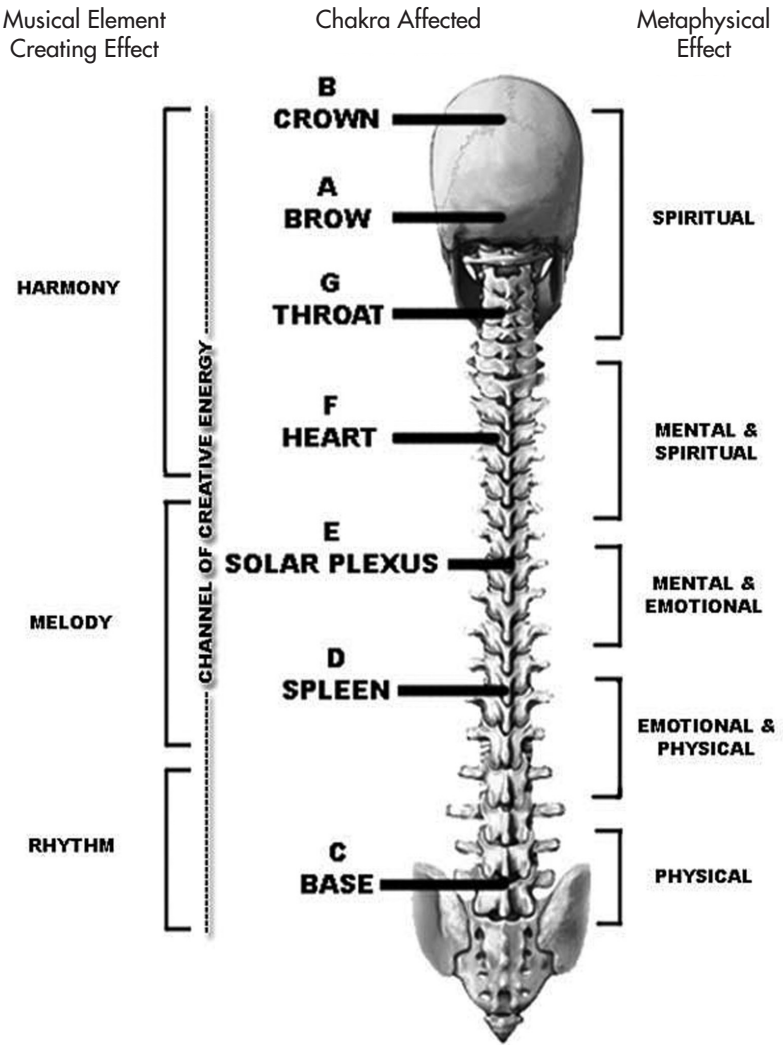
"Music is the mediator between the spiritual and the sensual life."

—Ludwig van Beethoven

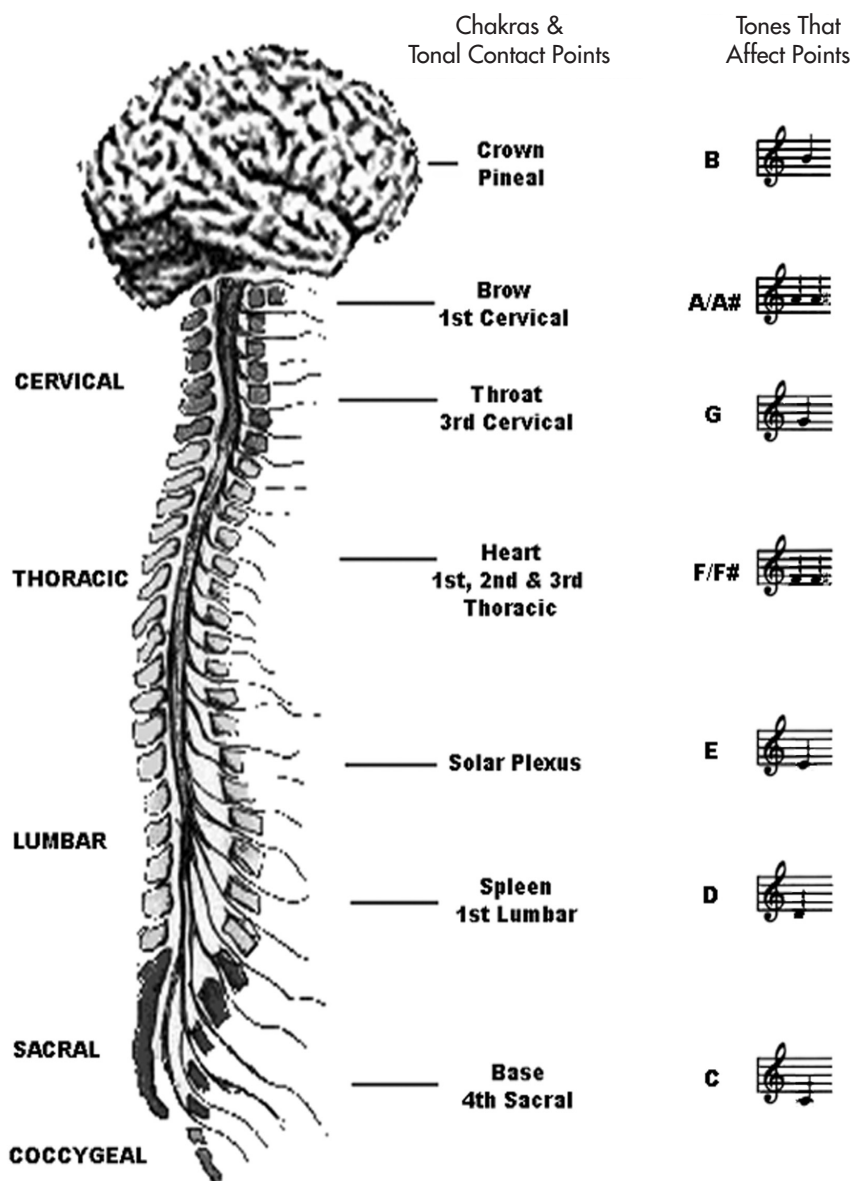
The concept of the metaphysical effects of music on the body is the basis for music and sound therapy. They have been used by many shamans and healers for hundreds of years in the practice of creating harmony in people's lives by tuning the body and bringing the mind to a more natural vibrational state. Armed with this knowledge, we can create music that will have a profound effect on our listeners while bringing a greater presence into the art of crafting our sound.

To give you a visual grasp of the chakras, the channel of energy they create, and the effects they have on the mind, body, and spirit, I have created a few diagrams. The first displays the channel of creative energy as it correlates to each note. The second shows a more detailed look at how the energy centers are connected to us via the spinal chord.

METAPHYSICAL ELEMENTS OF MUSIC



CHAKRAS & TONAL POINTS OF THE SPINAL CORD



The Five Elements



The law of the five elements has long been a huge part of martial arts, philosophy, mystical and alchemical practices, and many areas of the healing arts and Eastern medicine. By understanding the properties of each element we can unlock the nature of its power. We can then explore the idea of this power and use it as a strategy, or we can conceptualize an expression of its energy.

There are many different interpretations of the five elements and their meanings, and they vary from culture to culture and by application. In my studies, I have found that the Japanese names of the five elements and the path of their natural and destructive cycles to be the most in tune with how they apply to music. These elements are *Fire*, *Earth*, *Metal*, *Water*, and *Wood*. Many times you will see *Ether* or *Air* as one of the five elements, usually in place of *Wood*, but I like to think of *Air* as the invisible sixth element that binds the main five together.

Each element has its place in a natural and destructive cycle of life. For example, in a natural cycle, *Fire* burns *Wood* and creates ash that becomes part of the *Earth*. The ash gives nutrients to the *Earth*, which produces *Metal* in the form of minerals and ore. The *Water* that is present in the *Earth* and acquired from rainfall mixes with these minerals to give nutrients to plants, and the cycle begins anew. In a destructive cycle, you see how one element overpowers another. For instance, *Fire* can melt *Metal*, and *Metal* can pierce through *Wood*, and *Wood* can grow up from and break through the *Earth*, and the *Earth* can absorb *Water*, and *Water* can put out *Fire*. We can see how understanding the nature of these elements can give us insight into other areas of life.

Aside from the cycles of these elements as they intertwine, each individual element has its own unique energy characteristic. In the Ninja arts, there are evasive and attack maneuvers all based on the elements. For example, an *Earth* evasion technique would be something like hiding in a tree trunk or a ditch, using the *Earth* as a means of hiding; a *Water* technique would be like remaining underwater in a river using a small shoot of bamboo as an air source. By understanding the nature of the elements, the Ninja is able to apply the concepts of each to blend into his surroundings and use their energy for his next attack.

In this same manner, the five elements can play a huge role in the Alchemy of music. Understanding the ideas behind the energies and how they work can open our minds to see new ways of writing and expressing ourselves through music.

Let's take a look at a song structure and see how it may relate to the elements. We start with the *Wood* energy, which is a growing energy (very much like a growing intro or beginning of a song). Then we move into *Earth* energy, which is a stable energy (or the main verse or body of your song). From there we add some *Fire*, which is our expanding and explosive energy (your hook or theme). After repeating this cycle we fade into *Water* energy, which is a dissolving or sinking energy (much like an outro or fade out).

This is a very basic song format that I translated into elemental energies, but look at the possibilities that await us if we can use the energies to create a unique song structure or to highlight particular moods. Outlining techniques based on the energy they portray can open our minds and add a magical presence to our expression of life through music.

The following two charts further explain the elements and create a visual concept of how they work and relate to music.

THE LAW OF THE FIVE ELEMENTS



The Natural Cycle

WATER • WOOD • FIRE • EARTH • METAL

The Destructive Cycle

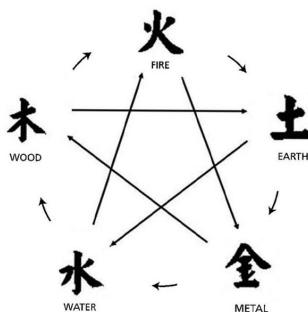
WATER • FIRE • METAL • WOOD • EARTH

Keep in mind that the beginning and ending of either cycle is essentially one and the same. Each phase of the cycle leads into the next, and the cycle continues as the end gives way to the beginning.

Water: Represents dissolving or sinking energy
Wood: Represents rising or growing energy
Fire: Represents expansive or free-flowing energy
Earth: Represents gathering or stabilizing energy
Metal: Represents hard-edged or unbreakable energy

Natural Cycle

Water
Wood
Fire
Earth
Metal

**Destructive Cycle**

Water
Fire
Metal
Wood
Earth

Since we are on a mission to explore the limits of our own self-expression, we can translate certain techniques in our musical arsenal into a sonic representation of any of the five elements. Furthermore, the natural and destructive cycles represent basic song structure of both soft and hard styles of writing.

WATER

Descending single-note patterns, bends, pull-offs; slow, descending chord patterns or slow, flowing held-out notes. *Resembles the mood of a song's closing.*

WOOD

Increased tempo, building arpeggios, full-chord voicings. *Resembles a build or the song's bridge.*

FIRE

All two-handed techniques, big chords, whammy techniques, palm mutes, harmonics. *This is basically your trick bag section of a piece, mostly the "color" added to a song.*

EARTH

Use your most firm foundations with your note and chord choices. *This is a very central point in a song, the main body. Resembles the verse or chorus sections.*

METAL

This is your song's "meat," hard-edged, highly controlled palm mutes, and my favorite "demon chords." *When I first started, we called this the "mosh part," but I would now call it the "heavy part" or most intense moment of the song.*

CHAPTER VI

Exploring the Dungeons

The Art of Drop Tunings



Metal has long been hailed for its deep and dark sound, and no other single genre has explored the depths of tuning down like metal has. During the days of metal's inception, standard A440 tuning (E, A, D, G, B, E) was beefed up with heavy overdrive and increased low-end equalization to achieve that low, heavy sound, but as time passed and music evolved, a desire for a deeper and more rich bottom-end guitar sound was building.

This vision for a deeper musical tonality had musicians looking at alternative tunings derived from other cultures and musical styles, such as country music's infamous DADGAD tuning. Simplicity also played a big role in lower tunings as open chords and open tunings began to expose a fuller richness in tone, as made popular by grunge music with its use of drop D tuning (D, A, D, G, B, E).

"If you want to play something that you hear, you need to listen with your mind's eye. You've heard of the mind's eye, right? Your mind has an ear too. It's a kind of listening, but it's not using your ears to listen. It's listening with your inner ear, and that's what you want to translate onto the guitar."

—Steve Vai

In the early nineties, guitar virtuoso Steve Vai, always looking to push the boundaries of creativity, teamed up with Ibanez to create a 7-string guitar with a low B string much like that of a 5-string bass. This low B allowed guitarists to dig down deeper and have a massive low-end sound while keeping the standard tuning of the remaining six strings intact. The call for lower tunings without the complications of adding an extra string was answered in the form of what we know as a baritone guitar, which is a 6-string outfitted with a longer neck that is set up for lower tunings.

Whether you fancy six or seven strings, standard or baritone, one thing remains clear: opening your mind to tunings that resonate with you, as a player and a songwriter, will carry more presence to the world that is listening. Some of us really feel the power of lower tunings, and those frequencies really give a song extra power and weight when we hear it. Having learned a bit about how certain notes and overtones produce effects on the chakras and energy centers of the body, we can use this knowledge to write songs in tunings that will increase the weight of their resonance with our audience.

When experimenting with alternate tunings, it's important to think about the needs of your instrument. For guitarists and bassists, you will need to keep the same amount of tension on the neck as it had in a standard tuning. So this means you will have to use a heavier gauge of strings and adjust your bridge or tremolo system and your neck. Most standard tuned guitars use 9 or 10 gauge strings. You can even get sets now that have a standard set with a heavy bottom string for drop D style tuning. Dropping a whole step down from standard to D, G, C, F, A, D is a common metal tuning, and for this, 11- to 12-gauge strings are the best, and they sound HUGE. My favorite tuning as of late is drop C, so that's the whole guitar tuned down one whole step and the low string tuned to C. So that's C, G, C, F, A, D and for this I recommend 12- or 13-gauge strings. And if you REALLY want to thicken up the sound and get some really rich overtones, try flat-wound strings, a little-known secret weapon for creating a thick sound as the purity of notes and the tones resonate longer and with more clarity.

Once you have selected a tuning, bought a set of strings to match your tuning, and tuned up your axe, it's time to make sure the neck is straight and the action feels smooth. The first thing to do is make sure your bridge is level, so if you have a fixed bridge you may have to raise or lower it once you have made sure the neck is straightened. For a guitar equipped with a tremolo system, it's more involved. In many cases you have to remove the back plate that covers the tremolo springs to tighten or loosen them according to how much play you need to level the tremolo. Tune the guitar with each adjustment, as this will also alter the amount of tension across the neck. Once you are relatively in tune with the tremolo bridge level on the body of the guitar we can check the neck.

Checking the neck of a guitar always looks like some sort of old-man eyeballing science that we think we'll never be taught to do correctly, but it's really just a matter of looking straight down the top of your neck and seeing how straight or curved the neck is. Sometimes it curves forward, sometimes backward, and it can all be adjusted with the truss rod, a small thin curved rod that sets in the middle of the neck and will draw the neck out or in depending on which direction it is turned. Unscrew the truss rod cover on the headstock, insert the correct allen or truss rod wrench that is usually provided with your guitar, and slowly turn it in one direction or the other until the neck appears straight.

Alternate tunings are just one more way of utilizing the power of vibrations in all ranges of frequency. After a few adjustments and a good re-tuning, you should be all set up to explore the dungeons of lower tuning and frolic in its depths!

CHAPTER VII

The Primal Scream

Hearing Your Inner Voice



Deep inside each one of us is a primal voice, and from the day we are born, this primal voice is longing to be expressed. Throughout our lives we are conditioned mentally and physically to fit into certain molds or confined patterns of thought that unfortunately pull us farther away from the inner primal or instinctual voice that is unique to us. By reconnecting to the primal voice of our own individuality we can expand our artistry and express it with fierce intensity.

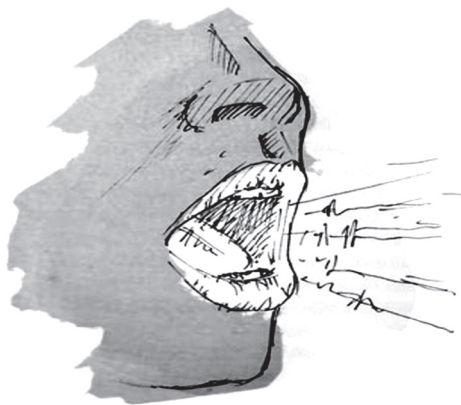
Once you can get in touch with your individual voice, you will open up to a whole new perception of sound and vibration that will become evident in your speech, the words you use, and even the note choices and tonality of your music, right down to the sound and tone of your instrument. By reconnecting with the inner essence of your individuality, your creativity will expand and your artistry will express this endless thread of creative energy

The Types of Voice

"The voice is not only indicative of a man's character, but is the expression of his spirit. The voice is not only audible, but also visible to those who can see it."

—Hazrat Inayat Khan

So how do we reconnect with this primal voice? First, by understanding that there are a few different types of voices and that each voice also contains many different qualities that all have a unique effect on others. Then, we must eliminate the mental and physical blocks that have separated us from recognizing these qualities and driven us farther away from our individual creative spirit. In martial arts, we often say that one must unlearn that which has been learned, and in this, we can separate ourselves from such preconceived ideas that become roadblocks on our way to pure expression, and open our minds to the qualities present in our primal voice.



Let's first take a deeper look at the spiritual and metaphysical aspects of the voice. In the ancient Hindustani tradition, it was seen that the voice was made up of three principle types: there is the *jelal* voice, which was indicative of power, the *jemal* voice, which represents beauty, and the *kemal* voice, which indicates wisdom. Often, we just hear the sound of a voice and do not recognize it as any particular type, but if one were to listen closely and tune in to the subtle qualities of the voice, a distinction between these aspects can be made and words become illuminated in a whole new light.

A word delivered with a particular emotional intent will carry within it the power to heal or the ability to poison. We can see this in so many examples. A military commander will speak with a great attitude of authority and this authoritative presence in the voice empowers the troops and calls them to action. With a great intensity, the commander calls out ATTENTION, and with the utterance of that one word, every soldier is indeed at attention and at his or her command.

Now let's look at this from another perspective. If a doctor were to approach a patient with some unfortunate news about their health, clearly, he or she would not speak with the same aggressiveness of the militant leader, for that quality would instill fearfulness in the patient in a moment of already heightened concern. On the contrary, the doctor would approach the patient with a sense of calm and an attitude of hopefulness. You have all most likely experienced your doctor uttering an encouraging remark such as, "The test results did present an issue, but with the right treatment we may be able to prevent further complications," which is much more suitable to the given situation. So, in this we can get an idea of how the types of voice or the emotions expressed in them can have a specific effect on the listener. This is true with music as well as with spoken word.

Qualities of the Voice

“Music is the voice that tells us that the human race is greater than it knows.”

—Napoleon Bonaparte

In addition to these voice types, there are certain qualities of the voice. By studying these qualities in a person's voice, we can learn much about the individual's character and the stage of his or her evolution in life. These qualities can be seen in many examples of the five elements, which we have touched upon previously from the alchemical view of Japanese ninjitsu. Here we look at them from the perspective of Eastern Mysticism, which incorporates *Air* and *Ether* in place of *Metal* and *Wood*.

The *Earth* quality of the voice gives hope and encouragement, and is tempting. The *Water* quality is intoxicating, soothing, and healing, and is uplifting. The *Fire* quality is impressive, arousing, exciting, and at times horrifying. The *Air* quality of the voice is uplifting, oftentimes raising or lifting a person from the plane of the *Earth*. Finally, the *Ether* quality of the voice is inspiring, appealing and convincing, often bringing forth peace, harmony, and healing.

With a better understanding of these types of voices and the qualities they possess, it is evident that we can learn to use these qualitative elements to expand the art of expression. As we grow to harness our individual strengths, we can present our words, music, and art with a deeper sense of meaning and a presence that will have a much more profound impact on all who listen.

Individual Tonality

These qualities are not limited to just the human voice. The same goes for creating a unique sound with your instrument or your equipment. We all have heard particular instruments that carry a distinctive tonality of sound or performance quality, and we immediately recognize the artist behind it—like the unique sound of Alex Van Halen’s drums or the searing scream of Dimebag Darrell’s guitar tone. Once you hear the first beat or the first lick, you unmistakably know who’s behind it. So no matter what medium your musical expression is transmitted through, keep in mind the quality of sound used to create it and listen for the distinctive emotional essence it creates.

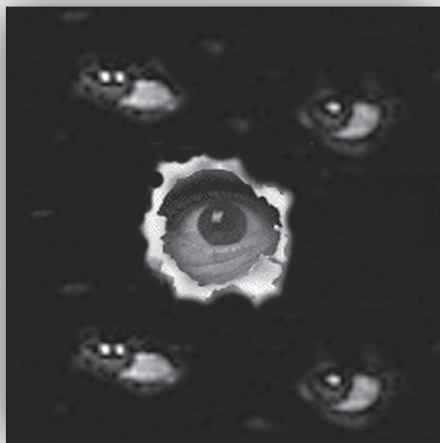
Like with the voice, an individual plays each instrument, and the different tonality and intent of the player just needs to be adapted to that instrument. Let’s look at some ways we might create a tone that can embrace certain qualities of our creative expression as to breath more life into our sound. There are a million ways nowadays that we can create a vast and endless array of guitar sounds, tones, and effects. Each of these can help expand the audible qualities of our instrument and create moods and vibes that will give your music a much deeper impact. Again, from the perspective of the elemental qualities we can see how a pristine clean or acoustic tone could easily bring forth the soothing or calming effect of *Water* energy. Use of echo, chorus, or delay could emulate the expansive and uplifting qualities of *Air* energy. Thick, heavy distortion, high gain, and overdrive can take on a *Fire* quality and add intensity and arousal to your sound. Working with EQs and compression in conjunction with the power and preamp sections of your amplifier can create a solid stable tonality that is indicative of the stabilizing energy of the *Earth*.

So we see now the potential of simply having, in our minds, a deeper perspective of the voice, the many types of voices, and the qualities of sound they possess. These are only a few examples of the many variations and combinations of sound energies that one can work with, but coupled with what we have learned so far about the development of our creative expression, seeing the existence of energies in sound, working with different frequencies through the advent of various alternate tunings, and channeling all that through our voices, instruments and equipment, we can consciously infuse our music with more depth, meaning, and transformative power.

CHAPTER VIII

Voices in the Dark

Illuminating the Color of Sound



Music has often been referred to as “colorful,” which implies that sound embodies a particular visible shade of color. In many ways this is true, as all color is the reflection of light and shade, and music is the reflection of the light that shines from within the human spirit. In this way, seeing music as colorful is much more than a metaphorical concept of sound but a realization that the light of the soul reflects through art and is projected into the minds of others, producing the visual concept of its sonic illumination.

“A painter paints pictures on canvas.
But musicians paint their pictures on silence.”

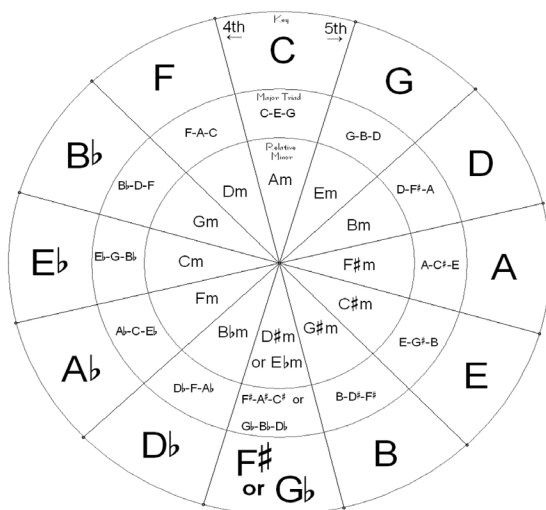
—Leopold Stokowski

Just as we can recognize the presence of energies and the different qualities they represent in musical form, so can color and texture embody sound in a manner that adds additional experiential elements to the vibrations of sound. Like a great painting or sculpture that speaks to us through the voice of its shade and texture, a melody or song speaks to us in the same way. By creating a particular texture or color of sound, the mind is given an enhanced visual connection to the music and is drawn into the emotional experience of the artist who created it.

The Color of Sound

A prime and simple example of the connection between color and sound is represented in the blues. This music was primarily rooted in the expression of pain and sorrow, which, in the era of its origin was often referred to as “feeling blue” or “having the blues.” When this feeling was expressed in musical form, no other name could justly suit it but “the blues.” The mellow and somber vibes of the stories the songs told were directly translated in the textures of sound and the mood of the music that accompanied them.

This is also very apparent in a modern form of metal known as “black metal.” The word black refers to the evil nature of the music’s message, or its black heart, and as it is a dark and ominous form of music, it can be said that black metal is appropriately named due to its lack of light.

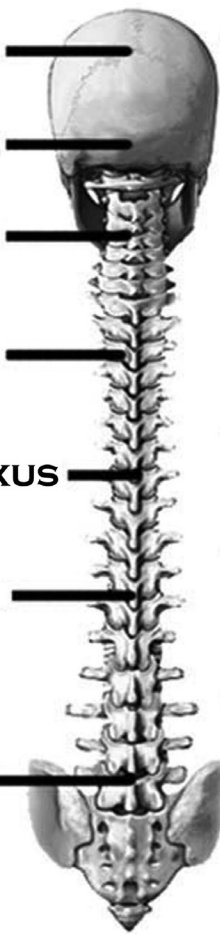
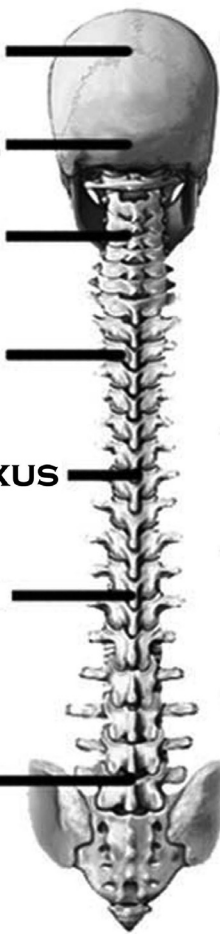
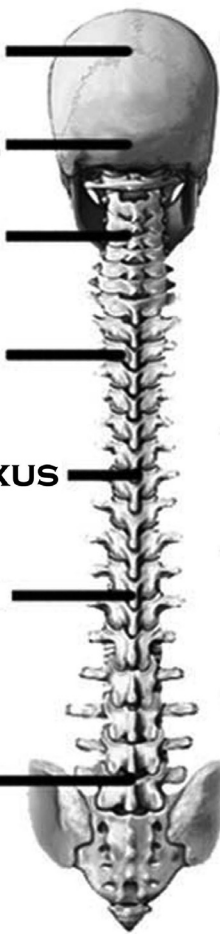
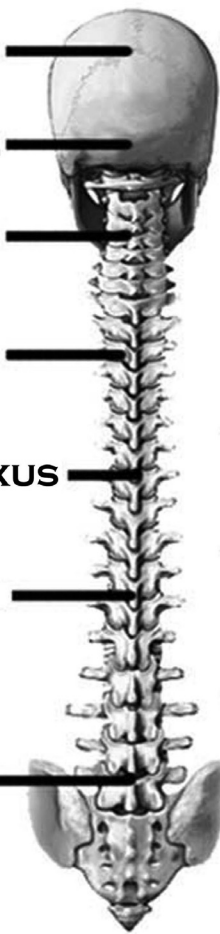
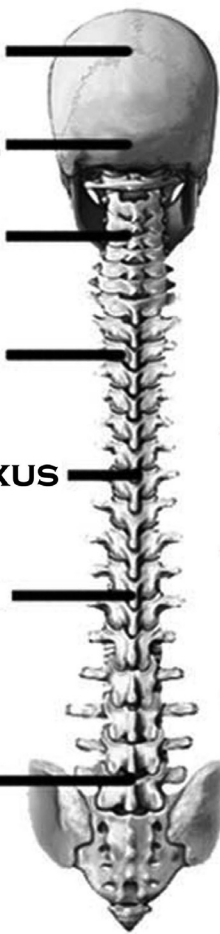
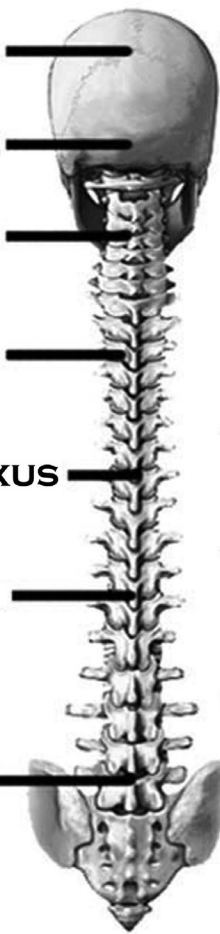
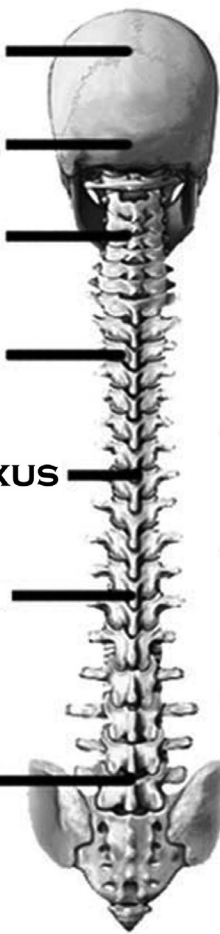


The Circle of Fifths

Earlier origins of the Circle of Fifths included a list of colors and astrological constellations that correlated to each note in the musical scale.

We learned earlier in the chapter on the alchemy of music and the metaphysics of sound that various notes in the musical scale have a physical and emotional effect upon the energy centers known as chakras. Each chakra also contains a corresponding color: *Crown* = violet, *Third Eye* = indigo, *Throat* = blue, *Heart* = green, *Solar Plexus* = yellow, *Sacral* = orange, *Base* = red. This color illuminates when its vibratory frequencies are raised. So the vibrations of sound that affect each energy center also quicken the speed of each mental and emotional vibration to invoke its color equivalent, infusing it with the added vibrations of light and shade. Put that all together and NOW we're working with some seriously HEAVY vibes!

COLORS OF THE CHAKRAS

NOTE	CHAKRA		COLOR
B	CROWN		VIOLET
A	THIRD EYE		INDIGO
G	THROAT		BLUE
F	HEART		GREEN
E	SOLAR PLEXUS		YELLOW
D	SACRAL		ORANGE
C	BASE		RED

For this chart, I substituted the words "Third Eye" for "Brow" and "Sacral" for "Spleen." Although both names are correct for each chakra, they illicit different mental images, and I found the names used here to be more colorful with regards to the topic.

The Texture of Sound

Texture is the other component that, when mixed with light and shade, will add dimension to any form of art. Often the role of a producer is to find ways to conceptualize textures of sound and present the info back to the artist in a way that will expand the sonic vision. It is often difficult for every person to see, or hear, an idea in the same way, and that is why it becomes important to be open to the textural visualization of sound.

“It needs more masking tape!”



I'll give you a personal example of how I came to understand this concept. My fellow band mate and I were trying to describe something that we felt was lacking in our guitar tone, and he described it to me as "masking tape." He said, "When you peel a big strip of masking tape off of the roll it has a very distinct sound of thickness, but not like a weight, more of a thickness that is held up by the fullness of the sound." Well, needless to say I took a minute to get it, but as soon as I got my hands on a roll of masking tape and peeled a big piece off, I GOT IT! With this picture in my mind of adding more masking tape to my tone, I was quickly able to pinpoint what was missing in the way of EQ and tone settings and dial it in!

The idea behind adding texture is being creative and having an open mind. What will add depth to your sound? What can add another layer or dimension to it that will raise it up from the speakers and reach out and grab your ears? The possibilities are truly limitless. If you can imagine it, you can recreate it!

So the addition of color and texture to sound is MUCH more than just a clever descriptive tool that a producer or songwriter uses to express an idea, but it is a living infusion of light and dimension with the vibratory frequencies of sound. Most of us listen to music or even write music and never give a moment of thought to the concepts of light and color, but again these vibrations are ALWAYS present. By acknowledging their presence and learning how to use them to serve you in your creative process, your music will be heard and seen in a whole new light!

Voicings

Let's explore some concepts that will help us unleash the voices that have been silenced in the dark and add color and texture to our sound. There are many different chord variations, appropriately know as *voicings*. These voicings are achieved by changing the intervals between some of the original notes of the chord, or by choosing a select few notes within the chord, giving it a different "voice." Each chord variation will sound unique in its color and texture while retaining the overall note value of the original. There are many chords such as diminished, augmented, and suspended chords that all have a unique voice and mood that they convey. Depending on what you are trying to convey, the use of even one of these many chord variations can make a drastic impact on the mood you create in a piece of music.

This chart shows nine variations for voicing a chord around the note C.

1. CM9 (R.H. - same as an E-7)	2. C9 (R.H. - same as an E-7b5)	3. C-9 (R.H. - same as an EbM7)
4. C-11 (R.H. - same as a G-7)	5. C13b9 (R.H. - start on the b7 - go up two min 3rds and a 4rth)	6. C9+11 (R.H. - start on the 3rd - go up a b5 and two 3rds)
7. C7+9 (R.H. - start on the 3rd - play a maj 7th chord w/o the 5th)	8. C-6/9 (R.H. - start on the b3rd - play a maj 7th chord w/o the 5th)	9. C6/9 (R.H. - start on the 3rd - go up two 4rths)

Intervals

An *interval* is the variation in pitch between two notes. Intervals are described as “vertical” (or *harmonic*) if the two notes are sounded simultaneously, and “linear” (or *melodic*) if the notes are sounded successively. Intervals may be labeled according to the ratio of the frequencies of the two pitches. Important intervals have the lowest integers, such as 1:1 (*unison or prime*), 2:1 (*octave*), 3:2 (*perfect fifth*), 4:3 (*perfect fourth*), and so on. The name of an interval is determined by counting the number of degrees between the two notes, beginning with “one” for the lower note. For example, the number of degrees between F and B is four, therefore, the interval is a fourth. An interval is further qualified with a term describing its *quality*, which is either *perfect*, *major*, *minor*, *augmented*, or *diminished*. This system is frequently used to describe intervals in both Western and non-Western music.

Some intervallic variations can sound downright dissonant, discordant, and demonic, and I LOVE IT! Much of the early pioneers of death metal, such as Suffocation, often used discordant intervals that many aspiring metal guitarists amply dubbed “demon chords.” These intervals often would be played slowly and broodingly with lightning-fast double bass drumming underneath, and the physical effect on the listener was indeed enchanting. Try them out, and then explore and seek out your own variations of intervals and voicings that stir your soul.

Now that we have expanded our visual capacities to include the color and texture of sound, we have combined our senses in a way that will open a new dimension of sonic velocity in our music. By infusing these mental ideas into the process of our musical creation, we empower it with the many colorful voices that have been slumbering deep in the darkest depths of our inner self, waiting for your creative reflection to shine upon them and bring them to light.

CHAPTER IX

The Speed Demon

The Science of Shredding

One of the main elements that has made heavy metal so intense and extreme is the speed of its delivery. Whether it's lightning fast guitar riffs or thundering double bass drumming, the faster it is, the more power it represents. What is it about the speed of the music's execution that gives it such a presence of power? It's the law of vibration.

The Law of Vibrations

"If you sing alone in your shrine, the vibrations return to you as a reaction. But in community singing, what you have is not a reaction but a wave of vibrations. They enter into the atmosphere and purify the polluted air."

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

As we have learned, all life is born of vibration and vibratory frequencies are carried through the Universe at various rates of speed. As a vibrational frequency is sped up it gains increased momentum to carry out its manifestation into reality.

To visualize this musically, we can refer to the piano, guitar, or any other string-oriented instrument. Lower notes are produced because of the increased distance between each end of the string in conjunction with the string's tension. This increased distance and lowered tension creates a slow vibration, and the sound it produces is lower in pitch. On the contrary, a higher note is produced when there is less distance and a higher tension applied between each end of the string therefore creating a faster rate of vibration, which in the end creates a higher sonic frequency.

This is why thoughts are so powerful and all of the science behind the law of attraction begins with the quantum physics behind the law of vibrations. Thoughts are generated at a very high rate of frequency so they move fast. This is another example of how each thought we create, whether good or bad, is propelled into the consciousness of the Universe and takes on a life of its own. This

accounts for how we attract either harmony or disharmony back into our lives. Like attracts like, so high speed, high frequency vibrations attract the same energies to themselves, and likewise, slow and low frequencies attract their equivalent.

The idea of *karma* is built on this principle as well. You can see how a positive action or thought, which is heightened (or sped up) with the addition of good vibes or positive emotions behind it, brings that same energy into your surrounding environment. Likewise, a negative action or thought, empowered by (or slowed down by) low frequency emotional vibrations, travels at a slow rate of speed but is still projected into the Universe just the same. This is how bad karma “comes back to haunt you.” A positive vibration is quickly released into your immediate surroundings attracting the like to you, and the negative vibrations are slowly carried a great distance and therefore gain a great deal of momentum on their return back into your life.

The effect produced on the physical body when sound is applied to these laws is the same. Slower music softens the heart or mellows you out as its vibrations slow down your own physical vibrations, and fast-paced upbeat music quickens the heart and raises you to a higher state of presence or even ecstasy. Again, keeping the principles of these laws in mind we can better understand the effects that the rate of speed carries in our music. Furthermore, we can see much clearer the power we place behind our music as we create it, and the emotional and mental effect that will be carried out as it reaches the ears of the listener.

Armed with this knowledge we can examine the speed and intensity of our own music and look even deeper to see the frequency of emotion that lies behind it. Music creates a particular mood and that is why it is such a powerfully expressive art form, which accounts for why its expression houses a true transformative power. These vibrations that are carried within the sound are what breathe

life into music and give it its power to stir the soul. It's important to acknowledge the presence of these vibrations and use them to our advantage in the creation of our art.

The Physiology of Shredding



Applying these scientific laws to the art of shredding involves some physiological factors as well. Although a higher tension with regards to tonality raises a frequency, tension inside the physical body while attempting to play with speed and accuracy has an opposing effect and slows down the muscles. To perform with speed and agility one must be calm and relaxed so that the muscles and tendons used to physically play out the music are not held back from achieving their peak level of performance. We will go over some ways in which to relax the body and alleviate tension in the muscles later in the book.

Another important physiological factor of shredding is the creation of *muscle memory*. We have all learned from the beginning of our musical training that practice makes perfect, and this is especially true when it comes to any type of performance that is physically challenging. Practicing scale patterns or cadences at a slow steady pace and then slowly increasing the speed after several repetitions of correct execution not only helps to build your strength to play faster, but also creates a memory of the physical motion in your muscles.

Much in the way a martial artist would do a kata or particular attack or defense pattern repeatedly until perfection is achieved before trying to do it with great speed, a musician can perfect a performance. When I first started learning to wield the nunchaka, not only did I have to start slow enough as to not knock myself out with each swing, I also learned the importance of getting it right before speeding it up. Starting with basic hand-over-hand movements, I would do 100 or so repetitions, and regardless of whether I'd made it to 9 or 95 reps, if I made a mistake I would start from the beginning. By taking the time to correct a false move or wrong notes in a pattern of music, you further ingrain in your mind and body the right way to perform with intensity. Speed then becomes the next natural progression and is much easier to achieve.

It is also always important to practice with intensity. Although intensity and attitude usually are associated with the mind, by adding that conscious intent into your repetitive action, your practice is just as powerful as your performance and this needs to be instilled in that muscle memory as well. We will touch upon this more in the next chapter pertaining to technique.

There are a lot of great materials out there that offer tips on shredding techniques, scale patterns, and much more, but the first part of really understanding the power of speed and how to achieve it comes with understanding how it works and why. Now that you have gained insight into the science of shredding and the effects of speed in the world of vibrations, you can apply it to music. So put the pedal to the metal and rip it up!

CHAPTER X

TNT

Unleashing the Explosive Technicality of Technique



There are many ways that an artist can progress and improve upon their skill level, no matter what instrument or style of music they play. One thing that has proven to be a valuable asset to any musician is the perfection of technique.

No matter how much raw talent or ability one innately possesses, the one thing that always makes particular artists stand out is their individual technique. What set Bruce Lee apart from all other martial artists was his explosive and precise technique. Men like Tiger Woods and Michael Phelps are great athletic examples of technical perfectionism and stand among the elite due to their personal dedication to the mastery of winning technique.

So what exactly is *technique*? Webster's dictionary defines it as *the manner in which technical details are treated (as by a writer) or basic physical movements are used (as by a dancer); also: ability to treat such details or use such movements (good piano technique). A body of technical methods (as in a craft or in scientific research) or a method of accomplishing a desired aim*. In a nutshell, it is the ability to use all of the subtleties within your art to transform your music from being impressive to becoming explosive!

So what does it take to really become a master of technique? Well it takes a keen attention to detail, a clear acknowledgement of your strengths and weaknesses, and a willing attitude to practice till it's perfect! Once we can visualize all the little details of our music, recognize our strong points and weak points in performing them, and then dedicate the time and patience to strengthen the weaknesses and perfect the strengths, we can build an explosive technique that will become an inspiration to anyone who sees or hears us perform our music.

By dissecting each little nuance of playing or singing we can tap into its essence and make a deeper connection to our own creativity. This deeper connectivity will help us hone in on weaknesses and strengths, and we will be better suited to build harmony and balance between the two. The outcome will be a flawless performance with unrivaled intensity.

Attention to Detail

"Sometimes when you start losing detail, whether it's in music or in life, something as small as failing to be polite, you start to lose substance."

—Benny Goodman

My grandfather was a great man and probably the most influential teacher in my life. He was a kind and patient man who taught me many valuable life lessons that to this day still mold me into a better man. One of the things I learned from him at a very young age was that if you're gonna do something, do it right the first time. His life long passion was to restore old classic cars. As one of the founders of the Car Coddlers of Ohio auto club, he had plenty of opportunities to work on some amazing cars. Many of these cars dated back from the 1920s through the '40s.

One day, I went into his garage and watched him work, as I often did, but this time I was quickly confused by what he was doing. He was working with the door on an old Model T Ford and it seemed like he was just taking the door off and then putting it back on over and over again. Being probably around 10 or 11 I had no clue why he would keep moving that door on and off again. Finally my curiosity got the best of me and I asked him why he kept doing this. He walked me over to the car and reattached the door, and as he closed it he said, "Look here son, you see this pinstripe here on the door is a little lower than the one on the body where the two meet. If I hold this dime up to the two you can see that this door is about a half of a dime's thickness lower where they meet and if I'm gonna do this, I'm gonna do it right the first time." It seemed a little petty to me and I would have never in a million years seen the difference with my own eye had he not pointed it out to me, but later in life I would come to realize that it was his meticulous attention to detail that made him the best damn car restoration expert in the Midwest! It was his understanding of the subtleties that could take a car from just being restored to being a true "classic" that kept the cars rolling in and out of his garage until long after he retired. To this day this lesson continues to make me a better musician as I look at each subtle detail of my art to make sure if I'm gonna do it that I'm doing it right!

We can see how really paying attention to the simplest of details can really have a huge impact on the final outcome of our time and efforts. The difference between being good at something and being great at something begins with this. Another great element of embracing minute details is that we discover our unique approach to performing any particular technique.

You can give a group of musicians the same piece of music and each person will play it in a way that is unique to their own style. They may all try to copy one another, yet they are still gifted with an individual voice. The intensity or lack thereof with which they perform it is all in the details!

Strength and Weakness



"Our strength grows out of our weaknesses."

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

It is very true that sometimes our greatest strengths rise out of our biggest weaknesses. When we can identify with anything that is holding us back in any way from achieving success, be it a small thing or our life's purpose, we have already begun the process of becoming stronger. As musicians it is quite often that we are faced with the challenge of overcoming a weakness, and persistence is the key to making it happen.

How many times have you been given the task of learning a particularly difficult piece of music or wanted to learn a particular song, and upon seeing the challenge in front of you, decided to pass on it? Or how often have you seen a friend or neighbor who is ecstatic about taking up guitar or piano lessons only to see them a month later and find out that they quit their lessons? This is a common occurrence in the world of fine arts as people are often not willing to overcome the challenges to fulfill their heart's desires.

If everyone who has come before us were to have bowed down before a challenge, our world would have not developed and we would all still be living out our short existence in caves and hunting for food with our bare hands. But there have been those who have stared into the face of adversity and viewed each challenge as a stepping-stone leading to a future of greatness.

And so it is with music. The way to excel is to pinpoint the areas of our talents that are the weakest, and with a strong will and perseverance, work to overcome them and transform them into strengths. A singer expands his or her range by building strength in the lungs and by slowly but surely breaking through the boundaries that limit their expansion. No one is just born with the power of Pavarotti or the beauty of Beethoven. But with a meticulous attention to the weak spots in our abilities, we can consciously overcome the fear of being trapped behind their limitations. Likewise, as we overcome even the smallest limitation, we add an extreme sense of empowerment to our whole being. This empowerment ignites the strengths we do possess and makes them explosive!

A great fighter works on the weakest side of his or her body twice as much as the strong side. Doing so creates a balance of total strength. This harmonious balance is the very thing every musician seeks to achieve, and by seeing through a weakness to recognize its inner strength is the first step!

Practice Makes Perfect

"I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times."

—Bruce Lee

There are many great quotes and mantras dedicated to the topic of practice and for good reason. It is the process of practicing one's craft that creates personal growth and builds the strength to overcome all of life's limitations. Although all of us are born with innate abilities, it is through the disciplined action of practice that these abilities are refined and empowered.

There are many ways to approach practice and many different theories as to what practice regimens are most effective in one's quest to become a highly skilled musician. Whether you work in a mechanized fashion by working on individual scales and chord progressions repeatedly, a physiological manner by focusing your attention on physical factors such as breath and muscle control, or a systematic approach that intertwines many different aspects of training, the one thing that needs to be present from the beginning is *mental focus*.

Mental focus is a broad subject, and throughout this book we have explored many new ways of opening our minds to what lies behind the things that we can physically see and hear in music. As we open our minds to these vibrations and frequencies that flow through the art we create, it becomes even more important

to acknowledge them in our practice. A positive attitude of determination coupled with a clear mental image of your desired goal will prove to be the most valuable practice technique you will ever learn.

So we start with a clear mental image of our goal. If you're practicing a scale or a chord pattern, you know in your mind how you want it to sound so embrace that image and see yourself performing it with that level of perfection no matter how far away you really are from perfecting it. Keeping a clear mental picture in your mind of success will lead you to that success.

Persistence is also a key factor in building your skill level through practice. Once you have looked at all the little details in your music, identified your weaknesses and strengths, and fashioned a clear mental image of your desired outcome, it's time to work through the weak areas with persistence.

It's much like the quote from Bruce Lee at the beginning of this chapter stating the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times has retained that clarity of his vision to persistently overcome weakness and bring perfection to that technique. The repetitive action, fueled by an intense mental focus, carves the perfection of that technique into the mind, the muscles, the heart, and the soul, and can never be taken away once it is there.

The other important factor of mental focus with regards to practice is intensity. It is one thing to practice for the sake of memory, accuracy, and precision, but it is also important to keep in mind the end result of performing with the intensity behind that precision. A fighter doesn't go to the gym and punch the bag lightly every day and then expect intensity to just be there when he needs it in the

ring. On the contrary, a great fighter knows to practice with all the intensity of the real thing, EVERY time he practices.

This type of practice as a musician will give you an extremely rewarding sense of accomplishment. With mental focus that contains a clear image of your goal, a persistent desire to perfect each technique, and the attitude of intensity behind the delivery of each technique, you will begin to see tremendous improvements in your art and yourself in a very short time.

Whether you're singing or playing scales and ragas, building precision fingering and pick attack, or preparing for a big performance, the process is the same. By paying attention to detail, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and working to balance them, and infusing persistence and intensity with clear mental focus, you will gain an explosive technique that will not only make you a better musician but will also set you apart from the rest of the pack.

CHAPTER XI

The Army of Darkness

Aligning the Creative Forces

At this point, you have been shown a glimpse into the future of the primitive. By this I mean that you have seen a small portion of the overall scope of the Universe. The future depends on the world returning to its core primitive truth—that we are all connected as one. Out of darkness that has shaded so much of the truth from our lives comes a silent stream of consciousness that

illuminates us, creating a harmonious balance. It is up to us to express these truths and create harmony through our talents and gifts.

I frequently refer to martial arts and the philosophies of great fighters for many reasons. Not only do their philosophies hold great wisdom, but it also takes a disciplined individual to really achieve greatness. Also, it is the warrior mindset that shows real power. By controlling one's mind and staying focused on your vision, this warrior mentality can be obtained. With dedication to strengthening

the human spirit through rigorous hours of training year after year, these arts build a clear vision of overcoming limits and expressing the power of the will.

Pushing past our limits and achieving success in any avenue of life starts with the way we think. We understand how thoughts carry vibrations and create what we focus on. We also see that there are so many more sub-levels of sound, frequencies, colors, and textures of music in each thought of our creative processes. With all of this tucked away somewhere deep in our consciousness, we can become great warriors by taking command over an army of creative forces within us.

Music has always been known as the “celestial art,” meaning that its very core represents harmony and illumination. A sweet melody can transcend one to a state of heavenly bliss. So it is through our understanding of the power we hold in us that we can harness it and give it back to the world through our music. Many of the great traditional beliefs of the Native Americans, Eastern Mystics, Zen Masters, and others recognized this truth. Music has long been a huge part of rituals, ceremonies, revivals, and even funerals due to its underlying oneness with all of life.

To fully grasp all you have learned, you need to have your own philosophy as to how it all ties together. I have presented various concepts taken from many schools of thought, all having their own beautiful way of teaching us of one truth. Here are a few philosophical thoughts to consider that may help you unravel the creative power of your mind.

Unraveling



I have studied many different spiritual paths and taken many insightful and wise things from each, all to better my own understanding of how the Universe operates as one whole! During one particular Sufism class, our teacher spoke of how spiritual work is like unraveling a rope that is full of knots. You create a knot mentally and then tug on each end, trying to see where it came from in your past on one end and how it will affect your future on the other end. Next thing you know, you have tightened that knot in the middle, and that is what you have to undo now!

This idea of unraveling knots in my head really resonated with me. Being an extreme over thinker, I have woven MANY knots in my head, and it became very obvious that many of these knots were the cause of my roadblocks. I started to view my whole life from a different viewpoint. I also see my artistic expression following a higher calling than what my own vision could create for myself. Where my music can carry some power and healing is by sharing

the experience and the wisdom of truth in my heart. It all starts with healing myself as each word that I sing and each breath that I breathe unravels a higher level of consciousness and understanding so that I may learn to stop creating the knots!

You can also think of the rope as a seamless thread of time and space. When there are knots in this thread, time and space are forgotten, and although they still move and create, you are stuck behind that knot and are not moving forward, and not taking ahold of the present moment. But once this knot is unraveled, then you are connected to all, as that thread of seamless time and space. It is there you can float in the nothingness of bliss and create your own reality in the present.

In reality, all of life is that continuous thread. There is one life force permeating through us all, and we are ALL connected by it. So on a global scale, you can see the disharmony that is present, and you can see that we are creating huge knots and have pulled way too tight on both ends of the rope. We have a tug of war going on between political parties, countries, nations, and tribes all letting their own pretensions build these enormous knots that almost seem to choke our hope for a thread of unity.

There are many knots to unravel in this universe, from an individual level to a global scale. If we all spend a little time listening to the truth within, we can identify the knots we create easily, trace their source, and begin unraveling.

The Book of Nature



What do you see in this tree?

What do you see in the picture on the previous page? I see a mighty hand reaching up from the Earth and spreading its fingers. I see a dancer spinning on a branch of the Universe. I see an angel landing on the Earth and shedding light from its wings. No matter what you see in this picture, there is one thing to focus upon. The book of nature is the greatest teacher of truth, and nature reveals to us what is true of our own nature.

A Sufi poet says that *every leaf of the tree becomes like a page of the sacred book, when the heart is open to read it and when the soul has opened its eyes*. A leaf of a tree doesn't struggle and become rigid when the winds of life blow, it rides the flow of life's very breath. Every wave on the ocean has its ebb and flow of rising and sinking. Such is the case in our lives. We are free to let ourselves float upon the breath of life and with every wave that sinks us down, a new wave rises to lift us up.

The book of nature shows us how all things flow together as one. The balance we see in nature is the harmony we seek to create within. It is nature's intent that we all have a unique vision and a life purpose to follow it. As we grow, many different images of growth will be reflected in us. Similar to this tree, we will not appear the same to all people, but to all people we must reflect the true nature of ourselves just the same.

By opening our mind to see the laws of nature and connecting to the nature of the self deeply rooted within us, we can apply those laws to vibration and sound. Then we'll begin to see each note we express become part of the grand symphony of life.

The Ten Thousand Things

"Returning is the motion of the Tao. Yielding is the way of the Tao. The ten thousand things are born of being. Being is born of not being."

—Lao Tsu (*Tao te Ching*)

The ancient wisdom of Taoism speaks often of the "ten thousand things." The ten thousand things are the things in life that distract us along our journey to enlightenment. But the nature of the ten thousand things can lead us back to the one truth: that the ten thousand things are all born out of, yield to, and return to the ONE force of creative energy that animates us and fills us with purpose.

Over the last several chapters, we have explored many different metaphysical concepts, natural laws, and spiritual truths, which may now be all scrambled up in your mind. These concepts are not meant to be distractions, but guideposts along your path. We can unify them much like with the ten thousand things. We can gain control over our minds, regulate our thoughts, and bring balance and harmony into our creative consciousness.

In other words, with a clear vision of what you wish to aim for in life, paint your picture with sound and use all the colors of the rainbow to do it. Don't let life's distractions stop you from singing the song of your perfect vision. Unite all of your talents and discover new ones. When you begin to live life through the higher self, you become one with all and master over the ten thousand things.

Enlightenment

"Knowing others is wisdom; knowing the self is enlightenment;
mastering others requires force; mastering the self needs strength"

—Lao Tsu (*Tao te Ching*)

There are many different paths one can follow on the quest to achieve enlightenment. But what does "enlightenment" really mean? It means to connect with your *real* self, or *higher* self, and become the master of your own mind. By shining the light of truth that is within you onto all that has been hidden behind a shadow of darkness, you can focus your mind on what is *real*. It is there that you will connect with your true and unique self that is seeking to fulfill its purpose in you. When you become master over your own mind and know your true self, then you will have experienced enlightenment.

Nirvana and the Eightfold Path

The Buddha described "nirvana" as the *perfect peace of the mind that is free from craving, anger, and other afflictive states*. This peace, which is in reality the fundamental nature of the mind, is revealed when the root causes of the afflictive states are dissolved. The causes themselves of these afflictions lie deep within the mind (that part of the mind that Western psychology calls the subconscious). The unraveling of these afflictions is gradually achieved by living a disciplined life by way of following an eightfold path.

The Noble Eightfold Path is seen as a way that leads to the alleviation of suffering and the achievement of self-awakening. Viewed as an instrument of discovery, this path gradually generates insights, unveiling the ultimate truth of things. It is a technique used to eradicate greed, hatred and delusion. The eight folds of the path are *right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration*. These eight folds of the path also help one to acquire right knowledge and right liberation. It is this liberation from the snares of mind that will spring forth the purity of your self-expression, which will ultimately be expressed in your art.

These are only a few small concepts derived from philosophies that express a deep connectivity with the world of sound and vibrations and the one true nature of all life. All of these ideas, concepts, traditions and philosophies have been carried and handed down across generations.

In this new day and age, as we work together to try and heal the planet and create unity and harmony, all of these great beliefs will create an awakening for some and still do nothing for others. What touches your heart may not do the same for another, and it is for this reason that truth is revealed in so many different ways; they are all various perspectives on life, passed on by those who have walked a path before us and discovered life's many secrets.

There are many pathways to this knowledge, but in the end the knowledge must lead you to a goal. Maintaining a clear vision of that goal, while staying present in your place along your path, you will command the Universe to speak through you and empower your musical expression. Out of the dark silent place within you, you will lead a mighty legion of creative forces to see you through to victory over the mind!

CHAPTER XII

Creating A Monster

Strengthening, Mind, Body, and Spirit



We have stuffed our heads full of ideas and concepts, all in an effort to gain control over our minds and achieve a level of *wu wei* or *no mind*. It sounds a bit like an oxymoron, but in reality, by clearing away the thoughts and vibrations that clutter our minds we can see with a clear vision the divine self and the creative power it holds.

Although it is just as easy to learn and memorize concepts and philosophies as it is to learn a piece of music, it is through practice and experience that these sacred musical gifts emerge. In time they will possess your mind and body and sing through you with a divine presence.

As the mind takes on the thoughts of all of our life's experience, atmosphere, pain, and suffering, and any acute or extreme form of stress weighs it down. It is this weight that holds us back from being our best. Once this weight is lifted, you are free to float to a new dimension of thought where you will see your higher self evolve.

Be it mental, physical, or spiritual restlessness, the only way to fully control the mind is by harnessing and combining the abilities of the mind, body, and spirit. Through practice and mental focus,

one feels the connectivity of these three parts of our one self. This connectivity combines the strengths and weaknesses of all three and gives you a bigger picture to look at. This bigger picture opens your eyes to see what lies behind the things we see on the surface.

One day I was at a friend's house waiting by the pool for him to come outside. I noticed on the bottom of the pool a large shadow of something moving. It looked like a huge alien bug through the ripples and curls, and I was unsure what was creating it. A few minutes later, I saw a small honeybee swimming across the surface of the water, and as I watched it swim, I saw my alien shadow move accordingly. So it was the sun reflecting on the bee that was treading the surface of the water and reflecting a huge shadow in the depths of the pool. At that moment, I saw a beautiful example of the mind/body/spirit connection and how it relates to what we reflect in the pool of life. The light of the sun shines upon a small soul struggling against the ripples of the water, reflecting deep in the depths a larger shadow. It's like the light of the heart that shines from the true self as we ride the waves of life, reflecting in the depths a larger self that is being shadowed by the small self we associate ourselves with. It also shows that what is on the surface is much smaller than what is in the depths. When the light of the Universe shines deep in the depths of the human mind, body, and spirit, a higher self is illuminated.

To become masters of our minds, we must become masters of the whole self. There are not only things shadowing the depths of the mind, but in every muscle fiber and organ of the body, in every moment of joy and bliss we experience, in our spirit, in every thought, in every action. By acknowledging all of the qualities that make us a human instrument, we can tune them all together to compose the grand symphony of our higher self. It is with these thoughts in mind that we explore a few principles and practices that will help us cultivate a connectivity of mind, body, and spirit.

Mind

There are several great methods for creating a calm and relaxed state of mind. Meditations, mantras, yoga exercises, tai chi, and many other rituals of discipline have a very calming effect on the mind. They all work to clear away the clutter of built-up energy in the mind. The many thoughts we have throughout the day, especially when under stress, can build up tense vibrations that overload the mind and create mental clutter.

The most important element to relaxing and stilling the mind is visualization. By focusing your mental attention to the thought of a calm and still mind, you create vibrations reflecting your inner light that break through the clutter. The ability to focus your attention in one place allows you to free yourself of all else at that moment and hold the connection between you and your focal point.

The following practice is done frequently in the healing arts to build focus and to direct and absorb energy. This exercise can be

done almost anywhere at any time. Sit in a comfortable position. Take a few deep and relaxing breaths, and just think of being very present in your body for a moment. Once you feel relaxed, move your attention to an object of any kind. It could be a flower, a tree, a candle, a picture, or any stationary object you can commit your full attention to. Now focus your whole attention on that thing, not allowing any thoughts or impressions to distract you from keeping your mind totally absorbed in the object of your focus. Absorb its shape, color, and texture, and feel its energy. When you feel your attention start to slip away from the object, will yourself to stay focused on it, even if it's only for a second longer. By holding onto the image for that extra second, you have expanded your ability to focus and cleared away more clutter from the mind.

During my early kung fu training, I learned a variation of the same meditation using a candle. We would place a lit candle about 3 or 4 feet in front of where we were seated and focus our attention on the flame. As we focused on the flame, we would breathe in its light, draw energy from its flame, and warm the heart with its heat. The idea was to create a connection with the flame through mental focus. When that focus is then allowed to shift into the higher consciousness, it carries you with it as you shift into a greater connectivity with the object in focus. You can also alter this practice by doing the same but drawing the light of the flame into each chakra, illuminating them and clearing away any blockages that shade them.

These practices are very simple, but highly effective. By learning to gain control of your mind, command your focus, and bend it to your will, you will achieve mastery over not just your mind, but also your life!

Body

The same vibrations that clutter up the mind create physical disturbances in the physical body as well. When we send out negative vibrations brought on by negative thinking or stress, they accumulate and are stored in the body, creating sickness and disease. It is important to listen to our bodies and retune them when they are in a state of discord.

This attunement with our bodies also helps us to visualize them as an instrument. We are playing our note in the symphony of life through the instrument of our human form. We are in the body to express the creative force that animates it. So it is of great importance to be in tune with your body and know its strengths and limitations.

As a singer and guitarist, I am well aware of the muscles and organs of the body that are used in my performance. As you push the limits of your technical abilities as a musician, you often notice a physical transformation has occurred as well. Expanding the vocal ranges requires an expansion of lung capacity and improved breath control. Building speed and flexibility as a guitarist requires flexible muscles and decreased tension build up. All the physical elements we use to create our music deserve the same amount of dedication to their cultivation.

There are many ways to keep the body in tune. Whether it be physical exercise like martial arts, tai chi, or yoga, or a simple bike ride or hike through nature, physical activity will help you create a deeper connection with your body. Aches and pains determine weak areas that need to be developed. On the flip side of that, performing rigorous physical activity with increased ease and endurance shows that limitations and weakness can be overcome through perseverance and patience.

All of these activities have the potential to unlock physical abilities within you that have been lying dormant and undiscovered. Getting in touch with your newfound physical prowess, you further uplift your confidence in yourself, and the mental limitations you impose on yourself for fear of physical failure are abolished.

There is one thing that is constantly present to keep us alive, and all of life carries it. It is the one thing that all life shares no matter what life form it is or where it resides. It animates us all and connects us to the whole of the Universe: it is the *breath*. All forms of meditation, and all traditions of healing and physical health, are centered in the work of the breath. Focusing on the breath makes you present in your physical body and brings cleansing into it through the energy centers.

There are many breathing exercises, but here I will give you a simple practice that will help tune the body and bring you into a deep state of connectivity to yourself through the breath. Sit in a comfortable and quiet place. Close your eyes, and breathe deeply, in through your nose, and out from your mouth. Take slow deep breaths, really holding onto each breath as long as you can before letting go to exhale. As you begin to feel the breath moving in and out of your body, start to imagine the breath moving through your body to each part. As you breathe in, feel the inward breath reaching all the way down to your feet; on the exhale, the breath gathers all of the loose energy in your legs as it rises back up and is expelled out through your mouth. Repeat this with the arms and the head, and then go even deeper into the organs and the veins, then the tissues and the cells. Then, when you feel your whole body as breath, imagine yourself being a breath released into the Universe, floating in and out of all life.

This meditation will help you build a connection with your breath and raise your frequencies of vibration in the body. Eventually, you will feel your body disappearing, and you will feel as though you

have become only breath. Connecting to the breath is extremely powerful and a huge factor in connecting the mind, body, and spirit. After all, it is the breath that brings the sound of words and music to our lips!

Connection to our bodies is an essential part of being a great artist as well as simply living a good life. If we can learn to listen and hear the disharmony in our bodies, we can pinpoint where it is out of tune and retune it.

Spirit

The spirit is the real source of power for both the mind and the body. It is the spirit that gives each of us our individual voice in the choir of life. Without the drive of the human spirit, we would not get up in the morning to go to work or school, and we would live our lives with no sense of purpose. There are many different dimensions and levels of spirit even within oneself. Often, when there is talk of the spirit or anything pertaining to spirituality, one's mind immediately interjects the word "religion" in there somewhere. In fact, spirituality has nothing at all to do with religion; rather, it is the cultivation of the human spirit so that it may see in itself and express the greater spirit that flows through us all. Religions are indeed ways to get there, but they usually have a specific, structured path to follow. In spiritual work, it is less about the path itself and more about the connection you feel to all living things as you tread it.

For your spiritual side to unfold, you don't need a religion, a church, a guru, or a master. You don't need to pray or praise God or a god. All you need is faith in the reality that we are all part of one connected consciousness that is urging us to live our lives to the fullest we can possibly imagine. Through our own individual life

experiences, the whole of life is experienced. Each spirit in us plays out a note. It is the connectivity of these notes that creates life's music.

A great practice for spiritual cultivation is trying to feel the life in another living object that is not in human form. A flower, a tree, a bug—they all breathe the same breath of life as we do. Even a rock has life energy inside; it just takes someone to strike two together to draw out a spark. So find a living object and focus on it. Think of it as part of you and you as part of it. As you make a connection with the object, calm your mind, and just feel the breath flowing through you as it flows through the object. At times, you can expand that connection beyond to all the plants in a room, or all of the trees along a nature trail. Wherever you can feel one with nature and its life energy simultaneously flowing through you, then you have gained the connectivity of spirit.

As you travel your individual path, you will find many things that resonate with you and lead you to the next bit of wisdom, which will lead you to the next. No matter how you go about bettering yourself as an artist, by making that effort, you create vibrations that will get you in tune with all that you desire. Your life will transform, and it will be heard in your music!



CHAPTER XIII

The Wise Speak

Affirmations and Words to Live By



The following quotations and affirmations have been used throughout the book as inspirations and food for thought. Some are words of encouragement, and others express thoughts in unique and revealing ways. May the wisdom of these men and women resound in you and offer you strength along your journey.

"It is the state of vibrations to which man is tuned that accounts for his soul's note."

—Hazrat Inayat Khan

"Over-Thinking, Over-Analyzing: Separates the body from the mind."

—Tool (*Lateralis*)

"Don't think... FEEL. This is what is known as emotional content."

—Bruce Lee

"Do, or do not—there is no try."

—Master Yoda (*The Empire Strikes Back*)

"Rhythm is the basis of life, not steady forward progress. The forces of creation, destruction, and preservation have a whirling dynamic interaction."

—Kabbalah

"Music is given to us with the sole purpose of establishing an order in things, including, and particularly, the coordination between man and time."

—Igor Stravinsky

"If you copy, then it is not self-expression."

—Michael Schenker

"He who knows others is learned; He who knows himself is wise."

—Lao-Tsu (*Tao te Ching*)

"After Self-Realization, one does not regard any other gain superior to Self-Realization."

—Bhagavad Gita

"Don't compromise yourself. You are all you've got."

—Janis Joplin

"The really valuable thing in the pageant of human life seems to me not the state but the creative, sentient individual, the personality; it alone creates the noble and the sublime."

—Albert Einstein

"Alchemy is the art of manipulating life and consciousness in matter, to help it evolve, or to solve problems of inner disharmonies."

—Jean Dubuis

"Through pride we are ever deceiving ourselves. But deep down below the surface of the average conscience a still, small voice says to us, something is out of tune."

—Carl Jung

"Music is the mediator between the spiritual and the sensual life."

—Ludwig van Beethoven

"If you want to play something that you hear, you need to listen with your mind's eye. You've heard of the mind's eye, right? Your mind has an ear too. It's a kind of listening, but it's not using your ears to listen. It's listening with your inner ear, and that's what you want to translate onto the guitar."

—Steve Vai

"The voice is not only indicative of a man's character, but is the expression of his spirit. The voice is not only audible, but also visible to those who can see it."

—Hazrat Inayat Khan

"Music is the voice that tells us that the human race is greater than it knows."

—Napoleon Bonaparte

"A painter paints pictures on canvas. But musicians paint their pictures on silence."

—Leopold Stokowski

"If you sing alone in your shrine, the vibrations return to you as a reaction. But in community singing, what you have is not a reaction but a wave of vibrations. They enter into the atmosphere and purify the polluted air."

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

"Sometimes when you start losing detail, whether it's in music or in life, something as small as failing to be polite, you start to lose substance."

—Benny Goodman

"Our strength grows out of our weaknesses"

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

"I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times."

—Bruce Lee

"Returning is the motion of the Tao. Yielding is the way of the Tao. The ten thousand things are born of being. Being is born of not being."

—Lao Tsu (*Tao te Ching*)

"Knowing others is wisdom; knowing the self is enlightenment; mastering others requires force; mastering the self needs strength."

—Lao Tsu (*Tao te Ching*)

All quotations are direct quotes by the individual credited as stating them and were all found listed as public domain information on various websites.

Afterthoughts

I hope you have enjoyed this brief glimpse into the metaphysical and spiritual elements of music. This book started out very different than what is printed here, and it has evolved over many years alongside of me and my spiritual growth. Although I initially planned this to be a stand-alone book mainly concerning the relationship of music to the cultural philosophies of martial arts, it morphed into something else. As my spirit grew, so did my knowledge, and it all made what I learned from previous philosophies more relevant. I have geared this book toward a genre of music in which I have great experience. Combined with the wisdom I have gained and the call of my spirit to use such a powerful form of music, I am simply fulfilling my life's purpose to deliver a message of truth and hope.

In the chapter titles, I infused a lot of the puns associated with metal and its dark reputation, but with the text, I wanted to show how the light of truth is shining behind our dark perceptions—all in an attempt to create a book that represents a yin and yang balance of philosophy and spirituality. If you have read this for the philosophy, then adhere to that and don't get hung up on the spiritual stuff. If you read it as a spiritual teaching, don't let the philosophies interfere with your spiritual growth. In time, the two elements will combine as one. This book is just a small peek into a vast and tremendous world of vibrations, how they affect the mind, and how they are transmitted through music. I wish you harmony and peace as you start your own journey to master your life!

About the Author



Singer and guitarist Scott Von Heldt (a.k.a. SVH) joins a new breed of heavy music and offers up a glimpse into the future of the primitive. From entrancing tribal rhythms to unparalleled vocal incantations, SVH has long been admired by his peers and continues to push the envelope to create music with unrelenting passion and intensity.

Scott broke into the original metal scene of Northern Ohio at the age of 17 by releasing his first solo guitar record, *To Each His Own*. SVH went on to join local metal giants Vatican (later renamed Marquis de Sade) and soon became a local guitar legend with the release of his second solo record *Cries of Silence*. In 1994, Scott gave his full attention to the formation of his new band, Theater of Madness. The group went on to dominate the local music scene, releasing their debut CD *The Demo* and opening for national acts ranging from Quiet Riot, Slaughter, and LA Guns, to metal masters more in their vein such as Suffocation, Anthrax, and Iron Maiden vocalist Bruce Dickinson, among many others.

After many years of trudging through the trenches in search of a record company, Scott formed his own indie label called Dead City Records and began work on *Mantra*, the debut from a new and improved version of his former band, now named Kurai.

In 2002, Scott moved to Los Angeles and joined Ivan de Prume (White Zombie) and Martin St. Pierre (Cirque du Soleil) in the creation of Healer, a band combining the elements of world music with modern metal! The band's debut, *Awakening*, has been hailed as one of the most original CDs released this decade, and continues to garnish rave reviews. SVH recently lent his extreme vocal abilities to the *Sheesh* E.P. by local thrash/funk quartet Baron Von Sloth.

Scott continues to add a unique sentiment to heavy music by infusing raw intensity with spiritual insight and global awareness! He is an ordained minister, has a Doctorate in Divinity, and serves as a teacher of spiritual growth and healing. He is currently studying to be a healing conductor for the Sufi Healing Order of North America and has served as an accompanist for local gatherings of the Dances of Universal Peace. His Progressive Metal band, Kurai, is working on a follow-up to their debut, *Mantra*, and he remains dedicated to spreading truth and illumination through the sacred art of music.

For more information, visit

WWW.SCOTTVONHELDT.COM

