



*By Benjamin Fargen - GJD Contributor*

Back in the 1960's through the early 70's guitar players were lucky to have one maybe two pedals on the floor at a gig unless they were a superstar...maybe a Fuzz pedal or the lowly MXR micro boost would make an appearance...other than that it was the guitar, the cord and the amp...

Well things have certainly changed in the modern age...whether you're catching a show at Wembley arena or a gig at your local hole in the wall blues bar, you won't ever look at the floor in front of the guitar player and see blank space. You will most likely see a glowing array of LED's piercing the darkness...what you're seeing is not a UFO...it is in fact an FX pedalboard loaded to the gills with the latest and greatest pedals...pedals that are gracing the guitar players pedal board... this week. But you know and I know, that pedalboard won't look the same next week...we just can't leave it alone! That being said I have built quite a few pedal boards in my day and made many discoveries and many mistakes...here are some tips to help you set up a lean and mean guitar FX pedalboard for your needs.

1. Do all your serious A/B testing up front and break it down to the essential pedals before you even start thinking about the layout and board size. There is nothing worse than getting your new board together and then deciding after you're done you want to swap that Fuzz for an OD or that Chorus pedal for a Flanger! Then Murphy's Law will prevail and the new the pedal won't fit or the jacks are on the wrong side etc. Do yourself a favor and make a true commitment to the pedals you want to use before you start your pedal board project.

2. Once you have decided on your stable of must have pedals...grab yourself a large piece of cardboard or large sized grid paper and do a mock layout of your board to obtain the correct size...don't forget to factor in your power strip or power supply as these items usually eat up some space at the top of your board and must be considered. Don't skip this step. It's critical for choosing the proper layout and proper size board. After you have created a solid and functional layout for all your pedals on your cardboard or grid paper... you can now mark out your mounting points for each pedal (I'll go into mounting options in a bit.) Make sure you leave enough room between the pedals for all you audio cables, DC power supply cables and the actual mounting method you will be using for mounting your pedals to the deck.

3. At this point it's also a good idea to mock up all the cable runs that you will be using on your new board. I like to layout all the power supply cables that will be running to each pedal followed by my audio cables. I personally use George L's cable for all my inter-pedalboard

connections as it's just so easy to size and route where you need it to go.

4. Once you feel comfortable with the overall pedal layout and cable runs, it should be easy to determine the overall size your pedalboard needs to be. You can choose to buy one on line from a million different vendors on E-bay or the like. You can also go the home grown route and get yourself a nice piece of 3/8-1/2 birch ply wood cut to size and wrap it in Ozite (speaker covering material). Screw in some rubber feet on the bottom (double them up on the top side of the board for a nice elevated angle); add a handle or two and bam! You're in business.

5. Now that you have acquired that fancy new pedalboard or built your own deck, it's time to break out your layout and emulate it on the actual pedal board and mount all your pedals.

6. Ahh...mounting the pedals you say...what do you think is the best method Ben? Well...I have worked through all of different mounting concepts for pedals on a pedalboard...Velcro, Industrial Velcro, Zip Ties, Silicon, you name...and I finally have found what I think to be the ultimate mounting solution for pedal...individually sized metal links from a bike chain or motorcycle chain. These individual links mount through the bottom access plate holes on each pedal with the stock machine screws. You can then use wood screws to mount your pedals to the deck through the other side of the link. My two current touring boards have survived multiple plane flights and UPS shipping without a single pedal coming loose or moving around.

7. Once your pedals have been securely mounted to the deck, go ahead and run all your power supply cables to each of the pedals. To make you wire runs stay in place and look professional, fasten each of the wires every 6 inches or so with a small plastic wire clamp and fasten it to the deck. Next run all your audio cables to each of your pedals and fasten these wires to the deck the same way.

8. At this point you should be able to fire up your new FX pedalboard and burn off some of your favorite licks!

Just a few side notes:

1. If you have any pedals that are super close together on your board, make sure you have enough room to plug in your audio cables after they are mounted to the deck; otherwise you will need to connect your cables to these pedals prior to mounting them to the deck.

2. When you're building any new cables for your pedalboard...take a few minutes and test the continuity of each of the cables. This ensures they are working properly before you commit them to your new board, nothing worse than firing up your new pedal board for the first time and hearing nothing but golden silence due to a bad or shorted cable.

3. If you're new to FX pedals or are trying a new setup...do some research on the best routing method and FX order for your style...a generic and standard order to follow would be TUNER / FILTERS (AUTO WAH / WAH) / COMPRESSOR / OVERDRIVES / MODULATION (CHORUS/ FLANGE /TREM) /VOLUME PEDAL / REVERBS & DELAYS.

Happy Jamming!

Benjamin Fargen