



Playing guitar instrumental music is both a blessing and a curse when it comes to song writing. When I write new songs the same rules apply as when I was playing with a singer. The song has to have melody and be easy to sing along with.

Being a "so called" shredder guitarist there is always the danger of over playing. This is a mistake I see way to many instrumental acts doing. There's a reason that Joe Satriani's *Surfing with the Alien* is the best selling guitar instrumental CD ever (I believe over 10 million sold) Joe is definitely a master of putting melody in his songs with healthy doses of shred when it's called for. He's the one I look up to when it comes to my song writing. There are many guitar heros out there but no one does it like Joe. He's got the whole thing covered; he writes great songs that are catchy and he can pretty much play anything, plus he has cross over appeal (you can hear his stuff in lots of commercials as well). He opened the door for all of us. Sure it was done before he came along but never with the commercial success that he obtained with the 'Surfing' CD.

When I'm writing songs, I try to keep it sort of simple so people can sing along to it. You have to remember that as the guitarist in my 3 piece trio I am essentially playing the part of the lead vocalist with my guitar. That being said I try to keep my main melodies of my songs very vocal in my phrasing. After I come up with the basic song and arrangement I demo it in my recording studio with a drum machine. Since I really can't program a drum machine I use the stock patterns it comes with and basically try to find a beat in the ball park and most importantly the correct tempo. After I demo it, and do all the backing guitars, bass and the melody then I think about the solo and adding stuff I think the song might need. I try to keep it simple and for the solo I try to take the song to a different place.

After I've finished the demo in the studio I burn a few CD's and give them to my band to learn the song. Almost always everyone will add their own take on it which in most cases is a great thing. That's what gives the songs their character. Even if someone is playing what has already been written, just changing the feel a little can make a big difference. This is what makes it fun.

When we track the song for real I almost always have my drummer record a track and include it in the demo. This works for a couple reasons; for one the drum machine's tempo is right on and acts as a click track and he can also hear all the other stuff being played as well.

After we get his tracks down, I lay down a guide guitar track also using the demo as my map. Then we put the bass on using my guide and the real drums as his guide. After drums and

bass are tracked the song is taking shape. I then spend time tracking all my guitars by myself in my studio. This is always a blast since I like to experiment with tones and effects plus when is it not fun to play your amp on 10??? I always record with the amps peaking. Lately I've been using Laney's through Mills cabinets (I will be discussing recording techniques in one of my future columns).

This is just an example of how I go through the song writing process. I suggest you do whatever works best for you and who knows maybe you'll even sell more CDs.

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plays his own

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of instrumental guitar rock and is fast becoming a So Cal guitar hero. He has appeared in several national and international music publications, including this one each week.