



*By Karl Greenberg - GJD Staff Writer*

I don't want to brag, but I had an incredible multi-hour practice yesterday. I achieved this by focusing on my goals and then deciding I owed it to myself to take those goals seriously. I owed it to myself to skip work and take the entire day to dedicate a full eight hours to practice. Just practice, nothing else. I saw it as a test of my commitment. Why?

Listen, if you are serious about music like I am, you'll test yourself. Otherwise, guess what? You're not serious. Not like me. You're a shirker. Get off the Earth. But those of you who, like me, have decided to make a personal Scientology-like Total Mind Meld commitment to your axe, well, you know who you are. And you will find my story inspiring, I trust.

Anyway: so, I decided to take the day off from work to prove my total devotion to practice, to sit with my metronome and scales and spend a monastic eight hours getting more familiar with the fret board. The goal: by the end of the day, I would know my instrument better than I know my wife, whom I met for the first time last week.

Take note, and learn: This is my story.

I was up with the 7am alarm. After turning off the alarm with the back of a coffee table, I quickly went back to sleep till 10. Refreshed, I went back to sleep for another half hour. Then I woke up fully refreshed and got dressed, then I made coffee. By 11 I was ready.

I began practicing. And I practiced. I practiced very well, very hard, and very intensively, for over ten minutes. Then it was time to eat. That took two and a half hours because I have to remove the food from the packaging. I bite my nails a lot, so it takes a long, long time to even penetrate the plastic shrink-wrap they put on everything these days. Anyway, then eating itself took an hour because I have to also read the paper.

But you know what? Even then, during lunch actually, I was practicing, even though I was in the kitchen and the guitar was in the other room. Mentally. I was practicing. I was practicing accepting a Grammy award for best album of the year. So that slowed lunch down because, once the refrigerator was empty, I had to spend time in front of the mirror working on my acceptance speech.

Then, after lunch, it was time to eat. Yeah, I ate, sure, but a snack. Then I took a walk to work

off lunch and think about guitar practice some more, which I consider a part of practicing because I was thinking about practicing. I was picturing my guitar, sitting there by itself; I was trying to work up pity for my guitar, so I could be motivated when I got back from my mid-day constitutional.

The mid-day constitutional was a brisk walk to the corner muffin store for dessert and coffee, which I needed because I was so stuffed all I wanted to go to sleep. There, I met some friends. They weren't friends before I met them, but socializing is how you make new friends, AND it's an important part of the creative process, so I consider that a part of practicing. We talked for an hour about the weather. Got back home by 4, ready to practice. I settled into the chair, picked up my axe, turned on the metronome, and set to work on these modal change thingys. It was amazing! It's incredible how, if you let yourself really simply do the very simple task of playing, slowly, a scale again and again, it is not only not boring, it's absorbing, it's very much like shooting a Zen master with a bow and arrow, or whatever that book is.

Yes, it helped that I had the TV on full blast, so while I was practicing, I was also watching reruns of Mannix. I can practice and watch TV. I encourage it. I'm moving my fingers around; it's not rocket science. That went on for a good ten minutes. Then it was 5pm, time for dinner.

Tomorrow I think I'll bring my guitar to work.