

Title:

How to fake being a better guitarist in five simple steps PART 2 of 2

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Summary:

Last time I talked about looking the part with good equipment to come across professionally, and ways to get up to speed on your singing. This week, I'm going to share some simple but often ignored pieces of information that can really push the impression you make from just a guitar player, to a fully fledged musician.

Keywords:

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Article Body:

Last time I talked about looking the part with good equipment to come across professionally, and ways to get up to speed on your singing. This week, I'm going to share some simple but often ignored pieces of information that can really push the impression you make from just a guitar player, to a fully fledged musician.

3. Be in tune

This is possibly the most obvious tip but you would be surprised how many people don't follow it. NEVER EVER trust your ears for tuning when you are playing with or in front of people. You may think you sound perfectly in tune and at the same time you are sending someone (most likely me) up the wall. A floor tuner like the Boss TU-2 is a necessity. And don't skimp on a cheap one. They usually have little to no shielding and introduce noise into your rig.

There is more to tuning though than the open strings. Your guitar's intonation needs to be accurate as well. There is no point being in tune until you solo and then you are out of tune up the neck because your guitar's intonation is shot. Check it now. Hit a string open, and then do the harmonic at the 12th fret. Is it the exact same note (only an octave higher)? Chances are it's not and it will be noticed. There are plenty of guides on line that show you how to intonate your guitars, but it is worth getting it done properly (something that even I still do).

Another thing that having a tuner can help you with is something I call pitch

pressure. It's like the Doppler Effect you hear when a siren is approaching or passing you. This is the effect that some musicians experience (myself included) at various times. Basically what happens is that due to the acoustic surroundings, whether excessive volume, frequency reflections, distance from sound source, sometimes your sense of pitch gets put out a few cents. There was one venue in particular that I used to play that I would swear my guitar was sharp compared to everyone else. But when I would tune, I was perfectly set. It was just that my ears were not hearing the true frequency spread. When you are in tune, you sound good. When you are not, you sound like a loser. It's simple to do so make sure you do.

4. Learn Pinch Harmonics

This sounds so dumb it has to be true. The most boring of licks can be livened up and turned into an ear catching line with the addition of a simple pinch harmonic. The sudden dynamic shift that is created by the pinch harmonic will grab everyone's attention, and is the sort of thing most people only hear on record. It is instantly associated with being professional, and professional is associated with talent.

To perform the pinch harmonic, simply follow your picking stroke on the string with the slightest edge from your thumb, in the same motion. It may take a little to get used to, but when you nail it sounds fantastic. Keep at it and soon enough you will be able to do it without thinking. Be warned though, muff it, and it will sound terrible. So make sure you can get it right every time before you pull this trick out in front of anyone.

I remember one night in particular, I had fresh strings on and the harmonics were really just popping out with ease. Being in a venue with a great in house PA, the notes would just feedback perfectly for infinite sustain. That night on stage, I was a god. All because of this one simple trick.

5. Learn One Solo Really Well

It doesn't matter what you do, but if you impress someone once at any given task, they will remember. And that goes especially for lead guitar. All it takes is one great solo rendition and you will always be thought of as a great guitarist.

Choose a recognisable solo, one that people will know. It doesn't have to be flash, but that does help. Learn the solo note for note as best as you can. Try to mimic the solo as much as humanly possible. All the bends, the vibrato, the feel and mood. Learn it so well you can play it without thinking.

Then let it rip.

Hear me playing it live one night right here. And if you listen carefully, after the fast descending run towards the end you can just hear the crowd in the background cheer. That is the greatest feeling in the world. The other advantage of this is the confidence that you can play that well. And being a good guitarist is all about confidence.

Wrap Up

That concludes my guide on How To Fake Being A Better Guitarist in Five Simple Steps. I hope that now you have the tools to at least get you some respect and hopefully fool the average and not so average Joe you are better than you are. These are no substitute for real practice and hard work, but they all work hand in hand. If you want to be a good guitarist, it will take time, but at least you can speed up the appearance a bit.