

[Musical Fun with Disturbed and a 7-String](#)

Because all work and no play makes Jack, or in this case Eric, a dull boy, I decided to try out a quick experiment. I've used a combination of some ear training, and Camtasia to make this a fun project.

I'm a fan of somewhat heavier music, and Disturbed recently came out with a new album. I decided to learn the song The Light from the new album Immortalized. This was a chance to muck around with some video editing fun to see how I could produce the video with a few elements.

The equipment I used for this was my Macbook Pro camera which was the top left version in the frame. The bottom right is a Logitech HD external mounted on a Gorillapod that grips around the headstock of my Ibanez 7-string guitar.

Audio in this case is the original audio track as I didn't have time to refine the output/input stream to push my live guitar into the mix. That will be the next iteration.

There is also one section towards the middle where you will hear some guitar elements that aren't being played. That is the second guitar in the band, and I have to master that section before doing a third camera run to show those parts.

Video was recorded in real time with the backing track, and manually synced up for two video tracks. It was surprisingly easy to get the video elements into Camtasia, but you can see that there are some tiny sync issues between video and audio in spots.

You may also see slight variations in the fingering. Remember, this is two separately played guitar videos synced up over the original audio. That's my disclaimer to why it may look slightly off in spots ☐

The original guitars are not 7-string guitars from what I know, so this just happens to work because the low B on my 7-string is the bottom chord for most of the song. I imagine they use 6-string guitars that are heavily tuned down, or an open alternate tuning.

All in all, this is just a sample of how we can take a break from the data center and use the technology to have a little fun. If I was a real good person, I'd transcribe the notes, but I literally learned this in the last day or so by ear, and I can't read or write music. Hopefully this is a little bit of a fun and musical break from the usual blog post.

Enjoy!

[Capturing the moment - More than just the content](#)

☒ One of the most important lessons I've learned in writing and recording music is that you don't just write a song, you capture a moment.

It holds true for music, conversation and even the written word. It's not often thought about while you are doing it but when you step away you will find that it is absolutely true.

Case in point: I recorded a song which I was writing on the spot. I put together the rhythm, laid down a backing track with some drum loops, added some layers and a short couple of hours later...voila!

In that moment, I could play back the song repeatedly and never miss the mark. While I could come back in a day or two and revisit additional parts and layers, it really is just putting icing on the readily prepared cake.

Why I bring this up is that two weeks later my hard drive decided that it had enough with digital life and it spun its final spindle. I was able to recover all of my system thanks to the magic of Time Machine (thank you Apple!), however the last backup was 3 weeks old.

So it doesn't require breaking out a calendar or a calculator to know that I was in trouble. I'd totally neglected my backups and I had started and finished an entire project which now was only a memory.

Luckily of course I knew how to play my song. I did write it after all so how hard can it be to just re-record? The answer is that it is surprisingly difficult. It isn't difficult to put down the base and track some layers and overdubs and harmony lines but what I had now was something interesting.



The song I now had on my computer was like a fraternal twin of the previous song. It was effectively the same song, but it had a number of different sounds inside it.

Because I had now recorded the same song in a different moment, it was essentially a different song. It's not that the first song was better or worse, but it was just that this one was both the same and different.

My lessons that I learned from this experience were key lessons I've carried into almost everything I do:

1. Always back up your systems
2. No seriously, always back up your systems
3. Always check your backups!
4. When the idea strikes, commit to it

Even if you are only able to lay out the framework, it is absolutely key that you capture the moment. You can add embellishment and detail later but the core of your idea should be captured.

This holds true for music, writing, blogging or even something as simple as a conversation. The moment is more important than you may think.

[Watch this Film: Jason Becker - Not Dead Yet](#)

Today was a lucky and interesting day. It started with some weekend work tasks, which as anyone in IT knows is fairly standard issue. During the course of the day I was monitoring my Twitter feed and I saw this tweet from [@JasonBeckerFilm](#):



So I emailed the team at <http://JasonBeckerMovie.com> and as luck would have it, I was given tickets to the show! I've been watching the project for a few months so I was super excited to see it come to Toronto in the Hot Docs festival. I'm a big fan of Jason Becker, and guitarists in general. The story of Jason being diagnosed with ALS (also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease) was well known among the musician community and a heartfelt struggle for Jason and his family. It turned out to be a great gift for my day to be able to attend the Canadian premiere screening.

The film, directed and produced by Jesse Vile, is neither a movie about guitarists, nor a movie about ALS. It is a story whose character Jason, had been given the ultimate gift of talent, work ethic, character and heart, and when these qualities culminated to what would have been fame and success beyond most peoples hopes and imaginations, he was given the ultimate burden at age 20; a virtual death sentence.



One quote stood out early on from Jason to his Mother. He was doing photo shoots and press work and he worried that he looked so young and innocent compared to the rough and road weary band-mates he was surrounded by. You'll have to pardon my paraphrase, but he said something along the lines of "I don't have any character in my eyes because nothing bad has happened to me".

He was surrounded by a happy and loving family, enjoying the fruits of his years of work and on the cusp of the best part of his career. Little did he know that he was about to experience more bad than he had imagined any single person could face.

I don't want to spoil the best moments for you as I would really rather that you experienced it yourself and truly get the joy of it first hand. The story couldn't have been written this well from the greatest fiction writer. What makes it amazing is that it is simply a true, and inspiring story. The people who shared their stories on the screen were filled with humour and emotion all around.

When the movie came to a close, the audience exploded in applause, and you could truly feel the emotion in the room. There was a Q&A with Jesse Vile which was excellent and could only have been better if we could have had more time. I was able to have a quick chat with Jesse afterwards and congratulate him on his film. Many others in the crowd did the same, some literally brought to tears.

The filming, editing and production all around were amazing. The score perfectly tied together every scene and even though many people in the room may not have been fans of shred guitar, they were pleased for having been there.

Jesse was relaxed and humble about what we found out was his first project. I hope that we are able to see lots of future work from Jesse and his team. If you have a chance to see a screening; go. If not, then I suggest that you take the first opportunity to watch it on-demand or on DVD when it is released.

[Recipe for the DiscoPosse PodCast](#)

✖ A few people have asked about what goes into the DiscoPosse PodCast so I want to break down the 4th wall and bring you all inside.

I've been doing recording and musical performing off and on for many years and I can honestly say that the technology today could have reduced what was often days of work on recording and production, and turn out an equal or better product within hours.

There are some hardware and software products involved in the creation of the PodCast which I will explain as we walk through it together.

Let's start with the hardware:

Microphone 1 - Eric's Mic - AudioTechnica AT2020 XLR



While this is not a typical microphone used for personal recording, I use this for a number of situations and I find that it is a versatile and excellent sounding mic. It can be used for larger ambient recording, or with a lower gain as a great near-field mic. What you may have noticed is that it can be overly sensitive when it's not placed right, which it wasn't during the first episode. There are a few pops and bass woofs which I've fixed by better placement for other recordings.

Microphone 2 - Alex's Mic - Shure SM58 XLR



The Shure SM58 is a great all around microphone and it's economical choice for anyone getting started. For the first two episodes you can hear a nice even tone which also helps because Alex has a very consistent voice. This mic definitely a directional mic, so it's important that you stay close to it and as with any microphone, placement is the key.

Mixing board - Behringer Xenyx 802



The Behringer Xenyx line of mixing consoles are great little units. The 802 and 1002 are the models that have been used for the DiscoPosse PodCast and they provide more than enough for some great multi-channel recording. This mixer works for our situation beautifully because it is a small form factor, and with 2 microphones, one mono input (guitar amp), one stereo input (Line6 TonePort) it still has room to grow if we want to add another channel as well as another RCA input if needed.

Guitar 1 - Alex's Guitar

For the Footprints Music PodCasts, Alex and I have guitars plugged in. We will be making much more use of the guitars as part of future episodes.

Amp 1 - Alex's Amp

In order to get Alex's guitar, we have plugged him into his normal amplifier and then taken the line out from it and plugged it into the mixer as a single channel. It would be ideal to properly mic the amplifier, but because it requires a recording and a control room and additional mic inputs we've opted to just input directly to the board.

Guitar 2 - Eric's Guitar

My guitar is plugged into the Line6 unit. We haven't done too much with both guitars active so it may even be difficult to tell we have both on during the first episodes. Again, this is definitely going to be used more in the future.

Line6 TonePort UX2 - Eric's Amp simulator



I've been a huge fan of the Line6 product line and the TonePort UX2 amp modelling system is my go to device I've used for the quite a few years. When I play live I often just use the house amps, but I've used the TonePort many times for live gigs and it's does a great job. For recordings that require an additional mic we will use the XLR inputs on the TonePort to add up to 2 additional vocal channels.

Next up is the software:

Line6 GearBox



This is what gives me the amp modelling for my guitar sound. It can also do vocal effects although for the DiscoPosse PodCast we use the British equalizers that are available for the two XLR input channels.

Apple iTunes



For the occasions where we inject some music during the recording, I simply run iTunes and we cue up clips as we need them. For the initial couple of episodes we've only used a couple of tracks on the fly. The rest of the bumpers and clips are added during editing in post.

Apple GarageBand



The final recording is done using Garage Band which is the native iLife product that ships with any Apple laptop or desktop. I've used ProTools and some other Windows based products in the past but I've found that GarageBand is a nice, simple interface and is more than enough for something like a PodCast.

How it all comes together

The interesting thing about our configuration is the flow of sound through the different devices. Because I want to add music tracks to the live recording, I need to either use software to push the iTunes output to the input for direct recording, or the better choice for my situation is to set the audio output for the laptop to go to the mixer.

For this configuration to work I set the system output to be the TonePort UX2 and the input to be the Line-in directly in to the laptop. The TonePort output carries the iTunes content along with the guitar modelling output and then I run the stereo main output from the Xenyx 802 to a 3.5mm cable for the microphone/line-in port on my Macbook.



The most important ingredient is good people. Ultimately the content is the key in many forms of media and this is absolutely true with PodCasting. I hope that you find some good content and spread the word. There will be much more coming!

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