

## 5 Ways to Diversify Your Musical Experience

### 1. Hit up an Open Mic!

If you're stuck in a groove of always playing the same songs, with the same people and want to try something new, consider a local open mic night. While some people associate the term "open mic" as lack of experience or karaoke parties gone wrong, these stereotypes are far from the truth of most open mics. Mostly open jams are hosted by experienced musicians and are a perfect space to try tunes you've been working on at home and want to test on a supportive crowd. They're also a great place to launch original material and meet other musicians, who just like you, want to network and take a risk.

### 2. Play with People Whose Level of Experience Differs from Your Own

While it can be nerve-racking to be the least experienced member of a band, there's something to be said for the opportunity to learn from musicians with years of experience on the bandstand. From touring to venue booking advice, to good communication On and Off stage – you'll learn far more from hanging around musicians with lived experience than you will from anywhere else. It's pretty simple; if the musicians you're playing with sound really good, then you'll be encouraged to practise hard and step out of your comfort zone. It's also important to recognize that age and experience do not necessarily go hand-in-hand. Some of the most experienced musicians have been in their 20s.

On the flip side, there's also a benefit of working with musicians with less experience. It's amazing how aware you will become of working with a group of kids in Eighth Grade, you'll notice your habits both good and bad. When a whole group of new musicians are looking to you as a role model, it suddenly becomes more important to play with good posture, tone, etc. It's also surprising what someone can learn from unexperienced players. They're more focused. When you play with a group of unexperienced musicians, it can be a good reminder to play with everything you've got.

### **3. Try a Different Instrument.**

If you're looking for a way to shake up your perspective, then trying a new instrument is a great option. Not only will it help improve your skills, but it will also help you understand other musicians better. Maybe you're a vocalist who is baffled by the way your bandmates get frustrated when you change the key of a song, or a horn player trying to find the line between complimenting the lead vocals and guitar and stepping on them. Everyone has something they wish everyone else knew about their craft.

Communication is key, but taking thing a step further to understand all the instruments involved in your set up will make you a diverse and valuable musician. Another great benefit to trying other instruments is understanding their range and capabilities for the sake of composing and arranging.

### **4. Play Music You're Not Familiar With.**

Playing a variety of music expands your playing abilities. It's amazing what you think you know, until you play something you've never tried before. There are keys you learn as you play different varieties of genres using your favourite instrument, or one you've recently started to learn. You'll be amazed to learn that the songs you play right now, are very influenced from earlier forms of different, earlier versions of that genre. There are so many ways to learn your instrument...don't let your preferences get you stuck in a rut. Don't let ONE genre rule your learning of new ways to play. If you ever find yourself in a "groove", learning something else (or playing a different genre using the same instrument) will teach you all sorts of lessons about your own playing skills. Improving them at the same time.

### **5. Embrace it All.**

At the end of the day every jam session, gig and rehearsal is an experience. Some are bad, hopefully most are good. There's nothing wrong with finding a small group of musicians you mesh with, a single instrument you love and a set of songs you can't go wrong with – in fact that's fantastic!! However, there's a huge benefit in taking a leap from your comfort zone to try something new. Whatever experiences you choose to try, embrace them all for what they are and enjoy.