WHY UNDERTAKE A PERFORMANCE DIPLOMA?

Some musicians question the value of formal musical study, even by those that have done it.

But for those working in the entertainment industry, a diploma provides a recognised benchmark of skill, musical literacy, and professionalism that extends beyond just the stage or recording studio.

1. Professional Legitimacy and Employability

Within the music industry, reputation is often built through reliability, good musicianship, and consistent performance standards. However, having a good reputation doesn't always translate into other professional environments. In schools, community organisations, and private education institutions, hiring decisions are frequently made by administrative staff who may not have a musical background or industry connections.

In these contexts, having a good reputation, or as having performed with well-known artists carries limited weight.

A formally recognised qualification, such as a Diploma of Performance, provides objective evidence that your skills have been assessed by respected practitioners and meet an agreed professional standard.

For employers, parents, and students, a diploma signals that your position has been earned through competence, merit, and verified expertise, rather than personal networks, assumptions or hear say.

2. Advanced Skills and Repertoire Literacy

Most real-world working drummers perform material that sits roughly around a Grade 6–7 level on the ANZCA drum kit syllabus. However, many contemporary and theatrical works extend beyond this level.

Progressive and art-rock groups such as King Crimson, Tool, Dream Theater and Rush require an advanced rhythmic understanding and high levels of technical control. Similarly, modern musical theatre scores like Wicked, Matilda, Sweeney Todd and Into the Woods demand a high degree of precision, stylistic versatility, and music literacy.

Diploma level study ensures exposure to these advanced skills and knowledge, and passing the standard results in acknowledgement of the skills attained. (a certificate)

3. Enhanced Pedagogical Skills (Better teaching skills)

A deep understanding of advanced rhythmic concepts is invaluable in a teaching context. Diploma-level study strengthens a teacher's ability to:

- Analyse and deconstruct complex musical passages
- Explain underlying rhythmic and technical concepts
- Simplify material without compromising the musical framework
- Diagnose the source of a student's difficulty and provide possible solutions

These skills can help support students preparing for tertiary auditions, formal examinations, or simply pursuing personal musical goals. It ensures that the instruction is accurate and aligned with common standards.

4. Access to Professional Pathways

In some international jurisdictions a formal qualification is a mandatory requirement for work visas, professional pay scales, or eligibility for certain teaching and performance roles.

In high level performance sectors such as orchestras, touring productions, and international cruise lines the initial recruitment stage can involve administrative screening. Applications may be filtered by agencies or HR staff before reaching any sort of musical director. Without a recognised qualification, even highly capable performers can be excluded during this early stage.

A formal qualification such as a performance diploma shows your skills have met an expected professional threshold and can allow applicants to progress to the audition phase where their musical skill can be evaluated directly.

Article by Gary McDonald.