

Open Handed Drumming is to play 'Open Hearted'

The 'Open Handed' Mindset

By Chris Lesso

You might have seen me play and noticed I do things a little differently. By now you know 'different is good', because there are no rules! The way I play is called OPEN HANDED DRUMMING, which simply means not crossing your hands. I discovered this way of drumming through asking better questions. WHY have things been done the way they've always been done, and WHAT IF we did it differently? Evolution happens from the next generation challenging the ones that came before. Could there be a better way?

Imagine yourself playing the piano. With 88 keys in front of you, your left hand covers the sounds underneath it and your right hand does the same. If someone asked you to play the notes on the left side with your right hand, you might ask 'why?', because wasted effort will only slow you down. The goal on the piano is to reach all 88 keys effortlessly and efficiently as the MUSIC directs us. It makes no difference if you're right handed or left handed, and you don't need to flip the piano around. You use the strengths you have, while working on your weaknesses, and doing the best you can with what you have right now. Why are the drums any different? Yet only a few drummers dare greatly by choosing to play this way. The drumset is just over 100 years old and we have a long way to go, so we need YOU to drive the instrument forward by being on the cutting edge of future evolution. When you push the limits in the art of drumming, you evolve as well. Lead the charge by being different! This way, more of you will come through the drums. Be proud to be one of the rare ones that embrace change.

I started drumming at nine years old. My teacher *basically* told me, 'Everybody else plays drums cross handed, so do it like this because it's always been done this way.' He meant well, but this kind of thinking holds back evolution and stifles individuality. By having more FREEDOM, we can bravely speak from our hearts more authentically, sounding more effortlessly like US in the process. If we mindlessly imitate the past without asking, 'What if?'; we risk blending into mediocrity by sounding like just another of the faceless crowd. The goal is to speak YOUR voice on the drums, loud and proud!

OPEN HANDED DRUMMING empowers you by:

UNLOCKING YOUR CREATIVITY
STRENGTHENING YOUR WEAKER SIDE
FEEDING YOUR COURAGE

Armed with these qualities, you can conquer anything. Later you can choose to play crossed, but at least by that time you'll have a deeper sense of creativity with a stronger weak side working for you. With a strong foundation, you can make creative choices that reflect YOU, and not blindly follow tradition just because 'it's always been done that way.'

I've had many students that started open handed and then

switched to crossed. Playing with crossed hands FEELS a certain way, and might bring to life the heroes you love. Remember, this is ART and EXPRESSION, and from that lens there are no rules. This way you are empowered with a CHOICE; a choice which I, like so many drummers out there, were never given.

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I once had a student from China tell me that learning open handed drumming felt 'open hearted', and that the Chinese character for 'open heart' also means 'happy', 'joy', and 'to rejoice'. That's exactly why we do it! Playing even a little open handed transforms us to our '2.0'; a new level to boldly step into. We rejoice in what makes us unique, rejecting the illusion of safety in mimicking the footprints of another. The mindset of open handed drumming is to embrace potential and possibility, moving with courage and vulnerability with a faith in the best of who we are.

Meeting our drums with the open handed stance of arms entered and chest out, we bring a steely readiness to the kit before even playing a note. This is entirely different than the old guard of traditional crossing with a closed stance. Arriving at our drums with the body language of inner strength, we bring an open heart to the rhythms we create. Rejoice in you being YOU. Have the audacity to RETHINK the instrument. That's how it got to where it is today, propelled by those who dared greatly to disrupt. It's not for everybody, but behind the safety of the known, we can't own the moment by being bold and real. I get excited by the edginess of not playing it safe. Playing open handed and 'open hearted' means you're stepping into the arena to discover the uncommon greatness that lives in you. It's facing the fear of uncovering something one of a kind, maybe even something no one's ever thought of or done before.

To unleash your best self through drumming, get your free course at chrislesso.com This is a chapter from Chris' book *LTR DRUMMING METHOD: LAUNCH!* out now at chrislesso.com Get the free open handed drumming video lesson and workbook at chrislesso.com/OHD Whether you're brand new to open handed drumming or are already doing it and want to raise your game, here's an essential masterclass on how to take it to the next level! bit.ly/openhandeddrumming bring a steely readiness to the kit before even playing a note. This is entirely different than the old guard of traditional crossing with a closed stance.

Chris Lesso is an expert on optimizing the power of drumming to improve focus, confidence, and self expression. His **LTR** (Life Through Rhythm) is an attitude and way of life, using drumming as a force to reach our fullest potential, and live the art of possibility every day. Chris is sponsored by Sonor, REMO, Sabian, Vic Firth, and Prologix.

Check out Chris's *Modern Drummer* profile page at moderndrummer.com

