

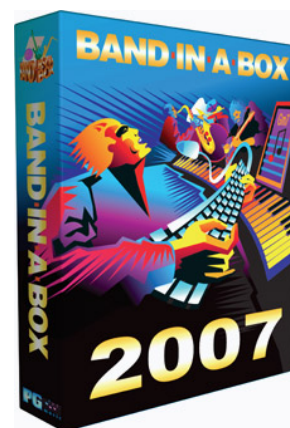
Interview with a Private Piano Teacher who uses Band in a Box

Band in a Box has grown from a simple accompaniment software program to a powerful, award-winning, all in one teaching, practice, recording and games studio.

And Band-in-a-Box is so easy to use! Just type in the chords for any song using standard chord symbols (like C, Fm7 or C13b9), choose the style you'd like, and Band-in-a-Box does the rest! Band-in-a-Box automatically generates a complete professional quality arrangement of piano, bass, drums, guitar and strings in a wide variety of popular styles.

Wendy Macdonald has had her own private music studio on the Northern Beaches of Sydney, NSW, for the past twenty years; her musical passion being the piano.

Wendy has a Bachelor of Music majoring in piano teaching and also has an accreditation certificate from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. Although



Wendy is very aware of the invaluable merits of teaching baroque, classical, romantic and impressionist music to young students, she has always stressed the importance of jazz and pop music because it is the music that young people hear most everyday and like and relate to. Computers are very much a part of young peoples lives today and Wendy realises the importance of young people being able to use them in their study of piano music and is already finding the stimulation and improvement in her students work outstanding.

Recently, we caught up with Wendy to see how she has been able to incorporate the use of Band in a Box into her teaching.

Q. Hi Wendy. Thanks for taking the time out of your busy schedule to chat with us today. When did you start playing the piano yourself.

A. I was 9 years old when I started taking lessons but I had been keen to learn when I played a piano at 3 years old.

Q. Did practicing come easily to you or was it a struggle to keep enthused?

A. I always enjoyed practicing. I didn't have as many distractions that the children have today such as computers, television, after school activities and even mobile phones.

Q. When did you decide on making a career from piano tuition?

A. When I started looking for a piano teacher for my eldest son. The 'traditional' teacher in our area at the time did not inspire him at all. However, the music master at his prep school was a jazzman and all the boys adored him. All my three children had lessons with him and it was he who encouraged me to teach and further my musical education.

Q. How were you introduced to technology as a teaching tool?

A. I attended a full day Music Teachers Workshop in January this year at the NSW Conservatorium of Music. The Conservatorium Open Academy runs it twice a year. The presenter for the day was Ray Partridge, a music technology consultant, who has been providing music technology training for educators for many years.

Q. And did you get a range of good ideas on how to integrate technology into your teaching?

A. Yes. As a private piano teacher, I am able to give that wonderful 'one on one' piano lesson but I was looking for a new challenge. I have students who enjoy the piano but lack the motivation and excitement that traditional learning methods offer.

So, since that day at the Con, I have made significant changes to my teaching.

By using a program called Band in A Box, my students have become more creative in their approach to learning the piano. My students actively participate and offer suggestions.

It's motivating to teach when you regularly hear laughter and watch students having fun.

They are even disappointed when the lesson is finished, because it's over too soon.

Q. How have you integrated Band in a Box into a lesson for your younger students?

A. I have included activities that have motivated my students. By using Band in a Box, the students feel the enjoyment and feeling of performing with other musicians. Piano students can now share the experience that instrumental students routinely enjoy in bands and orchestras.

Q. Does it help with improving the student's timing problems.

A. Playing with a Band in a Box accompaniment encourages accurate performance. I also use the loop feature to promote timing accuracy. Playing with an accompaniment and varying the tempos is very motivating to students. I also record the students' performances so that they can evaluate their own playing.

Q. Do you select different instruments for the students.

A. Yes. I introduce different instruments to fit the technique, style and mood of the piece. Band in a Box doesn't get boring even when I am trying to teach the various concepts in a piece.

Q. What about that all-important 'notation'?

A. The students can record their performance and print out what they have played.

Q. Have you made a recording onto a CD so that the students can practice at home.

A. No, not yet. But I am in the process of putting all of my students' performances on to a compilation CD so that I can keep a record of their progress. However, recording their songs to a CD is very easy to do.

Q. So, how would you sum up what has happened in your studio since using Band in a Box?

A. Many of my students find their lessons more stimulating and they are learning faster while exploring a wider variety of musical styles. Technology allows more freedom in teaching and I am able to teach more concepts. I feel that I have moved into the 21st Century and more importantly, my students and their parents think so too!

There is never a dull moment in the lesson. Previously, they would sometimes look at the clock to see if the lesson was nearly over.....now, they get frustrated when it is!

A number of students have raised their standard of playing – you can't be a mediocre performer with a band. Students invariably have weeks when their piano practice suffers for one reason or another. So instead of going through the same work again, it's great to explore the possibilities with the keyboard and Band in a Box, discovering together what can be achieved.

Music is a living art and has always moved forward with the changing times. Computers of the 21st Century could be compared with the impressionist painter Monet and composer Debussy at the turn of the 20th Century.