A Piano With or Without Technology?

Buying a Piano · https://ottawapianos.com/learning-centre/a-piano-with-or-without-technology/

For today's piano hobbyist, the question is no longer as simple as: "Would I like an upright piano or a grand piano?" Today, it is more likely to be: "Would I like a piano *with* or *without* technology?" Do you want just the sandwich or the combo meal?

The simple fact is that, for just over 10 years, digital pianos are outselling acoustic pianos in the United States. Piano students, piano teachers and even universities have discovered that digital pianos (which do not have actual strings) offer benefits like no tuning, portability, headphones, and connection to a computer and possibly the Internet. Software for education and entertainment is abundant and growing daily. Sitting down to play with your own personal orchestra is exciting, inspiring and motivational.

There is also a whole continuum of offerings between the two extremes that are appealing to certain people. For example, Chick Corea chose a hybrid piano called an Avant Grand N3 because it offered a highly technical digital piano sound complete with string resonance samples and transducers mounted underneath the keyboard to simulate vibrating string, yet it has a completely natural acoustic grand piano action, something that was critical to him in term of touch as an artist.

A less extreme variation with a little less technology, referred to as a Silent Piano, is popular with the home musician. The B1 is a small acoustic piano-with real strings and a real acoustic piano action-but adds several exciting sounds such as vibes, harpsichord, and choirs in addition to the ability to use headphones at any time of day or night. Students and teachers alike are excited with the ability to record performances for learning and sharing, not to mention the advantages of connecting to your iPad or computer.

Interestingly, there is an additional benefit of the technology option: obsolescence. If one were to purchase a piano without technology and maintain the piano on a regular basis, that piano will last for many years and will continue to do everything it does today.

However, if one were to purchase a piano with technology (and, of course, maintain it) it will do more than a standard acoustic piano can do today. Not only can it do more, who knows what will allow one to do in the future? For instance, if someone purchased a Yamaha Disklavier piano 20 years ago, it was the most advanced/player reproducing piano available. At that time, the Disklavier was capable of accurately playing back piano performances accompanied by a MIDI orchestra, all stored in a 3.5” floppy disk. It could also accurately record performances and archive them, amongst other features.

Imagine being able to look into a crystal ball at that time and being able to learn that in 20 years they could simply upgrade that piano for a nominal amount, allowing this same instrument to be accompanied by a real orchestra and voices. They could also stream music 24 hours a day over the Internet with multiple “stations” of musical styles (was there even any kind of streaming audio back then?) And lastly, they could connect to their large flat-screen TV and Surround Sound home audio system and watch performances and their favorite artists, hear them sing and the band playing while the artist plays their piano in their home!

So consider once again: Would you like a piano *with* technology or *without*? Some, of course, will choose an instrument without technology and there are plenty of brands, sizes, styles and finishes from which to choose.

For those who are intrigued by the potential and possibilities of a piano with technology, the question turns to what type of technology, or what depth of technology, is right for the buyer. Consider this the “grandest” of musical buffets!

By Craig Knudson