

SINGING Coach Unlimited

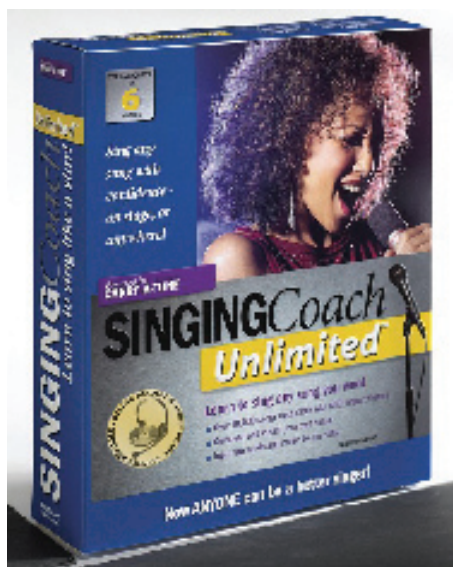
New Software Product Improves Singing

Singing Coach Unlimited is a new product I first became aware of at the NAMM convention held this past January in Anaheim, California. I happened to pick up the media kit at the press table and was immediately impressed with the general concept for the product. When we recently received an invitation to review the software I decided to tackle the review myself. Being a life-long shower (and car) singer, I've always had the desire to improve my warbling so I thought I might benefit myself from the review experience and either convey the benefits of the product to our readers or warn them if the product didn't prove worthy of their attention.

I'm happy to report that *Singing Coach Unlimited*, and its little brother *Singing Coach*, is all that is advertised on the box. It's described as a bio-feedback like program that improves your singing voice in 30 days using specialized computer-aided pitch tracking to teach people how to sing in tune and on tempo. The program utilizes the patent-pending Carry-a-Tune pitch-tracking technology along with animated on-screen vocal coaching to teach people of any vocal level to sing better. The animated characters portrayed are quite entertaining and their witty dialogue makes the lessons more enjoyable.

It was easy to install and setup with the headset microphone supplied. One of the first things you need to do is determine your vocal range. Are you a soprano, tenor, baritone or bass singer? You find out by recording yourself first singing into the microphone as high as you can and then as low as you can. The program determines for you where your vocal range lies in relation to "middle C" and shows what category your voice falls into. For instance, I discovered I am a baritone with about a two and a half octave range. Once your range is determined the program automatically customizes the singing lessons and songs into the right key for your range.

As you sing, *Singing Coach Unlimited*



shows with a tracking line on your computer screen the accuracy of your pitch and rhythm in relation to the actual true pitch and rhythm in the song. Therefore you get real time feedback as to whether you are off pitch (flat or sharp) and while you are singing you can make immediate adjustments to find the proper pitch and tempo. While I scored pretty high on achieving the proper pitch I discovered that on some ballads I had a tendency to sing flat (below pitch) with my pitch just before going into vibrato at the end of a phrase. Seeing this on screen brought the flaw to my attention and allowed me to correct the problem with a little practice.

You can use either sheet music or an easier to use graphic display for the songs you sing. You can also pick from beginner, intermediate or advanced levels of use. Beginning singers have a larger pitch target to hit than advanced singers.

There are 20 lessons included with the product. Each lesson is demonstrated by the animated characters and then you are asked to take the test yourself and attempt to score as high as you can from one to 100. You can take the lessons as often as you want and have fun improving your scores.

The *Unlimited* version comes with 24 well-known songs on the CD included plus 12 free song downloads from the product website. You can also choose from up to 10,000 songs on the site to download for between .99 cents and \$3.95 per song. The songs are midi-based which allows you to adjust the instrumentation for playback. Don't expect Sound Choice or Chart-buster level karaoke song versions but the midi versions available for this program are just fine for the purpose of learning to sing better. Didn't find much in the way of blues songs but there are lots of standards, oldies, country and other styles available. Hopefully more blues songs will become available in future versions and on the website.

The program also offers a "compose mode" feature which allows the user to enter any song from sheet music or create songs with music and lyrics.

Singing Coach Unlimited can be useful of users of any singing ability. If you want to become a better singer whether it's for gatherings of friends and family, singing karaoke in the clubs, or singing in a blues or any other type of band, this innovative product can be very helpful. It will give you confidence that you are singing on pitch and in the correct tempo.

There are currently two versions available: *Singing Coach Unlimited* which retails for \$99.95 and *Singing Coach* which is listed at \$49.95. The *Unlimited* version also comes with the ability to import MIDI files, compose songs, can track progress for up to six singers instead of three, includes 24 songs on the CD-ROM (instead of 12 for basic), offers 12 free song downloads (instead of four) and allows you to download many more songs from the website.

We highly recommend *Singing Coach Unlimited* for anyone interested in singing better. The Windows PC version is now available at many retail outlets. Mac and X-Box versions are in the works. For information visit www.carry-a-tune.com.