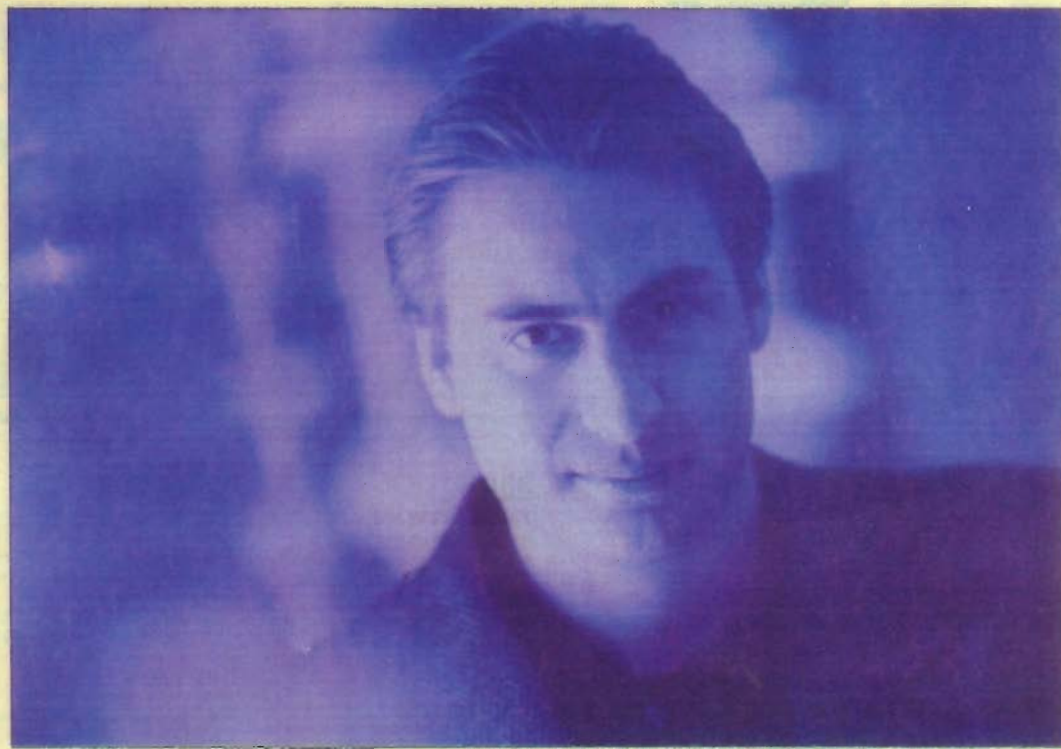


# Cyber Jazz

By Richard Cook



Jazz pianist Rick DellaRatta plays at Quo Quo, Monday to Saturday.

If you want to check out how good jazz pianist Rick DellaRatta really is, you can either go to the plush but relaxed environment of Quo Quo's piano bar or listen to him on CD... or catch him on the Net.

It's not just politicians, tourist boards and multinationals that are promoting themselves on the World Wide Web, people from all walks of life are getting in on the act—and that includes jazz musicians.

"My home page (a type of electronic brochure) has only been up and running for a few weeks and already there's something like 20 or 30 people dropping in every day. Some days I've had over 100 messages," says DellaRatta, sipping a coffee while relaxing on one of Quo Quo's deep and comfy sofas.

He continues in his soft-toned, New York City accent: "Already I've had feedback from all over the world. There's a radio producer from Norway who got in touch; he'd never heard of me before but from what he heard on my home page, he wants to play my

CD on his Norwegian jazz show. It's kind of funny."

As DellaRatta readily admits, the Net seems to be a defining point to a rapidly changing future. "Who knows, in a year or so, someone might check out my Web site, like what they see and hear and then book me for my next gig."

Not that the globe-trotting music man is really desperate for gigs. In New York, the jazz capital of the world, DellaRatta has built up more than something of a name for himself. He has played in nearly every jazz club in town, has been a support act for Dizzie Gillespie and Charlie Parker, and was the resident pianist at the Blue Note, which he calls "the most famous jazz club in the world... but now full of Japanese tourists".

It hasn't always been the high life though, especially in the beginning. Curiously enough, DellaRatta only became a pianist because so many people in upstate New York were broke when he was growing up. "I learned how to play the piano when I was about

six years old. My father's a lawyer and in those days, he often had to take his fees in the form of goods because people didn't have the money. One week we would get 40 pounds of fruit, another week it might be carpets or whatever. That week it happened to be a piano. I remember it was around Christmas time and this great big fat guy is coming in with this great big piano. It stayed and that's how I started playing."

And he hasn't really stopped. Although becoming well known to New York has opened a lot of doors, DellaRatta is quick to point out that because of the wealth of talent available, bookings last for a few days at a time, at best. Just like the first half of the movie *Bird*, which charts the tragic life of Charlie Parker, New York jazz musicians still spend most of their time looking for gigs. Or more accurately, gigs that pay.

But whereas Charlie Parker ended up turning to heroin, Rick DellaRatta has turned to the Net. "What's nice is that when I play outside of New York, in places where I'm not so known, people will have the chance of checking me out before they come down and see me. There's a little bit of my music on the Web, there's a photo and there's some biographical stuff. In the past, for people to find out about me, they had to rely on press clips. Now, anybody can check out a couple of sound clips and look at my bio. And what's really encouraging is that if after someone—a promoter or someone—has checked out my stuff on the Net and gets in touch asking for more, then they've got to be really interested in what I do."

Even on the Internet, there's always got to be a gig around the corner.

Rick DellaRatta plays at Quo Quo, Monday to Saturday, from 8pm to 11:30pm; seasons lasts until the middle of March. He can also be contacted on <http://www.webcom.com/delarata>