

“Banjo” Rick Eldridge Bio

A native of Richmond, Virginia, as a pre-teen Rick Eldridge taught himself to play drums, bass, guitar and piano. He was playing electric piano onstage with blues and soul bands in 1973 while still too young to drive to gigs.

Honing his keyboard skills as a student at Virginia Commonwealth University, Rick became recognized as one of Richmond’s top jazz piano artists. Articles were written about him and television programs were produced featuring his group’s jazz.

After paying dues on the road with several pop bands, in 1983 Rick relocated to Virginia Beach to marry his fiancé and raise a family. While there, Rick found himself in high demand as a solo pianist for resort hotels and private clubs. He played solo for over 20 years, learning over 1,000 songs to cover requests, and becoming a skilled interpreter of vintage tunes and historic jazz piano styles.

In response to many requests for a souvenir tape and CD, Rick recorded a solo piano album entitled “Solo Flights” in 1995. The album sold well and got the attention of the jazz press, and of his idol Dave Brubeck. Brubeck himself commented that he was “pleased and impressed” with Rick’s music and that Rick showed “a lot of very natural ability”.

Rick also performed with jazz bands, and was eventually hired to play ragtime piano with a local Dixieland jazz band.

In late 2000 Rick discovered an ancient tenor banjo in a pawn shop. He decided to buy and rebuild it, and secretly taught himself to play the instrument over the winter. By Fat Tuesday 2001, Rick debuted on banjo with his Dixieland band and gained new respect as a talented multi-instrumentalist.

Relocating to Northern Virginia in 2004, Rick immediately found himself again in demand by swing-dance and jazz bands on both piano and banjo.

During a visit to New Orleans in 2013, Rick sat in on the steamboat Natchez with the famous Dukes of Dixieland, and on Bourbon Street with Steamboat Willie - who, being unable to remember Rick's last name, called him "Banjo Rick".

Rick currently performs around the DC Metro area with several jazz bands on both piano and banjo. He may be the only Dixieland jazz musician in the world who can sing while simultaneously playing banjo with his hands and bass pedals with his feet!