

Pianist tickles ivories at Moonstruck

BY MARIA SONNENBERG
FOR FLORIDA TODAY

MELBOURNE—There's a new sound in downtown Melbourne these days.

It is smooth, sophisticated and assured. It is the music of John Ryan.

Patrons of Djon's in Melbourne Beach are familiar with Ryan's prowess on the piano keyboard.

During his 10-year gig at Djon's, Ryan amassed a local following eager for his smooth renditions of anything from show tunes to Beatles hits to classical music.

Ryan has crossed the causeway, settling into the cozy baby grand at the recently opened Moonstruck Wine Company in downtown Melbourne.

"We're so lucky to have John play for us," Moonstruck general manager Marta Reidel said.

Ryan started his "professional" career as a 13-year-old organist for Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church in Indialantic.

The mostly self-taught artist became a firefighter partly because the profession's typical work schedule allowed him to still play the piano professionally.

For more than 25 years, the Melbourne resident has performed in some of the most exclusive clubs and restaurants along the east coast of Florida, including a 20-year stint as the house pianist for the posh Moorings Club in Vero Beach.

In addition to the three nights a week he plays at Moonstruck, Ryan is also the house pianist at Vero Beach's private Oak Harbor Club.

The elegant atmosphere at Moonstruck suits Ryan's music. Through a sound system attached directly to the piano, patrons throughout the wine bar can enjoy Ryan's songs just as if they were sitting at the coveted sofa near the piano.

The concept of the new wine bar provides an upscale ambiance for patrons to enjoy hard-to-find, quality wines and microbrews by the glass.

Ryan said the crowd at Moon-



Maria Sonnenberg, for FLORIDA TODAY

Downtown mellow. The music of John Ryan is heard three nights a week at Moonstruck Wine Co. in downtown Melbourne.

To learn more

For information about John Ryan, visit Web site www.ryanmusic.com.

Moonstruck Wine Company is located at 836 N. New Haven Ave. in downtown Melbourne. Call 951-4555.

John Ryan plays at Moonstruck at 5 p.m. every Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

struck — ranging from twentysomethings to senior citizens — is extremely appreciative of his work.

"I'm getting requests for a wide variety of songs," Ryan said. "Anything from Alicia Keyes to Cole Porter to Hoagie Carmichael.

"There are a lot of twentysomethings that are totally into the old standards," Ryan said. "In some ways, they educate me."

At the invitation of British record producer Peter Clayton, Ryan spent time in England last year to record a CD of his original songs.

"Words Alone: the Music and Lyrics of John Ryan" was created at Air Edel Studios. Ryan found himself sharing airtime with the folks who were cutting the soundtrack for the newest Harry Potter picture.

Clayton, director of London's Robinwood Productions, is a mover and shaker in the music field who has many times filled London's Albert Hall with his musicians.

Clayton's also wants Ryan to record of an instrumental version of "Words Alone," which contains 17 compositions. ■