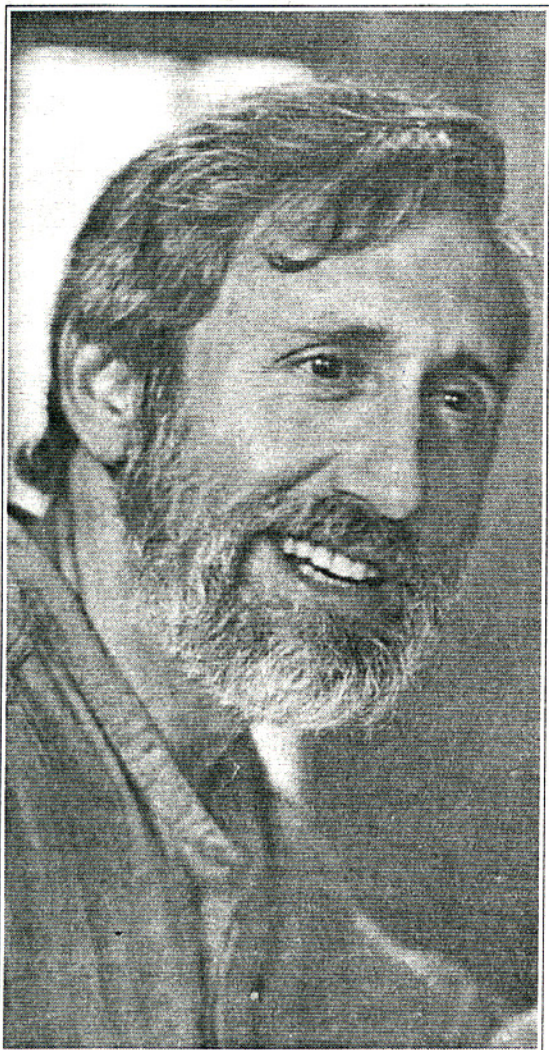


# CHICAGO READER

May 23, 1997

## CRITIC'S CHOICE



photo/James Gudeman

### DENNY ZEITLIN & DAVID FRIESEN

Denny Zeitlin leads a Jekyll-and-Hyde life—psychiatrist by day, jazz pianist and composer by night—and when it comes to noting the parallels between personae, I'm powerless to resist. Zeitlin's music is mentally agile, makes subtle suggestions, and succeeds through analysis; the ideas almost always arise from and reflect upon earlier statements. In the 70s, these qualities achieved actualization on the now-out-of-print albums *Zeitgeist* and *Expansion*—the latter an especially cogent fusion record that echoed the visions of a more famous shrink, Timothy Leary—and still supply the matrix for Dr. Zeitlin's music. These days he plays without electronics, which allows the listener to relish the depth of his shadings and the emotional balance beneath the keyboard fireworks. And if you *really* want to examine the traffic along Zeitlin's corpus callosum, compare his diffident ballad "Quiet Now"—which Bill Evans added to his repertoire in the 60s—and the jittery "Dormammu," named for the evil nemesis of the old Marvel comic book hero Dr. Strange. Both those tunes could pop up in Chicago; however, in his current setting (an acoustic duo), Zeitlin probably won't include any of the zooey electronic score he wrote for Philip Kaufman's 1978 remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Zeitlin's frequent partner, bassist David Friesen, has a spectacular resumé that encompasses work with straight-ahead groups in the 70s and with the quieter jazz hybrids of the 80s; he dives into the instrument's richest sonorities and gets you guessing that they might be bottomless. Zeitlin and Friesen's eponymously titled 1995 album for Concord proved their empathic ease with each other, which makes this rare homecoming by Zeitlin—a Chicago native who left town to attend med school at Johns Hopkins in the 60s before heading to San Francisco—all the more promising. The doctor is in for one night only. Sunday, 8 and 10 PM, Bop Shop, 5419 N. Clark; 773-275-7771. **NEIL TESSER**

DENNY ZEITLIN