



Zeitlin is great

Denny Zeitlen Trio
Centennial Library Theatre
Jazz City '84

By JAMES ADAMS
Journal Staff Writer

Jazz City continued to hit the right notes late Thursday afternoon with an excellent concert by San Francisco Bay-area pianist Denny Zeitlen.

Supported by bass giant Gary Peacock and former John Abercrombie drummer Peter Donald, the 46-year-old keyboardist (and practising psychiatrist) nimbly moved his way through an 85-minute set that was, perhaps, the most consistently satisfying Jazz City '84 session to date.

Playing before a "good vibes" (Zeitlen's term) audience of 150, the Zeitlen trio presented an 11-tune program balanced between originals and reworkings, one that effectively avoided both quick-fix highs and mind-numbing lows.

What the crowd got, in short, was a steady stream of satisfying sounds, expertly delivered.

With his professorial specs, grey-streaked beard, leather waist pouch and sandal-style shoes, Zeitlen was an interesting pianist to

watch as he bobbed and hovered over the keyboard.

At times Thursday he seemed almost hypnotized by the play of his large, splay-fingered hands as they alternately caressed, tickled and hammered the ivories.

Zeitlen's is an encyclopedic yet integrated style. On an original like Cascade, he concocted Jarrett-like ruminations with his right hand over a staggered boogie-woogie-style rhythm in his left. Following some Ran Blake-like rumbles in the bass register, he roared to the song's conclusion with a Gershwin-esque crescendo.

As expected, Peacock — he of Albert Ayler, Bill Evans, Ralph Towner fame — was a magnificent accompanist and, on such tunes as Chelsea Bridge and Embraceable You, a lustrous soloist.

Donald, a "no-sweat" yet propulsive drummer, was particularly impressive in his solo in New Vamp.