

# Jazz City

## Pure pleasure

By MICHAEL SKEET

Denny Zeitlin is a practising psychiatrist. He must have a terrific couchside manner.

Certainly he charmed his way into the hearts of 200 people at the Centennial Library Theatre last night. In company with Gary Peacock on bass and Peter Donald on drums, Zeitlin played a near-perfect set of entertaining jazz.

Zeitlin first came to fame as an improvisationalist, an artist who synthesized differing elements of rock, classical and jazz music into a jazz form. Speaking of synthesis, he was also one of the first users of electronics in jazz.

The music he played last night was not *avant-garde*; it was in fact closer to the mainstream than he's been in a long time. But it was exceptionally well-played, a

constant challenge to the intellect as well as a pleasure to the ears.

His sources ranged from Billy Strayhorn through Mingus and Ornette Coleman to himself. Many of his own songs are beautifully melodic, and Zeitlin caresses the melodies lovingly, shifting imperceptibly into improvisation.

### Deceptively complex

He still shines on improv. Zeitlin's work is more accessible than, say, Franco D'Andrea's, but it's deceptively complex.

His right hand is more active than his left, but this doesn't do justice. His right hand literally flies over the keys, until all the notes threaten to collapse into one another. How he keeps his solos clear and intelligible is a mystery that would be fun to unravel.

Gary Peacock deserves a medal. Stepping in at short notice when Charlie Haden bowed out, Peacock was obviously in unfamiliar surroundings.

But he performed admirably, and when he got the chance to step out on his own, he played a fine solo. He was better in the lower register than the upper, but that may be simply a matter of preference.

### Great drummers

One thing that has surprised at this year's festival is the number of great drummers who've been coming out of the woodwork. Peter Donald is another one; his solo on Zeitlin's *New Vamp* was tremendous.

When he's at the piano, Zeitlin swings with the music, exuding the pleasure of performing, of creating. It's that palpable sense of joy, as much as anything else, that made his show so worth seeing.



—Photo by Doug Shanks

**Gary Peacock, a late replacement, performed admirably.**