



CHICAGO **READER**

JUNE 4, 2004

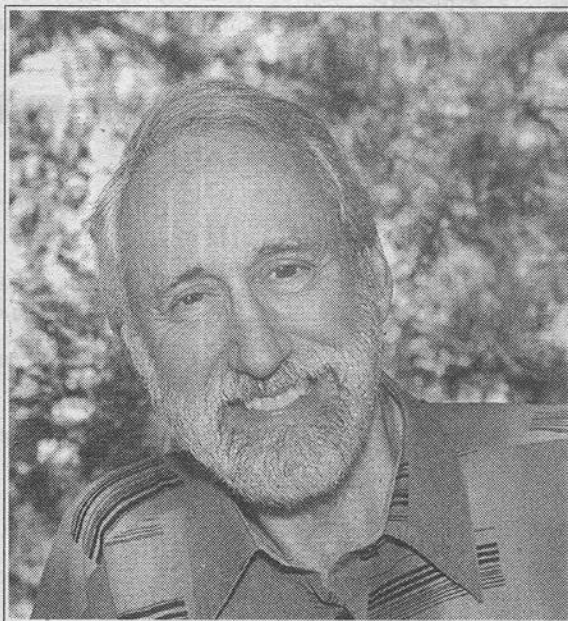
**SECTION
THREE**

**CONCERTS
CLUBS
CLASSICAL MUSIC**

CRITIC'S CHOICE

DENNY ZEITLIN TRIO

Highland Park native Denny Zeitlin spends half his professional life as a full-time psychiatrist in San Francisco and the other half as one of the most distinctive pianists in modern jazz. While I'd love to skip the cliché that his science informs his art, I can't name a more analytical musician—both in his serpentine improvisatory investigations, aided by his encyclopedic musical knowledge and exacting technique, and in the quickly shifting keyboard textures that surround them. Yet for all its cerebral qualities, Zeitlin's music also quickens the pulse, especially when he plays with veteran bassist Buster Williams and smart, iconoclastic drummer Matt Wilson, who've taken time out from leading their own bands to join him in this trio; the same lineup appears on Zeitlin's new release, *Slickrock* (Maxjazz). Despite these players' disparate individual approaches to improvisation, Zeitlin's music provides a medium where they can all come together, and the trio achieves an almost symphonic blend on standards ("Body and Soul," "Sweet Georgia Brown") and on Zeitlin's own provocative compositions. Over the years the latter have ranged from delicate tunes like "Quiet Now" (which Bill Evans added to his repertoire in the late 60s) to the sprawling, mercurial pieces of *Expansion*, Zeitlin's mind-bending 1973 excursion into fusion and electronics (which I've been begging him to reissue for years—maybe he'll listen to you). Two such pieces on *Slickrock* progress



through an inner landscape of startling left-hand melodies, shimmering upper-octave accents, and a unique dream logic instantly recognizable to Zeitlin fans. \$20. Thursday, June 3, 8 and 10 PM, Friday and Saturday, June 4 and 5, 9 and 11 PM, and Sunday, June 6, 4, 8, and 10 PM, Jazz Showcase, 59 W. Grand; 312-670-2473. **NEIL TESSER**