

JAZZTIMES

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CD REVIEW

DENNY ZEITLIN

As Long As There's Music

32 Jazz 32218 (65:47)

Zeitlin's first trio record in years recalls the excitement the pianist generated in his debut on Jeremy Steig's *Flute Fever* in 1963, and on the subsequent series of his own Columbia LPs. His technique was dazzling from the beginning. At 24, he could swing hard, as his work on "Oleo" on Steig's album made thrillingly clear, and he had a rich harmonic imagination. This CD fulfills all the promise of those early efforts. Despite Zeitlin's subsequent forays into electronic music and a kind of impressionistic near-jazz, he never moved out of the gravitational pull of the essential music that formed him.

Although Zeitlin has recorded periodically over the years, his parallel profession of psychiatry kept him near his base in the San Francisco Bay area and meant fewer concert and club appearances than it

takes for a performer to capture the general jazz audience. Most listeners are likely to be unfamiliar with his harmonic depth, command of time and finely honed sense of proportion and drama in building a solo. *As Long As There's Music* is Zeitlin's most satisfying album since his 1992 solo CD in Concord's Maybeck Recital Hall series. His brilliance and the interaction he achieves with bassist Buster Williams and drummer Al Foster make it a fully realized trio recording, surpassing even the superb one he recorded live at The Trident with Charlie Haden and Jerry Granelli in 1965. (Aside to Sony Legacy: Isn't it about time *Flute Fever* and the Zeitlin trios on Columbia were reissued?)

The new CD abounds with examples of Zeitlin's mastery. It has an exquisitely voiced version of "I'm All Smiles," a compact performance of John Coltrane's "Cousin Mary" in which Zeitlin bends the blues rules but does not break the blues

spirit, a joyous "They Can't Take That Away From Me" and an "I Fall in Love Too Easily" that captures the song's ache and the essence of its gloomy beauty. "Cousin Mary" highlights Williams and Foster's solo abilities, but it is their communal work with Zeitlin that makes them perfect collaborators. Ted Panken's thorough liner essay traces Zeitlin's history and major influences, except for one. Panken seems to bend over backward to avoid mentioning the most apparent influence of all: Bill Evans.

—Doug Ramsey