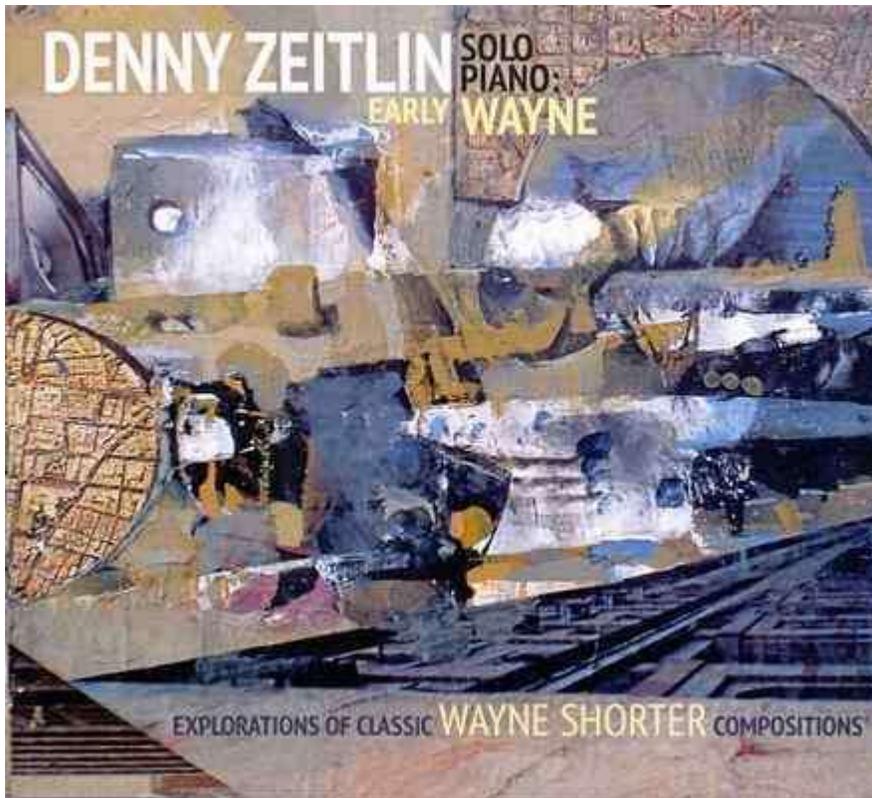


# Wayne Shorter gets a nod from jazz pianist Denny Zeitlin



By [Paul Liberatore](#), Marin Independent Journal

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## Local Review

This week: “Early Wayne,” Denny Zeitlin, independent, [dennyzeitlin.com](http://dennyzeitlin.com), Amazon, \$9.49 MP3, \$13.99 CD

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More than a half century after beginning his recording career, Marin jazz pianist Denny Zeitlin pays homage to one of his earliest inspirations, improvising on solo piano on compositions by the celebrated American jazz saxophonist Wayne Shorter.

“Early Wayne” was recorded live before an audience at the Piedmont Piano Co. in Oakland. Zeitlin’s masterful performance on 10 shorter instrumentals, all from the 1960s and ’70s, adds to a body of work that includes more than 35 albums, an extraordinary output that JazzTimes critic Andrew Gilbert says “places him at jazz’s creative zenith.” It would be hard to argue with that.

Zeitlin was discovered by the legendary record producer John Hammond when he was in medical school at Johns Hopkins University in the early 1960s. While doing his internship and psychiatric residency at the University of California, San Francisco, he became a Bay Area jazz star, performing with bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Jerry Granelli at the Trident, the ultra-hip Sausalito restaurant in the 1960s and ’70s. That gig resulted in the 1965 album “Live at the Trident.”

Zeitlin, a psychiatrist with a private practice in Kentfield, was a junior in college when he was captivated by Shorter’s originality as a composer and improviser on his debut album, 1959’s “Introducing Wayne Shorter.” The saxophonist and founder of the jazz fusion band Weather Report has continued to be an inspiration for Zeitlin over his long and stellar career.

He had recorded Shorter pieces before, but this is the first time he’d done an entire album of classic Shorter tunes like “Speak No Evil” and “Nefertiti.” He inhabits this music that he knows so intimately, playing with tenderness and emotion on a piece like “Miyako,” and then with strength and assurance on the track “Miyako,” venturing into the unknown on inventive, cerebral flights of improvisation. And he does it in the moment, live, flying above the crowd without a net.

Because he’s a jazz musician, Zeitlin isn’t as well known as the many rock stars who call Marin home. But, at 78, there’s no one more supremely accomplished than he is. And by recording an entire album of Shorter’s timeless music, you get two jazz greats for the price of one.