

Flutist gets late music start

By JIM WINDELL
 "I wasn't a child prodigy," Alexander Zonjic says, provoking suspicion. "The flute came about quite accidently."

The Windsor flutist and guitarist — currently appearing with his quartet at Archibald's at 555 N. Woodward in Birmingham — didn't even play the flute until he was a teen-ager.

The way in which he got his first flute is also unique.

"I bought it for \$9. I think it was from a guy who stole it from my high school," he admits candidly. Zonjic is a tall, Afro-haired musician who is honest and outspoken. His hustle and outstanding musicianship have earned him accolades on both sides of the international border between Windsor, his hometown, and Detroit, where he frequently plays.

If he is not in any kind of rut these days, with a successful record, more nightclub engagements than he can really handle, appearances with symphonies and several television specials, this was not always the case.

Which is probably why he bought that hot flute in the first place.

"I started studying the guitar at 10 years of age and in high school I was in the barroom band scene. I was in a real rut and I got burned out with playing Top-40 stuff."

"It's playing a dream, this imitating records and playing in bars — having a vision that someone will discover you. Unless you are an idiot, you can see how shallow it is."

HAVING THIS new flute back then and being fed up with the bar and rock scene, Alexander Zonjic fled back to school and began to study music in earnest.



Alexander Zonjic, a former guitarist, didn't begin to study the flute until he got tired of playing rock in bars.

"I found I was light years behind in my music," Zonjic said. "Even though I worked very hard in school (University of Windsor), I'm not near as well-rooted as I should be."

If he isn't well-grounded in the fundamentals of music, no one else seems to complain. He frequently is a guest soloist with symphony orchestras and often appears in a duo setting with Ervin Monroe, principal flutist with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra (DSO). His major instructor at the University of Windsor was flutist Shaul BenMeir of the DSO.

Zonjic retains his love for popular, scene, Alexander Zonjic fled back to school and began to study music in earnest.

"But I've never had to work at improvisation."

He says the knowledge of chord structures he gained from playing guitar in a rock 'n roll band help him play jazz. Then too, his exposure to jazz initially came through his rock days.

"When I first played rock 'n roll at the Colonial Inn, the upstairs room was perhaps the No. 1 jazz club in Toronto. Once Herbie Mann was upstairs and when I heard him, I went out and bought every one of his albums I could find.

"Herbie Mann planted a seed for me,

he was a definite early influence toward my jazz career."

PLAYING IN A quartet setting at Archibald's, Zonjic sounds smoothly modern with traces of Herbie Mann still apparent. The jazz goes well with an intimate room, but even people who've come to the downtown Birmingham club for something other than listening find themselves irresistibly bouncing to tunes of Earl Klugh, George Benson and Bob James.

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