

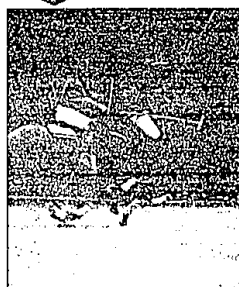
## THE WEEKEND

### FRIDAY



Bridget Fonda, Bill Pullman and Brendan Gleeson star in "Lake Placid," opening today at metro Detroit movie theaters.

### SATURDAY

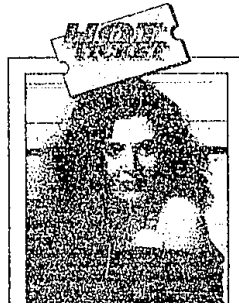


Enjoy an afternoon of polo at the 10th annual Southfield Gold Cup Polo Competition, 2 p.m. at the Word of Faith International Christian Center, Nine Mile Road at Evergreen. Tickets \$5 in advance, \$6 at the gate, call (248) 354-4854.

### SUNDAY



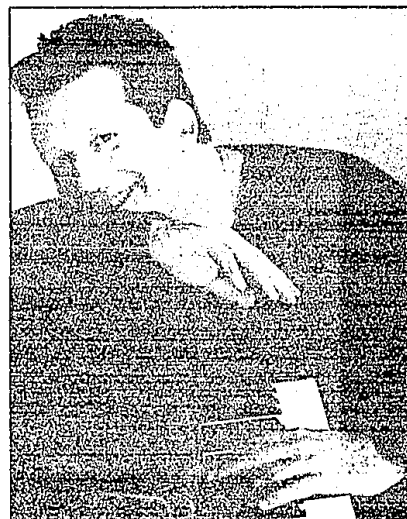
Join the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, led by Neeme Jarvi, for "A Gershwin Gala" 7:30 p.m. at the Meadow Brook Music Festival, on the campus of Oakland University, Rochester Hills. Tickets \$13 to \$45, call (248) 645-6666 or (313) 576-5120, discounts for students under age 18.



**Hot Vix:** The Michigan Jazz Festival, noon to 10:30 p.m. Sunday, July 18 at Schoolcraft College on Haggerty Road, between Six and Seven Mile Roads in Livonia, features 189 musicians, including Janet Tunal, performing on four stages. No charge for admission. Call (248) 474-2720 or (734) 459-2454 for more information.

### Forerunners:

Tim Weisberg and Jeff Lorber headline this year's Birmingham JazzFest. Both are credited with defining the "smooth jazz" sound.



## Birmingham JazzFest reaches for the stars

Weisberg, Lorber, local legends featured performers

BY FRANK PROVENZANO

STAFF WRITER

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For Alexander Zonjic, arguably the region's most-often heard and recognized jazz musician, the key to longevity is keeping it simple.

"This isn't my main gig. My focus is playing the flute," said Zonjic, as he sat at the sound controls in the Smooth Jazz radio studios in Farmington Hills, where he hosts a weekday morning-drive show.

Listeners on 98.7 FM have heard Zonjic's rapidly smooth on-air delivery, encyclopedic knowledge of jazz, not to mention his interviews with superstars such as Kenny G, Vanessa Williams and Harry Connick Jr. With seven albums over the last two decades, including the critically acclaimed "Passion," and recently released, "Pipers' Holiday," the local Pied Piper of jazz has also become a promoter and diplomat.

Zonjic has applied his straightforward philosophy of "keeping it simple" as the new artistic director for next week's seventh annual Birmingham JazzFest, presented by The Community House of Birmingham.

"My vision is for this festival to have an eclectic mix," he said.

The mix is highlighted by two of the forerunners of the "Smooth Jazz" sound, flutist Tim Weisberg, and keyboardist Jeff Lorber, a fusion-style musician and producer. Weisberg, widely known for his 1978 multi-platinum duet album with Dan Fogelberg, "Twin Sons of Different Mothers," also played with Jefferson Starship, and Loggins & Messina.

After the past several years of struggling to gain wider public appeal, this year's festival has an



**At the controls:** Alexander Zonjic, artistic director of the Birmingham JazzFest, has put together an eclectic line up of performers.

upbeat, eclectic feel with a line-up that features performers of jazz variants from fusion to the straightforward style of Marcus Belgrave to mellow "smooth" rhythms of Weisberg, who also plays classical music.

There's also a few pleasant surprises, particularly Pamela Wiso and the Afro Cuban All Stars, and the Chautauqua Express, a Saturday morning show for kids.

"The ideal at festivals is for people to come see their favorite act and see new stuff," said Zonjic, who also coordinates "Jazz on the River" in Trenton, and "Jazz on the Lake" at

St. Mary's College in Orchard Lake.

The festival takes place in downtown Birmingham's Shain Park, an upscale urban setting that also hosts a spring and fall art fair. Within blocks of the park are some of the area's most popular restaurants, where many local jazz musicians will be performing in conjunction with the festival.

While there's hardly a shortage of music in and around downtown Birmingham, organizers concede there's been a lack of big-name appeal during the previous six years of the festival.

"The jazz world shares the predicament with the classical world," said Zonjic. "There's a lot of quality performers but not a lot of marquee names."

For years, Zonjic has opened the Thursday-Saturday jazz fest to overflow crowds. But unlike in past years, when Zonjic leaves the stage this year he won't take his sophisticated sound system with him.

It's one of several fine adjustments made by Arlene Kass, who is in her first year as director of special events at The Community House.

Hiring Zonjic was key in putting together the talent with a quality venue, said Kass. Some critics contend, however, that the festival's show-mobile stage and under-sized sound systems haven't helped the presentation, nor the festival's reputation.

"Alex (Zonjic) has an intense interest in making the festival a mini Montreux," said Kass.

"We realized that the festival was stuck in place," she said. "It hasn't grown in scope like we thought it would. Our goal is to make it a mini Montreux, and for the park to be so crowded it's impossible to walk."

### Birmingham JazzFest

WHEN: Thursday-Saturday, July 22-24

WHERE: Shain Park, downtown Birmingham, south of Maple Road, between Henrietta and Bates Streets. Participating restaurants are located nearby. A trolley will make rounds to restaurants on Friday & Saturday.

ADMISSION: Free. For more information, call (248) 433-FEST.

#### THURSDAY, JULY 22

7 p.m. - Alexander Zonjic and Friends

#### FRIDAY, JULY 23

7 p.m. - Marcus Belgrave and the Detroit Jazz All Stars

9 p.m. - Friday, July 23 - Tim Weisberg, flutist

#### SATURDAY, JULY 24

11 a.m. - Chautauqua Express for KIDS

1 p.m. - Vocalist Kimmie Horn

2:30 p.m. - Randy Scott, saxophonist

4 p.m. - Jazz pianist Pamela Wiso and the Afro Cuban All Stars

5:30 p.m. - Ken Navarro, guitarist

7 p.m. - Jeff Lorber, keyboardist

Coming from the Capital Jazz Festival in Washington, D.C., keyboardist Lorber, a familiar performer in the metro area, has played at outdoor festivals since the late 1970s.

Three features of a successful festival, according to Lorber, include an appreciative audience, a quality sound system and a comfortable environment.

"The festival is a community in itself, musicians getting together to collaborate," said Lorber. "We play, of course, every chance we get."

For most musicians, it's as simple as that.

## MUSIC FESTIVAL

## Buzz is the blues at international festival



**Part of Bluesfest:** The local blues band Black Beauty performs during the four-day Bluesfest International.

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO

STAFF WRITER

Craig Bender knows first hand the power of the blues.

Three years ago, he, blues fan Ted Boomer and Todd Smith, one of the owners of the Novi Expo Center, founded the four-day, two-country music party International Bluesfest. The trio has since watched the festival explode.

"We've been blessed," Bender said. "With our second year, we were 100 percent over our previous year. We're hopeful, but not that optimistic about this year. But we're pretty darn optimistic. The buzz is the blues."

This year, the International Blues-

fest runs Thursday-Sunday, July 15-18, at the Novi Expo Center and the Civic Terrace Festival Site in downtown Windsor. Featured performers include Shirley King, Buddy Guy, Buckwheat Zydeco, Rik Emmett, Big Rude Jake, Mudpuppy, Bugs Beddow Band, and Wailin' Inc.

More than 50 artists from six different countries perform during the Bluesfest, the world's only blues festival that concurrently takes place in two countries.

The International Bluesfest isn't limited to just blues, however.

Canada's Big Rude Jake is a popular jump blues/swing band, while Imperial Swing Orchestra is pure swing.



Canadian Big Rude Jake

"We really kind of go all over the board. There's so many different kinds of blues. For the longest time, people have the stereotype of a large black man with a guitar."

"Quite honestly, things have made a full-faced turn. There's all kinds of different blues," Bender explained.

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