

Zo! of Foreign Exchange Music coming to Minneapolis March 12 at The Pourhouse

Written by



From time to time, life will throw us a curveball or two.

Fans of soul, neosoul and organic hip-hop, are probably pretty thrilled that Zo! of Foreign Exchange Music wasn't as good at hitting curveballs as he is at producing and creating timeless melodies and arrangements for the many artists who he's featured on his three released projects. Now that's not to say that Zo!, born Lorenzo Ferguson, was a slouch at hitting. The multi-talented producer was drafted out of high school in the 13th round of the MLB Amateur Draft to play center field for the Toronto Blue Jays. But Zo! passed on the offer, opting for college instead at Western Kentucky University, with dreams of securing a higher draft spot. While Zo!'s draft spot didn't improve, his keyboard playing did.

"My first love was baseball," said Zo!, who will be in the Twin Cities for a Wednesday, March 12 performance at The Pourhouse, 10 S. 5th St., downtown Minneapolis. "I'm a really passionate person and I was passionate about playing baseball. But I never let that get in the way of my music. I always kept playing music to keep my chops up."

Most would say the producer and keyboard player did a little better than keep his chops up. As an artist with the soul/hip-hop collective, Foreign Exchange Music, Zo! has composed for artists such as Eric Roberson, Anthony David, Phonte of Foreign Exchange (and formerly of Little Brother), Sy Smith, the soulful Carmen Rodgers (who will be joining Zo! on stage at The Pourhouse) and many others.

Zo!'s sound is unmistakable and almost without exception; all artists who perform and write with the Detroit-born producer end up writing and singing upbeat, feel-good tunes. Zo! said in many ways that's by design.

Take the song, "The Train" featuring Sy Smith as an example.

"The chords are upbeat and colorful," explained Zo!. "It's kind of a summery, no clouds in the sky kind of sound. You don't want to write about a breakup to that."

With the success of Robert Glasper's Grammy winning "Black Radio" and his follow-up, "Black Radio 2" soul music fans are readily accepting producer driven projects, but how exactly does

Zo! of Foreign Exchange Music coming to Minneapolis March 12 at The Pourhouse

Written by

that translate to a live show without all the projects' collaborators?

For Zo!, he says his live shows with Carmen Rodgers are unique each time out.

"You're going to get a combination of really good music, some jokes and laughter. It's a very interactive show," said Zo!, who said Rodgers is the perfect voice for his shows as she sings both male and female leads. "It's a really loose, fun show and each one is different because we just go where the music takes us."

Zo!, whose latest project is "Man Made," is working on music for the upcoming season of the Adult Swim cartoon, "Black Dynamite" and is also scoring the film, "Undeniable," a documentary about independent soul music artists.

Zo! and Carmen Rodgers' upcoming March 12 show at The Pourhouse starts at 8 p.m. with doors at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$20 in advance and \$30 at the door. Advance tickets are on sale at www.vitalculture.com/events/detail/2369

. Opening for Zo! is Minneapolis vocal powerhouse Margeaux Davis.



Zo! featuring Carmen Rodgers with Margeaux Davis

Presented by Thee Urbane Life and the Southern Comfort Music Series

Wednesday, March 12, 8 p.m., doors 7 p.m.

The Pourhouse, 10 S. 5th St., downtown Minneapolis

Admission: \$20 in advance, \$30 at the door