

By Kristen Forbes

Music Man, Medicine Man

Blues doctor bridges the gap.



Petar Novakovic

KJZZ loving physician Petar Novakovic has no trouble mixing music and medicine—but he never quite leaves his profession behind. “I’m a doctor,” he laughs. “If they’re going to throw a tomato, it should be organic.”


Born in Kosovo, Novakovic has been in the United States since 1989. He did his medical residency in Chicago and settled in the Valley, where he runs Novakovic Family Practice. In addition to the main location in Chandler, Novakovic has a satellite office in north Phoenix, where the majority of his patients are Bosnian refugees, a group he says has been “chronically underserved.”

Novakovic leaned toward music at an early age, inspired by a mother with “a beautiful voice.” He began dancing in a folklore company in his hometown, then picked up a guitar when he was 13 and started performing with bands. Though his Gibson Les Paul Deluxe collected dust during medical school and residency, he eventually started playing regularly again.

“I went to a local jam session,” he says. “I collected my courage one day and walked up to the stage and played. I think that was five years ago and they haven’t kicked me out yet.”

Since then, he’s recorded several CDs and donates the proceeds to charity. Many of his songs are inspired by family members, including wife Milica, son Aleksandar, and daughters Nina and Natasha.

Novakovic often leaves work as late as 8:00 or 9:00 p.m. and KJZZ is his companion on the drive home, as well as on evenings during the weekend.

“Music is a creation,” he says. “Medicine is research, searching for a solution. When it comes to music, I listen to my heart. When it comes to medicine, I use the method I tell my patients: Seek and you shall find. I’m stubborn as a physician because I try not to give up until I figure out what is going on. Music helps me recharge the batteries and unload the burden of the day.” 

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A visit to his website says it all: The left side of the screen features Petar “Pedja” Novakovic as a white-coated doctor, pens in his pocket and a stethoscope draped around his neck. On the right, he is dressed in black, clutching a guitar, a bracelet wrapped around his wrist. A doctor by day, Novakovic transforms into a blues musician after hours.