

CLIPPER ANDERSON
clipperanderson.com

Bassist Clipper Anderson is a musician who defies labels. Equally comfortable with straight-ahead, traditional, free jazz or bebop, he plays with genuine reverence for the music and an unassuming mastery that speaks for itself. He is a virtuosic improviser, known for creating intelligent lines, which are often executed with stunning speed and precision. He is the quintessential support player who steadily holds the pocket and creates a solid foundation for whomever he shares the bandstand with. He is also a well-respected vocalist. Earshot Jazz has aptly described Clipper as “a player for the connoisseur to savor,” and rightly so.

Clipper’s musical resume is as impressive as it is deep. He has played with a long list of jazz greats including Michael Brecker, Arturo Sandoval, Dave Samuels, Peter Erskine, Bruce Forman, Tamir Hendelman, Bob Mintzer, Lew Soloff, Bucky Pizzarelli, Benny Golson, Paquito D’Rivera, Phil Woods and Buddy DeFranco. He performs at jazz festivals throughout the U.S. and Canada and has appeared at the Highland Jazz Festival, the Port Townsend Jazz Festival and the Crown of the Continent Guitar Foundation Jazz Festival. He is also a featured artist, annually, at the Buddy DeFranco/University of Montana Jazz Festival and the Blaine Jazz Festival. As a session musician, Clipper has played on numerous projects. He has recorded five CDs with Northwest vocal icon Greta Matassa, including their critically acclaimed holiday CD “And To All a Good Night.” This recording was also Clipper’s first outing as a producer. With his new CD “The Road Home,” Clipper makes his debut as a solo artist and composer. This 11-song disc is a thoughtfully crafted collection that reflects his influences and pays homage to his mentors. It is due for release on Origin records in February 2012. Clipper is presently on the jazz faculty at Pacific Lutheran University.

Clipper was born and raised in Polson, Montana. Throughout his childhood, he learned to play a number of instruments including piano, trumpet and French horn. His family owned an old player piano. From the time he was five-years-old, Clipper would pump the bellows and listen to the piano rolls, which played music from the 20’s, 30’s and 40’s. Some of the songs were pop hits. Others were quite obscure. Many of the piano rolls included verses and lyrics. This was Clipper’s earliest exposure to jazz and was also the spark for a lifetime of archival pursuits. He still collects piano rolls to this day.

His first introduction to the bass came when he was in high school. His older brother Rocky, who was in a rock band, suggested that Clipper try the bass. Rocky constructed one for Clipper by putting bass strings on an acoustic guitar. “It didn’t fret well,” Clipper amusedly recalls. Yet despite the makeshift nature of the instrument, Clipper used it to play along with records by the Beatles and other popular groups of the time. He soon moved on to electric bass and was picked by Rich Matteson to be the All-Star bass player in the Montana State University’s statewide high school jazz festival. In 1973, Clipper entered the University of Montana to study French horn, but his focus ultimately switched to acoustic bass. He studied classical bass with Frank Diliberto and Jazz Workshop with Lance Boyd.

Upon his departure from the University of Montana, Clipper spent a brief period in Seattle before moving to Spokane for a two-week gig. He ended up staying for eight years. During this period, Clipper worked with the Jazz Conspiracy, which included pianist Danny McCollim, saxophonist Steve Barranco and longtime friend and collaborator, drummer Mark Ivester. The band played two sets, seven nights a week. The first set was a jazz set and the second was an R & B set that featured Spokane vocalist Robert Vaughn. These were formative years for Clipper and he was particularly

influenced by McCollim's modal style and modern sensibility. When the Jazz Conspiracy gig ended, Clipper briefly relocated to Portland but returned to Spokane six months later for an extended job with another cover and jazz band. Clipper has been working out of the Seattle area since 1992.

Although academia was an important part of Clipper's development as an artist, the role of mentors also had a significant impact. Most notable of these were pianists Arnie Carruthers and Jack Brownlow. Carruthers was a bebop pianist who, after a stroke in 1974, successfully retrained himself to play with one hand. Brownlow was a highly regarded Seattle pianist whose style was often compared to Bill Evans. Over the years, Clipper spent an extensive amount of time with each. Both Carruthers and Brownlow had an encyclopedic knowledge of jazz music. From popular standards to obscure compositions, they knew who wrote it, who recorded it and when. They also knew countless ways to interpret the songs. All of this was passed on to Clipper, who is a consummate archivist in his own right.

Although Clipper's accomplishments are many and his career extraordinary, perhaps what most defines this Montana-born bass player is the gracious spirit that he brings to the music. In the words of Mark Ivester: "After 30 years of playing together, Clipper still amazes and inspires me. He's the most dedicated musician I know."