

# AL HENDERSON

## BIOGRAPHY

Bassist, composer, arranger, leader, jazz educator AL HENDERSON, (MFA Musicology, 1983) is well known as a leader of his groups the Al Henderson Septet/Quintet/Quartet and co-leader of the influential group Time Warp. Since moving to Toronto in the 1970s, he has performed as a sideman for jazz artists such as Jane Bunnett, Arnett Cobb, Hank Crawford, Sonny Fortune, Slim Gaillard, Jimmy Knepper, Diana Krall, Flip Phillips, John Tchai, and Eddie 'Cleanhead' Vinson.

As a composer, he has created a large and distinctive body of original compositions - pieces which form the bulk of the repertoire of the bands he leads. Stuart Broomer has written "... bassist Al Henderson is the real thing, a composer in the tradition of Duke Ellington and Charles Mingus, whose works have distinctive energy and melodic and harmonic character..." (Toronto Life, January 2009). In 1995 he was recognized both as the Jazz Report Composer of the Year and winner of the prestigious SOCAN Award for Original Jazz Composition for the large work "Ellingtonia". His compositions have appeared on recordings by the Al Henderson Septet/Quintet/Quartet, Time Warp, Barry Romberg's Random Access, Richard Whiteman, Alex Dean, Don Pullen & Jane Bunnett, and Shox Johnson & the Jive Bombers.

The Al Henderson Quartet was formed in 1993 featuring Alex Dean (saxes, oboe, bass clarinet), pianist Richard Whiteman and drummer Barry Romberg. The band's first recording - *Dinosaur Dig* (CRST CD103) - was named one of the top three jazz recordings of 1995 by CBC Morningside.

In 1998, the band became a quintet with the addition of the internationally renowned saxophonist Pat LaBarbera (saxes, flute) to create the uniquely versatile and powerful front line featured on the recording *Urban Landscape* (CRST CD108). Geoff Chapman described the band's live performances as "...consistently stimulating...a healthy mix of drive and fascinating adventures..." (Toronto Star) while Mark Miller has called the band ..."a thinking fan's quintet" (Globe & Mail).

In October of 2004 Al Henderson released a new quintet recording of live performances from the Montreal Bistro in Toronto - *Fathers and Sons* (CRST CD124). Ted O'Reilly writes "Al Henderson works without a net, but you're never in danger of not having a good time..." (Whole Note) while Richard Bourcier states: "this session has it all." (JazzReview.com)

For his most recent recording, *Regeneration* (CRST CD132), the quintet has been expanded to a septet with the addition of noted cellists Matt Brubeck and Mark Chambers.

Al is also the co-leader of the influential group Time Warp, one of Canada's longest running jazz ensembles. Established in the early 1980s, the group has released nine recordings, played across Canada as well as in the US and Venezuela, and won numerous awards. In 2009, Time Warp was asked to perform in honour of York University's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a special concert by the Time Warp Jazz Orchestra comprised of fifteen full and part-time jazz faculty of York University. The performance included new arrangements of compositions performed by Time Warp over the years.

An Assistant Professor of music at York University in Toronto, Al has served as director of the York University Jazz Orchestra for nearly a decade, producing custom arrangements for many hours of performances annually and has served as the Jazz Area Coordinator. As a jazz educator since 1982, he focuses his teaching and research in the area of jazz studies on composition, arranging, theory, history

and performance. His Master's thesis, "Improvisation in the Recorded Works of Coleman Hawkins, 1932-34" (1981) was one of the first Master's theses completed in jazz studies in Canada.

A special area of interest is the theory and practice of walking bass line construction. Al has presented public lectures and demonstrations on this topic. During the series about the function of instruments used in jazz, CBC's The Sunday Edition chose a recording of Al's walking bass line with drums as a demonstration of time and motion in the walking bass line.

He has, along with fellow musicians Mike Murley and Barry Elmes been instrumental in supporting recorded Canadian jazz as a co-owner of Cornerstone Records Inc.. Since 1993, the label has released more than thirty Canadian jazz recordings.