

Jennifer Leitham

jenniferleitham.com



Her story is compelling. Her journey has been most unconventional. Her career is groundbreaking as she attempts to bring a sense of normalcy to a subject that many people don't understand, all the while proudly displaying her exceptional skills. She is considered by many to be one of the finest Jazz bassists in the world.

She began her life with the name John Leitham. In her professional life, she had played with numerous big names, including Woody Herman, George Shearing, Bob Cooper, Bill Watrous, Benny Carter and Peggy Lee. She was Mel Tormé's bassist for ten years.

For most of that time, she was also a bandleader and studio musician, playing on over one hundred recordings, including five discs under her own name. She married, settled in L.A., but all that while, was struggling to deal with and keep secret her gender identity. Finally, in a process that was lengthy and painful, physically and emotionally, she transitioned in 2001 while touring with Doc Severinsen.

She has maintained a vigorous career throughout and has achieved much acclaim and acceptance.

Jennifer has been a featured artist at many of the world's most prestigious jazz festivals and clubs. She has recently performed as a guest or appeared with her trio at some of the finest venues in the world, including The Blue Note, Iridium, Kitano, Small's, and Dizzy's Club Coca Cola in New York, The Toronto Pride Fest, The Bohem Festival in Budapest and The Louis Armstrong Jazz Festival in Bank, Hungary, Breda Jazz Fest in the Netherlands; Münster Jazz Festival in France; Yamaha Jazz Festival in Hamamatsu, Japan, Catalina's, Vitello's, blue whale, The Lighthouse, The Warner Grand and Renberg Theaters in Los Angeles, Boston Court PAC in Pasadena, KSDS Jazz Live at the Saville Theater and Dizzy's in San Diego, Mammoth Lakes, Sweet and Hot, and Sacramento Festivals in California, Blues Alley, Washington DC, Prescott Jazz Summit, Arizona, Milford Center for the Arts, Connecticut, The Black Box Theater at Centenary College and Shanghai Jazz in New Jersey, the Cheltenham Center for the Arts, Pa, the Deer Head Inn in the Delaware Water Gap, Pa and a host of others.

Jennifer's trio features the bass as the lead voice throughout and highlights both her original compositions, arrangements, and as her massive Spottily audience will attest, her superb vocals.

Jennifer has played on over 150 albums, including 11 albums of her own. In 2019 she release "Remnants Of Humanity", a wry commentary on current events, that she describes as "Jazz with a conscience!". Her "Future Christmas" was one of the top selling Indie CDs of 2014. Her 2015 release, MOOD(S)WINGS, was the #1 Crossover Jazz top seller on CD Baby for over 8 weeks and was voted one of the top three Jazz

CDs of 2015 by the readers of JazzEd magazine. Other recent CDs include the critically acclaimed *Left Coast Story* (2008), and an all original tour de force, *The Real Me* (2006), her most popular CD to date. It announced to the world her true identity, both as a musician and a person. Her DVD *The Real Me Live* (2011), also available as an audio download, is "crackling with intensity, passion, and virtuosity!" Leitham's other internationally renowned CD's include *Two for the Road* (1999), *Live* (1997) *Lefty Leaps In* (1996) *The Southpaw* (1992) *Leitham Up* (1988) and the audio download *The Real Me Live* (2011)

Jennifer's life story was profiled in the feature film, "I Stand Corrected". The documentary was the winner of 11 best film awards as it screened at film festivals around the world in 2012.

She was awarded the 2014 Community Leader Angel Award at the Angels of Change event benefitting the Children's Hospital of Los Angeles. This award is given annually to an individual for continuous support and advocacy toward the advancement of trans youth in the community.

In 2015, she was featured on U.S. newsstands as one of the top 20 pioneers in Vanity Fair's "Trans America" Special Collector's Edition. In 2016, L.A. Weekly named her as one of the "50 Most Interesting Angelinos." In 2018 she spoke at Jazz At Lincoln Center's Jazz Congress and was featured twice on the NowThis news site.

Here is what the critics are saying about Jennifer :

"The world that Leitham has moved in since the early 1980s has been at the center of the highest levels of jazz performance. More than 100 recordings as an A-list bassist, eight CDs of her own, long-term stints with Mel Tormé, Doc Severinsen and the Woody Herman Thundering Herd as well as appearances with the likes of Gerry Mulligan, Joe Pass, Louis Bellson, Bill Watrous, Cleo Laine and dozens of others attest to the far-ranging versatility of her playing". - JazzTimes 2009, Don Heckman.

"As a soloist, Leitham is in a class by herself. At the core of her powers are a rich plummy sound, an astonishing virtuosity, unerring intonation and a deep sense of swing. Leitham's trio, to borrow from the argot of rock, is a power group extraordinaire." - Topeka Capitol Journal 2009, Chuck Berg

"...prodigious technique and improvisatory prowess promptly erase any emotion except awe." - 52nd St. Jazz, Robert Bragonier

"Left handed virtuoso of the upright bass." - Los Angeles Times, Leonard Feather

"Combining her astonishing virtuosity with some exquisite soul, Jennifer Leitham brings in her trio to celebrate the success of her latest album, *The Real Me*. Some nice tunes on that one. She, (and her trio), make an organic whole that is really something live ... and something that all kinds of fans get into." - LA Weekly - Brick Wahl

"Jennifer Leitham is an extremely compelling diva of the upright acoustic bass. She is

one of the few practitioners of her instrument, of any gender, genre, or generation, who can completely command my attention with what is, essentially, an entire set of bass solos." - Wall Street Journal, Will Friedwald

"Her harmonically complex, fluid, yet often delightfully tough and percussive attack on the bass has made her one of the instrument's greatest practitioners in the jazz world for several decades now. Leitham's unique upright bass style rivals that of such iconic bassists as Paul Chambers, Ron Carter, and Oscar Pettiford. Yes, she's that great. Leitham proves to be a true poetess with a songwriting style as unique as her bass playing and composing. Leitham's virtuosic bass skills, added with her warm vocals, sly lyrics and masterful trio create a delightfully distinct mood within each composition." - The International Review of Music, Devon Wendell

"Last night at Catalina Jazz Club in Hollywood, Jennifer Leitham celebrated the release of her new CD "MOOD(S)WINGS". As advertised, the music took the crowd on a roller coaster ride of emotions from the depths of despair and sadness to total elation. Jennifer played, sang and entertained with great passion in every possible emotional direction. It was a great evening and it's a great CD!" - Jazzography, Bob Barry

"I Stand Corrected is a remarkable documentary about a remarkable human being, Jennifer Leitham. The best part of this documentary is the discovery of a truly major American musical mind. Listening to the way Jennifer plays, one has the impression that no obstructions exist between the ideas in her head and their expression on the instrument. And her ideas are by no means simple but profound and complex. Furthermore, she has a great sense of swing. This, indeed, is her real genius: She is able to compress her complicated thinking into rhythms that are not hard to follow, that speak to the body directly. There is no poetry without music, no music without the dance. Jennifer Leitham is an American original." - The Stranger, Seattle, Charles Mudede