

Bass Northwest's Evan Sheeley

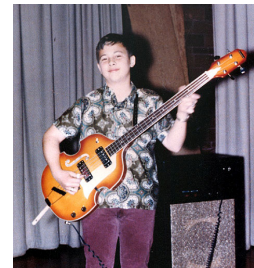
by S.K. Wallace



Bassist Evan Sheeley, Co-owner of Bass Northwest

S.K.: Talk about your "bass journey": How did you get started playing the bass? What are some of your career highlights?

Evan Sheeley: I saw the first appearance of The Beatles on The Ed Sullivan Show in the 1960s and got my first bass the very next day. My Uncle Lee owned a music store in Yakima, Washington, where I grew up, and my first bass was a bad copy of a Hofner 500/1 bass like Paul McCartney was playing. Within two weeks, I was in a band, and about a month after that, I played my first gig. I continued playing all through school.



Evan's first gig, 1965



TKO, The Moore Theatre, 1981
(Evan on far right)

Then I moved to Los Angeles to become a star. I was there for two years playing around Hollywood and then got a phone call from a couple of guys I used to play with in Yakima. They had a band called TKO and had just signed a recording contract with MCA records. They asked me to play bass, and I moved up here to Seattle. We toured with everyone from A to Z, AC/DC to ZZ Top.

TKO ended up having a major influence on many of the top "grunge" band players from Seattle. The most notable one is Mike McCready of Pearl Jam who says that TKO is the reason he wanted to play guitar in the first place. Mike is still a very good friend of mine.



Mike McCready and Evan
at Bass Northwest



Q-5 (from left): Rick Pierce, Gary Thompson, Floyd Rose, Evan Sheeley and Jonathan K

After TKO broke up, I started a new band with Floyd Rose (the tremolo inventor) and a couple of my bandmates from TKO. The band was called Q5, and we signed with PolyGram. We recorded two critically acclaimed records and then broke up.

I am currently involved in several music projects at this time. I have a new CD

with a band called Nightshade coming out in Europe and Japan later this year. The music is 1980s-style heavy metal. I am currently involved in a blues band project here in Seattle with Dudley Taft who used to play guitar with Seattle grunge bands Sweetwater and Second Coming. If that wasn't enough, I was asked to play bass in a new band called Sex and Violins which features Lynn Sorensen and Jeff Kathan who also play with Paul Rodgers (Bad Company, Free, and Queen). Last but not least, I have been recording with a band called American Standard that features TKO singer Brad Sinsel and Minneapolis guitarist extraordinaire Brynn Arens. I definitely have a full plate but enjoy playing my bass so much that I don't care.

S.K.: *How long has Bass Northwest been in business, and how did you get started?*

Evan Sheeley: Bass Northwest has been in business now for thirteen and a half years. We opened on March 1, 1994.

S.K.: *What are some of the milestones in Bass Northwest's history to date?*

Evan Sheeley: Well, we were one of the first "bass-only" stores in the United States, and we were a pioneer in that area of business. We were also one of the first music stores to have an internet web site selling our products online.

S.K.: *What do you consider to be some of Bass Northwest's particularly interesting dealings in terms of people and/or instruments?*

Evan Sheeley: We have worked with some of the most famous bass players of all time. To be honest with you, we view all bass players the same way and feel that we are just part of one big bass community.

S.K.: *What's your best advice to someone considering buying a bass on-line?*

Evan Sheeley: Don't believe everything that you read online. The best advice is to talk to someone who is knowledgeable about bass gear over the phone so that actual

human contact is made. A lot is figured out by actually talking to a real person.

S.K.: *Over time, other exclusively-bass stores and businesses have been emerging. Do you feel that Bass Northwest's niche is as secure as it has been in the past? What makes Bass Northwest unique? How does the future look?*

Evan Sheeley: Business and free enterprise are ever-evolving. We feel secure because we have been in business for more than a decade and are a very well-known store throughout the world. Bass Northwest is unique in the fact that we have an ever-changing and really diverse inventory of both new and used bass gear.

We also have people working at our store who really know their stuff, and they really try to help customers get the correct products to achieve the sound that they are after. Unlike a lot of other places that exist now, we don't view a customer as a "walking wallet." We view our customers as "bassists," "musicians," and "artists." The future of Bass Northwest looks great, and we will continue on our journey for as long as we are enjoying it.

S.K.: *Talk about your own instruments, gear, rig, and effects.*

Evan Sheeley: My main bass is a Mike Lull M4V which I REALLY love. I have owned a lot of basses over the years, and the Mike Lull bass is definitely the best one that I have ever had. I also have a Danelectro Longhorn, Fender Geddy Lee Jazz Bass, and Line 6 Bass Variax 700 for recording. For amps and cabinets, I have an Ampeg SVT-CL with an SVT-810E, Ashdown ABM 300 and ABM 500 EVO II amp heads, Sonic 215 cabinet loaded with JBL E-140 speakers, Bergantino EX112, and a Tech 21 Bass Power Wedge 60.



S.K.: *What's your philosophy of bass playing?*

Evan Sheeley: My philosophy is to have fun with it. Listen to as many bass players as you can, and then try to incorporate bits of each player's style into your own. That way, you will have a brand new style unlike anyone else's.

S.K.: *One last thing, an item of "bass-lore" emanating from the Pacific Northwest: John Reid had mentioned seeing a display at Seattle's Experience Music Project that*

featured an "Audiovox" electric bass that some consider to pre-date the Fender and believe to be the original electric bass. Have you seen or played this instrument, and do you have an opinion on it? (Cursory research revealed quite a bit of debate on the matter.)

Evan Sheeley: I have not personally played the bass you are talking about, but, as far as I know, it has been proven to be the actual first electric bass. By the way, if you ever get to the EMP (Experience Music Project) make sure to go into the "Northwest Passage" room. You can see a TKO tour jacket as well as a video clip on a big screen of me playing in 1982 with TKO.

To contact Evan or learn more about Bass Northwest, go to www.BassNW.com.

[All photos that appear in this article are used with the permission of Evan Sheeley.]

About the Author: S.K. Wallace is a bassist, acoustic and electric violinist, and chemistry teacher. She has been writing for Mel Bay's Bass Sessions ® since 2004. She may be contacted at SKWBassist@aol.com.