

Trevor Dunn Biography – 2004

"I was born in 1968 in a small Northern California logging town not far, in spirit anyway, from David Lynch's Twin Peaks. For some reason, at the age of 13, I started playing electric bass. I had some good teachers who turned me onto Miles Davis, Bill Evans and Herbie Hancock, and my Mum had some Mingus and Ahmad Jamal records lying around. At the same time, I was listening to what a lot of teenagers were listening to in the 80s: punk and metal – Slayer, DRI, Venom, the Swans, and so on. Then I went to a small university and started studying contrabass and classical music. I really got into the 20th century masters: Webern, Messiaen, Ligeti, and others.

My first bass teacher hooked me up with some other kids and within months of my first lesson I was already in two bands. My first professional gig was at age 17, and around that time I formed a band with some high school friends. We called it Mr Bungle. There was a point when I was involved simultaneously with this avant-rock band, the university orchestra and big band, a 50s rock bar band (my job), and a couple of local jazz quartets.

I moved to San Francisco in 1992 and Mr Bungle signed to Warner Bros. When we weren't touring I was meeting people like Ben Goldberg, John Schott, and Graham Connah and playing a lot of creative music night after night. Around that time I had the idea to form my own "jazz" trio that I would approach compositionally but would also incorporate elements of "rock" music, like power chords. In 1998 a Dutch label called Buzz Records released my first trio recording Debutantes & Centipedes.

In 2000 I moved to Brooklyn, New York because I was feeling a little complacent in San Francisco. Up to this point in time I've played on over forty recordings including several with John Zorn, Mike Patton's metal group Fantomas and other "jazz" groups. Recently I've been playing with Marc Ribot, Zorns Electric Masada, David Krakauers Klezmer Madness, Hilmar Jennson, Jenny Schienman, and a duet with harpist Shelley Burgon.

As a sideman it's difficult to find the time for one's own projects. Recently I made the time and found two young musicians to help me play on the new trio-convulsant CD. Ches Smith plays percussion in contemporary classical concerts and drums in a rock band called Theory of Ruin. Mary Halvorson, guitarist from Boston, leads several of her own groups and has played with Anthony Braxton and Joe Morris.

People ask me what kind of music Trevor Dunn is and I never know what to say. There is counterpoint, there are power chords, and atonal melodies. Sometimes it swings, sometimes it tries hard not to swing. There are complicated written passages and sections of free improvisation. It's not fusion but it does combine disparate styles, and yet I like to think of forms developing organically as opposed to a cut-and-paste technique.

Whether I'm listening to Throbbing Gristle or Britney Spears I absorb what comes my way. It's all music to me, and why shouldn't it be? I consider myself rootless because I accept all. I have no ties and nowhere to go. The music I write is a result of that."

(Trevor Dunn)

Trevor Dunn – bass
Mary Halvorson – guitar
Ches Smith – drums

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