

CROSSING OVER
The Life of a Bass Player in Motion

THESIS, presented as reflective aspect for the degree of Master
of Music,
major Instrument, double bass

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academic year 2016– 2017

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ABSTRACT IN ENGLISH

My goal in choosing the topic of researching what it means to be a crossover bass player is threefold. First, I wish to shed light on my personal story and examine my musical journey that has brought me to the present day. In doing so, I wish to illustrate how it is that some musicians arrive at a career that can be termed “crossover.” I assert that it is due to an upbringing in which the musician (for purposes of this thesis a bass player) is exposed to a wide variety of musical genres and through this exposure acquires an ability to assimilate multiple styles. This must combined with a naturally curious predisposition and an ambitious work ethic.

I have examined my preparation process in order to further lend validity to the point that it takes an extra amount of effort and an expertise in multiple musical styles in order to achieve success as a crossover bass player.

My second goal is to delve into the history of the bass in modern music. The bass is a necessary instrument in virtually all styles of music therefore, there are simply more opportunities for the willing bassist to cross musical borders more frequently than other instrumentalists. I wanted to dig deeper and find out the origins of how this came to be and profile a few of the players who were responsible for creating the template for the modern crossover bassist.

My third goal was to talk to like-minded musicians and see if some of the assumptions I had were true. I wanted to see if we shared some commonalities in our backgrounds. I was curious about their creative processes. I wanted to ask these modern masters if they even considered themselves to be crossover bass player and, if so, how would they define the term.

My main sources were *The Jazz Bass Book* by John Goldsby, *Standing In The Shadows Of Motown* by Alan Slutsky, Wikipedia and many official websites from the artists discussed in this paper. The interviews that make up the fourth chapter of this thesis were conducted live via Skype over a two-day period. The music found in the accompanying CD was purchased from iTunes. The largest source of information was culled from my own life experience. When discussing the modern crossover bass player, I have drawn upon my own expertise that largely takes up the first portion of this thesis.

CHAPTER 4

THE MODERN MASTERS 4.1

We have journeyed from the dawn of modern popular music and the birth of the bass player as a multi-tasker to the present day. I have highlighted players who have laid the groundwork for my own highly diverse musical career. I have made my assertion that crossover bass players are created by a combination of their unique life experience and the fact that our instrument lends itself to so many different styles of music therefore creating a disproportionate amount of opportunities for the modern player. I wanted to contact a few of my contemporaries and ask them a few questions about their musical life, how they got started and what their process is. I also wanted to find out if they consider themselves a crossover bass player and if so, how would they define the term. I had the great pleasure to speak with three modern masters, Germany's Claus Freudenstein and from the United States, Jeff Allen and Trevor Jones.

CLAUS FREUDENSTEIN 4.2

My first interview was with the inimitable Claus Freudenstein. Claus has had a fascinating journey and is someone who, in my opinion, exemplifies the term crossover bass player. I found him to be truly inspiring and engaging. His passion for teaching young people is infectious and his dedication to the bass is unshakable. Claus is currently spending most of his time performing internationally with his bass quartet, The Bass Monsters. Next year they will be performing at the 2017 International Society Of Bassists convention in Ithaca, New York. Claus is also travelling the world as a clinician and educator. He is the author of Mini Bass, a bass method and series of instruments specifically designed for children.

I began our conversation by asking Claus how he got into music. Claus answers, “The circumstance is something I will never forget. I was playing flute when I was five years old in a preschool program. And this was good. I was one of the few guys who had a positive memory of the flute,” He joked. His flute career was short lived. Claus continues, “the teacher quit and then I stopped for a very long time. And then I was working as a tax officer at sixteen years old. After high school, I wanted to make money and getting that job was for life. During my education for that job, I was in a bar and I saw, for the first time, Metallica play. They had a big screen there and I saw (Metallica bassist) Cliff Burton. My biggest dream then became, when I finish my education I will start to play electric bass and that’s what I did. After I secured the job, I went to the shop and I bought an electric bass, and this was like being addicted from the first moment.”

Upon hearing about Claus's first bass influence I immediately felt a connection with him. One of my first bass heroes was also the late Cliff Burton³⁷. Cliff was widely regarded as a bass guitar virtuoso and, perhaps very telling, was a massive classical music fan. One need only to refer to his solo *Anesthesia (Pulling Teeth)* (CD track 12) to hear the impact that classical music had on his playing and by extension a whole generation of bass guitarists. Claus confirms this by saying, "I always felt like Cliff Burton pulled me, in a way, to classical music because without Metallica I would never have played any instrument. It's the seed and the root of everything I do." Tragically, Cliff Burton was killed in a bus accident when Metallica was on tour in Sweden in 1986. He was 24 years old.

After some time Claus began to get tired of his tax job. He had the occasion to hear a girl who was playing double bass and she was going to the conservatory. As Claus explains, "I was getting sick of this job and I wanted to leave work in some official way. I heard this girl playing who said she was in the conservatory and I thought (obviously unimpressed by her level) then I can do it." After studying privately for two years Claus managed to enter the conservatory but was met with skepticism from his teacher and colleagues saying he was too old to get an orchestra job. This was another similarity in our stories. I too was older when I entered the conservatory to pursue a classical education and I too was already an accomplished bass guitar player who had already played with successful bands.

³⁷ Cliff Burton was the original bass guitarist for the band Metallica. Hear Cliff's classical styled bass solo CD track 12

I had initially said that the theme of my life has always been, twice as much. I found that Claus had a similar work ethic and a similar amount of stamina when it came to placing demands on himself. While he was doing his classical double bass studies at conservatory, he was also maintaining an international touring career with a band that was playing VIP parties for Formula 1 Racing. “I got the chance to get into this band and we were playing all of these Formula 1 parties worldwide. I was doing this at the same time as my studies so, I mean it was busy,” Claus laughs. Claus continues, “at that time, I did not see a chance for me to become an orchestra musician. I just wanted to get my degree but that changed after my band broke up. The Tenerife Orchestra was having a trial period and I got it so, I ended up working there for 15 months. After I got home I began teaching at the school that I still am at now and then I became completely focused on making instruments for young people.”

When I ask Claus about his current schedule he continues to fit the mold of a crossover bass player. “Two years ago I cut my teaching down from sixty students a week to thirty. I am arranging and I try to not take all of the commercial stuff that I did before because now I can afford it. So, I’m trying to create something. I use the time to write for The Bass Monsters and to finance it. I’m doing my solo stuff but the schedule is intense but not as tight as it was.” When I ask him about his daily routine it reveals a disciplined artist who uses his time wisely. “Honestly, I have no daily routine,” Claus laughs. “Everyday is different. At the moment, more or less, I try to practice for an hour then I am always organizing concerts. I’m also running the Bavarian Bass Days, I’m selling Mini Bases and I’m writing books and organizing student concerts. So, all of this stuff has to happen before 1pm. At 1pm normally, I start teaching on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Thursday can be a day of practicing.”

He goes on to explain all of his projects, “I mean I’m also teaching at a bass camp at the moment. I was just in California doing Mini Bass workshops, I was playing with the Malta Symphony. So, when you get home it’s like, my God there’s so many things to fix again!”

It’s obvious from talking with Claus that he is very focused on early education for bass players. He travels the world turning on kids to the wonders of the bass. His teaching philosophy really impressed me. He was recently in Taiwan and expressed his frustrations with the rigid focus on music education only for competitions. Claus told me, “the goal is not to create Bottesini’s. The goal is to create good people.” What an amazing teaching philosophy. It seems to me after speaking with Claus that the circumstances and the struggles of his amazingly varied musical journey have not only made him a master musician but, more importantly, a sympathetic human being.

As we finished our conversation, I had one more question for Claus. I asked him, “Do you consider yourself a crossover bass player.” “Yes,” he replied without hesitation. When I asked him how he would define the term “crossover bass player” there was a long, thoughtful pause. Claus responds, “a crossover bass player is someone who is able to play the bass, no matter if it’s electric or upright, with a bow or without bow in a very wide filed of styles and always with the sense (mastery) of that style in that moment.” I find that our definitions match almost word for word. That gives me encouragement that players like myself have many things in common with our stories and our personalities and we occupy a unique place in the modern music world.

JEFFERY ALLEN 4.3

My next conversation was with bass player Jeffrey Allen. My history with Jeff Allen goes back to New York City. We met in 1991 when I replaced him in the band Misconceptions. Even back then at the start of his career, Jeff had a reputation as a very versatile bassist capable of handling every kind of style. From the moment he came on the scene he was an in demand player. Jeff is also a consummate musician who studied music at the highest level. He is a Juilliard graduate and was a double bass student of Homer Mensch and Eugene Levinson. Jeff also was a longtime member of Tony and Grammy award winning songwriter Duncan Sheik's³⁸ band which led to multiple albums and many world tours. Jeff has been touring internationally for the last seven years with David Garrett³⁹ whose combination of rock and classical performances are perfectly suited for Jeff's skill set, a true crossover bass player's dream. When Jeff is not on the road he can be found on Broadway playing bass guitar and double bass in some of it's most successful productions including the blockbuster musical Hamilton. It was a long time since we had last spoken and I was really excited to reconnect with my old buddy and ask him his thoughts on life as a crossover bass player.

Talking with Jeff Allen, who at this point is one of the most well know and well respected bassist in the New York City area, was a very revealing conversation. I got a sense of a player who has had so many years of experience from playing basements to stadiums. He is at the point in his career where he has total confidence in his abilities and he has the maturity to navigate a musical landscape filled with minefields ready to explode under the feet of less experienced musicians.

³⁸ Duncan Sheik is an American singer/songwriter. Official website

<http://duncansheik.com>

<http://www.claus-freudenstein.de>

³⁹ David Garrett is a German born violinist who performs worldwide. He is widely considered a crossover artist. Wikipedia page,

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Garrett_\(musician\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Garrett_(musician))

I began by asking Jeff how his life in music began. “I started playing clarinet in the second grade (age 7) just because it was offered and I choose clarinet. There was an old man across the street from house and he was a music teacher who taught saxophone and clarinet. So, my dad went over and asked if he would give me lessons. I really took to it and I was able to read music fairly well early on. I later found out that the old man across the street was a man named Joe Allard⁴⁰ who was the greatest pedagogue of his time. He was (legendary Jazz musician) Michael Brecker’s teacher. He was the guru that all of these guys went to. He played auxiliary reeds in the NBC Symphony with Toscanini. So, he was a legitimate player who parlayed his career into being a major pedagogue that any serious reed player flocked to.”

The start of Jeff’s bass guitar career was much less formal. “I started playing electric bass when I was in seventh grade (age 13) because I was totally into the band KISS. My friend who I grew up with turned to me in math class and says, ‘Hey, man let’s start a band! I will play drums you can play bass.’ I said, ‘OK,’” Jeff laughs. He goes on to detail his early music evolution. “As I got it more together on the bass I started gravitating towards music that was a bit more complicated. I really liked a lot of aggressive Metal like Judas Priest, Black Sabbath and Iron Maiden⁴¹. At the same time, I was getting into stuff that a little more nuanced like (the band) Rush and Jazz fusion. (refer to footnote 7, chapter 1.2 page 5/CD track 3)

As Jeff tells me his early musical influences, I can’t help but notice similarities not only in my story but also I with in my previous interview with Claus Freudenstein. All three of us classically trained, bass guitarists/double bassists had our early roots in Heavy Metal music.

⁴⁰ Joseph Allard was an American saxophonist and clarinetist who taught at The Juilliard School. Source Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Allard

⁴¹ Judas Priest, Iron Maiden and Black Sabbath are British Heavy Metal bands who have each had a significant impact on popular music. Source, ‘Essential Hard Rock And Heavy Metal’ by Eddie Trunk, Abrams Image, New York

I find this curious but also not surprising. For example, I was also a huge KISS fan since I was three years old. When Jeff talks about Rush being a big influence, my first song on the bass guitar was “Tom Sawyer” (CD track 12) a Rush song. That band was, in fact, my inspiration to play bass because the lead singer in Rush, Geddy Lee, is also the bass player and keyboard player. Being that I started as a keyboardist, I modeled myself after him.

The seeds of inspiration for Jeff’s career as a studio musician were planted around this time. He became aware that there were certain bass players that were often asked to do multiple recordings. “There were guys in New York who would go into recording studios and made these really cool records. They had this magical ability to play on all of these different recordings. So, that’s what captured my imagination.” It was apparent that Jeff was a very curious musician. It is another of my assertions that a crucial element of the crossover bassist’s personality is curiosity. Jeff was already looking to evolve into something more than just a Rock bass player.

“Because I was interested in become a session bass player I wanted to also learn double bass. I remember thinking it would be good for me to be well rounded and it would widen my musical palette. I ended up taking summer courses at Manhattan School Of Music and through those courses I started studying double bass with Linda McKnight(55). I guess there is something in my temperament where I somehow took to it.” Jeff steadily progressed on the double bass auditioning and winning places in the pre-college division of Manhattan School Of Music and then the various youth orchestras in the region. However, he was also continuing to study and progress on the bass guitar as well. This eventually led to a fateful choice.

“I wanted to go to Berklee and become the session player that I had imagined in my head. When I told that to my parents they were insistent that I go to a real college and get a proper education. At that point the classical thing was taking over. So, it my teacher and I had the idea to start auditioning for conservatories. I got into Juilliard so, I went there and the funny thing was that because of the social standing of Juilliard being like, the Harvard of music schools all of a sudden my parents were supportive! I moved into the city at seventeen years old and immersed myself in classical music. At the same time I always had my bass guitar with me and I was still very serious about the instrument.”

As Jeff continued having success on the double bass, winning fellowships to festivals and beginning to get into the final rounds of orchestra auditions he had a revelation about how he wanted to spend his life in music. “Around the time I was getting ready to graduate school I remember thinking that I wanted to play music for people of my generation. I still loved Classical music. I had a lot of friends who were landing jobs and I’m sure that if I had continued down that path I would have won gotten a job someplace. When I would visit friends who were a little older than me who had gotten jobs in orchestras I began to see how the realities of that life and I began to think about what I really wanted to do. So, stopped going to classical auditions and started going on auditions for the electric bass.”

This was a pivotal time in Jeff’s life. He began to play in a variety of musical situations and started to plant the seeds of his network that would continue to germinate until within a few years he was making a living as a freelance musician around New York City. I can tell you from first hand experience what an accomplishment that is. It is indicative of the risk-taking component of crossover musicians who often choose to operate outside of their comfort zone. Jeff chose to abandon the years of opportunity and eventual security for the unknown. Once again, I can’t help but compare our stories. We basically did the same thing but in reverse.

Where as Jeff was a budding classical double bassist on the verge of landing an orchestra job at the highest musical level who left that sophisticated world for a life of uncertainty, I was a young bass guitar virtuoso who suddenly longed to be in control of my own destiny and not be beholden to a record industry that was based on style over substance. On both of our respective paths our varied skill sets served us well and enabled us to succeed in musical situations that many others could not.

When Jeff was freed of the limitations of his classical environment he used all of his musical powers to play with anyone he could from funk music with New York club band GTO and The Soul Squad to live Hip Hop to Philip Glass protégé Todd Levin. Jeff explained to me that many of these gigs were a huge learning experience for him. He was often learning on the job and doing whatever it took to execute the music to the best of his ability.

When I ask Jeff if he considers himself a crossover bass player he is reluctant. “It’s not a term I would use. I definitely consider myself a bass player and I think of bass playing as functional. These last six years I have been playing gigs where I’m using both the double bass and the electric but I don’t know about the term. I have to honest with you that term makes me bristle,” Jeff jokes. “Prior to me playing with David Garrett, when I would see classical musicians force themselves into a rock setting I hate it. Maybe I feel this deeply because I do inhabit both of those worlds so, I take extra offence when these things are done haphazardly. I have always hated the word (crossover) because it’s always referred to failed musical experiments. But look in the time that I’ve been doing this that line has changed. Someone like Brad Mehldau⁴² will play a Radiohead song. Because of guys like that I think the definition of what crossover is or what it can be has changed.”

⁴² Brad Mehldau is an American Jazz pianist, composer and arranger. Source, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brad_Mehldau

I agreed with him about Brad Mehldau. Last season I had the opportunity to accompany him in the Brussels Philharmonic when we played some of his new compositions and it was truly crossover music. Here was a formally educated Jazz pianist who wrote contemporary classical music for a symphony orchestra. That certainly fits into anyone's definition of crossover.

However, I maintain that Jeff is a prime example of what it means to a crossover bass player. I present him with the opinion that for my purposes I have trouble finding a better word for what it is that we do. He tells me of a gig where he was accompanying three young Italian singers who were doing some bad opera singing and he was hired to play double bass in the string section. Jeff points to this as being what drives him crazy about the term "crossover." My counter argument to him was that in that musical situation, Jeff is embodying what it means to be a crossover bassist. To this point, Jeff agrees.

Next I ask Jeff about what his current schedule is like and how he prepares. "It's pretty varied. You have to be efficient with your time because I have a six year old son so, I can't spend all of my time preparing. That being said, preparation is critical especially substituting on Broadway because, often times there is no rehearsal. I have been able to make inroads in that world because I am always prepared. For me, it's all about detail. I'm concerned with note lengths, where I want to play on the neck. It's almost like fractal geometry," Jeff laughs.

As for what Jeff hopes for in the future, he is a committed family man and an avid cyclist. The future looks secure for Jeff Allen as he continues to play on Broadway's biggest shows, keeps a full recording schedule and prepares for another year of international touring with David Garrett. He will continue to live the lifestyle and be a shining example of a crossover bass player.

TREVOR JONES 4.4

I became aware of Trevor Jones through the podcast *Contrabass Conversations*⁴³. I was struck by Trevor's story. He is a truly unique musician. He is the combination of a classical double bassist and a master bass guitar player as well as being an award winning songwriter with his modern rock band Molehill⁴⁴. Trevor has performed with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago and the DePaul Symphony Orchestra. In addition, he is on faculty at Wesleyan University. He is currently the bassist at The Marriott Theater where he maintains a busy performing schedule on both double bass and bass guitar. We had a great conversation tracing his musical roots and talking about what it means to be a crossover bass player.

When I asked about how he got started, the talk turns to his parents. "I grew up in a really musical household. My dad is an electric bassist and a composer. His main gig has been teaching at Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania since 1989 but at the same time he has a sixteen-piece big band. My mom plays French horn so, I grew up listening to her teach private lessons and she taught music in public schools for twenty-five years. I was surrounded by a lot of music. They encouraged me to take piano lessons when I was younger. There was a really great piano teacher right in our neighborhood so, I would just walk to her place for lessons." Trevor jokes, "I can't say I really practiced piano very hard but my teacher was incredibly patient with me and it got me reading music."

⁴³ *Contrabass Conversations* is a bass specific interview podcast hosted by Jason Heath. source Trevor Jones episode #205, <http://contrabassconversations.com/?s=205>

⁴⁴ Molehill is a modern rock band based in Chicago, Illinois, USA. Official website <http://www.molehillmusic.com>

I ask Trevor when the bass entered of his life. “ I started playing both the double bass and the electric bass almost at the same time when I was twelve years old.” When pressed as to why he chose the bass he turns back to the influence of his musician parent. “Both my mom and dad are two people who work very hard behind the scenes and neither of them are interested in getting public attention, in their case just being great teachers. In a way, I think that plays into the functionality of an instrument like the bass. You’re not necessarily there for the glory. For me, it’s incredibly satisfying playing the pedal D in the fourth movement in Mahler’s First Symphony and it’s incredibly satisfying playing in ballads where I hold a note for eight beats under this amazing lead vocal. So, I get a ton of pleasure out of the more functional role of the bass.”

Trevor relates a funny story about how his parents encouraged him to pick up the bass because the school orchestra needs a bass player but he was completely unaware how to play in an ensemble. “I remember going into my first orchestra rehearsal and not knowing how to count measures of rests so, as soon as I saw the hand of the conductor came down I just started playing. Of course, I was mortified.”

Trevor took to the bass and started having success quickly. What strikes me is how mature his concept of what a bass player does was fully formed at a young age. “I was not a child prodigy but I felt a real connection to the sound of the instrument and how it functioned in an ensemble.” I think watching my dad play in his big band plus we had all sorts of great music around the house like Earth, Wind & Fire⁴⁵ and Tower Of Power⁴⁶”

⁴⁵ Earth, Wind & Fire are multi-platinum selling group founded in 1970. Source, Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth, Wind %26 Fire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth,_Wind_%26_Fire)

⁴⁶ Tower Of Power are an American R&B band based out of Oakland, California. Official webstie, <http://www.towerofpower.com>
<http://www.molehillmusic.com>

Trevor adds, “Plus, in all of these great orchestral works I was hearing the bass was always that thing that was not overt like a guitar solo or a lead vocal. It taught me to pay attention to subtleties in music.”

The conversation turns to influences and Trevor brings up some of the usual suspects for bass guitar, modern virtuosos like Victor Wooten and Marcus Miller. However, he finds himself drawn to the simpler side of bass playing. “I heard those guys and I thought wow, all of this is possible on the bass but I still really loved listening to the bassist who were just “holding it down.” I mean, who ever gets tired of listening to James Jamerson?⁴⁶ The perfect lines to support the songs”

It seems Trevor and I agree on some common influences. Trevor continues to talk about Christian McBride’s influence on his playing. Christian is one of modern music’s most influential and accomplished bassists. He is a former Juilliard student who is now one of the most celebrated Jazz bassists of his generation. McBride is also a masterful bass guitarist whose ability is seemingly limitless. Trevor relates how hearing Christian McBride was a game changing moment in his life. “I got his album ‘A Family Affair’ and he played this beautiful ballad⁴⁷ and he could play with the bow and then play a funk song. I realized that you can do all of this stuff. Don’t worry about sticking to one thing, it’s okay to like all of it.”

While his lessons were centered around the classical method for the double bass, Trevor is basically a self-taught bass guitarist. He relied on method books and transcribing bass lines by ear from his favorite recordings. While he was deeply involved in his progression as a classical bassist, he was at the same time, perhaps unknowingly, giving himself the tools that would provide him with a successful career as a versatile crossover bassist.

⁴⁶ see chapter 3.4, James Jamerson

⁴⁷ CD track 13, Christian McBride, “I’ll Write A Song For You”

I ask Trevor if he thinks, like I do, that crossover musicians tend to be a bit more curious and if he would consider himself to have a certain work ethic. “Yeah, I think I’m curious. One of the great things about the music industry is how it’s changed with regards to consumption. I try really hard to seek out new music every week. That doesn’t necessarily mean that it’s a new release. I’ll hear someone mention something that I’ve missed and I will seek it out. As far my work ethic, I’ve had people tell me that I’m focused. It’s just how I live my life.”

Trevor began crossing musical boundaries while he was doing his under graduate degree. “While I was in school I saw this really interesting add for auditions for an orchestra to work with a DJ. There was a concerto written for turntable and orchestra and I thought this is the coolest thing. So I put together an audition video and lo and behold I got in. Next thing I know I’m begin flown to New York to play at Carnegie Hall. That was a great experience because everyone there was like-minded. We all wanted to try something that puts us out of our normal comfort zone.” Trevor has just hit on another point that defines a crossover bass player, a consistent desire for new experiences especially those which forces some kind growth and adds to our musical vocabulary.

I ask Trevor, like my previous subjects, if he considers himself a crossover bass player. “Yeah, I can do a lot of things. When I was doing my master’s degree I auditioned for the Civic Orchestra of Chicago and won the place there. I was playing in a regional orchestra. Now, seven years later, my main job is playing in a theater where I did three hundred shows last year, mostly on electric bass.”

Trevor is not limiting himself only to the bass guitar these days. He continues, “Yesterday morning I was organizing a practice session for classical double bassists for the Chicago Bass Festival. I think I’m competent at a range of styles. I toured Europe in some big bands when I was younger. I love the variety and I think I do a reasonable job of covering a lot of different styles.” Trevor hits on another point. The crossover player plays each of the styles and techniques required at a given moment competently.

Trevor continues to discuss another bit of common ground that the three interview subjects and myself share and that is a classical foundation on the double bass. “I feel fortunate that my progression happened the way it did. Especially on double bass, the idea of having a formal classical training in technique on that instrument cannot be overstated. I feel that getting really solid training on the double bass is the most important thing that you can do if your goal is to be both a double bassist and electric bassist and you want to be a crossover player.”

It has become apparent in our short conversation that Trevor Jones is a thoughtful, serious player. I was curious as to what his process is when it comes to handling such a heavy workload. Trevor tells me, “I’ve got to tell you it’s been really tough recently. My band has been putting out new material, so it’s been busy. The first thing I do in the morning is exercise. You’ve got to. Otherwise, there’s now way to hold up and do all of this stuff.” I take a moment to commiserate with him. I find this interesting. I too, have been an avid weightlifter since I was a teenager. I noticed also, that Jeff Allen is a dedicated cyclist. There is perhaps another element of the crossover bassists’ personality that makes them practitioners of a healthy lifestyle. Trevor feels like I do that if we were not physically fit we could not keep up such a demanding schedule.

Trevor continues, “As far as the bass goes. I do really basic things on the double bass like long tones and scales and arpeggios. I’ll also keep up with what my students were doing. When I was prepping for *Mama Mia*⁴⁸ (Abba’s hit musical) there are like thirty-four cues in that musical and the bass lines are great. I probably spent about three weeks preparing and a lot of what I did during that time was just sitting at my desk listening to the music. For each song, I checked out two to four different recordings. I would make articulation notes and then I would spend some time just playing them. The music director at the theater is great about letting me be free and doing what I think is best but I try to honor the original recordings the best that I can. I do about five shows a year so I repeat that process.” When Trevor is not preparing for shows he tells me, “sometimes I will come home from a gig at about 11:30pm and I’ll play bass for another hour.”

In addition to his full performance schedule at the theater Trevor is also teaching twelve to fifteen students a week and writing and performing with his band. Trevor laughs, “It’s a crazy schedule!”

Never one to stop searching, when I ask him what he hopes to do in the near future Trevor tells me his latest passion is Cuban music. “I lack experience in the Latin music world, so that is something I need to get into. It’s some of the most hypnotic music ever written. I can sit there for hours and just listen.”

⁴⁸ *Mama Mia* is a hit musical based around the music of Swedish pop group, Abba. Official Website, <http://www.mamma-mia.com>

Trevor is also busy working on new techniques. “I’ve been working on my pick playing. I’m constantly exploring new tones. A lot of what I’m focusing on right now is keeping my current work in good shape and then biting off a bit more. One of the benefits of having steady work is that I can plan. So, I’ll be working on some Latin music, I want to improve my pick playing and soon I’ll will be getting into a new block of time for writing with my group. That’s what’s on the horizon for me.”

As we wind down our conversation, Trevor makes one last reflection on his life and the influence of his father. “My dad has always been a guy who has had a variety of interests. He has always had many things going on in his life. Looking back, I see that it was a direct influence on me, so I guess that has always been in my blood.” Life experience has everything to do with creating the crossover bass player.

CONCLUSION

When I began the process of writing this paper I was not sure if my initial assertion would stand. I knew there were other bass players who were multifaceted, but did we share some common traits? Of course, we are all unique, but was I an anomaly? I believe that reflecting on my personal story has given me perspective on where I've been and where I am at now. The reopening of past chapters in my life has been cathartic and the sharing of that story has benefited me personally. However, the larger purpose is to impart some wisdom unto not only myself but also the wider musical community as it pertains to the subject of the crossover bass player. I have found that my story, while singular, is not totally uncommon, particularly when it comes to bass players.

By dissecting and analyzing my process, I hoped to shed some light on the discipline and ambition it takes to successfully navigate a diverse musical career. Without a well thought out, methodical preparation process, it would have been impossible for me to build a reputation that serves as the bedrock of my performing career. The mastering of multiple instruments and styles is a journey that began at an early age by being exposed to and having a love for music for all kinds. I maintain that the circumstances of my life have allowed me to play each style that I approximate with conviction and genuine musicality. I have illustrated this by describing the different stages of my musical life where I have inhabited multiple genres. As a result of this life experience, I still consider myself a perpetual student.

My assertion remains that the modern phenomenon of the crossover bass player has come about through the evolution of modern music and the technology and innovations connected with bass playing over the last century. As we have learned, the bass has had a function in all styles of music creating a niche for players who were more willing and able to not only supplement their income but to also raise their artistry. It is on the shoulders of countless pioneers and a few bass playing giants that we modern crossover bassists stand. I have profiled a few bass players who I think were pivotal in laying the groundwork for what it is that I now do. As I look to the future, it is becoming so that music in the 21st century is less compartmentalized. Therefore, I feel that the evolution of crossover bassists will happen at an accelerated pace. Technology and the fast dissemination of information will force the modern bassist to be highly adaptable and broadly skilled.

In speaking to three like-minded individuals, I have learned that my initial suspicions about certain commonalities between crossover bass players were confirmed. We have heard from Claus Freudenstein, Jeff Allen and myself that the bass guitar and Heavy Metal music was the gateway to a broad and wide-ranging career. I am in full agreement with Trevor Jones that having a formal classical education on the double bass is absolutely essential for the modern player who hopes to be limitless in their playing possibilities. All of the modern players interviewed have a formal classical education on the double bass in common. I have confirmed that people who are predisposed to being crossover bass players have greater ambitions to focus on more than just one genre of music and will often double their work load in order to fulfill that desire. I was pleased to find out that all of the modern players profiled in this paper had unique upbringings and were exposed to a wide variety of music.