


Dixie Dregs

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Andy West and Allen Sloan of the Dixie Dregs live in 1999	
Background information	
Origin	Augusta, Georgia
Genres	Hard rock, rock, jazz fusion
Years active	1970–present
Labels	Capricorn, Anthem
Website	Steve Morse ^[1]
Members	
Steve Morse Rod Morgenstein Dave LaRue Jerry Goodman	
Past members	
Andy West Gilbert Frayer Allen Sloan, M.D. Frank Josephs Steve Davidowski Mark Parrish T Lavitz Mark O'Connor Jordan Rudess	

The **Dixie Dregs** are an American band formed in the 1970s. Their mostly instrumental music fuses jazz, southern rock, bluegrass and classical forms in an often unique style.

History

Formation and early years

The Dixie Dregs evolved from an Augusta, Georgia band called Dixie Grit, formed by Steve Morse and Andy West in 1970. The band featured Morse's older brother Dave on drums, Frank Brittingham (guitar and vocals) and Johnny Carr (keyboards). Carr was later replaced by Mark Parrish. Shortly after Steve Morse's enrollment at University of Miami's School of Music in 1971, Dixie Grit was disbanded. Morse and West continued performing as a duet, calling themselves Dixie Dregs (the "Dregs" of "Dixie Grit").^[2]

In 1973, Steve Morse (guitar), Andy West (bass), Allen Sloan (violin) and Bart Yarnal (drums) met while students at the University of Miami's School of Music to play as Rock Ensemble II. West also attended Georgia State University

for a year while studying cello and music theory & composition along with Parrish. Parrish remained at GSU during the academic school years only to return to Augusta, Georgia during summer breaks - re-establishing the guitar/bass/keyboards/drums quartet with Morse, West, Parrish, and Gilbert Frayer (drums) performing as opening acts for concerts and headlining local gigs as the Dixie Dregs.

During subsequent academic school years, the remaining members of the Dregs — including Andy West — returned to the University of Miami and Mark Parrish returned to Atlanta, Georgia to complete his degree in music performance and composition at Georgia State University under the study of William Masselos, with additional studies of electronic music at Columbia University in New York City under Alice Shields - a protégé of Wendy Carlos.

First recording

At the time, the University of Miami hosted a lively musical community, including future greats Pat Metheny, Jaco Pastorius, Danny Gottlieb, T Lavitz and Bruce Hornsby. Rod Morgenstein was asked to fill in as drummer after a surfing accident disabled Yarnal. In 1974, during the school years at UofM, keyboardist Frank Josephs was added to their lineup. In 1975, the group's first effort, *The Great Spectacular* (named by ex-"Dixie Grit" second guitarist and singer, Frank Brittingham) was recorded at the University. Approximately 1,000 copies of the original LP were pressed. The album was reissued in 1997 in CD form.

Signed to Capricorn

Based on the strength of a three song demo and a tip from former Allman Brothers Band members Chuck Leavell and Twiggs Lyndon, Capricorn Records signed them in late 1976 to record *Free Fall* (1977). Former Dixie Grit/Dixie Dregs keyboardist Mark Parrish rejoined the group later that year. The moderate success and critical acclaim of *Free Fall* led to their 1978 effort, *What If*, supported by their first tour with dates in New York, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Texas, Arizona, Massachusetts, Mississippi, and California.

Their fourth album, *Night of the Living Dregs* (featuring Morse, West, Sloan, Parrish, and Morgenstein), was released in April 1979, gaining the band their first Grammy nomination for Best Rock Instrumental Performance - won that year by Paul McCartney's band Wings. *Night of the Living Dregs* included studio recordings as well as compositions performed live and recorded at the Montreux Jazz Festival on July 23, 1978. Ken Scott - The Beatles' and producer/arranger George Martin's right-hand man and engineer - produced both Dixie Dregs albums *What If* and *Night of the Living Dregs*.

Switch to Arista

In October 1979, Capricorn Records declared bankruptcy, and the band was signed by Arista Records in January 1980, to create three albums. At that time, keyboardist Parrish left and was replaced by T Lavitz. Later that year, *Dregs of the Earth* (featuring Morse, West, Sloan, Lavitz, and Morgenstein) was released.

Parrish went on to play piano and keyboards for vocalists Andy Williams, Roberta Flack, Natalie Cole, Luther Vandross, Peabo Bryson, Celine Dion, Regina Belle, Deborah Gibson, Pat Boone and daughter Debby Boone, Glen Campbell and for guitarist Larry Coryell. He won an Angel Award as co-producer of a Christian album, where he arranged and played all the instrumental segments. He has also been musical director, conductor, and keyboard instrumentalist with the touring stage shows of *Cats*, *Meet Me in St. Louis*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Nunsense*, *Brigadoon*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Anything Goes*, and other Broadway stage shows.

Name change



Steve Morse live with the Dixie Dregs at the Roxy Theatre, Hollywood, California, August 28, 1999

For *Unsung Heroes*, released in 1981, the band changed their name to **The Dregs** in an effort to gain more commercial appeal. Violinist Sloan was replaced by Mark O'Connor, winner of Nashville's Grand Masters Fiddle Championship for their 1982 release, *Industry Standard*. This album introduced vocals for the first time as a further attempt to gain more airtime. Guest vocalists included the Doobie Brothers's Patrick Simmons and Alex Ligertwood (Santana). *Industry Standard* provided the Dregs with another Grammy nomination for Best Rock/Jazz Instrumental Performance. The recent name change, vocal additions and a grueling touring schedule did nothing to improve sales and the members of The Dregs parted for individual projects.

Reunion

In the late 1980s, the group reunited for a tour featuring former members Morse, Morgenstein (who was also playing with Winger), Lavitz and Sloan. Their return was complemented by a "Best Of" release entitled *Divided We Stand* (1989). Bassist Dave LaRue completed the line-up for a seven date tour culminating in the 1992 live album *Bring 'em Back Alive*. Violinist Jerry Goodman, of The Mahavishnu Orchestra fame, filled in for Sloan, who was frequently absent as a result of his busy medical career. They signed a deal with former label Capricorn Records for their first studio album in years entitled *Full Circle* in 1994.

Today

The Dregs to this day remain a loose collection of its former members, reuniting briefly for short tours and rare studio work. 1997's releases were *The Great Spectacular* in April and *King Biscuit Flour Hour Presents* (originally recorded in 1979 for the King Biscuit radio show) in September. *California Screamin'* (2000) is a curious mix of live recordings from the performances at the Roxy Theatre in August 1999. This release features older compositions and covers of the Allman Brothers Band's "Jessica", and Frank Zappa's "Peaches en Regalia" (with Dweezil Zappa sharing guitar lead). *20th Century Masters: The Best Of The Dixie Dregs* and the DVD *Sects, Dregs and Rock 'n' Roll* were released in 2002.

Current line-up

- Steve Morse - guitar (1970 - Present)
- Rod Morgenstein - drums (1973 - Present)
- Dave LaRue - bass guitar (1988 - Present)
- Jerry Goodman - violin (1992 - Present)

Former members

- Andy West - bass guitar (1970 - 1988, 2000)
- Gilbert Frayer - drums (1972)
- Allen Sloan, M.D. - violin (1973 - 1981, 1992)
- Frank Josephs - keyboards (1974 - 1975)

- Steve Davidowski - keyboards (1975 - 1977)
- Mark Parrish - keyboards (1977 - 1978)
- T Lavitz - keyboards (1978 - 2010)
- Mark O'Connor - violin (1981 - 1982)
- Jordan Rudess - keyboards (1994, filled in for T Lavitz)

Discography

- *The Great Spectacular* (1976 - released on CD April 1997)
- *Free Fall* (May 27, 1977) (Note: the spine lists the title as "Freefall")
- *What If* (March 1978)
- *Night of the Living Dregs* (1979)
- *Dregs of the Earth* (1980)
- *Unsung Heroes* (1981)
- *Industry Standard* (1982)
- *Off the Record* (1988) (Demo for Ensoniq synthesizers)
- *Divided We Stand: The Best of the Dregs* (compilation, 1989)
- *Bring 'Em Back Alive* (1992)
- *Full Circle* (June 7, 1994)
- *King Biscuit Flower Hour Presents* (September 16, 1997)
- *California Screamin'* (February 1, 2000)
- *20th Century Masters: The Best Of The Dixie Dregs* (March 26, 2002)
- *Sects, Dregs and Rock 'n' Roll* (DVD, December 2002)
- *From The Front Row... Live!* (Dolby 5.1 DVD-Audio, 2003)

Notes

[1] <http://www.stevemorse.com/>

[2] <http://www.stevemorse.info/timeline/1970s.html> See section entitled "1970" and "1972"

External links

- Listen to Dixie Dregs Live at Sigma Sound Studios on June 17, 1979 (<http://concerts.wolfgangsvault.com/dt/the-dixie-dregs-concert/20052604-7322.html>)
- http://www.michaelmastro.com/photo_dregs.html The Dixie Dregs first promo photograph, by Michael Mastro, who also shot the photographs on the back of "What If".

Article Sources and Contributors

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