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The Power Of Three

Along with revisiting the music of trios like The Jam, The Cure and Nirvana – bands that are long gone – I also discovered some new threesomes

WHAT'S COMMON between Dudley Moore, The Jam, The Cure and Nirvana? Moore, many of us will remember, was the British actor and comedian who starred in the 1979 film, *10*, with (and many of us are more likely to remember her) the stunning Bo Derek. But Moore was also a musician, an accomplished jazz pianist and composer who had a band called The Dudley Moore Trio. Trio. That's what's common between Moore, The Jam, The Cure and Nirvana – all of them are bands that were primarily three-member outfits.

Nirvana was, for the better part of their tenure, a power trio of Kurt Cobain, Krist Novoselic and Dave Grohl. And though The Cure often had a fourth member, the Robert Smith-fronted British band was more often than not a trio. Likewise, The Jam, British punkers from the 1970s, was a trio comprising Paul Weller, Bruce Foxton and Rick Buckler.

Over much of last week I have been listening to trios, bands that have three members and more particularly, rock bands where there's a lead guitarist, a bassist and a drummer, with one of them also singing. It all began with a version of *Spank Thru* by Nirvana from a 1989 session on BBC1 with the legendary DJ, John Peel. Trios (or power trios as they're sometimes called) usually do away with rhythm guitars and keyboards and tend to lay a lot of emphasis on solos by each of the three musicians in the band. In the 1960s, the biggest trios included the Jimi Hendrix Experience and Cream, which was led by Eric Clapton. But later, there were many bands that had three instrumentalists but added a fourth standalone vocalist who only sang but never played any instrument of consequence. Thus, The Who had Roger Daltrey as the singer plus a trio, Queen had Freddie Mercury and three musicians. So did Led Zeppelin (Robert Plant plus the three others). Many later bands followed this model too – Sex Pistols and the Ramones, Motorhead and the Grand Funk Railroad.

But last week, along with revisiting music by The Jam, The Cure and Nirvana – bands that are long gone – I also discovered some new trios. Girl In A Coma is a band from Texas and take their name from a song by The Smiths (*Girlfriend In A Coma*). Made up by two sisters, Nina (lead guitar and vocals) and Phanie Diaz (drums), and Jenn Alva (bass), Girl In A Coma



ALL STAR TRIOS

Girl In A Coma (top left), North Mississippi Allstars (top right), Boris (above), the late actor Dudley Moore who also had his own trio (below)

were called by Morrissey in 2007 to open for some of his shows. They have one album, *Both Before I Am Gone*, and their appearance at the 2007 SXSW (South by South West) Festival got them some critical buzz and a growing number of fans. Like their name, The Smiths or rather Morrissey's style of songwriting too influences their music.

You can't say the same thing about Boris. The curiously named trio is a Japanese band sometimes also known (more curiously) as Fangs Anal Satan. Boris are the ultimate experimenters, genre-hopping with reckless abandon, they've played everything from metal to psychedelic rock to punk and even ambient music. They're not new either, having

been formed in 1992. Listening to their albums (there are over 15 full-length ones) is like dipping into a miscellaneous bin at a music shop. You'd never guess what's in store for your ears.

More predictable and less adventurous are another trio (and like Girl In A Coma, they're also from Texas), the Los Lonely Boys. Three brothers make up the band – Henry, Jojo and Ringo (yes, he plays the drums!) Garza – and they play a genre that they call Texican rock 'n roll, melding Tejano (Spanish-Texan) music with rock, country, soul and blues.

One of my favourite rock trios are the North Mississippi Allstars, a band, as the name suggests, from Mississippi. Luther Dickinson, Cody Dickinson and Chris Chew do blues-rock and after I first heard them, I've obsessively gone and collected seven of their albums and am dying to lay my hands on their most recent release, *Do It Like We Used To Do*, which I believe has two CDs and a live DVD.

The other trio that I discovered only last week are post-punkers from Baltimore who call themselves Double Dagger. Nothing really prepared me for their sound. They're a lead guitar-less trio – drums, a very, very loud bass and vocals.

Double Dagger has been around since 2002 and have played with acts like Pere Ubu (American experimental rockers) and The Buzzcocks (British punk band), neither of whom are a trio. Double Dagger has three albums out and I'm on a mission to get them all. Any help will be appreciated!

PS: Oh, last week I said Curumin sings in Spanish. I was wrong. He sings in Portuguese. Sorry.

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