

Unlikely Union has plenty of team spirit

Three-piece are making waves in the Manchester scene, but don't mention The Fall, says **David Sue**



IVE performances from Manchester band The Louche FC can be a beguiling, sometimes disorientating, experience.

A guitar three-piece who cite the influence of such music terrorists as Sonic Youth and My Bloody Valentine's Kevin Shields, theirs is a noise-rock assault which proudly turns up the amplifiers and threatens audiences with full-on sensory overload.

However, there's also another slightly more unsettling sound you may detect when you attend a Louche FC gig. And that's the audible, highly excitable chatter of muzzos and guitar nerds.

"We do get a high percentage of intelligent musician types at our gigs," laughs the group's bass player Simon Sways over drinks in Oldham Street boozie The Castle.

"I've had people come up to me after gigs and start talking about complicated chord changes with this real sense of excitement on their faces.

"I guess when you play music as intricate as we do, you are going to inspire a certain reaction from that kind of fan – really dedicated musician types who scrutinise everything you do. But I think that's something to be proud of."

Manchester's The Louche FC, as you've no doubt surmised, are a band who gladly embrace the

cerebral approach. In a year when slickery and sloppy fretwork have become an even softer-worn wall, the Manchester trio proudly revel in meticulous, rigidly crafted musical detail.

Recently melodic, their intricate spectral pop absorbs krautrock, post-punk, Sixties pop and shoegaze, while luscious harmonies provide a bright counterpoint to this dense wall of sound.

Indeed, where most rock experimentalists often describe their efforts as a "happy accident" after hours of indulgent jamming, The Louche FC have little time for such disingenuousness.

"If you're going to make truly life-enriching, majestically genre-warping pop music, then you should really know exactly what you're doing from the very start."

"Whenever I meet people, I like to describe our band's sound as 50s/60s inspired melancholic reverberators," declares the group's singer Kyoko Rathmell. "It's a description that sums up the different sites that this band."

"There's this real blend of classic pop but we've also got that improvised, almost post-rock side to us too."

"On paper, people might think it's not an obvious match. But we make it work."

The Louche FC's story starts in Milton Keynes, the hometown

» INSPIRED BY THE CITY The Louche FC

of singer Kyoko and guitar player Luke Scott. Although close friends since childhood, they had never actually played music together until moving to Manchester two years ago to study at university.

The positive effects of Manchester were immediate on the pair's creativity.

Inspired by the restless, anything-goes creativity of the city's current DIY music scene, the duo wasted no time in forming a band and marrying their respective musical loves.

In Rathmell's case, it was a passion for 60s girl groups and the sumptuous arrangements of Scott Walker; and for Scott, it was a love of noise-rock terrorists such as Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore.

An unlikely union of sweetness and spiteful may be in such highly meticulous hands,

The Louche FC's sonic excursions into the unknown ultimately reward the listener with every twist, turn and incongruity.

With tracks such as Back Bedroom Casualty and (I Cannot Be) Much More Than This – think My Bloody Valentine covering Roy Orbison with magic production dust from Phil Spector – The Louche FC deliver a surge of quicksilver brilliance and idiosyncrasy rarely seen from experimental pop outfits.

"There is a very fine line with experimental bands in terms of how indulgent they can be," guitarist Scott explains.

"But when you do it right, it can be really engaging to watch. "That's why I love bands like My Bloody Valentine and Sonic Youth. There's a sense of them really pushing boundaries and going into the unknown."

"But there's an almost violent, chaotic way they played their guitars which makes it impossible to take your eyes off them. That's what we're aiming for."

Recently bolstered by Stockport-based bass player Simon Sways, the trio have since become regulars at such sessions as Underachivers Try Harder and Akoustik Anarchy (which they play tonight at The Castle), winning over not just Manchester's muzzos and guitar fanatics, but also a few rock legends too.

In particular, a certain Mark E Smith is one supporter the band are keen to enthuse about. The cantankerous Fall singer recently watched the group perform at Oldham Street venue Gullivers, and was quick to make a beeline after the show.

Scott proudly recalls: "He said he enjoyed us which was amazing 'cos we're all massive Fall fans. I had a nice chat with him. "Unfortunately, it all went wrong, 'cos one of my friends said something which upset him, and Mark then threw a pint of beer over his head!"

"Hopefully it won't harm his impression of us."

It's unlikely anyone – even an irate Mark E Smith – could forget the joys of The Louche FC experience.

A band full of contradictions and incongruities, they're a rare beast in Manchester's current experimental rock brigade, bursting with clever-dogs musicality yes, but not forgetting to bring the emotional guts and devastating tunes too.

Like their band name cheekily implies, here is a three-strong team firmly shooting for victory – and in their own unique, uncompromising way.

"The name sums us up," smiles Rathmell. "The Louche FC – 'cos we are like an odd little football club."

"I'm like the striker. Luke is the midfielder and Simon is the solid goalkeeper. There's a good team spirit."

The Louche FC play The Castle (Oldham Street) tonight. For more info visit myspace.com/thebycetheiveusik.