

Emil Lewandowski, RIP—Down to Two Dog Night: Michael's Rock and Roll Posse

Cory Wells, Singer With Three Dog Night, Dies at 74 : <http://nyti.ms/1LGBPMe>
(NYT obituary)

Beloved Posse,

I saw Three Dog Night three times. First, they won an improbable Battle of the Bands contest at Albuquerque's Tingley Coliseum in 1967, when I was in high school, beating out other obscure groups The Stone Poneys (with their lead singer, Linda Ronstadt), The Golliwogs (soon after cocooning into Creedence Clearwater Revival, and later inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame), Strawberry Alarm Clock, and other local and regional bands. We voted with an applause o'meter kind of contraption that was on a wind-up clock face and that "measured" audience reaction. Second, I saw them in their heyday, after they had several number one songs as Three Dog Night, in Columbus, Ohio, when I was in college seminary. I saw them last in the Buffalo Thunder casino in Pojoaque, NM, about 5 years ago, when I wrote (in an early Posse posting) that they were down to a novelty act, and down to Two Dog Night. With the death this week of Cory Wells, (f/k/a Emil Lewandowski), who was still on the circuit with the group, they really are down to Two Dogs, and only Danny Hutton is left of the original group that was still touring. (Chuck Negron left the band a number of years ago for a solo act and rehab, and the fourth original member Jimmy Greenspoon, their piano player, died about 6 months ago.) As with so many other groups of such longstanding, they broke up and broke down many times, and had dozens of members over time.

They were not great, maybe a B- group, but to their credit, they stayed at it on the casino/oldies circuit, and their songs are instantly recognizable to many people in

my generation. I heard “Jeremiah Was a Bullfrog,” their cover of the Hoyt Axton hit, on some ad theme just the other day, and thought of them. (Axton also wrote their popular song, "Never Been to Spain.") Indeed, they mostly covered other people’s work, and I discovered Randy Newman—now in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame—when they covered his great song, “Mama Told Me Not Come,” sung by Cory Wells: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKaQzQAINn4>.

I cannot keep up with all these obituaries, as there are just too many, but these hundreds of groups formed my musical DNA, and I mourn their passing, however imperfectly.