



# ENTERTAINMENT

## Lush - a guilty pleasure?

by Michael Edwards  
Brunswickan Entertainment

Simply by releasing their fourth album, Lush have proved quite a few of their critics wrong. Back when they joined the legendary 4AD label in 1989, they very much fitted in with the label's 'sound'. But the passing of the years have seen Lush releasing more varied albums which never seem to get the acclaim that they deserve. The song-writing of both Miki Berenyi and Emma Anderson has gotten a whole lot stronger, and the overall sound of the band has shifted from being smothered in studio production, to something which can be recreated easily in their live shows.

They are currently touring in the UK in support of *Lovelife*, and I was fortunate enough to talk to Miki from her hotel room in that most glamorous of coastal towns, Plymouth. We talked about all kinds of things, including the now-infamous Jarvis Cocker incident from the Brit Awards...

**In the early days, Lush was very much seen as just another 4AD band, particularly on the first album, *Spooky* - how did you feel about that?**

Well, I thought that it was down to the sound of the record really - if you get Robin Guthrie to produce an album, it's going to sound just like The Cocteau Twins.

**What did you think of *Spooky*?**

It's not an ideal album, but I think that when Robin was good, he was brilliant. There were bits where it just didn't work, but even that's over-analysing it. In hindsight, I don't listen to it and think it sounds exactly like The Cocteau Twins, because it doesn't.

**You've been with 4AD for your entire career, and seen it change from being an 'ethereal' label to a much more diverse one. What is your relationship with the label like?**

It went through a bit of a rough stage during the time of *Split*, but it is all back again now. It's all okay. It was difficult because Ivo, who runs the label, moved from Britain to America and when *Split* came out he was fucking nowhere to be found - he decided to go off to the desert to find himself or something. So we released this album, and no-one knew what was going on, and it kind of disappeared. We got pissed off about that, and resented them for that, but since then, they've got everything up and running again.

**Do you like being on an independent label?**

Well, it has its benefits and it has its drawbacks. The thing is that if we were on a major label, we wouldn't have been able to put this record out because we would have been dropped after *Split*. A major label will give you one shot at something, and if it doesn't work then they wave goodbye to you. Whereas 4AD, even if the record didn't sell loads of copies, Ivo still says that *Split* is a great record even though it didn't sell as many copies as it should have. To him it is primarily the music.

**Were you disappointed with the response to *Split*?**

I think that what I was disappointed with was that a lot of people didn't even get to hear the thing. It was a very bad plan that went on there - it was badly marketed, and not many people heard it. And I was quite resentful as it meant that with this record it was like starting again. Instead of making a step forward after *Split*, we made a step

back and it wasn't because of the record - it was a better record than *Spooky*.

**Both yourself and Emma write songs for the records - do you collaborate or do you work separately?**

They're completely separate.

**Is there a big difference in the way that you each write songs?**

Not a massive difference, but there are differences obviously though I can't really analyse it any more than that. I think that we do influence each other to some extent.

**Your songs seem to be a bit more bitter than Emma's - is there a reason why?**

I'm not sure that it's necessarily that they are more bitter - I've just got a nastier way of putting things. A bit more cruel, I guess.

**The lead single on *Lovelife*, 'Ladykillers' is quite wonderful - what's the story behind it?**

At the time, I really wanted to slag some people off who I'd encountered. A bit mean really, isn't it? I remember at the time when it was all happening, I thought this would make a really good subject for a song. It's taken me quite a long time to realise that people could behave like that, and to be able to put it into words. It was actually the first song that I wrote for the new album. It was a bit weird as after *Split*, I found it really hard to write stuff and it took me bloody ages to write it - I just ripped off The Buzzcocks a bit.

**And what about 'Ciao', the duet with Jarvis Cocker (from *Pulp*) - how did that come about?**

Originally the song was written for Chris, our drummer, to sing because he wanted to sing on the album. I wrote the song, but he didn't realise that it was going to involve so much. So we had to find someone else to sing it - we've known Jarvis for some time, and we have some friends in common. They were recording at the time, so it seemed harmless enough to ask him and he said yes. It was very simple.

**What was it like working with him?**

It wasn't like some great collaboration as basically, the track was all there. He just came in, we played a few games of pool, had a couple of drinks, went in and did it, drank a bit more and went.

**It's funny as most people know Jarvis for the incident at the Brit Awards where he 'stormed' the stage to take on Michael Jackson.**

That's so weird as it is so not him. It's such a big fuss over nothing - I know people who were at the Brit Awards, and they didn't even see anything happen. I can just imagine what happened - you were at the side of the stage, kind of lit up and you just think "fuck it". I don't think that anyone thought it would get to people suing or police getting called. It was just running on stage and mucking about. I don't think that he ever thought that this would be the reaction.

**You never have the urge to do wild things like that, do you?**

I suppose that stage-diving to Ministry was not the greatest thing that I ever did, especially as I ended up in hospital. But I don't think that it was actually such a wild thing to do. It's not like he jumped up on stage and rugby-tackled Michael Jackson to the floor - that would have been pretty entertaining [laughter].

**Talking of Ministry, is it true that Lush and**



Lush - not just another female-fronted band.

**Ministry went into the studio and recorded together while you were touring with *Lollapalooza*?**

No! I don't know where these stories start - it's so weird. When we were on *Lollapalooza*, there was some Warner's rep who was basically telling everyone that Al Jourgensen and I would, on a regular basis, have a bath together, shoot heroin and cut our arms open. He said that he saw it with his own eyes - it's fucking insane, you know?

**I notice that one of your songs, *Sweetness And Light*, is being used in a Volkswagen ad on tv - is Lush selling out?**

We don't have agents all over the world begging people to use our music. I think they just got in contact with 4AD - I'm not sure

how they pick out the music. And it's all money, isn't it? It's kinda exactly what you want if you write music - you want people to use it in films and use it in ads. It does depend on what it is advertising, Volkswagen seems pretty harmless.

**The music press in Britain are not known for being the easiest to deal with - how is your relationship with them?**

Hot and cold...mostly cold. We do alright. We just don't get the front covers and the huge drum roll for our work. It's probably a mistake to read it as I know plenty people in bands who don't read

reviews. And I can understand why as at the end of the day it just pisses you off unless it is fantastic.

**It doesn't help to have an ex-New Musical Express writer in the band?**

To be honest, I think that a lot of that works against you. As I said, Emma used to work for a guy who did press, I used to go out with someone from one of the best press companies in the UK and Emma used to go out with an NME journalist - everybody has got these links. But it actually makes those people a bit contemptuous of you; it doesn't help. The music press in Britain are very grudging about us. Even the people who like us feel a bit embarrassed that they like us.

**Why should people feel embarrassed about liking Lush?**

I think because we've never been a particularly fashionable band. We've never been particularly cool or tried to invent that sort of image for ourselves. We're aware that being friends with Primal Scream is cool because they tell everyone that they take heroin and that they fuck 14 year-old groupies, so everyone thinks they're fantastic. But if you admit that you are not all that exceptional, and go to the pubs where people see you then they don't like it. A lot of journalists are quite romantically-minded where they like to have some mystery surrounding a band, and if you destroy it for them then they have nothing to write about.

