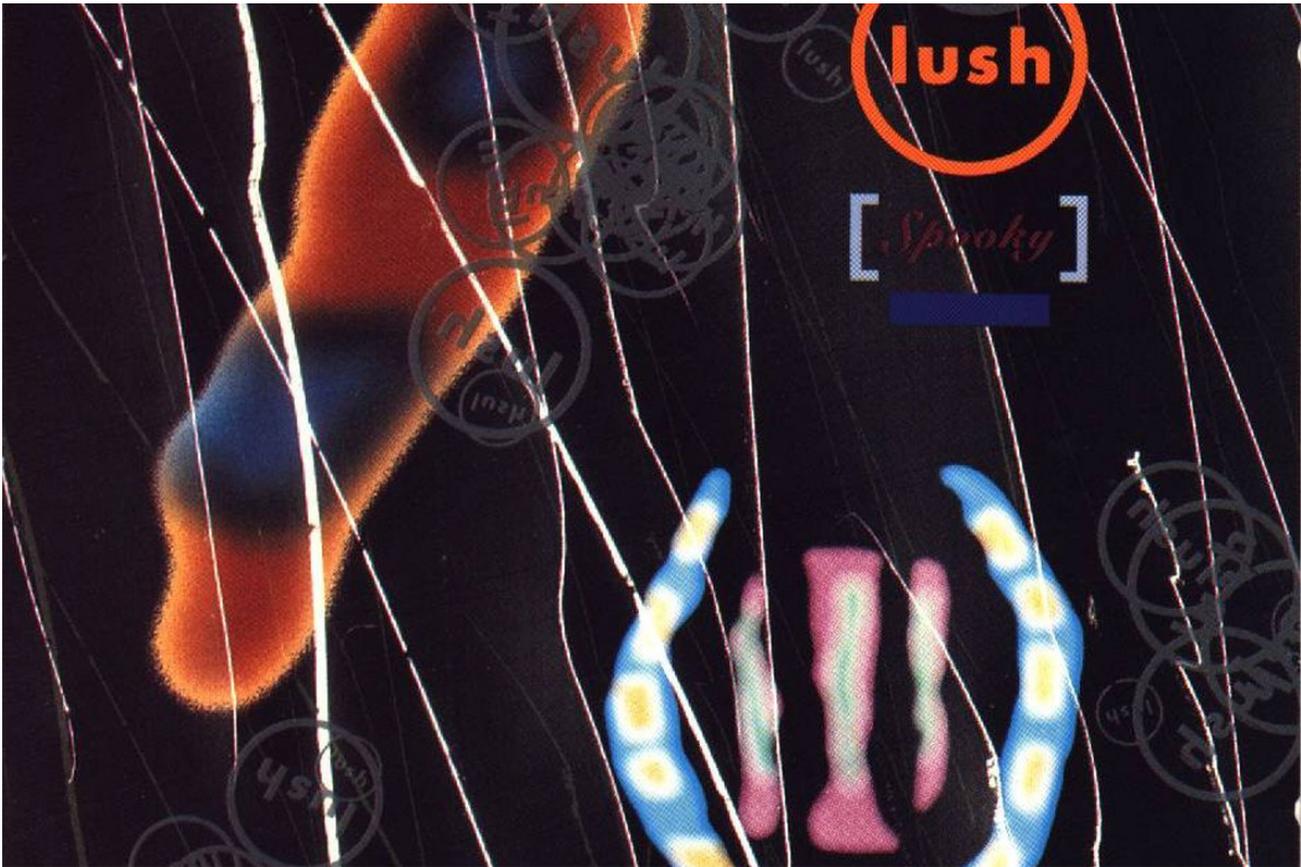


# The Classics: Lush, 'Spooky'

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5/18/2013



## Spooky

*The Classics* are must-see, must-read, must-play works revered by *The Verge* staff. They offer glimpses of the future, glimpses of humanity, and a glimpse of our very souls. You should check them out.

British band Lush's first full-length album, *Spooky* (4AD, January, 1992) is a relic of a past which no longer exists, but which incessantly reminds you that it once did. You hear its reverberations in predecessors like *Black Tambourine* and in successors like *Wild Nothing*. What ties them all together is a dialogue, a certain way of looking at the world, which has everything to do with the tone, the sound, the feel, and often nothing to do with actual meaning. The meaning is conveyed in the delivery.

*Spooky* operates on the listener like any good story. It's got a beginning, a middle, and an end. It ebbs and flows, and you feel the time passing as you listen: it starts with a sunrise and ends at nighttime. There is a warm and comfortable blanket of desolation spread over the whole affair, a thick production (provided by the Cocteau Twins' Robin Guthrie), heavy with effects, laden with harmonies and angelic, nearly indecipherable vocals. As you start to listen you wonder, "what are they talking about?" and as it ends you ask yourself, "does it even matter?"

"you feel the time passing as you listen"

The album works best as an album, though there are perfect songs sprinkled like glitter throughout -- "For Love" is maybe the best song Lush ever recorded, and "Nothing Natural," which drones on for nearly six minutes, sums up their weird energy better than any other piece on the album. Still, it is best to take it as a whole organism, to let it

soak through your bones, one song melting into another, at as loud of a volume as your delicate ears can manage. There are weird bits of noise -- random echoes and hints of laughter -- throughout the Lush back catalogue which can only be accessed in the right light, with the right ears, at the right moment. Such was their magic.

The opening song, "Stray," which is just two minutes long, much of it spent on fading in and fading out, was my favorite track when the record crossed my path, in the summer of 1992. I assumed it was about a lost love, no longer accessible, and the longing which I imagined must come with such loss. Twenty-one years later I stumbled across an interview where the song's writer, Miki Berenyi, wrote that it was about a stray dog that used to hang around the band's practice space. That's an apt way of thinking about Lush generally, actually: when you strip away the effects and the production, you are often left with breathlessly perfect pop songs about dogs or cars, but while you're listening, it's easy to wonder if this music was even made by humans. It's shocking to dig through the layers and hear a structure of verse, chorus, verse, with two guitars, bass, and drums. It would be easy to allow that realization to drag you down to mundane, dry vocalled reality.

On the other hand, what more true expression of loss is there than the one that you feel for a dog?

*For your enjoyment, I've made a [Playlist](#) of some of my favorite Lush songs, which can be found here. As always, wear headphones for maximum vibes. Enjoy.*