

Six Of The Best – Miki Berenyi (Lush)

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April 16, 2018



Six Of The Best is a semi-regular feature that pokes, prods and persuades your favourite bands, bards and barometers of hip opinion to tell us six of the best tracks they've ever heard. The tracks could be mainstream million-sellers or they could be obfuscatingly obscure, it doesn't matter. The only criteria set is that, aye, they must be Six of the Best. Think of it like a mini, groovier version of Desert Island Discs...

Number 27 in a [series](#):



Miki Berenyi is best-known as the focal point of **Lush**, the perfectly-balanced indie rock quartet from London. With a healthy obsession for phasers, flangers and flame-red hair Miki and her guitar sparring partner Emma Anderson sang ethereal two-part harmonies, usually atop a fantastic swirl of noise, always ably backed by Chris and Steve (and laterally Phil) on drums and bass, the power-packing yin to the girls' gossamer-light yang. If you were looking

for decent music in a post-Smiths/pre Britpop era, Lush may very well have been right up your street. I'm sure mine wasn't the only quiff that collapsed in horror at the first listen of Morrissey's *Kill Uncle* LP, only to fall fortuitously into a heavily-fringed bowlcut in time for Lush and Ride and their ilk to come along.

Signed to 4AD at the tail end of the 80s, their early recordings were produced by Robin Guthrie, the directive force and sonic architect in the Cocteau Twins. Guthrie employed the same studio techniques on Lush as he did on his own band's recordings and Lush records, moreso the early ones, have more than a hint of the Cocteau's gothic grandeur. Like all the very best bands, Lush released terrific standalone EPs featuring tracks not available on albums. 12 string guitars chime and feedback continually howls, effect pedals are always turned to 10 and yet, somewhere in the mix you'll hear Miki and Emma's vocals floating over the top, a shoegaze Abba for the youth of the day.



The 6 track *Scar* EP is a particular favourite in this house. As is the 4 track *Mad Love* release, which features *Downer*, the sound of Lush rushing downhill at a thrilling 100 miles an hour. Worth mentioning too is their cover of Wire's *Outdoor Miner* on the *For Love 10"*. Indeed, all those Lush EPs are essential. You really should try and track them down. The early ones were compiled onto the *Gala* LP, released to promote Lush in the US and Japan, and it wasn't until 1992 before the band's debut album *Spooky* was released. *Spooky* would reach the dizzy heights of number 7 on yer actual Top 40 charts, no mean feat for a marginal indie act in the early 90s.



By 1996, the band were onto their third album. Buoyed by the (gads) Britpop scene, the last truly commercial era for record companies, Lush went on to score a number of top 40 hits on the singles chart. Most famously, *Single Girl* took them all the way to number 21 and onto Top Of The Pops and remains probably their best-known tune.

A short-lived reunion a couple of years ago laid the ghost of Lush to bed once and for all. Those records live on though, and they still sound great today; loud, airy, other-worldly and melody-packed, a wonky Abba fuelled by cider and blackcurrant.



Lush, 2016

It was Miki's Twitter feed that sparked the idea of asking her to contribute a Six Of The Best. It's a treasure trove of an era long past; pictures of My Bloody Valentine playing to about 6 people in a horribly sterile venue, snaps of various members of Lush lying around in festival backstage areas with assorted pop stars of the day for company, a picture of Miki's mum snapped alongside Sean Connery in a promo shot for *You Only Live Twice*... in essence, the sort of stuff that makes you want to find out more.

"My daughter is turning 17 this month so with that on my mind, I'm picking six random songs that remind me of being a teenager.

*I had no siblings to influence my taste and my dad's musical contribution stretched to singing *What Do You Want* by Adam Faith on car journeys and wolf-whistling the women from Baccara on TOTP, so learning about music outside of the top 40 involved random acquisitions from Record and Tape Exchange and the local library. In other words, no I wasn't listening to Crass when I was 12, but by 15 I was desperately trying to catch up and was open to listening to anything that had an interesting name or cover."*

Here then is **Miki Berenyi's Six Of The Best**



The Undertones – Wednesday Week

*Remember that scene in a *Fistful of Travellers' Cheques*? "Everybody likes the Eagles!". Well, I guess everybody likes *The Undertones*, so I could pick any of many of their tracks that joyfully, yearningly encapsulate teenage preoccupations.*

<https://philspector.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/12-wednesday-week.mp3>

This reminds me of being 13 and getting the tube to school and having a massive crush on a boy who went part of the journey in the same carriage every day, who smiled sweetly and who I was too shy to ever speak to.



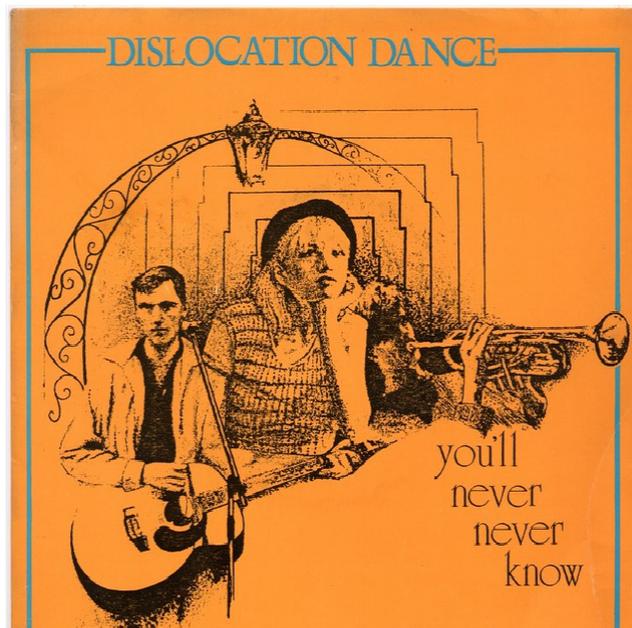
The Creatures – So Unreal

I can still remember Siouxsie and Budgie playing Mad Eyed Screamer (or Mad Ice-creamer as we used to call it) on TOTP and thinking “Fucking wolf-whistle at THAT Dad!!!”

<https://philspector.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/the-creatures-so-unreal.mp3>

I first saw the Banshees play in 1982, touring Kiss In The Dreamhouse, and still get a rush of my 15-year-old excitement, fighting my way down the front and drinking in every heightened-aware second. Absolutely changed my life!

I met them years later when I was in Lush but I was ridiculously starstruck and could only gush to Budgie how I used to obsessively tap out the drumbeat to this song on my wooden pencil case at school.

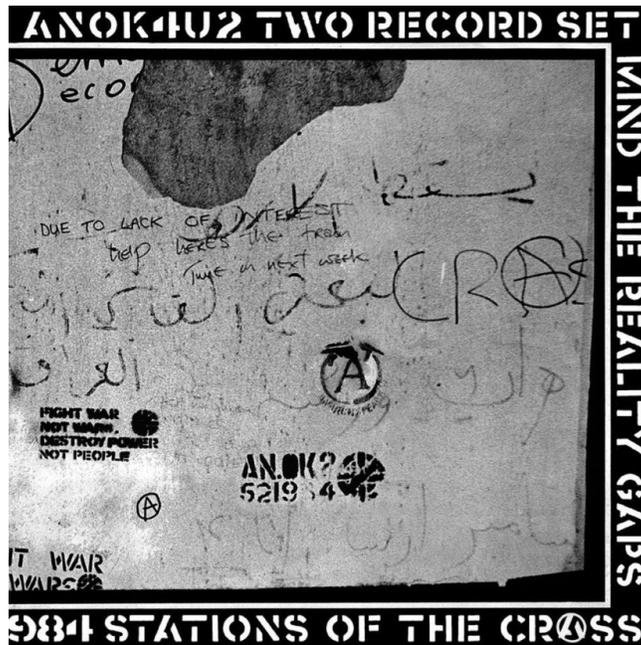


Dislocation Dance – You'll Never Never Know

I bought this single because I liked the name of the band and that was it – knew absolutely nothing else about it.

<https://philspector.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/18-youll-never-never-know-7-versio.mp3>

Most of the music I listened to at that point was dark and angry or plaintive, so when I first put it on the record player I thought: “Hmmm, this doesn’t fit with the image I’m trying to project” but it’s such a breath of summer air and I couldn’t get the tune out of my head, so it’s become synonymous for me with youthful strolls around London in the sunshine.

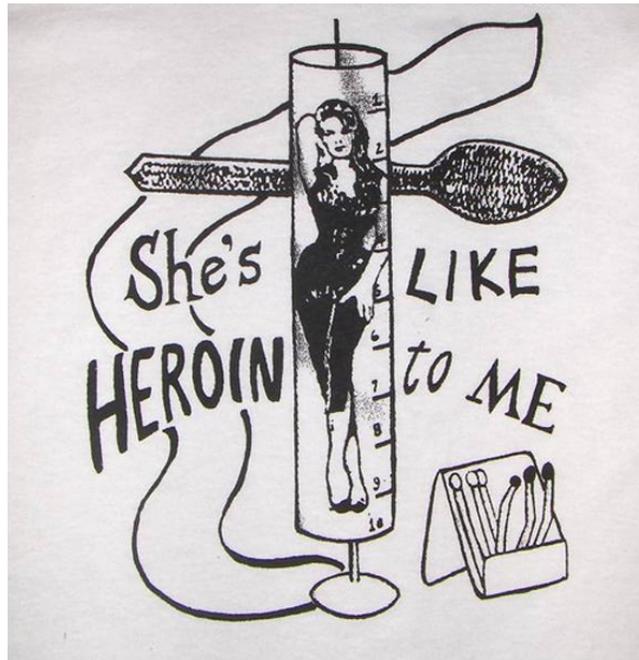


Crass – Walls

I remember playing my 7" of Reality Asylum/Shaved Women by Crass to a girl at school and she was so appalled she didn't speak to me for a week.

<https://philspector.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/13-crass-walls.mp3>

This one she could just about live with, especially as at the time we both misheard the lyrics and thought it was “cider, cider, cider cider”.

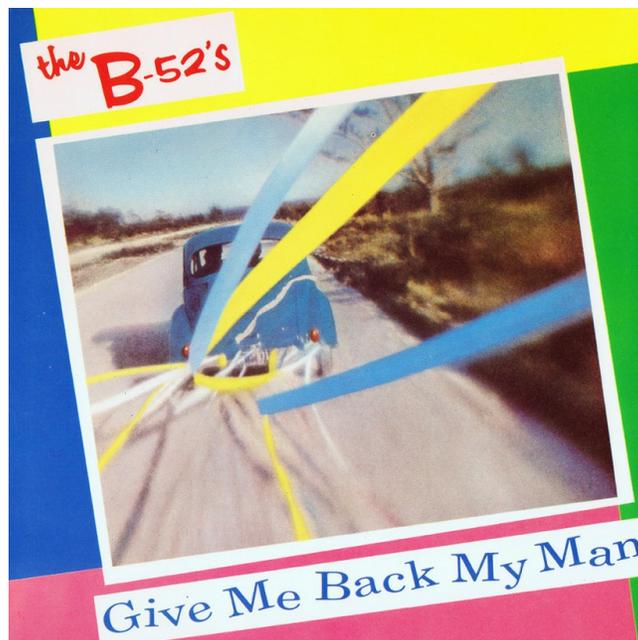


The Gun Club – She's Like Heroin To Me

I first saw The Gun Club when I was 16 at The Lyceum in 1983, primarily because I was big into The Sisters Of Mercy, who were supporting. Following this gig, I listened to Fire of Love relentlessly and this song in particular.

<https://philspecter.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/04-shes-like-heroin-to-me.mp3>

I've never been big into drugs – smack to me as a teenager in London felt scabby and ugly, all piss-stained mattresses and rat-infested squats, but heroin in an American accent sounded AMAZING and, in this song, swirled up with the euphoric rush of love and sex (but still didn't make me want to take it, I hasten to add!)



The B52s – Give Me Back My Man

The B52s would often get slung on as a staple at house (and I mean ‘house’ as in ‘home’) parties back in the 80s and I spent many a night jumping around to Rock Lobster and Planet Claire.

<https://philspector.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/the-b-52c2b4s-give-me-back-my-man-hq-audio.mp3>

I love this song because there’s a wild, cracked, child-like primal demand in the vocals that I only next encountered when I first hear Birthday by the Sugarcubes. Pure feeling and great to drunkenly yell along to when – good or bad – it all gets a bit much.

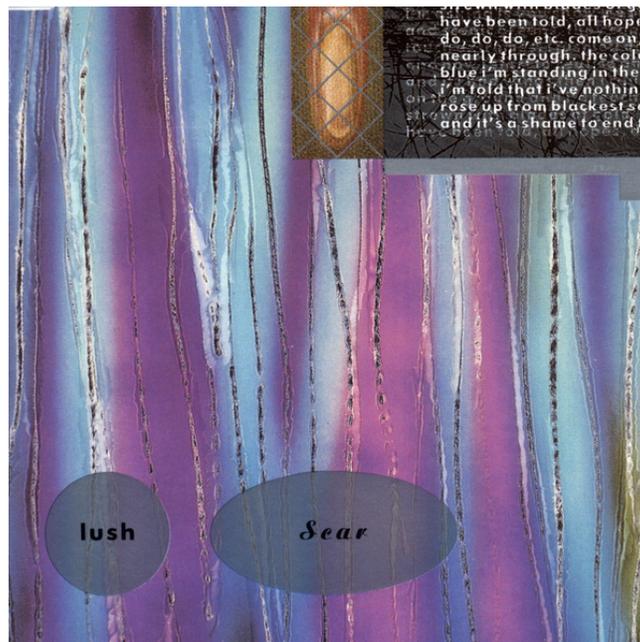
A terrific choice of records! Turning the focus on her own band, I asked Miki which Lush track she was most proud of playing on.

“Hmmm... I don’t think I can say I was ever really ‘proud’ of my playing/singing – it was generally rather agonising, and I was always conscious of being sub-par!

That’s not to say I didn’t think the songs, when finished, weren’t great – I remember first hearing a mix of Scarlet in the studio with John Fryer and almost blushing with achievement, thinking “Bloody hell, is that US?!” But if a producer ever said my performance was good, my instinct was to be surprised or to think they were just trying to be kind. It must have been very tiresome!”

Lush – Scarlet (Scar EP)

<https://philspector.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/lush-scarlet-320-kbps1.mp3>



Lastly, while we’re talking about producers, tell us a story about Robin Guthrie.

“Robin was super patient with me, doing the vocals. Sometimes I sang so quietly the note itself was barely audible and then you’d get a massively loud rasp as I inhaled a breath for the next line – I smoked loads, too, so that must have been fun to edit!

The studio had these banks and banks of effects all lining the walls, it was like a fucking spaceship. You'd be playing the guitar and he'd be sticking the other end of the lead into random sockets and these mad sounds would suddenly emerge. And when he gave you a compliment it felt so fucking great. I remember him picking out this transition in For Love saying "That's good. I'm gonna nick that" which swelled my heart fully. Actually, that was probably my proudest moment!"

And there ye have it, Miki Berenyi's *Six Of The Best*, plus a cracking Lush track flung in for good measure.