

Chorus Lines - Lush In Conversation With Martin Aston

Origins

Lush's announcement of their first shows in 20 years has a different ring than comparative band reformations because of what brought them to a halt. Sure, there were attendant stresses of relentless touring and recording (especially during the 'format wars' of the Nineties, with the demands for all those B-sides), management teams lacking in empathy, complicated by their record label's own internal strife - and this on a band that struggled to believe in their own abilities. But what brought the curtain down was the suicide of drummer Chris Acland, completely without warning. For 20 years, Lush have lived with that severe and shocking denouement, and haunted by the idea of what might come after; to make music, to honour what they once had, or perhaps, in the words of Ian Curtis, to walk away in silence. But during the last five years, tentative discussions have finally led to an affirmative decision.

Phil King (bass): We'd all meet up for meals sometimes, and see each other socially, but with families and day jobs, it hasn't happened. Last year, I wanted to do the Psychocandy tour with the Jesus & Mary Chain, so we put it back a year, since when Ride have reformed. But it will make it twenty years since Lush split up.

Emma Anderson (lead guitar, vocals): Looking at the new photos, of Miki, Phil and me, it's striking how clear it was that someone's missing. It's so sad. It will be weird up there on stage, without Chris, we'll feel the absence.

That loss will be tempered by the addition of Justin Welch, an old friend of Chris who drummed for Spitfire and then Elastica, and with Emma on the initial demos for her post-Lush band project Sing-Sing.

Miki Berenyi (lead vocals, guitar): Even now, it won't be easy knowing Chris won't be there. We know you can't recapture what you had before, but hopefully it will be brilliant in a different way. If I think of all best bits of the band, how great it is to play live, and to play your own songs, then there's an open door you can walk through. I know I'll regret it if I don't.

Preceding the Lush reunion shows, the band released a four-track EP named after its opening track, Out Of Control.

Emma: Recording again was really good fun and relaxed too, though we did it differently to how we used to, because we hadn't even played again as a band in a room, or rehearsed the new songs. I recorded the demos of the music on Garageband, and then we recorded it at [producer] Jim Abbiss' studio, but the next record we'll rehearse the songs first before recording.

Miki: I was having sleepless nights, thinking it would be a disaster as we hadn't even rehearsed beforehand. I even had a singing lesson! Jim [Abbiss] has an amazing CV, he's worked with people like Adele... I visualised standing in the vocal booth and seeing a discussion outside about how to make it OK! But it went really easily, and it really helped with the band going forward with rehearsals for the live shows.

4AD have celebrated their return with the first ever pressing of Ciao! The Best Of Lush on red vinyl, but more crucially, the limited edition boxsets of Chorus (5 CDs presented in a book) and Origami (a 5 LP box released on

Record Store Day 2016). Artwork for both is by Chris Bigg, who, alongside design chief Vaughan Oliver, was responsible for those iconic 4AD covers in the Nineties. Both boxsets contain the band's five albums, the early compilation Gala (1990), the three studio albums Spooky (1992), Split (1994) and Lovelife (1996) and the B-sides collection Topolino (1996). The CD boxset also contains a selection of radio sessions, band demos and remixes. If anything will convince the band of reconnecting with their past, this will do it.

That past is best recaptured in the band's own words; of how their twin songwriters, Miki and Emma, emerged from unconventional childhoods to tentative forays into music, and the craziness that followed, at a time when the media focus on bands was merciless, instantly putting unproven talent in the spotlight. Lush had terrific tunes, they also looked the part, they were recording for an iconic record label, but they were also vulnerable ingénues, and hostage to the interpretation of events – in their case, preceding shoegaze but being shoehorned into it, and then lumped into Britpop. Back at the start, when their demo arrived on the desk of 4AD founder Ivo Watts-Russell, there was no aim, musically or otherwise, but a lot of hope and promise. As Ivo recalls, "A lot of English bands at that time, like Slowdive and Ride, suggested that things could develop, that they were experimenting, taking influences from the Sixties but being just as experimental from one album to the next, like The Byrds had."

Miki: I was born in London. My dad was Hungarian, a journalist, and he met my mum at the Tokyo Olympics in 1964. It was a whirlwind romance, but they'd divorced by the time I was four, mainly because of his relentless philandering. She remarried a TV director and moved to the US when I was twelve, but I didn't want to go and stayed here. My dad had fought to keep me with him, but he wasn't up to the parenting, and I was mostly left in the care of my grandmother, who was a very bitter and cruel woman. These days, we'd probably say she had mental health problems. So I left home at 14 – I lived in the school music room for a year! I'd been to about seven different schools by then - state, private, a convent, you name it, partly because of my mum always moving. I felt very unsettled having to constantly be the new kid and leave behind friends I'd made. I met Emma at a Harley Street girls' school. I made several lifelong friends there, but there was an elite of snobby kids who looked down on girls like us whose parents could just about scrape together the fees. We rebelled against them and their values - shaved off bits of our hair, wore tatty clothes. They thought we were revolting! And I suddenly realised how liberating it is to not give a shit what people like that think.

Emma: I was born in London but I was adopted when I was a month old. At the time of my adoption, my dad was 48 and my mother was 38. That isn't so odd these days but in the 1960s, it was, and it also meant my parents were from a time before there was such a thing as popular culture. They also had very strong ideas about a woman's role, i.e. as wife and mother, so as I grew up and my ambitions grew beyond those limits, they tried to block me at every step. I even wanted to learn the piano when I was about eight but that wasn't allowed. I grew up in quite a strange place. My father was the Club Secretary of this old boys' club called The Naval and Military on Piccadilly in Mayfair. We lived in a flat provided by the job so my parents didn't have the usual mortgage or bills, which meant they had enough disposable income to send me to private schools, although I was moved around a lot – I'd been to five different schools by the time I was sixteen. When I was 14, I was sent to Queens College in London - where I met Miki - and that's when my obsession with music really took hold. Miki had had a very atypical childhood too, so I think we gravitated toward each other because we didn't connect with the wealthy, more privileged London kids that mainly populated the school. We were outsiders and misfits and were more or less ignored by the others. The school was unusual in the fact that was no uniform so Miki and myself started wearing black and clothes from army surplus stores where the other girls were dressed head-to-toe in designer clothes. Music was a little club for us that excluded them.

Miki: Music wasn't big in my family, so I just liked what was in the charts as I was growing up and I liked ABBA. I fantasised around music, like acting out a life story to ABBA's 'Knowing Me, Knowing You', which felt dramatic and real because it was about divorce. I was really into 2-Tone, but I wasn't picky - disco, synth pop, Sixties girl groups, I loved all sorts.

Emma: I started getting into music by listening to the Top Forty on a Sunday, when I was about 12, at boarding

school in Sussex. I homed in on New Order, The Teardrop Explodes and The Human League when all the other girls were into Michael Jackson and Billy Joel.

Miki: We became completely obsessive about music. But we had no older siblings to guide us, and no one to tell us what was cool and what wasn't, we just listened to anything and everything. We would go to loads of gigs but we were completely scattergun in our approach: in one month alone, I think it was April 1983, I can recall going to see Culture Club, The Danse Society, Tears For Fears, The Gun Club, The Electric Guitars and The Birthday Party.

Emma: I'd been soaking up music like a sponge, but eventually your tastes get more defined. I got very into 4AD. I loved their artwork – it had such strong imagery. I would buy 4AD records without hearing them. I once found a copy of the Nature Morte compilation in Record & Tape Exchange, but I hadn't got any cash on me so I hid it in the dance section (so no one else could find it), went home on the tube and borrowed the money from my mum then went back to the shop and bought it.

Miki: We started a fanzine when we were 15, called *Alphabet Soup*. The tag line was "*It may be shit but only 5p*". It was very juvenile and smutty, and makes me cringe when I remember it. We interviewed Xmal Deutschland in their hotel room and managed to mumble about five words throughout. But we were shy and awkward, and it was a good way for us to come out of our shell.

Emma: We got more embroiled in the live scene, so it was natural to start to make music ourselves. We both started off playing bass in different bands, I was in The Rover Girls with two of Silverfish, Miki was in a garage band called The Bugs. But we wanted to write songs as well, so we were trying to form our own band. We'd get together in my kitchen and play guitar and bass. Our first songs were very naïve and basic, we were just finding our way around.

Miki: Emma ended up at Ealing College and I was at North London Poly. That's where I met Chris, Steve and Meriel. I asked them if they wanted to be in a band and they said yes. Honestly, it wasn't a big deal. It was like asking someone if they fancied going to the pub.

Steve Rippon (original bassist): I was born in Carshalton [Surrey]. I'd got into music big time from the age of ten, I was a massive Beatles fan and other great Sixties bands like The Beach Boys and The Byrds. I was into punk too. I started my first band at eleven with school friends. I sang and played a bit of bass, and then guitar. I didn't pick up a bass again until Miki and Chris asked me to join their band. I had about six weeks to learn eight songs before our first gig at the Falcon in Camden.

Miki: Chris was born in Lancaster and grew up in Burneside, a Lake District village. I remember enviously looking at family photos of barge holidays and get-togethers that conjured up images of an idyllic Enid Blyton childhood! His early musical loves were The Jam, The Stooges, a slew of Oi, Anarcho and Positive Punk bands from Discharge to The Mob to The Sisters of Mercy, and he loved Nick Cave. Chris would go and see bands in Manchester, but these were violent times and on one occasion, coming home from a PiL gig, he had half his hair ripped out by a gang in Moss Side and was almost beaten to a pulp after seeing The Jam by some Salford soul boys who only let up when they realised he was just 14 years old! Chris was a seasoned drummer by the time he joined Lush. He had already been in a string of punk bands including Infection, Panik, A Touch of Hysteria, Les Turds and Poison In The Machine. I remember first meeting him in 1986 outside a lecture hall at North London Polytechnic. He was wearing a Southern Death Cult t-shirt, so it was an instant signal that we'd get on!

Emma: We started off as The Baby Machines, which we culled from the lyrics of Siouxsie & The Banshees' 'Arabian Knights'. Some songs were a bit gothy or a bit C86, but none were very good. The best was one of Meriel's, called 'Skin', which sounded quite Primitives and Darling Buds. But we had a set of songs to play when we changed our name to Lush. We never actually played a gig as Baby Machines.

Miki: To call Baby Machines 'riot grrl' is to dignify it with an insight and direction we didn't really have. 'He's A

Bastard' was about an ex and 'Female Hybrid' about The Sun's Page Three, slightly feminist anthems, it made Chris collapse into fits of laughter and poor old Meriel would understandably wince at having to be the mouthpiece for this garbage. I think we just wanted to be out there and in a band.

Lush, Baby Machines, they both had a feminist slant. Reclaiming insulting words for women and making them a badge of courage. We played a handful of times, but Chris was the only one of us who was any good as a musician. We started to realise it was no fun playing when everyone thinks you're total crap, so we started to take it more seriously. That meant more commitment - so I left the Bugs - but Meriel was less interested.

Meriel Barham: My experience of Lush was in its early, thrashy days, which was great fun among mates, and much more Emma and Miki's project than something that I was as focused on, so I understood our different standpoints.

Miki: Meriel left and we didn't have a singer. We advertised, which was a disaster. One was a complete racist, one was so claustrophobic, she couldn't travel by tube, just nuts! I was already singing backing vocals so it was - well, either you sing or we'll just have to split up. It was needs must.

Emma: After Meriel left, something clicked in our brains. I don't know how or why, but I just started writing better songs, like 'Etheriel' and 'Thoughtforms'.

Miki: We realised that it wasn't just a case of writing something – anything – just so we could do a gig, but that the quality of the songs also depended on writing to the band's strengths - or accommodating its weaknesses! 'Scarlet' was still about why boys like slutty girls, and 'Etheriel' was still about a break-up of sorts, but the lyrics started to have extra levels of meaning. The sounds of the words became as important as what was being said, and the songs became a lot more enjoyable to play as well as listen to.

Emma: We recorded a demo and Geoff Travis at Rough Trade was the first to show interest, but he said that if Ivo was keen, he could see us on 4AD. Ivo came to see us play at the Falcon, with Pale Saints, who were great while we were a mess. But Ivo could see potential in us. One day, Ivo left an answerphone message - it's good, but we need to chat because not everyone at 4AD agrees. Howard [Gough, 4AD promotions) was trying persuade Ivo not to sign us. He'd seen us live at ULU, and said we were a shambles. But Ivo wanted to give us another chance, so he put us in the studio with [producer] John Fryer to record more demos.

Gala

SCAR (1989)

Lush's 4AD debut was the mini-album Scar. It wasn't a groundbreaking statement, with Miki's vocals slathered in effects, but it was a suitably sparkling testament to new beginnings and ethereal melody, with Miki sounding much more confident than she probably was, and 'Thoughtforms' and 'Etheriel' showing a much stronger pop sensibility than any other band following in the slipstream of My Bloody Valentine's brilliant album Isn't Anything. 'Second Sight' was in thrall to that MBV template, while 'Scarlet' had something of the Sixties psych feel that Ivo had mentioned. The press reaction to Scar was positive, likewise to their image, with Emma's jet-black hair contrasting with Miki's scarlet rinse.

Emma: The three tracks on *Scar* were recorded as demos, partly because 4AD needed convincing that we could really come up with the goods. They were never meant to be for a record but Ivo liked them so much he said, 'Go back and do three more and I'll release it as a mini-album'.

Miki: I can still remember hearing the final mix of 'Thoughtforms' coming out of the speakers and being genuinely blown away that that was us! And Ivo's response was so flattering. We couldn't believe a label like 4AD wanted us, it was beyond our wildest dreams. There was no question of us not signing. They could have offered us fifty pence

and we'd have signed.

MAD LOVE EP (1990)

Lush's second release, a four-track EP, was produced by Cocteau Twin Robin Guthrie – who'd instantly responded to hearing them perform a new track, 'De-Luxe'. Mad Love sounded bolder and brighter than Scar (contrast this version of 'Thoughtforms' with the original). Guthrie was spot on about the cascading 'De-Luxe', and neither 'Downer' nor 'Leaves Me Cold' revealed them as a band with self-esteem issues.

Miki: Ivo had 'De-Luxe' marked as a single the first time he'd heard us play it live, and Robin said he could do great things with it, but I was worried that our performances were so ropey. Robin said, don't worry, it'll be fantastic. And we really needed that support. Working with John Fryer had been great, but he'd had to chisel any response out of us. We were so grateful that anything we had done sounded good that we didn't want to express our opinions or suggest any changes or additions, in case they'd get shot down. Robin encouraged us to add embellishments and we started to understand how putting together a record works.

Miki: We were on the cover of *Melody Maker* six months after we formed, which became a nightmare because we weren't prepared – we'd only played about four gigs. We didn't even have a long enough set to be able to headline. And we were awful live, so we were forced to become good in public.

Emma: We were still very inexperienced and we thought it would be good to try something else first, to not get entrenched in one direction. Working with Tim [Friese-Green, Talk Talk producer] brought a new perspective.

SWEETNESS AND LIGHT EP (1990)

A three-track EP was helmed by Tim Friese-Green, at Ivo's suggestion. Talk Talk's producer-collaborator was much more of a perfectionist than Guthrie, and spent six weeks with Lush recording and mixing just three tracks. The title track was a longer, comparatively dreamier and, indeed, lush Lush than before, while 'Sunbathing' was Lush's first "ballad". As Ivo said, "I loved Talk Talk's space and clarity, but 'Sweetness And Light' sounded thin and woolly, and so unrepresentative of Lush's live sound. Yet it was a fantastic song, and the record served its purpose by accelerating the band's popularity."

Emma: It took so long to record! Most time was spent on 'Sweetness And Light' and a lot of that was us playing it endlessly in a rehearsal room with Tim sitting in the corner nodding along, deep in thought. It was a good learning curve, but very time-consuming, and as there were so many different mixes as we went along that we could barely tell any difference between them.

Miki: Tim really focused on Chris's performance, saying, do it again, do it again. Poor Chris got quite upset, but he did eventually realise that the discipline had a remarkable effect. Tim's sound was very different to Robin's, more nebulous, which may have meant the record suffered in comparison.

GALA (1990)

As an introduction to the US and Japanese markets, 4AD conjoined Scar, Mad Love, 'Sweetness And Light', 'Hey Hey Helen' and a second version of 'Scarlet' that Robin Guthrie had produced.

Emma: The problem we encountered down the line was, where most bands use their first songs on their first album, people said to us, Where's your first album, then?

Miki: Tim Carr, from Warner Brothers, had come over to see us play and he was keen to license us for America. Other labels were interested, so we went to LA for meetings. It was very corporate and full of nodding execs going, "We love you guys," but none of them seemed to, "get," the band and we were suspicious of their motives.

Emma: I remember a meeting at Columbia. While they were schmoozing us with all the amazing things they were

going to do for us, one of their people was sitting next to me taking notes. I caught a glimpse of his notepad and he'd written: "*We already have Ultra Vivid Scene, do we need this band as well?*"

Miki: In the end, we went with Tim and Reprise (a famous subsidiary of Warners), mainly because we liked him. He was passionate about Lush - about music in general - and the label had a good track record with bands. *Gala* came as a result of that deal, and we did a short US tour to support it.

Emma: We were so happy with *Mad Love* that we decided to do the album with Robin. But we were still very inexperienced and we thought it would be good to try something else first, to not get entrenched in one direction. Working with Tim [Friese-Green, Talk Talk producer] brought a new perspective.

Miki: It got tiresome having to explain over and over that *Gala* wasn't a 'proper' album. And I don't think Ivo was happy having the three different records just shoved onto one disc. *Scar*, *Mad Love* and *Sweetness And Light* each had its own concept and artwork and sound, and lumping them together for convenience was not very 4AD at all.

Spooky

First came the Black Spring EP, four tracks that included 'Nothing Natural' and 'Monochrome' that were included on Lush's official debut album, produced by Robin Guthrie. 'Nothing Natural' and future single 'For Love' sat alongside an elated 'Superblast!' and the wistful Sixties strain of 'Untogether' and the serene madrigal of 'Monochrome'. At 48 minutes, Spooky was at least two tracks too long, and felt a little repetitious in parts, and sections, like the intro to 'Stray' sounded more Cocteau than Lush. But Guthrie had clearly boosted Lush's confidence while the space rock coda on 'Laura' showed his sonic trickery could be exemplary, and the album it topped the UK indie chart and the national charts' top ten – a gratifying sign of acceptance.

Miki: There was a fair bit of drama and disruption with the recording, which wasn't our fault! But Robin really brought out the best in a lot of the songs. He's said since that our ability often didn't match our ambitions, and I agree with that. We still lacked confidence and assertiveness, but we had raised our game. Press-wise, when *Spooky* was released, we ended up having the Cocteau comparison thrown at us. I thought, How can you even mistake my voice for Liz's? And the songs are nothing like Cocteau Twins! But the naysayers were out.

Emma: Some songs suffered, like 'Covert', which is buried in that Guthrie sound, but the album as a whole has this bubblegum pop feel that I really like. And I have to say, *Spooky* is probably my favourite Lush album. Plus, it went top ten, and we had our first top Forty single with 'For Love'.

Steve: The early recordings were great fun, and getting into a real studio was a massive thrill. My favourite time was recording *Scar* and it's still my personal favourite, I think it represents our early sound best. I thought *Mad Love* and 'Sweetness And Light' turned out really well too, but *Spooky* is more like Robin Guthrie's idea of what we should sound like than ours. It was too digital-sounding for me.

Miki: Steve left after our 'secret' support appearance with Ride at ULU in London, in December 1991. To be honest, when Lush started, we needed a bassist and I asked Steve because he was a nice bloke, not because he was an amazing bass player! His taste in music was quite different to ours and I don't think he even liked any 4AD bands. Once he'd had the experience of a headline tour and making a record, he was done.

Steve: I'd had a brilliant time in the band but I wasn't keen to get on the tour-record-tour bandwagon which I could see looming, so I got out while I was still enjoying it. I missed Miki, Chris and Emma, but I spent my first year out of Lush travelling round the world with my girlfriend and it was the best thing I ever did so I didn't regret leaving.

Miki: Phil was recommended to us by a mutual friend, so we met up for a drink. As with Steve, finding a new member for Lush was primarily about liking the person. And we knew Phil had a strong background playing with

other bands.

Phil King (bass): I had been in The Beautiful Losers, and then The Servants, we supported all the Creation bands, and then I joined Felt. I was also in Biff Bang Pow, and had a solo single ['Love Resistance') under the name Apple Boutique. I'd met Emma, and I'd seen Lush play, I remember lots of giggling in between songs! They were like a late Seventies post-punk band, quite angular and interesting. Emma's chords had quite unusual formations, with melodic vocal harmonies over the top, they immediately sound like Lush. I didn't even have an audition. I learned all the bass parts from the record and got dropped in the deep end - 120 shows (in 1992), which included Lollapalooza.

Miki: We were stunned to be considered for Lollapalooza, and we had a whale of a time. It was like having front seats at the circus. The places were packed, and we got loads better live.

Split

Choosing a producer to replace Guthrie for a new album proved difficult, but after much deliberation, Mike Hedges got the job. The recording of Split was great, though this time, the mixing caused ructions, but eventually Lush made this writer's (and Ivo's) favourite Lush album. There was new-found intensity to the sound and lyrics - clear evidence of how far they'd come. But with their singles yet to break the national Top 30 - 4AD were not - yet - in the chart-chasing game - their new manager Howard Gough suggested preceding Split with two new singles on the same day, as if to say, We don't stand a chance, let's make a musical statement instead. At least the band's two distinct halves equally shone, from Miki's buzzing 'Hypocrite' to Emma's lengthy, languid 'Desire Lines'.

Emma: Howard had gone from hating us to becoming our manager after we'd released *Mad Love*. I think he liked us as people, but maybe he was just unhappy [at 4AD], or he was bored of plugging, or he could see an opportunity. Credit where it's due, it was Howard's persistence that got us Lollapalooza, but it got him thinking that we were some kind of rock contenders. There were all these female-fronted bands - The Cranberries and The Sundays, even Belly - that were suddenly selling a million, and there was a pressure on us to do the same. When people get a sniff of success in America, they just see dollar signs, and that definitely had an effect on Howard.

Miki: Warners loved working with Howard, maybe because he had a more corporate mentality and was into the business of 'shifting units'. Of course, that's important. Of course, we wanted to be successful, but the emphasis changed. Right from the start, it felt like Howard was pushing us to make a record to impress Reprise, rather than 4AD.

Emma: Howard was coming up with all these big American producers, like John Paul Jones and Rick Rubin. It was getting out of hand, and none of us wanted to record an album in America. I'd had a chat with Bob Mould about possible recordings, but he had his own definitive sound and, after Robin, we felt we needed to make an album that didn't have a producers stamp all over it, but sounded like Lush.

Miki: We loved *Sulk* [Associates], *A Kiss in the Dreamhouse* [Siouxsie And the Banshees) and *Seventeen Seconds* [The Cure], which Mike had all produced, and we thought he might get our kind of music.

Phil: We recorded at Rockfield in Wales and then mixed at Mike's house in France, but it sounded as flat as a pancake, no dynamics at all.

Miki: We weren't particularly keen to record in a residential studio - we don't 'jam' and grow the songs in that way, so it didn't really add anything. But again, I think Howard was pushing the idea, probably because he thought there was something more 'legendary' about the concept. Mike did a great job with the recording, but he insisted on mixing at his own studio in France, which was in the middle of nowhere. It was January, so it was bloody freezing, and we'd already been away from home at Rockfield for eight weeks. We were isolated and homesick - it was completely the wrong environment.

Emma: I think Mike just lost interest in the end. The mixes started going back to Ivo, who said they sounded like they were coming out of a transistor radio.

Miki: In our heart of hearts, we knew it sounded awful, so we remixed it. Ivo suggested that we have the entire album remixed by Alan Moulder, who had already worked with My Bloody Valentine and Ride. We were really demoralised by then, but Alan was brilliant. But Howard still had his eyes on America, so he railroaded us into doing a couple of mixes with [R.E.M. producer] Scott Litt. I think he just wanted his name to be associated with us. That was a complete waste of time and money. But, thanks to Alan, we were really happy with *Split* in the end.

Emma: We didn't get totally slagged off in the UK press, but the album was dismissed and largely ignored. Britpop was on the ascendant, and we weren't in step with that.

Miki: Some reviews said the lyrics were too dark; others said we were irrelevant because we only sang about fluffy clouds. How much darker could the lyrics be? There were songs about death in the family, child abuse, abandonment, neglect... The papers wanted to crucify shoegazing, like, *"that soft, Southern shite, let's hang this lot out to dry"*. I still stand by *Split*, and we shouldn't have listened to comments, but you needed a hard shell to deal with the critics, and we got bruised.

Emma: *Split* didn't sell as well as *Spooky* so tour-wise, we didn't hammer it to death. But being on 4AD, it wasn't a massive problem. They just said, It's fine, go away and write more songs. Also, the press stayed pretty positive in the US.

Loveline

Lush's third studio album, which turned out to be their last. Seven years after the first band show that Ivo had seen, they didn't need knocking into shape, and 4AD agreed to let their live sound engineer Pete Bartlett produce the record. Without the drama that had marred the recording of Spooky and Split, Bartlett got the desired results, with much less reliance on effects, to match the three-minute charge of the new tracks. Miki had written pop songs before, but nothing like the dynamic zip of 'Ladykillers' with its sharp putdown of misplaced machismo that you'd have expected more from The Baby Machines. Anderson's response was the ironic submission of 'Single Girl', brilliantly bittersweet with a marked Sixties lilt. But with the release of both tracks as singles, across a multitude of formats, the band needed a total of 14 B-sides. More were needed for a third single '500 (Shake, Baby Shake)' – and the pressure started to show...Especially when the band finally has success in the singles chart.

Emma: *Loveline* was very easy to make. Pete knew us better than anyone, and we were happy to be working in London again, rather than trapped in a residential studio in the middle of nowhere.

Phil: Alan Moulder had saved the day with *Split*, and it's my favourite Lush record, quite dark and brooding, though it starts with 'Hypocrite' which sounded poppier, as well as 'Lit Up', and 'God's Gift' (from the *Black Spring* EP). Those songs were reflected more on *Loveline*.

Miki: The response to *Split* had knocked my confidence as a songwriter. And the lyrics, which were so personal and raw, had been belittled. I remember one reviewer said something like, 'Everybody knows Miki was abused as a child. This isn't news'. I couldn't face exposing myself like that again, so with *Loveline*, the lyrics are less inward looking and more confrontational. And I threw everything at 'Ladykillers' – handclaps, simpler harmonies, sudden stops - to prove I could write a catchy song.

Emma: There was some accusation that we'd deliberately set out to make a Britpop record. No, we just wrote what came out. I was listening to Supergrass and Elastica at the time, so that may have had an influence. There was an element of, everyone's having a bloody hit, let's try and have a go, but it wasn't that calculated, they were just three-minute punchy songs. And it worked.

Miki: Chris [Acland] had said he'd like to sing on a track, but when I played 'Ciao!' to him, he said, "No way I can sing that!" We were mates with Pulp, so we asked Jarvis. He was great – he did it in one or two takes and made up the talking bit in the middle section. Of course, most of the UK press then accused us of jumping on the bandwagon, like, this is the Britpop album, they're trying to play catch up. But I can see a natural development from 'Hypocrite' to 'Ladykillers' and 'Lit Up' to 'I've Been Here Before'. It was us saying, We are confident, we don't have to cower. We felt brasher, more upbeat. The mood was chipper again.

Lush's chipper mood was soon to turn un-chipper when the band began to have management problems, which had the unfortunate effect of turning bandmates against each other.

Emma: Howard got totally sucked into running his record label, Laurel, and he lost interest in us completely. 4AD didn't want us to work with him anyway. So we'd got on with making *Lovelife*, and met other managers.

Miki: Warners suggested an American and Emma rightly said we didn't want someone always pulling us over there. The focus on America was making Emma turn the other way, saying it wasn't why she'd formed Lush, that Europe was more our sensibility. We chose The Boo Radleys' manager Peter Felstead, he was a bit pedestrian, but also a relief after Howard's craziness.

Emma: *Lovelife* had come out and we did well with 'Single Girl', we got on Top Of The Pops, and then again with 'Ladykillers'. America was rearing its head again, but we were doing well in the UK! We did a UK tour but had just eight days break before going to America to tour with [fellow 4AD bands] Mojave 3 and Scheer for the *Shaving The Pavement* tour. But the atmosphere was more hanging out, getting drunk and passing out, and less about breaking America.

Miki: We came home looking forward to a less gruelling summer of weekend festival dates in the UK and Europe . But yet again, our management got dazzled by the American dream. We were mentally and physically exhausted at this point, and Emma and I - who had always managed to solve our disagreements in the past - were not seeing eye to eye. A bit of time apart would have done wonders, but pressure was put on us to immediately go back to the US, and while Emma was violently against it, the rest of us caved. Peter was fixated on success in the US and saw Emma as the 'problem' and the rest of us as vacillators who could be won round. Never mind what that did to the internal relationships in the band.

Emma : Our last US tour supporting The Gin Blossoms was a complete mistake. Their audience hated us, and our fans couldn't see the point of coming to see us again after just a couple of months. And we missed out on touring Europe. Morale was rock bottom. I told management how unhappy we all were and they said, "Stop moaning, you're only there to keep them Warners interested or they'll move on to the next thing."

Miki: We went back to America for a radio festival tour, the KROQ Weenie Roast. That's fine because it's a big deal, but we found ourselves in Philadelphia, with only a handful of people in the audience, when we could be playing to big crowds at European festivals. Or in Britain!

Phil: The management was trying to break us to a new audience, but this audience was holding a big container of popcorn and coke. One Saturday night in Toledo, because of the licensing laws, there was a hockey net down the centre of the hall, with one side under 21 and the other over 21. I sat on this park bench beforehand, this homeless guy was on the other bench, and I thought, you know what? I'd quite like a normal day job.

Emma: In Connecticut, Miki got repeatedly soaked by bottles of water chucked by the crowd. She couldn't go near the microphone. This massive boot came towards me and I ducked and put my guitar down and walked off. What was the point? It wasn't helping sell records. The radio station called us pussies... That was the turning point for me. I decided I'd get through the tour and then leave.

Miki: We got back off tour, and she called a meeting with me and Phil – Chris was already back home in The Lakes. She said she was done with Lush, but that we could carry on without her, no problem. She wasn't interested any

more in chasing success and just wanted to make the music she wanted to make. I said, OK, the most important thing is to stay together, so let's get rid of management, we'll do it your way. But let's at least give it another chance. It was tentatively positive.

Emma: Chris was depressed and exhausted and had admitted he felt unable to tour again, but he felt he was letting us down if he didn't do the European dates. Together, we came up with a possible plan, to start with another drummer and maybe he could join us as soon as he felt ready. He was quite down, but he could go home to his parents, which would help. He was so such a lovely funny guy. There was not an inkling of what was about to happen.

Miki: Chris was a very up and sociable person, but anytime he felt low, he was very unforgiving with himself. He hated the thought of burdening his friends with his problems, of imposing a bad time on anyone. That's when he would return home, see his family, clear his head and recharge his batteries and things would be fine again. I phoned after the weekend, and his mum thought he'd gone out. Chris was dead by then. He hanged himself from a tree in the garden. It was such an unspeakable, crushing waste.

Phil: Chris was literally the last person in the world who'd do something like that. I remember talking to Mark Eitzel in a bar, I was feeling pretty down, and Chris was like the party animal, so when Mark heard that Chris had died, he thought it was me. I was first to find out, I heard he wasn't well, so I called to have a chat. We all went to ground. I still can't really listen to *Lovelife*, it's just overshadowed by Chris.

Miki: For me, Chris was the glue that held things together, the core of the band. It was all over.

Topolino / Chorus / Origami

Five months after Lovelife was released, 4AD compiled a number of recent B-sides for the album Topolino, for the Japanese market. A year later, another more representative version was released in Canada. It's the latter that has been used for Chorus, boosted by two tracks ('Piledriver' and 'Plums And Oranges') from the Japanese version. All five CDs in the box set have expanded track listings, while the vinyl box set's additional exclusive download adds another ten of Emma and Miki's home demos, so here's a guide to Lush's alternative recordings...

The B-sides

Emma : Of the B-sides that I wrote, my favourites are 'God's Gift' - musically, I was influenced by Big Star at the time - and "Carmen". Miki wrote the lyrics to both. Also 'Shut Up', which I had a deadline of literally the next day for, to write yet another B-side for the endless formats we were releasing in 1996. I was in bed, tired, thinking, I am never going to do this, and suddenly the melody came to me. I really like the result. Of Miki's, 'Ex' is a great song and also 'Dear Me', which was written before *Lovelife* was recorded, so I'm not sure why it wasn't recorded in the album sessions.

Miki: We had to write a ton of extra songs and we didn't just want sixteen different versions of the same *Lovelife* tracks, so there wasn't much time to develop them from the demo stage. I would have liked 'Half and Half' to have a bit more to it, but maybe it's just as well it didn't as it already caused a huge row between me and an ex-boyfriend!

Phil: I wrote two B sides around the time of *Lovelife*. 'Cul De Sac' was a bit jazzy and 'Matador' was bit Morricone, a bit like Marden Hill. Chris wrote a couple too, 'Piledriver' and 'Sweetie'.

Miki: I remember playing the recorder part for 'Tinkerbell' in the demo studio and I looked up from the vocal booth, behind a glass screen, and Pete Bartlett had vanished from the mixing desk. He was actually on the floor, doubled up and weeping with laughter, because the whole concept of a recorder solo was so ludicrous.

The radio sessions:

Emma: John Peel wasn't that keen at the start, I think he thought we were hyped. In the end, at a London gig, I had a copy of *Mad Love* and Howard said to give it to him in person, so I did, and we got this one session. When he saw we'd done 'Hey Hey Helen', he got very chipper, maybe he'd thought we were this po-faced 4AD band. He grew fonder of us after that.

The cover versions:

Emma: Of the cover versions that were B-sides, I am fond of 'Fallin' In Love' which was written by Denis Wilson of The Beach Boys. We used the American Spring version as the template, though, and not Denis' version. Robin Guthrie used one of his old beatboxes set to 'bossanova' as the rhythm track and it works really well. I also love 'I'd Like To Walk Around in Your Mind' by Vashti Bunyan. When we covered it, we didn't actually know what or who it was because Phil just had this white label single of it, so unfortunately on the B-side to one of the '500 (Shake Baby Shake)' CDs, it's just credited to 'Unknown'. I think the problem was solved eventually and Vashti did get some money!

Phil: The Vashti song came from an acetate that I'd been given. She told me it was the first time she'd ever received royalties from one of her songs! [The Magnetic Fields] 'I Have The Moon' and [The Gist's] 'Love at First Sight' were great, they were such fun. I'm not saying the albums weren't but there was pressure there, especially from management.

Miki: We'd had toyed with [Baccara's] 'Yes Sir I Can Boogie' for the *Alvin Lives (In Leeds)* Anti-Poll Tax compilation, but we went with [Middle Of The Road's] 'Chirpy Chirpy Cheep Cheep' instead. When we were recording it, Robin was going, "*Speed it up for fuck's sake, and enjoy it!*" He was right, we were trying too hard, and it suddenly all came together. After that, we approached all our covers from that perspective. I think that's why Colin Newman of Wire really liked our versions of his songs. The Rubinoos' 'I Wanna Be Your Girlfriend' [originally 'I Wanna Be Your Boyfriend'] was this really bubblegum track I had that Pete Bartlett really liked – it got cited in a court case when Avril Lavigne was accused of ripping off the original track for one of her singles. The Zounds cover was my choice, but Chris was delighted, it got him some kudos back with his punk rock mates who thought Lush were crap!

Emma: 'All this Useless Beauty' was an interesting one as Elvis Costello, whose song it was, asked us to cover it for a B-side for one of *his* singles. We did it and really liked the version - it's quite *Lushy*. A few years later, Greil Marcus wrote about it [in the book *Stars Don't Stand Still In the Sky. Music and Myth*] where he said our version of the song is, "*as hard, as resistant, as betrayed as anything in 'Anarchy in the UK'.*" 'Mannequin' was the second Wire cover we'd done, for a tribute album; the first was 'Outdoor Miner' for the B-side to 'For Love'. Recently Colin Newman said our versions were his favourite covers that anyone had ever done of Wire songs.

The remixes:

Emma: The Kevin Shields remix of 'Sweetness and Light' wasn't done for a Lush B-side, but for the American film *Splendor* that was released in 1998, so Kevin actually did that remix after Lush had split up. It is called 'The Orange Squash Mix' after an argument Kevin and I had years before where Kevin ended up pouring a bottle of undiluted squash over me while I was lying in bed. The Spooky mix of 'Undertow' was a B-side to 'Hypocrite'. It's probably the best, most inventive remix we ever had done - of course we had to ask Spooky to do a remix for us because we had had an album called *Spooky!*

Miki: Emma was more into the dance scene than I was. Sometimes I used to think it was a bit lazy doing remixes, and the dance scene could be a bit sneery toward indie, but that was probably more the people who listened to it, rather than the artists themselves! But I liked Spooky's remix of 'Undertow', which we started using as our live intro.

Emma: The 'Undertow' remix has a video with footage that Phil shot on super 8 film on the 1994 tour.

The acoustic session:

Emma: That was done around *Lovelife*, at the beginning of 1996 with Pete Bartlett, but we can't remember where it was done. I think it's really nice. I prefer the version of 'Olympia' to the album version.

The demos:

Miki: I used to take trouble over my home demos, I think because I was too shy to present a song as just the bare bones. So I'd fiddle with drum machines for hours, while Emma's demos would just have a click track! Her main interest was the melody, the musical quality of the song. But I also liked the contrast of some demos being stripped down and fragile, so you get the real essence of the song. We weren't the kind of band that came in with two riffs and a chorus and built the song up. It's a male thing, I think, that jamming and noodling about. "Half And Half" and "Dear Me" would have been for the record after *Lovelife*, I think. We've "Ladykillers" is pretty much already there as a demo but the demo of "Papasan" sounds completely different, it's much more shoegaze-y, as the *Lovelife* version ended up much more stripped back after we tried throwing different things at it that didn't work. "Untogether" is very different too, which shows Robin [Guthrie's] talent and skill at getting the best from the song – and proves wrong the naysayers who claimed he did nothing more than get out his Cocteau's box of tricks.

Emma: Miki was a lot more professional with her demos, she'd programme the drums while I would just use something like a loop. I like the demos as they're snapshots of how the songs came to be. For example, "Single Girl" had a different guitar melody to begin with, "Covert" was a band demo around the time of Spooky. We took the end of the "Problem Child" demo and used it for "Nothing Natural", which shows a work in progress. Miki's home demo of "Half And Half" was on the Volume 16 CD. The "Desire Lines" demo was on [4AD compilation] *The 13 Year Itch*, and neither has appeared anywhere else. "Lit Up" is from the same session as "Desire Lines", and was a Lush fan club flexi.