

Live Review: Lush – November 25th Manchester Academy 2016

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It couldn't have been more fitting. The first song I ever heard by Lush was the brilliant hypnotic Deluxe and this was the first track played at Friday's Manchester gig; the ultimate one they would ever play as announced earlier in the week. Considering Lush only got back together last year after an almost 20 year hiatus they sounded remarkably fresh and untethered by time.

They were supported by the brilliant Brix Smith and her band the Extricated who rocked and sung a rousing version of the Fall's LA. Well if they can't, who can? New single Something to Lose had a bad ass guitar sound. Brix sings like she means it and the whole set was energetic and a great fore-runner to Lush. As Lush came on the crowd cheered to Miki's "*Hiya. You're very polite in here.*" she smiled. "*Is no-one f***ing drunk yet?*" and so began an electrically charged gig. The energy was high voltage as Miki, Emma and Justin were joined by former 4AD label mate Michael Conroy, bass player from Modern English (and was also a close friend of their original drummer Chris Acland).

Many earlier tracks were played including Kiss Chase from the aptly titled Split with its haunting lyrics. Miki and Emma's vocals were pitch perfect on this and almost angelic. Throughout Miki's various guitar changes they played track after track from their earlier albums including Thoughtforms and Etheriel. With their trademark shimmering sound and feedback guitars they hypnotised a rapt audience with a sound that bordered on celestial. At one point someone shouted "Shoegaze!" and Miki laughed. "*We've reclaimed it*" before ploughing into further songs from the Lush back catalogue as they mesmerised further. Their new single Out of Control wasn't out of place with earlier songs. Far from dampening their talents their 20 year break appears to have crystallized their song writing capabilities.

As the razor sharp Ladykillers blasted out the crowd were rapturous and there we were again, taken back to the mid 90s era. "*Any merchandise not sold is lining my nuclear bunker!*" chimed Miki. They finished their set with the haunting, Sweetness and Light with some superb drumming from Justin Welch before coming back for an enchanting encore of Stray, Nothing Natural and Leaves Me Cold. But the audience weren't keen to let them go. "Encore!" they shouted, and so they came on once again, sung Monochrome with beauty and brevity before retiring and becoming once more a beautiful, ephemeral memory.

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