

Blind Spot EP

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In his review of [Still in a Dream: A Story of Shoegaze 1988-1995](#) —the recently released 5xCD box set that strives to illuminate/explain the so-called “Scene That Celebrates Itself”—Simon Reynolds describes the experience of hearing [Lush](#)’s 1991 single “De-Luxe” as something akin to “being buffeted by flower petals in a wind-tunnel.” It’s an apt description for a band that, over the course of four full-length albums, managed to strike a delicate balance between shimmering guitar squalls and jangly pop hooks. Though they were often unfairly regarded as sonic lightweights in regards to their peers—perhaps due to their airy vocal harmonies—Lush were always a formidable live act, capable of delivering sweetness and noise in equal measure. And while so many of their shoegazing brethren wrote lyrics that were as amorphous as their guitar effects (and then buried them deep in the mix), Lush traded in emotional intelligence, crafting songs that were as lyrically sharp as they were sonically adventurous.

Given the recent spate of shoegaze-era reunions—[My Bloody Valentine](#), [Ride](#), [Slowdive](#)—it’s something of a no-brainer that Lush would finally be making a comeback. Rather than simply embark on a cash-grabbing nostalgia tour, the band recorded *Blind Spot*—a sparkling 4-song EP that marks their first new output in two decades. Hewing closely to the ephemeral vibe of 1990’s *Gala* and the more plaintive tracks sprinkled across 1994’s *Split*, these new Lush songs are instantly unmistakable—the pairing of co-frontwomen Miki Berenyi and Emma Anderson’s voices and chiming guitar tones sounding every bit as diaphanous as they did over 20 years ago.

“[Out of Control](#)”—the EP’s first single—offers the kind of romantic yearning that made old songs like “Last Night” and “Desire Lines” such compelling listens. “I can’t understand why you won’t take my hand,” sings Berenyi throughout the track, “Out of control but I love you so much.” Elsewhere, “Burnham Beeches” bubbles with the same kind of lovelorn effervescence of *Spooky*’s “Untogether” (“I’m so shy, I never speak a word till we’re on our own,” admits Berenyi. “That’s just fine, as long as everybody leaves us alone.”) Closing track “Rosebud” is an oddly beguiling take on a Grimm “Sleeping Beauty” narrative in which the threat of eternal slumber is both ominous and strangely tantalizing: “Goodnight my baby girl and dream of Paradise/ My thorns will cradle you with love.” It would sound more sinister if the song itself wasn’t so lovely—all gently strummed rhythm guitar, gently shaken tambourine, and quietly employed strings.

It’s important to note that while many of the Lush’s dreamy peers and 4AD labelmates either dramatically crashed and burned or simply fizzled into obscurity, Lush ended their first career run on a tragically bittersweet note. The band’s last full-length, 1996’s *Lovelife*, was a commercial and critical high—a razor sharp feminist kiss off and hook-filled antidote to the laddish mentality of late ’90s Britpop. At a moment when they might have parlayed the success of songs like “Single Girl” and “Ladykillers” into even bigger mainstream success, drummer and founding member Chris Acland took his own life. It proved to be a loss so profound that it appeared as though it would essentially silence the band forever. It’s hard not to think of Acland when listening to “Lost Boy,” the EP’s simplest and most haunting track. “I should have never let you out of my sight,” sings Berenyi. “Desperate to be beside you, I didn’t know I’d never see you again.” Whether or not the song is an oblique reference to Acland’s passing, it hints at the kind of abject heartbreak that is often impossible to overcome, making the band’s poised return all the more remarkable.

If there’s a weakness with *Blind Spot* it might simply be its brevity, or perhaps the marked absence of the kind of swaggering sonic guitar bombast the band unleashed in old songs like “Sweetness and Light” or “Superblast!.” Regardless, *Blind Spot* feels like an assured—albeit somewhat tentative—way for the band to dip their toes back in the water. It would be great if the EP served as something more than just a primer for the band’s forthcoming reunion tour. Hopefully it will provide the kind of emotional throat-clearing they need in order to set about recording another full-length record. Clearly, they still have plenty to say.