

# Lush Return From the Abyss

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by Doug Wallen | Apr 26, 2016 1:01:PM



Formed in the late eighties and signed to iconic art-rock label 4AD, London quartet Lush confounded tidy genre tags during the media's obsession with both shoegaze and Britpop. They were dreamy and poppy, but also melancholy and subversive. And their songs hold up remarkably well today, whether it's stinging anthems like the openly feminist "Ladykillers", airy confection like "500 (Shake Baby Shake)" or noise-swept vistas like "Nothing Natural".

Lush have reconvened for their first material in two decades, after the 1996 suicide of drummer Chris Acland effectively ended the band's output. They're playing their first reunion shows this month – including a spot at Coachella – and have just released a richly textured EP, *Blind Spot*. Coinciding with a new vinyl box set plus a repressing of a previous box set, *Blind Spot* continues the band's talent for combining surreal, effects-warped guitar-pop with sharp-tongued lyrics.

Having recruited Elastica drummer Justin Welch, Lush's remaining members – singer-guitarists Miki Berenyi and Emma Anderson, and bassist Phil King – are easing back into being a band. That means juggling rehearsals and songwriting with parenting and careers. Anderson wrote the EP's four new songs while Berenyi penned the lyrics, meditating on raising a teenager ("Out of Control", the bullying-inspired "Rosebud"), the disorientation of young love ("Burnham Beeches") and a recent dream she had about their former drummer ("Lost Boy").

"It was tricky. I came up with a lot of first drafts that were... not very good," says Berenyi. "But eventually I started feeling better about it. It was like getting the old machinery cranked up."

Lush had talked about reuniting before, but seeing Nineties contemporaries like Slowdive do it tastefully helped bring them around to the idea. “I always thought there was something a bit shit about re-forming,” says Berenyi. “But when they did it, it was a really positive thing and they had a really good time.”

Still, she worried about ruining the band’s legacy: “There was a discussion about doing an album immediately, but the lifeblood drained out of me at the thought of it. I think we needed to start piecemeal. Doing four tracks was a good way to get back into it without it feeling daunting and immediately a burden.”

Before their first shows, there’s the small matter of figuring out how to play all these songs again. “I can’t remember how half of them go,” says Berenyi. “I’ll have to comb YouTube for all kinds of live performances to figure out what the bloody hell I’m doing.”

Despite her hesitation, *Blind Spot* fits comfortably into the treasured Lush canon, though it’s quieter and subtler than the band’s best-known singles. “It felt like Lush immediately,” Berenyi agrees. “It wasn’t like we were coming back as a jazz/funk band. I quite liked that, picking up almost where we left off.”

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