

Live Review: Lush with The Young Evils at Showbox at the Market 4/20/16

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all photos by Kari N. Taylor ([view set](#))

Not New York City. Not Los Angeles. **Lush's** first U.S. show in 20 years was right here in Seattle. The honor was not lost on the hundreds of fans who lined up early outside the venue to get closer to the stage, and who swarmed the merchandise table immediately upon entering The Showbox, like ravenous parents on Black Friday racing through Toys-R-Us to get the toy-du-jour. It was Lush. *LUSH*. A band who brought feminism to the shoegaze scene, fronted by two strong women whose lyrics were unapologetically emotional and confessional. There have been a lot of shoegaze reunions lately, but this one felt particularly special.

Seattle's own **The Young Evils** opened the show, and yes, even they seemed unsure if they should be there. "We'll be quick," frontwoman McKenzie Mercer told the audience, almost apologetically. They needn't have been so sheepish: sure, their '80s-inspired stadium rockers sound nothing like the ethereal dream-pop of Lush, but I could tell the band chose the moodier, more melodic pieces of their discography for the set list.

Wearing an Iron Maiden t-shirt and hot pants, Mercer confidently strode about on stage, her voice sounding stronger than ever. Sideman Troy Nelson (yeah, yeah, [that guy](#)) jumped in on backing vocals, and played guitar, keyboards, and shook a maraca like it owed him money. By the end of their set, I wouldn't be surprised if they had made some new fans out of the '90s-nostalgic audience.





Lush took the stage to a roar of applause louder than My Bloody Valentine's guitars. The band looked relieved to be there: earlier that week, it was announced that the band were cancelling their west coast dates due to Visa problems. And then, they announced that the last dates of the tour had been salvaged. I feel terribly for the fans in California and Portland; those shows have been rescheduled for later this Fall.

They kicked off the show with "De-Luxe" followed by "Breeze," both on their 1990 singles collection on 4AD, *Gala*. With every dreamy guitar line and every swoony harmony, I was transported to those pre-teen days, when I first bought that album on cassette, and my oft-mentioned best friend Becky and I would dress up like the Lush frontwomen Miki Berenyi and Emma Anderson. (In retrospect, it would've made more sense if I was Miki, since I'm half-Japanese like she is, but Becky had the brightly colored hair, and I had the dark hair and bangs, so... Speaking of Berenyi's infamously dyed reddish-pink hair, it — like our youth — is long-gone.)



The set was mostly focused on their earlier sound, thank goodness. Much like their fellow four-letter-band-name band (and former tour mates) [Ride](#), Lush transformed themselves mid-career, going for more of a power-pop sound. They surely couldn't have left the 1996 single "Ladykillers" off the setlist, seeing as how it was one of their bigger "hits," but it did stand out like a sore thumb. Funnily enough, the song they played before "Ladykillers" was a new one, "Out of Control" off their recently released EP *Blind Spot*. That track fit in flawlessly among the others in the set list, leaving me so excited to hear more new music from the reformed group.

Well, reformed with the exception of founding drummer Chris Acland, whose suicide in 1996 devastated the band and whose presence was definitely missed. An old friend of his, Justin Welch of *Elastica*, is filling in on this tour, and while he did a perfectly fine job, it was hard not to think of Chris. While both Miki and Emma were self-taught, Acland had studied percussion at the prestigious Lakes School in the UK. His backbeat helped ground the heavenly, airy guitar noise. I can only assume the first band rehearsals following their reunion must've been bittersweet.

They played everything I could've wanted: the "Etheriel"/"Scarlet" double-hitter was utter perfection. Both "For Love" and "Sweetness and Light" were gut-punchers of beauty. The one surprise was "Nothing Natural" being left off the set list, despite the guy in the audience who kept bellowing for it.

After the first encore ended, some of the crowd started to leave, and at one point, the house music even turned back on. But, a large group of fans kept cheering. It was just so incredible to hear them live again after 20 years; most of us were still reeling. There was a cute moment where I saw their heads peeking out from a doorway backstage. And then, they came back out again, closing the night with the gorgeous "Monochrome," a swoonsome sonic ballad, and one of their longer, more epic tracks. About midway through a wash of feedback, chiming perfectly with Emma's, I could see Miki starting to get teary-eyed, which made me teary-eyed. I think it's safe to say this reunion means just as much to them as it does to us.

