



LUSH

BLACK SPRING EP (4AD)

THEY'RE back, riper, heavier, even fighting. Lush have been so well scrutinized since they first emerged in 1989 that I can never avoid the feeling that they're being escorted, coached to greatness like a promising young boxer, that the measurable improvement of "Black Spring" is proof that things are going as planned. The fact that these groups milk off their creativity in a succession of EP's suggest that wiser counsels are prohibiting them from making fools of themselves, or stumbling into excess, over a full album. Nevertheless, this is great.

They apparently felt that the B-side, "God's Gift" should have been the main track. Here, Lush practically roll up their sleeves and rock out, Miki's fragile vocals dragged along in the exhaust fumes. There's also a tastefully regressive cover of Dennis Wilson's "Falling In Love" which features an almost camp, Cap'n Morgan/Hammond organ-type drum machine.

Best here for me is "Nothing Natural", Lush at their most violent, violet, violated and vigorous, with the delicate, "ba-ba-ba" vocals snarled at by the open scars of feedback. And "Monochrome" is an exquisitely mournful study of the tedium of anxiety ("Sometimes I sit by the phone and hope it will ring"), guitars like sleighbells in the fog and clouds wrapped around silver linings, it's been done before but Lush make it sound as fresh as dew here.