

The bastard plumber is late. Lush's toilet won't flush. If they want to go to the lav they have to rush down to the local pub where Tex the mad ex-mortician C&W singer sits telling stories about his cattle rustling days in Lewisham. Plus they might get accosted by the oddball with the pile of library books who keeps trying to tell them "what it was really like in the Third Reich".

Lush's Miki and Chris do not live in a dreamy ivory tower. They live in a terraced house in Camberwell, which Chris grinningly points out is also the home borough of Duncan Goodhew, Lorraine Chase, Kenneth Branagh, Guy Chadwick and Bullet Baxter, the teacher from *Grange Hill*. Right now, Lush figure pretty low down on the list of Camberwell luminaries. But this is about to change. For Lush have just released an EP, 'Mad Love' which assures them of a future celebrity which will thoroughly eclipse their semi-famous neighbours.

This time, Lush have come up with the goods. Last year, along with their 4AD label mates Pale Saints, Lush were written up as the brightest of sparks in the grey world of Brit pop. They then spent most of '89 dealing with niggardly accusations of 'hype'. Admittedly their October mini-LP 'Scar' was only 60 per cent scintillating, but it was still a bold and believable promise.

With Cocteau Twin and Lush fan Robin Guthrie producing, the new four-song EP is a hyperventilated hop forward into fully inflated Lush-ousness. It divides roughly into the waltzing, head over heels, serene songs 'Thoughtforms' (re-worked from 'Scar') and 'Deluxe', and the snarly, multi-textured frenzies of 'Downer' and 'Leaves Me Cold'. There is Emma scraping away at dischord guitar. And there is Miki,

sweetly coaxing with her voice. There is madness and there is love, and this, Emma darling confides, is probably why it's called 'Mad Love'. And love is... THE FOUR disparate elements of Lush - Mick Berenyi, Emma Anderson, drummer Chris Acland and bassist Steve Rippon - are lounging around their living room amidst the everyday chaos of cats and ashtrays and college poetry books and Tottenham FC videos. They are opening up their hearts. Well actually they're opening up a packet of 'Love Hearts' sweeties and collapsing into fits of giggles at the inscriptions on them.

"I bet I get the one that says 'You Smell'" mutters Miki, grabbing the top sweet. "Oh my God!" 'Dream Girl' it says... Ha ha ha heurgh!"

Chris: "Mine's 'I Like You'. Erkl!"

Steve: "I've got 'Don't Blush'."

Emma: "'First Love'... Yeeeeeuck!"

Everyone looks like they're about to throw up, which seems like a good time for the ultimate Slush-Lust test. So then Chris, if you had to choose between getting out of bed to go and see Tottenham play, or staying in bed for a shag, which would it be?

Chris: "Both. Have a shag, and then go and shag all the Tottenham players."

Miki: "Ha ha ha hee hee-eeek."

Chris: "Actually it depends on how I was feeling. I think I'd rather go and see Tottenham play because a game lasts for 90 minutes and a shag lasts about three seconds (*speak for yourself - Ed*)."

Alright, let's forget romance.

IT HAS to be said that despite the heavenly abstractions of their music, Lush are pretty grounded types. Game for a bit of a smirk, you might say. There is, for instance, disputed evidence that it was Emma who first approached photographer Kevin Cummins with the idea of doing the photos in body-paint. A splendid idea, of course, and one which put the fear of God into the très tasteful, darling, types at 4AD. But Lush went for it anyway.

It isn't that they don't take their music seriously. It's just that their attitude to their creeping celebrity is one of much self-deprecation,

born of a healthy sense of the ridiculousness of becoming 'rock people'.

Did you have it tough in the beginning?

Emma: "Yeah. We had it tough 'cause we were shit."

Steve: "We deserved it tough."

Do Lush have an attitude?

Steve: "I had an attitude this morning."

What was it?

Steve: "I've forgotten... I left it in the gas showroom when I went in to pay the bill."

Miki: "Fnarr har har heurgh."

There is in fact a type of confidence in Lush's under-selling of themselves. They are bright enough to know that any attempt at a sales pitch along the 'We're-the-best-most-now-wow-fututre-band-in-the-country' lines would come across as conspicuously fake. They don't need it. And it's just not 'them'.

A year ago all four Lush-es were still students at the Polytechnic of North London and Emma has yet to finish her Eng Lit course there (Emma: "God knows why I'm still doing it!"). They all have dodgy pasts on the peripheries of gig life, some of which they even own up to.

Steve was The Bob Dylan Of Bracknell, playing long rambling folksy stuff with "boring harmonica solos". Emma and Miki, who grew up together around St John's Wood, were both in unmentionable pre-Lush bands and worked on the infamous "teenage smut" fanzine *Alphabet Soup*. And Chris was a "lovable spikey-top" Goth-cum-Punk, stumbling over Lake District hilltops in his bondage strides. Heroic, really.

Nobody except Steve seems to have taken their college work very seriously.

Chris: "I just used to get in there, go to the bar, get pissed, then go home."

Miki: "I spent the first year completely inebriated. You were meant to do eight essays a year or something, but everyone just did

four."

Steve: "I did all eight."

Miki: "Did you? YOU F—ING SWOT! Bloody hell! God! All these closet SWOTS!"

Being less than fulfilled by their academic studies they dragged themselves away from college bars (and libraries, Steve) and by October '88 Lush proper had come into being. There then came the usual grubby pub/college gigs (including the memorable night playing second on the bill to *Playschool's* Fred Harris), followed by the initial raving press reviews, the eventual spotting by 4AD head Ivo and tours with The Darling Buds and Loop and support slots with The House Of Love at the ICA. All of which was just the prelude.

As daytime radio gradually ceases to bore itself to death playing the same stock dance record over and over, Lush are poised to move into the gap. And the very fact that they are up for playlisting is quite remarkable since Lush's status as a desirable distraction owes nothing to amp smashing sensationalism (Birdland) or acid dazed body-culture (the rest of the newly radio friendly lot). If there is a Lush bloodline to be traced, it zig-zags back through a Primitives/Cocteau/Banshees lineage which is hardly advantageous at the moment.

But it just so happens that Lush's version of shimmer'n'scythe pop is superbly, teasingly executed. Not Equity culture, more cup o'tea culture.

Emma: "I think we'd look a bit funny if we suddenly started wearing flares and growing mop tops."

Miki: "I can't imagine sitting down and going 'Oooh, we'd better have a dance number'."

Perhaps you're just not body people.

Chris: "We're body-painting people."

Perhaps you're taking the

"I'd rather see Tottenham play than have a shag because a game lasts 90 minutes and a shag lasts about three seconds." - Chris

24.2.90

wrong drugs.

Emma: "I don't even drink tea or coffee. I take Feminax though. I gotta coupla taps of that . . . man."

Are you a health food shop type?

Emma: "I am a bit."

Chris: "She's got the beard for it."

Miki: "Ha heurgh heurgh!"

Chris: "She goes about on a push-bike with a basket on the front."

Emma: "Well I do 'pop in' . . . With a bushwacker helmet on."

Miki: "Ho ho ho har . . . gloop."

LUSH MAY not like it, but there is no escaping the glamour potential of the band. Wouldn't they look just luvverly on a chatshow? A few weeks back I watched a thousand strong French crowd fall instantly in lus(h)t with the flirt-free Miki before Lush had even plugged in their guitars. Already there are rumours of clothes modelling offers. Already the boys in the band are beginning to mysteriously disappear from front cover shots. Lush do not approve.

Chris: "Especially because me and Steve are the most attractive members."

Miki: "It's just the usual thing of people liking to think of us as bimbos or something. Or just the music coming second to the novelty thing."

Emma: "At least we play instruments so we haven't had it as bad as some."

Do you think Wendy James is a feminist hero?

Miki: "No I don't. I think she should keep her mouth shut. I mean, they look really good and can get away with it, but as soon as she opens her mouth . . . With people like that it's like they're working to some sort of plan of something."

Lush haven't even got a manager, let alone a plan for burrowing into the heart of the charts. Also they still haven't got a functioning toilet. They loll around the pleasantly scruffy front room, swapping droll remarks, wondering where the plumber's got to and trying to work out if they've got enough money to go down the pub. They haven't. At times like this their disinclination to make a grab for a bit of the limousine lifestyle starts to look a bit strange.

Wouldn't you like to be international megastars?

Emma: "Well . . . I wouldn't mind. It depends how."

Would you be good on chat shows?

Miki: "Oh God!"

So you'd settle for being indie sex symbols?

Miki: "Chris already thinks he is."

Chris: "No I don't. I don't want to be anything particularly. This guy from a music paper the other day said we were pop. I think we're a bit rock, and pop . . . And punk. I'd rather be called a punk band."

Miki: "Oh God, you would."

Chris: "No, not in that sense. I just mean in the sense of being like The Clash or The Sex Pistols as opposed to being the bloody Pooh Sticks!"

Would you ever sign to a major label?

Emma: "No."

Chris: "They'd just try and turn you into a chart band anyway. You'd get the massive advance, the good producers, they'd try and bring out something commercial, they'd give a few goals and then they'd drop you."

"I'd be quite happy to get into the charts but I'd want to do it like someone like the Buzzcocks or The Jam. The only reason those songs got into the charts was because they were really good, and they weren't written to be commercial. I wouldn't want to do it in any poxy sort of way."

So Lush don't get high on fame and money. They have never taken Ecstasy (see above - Ed) and tend to get all un-co-ordinated after half a pint of lager. Where then does the impetus for Lush's tingling, uplifting thrillscapes come from? They have Warhol and Wilde on their bookshelves and surrealist posters outside their (still blocked) toilet. Ah! They must be closet art junkies.

What get's you excited?

Miki: "Football."

Oh well.

Chris: "Nah. I'm sick of talking about football. Every interview goes 'Chris is a Tottenham fan', you know . . . Chris has got one dimension to his personality. You should see my stamp collection."

Miki: "Hurgh ha ha!"

So what about the literary stimulus? Do you want to re-interpret Dostoyevsky?

Chris: "No. We want to re-interpret the *Sunday Sport* . . . actually we want to be in the *Sunday Sport* . . . Elvis Found Singing For Lush! . . . Ha hargh ho!"

Miki: "Lush Found On The

Moon!"

Isn't 'Thoughtforms' supposed to be inspired by a Kandinsky painting?

Emma: "Naaaah! That's bollocks! I never said that. All I said was there's just this book

called *Thoughtforms*. It's got all these weird shapes and they're all supposed to represent an emotion, and Kandinsky picked up on all this stuff about colours and shapes and moods. It's just, you know . . . pretentious."

The afternoon is fading away rapidly, the Camberwell nutcases are still in the pub, the bog is still blocked, and we're rapidly coming to the conclusion that there are no easy explanations about Lush. Do you think Lush are an

important group?

Emma: "Dunno . . . Well you sort of think about it sometimes, about how you fit into the scheme of things but without coming to any conclusions."

Chris: "What was it that French

geezer asked us? Oh yeah. 'What is Lush?' I mean what are you supposed to say? . . . A subtle blend of herbs and spices?"

Well you could say that. Me, I go for reluctant pop stars. Or a brilliant unblocking of pops drains.