



Hey, Miki, you're not fine . . .

BACK LUSH!

LUSH EDINBURGH VENUE

NOT EXACTLY a bold declamation is it? Lush; a bit green, moist maybe, and rather dense. The green bit, at least, is undeniable. Not as in eco-friendly, but budlike, embryonic, a quart of Baby Bio short of fully grown.

Lush play it enigmatic. They don't talk if they can possibly avoid it, and when they sing it's for the percussive value of the words. The only audible lyrical fragment all night – tra la las aside – is the word "Heaven", a good one in its context, but sadly misapplied here to summon up the mystical fog so beloved of old-style hallucinogenic rockers.

The set begins haltingly, with distortion, swishing cymbals, puffed out guitar lines and a lullaby vocal. The bits don't quite fit; it's like Tracey Thorn fronting The Jesus And Mary Chain. As the dew settles some much needed aggression develops; the flanged excesses of the guitars are swapped for fuzzy powerchords and the drums summon a toy army biscuit tin rumble. The problem may be in the mix. A siren guitar raises the tone slightly, but the whole is less than the sum of the mismatched parts. At least the songs are short. This one is like Ben Watt fronting the Buzzcocks.

Another song, another style. This one is more representative, building on a repeated bass motif, played high against tangled angel wails. It's nothing less than the return of Overcoat Rock. Cure fans may argue that this regrettable sub-genre never went away, and there is more

than a hint here of the more obtuse exploits of Fab Bob and his crones. The female vocal confuses, but the persistent equivocation over the song's time signature gives the game away.

By now it's clear that technical gremlins are not to blame. Lush sound this way because they want to, eschewing common concerns like hummability or – perish the thought – meaning. Instead they go for broad atmospheric sweeps and Anadin rushes which dull the brain before dissolving the lining of your stomach in one big depressive gulp.

The performance is, at best, naive. The jumble of avant-garde styles is not unlike that which greeted the Queen when she visited the British Art Show. A clutch of scrappy ideas which have long lost their artistic primacy. A group with no charisma to speak of. The best they might hope for is to find work on soundtracks for imaginary remakes of *Barbarella*.

Forty minutes in, the Lush experience wobbles to its conclusion. A chant goes up – a strangely direct response – and a two song encore is granted. Here the playing is more purposeful; lushing guitars give way to crashing drums, feedback and, for the first time, a tune. Lush are playing pop, just a little too late.

Brought back again they are forced to repeat the song with the Rover Assorted drumrolls. A pudgy-faced gothette turns to her flour-faced chum: "Well, that was better than the Mary Chain," she says. The Queen was right. You've got to laugh.

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