



LIVE

EDITED BY HELEN MEAD

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"I DON'T like words," says the erstwhile centre of attention with the shock of bright red hair. "Why?" inquires the journalist querulously. "Oh, I'm gonna get really heavy now," she replies. "Words don't say enough; they limit you; they're too strict. Every word you say is formed by your culture, so you've got to express yourself through that culture. Inevitably, there's a distance between your thoughts and what you actually say. That bothers me."

"Most people think all Lush sing about is sex," the journalist continues, egging her on. "Really? We don't just sing about sex," she retorts. "That comes into it. It comes into everything. Everyone sings about f—ing."

In the plush foyer of a Newcastle hotel, the post-gig Miki is pissed beyond the call of duty, swearing like a market woman. Emma isn't that far behind, but she articulates the fact she doesn't like football and refuses to play sociologist. Steve is quiet, but jovial, seemingly determined not to give anything away, while Chris rises to the occasion like a trouper.

"I do think we're preaching to the converted," he claims, "because you can spot a Lush audience a mile off. It's students and bedsit indie-kids, which is sad in a way, but it would be nice to have a bit of crossover. At least we sometimes get stage-divers and stuff, but we also get a lot of wankers who're there for the women and 'get your tits out'. We know how to deal with them."

Soon Lush will have to worry about the bigger picture. The cosy underground that spawned them is rapidly expanding and chart success is on the horizon. No longer will they have to play to 300 odd people in Brighton (slightly less tonight; Newcastle is home to crusty rockers who like the familiar) and try and prevent papers from reviewing them. The reasons are varied: they've developed gradually over the last two years, the songs are delightful and the image is unassailable. With low-key tours of Japan and America in the offing, soon they'll be unreachable, but hopefully without alienating those who only like small and impenetrable acts.

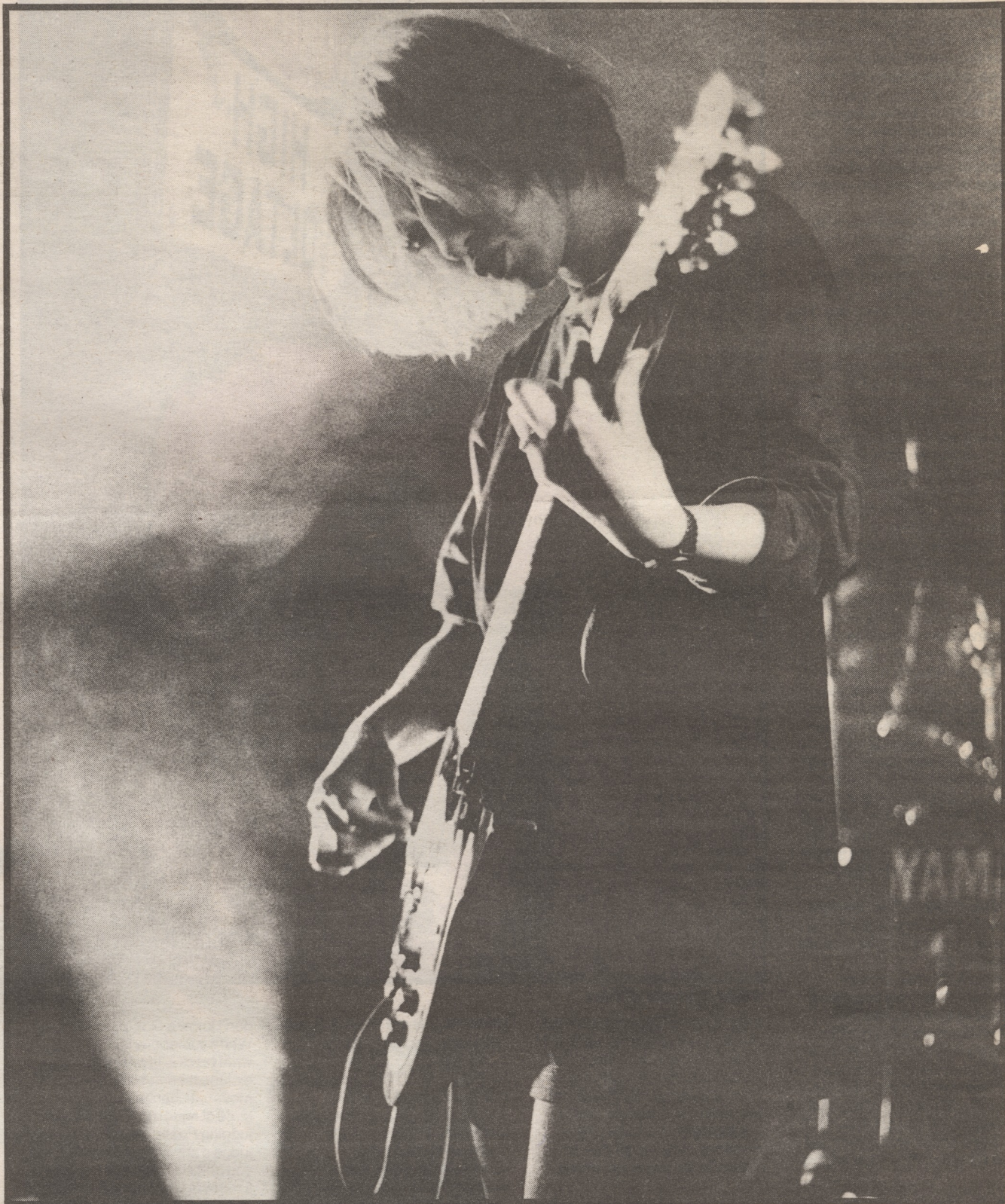
Right now Lush are as normal, down-to-earth and friendly as you can get without laying it on with a trowel. Anyone expecting them to be vaguely arty just because they're on 4AD is bound to be shocked by their candour and head-placed-firmly-on-the-shoulders demeanour. They don't treat fan worship as something strange because both Emma and Miki have been on the other side: what galvanised them to start Lush was a desire to make their own personal contribution, to start off where the bands they liked set off from and take things much further.

They feel they've been harshly scrutinised just because women in rock are in a minority and even feminists don't seem to understand they're just doing things (like those infamous topless shots) for a scream, not to set back the struggle.

Live, Lush are fast coming into their element. Although beset by technical problems and hitches, they're a long way from the shambling outfit that used to play London's dingier holes. Lush rock out, but not in any conventional sense: this is '90s guitar music with a twist, feeding on the past to go forward as opposed to replicating the past exactly for nostalgia's sake. Miki loves the limelight yet loses herself in the music, her wispy and frail tones not so much riding the mix as being submerged. Emma is quite underated as an axe-person even though she cajoles striking sounds from her instrument at will.

There's a balanced mixture of the atonal and the melodic to plug into here. Which is why Lush might at first seem overpowering, but patient listening reveals a method to the madness. Maybe the reason they seem different from the likes of the Pale Saints is the lack of obvious riffs and harnessed experimentation as opposed to wilful, knowing re-jigging of clichés. But I'd also like to think it's because they're been

FIRE LIGHTERS



PICTURES: MARTYN GOODACRE

'I'll give him 'wispy and frail... ' Miki prepares to unleash another Quo powerchord

influenced by what's going on in clubs — they're all determined clubbers — without actually changing their music to suit the clubs.

For instance, 'Sweetness And Light', the new single and the most effective slice of Lushism tonight, is a rock song superimposed on a slightly sped-up hip-hop rhythm. This might not seem like anything new, but the way it's executed lends an individuality that'll help 'em escape any comparisons to Primal Soup Charlatans. The end effect is upful, not miserabilist, although they do possess some wrist-slitting ditties. But thankfully there's nothing Satanic about the way they sometimes reach the lowest of lows; these love songs from another planet aren't unnecessarily perverse.

'Deluxe' and 'Covert' also show another side to Lush — you can actually hum along. This'll stand them in good stead when competing against regulated chart pop, even if Chris insists that they're not bothered by the charts. At the end of the day, they've got to make a mark on the real world, and stand up for *difference* in times of numbing conformism. Hesitantly, they're on the way...

Back at the hotel, Chris is coming to terms with Lush's current presence in the Top 50.

"I don't think we're gonna be chart succesful," he offers. "If I wanted any success it would be on the level of The Jesus And Mary Chain, and the Pixies, who have steady support, not like The Primitives or The Darling Buds who have one hit and are then seen to have gone downhill."

"I know it sounds crap, but we'd just like artistic licence, to be allowed to do what we wanna do without outside interference."

But doesn't that lead to self-indulgence?
 "Not really. We're pretty straightforward and easy to listen to. It's not like we're doing free-form stuff. Even if people don't instantly like us that's not a bad thing; I find songs you like instantly tend to wear off, and more insidious ones last longer."

Yes, Lush are insidious. And they're coping quite well with road fatigue, not suddenly going haywire and developing Napoleon complexes, or partaking of the usual rock excesses. One thing's certain, even when the bubble bursts on the current indie upsurge, they'll still be around.

Born survivors.

Dele Fadele



'Duvet mean us?...' Lush take in-band-mateyness to extremes...



Lush only eat what they kill (rabbits, that sort of thing...)