



Miki: Lush strokes

DECIDE AND CONQUER

LUSH

LONDON NEW CROSS VENUE

WHEN THE lights dim and the crowd surge forward to cheer Lush through their opening number, 'Bitter', the first thing one notices is that expectation, not sleazy condescension, is in the air. It is to Lush's credit that they are able to maul and mollify this Venue crowd tonight, for the most part unhindered by 'Gerremoff' requests, for with two good looking females in the band this kind of audience response seems almost obligatory.

Unlike that other, fleetingly promising indie sort Wendy James, who threw her credibility to the winds in favour of becoming just another Walking Cleavage on the Undie Scene, Lush are smart enough to realise that there's more to be had from this caper than a lifetime spent stumbling around pop's glorified peepshow with your knickers around your ankles.

Tonight their quick mateyness charms both sexes effortlessly. The boys in the crowd may be more used to being pampered with 'come-on' signals from the stage, but they instinctively know Miki and Emma's 'Gettouthere' approach is far sexier. A shame then that this secret gig/rehearsal for their forthcoming American tour is a tad patchy. This

is not to say that the good news about Lush is not evident in italics for all but the most musically dyslexic to enjoy. We get the fairground mania of 'Deluxe', the angry parable of 'Sweetness And Light' and – lest we forget – 'Breeze's nagging, anarchic hooks.

On the downside the newer material, more speculative and fluid than we are used to from Lush, tends to limp a bit when steady acceleration is necessary, while better known songs – 'Babytalk' and 'Downer' – dissolve too easily into fussy feedback nonsense. Irony fans out there can now thrill to the fact that whereas Lush first sprang to prominence partly because of their refreshing lack of pretensions to any muso-professionalism whatsoever, their futures now spin almost exclusively on this very axis. A nip here, a tuck there, in short a touch of precision in all directions is all that is needed to reduce Lush's detractors to bite-sized morsels.

As they are currently on the brink of a major US tour and possible world domination, now would seem a good time for Lush to decide whether to confuse or conquer. Whatever happens, going on the evidence of their onstage persons tonight, at least we don't look like losing Emma and Miki to the Undies.

Barbara Ellen