

## Emma Anderson of LUSH Talks To Alex Green About The Stone Roses

What was your opinion of The Stone Roses in the 80s?

I thought they were fantastic. I even had a photo of them on my wall, which for a 21 year old was a bit embarrassing.

What do you think the strengths of the debut are?

Not a bad song on the album. It is a great guitar album – it's a classic.

Did you ever see the band play live? What were they like? Can you describe the experience?

I saw them quite a few times. I saw them just before they hit the big time--at The Powerhouse and the ICA in London--I was very near the front (was already a fan by this point) and the shows were electric. I also saw them at Spike Island which was OK but I also saw them at one of their (in) famous shows not long before they spilt--at Benicassim, Spain in 1996. They were dreadful – Ian Brown's vocals just couldn't hold up to big festivals (I think).

What was the general attitude bands had regarding The Roses? Did commercialism do those Manchester bands in? After a while those flares.....

I never knew anyone that didn't like The Roses--they seemed to be universally respected and appreciated. NME gave them 6 out of 10 for the first album though and it looked a bit silly in retrospect for that! I don't think commercialism did the bands in--I think it was a scene that ran its course and some of the bands only had one good song e.g. Paris Angels and 'Perfume'. The Roses, Mondays, Inspiral Carpets and New Order survived it all somewhat intact to have careers past the days of 'Madchester'....

What are the best numbers on the debut and why?

My favourites are 'Waterfall' which I first heard on a TV programme called 'The Other Side of Midnight' which was a Granada-made Manchester programme presented by Tony Wilson (who else?). I just immediately fell in love with the song. And 'Don't Stop' is so clever being a backwards version of 'Waterfall'.

Also, I love 'Made of Stone' which is what turned me on to them in the first place--I remember the first time I heard it at a friend's house--I was absolutely blown away.

Noel from Oasis says in 'Live Forever' 'that when E came along it was viewed as a new drug'--what does he mean by this? Surely it had made the rounds by then...

Erm, yes it pretty much had done the rounds by the time 'Live Forever' came out! I mean it was about 1987 that it really started making an impact and by 1988/9 many,

many young people were doing E. That carried on into the early 1990s (when 'Live Forever came out) but by the mid-90s it was kind of dying out because of the prevailing culture (Britpop ruled then) and because of the poor quality of the drugs.

Were you aware of a proliferation of E at that time? Who was taking it mostly? Was it only associated with rave culture? Why the sudden rise in its popularity?

Yes, I was totally aware of it. Everyone was taking it and, no, it was not just limited to ravers. At all. The famous image is always of football fans, who were previously getting drunk and acting aggressively all hugging each other on E. Why? Because it was fun and here was a drug that promoted friendliness, though that wasn't always a good thing in itself. (i.e. you could end up being very false with people who were not and never would be your friends – though it didn't feel false at the time!).

Drugs are always associated with the rock and roll lifestyle--what is your opinion on their effects in the dynamics of a band? Stunting, enhancing, creatively expanding, etc.

Well, the band I was in, Lush, was not really a druggy band – we were a boozy band if anything but we all dabbled and E was probably the drug that I certainly did the most around that time. Pretty much everyone I knew was doing it, though. However, I would say it had no effect on my career at all – I didn't do it THAT much and I certainly didn't do it when I was working (playing live etc) unlike some people! I stopped doing it after I realised it was having the opposite effect of what it was supposed to!

I have heard that certain drugs can initially provide creative impetus for a band or artist etc. but ultimately they will always stultify and take over someone's lifestyle in a negative manner. As I said, I have never been a big drug taker so I don't know personally.

Were The Stone Roses too arrogant? Why did this not alienate the British press?

I think it was their arrogance which actually endeared them to the British press. At last the press had something they could write about (at that time). I think it is also a cultural divide--Northern people tend to have a swagger that people down South don't--just look at Oasis, too. The press actually quite like that you get great quotes from bands with that kind of confidence! I also think that a lot of music journalists, who are mainly very middle-class, generally favour very working class bands (like The Roses). I think they see bands like this as more 'real' i.e. what they write about being more relevant somehow than if they were middle-class. Having been in what was considered middle-class band, I witnessed this first hand.

Why were The Roses embraced by rave culture?

I always pondered this a little as I don't personally think that that first album is a dance album--OK you can shuffle your feet a bit to it but it's a primarily guitar pop album. However, I think it's the timing of the release of it that had more to do with it--the upsurge in E consumption and club culture and moreover what was happening in Manchester where that marriage of dance and rock culture was happening with force at clubs like The Hacienda and with other bands like New Order and Happy Mondays.

The Roses fired shots at the Royal family in 'Elizabeth My Dear'--what is the opinion of the Royal Family by artists/musicians, etc. Are they ridiculed a great deal? Why? Are they too easy of a target in your estimation?

Not a lot of bands write about the Royal Family actually but if they are criticised or ridiculed it usually stems from people with very working class Socialist bordering on Marxist backgrounds 'having a go'. However, I do think that some bands have very much 'romanticised' left-wing politics and by that I mean taking the stand of being ultra left-wing whilst at the same time living in a big house in a posh area of London, driving an expensive car and eating at expensive restaurants--it doesn't add up for me. If you are going to talk it..... walk it.

What was your impression of America and American music fans in the late 80s?

I visited the USA in 1984 and then again in 1990 so all I know of U.S. music in the late '80s is probably what I heard about here in the UK....namely big-hair bands – Warrant, Winger, etc. etc. Thank god for Nirvana.

Do you think that a music "scene" like Manchester or Seattle's grunge era, is always destined to run its course because it becomes so specifically pigeonholed by the press?

I think any 'scene' runs its course, yes, it's inevitable as fashion – no bad thing, totally normal and not 100% the fault of the press. However, if there are any good bands that come out of a scene they can usually transcend it. The Roses could have done better if they hadn't waited so long to put out their second album – that gap was their downfall really.

The English press seems like they can worship or punish a band overnight. Why are they so...fickle? Is it hard to not keep them in mind?

The UK press seems very fickle probably because this is such a small country with such a large pop culture and history and a proliferation of national magazines and radio stations. There is so much to cover and news gets round fast! When I was in Lush we had a LOT of press at the beginning of our career. We didn't get any radio or TV at that time but the press were all over us. And yes, it did hurt when they kind of turned on us when we put out 'Spooky' but to be honest it didn't have that much effect on us long-term and we carried on for another 5 years. The band I am in now, Sing-Sing, has had a little UK press (no way as near as much as Lush, though) but the Internet has become

far more important for us. Good reviews are great but they are not the be-all and end-all of it...

### Any personal anecdotes?

I used to visit Manchester a bit in the late '80s and partied at The Hacienda a couple of times. I saw Northside and The High pretty early on but didn't meet The Roses really until Lush was recording our second album in Rockfield Studios, Wales. The Roses were in the adjacent studio so we hung out with them a little. Mani was one we saw the most and I remember we did celebrate his birthday in the local town and I shared a cab back with him to the studio where I promptly was sick out of the car into the courtyard! Nice! I also knew Cresser--the Roses' onstage dancer--a little as I had met him with The High (I loved their album).

I have also enjoyed Ian Brown's solo career, since The Roses, immensely.