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# KATE BUSH

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# KATE

EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT HER THEN... AND NOW!

# BURSA



KATE BUSH  
THEN!

# THE 70s!

AS PUNK STARTED TO DIE DOWN, A NEW MUSICAL FORCE INTRODUCED HERSELF. **VICTORIA SEGAL** CHARTS THE EMERGENCE OF THE VISIONARY WHO CHANGED EVERYTHING.



Oh England my leotard: Kate Bush in January 1978, the month Wuthering Heights came out.

In April 1979, nightly current affairs show Nationwide dedicated an entire edition to Kate Bush – “one of Britain’s biggest musical success stories of the ’70s” – as she prepared to embark on her extravagantly theatrical first tour. Going behind the scenes before the make-or-break opening night at the Liverpool Empire, reporter Bernard Clark observed earnest dance warm-ups and production meetings, before asking the singer about her vertiginous rise since the release of her debut single Wuthering Heights 15 months earlier. “You’ve made it,” he says. “What is there left to do?” A look of incredulity, almost disdain, quickly flickers across Bush’s sweetly smiling face. “Everything,” she answers emphatically, shaking her head.

As the slow evolutions of the intervening 35 years have proved, the concept of having “made it” – becoming the finished article, all goals achieved, all work perfected – is not one that Kate Bush has ever comfortably applied to her career. Even so, by 1979, the 20-year-old could have been forgiven for feeling a little self-satisfaction. The unearthly roll and fall of Number 1 single Wuthering Heights had hurled her straight into the public consciousness, the combination of youth, beauty, striking dance moves and improbably-pitched vocal drama difficult to tune out. Two remarkable albums, *The Kick Inside* and *Lionheart*, were released within nine months of each other, while the series of shows that would later become known as *The Tour Of Life* – a meticulously choreographed parade of songs, costumes and characters that cost £10,000 per night to run – underlined the complexity and strength of her undiluted vision. She had

come a long way from being the convent school girl who toyed with becoming a vet or psychiatrist until quitting the sixth form after her mock A-levels, driven to follow her less-than-nun-like musical vocation.

That early story is not the perfect creation myth for a peerless pop radical. She was raised in a family that was a fortunate combination of middle-class security – doctor father, big house in a suburban idyll – and hippy bohemia – her older brothers passed their time writing lofty erotic poetry and exploring medieval musicology. It was the kind of environment where it wasn’t beyond the realm of possibility that a brother’s friend would work in the music industry and be able to pass on a tape to Pink Floyd’s David Gilmour, the man who would fund a demo and guide her towards EMI. When that happened, she was 18, with a stockpile of songs running into the hundreds. The record company waited, let her develop in her own individual way: attending dance classes, writing at the piano, playing her first ever live shows in South London pubs with the not-so-ethereal KT Bush Band, growing up. Then *Wuthering Heights* changed everything.

“We humans got it all, we perform the miracles,” Bush sings on *Them Heavy People* and the first stage of her career bears witness to the strange transformative power of pop music. Looking back now, knowing what she

would achieve with her very greatest albums >>>



Starting out: with The KT Bush Band, South London, 1977; (above) her debut album *The Kick Inside*'s sleeve and picture disc.

GERED MANKOVITZ/SNAPGALLERIES.COM, VIC KING

THE BEST OF KATE BUSH IN THE '70s

- 1 **WUTHERING HEIGHTS** (The Kick Inside, 1978)  
Making her presence felt like a cold hand tapping at a window pane, Bush made her precocious Emily Brontë-inspired debut with this astonishing single.
- 2 **THE MAN WITH THE CHILD IN HIS EYES** (The Kick Inside, 1978)  
Written when Bush was still a child herself, this almost supernatural rapture still enchants and unsettles.
- 3 **L'AMOUR LOOKS SOMETHING LIKE YOU** (The Kick Inside, 1978)  
The references to "sticky love inside" might have acted as pervert-nip, but this torch song remains a touching and frank exploration of female sexual energy.
- 4 **THEM HEAVY PEOPLE** (On Stage EP, 1979)  
Bush's cosmic tribute to those who opened the doors of her mind. The live version from the Tour Of Life shows off her elaborate performance skills.
- 5 **THE KICK INSIDE** (The Kick Inside, 1978)  
This disturbing song contrasts earthy matters of childbirth, death and incest with Bush's angelic, sky-high vocal.
- 6 **STRANGE PHENOMENA** (The Kick Inside, 1978)  
A cosmic meditation tempered by sisterly righteousness: "Every girl knows about the punctual blues..."
- 7 **KASHKA FROM BAGHDAD** (Lionheart, 1978)  
Her second album's luscious nocturne comes with a voyeuristic edge as the narrator watches the shadows of Kashka and his lover in the window opposite.
- 8 **WOW** (Lionheart, 1978)  
The unmatched abandon in that glorious freefalling chorus is weighted with an unexpected reference to The Sweeney in this tale of showbiz pitfalls.
- 9 **OH ENGLAND MY LIONHEART** (Lionheart, 1978)  
Stately pastoral that takes in Peter Pan, Spitfires, Shakespeare and a looming ravens-leaving-the-Tower unease.
- 10 **HAMMER HORROR** (Lionheart, 1978)  
A deliciously thudding tale of guilt and paranoia. The video features one of Bush's most eccentric dance routines.



“ SHE EXISTED APART FROM PUNK, BUT HER VOICE IS EVERY BIT AS OUTRAGEOUS AS JOHNNY ROTTEN'S. ”

to declare his love for her music.) Her upfront sexuality – bastardised into the “sexpot” image loved by the tabloids and TV impressionists – was dreamily uninhibited on Feel It and the “sticky love inside” of L'Amour Looks Something Like You, a physicality still vanishingly rare in female pop stars. She was sensitive to the outsider, too, as on Lionheart's affecting Kashka From Baghdad, lyrically piecing together a gay couple's secretive life together: “They never go for walks/Maybe

it's because the moon's not bright enough/ There's light in love you see.” On those first two albums, she also covers showbiz (the glorious flailing abandon of Wow), incest (The Kick Inside), and Englishness (the prog pastoral of Oh England My Lionheart). “Varied subjects” indeed.

Rushed and tense, Lionheart was not the second album Bush dreamed of making. Still not in charge of the production herself, she would not decisively herald her sonic independence until the Fairlight crunch at the start of Army Dreamers on 1980's Never For Ever. By then The Tour Of Life had proved her star power and her mettle: now an established performer, she could head into the studio to refine and define her sound, a process that would result in the experimental blitz of The Dreaming. As she announced to Nationwide in April 1979, “I haven't really begun yet.” This first delirious stage of her career, however, shifted pop music off course forever, her remodelling of what any pop star – not just a female one – could achieve still kicking in its psyche today. Still strange, still phenomenal.

Cats & Dogs. “It's difficult to imagine Kate Bush as a popular taste,” said a review in US publication Crawdaddy!, adding, “she's already proved quite palatable in England”, as if she were merely meeting a quirky English taste for the eccentric. Certainly, the US remained bewildered by her. The short gap between The Kick Inside and Lionheart suggests not only a keenness to keep Bush's profile high, but a slightly unseemly rush to cash in just in case she didn't turn out to be the long-term “albums artist” they'd hoped. The press, meanwhile, fixated sweatily on her sensual lyrics and erotically expressive dance: she was “a perky young songstress” according to Billboard's review of The Kick Inside, who could write “evocative lyrics about varied subjects.” The Sun settled for “Wow! Wow! It's Raunchy Kate!”

All this should have conspired against her, yet even at this stage she had the charisma, talent and enthralling idiosyncrasy to carry it off, her lack of modishness widening her appeal rather than killing it off. With the rose in her hair and her legwarmers, she clearly existed on a plane apart from punk, but her voice is every bit as outrageous and distinctive as Johnny Rotten's, her image as opinion-dividing as The Slits. (John Lydon, significantly, would in later years miss no chance

There is a sense in these early days that nobody – not even the famously perfectionist musician herself, perhaps – knew quite what to do with Kate Bush. It's entirely understandable in her case: it's always astonishing to remember just how young she was when she was writing these songs (just 13 years old, in the case of haunting fable The Man With The Child In His Eyes). Wuthering Heights was so unusual, so extreme, to some eyes it could almost have looked like a novelty hit, an impression perhaps strengthened by the fact it was replaced at the top of the charts by Brian & Michael's Matchstalk Men & Matchstalk

BARRY PLUMMER, BBC; GERRED MANKOWITZ/SHARPGALLERY.COM; GETTY



Locked and loaded: Bush at home in East Wickham, South London, May 1978.

– 1982's The Dreaming, 1985's Hounds Of Love, 2005's Aerial – it's worth wondering how her reputation would have endured if she had, as Nationwide's reporter rather quaintly put it, settled down, got married and become “an ordinary mother”, after the huge physical and mental strain of performing The Tour Of Life had taken its toll. While Wuthering Heights still sounds now as it must have done on the day of its release – as if it has fallen from the skies – her first two albums come with traces of clay on their ballet shoes. Her roots in the recent past are still visible. She's not entirely estranged from Joni Mitchell, Laura Nyro, Judee Sill and Carole King – the feel of denim, of bare feet on piano pedals – nor from the fearless art-pop boundary-breaking of David Bowie

and Bryan Ferry and the prog delights of Genesis. Yet at times, she's also not too many rows back from the teeth-and-eyes musical theatre of Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber: the Dr Crippen capers of Lionheart's Coffee Homeground, the moustache-twirling Hammer Horror, even that stagey twinkle at the start of Wuthering Heights. The influence of Lindsay Kemp, the maverick dance maven who also taught David Bowie mime, is detectable in her facial expressions and interpretative dance moves, a theatricality encouraged by attendance at Kemp's 50p drop-in classes. From her Ophelia hair to her ostensibly mild manner, from the awkwardly conceptual album artwork – singer dressed up as lion? – to her heavy rock friends, she was in many ways, out of time, out of step.

In January 1978, six days before Wuthering Heights was released, the Sex Pistols fell apart at San Francisco's Winterland. Punk's phlegmy petri-dish had infected a generation and left behind the dark mutations of post-punk; The Kick Inside album started with whale song. Them Heavy People, all about crashing through the doors of perception, namechecks hippy faves Gurdjieff and “Jesu”, while Strange Phenomena, a brilliantly moony testament to menstruation and cosmic coincidence, even features a Tibetan prayer (“Om mani padme hum”), which couldn't suggest Arts Lab happenings and macrobiotic rice more strongly if it tried. (Bush would later appear



Ready, steady, cook: Bush gets culinary with Delia Smith.



(Clockwise from left): Bush in 1979; her second album Lionheart; on The Tour Of Life, 1979.

# KATE BUSH THEN!

Kiss and make up: Kate Bush performing *The Dreaming* single on Italian TV, 1982.

# THE 80s!

RECOILING FROM FAME, BUSH ENTERED THE 1980S DETERMINED TO REGAIN COMPLETE CONTROL OF HER CAREER, WHICH, WRITES **TOM DOYLE**, SHE DID INCH BY INCH, ALBUM BY ALBUM.

**I**t must be hard to be a pop star when, deep in your soul, you don't want to be a pop star. To find yourself existing in a world of cosy mainstream TV programmes such as

Nationwide and Pebble Mill At One, or having the piss taken out of you on *Not The Nine O'Clock News*, as crimped-haired, leotard-wearing comedienne Pamela Stephenson helium-shrieks, "People bought my latest hits, cos they liked my latest tits." It must start to feel as if it's all getting a bit desperately out of your control.

"I never wanted to be famous," Kate Bush told me in 2005. "My desire wasn't to be famous. It was to make a record. That's very different from wanting to be famous."

The 1980s was the decade in which Kate Bush regained control of her career, inch by inch, record by record. Her first move was to insist on co-producing her third album, *Never For Ever*, primarily at Abbey Road Studios, which for a time would become her spiritual home. "It was suddenly being let loose in a situation where I could actually get my hands on things and play around," she said. "There was this lovely feeling of creativity and freedom and fun."

Yielding a run of startlingly unusual singles – the voicing of a foetus's thoughts in a post-nuclear landscape in *Breathing*, the marriage-spicing masquerade of *Babooshka*, the rifle-cocking

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Guns and poses: performing *Army Dreamers* onstage, 1980; (below) her four '80s studio albums.



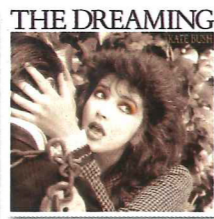
“THE DECADE PROVED A TRANSFORMATIVE ONE: BUSH WAS NOW VIEWED AS AN ARTIST RATHER THAN A KOOKY POP STAR.”

percussion effects of poignant, anti-war waltz *Army Dreamers* – *Never For Ever* did nothing to dim her stardom. To support its September 1980 release, Bush appeared in London for a record signing that drew a lengthy queue down Oxford Street.

The success of this decidedly idiosyncratic material encouraged Bush to push further, despite the resistance of her record label EMI. Thinking about its successor, she grew determined to be entirely in charge of its recording. “The people at the record company,” she remembered, “were going, ‘Nutter... thinks she can produce her own stuff now.’”

Kate Bush was suddenly perceived as a “difficult artist” by the bosses at EMI, and so there was frustration, anger and rebellion at the heart of the resulting album, *The Dreaming*. Recorded in intense bursts, at enormous personal expense (Bush insisting on paying for the sessions herself to retain creative freedom), it found the singer bunkered in various studios in London over the course of nearly two years. Behind closed doors, she plunged herself into the world of art rock, inspired by her recent collaboration with ex-Genesis frontman Peter Gabriel on his untitled third album and by Brian Eno and David Byrne’s experimental 1981 release, *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*.

Its first single, *Sat In Your Lap*, released more than a year before the album’s completion, was a jaw-dropping, tangential creation, driven by thumping drums. It was



promoted with a video featuring the singer in white tutu and dunce cap, filmed in Abbey Road Studio Two’s live room while *The Dreaming* was still being tinkered with upstairs. Remarkably, this strange record still managed to hit Number 11 in the charts.

But at the same time, the continuing whispers of uncertainty emanating from EMI were starting to get to Bush. “Of course you’re full of self-doubt,” she admitted. “I really felt, ‘God, maybe I shouldn’t be producing it.’ We were going through so many different studios. I was starting to get worn down.” It didn’t help that even Bush’s friends were lightly questioning her sanity when they were first played *The Dreaming*, particularly the demonic donkey braying that closed *Get Out Of My House*. “When it got to the ‘hee-haw’ bit,” she recalled, “they just pissed themselves laughing and said, ‘God, you’ve totally lost it, girl.’”

While the lasting impression is that *The Dreaming* was a commercial flop, it actually peaked at Number 3 in the album chart.

More importantly, it was a visionary work which entirely turned on its head the popular perception of Bush as the witchy piano-playing waif. EMI were proven right in some respects though – the brilliant if unhinged title track, sung in an Australian accent and concerning itself with Aborigines being mown down by uncaring drivers, stalled at Number 48; the Ealing comedy caper of follow-up *There Goes A Tenner* failed to chart at all.

Characteristically, in the aftermath, Bush disappeared from view. Early in 1983, she broke cover to write a note for her fan club’s newsletter, which revealed how the whole experience had been troubling for her.

“This year has been very positive so far,” she offered, brightly. “It doesn’t have the same air of doom and gloom that ’81 and ’82 seemed to hold. The problem is that if I don’t make an album this year, there will be at least another two-year gap, and it would be a negative situation. I intend just to keep on writing for the first part of the year, so yet



again I slip away from the eyeball of the media to my home.”

Home for her was now a 17th-century farmhouse in the Kent countryside, having chosen to escape her previous abode in the suburbs of South-East London. At the same time, Bush made the entirely shrewd move – on the advice of her father – to build her own studio in the barn at her parents’ East Wickham Farm in nearby Welling. From here she could effectively run a cottage industry, albeit one using state-of-the-art technology including a lavishly-expensive SSL mixing desk and cutting-edge Fairlight sampler.

It was in this liberating environment that Bush crafted what is rightly regarded as her masterpiece, *Hounds Of Love*. Working closely with her then-beau, engineer/bassist Del Palmer, she was relaxed enough to let her imagination fly. Her lyrical preoccupations, if anything, were even less orthodox than in her previous songs. The strident *Cloudbusting* was inspired by Austrian psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich’s belief that he could create rain with his self-built Orgone Accumulator. *Running Up That Hill (A Deal With God)* pined for some kind of transfigurative, soul-swapping arrangement with a lover. The pummelling, propulsive title song expressed romantic fears as a metaphorical flight for life from a pack of dogs. But there were hooks aplenty and its emotional range, from terror to euphoria, was far easier for an audience to relate to.

With the promotional campaign for *Hounds Of Love*, Bush was clearly keen to connect. When *Running Up That Hill (A Deal With God)* was chosen as its lead single, she appeared on *Wogan* and *Top Of The*

Pops. Then the album was launched on 5 September 1985 at London’s Planetarium, where guests were treated to a playback accompanied by lasers shooting around the interior of its domed roof. Upon release, the record charted at Number 1, going on to become her best-seller.

Bush admitted to me in 2005 that it was a moment of real vindication over the naysayers at EMI. “When *Hounds Of Love* came out and it was self-produced and it was an enormous hit, it was so fantastic,” she grinned, before cupping her hand to her ear as if listening to the off-putting words of her label bosses. “Sorry, what’s that you said? Sorry? Didn’t want me to produce it? They left me alone obviously from that point. It shut them up.”

And yet, Bush’s muse remained temperamental. It would be another four years before she released a follow-up in the shape of *The Sensual World*. Though a great album by anyone else’s standards, it failed to truly shine when held up against the golden light of *Hounds Of Love*. Bush seemed to accept as much when she chose to re-record seven of its songs for 2011’s *Director’s Cut*.

The decade had, undoubtedly, proved a transformative one. From here, Bush was viewed – and treated – with the respect she deserved, as a true artist rather than just some kooky pop star.

Nevertheless, for her, the creative process remained a painful one. “I chose to go

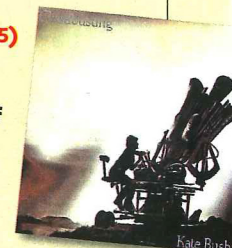
through this incredibly sort of masochistic way of making records, which takes a long time,” she told me. “They’ve all really been made with a lot of care. So I suppose I’m quite proud of that really. Especially when some of it I had to really fight for. The most important thing for me is that it’s interesting from a creative point of view. Then I feel totally fulfilled as an artist and I can move on.”



KATE BUSH THEN!

## THE BEST OF KATE BUSH IN THE '80s

- BABOOSHKA** (*Never For Ever*, 1980)  
Over balalaikas, Bush inhabits the mind of a woman testing her husband’s fidelity by posing as a temptress.
- BREATHING** (*Never For Ever*, 1980)  
Post-apocalyptic and still-unsettling ballad sung from the viewpoint of an unborn child.
- SAT IN YOUR LAP** (*The Dreaming*, 1982)  
Daringly complex groover that speaks of the struggle for intellectual and spiritual enlightenment.
- PULL OUT THE PIN** (*The Dreaming*, 1982)  
Kate as Viet Cong soldier hunting his Yankee prey. Instantly zaps the listener into the war jungle.
- RUNNING UP THAT HILL (A DEAL WITH GOD)** (*Hounds Of Love*, 1985)  
A heaven-directed appeal for some kind of supernatural gender swap. You could even dance to it. Still her biggest US hit.
- HOUNDS OF LOVE** (*Hounds Of Love*, 1985)  
Shares its nightmarish vision of a hunted girl with Neil Jordan’s 1984 film *The Company Of Wolves* and features an astonishingly expressive vocal.
- CLOUDBUSTING** (*Hounds Of Love*, 1985)  
String-driven pop that turns its unlikely subject matter – the son of a “rain-making” machine inventor watching his father being arrested – into something moving.
- AND DREAM OF SHEEP** (*Hounds Of Love*, 1985)  
The delicate and wozy opener of *The Ninth Wave* song suite and a Bush classic in its own right.
- THE SENSUAL WORLD** (*The Sensual World*, 1989)  
Bush interprets James Joyce as uilleann pipes skirl around her, channelling an, ahem, clearly aroused Molly Bloom.
- THIS WOMAN’S WORK** (*The Sensual World*, 1989)  
Stark and affecting piano ballad that bravely tackles the agonies of emotional self-denial and missed opportunities.



**KATE BUSH  
INTERROGATED!**

# ENCOUNTERS WITH KATE

Q'S **PHIL SUTCLIFFE** REVISITS A DECADE-LONG SERIES OF INTERVIEWS WITH A DETERMINED, GIGGLING, SELF-DOUBTING, ARTISTIC POWERHOUSE.

I sat across from Kate Bush in EMI's offices and Abbey Road Studios for around seven hours from 1979-'89, asking awkward questions and getting awkward, honest answers. She looked you in the eye. "In an interview I have no way of projecting an image to you," she affirmed. "I'm just being me."

Over 10 years, she changed and didn't change at all.

At 21, in an interview for *Smash Hits*, she erupted incandescent in vermilion business suit, black patent-leather high heels, black stockings, hair elaborately upswept, loads of eyeshadow, blusher, and who-knows-what. Ultra-smart and sort of all wrong.

At 31, for *Q*, she showed up in old blue

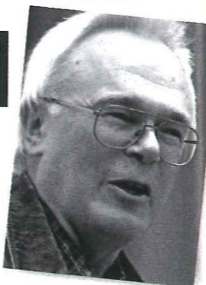


Kitchen sink drama: Bush at home in East Wickham, 1978; (above right) Q's Phil Sutcliffe.

jeans, battered sneakers, a Fair Isle jumper she'd probably put on for some pre-promotional weeding. No make-up, hair combed, no fancy hairdo. The natural woman right there.

Appearances represented quite a shift of perspective from the girl with the variegated Cockney-convent accent who told me in 1980 that, "I do have to keep my face in the papers, you know; I need the publicity," and worried about how "people often seem to regard me as totally manipulated by EMI, 'the dance teacher' and 'the record producer' – and not intelligent. But I consider myself very strong. I do control a lot of what happens around me and I try to control it all."

It wasn't freaky power instinct. Kate Bush knew she needed that control to achieve what she described as "the connection: getting through the barriers" >>



GUIDO HARARI/ANPA/ALAMY.COM, GETTY/CHRIS MOORHOUSE



“I'M THE SHYEST  
MEGALOMANIAC YOU'RE  
EVER LIKELY TO MEET.”  
KATE BUSH

This woman's work: Kate Bush, *Black Island Studios*, London, 1993.

to people. Continually swilling in ego isn't what I want to do. I want to be a perfect person." She added, "I think everyone does."

**H**er 1989 record *The Sensual World* contained what could be the overarching theme for Kate Bush's entire musical career. When I talked to her

for *Q* in '89, she fretted over discussing the album's title track – her reimagining of Molly Bloom's glorious, orgasmic, inner monologue at the end of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Deliberative pauses abounded. "I'd be worried if people felt this ambiguity between sensual and sexual," she said, frowning.

I quoted the line about "his spark took life in my hand" to her.

"Yes, it is rather saucy," she grinned, then decided to say what she felt. "Don't you think art is a tremendous sensual-sexual expression? I feel that energy is often... the driving force!" She suddenly guffawed, more or less, at one of the double-entendres her candid songwriting often led her into.

While she does address a plethora of other themes, she'd more or less drafted her manifesto with the clunkily direct *Symphony In Blue* from *Lionheart*: "The more I think about sex/The better it gets/Here we have a purpose in life." If that didn't clarify matters, the cover of her next album, *Never For Ever*, featured an illustration wherein all manner of creatures, cute to monstrous, gush forth from beneath her skirt.

I interviewed her for *Sounds* in 1980 and she acknowledged, "A lot of people think it's hilarious that all the ideas are coming out from under my skirt. But it's saying all the good and bad things pour out of me in the form of music. And it's to hint that so much of it comes from a sexual need, from inside me... excretions."

We probably both looked at the floor and blushed. Then she giggled, recalling that, when EMI people told her the Kate-in-lion-costume sleeve of *Lionheart* looked "too sexual", she said it was entirely appropriate because she'd included a song about bestiality. Cue corporate conniptions, until she cracked up laughing.

But, despite the convent schooling, the middle-class doctor's daughter from a polite South-East London suburb had already written songs referring to period pains (*Strange Phenomena*), gay relationships (*Kashka From Baghdad*), a young boy's sexual desire for a woman (*Infant Kiss*), and brother-sister incest (*The Kick Inside*). The notion of equating "sin" with sex never seemed to cross her mind. Keeping constant faith with the characters she'd created, she didn't judge, she empathised.



Running up that hill: in a promo shot for *The Sensual World* album, 1989.

**PHYSICAL MASTURBATION... IT'S FEELING SO BOTTLED UP YOU HAVE TO RELIEVE IT AS IF YOU WERE CRYING.**  
**KATE BUSH**

open, beautiful, it's love... There's emotional masturbation, too. But physical masturbation, it's feeling so bottled up

Her fearless "sensual-sexual" creativity expressed itself best in her profound feeling for the way love and eroticism tumble together – remember the "surlly lady in tremor" of *The Saxophone Song*, and the all-embracing seduction of *Feel It*: "Feel your warm hand walking around/I won't pull away, my passion always wins/So keep on a-moving in.../Synchronise rhythms now."

A question about *The Saxophone Song* brought out how, when writing, she often imagined herself into a male point of view: "The sax is a very sexual sound, all vibrating, resonating – like bowels! Look at photos of musicians playing any instrument and... it's not always sexual, but mainly. You're cuddling the instrument, you're seducing each other. Guitarists are up there, so obviously wanking with their guitars, but it's

you have to relieve it as if you were crying."

After talking so truthfully, Bush would often be troubled by thoughts of what might happen if these quotes got into the wrong hands – namely, the tabloids. Oddly, though, it never seemed to happen. This awareness of what she was about seems to have remained within the (multitudinous) circle who loved and respected the music and the musician.

"The sensationalists wouldn't see it as the intimate expression and sharing with the listener of experiences we all know about," she said. "But there are enough people who have seen it. They're listening with their hearts."

As did her collaborators in the studio. Years later, I had the chance to interview several of her lieutenants. While musos can be a coarse lot, she'd clearly taken them to higher ground. Notably, Haydn Bendall,

a recording engineer from *The Dreaming* to *The Red Shoes*, called working with her "absolutely thrilling: the cleanliness of intent, the cleanliness of recording, everything felt whole."

"Kate is extremely firm-minded – in a velvet glove," said the late, fondly remembered Bob Mercer, the EMI executive who signed her to an inventive development/apprenticeship deal in 1976.

Bush's probable favourite music businessman David Munns (still thanked on her own-label release *50 Words For Snow*) told me, "You don't fuck with her, basically. You approach issues gently and see how determined she is. Then you give in."

Not that she didn't lose a few scraps en route. She didn't want her name spoiling the front cover design of her debut album *The Kick Inside*; she didn't want to go to Australia for interviews when it meant her absence from mixing *Lionheart*; she didn't want *Deal With God* renamed *Running Up That Hill*, not even to avoid getting banned in 10 very Christian countries, including America. She yielded to business imperatives in each case – but, apart from that, hardly ever.

Instead, she strove to self-determine every aspect of her artistic life. She took two simple approaches to achieving her aim: hard work and strong decision-making.

"Music is... you have to break your back before you even start to speak the emotion," she said in 1980. Her studio associates variously described to me working days lasting 15, 18, 20 hours – with Bush often waking up for dance sessions before recording.

**G**iven that she and her family had got on top of the money side from 1976 with the formation of her own company *Novercia Ltd* (now renamed

*Noble & Brite*), she realised early on that producing herself would be the key to musical independence. On *Lionheart* she got an "assistant producer" credit. On *Never For Ever* it was co-produced with Jon Kelly, and at the time her confidence in taking full control was rising.

"I'm free in lots of ways," she said, "and I'm getting more free, more artistic control. Many artists aren't capable of being objective enough to be close with everyone involved and through their respect and enthusiasm create what you have been thinking about for over a year..."

Then, in *The Sensual World* period, assessing interim developments, she recalled her final, assertive step to self-production on *The Dreaming*: "Jon wanted to keep working with me, but we discussed it and he realised that it was for the best. I think the basic fear



Cover versions: (from left) Bush in *Q* from 1989, and in *Smash Hits* and *Sounds*, both 1980.

in everybody's head was, 'God, does she really know what she's doing?' But you have to trust your own decisions.

"That was a brave time for me. I had to take control of the whole album, see if I really could pull it together – put some balls into my voice for the first time too. On *The Dreaming* and *Hounds Of Love*, particularly from a production standpoint, I wanted to get a lot more weight and power."

Since 1983, she'd also had her own "home" studio in a barn at her parents' place in East Wickham. Her almost ever-present drummer Stuart Elliott told me that, along with her adoption of drum machines and the Fairlight sampler/synthesizer as writing tools, this changed her recording method to "using musicians one at a time" instead of playing with the whole band together. "Kate needs that control because she's very particular about every nuance of what goes in," he said.

Well, Bush did call herself "the shyest megalomaniac you're ever likely to meet". It was a joke. Sort of. However, when I talked to the musos, she emerged as no bug-eyed dictator ordering people around,

but a strange phenomenon of leadership-by-musicality.

Long-time Bush bassist David Paton reckoned, "We were all mesmerised. Her charisma, the quality of the songs. When she played you could hear a pin drop. She opened herself and we knew we had to do the best we could. But she had nothing pushy about her. Nothing pretentious. No 'I'm the artist'. She was always first to make a cup of tea."

Elliott concurred: "She treats everyone so well. If she's having a bad day you will be the last to know. She comes into the studio and smiles and it's all bright, airy and sunshine. She really does care about people."

But Haydn Bendall insisted that, if such comments sounded a bit saccharine, he never for a second thought of her as sweet: "She's very unambiguous, she tells you what she thinks. But she is also very accepting should one come up with a good idea. She'd coax the best out of people. Bring out something they didn't know was there."

"One of the most wondrous things about working with her was she'd speak to me as the engineer, then go into the booth – at her own studio you couldn't see her singing, >>>



The great collaborator: Bush at work in the studio with Peter Gabriel on his Top 10 hit *Games Without Frontiers*, 1979.



“What? This old thing?” Bush starts out in 1978.



“IT’S FRIGHTENING HOW EACH ALBUM HAS TAKEN LONGER THAN THE ONE BEFORE.”  
**KATE BUSH**


there was no window from the control room – and this amazingly passionate voice came out, every fibre of her being committed and blasting through the speakers... Running Up That Hill, she used her voice in an unashamed way. Naked without taking her clothes off.”

So, come 1989, she looked set. Yet it turned out to be the start of her unforeseen periods of long silence.

During our interviews, she wondered about her future. “I have trouble with the domestic me,” she mused, at 22. “Marrying, having kids, washing and cooking... Work is a different me, work is a love, and how could I do that and bring up a child?”

And she always had to answer the question about playing live again. She’d considered it but, at 31, “The idea is so unattractive when I think about what that tour [in 1979] took out of me...”

Finally, a concern she brought up herself, again to Q in ’89: “I get a tremendous amount of security from my work but it’s frightening to me the way each album has taken longer than the one before. The writing gets harder every time. The Sensual World took about two-and-a-half years to make, but with a lot of gaps. I was going quickly at first thinking, ‘Nah, piece of piss!’ Then it all seemed like rubbish and I had to stop for a while. There’s tremendous self-doubt involved. You think, ‘Oh God, I’ll never get it finished.’”

Over the coming years, the lengths between albums would grow. But Kate Bush being Kate Bush, away from public glare, the work would never stop. 

**“SHE WAS ON THE PHONE, SAYING, ‘MAYBE WE SHOULD JUST PUT A BAG OVER HIS HEAD.’”**

**WHEN TOM DOYLE WAS BUNDLED INTO A CAR IN 2005 TO INTERVIEW KATE BUSH, HE HAD NO IDEA WHERE HE WAS HEADED. FORTUNATELY, THEY HIT IT OFF FAMOUSLY.**



On a bright morning in September 2005, a car picked me up from my house in North London, heading to a destination

unknown. All I knew was that I was being driven to Kate Bush’s house, somewhere in Berkshire. In the days leading up to the singer’s first interview in 12 years, a plan had been hatched for us to meet at Abbey Road Studios. The day before, she suddenly changed her mind and decided to allow me into her home. But she wasn’t about to give me the address, hence this air of mystery.

“Oh, it must have been you she was talking about the other day,” the driver told me. “She was in the back, on the phone, saying, ‘Maybe we should just put a bag over his head.’”

Upon arrival, Kate’s house turned out not to be the cobwebbed mansion of myth, where people believed she lived out her “reclusive” Miss Havisham-like existence. It was a large-ish detached Georgian mill house, with a recording studio in the barn across the garden. She met me in her living room: hair clipped up, brown shirt, white trainers, slightly wary smile. We were both a bit nervy. But over the course of four hours – “The longest interview I’ve ever done,” she later pointed out – her initial fears melted away and she proved to be excellent company: funny, insightful and perhaps surprisingly swear-y.

Having in the run-up read dozens of her past interviews, where she had so often seemed distant and unreadable, I was determined to meet the real Kate; the one who had spent years living in studios in the salty company of male musicians. It wasn’t long before she revealed this side of her character, when she was talking about the myths that had built up around her.

“I find it frustrating that people think I’m some kind of weirdo reclusive that never comes out into the world,” she gently fumed. “I’m a very strong person and I think that’s why actually I find it really infuriating when I read... ‘She had a nervous breakdown’ or ‘She’s not very mentally stable, just a weak, frail little creature’. It’s like... Fuck off!”

It was a very pleasant, entertaining way to spend an early autumn day. We broke for lunch and numerous cups of tea and fags (me... she’d given up) and a wander around the grounds and down to the studio where she showed me the mixing desk she’d had since making Hounds Of Love. Later, I gently pushed her on the subject of live performance and the fact that she hadn’t performed a full concert since 1979. Would she consider a return to the stage?

“I do toy with the idea,” she offered. “I mean, who knows, maybe I will. Grab me Zimmer frame and waft out there. Maybe I will one day.”

A few weeks after the feature appeared, she sent me a great letter, in which she wrote: “It’s the first interview where I feel it actually sounds like me and not some strange woman.” For years I’ve kept it tucked away inside a book. I really should get around to framing it.

KATE BUSH  
NOW!

# MODERN KATE

IN THE MID-'90s, BUSH RETREATED FROM PUBLIC VIEW. HER INFREQUENT REAPPEARANCES STILL ENCHANTED, THOUGH. **MARK BLAKE** GETS TO GRIPS WITH 21ST-CENTURY KATE.

**I**n October 2001, Kate Bush met Q's John Aizlewood in the restaurant at Harrods department store. She was due to attend the Q Awards, and had been persuaded to give her first interview in five years. Over a liquid lunch of tea and water, Bush explained that after the release of her last album, 1993's *The Red Shoes*, she had

"spent a lot of time sleeping... watching really bad TV quiz shows... and visiting museums."

More importantly, Kate had been bringing up her now young son, Bertie. She didn't like giving interviews; even less now, because she'd spent a lot of time with Bertie's friends' mothers and didn't want to blow her cover. "I don't even know if some of them know who I am," she said implausibly.

Readers paused, and imagined what it must be like to be a parent who'd invited >>

THE BEST OF KATE BUSH IN THE 2000s

- 1 **MRS BARTOLOZZI** (Aerial, 2005)  
Haunting piano ballad in which the Bush family's Hotpoint seems to become a portal to another dimension.
- 2 **MOMENTS OF PLEASURE** (Director's Cut, 2011)  
A Red Shoes track and a prayer for the recently departed reworked with a heavenly sounding choir.
- 3 **HOW TO BE INVISIBLE** (Aerial, 2005)  
Creepy electro-pop during which suburban witch Kate casts a spell created from mundane household objects.
- 4 **A CORAL ROOM** (Aerial, 2005)  
Guest singer Michael Wood joins Bush on a stunning eulogy for her late mother.
- 5 **AN ENDLESS SKY OF HONEY** (Aerial, 2005)  
Kate communes with nature on this 42-minute pastoral celebration of love, sex and birdsong.
- 6 **π (Aerial, 2005)**  
Bush recites the number π ("3.14159265358...") like a prog-rock Carol Vorderman, and makes it sound both important and strangely erotic.
- 7 **TOP OF THE CITY** (Director's Cut, 2011)  
Originally a Red Shoes highlight, and a song about the "other woman" in a relationship, reconfigured for the new(ish) century.
- 8 **LAKE TAHOE** (50 Words For Snow, 2011)  
Chilly strings, piano and guest singers Michael Wood and Stefan Roberts help Bush recite this musical ghost story.
- 9 **MISTY** (50 Words For Snow, 2011)  
Extraordinarily odd orchestral pop song in which a snowman appears to get his leg over. Really.
- 10 **AMONG ANGELS** (50 Words For Snow, 2011)  
Spooked-sounding ballad about angels and apparitions, and a quiet highlight of both Bush's not-quite Christmas album and her recent live show.



but his latest cameo felt like a throwback to the world of teatime telly in which Bush had landed as a pop star in the late '70s. Meanwhile, EMI's paranoia about internet piracy and reduced profit margins suggested they were clinging to Aerial like shipwrecked passengers hanging on to a life raft adrift in the Atlantic. Aerial reached Number 3 in the UK, scraped into the American Top 50, and seemed to disappear as quickly as it had arrived. It was hard to shake off the feeling: "Is that it for another 12 years?"

The answer was: no. Against all expectation, Kate Bush reappeared a relatively miniscule six years later, in May 2011, with the first of two new albums. Director's Cut featured re-recordings of tracks from The Red Shoes and The Sensual World, and was both good and not so good. Nobody really needed a pub-rock version of the 1993 hit Rubberband Girl. But Bush breathed new life into The Red Shoes' Moments Of Pleasure. "It was always rumbling around in the back of my head that [the songs] just could have been better than they were," she told writer Keith Cameron. Empowered by the success of Aerial, you sensed that Bush had the bit between her teeth and was keen to keep making music.

Six months later, she was back again with an album of all new material, 50 Words For Snow. It began with Snowflake, a song that closed the circle by featuring the choirboy vocals of the now 12-year-old Albert "Bertie" McIntosh. Bush's latest was a beautiful if sometimes infuriating record. Snowed In At Wheeler Street told the affecting story of lovers separated by historical events ("We saw Rome burning/I saw you on the steps in Paris") but was hamstrung by guest vocalist Elton John's rather hammy vocals.

Meanwhile, the title track featuring, yes, 50 words for snow ("phlegm de neige... vanilla swarm") suffered a little because its narrator Stephen Fry's voice is so ingrained in the psyche you kept thinking he was going to break character and either start scolding fellow QI regular Alan Davies or bellowing, "Well, bugger me with a fish fork, Blackadder!" If you kept listening, though, you were soon rewarded with the lovely closing ballad, Among Angels, where Elton and Fry were soon forgiven and forgotten.

Ultimately, like every Kate Bush album before it, 50 Words For Snow left you eager to hear the next Kate Bush album, but, of course, unsure whether there's going to be another Kate Bush album. In this or indeed in any other decade, Bush remains many things: brilliant and frustrating, definitely, but rarely dull and certainly never ever predictable. **Q**



Two albums, six years apart: 2005's Aerial and 2011's Director's Cut.

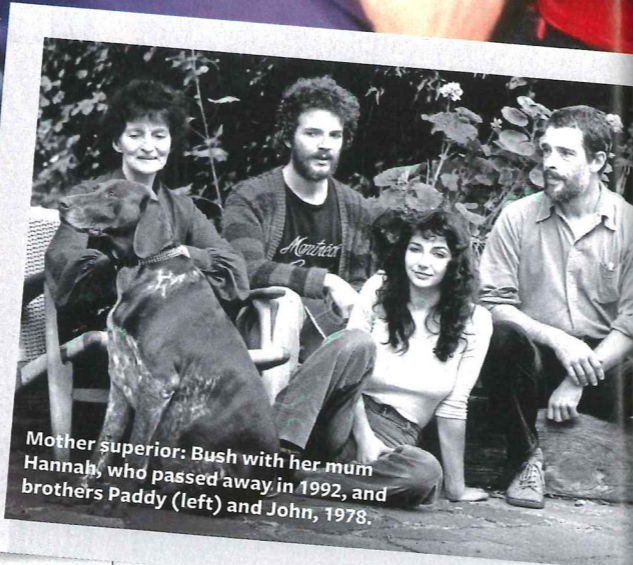
As Bush quickly pointed out when she did reappear to promote Aerial: "I'm not some weirdo recluse." The fact that the album included a song called Mrs Bartolozzi, partly about a washing machine, was a clue to what busy mum Kate Bush got up to on an average day. You desperately wanted to believe that lyrics such as "my blouse wrapping itself in your trousers" were a metaphor for sex, even if, in reality, they were just about a 30-degree delicates cycle.

It didn't help that reviewers weren't allowed advance copies of the album. Instead, they were summoned to EMI's London HQ to listen to Aerial on headphones in the company of a security guard. As hardships go, this was not an 18-hour shift in the A&E department of an inner-city hospital, and many Kate Bush fans would have sacrificed a limb to be similarly inconvenienced. But the end result was that everybody wrote pretty much the same review: "Bush is back!... Aerial is great!... It's about washing machines and sex... Probably!"

**A**erial was certainly a fine album. Two songs, How To Be Invisible and A Coral Room, were up there breathing the same rarefied air as the best tracks on Never For Ever (if not quite Hounds Of Love). Meanwhile, the album's second half was taken up with a lengthy Ninth Wave-style concept piece, A Sky Of Honey (later retitled as a continuous piece, An Endless Sky Of Honey, on Aerial's 2010 re-release). One movement, The Painter's Link, featured guest vocalist Rolf Harris droning "What has become of my painting?" Putting aside the grim revelations of recent months, it seemed a bit naff even then.

In a way, both her choice of special guest and the security measures imposed on reviewers were reminders of how the world had changed since Kate Bush last released an album. Harris had guested on The Dreaming,

Moments of pleasure: Kate Bush, Q Awards, Park Lane Hotel, London, 2001.



Mother superior: Bush with her mum Hannah, who passed away in 1992, and brothers Paddy (left) and John, 1978.

CHRIS TAYLOR; GETTY/CHRIS MOORHOUSE

HER PROLONGED ABSENCE GAVE RISE TO RUMOURS THAT RIPPLED THROUGH THE MUSIC INDUSTRY LIKE CHINESE WHISPERS.

their toddler's friend round for a play date, only to find Kate Bush on the doorstep, with a child clinging shyly to one hand and a packet of wet wipes in the other. There was, she told Aizlewood, a new album in the works. "It may be released in 2002," she said. "It may not."

A week later, Kate Bush received the Q Classic Songwriter award at London's Park Lane Hotel, and looked genuinely shocked to receive a standing ovation from an audience that included Liam Gallagher and John Lydon. "Blast From Past! Bush Is Back!" declared newspaper headlines the following

day. But, as 2001 became 2002 – and then 2003 – there was still no sign of that elusive new album.

In fact, Kate Bush's "new album", Aerial, didn't show up until November 2005, trailed by a pleasant if unsensational single, King Of The Mountain. Fittingly, Aerial included a song about her son entitled Bertie.

As Bush had explained in her Q interview four years earlier, the time spent sleeping and watching TV had been part of the grieving process following the death of her mother, Hannah. It was also a way of recharging her batteries after almost two decades as a

musician. Having been signed to EMI as a teenager, it was as if music had overtaken Kate Bush's life, and she'd needed to restore some balance. That balance had, it seemed, come from a relationship with guitarist Danny McIntosh and the birth of their son.

Her prolonged absence from music had, of course, given rise to rumours that rippled through the industry like Chinese whispers: she's smoked all the dope in England... she's consumed her body weight in Cadbury's Dairy Milk... she's gone mad, you know...

KATE BUSH  
NOW!

# WOW!

IN CASE YOU HADN'T HEARD, KATE BUSH HAS BEEN PLAYING SOME GIGS. TOM DOYLE DESCRIBES THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH.

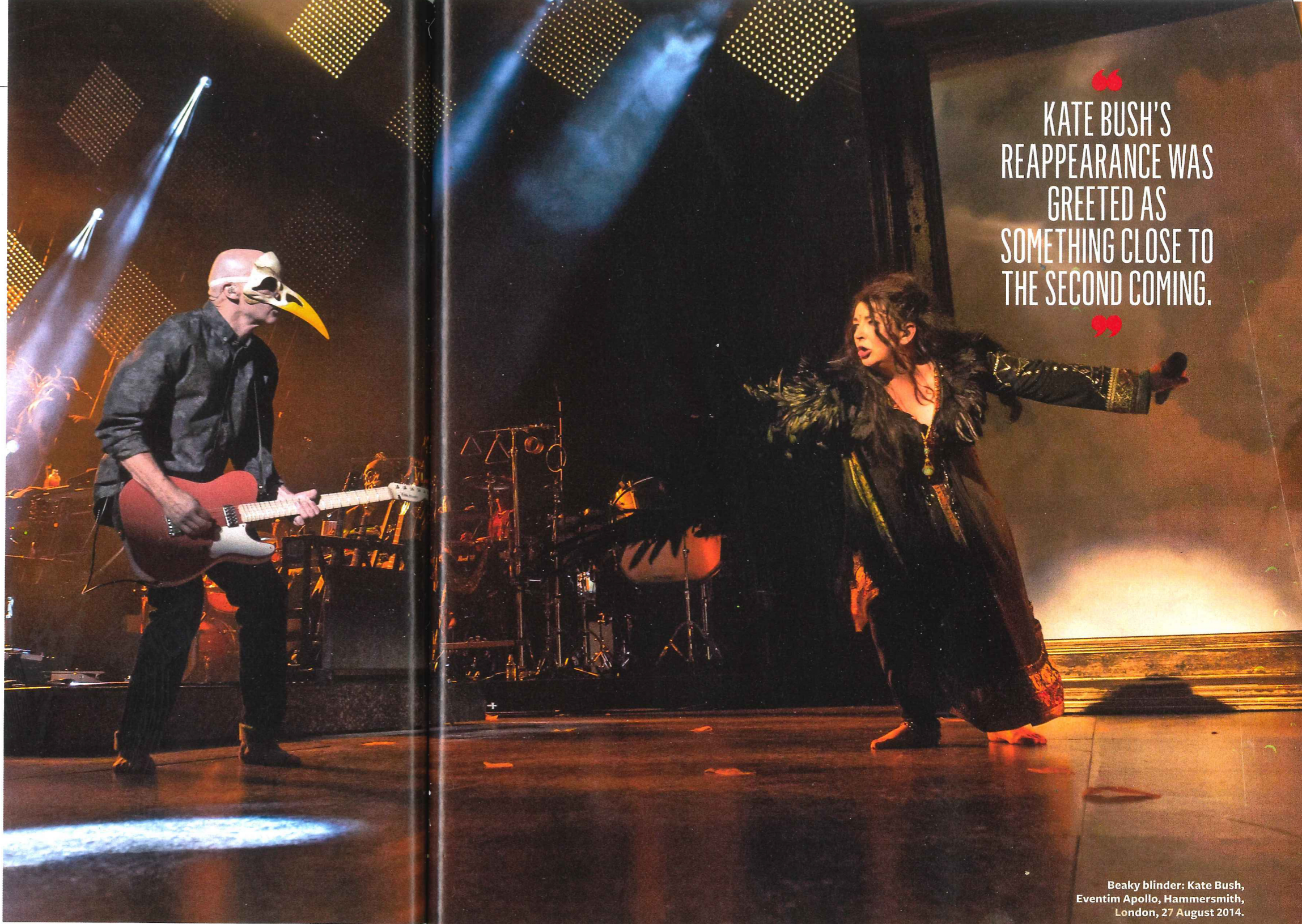
EVENTIM APOLLO, HAMMERSMITH, LONDON.  
WEDNESDAY, 27 AUGUST, 2014 ★★★★★

**A**fter the jaw-dropping revelation in March that Kate Bush was to return to live performance... after the demented online scramble for tickets... after the social media whoops of delight and howls of despair from the lucky and not-so-lucky ticket baggers... after the months of hoo-ha and build-up... after the opening night ovations and the hastily-typed glowing reviews... there is this: the second night of the singer's 22-show run at the Eventim Apollo.

If the reappearance of Kate Bush onstage the evening before was greeted as something close to the Second Coming, then tonight in the 3600-capacity theatre there is a more muted atmosphere, a hushed air of anticipation. There are likely some here tonight who witnessed her last appearances at this venue on 1979's *Tour Of Life*. There are perhaps some who were there for her storming one-off performance of *Running Up That Hill (A Deal With God)* with David Gilmour at Amnesty International's *The Secret Policeman's Ball* at the London Palladium in 1987, or even for her surprise guest rendition of *Comfortably Numb* at the Pink Floyd guitarist's Royal Festival Hall gig in 2002. But chances are this is the very first time most people here will have had the chance to see and hear Kate Bush singing live and in the flesh.

The former Hammersmith Odeon is clearly something of a performance safety zone for Bush. Still, she reveals in the lavishly-tooled 15 quid programme that originally she had entertained the notion of staging *Before The Dawn* in an unnamed "aircraft hangar"-proportioned venue that was a "really beautiful space but extremely big" (this writer's money is on Alexandra Palace). But then, viewing a scale model of it from the perspective of a tiny toy audience member made her feel "physically sick" in terms of its sheer size.

And so here we are in this more modest environment, made all the more intimate by the fact that the elaborate production – 15 months in the planning – required the first four rows of seats to be removed to make way for an enlarged stage. This platform is bathed in blue light as



KATE BUSH'S REAPPEARANCE WAS GREETED AS SOMETHING CLOSE TO THE SECOND COMING.

Beaky blinder: Kate Bush, Eventim Apollo, Hammersmith, London, 27 August 2014.

the audience take to their seats for the prompt 7.45pm kick off. The mood of quiet reverence is made explicit by the fact that even the male-voiced-message asking us to turn off our phones is met with an understanding cheer.

The first sound to be heard is that of Lily, Bush's friend and "healer" – who helped her through her low period following her mother's death in the early '90s – intoning the ancient Gayatri mantra that includes the words: "Unveil to us the face of the true spiritual sun/Hidden by a disc of golden light." As the band launch into Lily the song, its arrangement closer to the 2011 *Director's Cut* remake than the 1993 original on *The Red Shoes*, a grinning Bush enters from stage left, with a procession of her backing singers. Then, she opens her mouth to reveal a beautifully

controlled singing voice that time has not withered in the slightest.

It's a bold and provocative opener, whose mysterious lyrical qualities – the frightened, psychically damaged singer performs a protective, angel-summoning ritual within a "circle of fire" – leads you to believe that it has been carefully chosen, and not just for its cooking groove. While she has always been reluctant to discuss her more arcane interests, Kate Bush clearly believes she is making this space her own, on levels seen and unseen.

From here, we're off and into more familiar territory, with a charged and impassioned reading of *Hounds Of Love*, after which Bush seems to be temporarily flummoxed. The band launch into *Joanni* (from 2005's *Aerial*) as she steps to the side of the stage, gulps down bottled

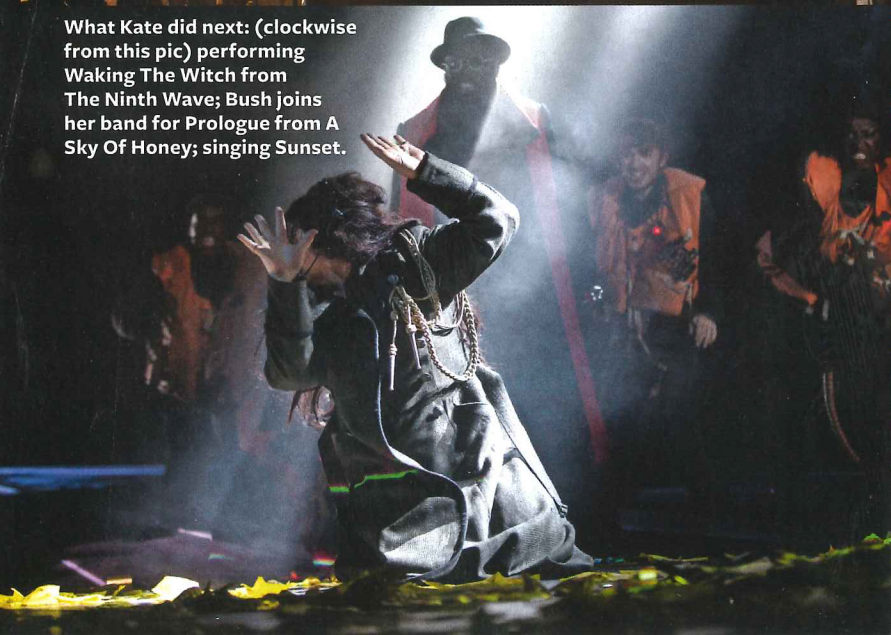
water, returns to the spotlight, closes her eyes, composes herself, then delivers a note-perfect performance. It's the only blip of apparent nervousness all evening from this 56-year-old woman who hasn't performed a full show since she was 20. Sometimes, as any seasoned luvvie will likely tell you, second nights are harder than the first.

But then, standing with a hand-held microphone in front of her seven-piece group, it's perhaps amazing how quickly Bush becomes entirely relaxed, likely calling upon her teenage experiences fronting *The KT Bush Band* in London pubs in the '70s. This opening six-song run continues with a verse-tender, chorus-gutsy *Top Of The City*, a strident *Running Up That Hill (A Deal With God)* and a rolling *King Of The Mountain*, the ending of which is dramatically tweaked. >>

“  
A NIGHT FILLED WITH MAGIC AND MYSTERY, BEFORE THE DAWN IS AN UNDISPUTED TRIUMPH.”  
”



What Kate did next: (clockwise from this pic) performing *Waking The Witch* from *The Ninth Wave*; Bush joins her band for *Prologue* from *A Sky Of Honey*; singing *Sunset*.



keeping with the negatively-rendered Alice In Wonderland theme of the 1985 recorded version (girl descends into world of utter terror), it's more nightmare than dream: the claustrophobic horror of *Under Ice*, the shit-scaringly demonic *Waking The Witch* (where Bush is physically thrown around by an accusing preacher).

Then the auditorium is thrown into pitch blackness as a smoke-belching “helicopter” rotors above our heads, picking out audience members with a searching beam. In any other production this might be a diverting, costume-changing moment. But here it seems to go on. And on. And on. No one in a crowd ever feels comfortable being spotlighted and so the longer it goes on, the more it becomes clear that it's a great, psychologically intimidating tactic.

As the stage lights go back up, a set spins into view: a surreal, slanted living room that is also part-shipwreck. Here Bush's 16-year-old son Bertie and backing singer Bob Harms as “Dad” enact a domestic sketch that might seem a bit too cosy if it didn't turn so dark. “Mum's late,” says the younger, before a door swings back to reveal a hiding Kate to audible gasps in the audience. A virtually mute ghost in her own living room, she launches into *Watching You Without Me*, always *The Ninth Wave*'s creepiest song. By its close, with cut-up voices swirling around, young Bertie has been paralysed by unknown forces.

In *Jig Of Life*, hellish spirits tussle over Bush's soul. Surrounded as she is by dancers in fish masks, the effect is like bearing witness to some occultist Golden Dawn ceremony. The fish people then pick the singer up and carry her horizontally, as if stealing her away, moving with deliberate slowness to the lip of the stage, down a set of steps, into the stalls and up the aisle, making for a side door to a roar of astonished cheers.

It's heavy, headspinning stuff. Which is why when the stage brightens to reveal the band stepping towards the audience, playing *The Morning Fog* acoustically, Bush walking back through the crowd to deafening applause, the post-near-death-experience revelations of the song are made all the more poignant. “I tell my mother... I tell my father... I tell my son,” she says, gesturing to Bertie, “how much I love them.”

Time for a slightly dazed 20-minute interval. When the curtain lifts for part two, the stage has been rearranged and divided into two areas: left for musicians, right for drama. The recording of the primary school-aged Bertie can be heard narrating the introduction to *A Sky Of Honey*, the themed second disc of the double *Aerial* album, centred around a bucolic day stretching from afternoon to sunrise: “Mummy/Daddy/ The day is full of birds/Sounds like they're saying words.”

Bush sits at a grand piano, picking out the opening arpeggios of *Prologue*, as enormous slo-mo birds wing across a vast screen backdrop and a black-clad puppeteer walks a recreation of a faceless 18th-century wooden artist's model around the stage. The teenage Bertie appears in front of a framed image of a perceptibly moving sky painting, in the role of *The Painter* (originally played on the album by the now otherwise-detained Rolf Harris), as we move into the lovely *An Architect's Dream*, a song about the shifting randomness of the artistic pursuit. If by this point, there is some feeling that there is too much in the way of motherly indulgence going on with her son's continued presence, then it's to forget how much Bush has always involved her family in her music and artwork. Throughout the production, he pulls off his parts with no little style and confidence, too. A career in musical theatre may be beckoning.

Less dramatic than *The Ninth Wave*, *A Sky Of Honey* is a gentler work that marvels at the wonders of nature, particularly bird song, which Bush vocally mimics with as much enthusiasm as she did on *Aerial*. While more ruminative, it's filled with stunning set-pieces: the gloaming light of *Sunset*, the Balearic beats of *Somewhere In*

Setlist

- Lily
- Hounds Of Love
- Joanni
- Top Of The City
- Running Up That Hill (A Deal With God)
- King Of The Mountain
- The Ninth Wave
- And Dream Of Sheep
- Under Ice
- Waking The Witch
- Watching You Without Me
- Jig Of Life
- Hello Earth
- The Morning Fog
- A Sky Of Honey
- Prelude
- Prologue
- An Architect's Dream
- The Painter's Link
- Sunset
- Aerial Tal
- Somewhere In Between
- Tawny Moon
- Nocturn
- Aerial
- Encore
- Among Angels
- Cloudbusting

Between. As “night-time” falls, a projected moon hangs over the proceedings, with geese flying across it, for the trancey dancefloor shapes of *Nocturn*.

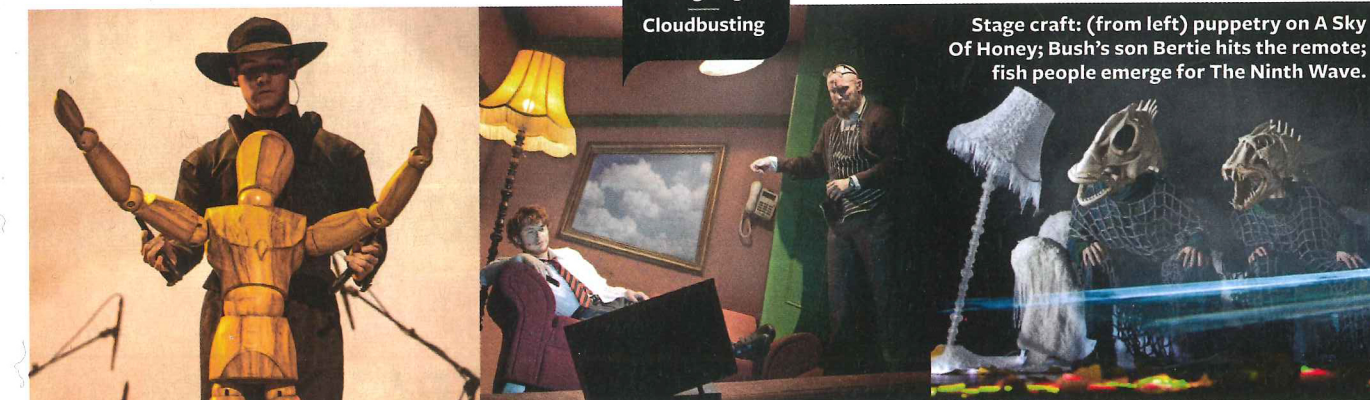
As spellbinding as all of this is, the show takes a turn for the gobsmacking once again with the thumping, rave-like *Aerial*. Where in the album version, her ecstatic cries of, “I've gotta be up on the roof” could be heard as simply a celebration of the rising sun, here it is translated as an intense desire to *become* a bird, as Bush appears to grow a wing in place of her right arm. Then, piece by feathery costume piece, her body fully mutates and, for a brief moment before the lights are killed, she rises into the air and takes flight. Once again, there are audience gasps followed by the uproarious applause of a standing ovation.

Returning for the encore, she is – for the only time tonight – entirely alone. At the piano, highlighting just how special she is even without theatrics, she performs *Among Angels*, the closing track of 2011's *50 Words For Snow*, a reassuring hug of a song for a troubled friend, with a supernatural twist. It's truly shiver-inducing, and not for the first time, you can sense the heightened emotions in the audience.

Having been a touch over-policed by security personnel all evening – scouring the rows for phone-snappers, nearly preventing two girls from placing a bouquet of flowers on the stage – the crowd is itching to dance. And so the assembled rise to their feet with the string-stabbing introduction of *Cloudbusting*, before joining in with a beaming Bush on its wordless chant for a triumphant finish. Taking her bows you sense that the singer is truly affected by the fervent response and, perhaps, a touch relieved that the second night has gone without a hitch.

As we file into the foyer afterwards, Q hears one or two dissenting mutters that the second half relied too heavily on *A Sky Of Honey*, leaving less time for the hits. This is to miss the point though – as an artist, Kate Bush has always followed her muse entirely and so to expect anything less from her first shows in three decades is to not really understand what motivates her as an artist. A night filled with magic and mystery, *Before The Dawn* is an undisputed triumph.

Amid the general knicker-wetting that preceded these performances, you had to wonder if some presumed that Bush had been preserved in aspic since 1979, and would appear pirouetting her way through *Wuthering Heights* as if time had never moved on. In effect, she has now demolished that image of her younger self, in turn freeing her up for the next act of her career. Let's hope she enjoyed the experience and will return to the boards again, and soon. ☑



Stage craft: (from left) puppetry on *A Sky Of Honey*; Bush's son Bertie hits the remote; fish people emerge for *The Ninth Wave*.