



[50 Words For Snow](#), by Kate Bush

by [Denis Joe](#) November 2011

I love this time of year: the run-up to Christmas. Whilst some moan about lack of tradition and meaning, and whinge about the ‘consumer’ orgy, I am never less than amazed at the crowds in city centres who put themselves through so much in order to show their family and friends just how much they care. That is something to celebrate. It is a time when people show themselves as caring and unselfish individuals.

What I hate about this time of year is the omnipresence of the Christmas pop song, as if the music industry feels that it needs to force people to be happy. The exception is *Fairy Tale of New York*, a song consistently voted the best Christmas song of all time; it has everything a great Christmas song should have: pathos and sentimentality.

The only Christmas album that I have ever heard that I really like is *Home for Christmas* by the Swedish mezzo-soprano, Anne Sofie von Otter released over a decade ago, and that is partly because I don’t understand the Swedish language. So I was a bit wary of Kate Bush’s new album, (the first album of new work in five years).

It may seem rather strange to younger people today, but Kate Bush was a phenomena. Arriving on the pop scene as the cadaver of punk rock was having the last piece of meat ripped from it by the likes of Malcolm McLaren and as boys and girls in London were prettying themselves up preparing for the most vacuous youth movement ever: the New Romantics, Kate Bush was not just a beautiful looking woman, she was also bringing a unique sound to the pop music world. *Wuthering Heights*

came across like the outpouring of an hormonally-challenged pre-pubescent. The vocal range of the singing only added to its 'weirdness'. On Top of the Pops, she wiggled and writhed as if doing Salome's Dance of the Seven Veils. Nothing like this was ever encountered on TOTP. Kate Bush did do her own thing. In hindsight it can be said she was the bridge between Punk and New Romance: she put into practice the stance of many punk bands ('I don't care' and its variations) whilst setting the standard for facial, cosmetic, make-up that Steve Strange and the rest of the panto-dames of the time, could not match. And the rendering of a literary classic into a four-minute pop song told us that she was no air-head.

From the outset Bush, at only 19 years of age, refused to allow her record label, EMI, to put out the album track, *James and the Cold Gun* as a single, insisting on *Wuthering Heights*. As such she became the first woman to reach number one in the UK charts with a self-penned song, which was also an international hit.

She only ever did one tour in early 1979. I was lucky enough to see her in Birmingham, in an audience that seemed to be made up of love-struck lads, like myself, in the last of our teenage years. The thing was that Bush was never really seen as a sex symbol, as such; she was Scylla to our Glaucus. And this made the *Not the Nine O'Clock News* [spoof](#), at the time, seem like catty bitching rather than humour. Kate Bush rightly complained that EMI promoted her as a female body. But we knew better.

Bush was to release 6 more albums, all chart successes in Britain and the US (even though she

never toured the States), before a long hiatus. After *Red Shoes*, in 1993 it would be another 12 years before she released another album.

Aerial

(2005) was a critical and commercial success but that was the last album until earlier this year when Kate Bush released

Director's Cut

, made up of songs from her earlier albums

The Sensual World

and

The Red Shoes

which had been re-recorded and restructured. It was the first release on her own label Fish People.

