Feedback...

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"HOUNDS OF LOVE ARE HUNTING..."

Can any artist fulfil everyone's expectations in a live performance? Clearly not. Whilst Peter Benyon [*Feedback..., Uncut 210*] is entitled to his opinion, we wonder whether he recognises how much his own attitude, beliefs and opinions have shaped his experience of Kate Bush's 'Before The Dawn'. It is unfair of him to assume that his opinion is shared by the majority. Surely a true fan would not treat such an event as cost-benefit analysis exercise.

And thereby, we suspect, hangs the tale. Inevitably, the performances have attracted the trophy hunters – those who have wanted to say they had been there rather than actually be there, as well as those whose investment in Kate as an artist spans only part of her career. Did Peter really think that a tour entitled 'Before The Dawn' would see Kate trotting out her greatest hits? Surely we should allow the artist to determine what they perform and how they perform it, and it is for us as fans to appreciate the art as intended. The only promise Kate made in advance was that "The Ninth Wave" was an integral part of the show – and on that she delivered; "bombastic" for Peter, for us bringing to life all the emotion of one of the most incredible pieces of music ever recorded. The fact she gave us a three-hour show with so much more as well is hardly cause for complaint.

As for Peter's comments about the band – "functional playing of all the right notes without any spark or originality". This was not a concert, it was a theatrical performance where one of the components was a group of highly competent musicians who knew what their role was – to play the music spot on and not be centrestage. Given the calibre of a band featuring Peter Gabriel's long-serving lead guitarist and members of Weather Report and Pink Floyd's band, what would Peter's opinion have been if they had not been note-perfect?

We cannot include ourselves in Peter's analysis of the audience as "we paying mugs duped into buying these exorbitant tickets so we could fund this grand folly". We include ourselves with those who exchanged an experience with Kate and her team – a genuinely creative and emotive event that for us was priceless. There is, however, one point on which we can agree – Peter, we too wish you had waited for the DVD and then four tickets could have gone at cost price to people who really wanted to be there.

Allie and Paul Devenny, via email



Singing just for the true fans? Kate Bush onstage in Hammersmith

COOL FOR CAT

Back in February 1973, when I was 15 years old, my family was on a weekend trip to the ski/snowboard resort town of Wrightwood, in Southern California. At the end of the day we started the drive home to Pasadena. We were driving westbound on the freeway when my best friend seated next to me in the backseat happened to look at a van (most likely a VW bus) in the lane to our left. He started hollering, "That guy driving looks just like Cat Stevens! I'm sure that's Cat Stevens!" We were huge fans, so we had to try to get an autograph. The problem was we were driving at about 60 mph.

As our cars were side by side, I rolled down my window, stuck my head out and, while waving furiously, yelled out repeatedly, "Are you Cat Stevens?" The young woman in the passenger seat rolled down her window to hear what I was shouting about. Then, with a huge smile, she shouted back and nodded "Yes"! I motioned to her that I wanted an autograph.

The woman reached into her purse and handed Stevens a pen and small piece of paper. He carefully took control of the steering wheel with his forearms, and then, with the paper on the dashboard wrote on it. All the while, our two cars drove side by side. Then the woman had the



BUSH WHACKED

Dear Q, not only did you get me running up that hill, but you got me rushing around all (three, to be precise!) my local Tescos desperately trying to locate a copy of your exclusive Kate Bush cover with the souvenir posters. It'd sold out everywhere but I eventually managed to buy one at the Finchley superstore. It was well worth the effort, but, *please*, get more stocked-up next time!

James Elliott, Putney

NO MARR, THANKS

Hey Q, very frustrated with your Johnny Marr interview. Thought I'll be able to find out about his new album, what bands he's into, his current influences, his tour plans etc... but no – Q keeps it to The Smiths – yawn – we've heard all that before, enough has been written – move on Q & Sylvia Patterson – he has and his fans have.

Joe Kelsall, via Q Mail



Johnny Marr: in *that* cardie.

Where did Johnny Marr get that pillar-box red cardie from? Need one.

JP, via Q Mail

Coming back to what we were discussing before

A favourite Kate Bush song? What an absurd idea! When I bought *The Kick Inside*, the week it came out, I was 15 and had just some school English, so it was about sounds, not about lyrics. But the sound got me hooked and I bought every Bush album until *Hounds Of Love*.

My interests shifted to other things and the later albums always arrived when I was busy with Indian ragas, Zappa or Dylan. Her so-called comeback made me listen to her later records and I'm surprised by the wealth of gems this maybe modest *oeuvre* is full of. My favourite album used to be *The Dreaming*, but even then the lyrics were not so important. A not-native speaker has to listen on purpose and when the sound is so rich, what do I care about a story? The 50 Best list [MOJO 251] made me check some of the songs more carefully and I discovered one little flaw.

Take for example There Goes A Tenner. Love the song, but the story is not convincing. Why? Bush has a wonderful voice and immense range, but she doesn't sound like a bank robber! Same goes for Pull Out The Pin. Houdini works perfectly again. Take instead *Aerial* or *50 Words...* and all the stories fit the voice. But can you imagine being a boy in puberty and all the girls around you know your mom's song about wonderful, wonderful Bertie? Must have been fun – sort of. At the moment I love Lake Tahoe, Mrs Bartolozzi and Pi. I really hope she takes this comeback seriously and gives us more, because she is rare and special. I wonder whether Tori Amos sleeps well right now.

Michael Fiedler, Rotterdam

I guess some people come back a little changed

We saw her on the fifth. I've been a fan since the first notes of the first single. That moment when she comes on stage and you think – It's Kate Bush! IT'S KATE BUSH! and you're on your feet, shouting with joy. And you soon realise you aren't going to have to make allowances for her being nervous or unused to performing, because she is superb – and that voice, that voice! And the place is alight with emotion, vast tides of it. And the choice of final song – the wonder of it all. Complaints about there being no old songs – incredible. I can't help but feel some contempt for that view. Do they think she's some lame '70s singer banging out a handful of hits to sing-along crowds? If you follow her career at all, you know she's dismissive of everything pre-*Hounds*. If you haven't been following her career, why on earth go? The Bertie bits did slow it down a bit. But I suspect Bertie was a big reason for her doing this in the first place. Looking forward to the next lot of shows, even if we're in our nineties by then.

Pam Mason, via e-mail

Take a bow

KATE BUSH: BEFORE THE DAWN

VENUE	HAMMERSMITH EVENTIM APOLLO, LONDON
DATE	26/08/2014

As you've doubtless heard by now, or may have been fortunate enough to witness yourself, this was one of the all-time great comebacks. Musical event of the year? Musical event of the 21st century so far wouldn't be overstating it.

Nobody thought Kate Bush would return to the live stage after 35 years' absence. In the interim, her 1979 Tour Of Life has assumed near-mythical proportions. Before The Dawn gives us a deeper understanding of that myth.

The spectacle embraces modern technology and stagecraft to raise Bush's unique eclecticism – song, film, costume, lights, props, magic and high drama – to another dimension. More than a rock gig, it's a sensual sound-and-vision extravaganza. It takes flight. Yet for all the razzle-dazzle, it proves intensely moving. At the centre of the whirlpool: that voice, richer than ever.

On the opening night of the run, the applause as Bush and band walk on is deafening. Luckily our hearing returns to register that the 56-year-old, barefoot, wearing black, is singing *Lily*, *Hounds Of Love*, *Joanni*, *Running Up That Hill*, *Top Of The City* and *King Of The Mountain*. It's a conventional – if uncommonly adept – set-up for this introductory spell, the musicians (two guitars, two keyboards, two drummers, bass, five backing vocalists) vigorous yet smooth. We acclimatise to the fact that Kate Bush is onstage, confident and potent.

Then comes the evening's pinnacle: the ground is swept from beneath our feet and things get giddy. *The Ninth Wave* is performed: an epic production, almost an opera. The narrative is enacted, gliding from film of a floating-in-water Bush, singing in a life jacket, through the tale of a woman lost at sea as her life flashes before her. This includes stunning trickery (the stage becomes the sea bed, peopled by fish skeletons and other surreal creatures); visuals not witnessed since Pink Floyd's stadium heyday (a lighting rig posing as a helicopter swoops in and out of the crowd, emitting lasers and voices); and some distinctly odd acting cameos (Kate's son Bertie plays prominent roles).

At one point Kate appears from nowhere, Houdini-like, in a mock living room, complete with sofa, lampshade and TV. In another scene she's rescued from beneath the ice, in a hole carved from the stage. There's a jig, there's a wake as the fish-people carry her away, and there's catharsis. Everyone emerges for the intermission blinking, a bit speechless and completely overwhelmed.

Clearly, performing *The Ninth Wave* is something the singer's envisaged for a long time. You have to deduce she feels it's her masterpiece. The total absence of any early-career hits here may bother some (those who wanted *Wuthering Heights* or *Babooshka* have come to the right venue in the wrong decade), but this is a legacy-redefining appearance by pop's Maria Callas. There can never again be any argument that she isn't prog.

Can the second half live up to the first? Almost, if not quite. Giving us *A Sky Of Honey* (the second disc of *Aerial*) in full, it's (relatively) a more relaxed affair. Loaded with imagery nonetheless – birds, paintings, moons, mannequins – it ripples through its course, Bush in exquisite voice, her musicians dextrous, until its extraordinary crescendo. Now the rhythms get manic, guitars squeal, and to top this chaos of multifaceted motion, Bush grows wings and soars – albeit momentarily – into the air. The audience gape.

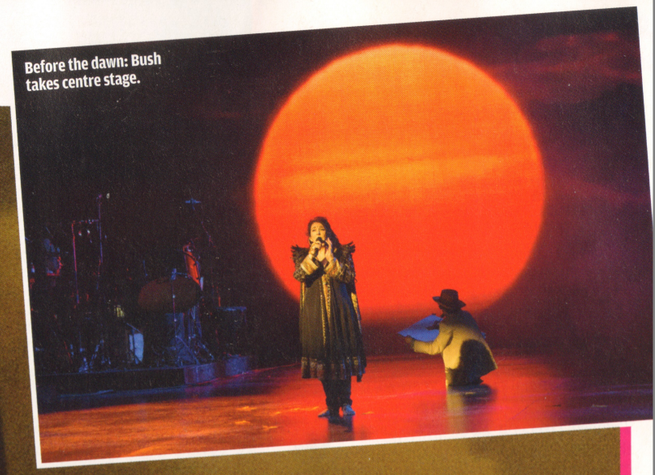
After she thanks us profusely for our "warm response", there's an encore of *Among Angels* performed solo at the piano, followed by a euphoric full-band singalong of *Cloudbusting*. The crowd are still roaring five minutes after the house lights have gone up.

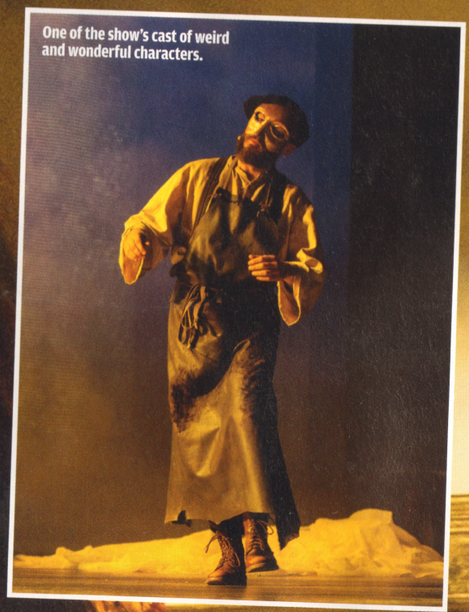
'Big concept' shows like this have hidden away since Bowie's Glass Spider tour took a kicking. It may be that Kate Bush has brought mannerisms often reductively labelled as prog back to mainstream acceptance. Or it could just be that Britain's most gifted female star can do anything she wants, such is the love and adoration displayed here. The young girl who once yelped *Wow* is now a mature woman confirmed as the genius godmother of art rock. Thirty-five years on, the moment is hers again.

CHRIS ROBERTS


No place like home: the twisted living room set.


The fish-skulled cast during *The Ninth Wave*.


Before the dawn: Bush takes centre stage.


One of the show's cast of weird and wonderful characters.


The show mixes light, drama and sound to create an epic spectacle.

"A legacy-redefining appearance by pop's Maria Callas. There can never again be any argument that she isn't prog."

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