

Q&A



John Carder Bush

KATE BUSH

For this pioneering songstress, inspiration literally fell from the sky

"SHIMMERGLISTEN." "CREAKY-CREAKY." "Boomerangablanca." The Eskimos don't really have 50 words for snow, but Kate Bush does. Featuring guest turns from Elton John, Stephen Fry and Bush's 12-year-old son Bertie, her new *50 Words for Snow* album is a quietly riveting meditation on the white stuff. "I started thinking about how it feels when it snows, and that gradually gave birth to these songs," says the native of Kent, England. Despite increasingly lengthy gestations between new albums—and the fact that she hasn't toured since 1979—singer, songwriter and pianist Bush, 53, continues to inspire and intrigue new generations of listeners.

How did you create the 50 words?

It was difficult at first, but I got into the flow of it. It's interesting about these made-up words. I think people have a fascination for them—maybe even more so in our world now, where everything is so easy to pin down. You just have to go on Google and there are all these explanations for everything.

What drew you to snow?

It's got a powerful presence and a magical quality. Also, I do like working within a theme. Sometimes it can be quite difficult,

but with this album it seemed to come quite easily and quickly. Each time I start a new album it's a new adventure. I don't want to just carry on making the same record I've made before. I'm always looking for something new and different.

Is the album format vital to you?

Absolutely. That's how I grew up with music. When I was in my teens, it was a really exciting thing to save up your money and go buy an album. It was a special event. You would enter the world of the artist you liked and would spend some time with them. Not just shuttling from one track to another, like now. It was a journey, a relationship that you built with that person's music.

How was working with Elton?

I've been a fan since I was a girl. My biggest dream was to be able to play the piano like he does. To actually have him in the studio singing—and singing so beautifully—was special. And I loved hearing his voice in a lower register on "Snowed in at Wheeler Street." It's very emotive.

What shaped your vocal style?

Again, when I first started writing songs, Elton was my big inspiration. At that time

most well-known musicians were guitar-based writers, so as a pianist I related to Elton. Another thing that gave me a different sound was that I sang with an English accent. It's more common now, but if you go back a few years I can't think of many English singers who didn't sing with an American accent. It's interesting that so many English singers chose to do that. But it's natural that if you hear something you like it becomes an influence and an inspiration.

Will you ever tour again?

I don't know. I loved to tour, all that time ago. It was great fun, and I had planned to do more. But I just went into this process of making albums. I became more involved in production, and they became more time-consuming. Playing live is wonderful, because of the interaction with the audience. But what I love about making albums is that you're starting afresh and creating. I find that an exciting process.

What's next?

It's been a long period of intense work. So now I'd like to take a break and spend time doing other things, like watching movies, seeing friends and sleeping.

—Bill DeMain

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