



# “Heathcliff, It’s Me, Cathy!”

WHEN DOUGLAS LEITCH DECIDED TO ORGANISE MELBOURNE’S MOST WUTHERING HEIGHTS DAY EVER, A CELEBRATION OF SINGER KATE BUSH AND HER CLASSIC DEBUT SINGLE, HE DIDN’T EXPECT 2,000 FANS WOULD JOIN HIM – ALL DRESSED AS KATE! MATT MYERS REPORTS FROM THE WILEY, WINDY MOORS (MELBOURNE’S BOTANICAL GARDENS, ACTUALLY).

ON JANUARY 5, 1978, an unknown 19-year-old British singer hit the airwaves with a song called *Wuthering Heights* that toppled ABBA from the #1 chart position and firmly entrenched itself in the psyche of popular culture. At a time when music was all about Fleetwood Mac, The Eagles and KISS, this deeply unusual but addictive song, and accompanying video, scaled the charts and made a star of esoteric Kate Bush.

Forty years later, July 16, 2016, and it’s a normal sort of Saturday in Melbourne. Trams clang, shoppers bustle, Pokemon Go players clog the footpaths, and football supporters make their way to the MCG. But the footy fans aren’t the only ones dressed in team colours. Throughout the park are mysterious, raven-haired figures dressed in red.

Forty-four-year-old Melburnian Douglas Leitch was inspired by a 2013 event in Brighton called Shambush that attracted around 300 participants – all dressed as Kate in the *Wuthering Heights* video, who copied the dance moves flash-mob style. “I thought Melbourne should do the same,” says Leitch.

“I proceeded to set up an event here and, within days, thousands of people had expressed interest, which included a small team of volunteers to form an organising committee.”

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Melburnians turned out in force. Women, children, gay men and straight alike went to great efforts to emulate the red dress costume (which includes red tights, a red flower in the hair, a brown or black scarf tied around the waist and, let’s not forget, the green eye-shadow!) Some of the more Alpha males in drag, with their crooked wigs and dangling cigarettes looked more like a Monty Python skit, but all were there for the pure joy of it.

Twenty-one other Most Wuthering Heights Days cropped up simultaneously around the globe including Sydney and The Blue Mountains, Berlin, West Hollywood, London, Oslo and Auckland.

“It was decided,” says Leitch, “that we should donate any funds we raised to a suitable charity. We had to provide registration for use of the grounds so we set up

## Ten Wuthering Facts

1. *Wuthering Heights* was the first UK #1 written and preformed by a female artist, fact fans.
2. Published in 1837, *Wuthering Heights* was Emily Bronte’s only novel. She died the following year, aged 30.
3. Kate Bush and Emily Bronte share the same birthday: July 30.
4. At the start of Kate’s single *Wow*, released in 1979, she whispers the name Emily over the musical intro. She has never revealed if this is another reference to Ms Bronte.
5. In the video, Kate plays the ghost of Catherine Earnshaw on the moors where she and her adopted brother, Heathcliff, once played and become lovers – before it all went wrong!
6. Kate wrote *Wuthering Heights* one night after seeing the chilling scene in a film adaptation in which Catherine’s ghostly arm appears to reach in through a broken window.
7. Her vocal performance for the original song was done in one take.
8. *Wuthering Heights* has been covered by Pat Benatar, Wolfmother, China Drum, Josh Pyke, the Ukulele Orchestra Of Great Britain, and lots of men with beards and guitars – check YouTube!
9. A Danish heavy metal band named *Wuthering Heights* formed in 1989.
10. In 2012, Laura Bunting performed *Wuthering Heights* on *The Voice* making the original re-enter the UK charts – thirty-five years on.



Kate Bush in the original *Wuthering Heights* video.



## The Mystery Location

While Emily Bronte's novel of *Wuthering Heights* is set on the Yorkshire Moors, there's mystery surrounding where Kate filmed her video. Some have suggested it was in Wales, others Box Hill in Surrey, or Black Park near Pinewood Studios where her *Breathing* video was shot, but Ashdown Forest at Camp Hill, an hour south of London is considered the most likely site.

What deepens the mystery is that dedicated film location sites can find almost anything – from the chapel in Madonna's *Like A Prayer* video (Mission Maria Stella Church in San Pedro, California) to the hotel in the Spice Girls' *Wannabe* clip (St Pancras Renaissance London Hotel) and the street in Coldplay's *Sky Full Of Stars* (King Street, Newtown, Sydney). Yet Kate's misty hill and stand of trees remain undiscovered.

As fans know, Kate is great at keeping secrets. Her last album *50 Words For Snow* and 2014 concerts appeared out of nowhere. She kept the birth of her son a secret for five years. But Kate Bush's private world is exactly that, and in an over-saturated celebrity world her elusiveness has, perhaps, become a part of her appeal.

a small fee to cover the cost of the event and the rest went to Safe Steps, who do great work in offering protection for women and children in domestic violence situations." In excess of \$5,000 was raised.

Since her remarkable 1978 debut, the music of Kate Bush has spanned generations, countries and cultures. It's not just the classic hits like *Wuthering Heights*, *Babooshka*, *Running Up That Hill*, *Wow*, *The Man With The Child In His Eyes* and her cover of Elton John's *Rocket Man* and that have earned Bush praise. *Hounds Of Love* (1985) is considered by critics to be one of the best albums of the '80s, some say of all time. Her 2005 double album *Arial* and 2011's *50 Words For Snow* have been among her most highly praised and awarded (you'll find Brits, Grammys, an Ivor Novello Award and a CBE from the Queen on her mantelpiece). When her 2014 live show *Before The Dawn* was announced, all her albums re-charted, meaning that for one week, 25 percent of the albums in the UK chart were by Kate Bush.

But why does *Wuthering Heights* still resonate so strongly for many people?

"I would say it resonates with Australians in particular because it's unique and plays into a sense of larrikinism that we all share," says Leitch. "The song itself was particularly popular here in 1978 and continues to be to this day. It's a special song, written by an extremely talented person. People wanted to be her. They wanted to dance and sing like her. I remember as a child seeing the video on *Countdown*. Kate Bush stood out among the punk rock and disco that filled the charts at the time. She became my favourite and I remember, as a small child, trying to dance like her! *Wuthering Heights* is one of the most unique pop songs ever recorded. In fact, it's musically rather complicated and as for her dancing... well, at the time there was nothing like it. Even today it's still unique to her."

Given that the event was one of many, how did Melbourne's stack up?

"The mood was electric. Seeing so many people so happy was an extremely proud moment for our organising committee," says Leitch. "The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and somewhat inspirational."

There were just two rehearsal sessions on the day, lead by Adam Francis and Cathy Stevens, before the final performance, and all completed in around four hours. Unofficially, it seems Melbourne's was the biggest, but that's not important to Leitch. "No matter where it was done or how many took part, everyone had a wonderful time. It was about being part of an event to celebrate Kate Bush," he says.

While Leitch likes the idea of Melbourne's Most



It's a bit bright on the moors tonight, Cathy.



Let me grab your soul away-ay-ay.



My one dream, my only master.

*Wuthering Heights* Day Ever being a one-off event, going by the numbers, he's not ruling out a return in 2017.

As for the last word, that surely belongs to Kate herself but, alas, as she's publicity shy, she's made no comment. She once commented, however, that, "What I've tended to do is to use my own experiences to get into someone else's mind, like in *Wuthering Heights*." For many around the world, it seems she has.

**MORE** Watch the Melbourne performance at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=yI3NtTjbYO](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yI3NtTjbYO)

**VISIT** Matt at [thecelebritywhisperer.com](http://thecelebritywhisperer.com)