

THE WOMAN'S WORK

Dreaming of Kate Bush

Kate Bush has always been a one-off, with a vision too broad for any category. Asked for her influences, the exotically gorgeous British recording artist replied, "Elton John." Well, yes, Bush also sings and plays piano, and her second single, "The Man With the Child in His Eyes," did have a touch of EJ about it. But as the documentary *Kate Bush: Under Review* reminds everyone who

ever paid her any mind, Bush emerged in the late '70s as an artist beyond trends. Neither punk nor pop nor prog, nor even gothic in the Anne Rice sense, Bush transcended all labels.

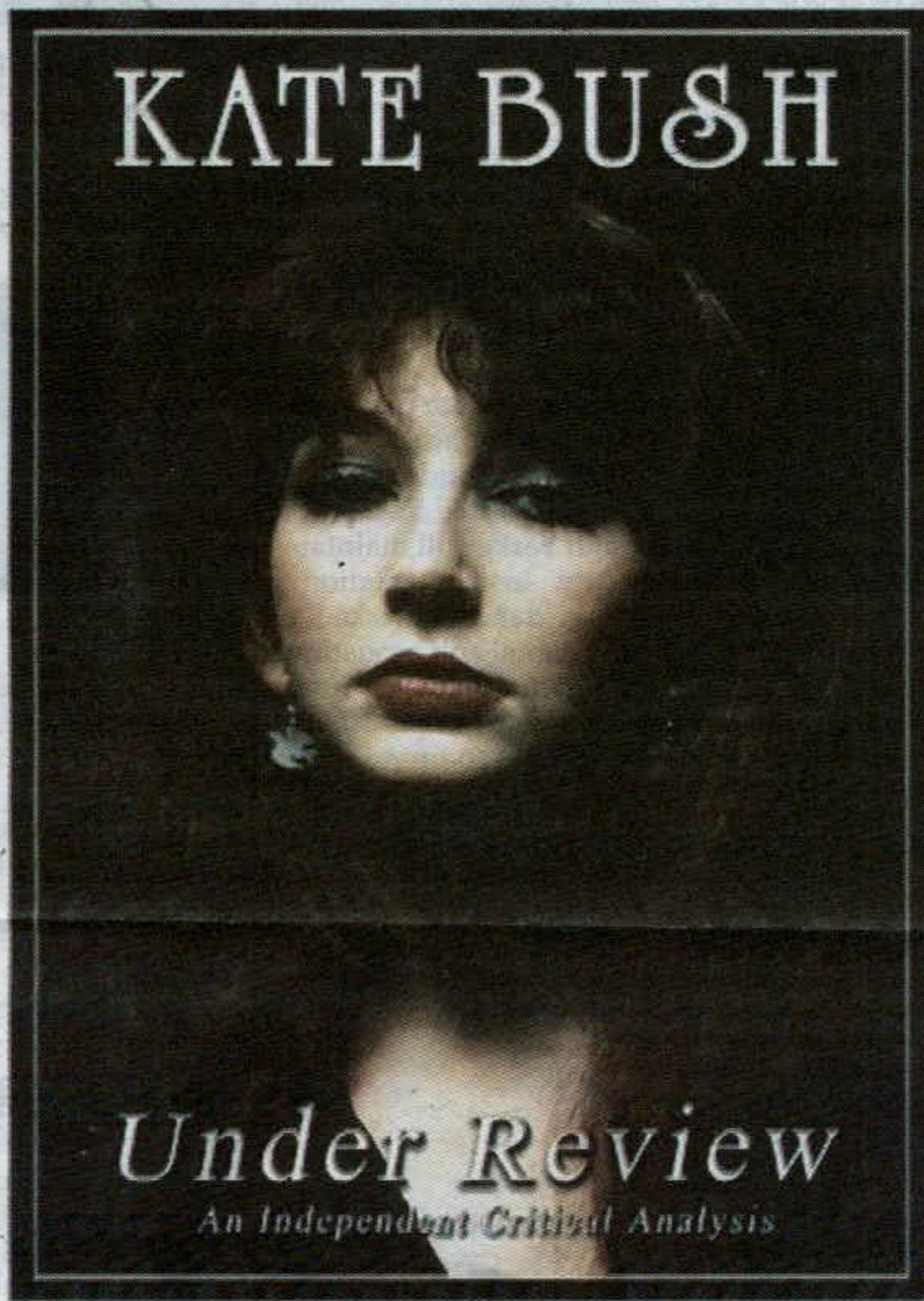
One remarkable aspect of Bush's career was that it happened at all. The small team of talking heads assembled for *Under Review*, mostly British journalists and DJs, all agree that it couldn't occur nowadays. Although the interviewees recount several disagreements over the decades between Bush and her record label, EMI originally signed her to a "development deal." Still a teenager, she was paid to take a year or two to cultivate her sensibility, improve her mind, hone her skills. Sure, the eager ingénue took voice lessons, but she also learned dance and mime—skills that served through a series of videos to express her lyrics in dramatic, theatrical ways.

And the emergence of music video proved invaluable for presenting Bush's artistry. After all, she mounted one concert tour, an ambitiously staged sequence of musical theater (1979), and never appeared again before ticket holders.

Under Review offers little insight into this and other mysteries, including how exactly Pink Floyd's David Gilmour, her original Svengali, happened to discover her through family friends. The documentary, made without the cooperation of its reclusive subject, makes do with televised interviews from the '70s and '80s and those striking music videos. The cinematic tackiness of her debut, "Wuthering Heights" (1978), couldn't eclipse Bush's formidable talent as she acted the role of the ghost from Emily Brontë's novel, haunting and haunted. Her octave-spanning voice also left an indelible impression. Bush later co-directed her videos, including the astounding "Cloudbusting" (1985), co-starring Donald Sutherland in a story told through unforgettable images.

Although *Under Review* is not the definitive biography of Bush (a difficult subject given her penchant for privacy), it should be fascinating to fans for its rarely seen footage and occasional insights.

—David Lührssen



TV

VOICES OF THE WORLD

The music of Alan Lomax

Musicologist Alan Lomax was determined to hold back the tide of global homogenization, the tsunami of mass-produced junk culture that threatened to submerge the many voices of the world under one shallow sea of American pop music. He began in the 1930s at the side of his father, Library of Congress folklorist John Lomax, who recorded prisoners in Southern work camps in his search for the roots of American music. Armed with portable tape recorders after World War II, the junior Lomax extended his father's mission. He wanted to record the folk music of the entire world before it faded, before the old songs were forgotten as traditional culture disintegrated under the assault of industrialization.

Lomax nearly succeeded, logging thousands of miles over bad roads from Basque country in Spain to the backwaters of Latin America. In the PBS documentary "Lomax the Songhunter," Dutch filmmaker Rogier Kappers retraces some of Lomax's steps, finding per-

Lomax, interviewing the 86-year-old musicologist shortly before his death in 2002 and interspersing his travelogue with fascinating snippets of archival footage.

What emerges is that Lomax was more than the aural equivalent of a butterfly collector, pressing colorful specimens between the pages of his albums. Lomax believed in the dignity of all people and argued that organic folk culture is the repository of human worth and diversity. His recordings, a fraction of them released on LP during his lifetime and reissued with bonus tracks on CD in recent years, testify that music was integral to traditional societies, part of the rhythm of life, neither a leisure activity nor an afterthought. The lyrics were often great poetry. Many of the people whose voices he preserved had never seen a recording device and were still relatively distant from the reach of popular culture. The world has morphed considerably since Lomax's musical odyssey in the 1940s and '50s, but his core values of diversity and human worth are no less vital nowadays.

"Lomax the Songhunter" will be shown 9 p.m., Aug. 22 as part of the PBS series on WMMV Channel 10.