

THIS IS LONDON

May 2007

<http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/showbiz/article-23392052-details/Essex+songbird+is+Top+of+the+iPods+with+her+homemade+album/article.do>

Acoustic guitarist Kate Walsh has knocked Take That off the top of the iTunes download album chart - but does not even own an iPod. The 23-year-old guitarist recorded her album in a friend's bedroom and named it Tim's House in his honour.

The homemade album has proved a unexpected hit with iPod fans who had downloaded it from the iTunes website in their thousands - knocking Take That and Kaiser Chiefs from the top spots.

Miss Walsh said: "You end up looking at it every day to see if you're still number one. I think I'm ahead of Elton. "I don't actually have an iPod yet. I hear they are quite good for ten hour flights.

"I set up my own record label called Blueberry Pie and just got the music out there. It's pretty easy. Anyone can do it."

The classically trained pianist from Brighton said she built up a fan base by putting her music onto her MySpace page and eventually persuaded iTunes to sell it.

Miss Walsh said she her songs were inspired by Burnham-on-Crouch in Essex, a seaside town where she grew up and still has family. She added: "I was a classical pianist until the age of 18. I never thought I could have a career as a female singersongwriter.

"The web response is amazing. Someone I've never met called me the new Jane Austen."

Although the singing sensation has been invited to perform for record company bosses in America she is determined to stay in the UK.

She told The Times: "I prefer the pace of life in Brighton or in Burnham-on-Crouch."

Now record label bosses are "queuing up" to sign the classically trained pianist turned acoustic guitar player and ticket sales for her forthcoming gigs across the UK are said to be "fantastic."

Two years ago singer Sandi Thom was propelled to stardom after her 21-night "tour" of concerts from her Tooting flat was screened on the internet.

Walsh's now seemingly unstoppable rise to stardom also has a homemade theme.

It was recorded at a cost of "a few hundred pounds" in the Brighton home of producer Tim Bidwell, who created a sound-insulated vocal booth in his bedroom with velvet curtains he bought from Debenhams.

In a bid to make sure her gentle folk songs reached the public she formed her own record label called Blueberry Pie and put her work on the internet.

Walsh, who doesn't even own her own iPod, said: "I just got my music out there," she said.

"It's pretty easy. Anyone can do it. The web response is amazing. Someone I've never met called me "the new Jane Austen."

In the last few days around her album Tim's House has

sold around 6,000 copies and the number of plays on her MySpace site has topped 150,000.

Walsh was in Glasgow where she was due to perform on stage and will play gigs across the UK over the next three months.

Many of the songs on the album are about growing up in the Essex fishing village of Burnham-on-Crouch where she was born.

On her MySpace profile she describes the town as "a pretty little place with lots of farms around it."

But life was also tough. "I never fitted in there and I ended up going to four different secondary schools," she recalls.

Walsh, described as a British Joni Mitchell and with a Didoesque voice, was offered a place at 18 at the London College of Music, but chose to pursue her career instead. She said: "I was a classical pianist until the age of 18. I never thought that I could have a career as a female singer-songwriter."

Now living in Brighton, Walsh is planning to license her album to a major record company "to keep control" of her own work.

Her manager Jonathan Morley said: "The record labels are queuing up to sign her now. She has a sweet voice and is a great song writer. Her work is original, it's not over produced and it's pretty raw and that's what gives it a lot of appeal."

Commenting on her chart-topping success, Oliver Schusser, director of iTunes Europe said: "This is an incredible achievement when you consider Kate Walsh is unsigned and still outsold several major international artists."

Miss Walsh has two older brothers, her father John is a policeman and mother Ruth a Secretary.

She said she had the chance to sign with a small independent record label but decided to make the album herself in Mr Bidwell's terraced house home, where he has converted a bedroom into a studio.

Her big break came as a result of iTunes promoting her music online and giving her the "single of the week's spot". Commenting on the internet phenomenon where unknown artists can become stars overnight, she said: "It's amazing. It's great news for all the people who can have the confidence to go out there and do it themselves.

"You don't need loads of money to make an album and they don't need the backing of a record label. There's no advertising or marketing involved, you don't go on how much money has been spent."