

= Katie Melua =

Ketevan " Katie " Melua ( / ˈmɛluː / ; Georgian : ??????? " ???? " ????? IPA : [ kʰɛtʰvʰn mɛlu? ] , born 16 September 1984 ) is a Georgian @-@ British singer , songwriter and musician . She moved to Northern Ireland at the age of eight and then to England at fourteen . Melua is signed to the small Dramatico record label , under the management of composer Mike Batt , and made her musical debut in 2003 . In 2006 , she was the United Kingdom 's best @-@ selling female artist and Europe 's highest selling European female artist .

In November 2003 , at the age of nineteen , Melua released her first album , Call Off the Search , which reached the top of the United Kingdom album charts and sold 1 @.@ 8 million copies in its first five months of release . Her second album , Piece by Piece , was released in September 2005 and to date has gone platinum four times . Melua released her third studio album Pictures in October 2007 .

According to the Sunday Times Rich List 2008 , Melua had a fortune of £ 18 million , making her the seventh richest British musician under thirty . It was reported in 2009 that she may have lost millions as a result of the global economic downturn . As of May 2011 , Melua could have a £ 12m fortune and she came second in the under 30 rich list .

= = Early life = =

Ketevan Melua , known as Ketino to her family , was born to Amiran and Tamara Melua in Kutaisi , Georgia , which was then part of the Soviet Union . She spent her first years with her grandparents in Tbilisi before moving with her parents and brother to the town of Batumi , Ajaria , where her father worked as a heart specialist . During this time , Melua sometimes had to carry buckets of water up five flights of stairs to her family 's flat and according to her , " Now , when I 'm staying in luxurious hotels , I think back to those days " .

In 1993 , in the aftermath of the Georgian Civil War , the family moved to Belfast , Northern Ireland , where her father took up a position at the Royal Victoria Hospital . The family remained in Belfast , living close to Falls Road , until Melua was thirteen . During her time in Northern Ireland , Melua attended St Catherine 's Primary School on the Falls Road and later moved to Dominican College , Fortwilliam . The Melua family then moved to Sutton , London , and some time later moved again to Redhill , Surrey . In 2008 , Melua moved out of her parents ' home in Maida Vale to an apartment in Notting Hill , where she transformed the spare bedroom into a recording studio . Melua is fluent in English and Russian ; despite still speaking Georgian fluently she has admitted that she cannot write songs in the language . Melua is also partly of Canadian and Russian ancestry .

During the South Ossetia War in 2008 , Melua 's brother and mother were staying with relatives in the Georgian capital , Tbilisi . Melua was due to travel to Georgia herself less than a month later .

She is a baptised Georgian Orthodox Christian . Whilst living in Belfast , Melua attended the Roman Catholic schools St Catherine 's Primary School and Dominican College , Fortwilliam , while her younger brother attended Protestant schools . After completing her GCSEs at the all @-@ girls ' grammar school Nonsuch High School in Cheam , Sutton , Melua attended the BRIT School for the Performing Arts in the London Borough of Croydon , undertaking a BTEC with an A @-@ level in music .

Melua has not attended university , though she has often stated her desire to do so , saying that English literature , history and physics would be her courses of choice should she have the chance to go to university .

= = Nationality = =

On 10 August 2005 , Melua became a British citizen with her parents and brother . The citizenship ceremony took place in Weybridge , Surrey . On gaining British nationality , Melua was eligible for a British passport . Becoming a British citizen meant that Melua had held three citizenships before she was 21 ; first , Soviet , then , Georgian and finally , British . After the ceremony , Melua stated her

pride at her newest nationality . " As a family , we have been very fortunate to find a happy lifestyle in this country and we feel we belong . We still consider ourselves to be Georgian , because that is where our roots are , and I return to Georgia every year to see my uncles and grandparents , but I am proud to now be a British citizen " .

= = Personal life = =

Melua is occasionally referred to as an ' adrenaline junkie ' because she enjoys roller coasters and funfairs and often paraglides and hang glides . She has skydived four times and taken several flying lessons , and in 2004 she was lowered from a 200 @-@ metre building in New Zealand at 60 mph . When asked about Melua being an ' adrenaline junkie ' , Mike Batt said , " she enjoys extremes , but in life her emotions are always in check " . In November 2009 , Melua came near to drowning after she breathed in and choked on a lungful of water when diving in a lake near Heathrow Airport .

In September 2010 , Melua was ordered by her doctors to stop working for a few months after suffering a nervous breakdown , resulting in her hospitalisation for six weeks . As a result , all touring and promotional activities were postponed until the following year .

In January 2012 , Melua confirmed her engagement to World Superbike racer James Toseland . The couple married on 1 September 2012 in the Nash Conservatory at the Royal Botanical Gardens in London .

= = Career = =

= = = Early stage = = =

Due to her upbringing in politically unstable Georgia and troubled Belfast , Melua initially planned to become either a historian or a politician . This changed in 2000 , at the age of fifteen , when Melua took part in a talent competition on British television channel ITV called " Stars Up Their Noses " ( a spoof of Stars in Their Eyes ) as part of the children 's programme Mad for It ! . Melua won the contest by singing Badfinger 's " Without You " . The prize was £ 350 worth of MFI vouchers , with which she bought a chair for her father . Had she lost the contest , she would have been gunged .

= = = BRIT School and Mike Batt = = =

After completing her GCSEs , Melua attended the BRIT School for the Performing Arts in the London Borough of Croydon , undertaking a BTEC with an A @-@ level in music . When studying at the school , Melua began to write songs and met her future manager and producer , Mike Batt .

While performing at BRIT School showcase , Melua caught the eye of songwriter and producer Mike Batt . Batt was originally looking for an acid @-@ rock band , bass player and a singer capable of singing " jazz and blues in an interesting way " . After hearing Melua sing " Faraway Voice " ( a song she wrote about the death of her idol Eva Cassidy ) Batt signed the 18 @-@ year @-@ old Melua to his small Dramatico recording and management company and took her into the studio , producing her first three albums during the ensuing years .

= = = William Orbit = = =

For her fourth album , The House ( 2010 ) , Melua worked with producer William Orbit . She said about the experience : " The whole thing has been really exciting . It was the same feeling I had the first time I went skydiving . I was really quite nervous , but I knew all I had to do was let myself go and it was going to feel amazing . I wasn 't trying to get away from anything . It was more about going towards something . I wanted the music to be inspired by the future , something unknown that 's never been heard before , but at the same time hold on to the values of the music of the past , to try and tap into something that 's so ancient and old that it 's kind of forgotten . I thought that , if we

went far enough in both directions , we could end up in the same place " .

= = Recordings = =

= = = Call Off the Search ( 2003 ) = = =

Melua 's debut album , Call Off the Search , was released on 3 November 2003 and featured two songs written by Melua : " Belfast ( Penguins and Cats ) " , a song about Melua 's experience of her time in the troubled capital of Northern Ireland , and " Faraway Voice " , a song about the death of Eva Cassidy . Melua also covered songs by Delores J. Silver ( " Learnin ' the Blues " ) , John Mayall ( " Crawling up a Hill " ) , Randy Newman ( " I Think It 's Going to Rain Today " ) and James Shelton ( " Lilac Wine " , originally a UK hit for singer Elkie Brooks ) . The other six songs on the album were by Mike Batt .

It was initially difficult for Melua and Batt to obtain airplay for the album 's lead single , " The Closest Thing to Crazy " . This changed when BBC Radio 2 producer Paul Walters heard the single and played it on the popular Terry Wogan breakfast show . Wogan played " The Closest Thing to Crazy " frequently in the summer of 2003 . Wogan 's support raised Melua 's profile and when Call Off the Search was released in November 2003 supported by a TV campaign financed by Batt , it entered the top 40 UK albums chart . The single achieved the number 10 spot in the UK chart . After an appearance on the Royal Variety Show the album was further boosted and Batt continued a relentless marketing campaign which saw the album hit the number one spot in January 2004 . Call Off the Search reached the top five in Ireland , top twenty in Norway and top thirty in a composite European chart . In the UK the album sold 1 @.@ 9 million copies , making it six times platinum , and spent six weeks at the top of the UK charts . It sold 3 @.@ 6 million copies worldwide . Subsequent singles from the album did not repeat the success of the first ? the second single and album title track " Call Off the Search " reached number 19 , and the third single " Crawling up a Hill " got to number 41 . The album achieved 6X platinum status in UK , 3X platinum in Norway , 2X platinum in Germany , Holland , Denmark and Ireland , Platinum in South Africa , Australia and Switzerland and Gold in New Zealand and Hong Kong .

= = = Piece by Piece ( 2005 ) = = =

Melua 's second album , Piece by Piece , was released on 26 September 2005 . Its lead single was " Nine Million Bicycles " , which was released a week before the album on 19 September and was number 3 in the UK singles chart . The album contains four more songs written by Melua herself , four more by Batt ( including " Nine Million Bicycles " ) , one Batt / Melua collaboration and three more songs described as new versions of " great songs " . The band line @-@ up was the same as on the first album . The album debuted at the number one spot on the UK Albums Chart on the week of 3 October 2005 . This album broke Melua across Europe where it sold 1 million copies in Germany alone and achieved the number one position in Billboard 's " European " albums chart . It was 4X platinum in UK and in Ireland , 3X platinum in Norway , Denmark , Holland and Germany , 2X platinum in Poland and Switzerland and at least platinum or gold in France , Iceland , South Africa , Austria , Belgium , New Zealand and Sweden . Worldwide sales to date are in excess of 3 @.@ 5 million .

On 30 September 2005 , Melua came under criticism in The Guardian from writer and scientist Simon Singh for the lyrics of the track " Nine Million Bicycles " . Melua 's disputed lyrics were :

We are 12 billion light @-@ years from the edge . That 's a guess ? no @-@ one can ever say it 's true , but I know that I will always be with you .

They were interpreted by Singh as an assault on the accuracy of the work of cosmologists which sparked a series of letters from other Guardian readers , agreeing or disagreeing . On 15 October , Melua and Singh appeared on the BBC 's Today programme , and Melua unveiled a re @-@ recording of the song which included Singh 's tongue @-@ in @-@ cheek amendments to the lyrics

:

We are 13 @. @ 7 billion light @-@ years from the edge of the observable universe / That 's a good estimate with well @-@ defined error bars / And with the available information / I predict that I will always be with you .

Both sides amicably agreed that the new lyrics were less likely to achieve commercial success , amidst a discussion about scientific accuracy versus artistic licence . Melua said that she " should have known better " because she used to be a member of the astronomy club at school .

A double A @-@ side of the Melua @-@ penned " I Cried for You " and a cover of The Cure 's " Just Like Heaven " ( 1988 ) , which is the theme song to the film Just Like Heaven , was released in the UK on 5 December and peaked at number 35 . " I Cried for You " was inspired by a meeting with the writer of Holy Blood , Holy Grail .

A third single , " Spider 's Web " was released on 17 April 2006 and peaked at number 52 in the UK . Melua embarked on a concert tour in support of Piece by Piece , the UK leg of which started in Aberdeen , Scotland on 20 January 2006 . Towards the end of 2006 , Melua released the single , " It 's Only Pain " , which was written by Mike Batt . This was followed by the release of " Shy Boy " , also written by Batt .

= = = Pictures ( 2007 ) = = =

Melua 's third album , Pictures , was released in the UK on 1 October 2007 and was announced to be , at least temporarily , the last of her albums in collaboration with Mike Batt as lead writer and producer . It also features Melua 's friend Molly McQueen , the former frontwoman of The Faders , as co @-@ writer of " Perfect Circle " . Melua also collaborated with Andrea McEwan on the album , who wrote the lyrics for " What I Miss About You " and " Dirty Dice " . The album also featured a cover of " In My Secret Life " by Leonard Cohen and Sharon Robinson . Melua said of the cover , " [ It ] completely got to me , about how we all have great ideals but in reality we end up conforming , following everyone else . "

Melua released four singles from the album : " If You Were a Sailboat " , " Mary Pickford " , " If the Lights Go Out " , and " Ghost Town " . " Mary Pickford " , written by Mike Batt , was about the silent film star of the same name . " Ghost Town " was Melua 's first reggae @-@ sounding song .

The iTunes version of the album includes a cover of the Prince song " Under the Cherry Moon " as a bonus track .

= = = The House ( 2010 ) = = =

Melua 's fourth album , The House , was released on 24 May 2010 . Songwriters include Lauren Christy , Guy Chambers and Rick Nowels , with William Orbit producing .

= = = Secret Symphony ( 2012 ) = = =

Melua 's fifth studio album , Secret Symphony was released on 5 March 2012 . The album was recorded in collaboration with orchestrator and conductor Mike Batt . Melua said in a statement : " This album was going to be my ' singer 's album ' . I had always wanted to do this one day ; singing other people 's songs brings something out of you and your voice that isn 't perhaps where you would have gone vocally with your own material . "

= = = Ketevan ( 2013 ) = = =

Melua 's sixth studio album , Ketevan , was released on 16 September 2013 . Ketevan entered the UK charts at number 6 - Katie joined a very small group of female artists , which includes Madonna and Kate Bush , who have scored 6 consecutive UK top 10 studio albums . Ketevan also entered the top 10 in France , Poland , Denmark , Germany , the Netherlands and Switzerland in its first week of release .

= = Other work = =

= = = Acting and modelling = = =

Melua appeared in a segment of the 2007 film *Grindhouse* , written by Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez . The segment in which Melua appeared , entitled " Don 't " , was a faux trailer , directed by Edgar Wright and produced in the style of a 1970s ' Hammer House of Horror film trailer .

In 2009 , Melua was named as the new face of the leading French cashmere designer , Eric Bompard .

= = = World record holder = = =

On 2 October 2006 , Melua entered the Guinness Book of Records for playing the deepest underwater concert 303 metres below sea level on the Norwegian Statoil 's Troll A platform in the North Sea . Melua and her band underwent extensive medical tests and survival training in Norway before flying by helicopter to the rig . Melua later described achieving the record as " the most surreal gig I have ever done " . Melua 's concert is commemorated in the DVD release *Concert Under the Sea* , released in June 2007 .

= = = Charity work = = =

In November 2004 Melua was asked to take part in Band Aid 20 in which she joined a chorus of British and Irish pop singers to create a rendition of " Do They Know It 's Christmas ? " to raise money for famine relief in Africa . Then in March 2005 , Melua sang " Too Much Love Will Kill You " with Brian May at the 46664 concert in George , South Africa for Nelson Mandela 's HIV charity . Melua had been a fan of Queen since her childhood in Georgia when her uncles played the band 's music , so performing with May was a realisation of a childhood dream . Later in 2005 , through her role as a goodwill ambassador to the charity Save the Children , Melua went to Sri Lanka where she observed the work the charity was doing for children in the area after the civil war and Indian Ocean tsunami . In 2006 Melua donated all the proceeds from her single " Spider 's Web " to the charity .

On 7 July 2007 , Melua performed at the German leg of Live Earth in Hamburg and in December of that year , Melua released a cover of the Louis Armstrong song " What a Wonderful World " in which she sang with a recording of the late Eva Cassidy . All profits from the single , which entered the UK singles chart at No. 1 on 16 December 2007 , went to the Red Cross .

Melua has visited Oxfam charity shops for many years , using them frequently to buy her clothing . She has stated that this is related as much to her dislike of spending and glamour as it is to her support for the charity , and admits that she looks " like a tramp " and that her hairdresser playfully calls her look " the Romanian window cleaner " .

Katie is also patron of Fair Trees , the organisation that is trying to stop exploitation of cone pickers in Ambrolauri , Georgia , by the European Christmas tree industry . The local people in this region of Georgia are paid a pittance to risk their lives climbing 30 m high fir trees to collect the cones from which the seeds are extracted and sent to Christmas tree nurseries in Europe . Until Fair Trees came along these cone pickers were given no safety equipment or training , no health insurance and very little pay ; every year people are injured and even killed doing this work . Fair Trees grow and sell the only fair trade Christmas trees in the world ( certified by the WFTO ) .

Katie is a patron of the Manx Cancer Help charity , which offers support to cancer sufferers and is based on the Isle of Man . She attended the 2013 fundraising ball for the charity .

= = = Musical tastes = = =

In April 2006 , for The Sun newspaper , Melua chose fourteen pieces of her favourite music that she enjoyed and had the biggest musical influence on her . The pieces she chose were Paul Simon 's " Hearts and Bones " , Jeff Buckley 's version of Leonard Cohen 's " Hallelujah " , Joni Mitchell 's " Marcie " , Bob Dylan 's " Masters of War " , James Taylor 's " How Sweet It Is ( To Be Loved by You ) " , Chuck Berry 's " No Particular Place to Go " , Portishead 's " Glory Box " , Björk 's " The Pleasure Is All Mine " , Camille 's " Au Port " , Rage Against the Machine 's " Killing in the Name " , Bobbie Gentry 's " Fancy " , Finley Quaye 's " Even After All " , Suzanne Vega 's " Caramel " and Babyshambles ' " Fuck Forever " .

Melua has said on numerous occasions how Queen were a huge influence on her as a child / teenager , with one of her memories of music being her uncle playing records by Queen and Led Zeppelin . She performed with Queen at the 46664 concert in South Africa in March 2005 .

Melua appeared on the BBC 's The Culture Show in November 2006 advocating Paul McCartney as her choice in the search for Britain 's greatest living icon .

= = Discography = =

= = = Studio albums = = =

Call Off the Search ( 2003 )  
Piece by Piece ( 2005 )  
Pictures ( 2007 )  
The House ( 2010 )  
Secret Symphony ( 2012 )  
Ketevan ( 2013 )

= = = Appearances on soundtracks = = =

= = = Acting roles = = =

= = Honours and awards = =

Melua was the best @-@ selling UK female artist of 2004 and 2005 .

In 2006 , Melua had a tulip named after her .

According to VH1 , Call Off the Search is the 87th best @-@ selling British album in history .