

**KALASHNIKOV KULTUR**

By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

**Miaow**

They say it's a dog eat dog world out there and man's best friend has no intention of winding up in a tin of doggo meat. The thing is that man's best friend ain't man's best friend no more. The slobbering pooch by the fire has been replaced by its mortal enemy, the pointy eared, inscrutable, mouse-murdering cat. Yes. 'ole fish breath' is back and now that it's got the best seat next to the radiator it ain't moving.

Cats are like that, they are control freaks and they are in charge. Cats have got it made. They even have an organisation specifically designed to protect them and that organisation, The Cats Protection League is 75 years old and well into its second or third set of nine lives. The thing is, where were they on 11 May when one bunch of feline terrorists got the chop?

**A Fond Farewell?**

Don't ask me why, because I don't know the answer, but when I heard that Andrew Lloyd Wombat's long running musical was finally coming to an end I just had to go along and find out. I mean, it started on 11 May 1981 and lasted for 21 years of purring, miaowing and generally disturbing the neighbours, so I had to go along and say farewell.

I wouldn't be me if I didn't love cats, but watching Wombat's massacre of T.S. Eliot's poetry was another matter. OK so it was spectacular, but then so are most things. Some of the performers were actually feline, some of them weren't and some of them had the kind of names that no parent should be allowed to inflict on a child. Yes folks, stand up the people who christened their daughter Summer.

But it wasn't the songs or the scenery or the coach loads of tourists from Bolton, Ipswich, Portsmouth, Berlin, New York and Tokyo that got me, it was the weirdos. Look at it this way, or then again don't, but the audience was full of tribute cats. Men and women with nothing better to do than dress up like the cast and sit in the stalls pretending to be more than just an audience. Please, get a life. Worse still are those sad creatures who've built their entire lives round the show. One man from Hampshire saw it 791 times in 14 years. That's more than once a week. Why? It was only a musical, it wasn't a matter of life and death, the cats don't even catch mice or sleep in front of the radiator, they're just actors. They've got lives, the serial Cats followers sound like they haven't. For them the end of the show isn't just sad, it's tragic, so maybe it's a good job that the Cats Protection League is around to help these poor souls. I guess I should send them the phone number.

Come and visit **THE ARCHER** team on the stall at...  
**East Finchley Community Festival**  
on Sunday 23 June in Cherry Tree Wood.



Patricia Roque at home in East Finchley. Photo by Femke van Iperen

**Care for Someone**

By Femke van Iperen

A holiday in 1999 to Zimbabwe motivated Patricia Roque, from East Finchley, to found a charity for the children of Zimbabwe affected by AIDS, that same year. Though the *Care for Someone* charity has had donations from celebrities from Brookside, Coronation Street and East Enders, Lenox Lewis, and the [Mohammed] Alfejad Charitable Organisation, Patricia is struggling to continue her work in Africa.

Zimbabwe has one of the worst AIDS epidemics in the world; it has left behind an estimated 900,000 orphans. Patricia's skills' centre in Zimbabwe, run by about 12 teachers and a doctor started in August 2001.

Says Zimbabwean Patricia: "It is a very big project, predominantly for orphans who have been affected by AIDS or who have lost families. Charitable organisations are not interested in them, as everybody is looking after AIDS patients."

However, Patricia shies away from the word AIDS; "It's a stigma" and goals are not just to provide sex education, but also vocational and practical training.

**Work creation**

The charity aims to fight illiteracy and reduce poverty by helping children to produce their own food. Ideas and plans for the future are endless: "My own experiences helped me come up with ideas [for the projects]. I think it comes naturally being a single-parent-of-three myself."

Money from crop sales, and village-donated land is used for resources: food, clothing, school uniforms, shoes, school-fees assistance, and school stationery. More clothing and books originate from UK donations.

The children produce hand-made baskets and sculptures that will be sold in the UK. Tapiwa, a 19 year old boy, joined when he was 17. He had

lost both parents. "But he had this skill for making sculptures, and his work is now bought by galleries in Harare. Now he has money to help his family", says Patricia.

The charity ultimately aims to enable children to set up their own work-creating companies. But the main concern is sex education. "A lot of the children go into prostitution, then, before you know it, they are affected too. We teach them about condoms, show them video clips; they need to see the reality."

Patricia has an office in East Finchley. Here, she has also been trying to get funding to train people who have lost families through AIDS, or are affected themselves.


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