

WHO, WHAT, WEAR

Compiled by Carolyn Enting

# Dressed to amuse

**P**ERFORMANCE arts and events photographer Robert Catto admits people probably think he's "insane" when he shops for clothes and footwear.

Photographing the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra or New Zealand International Arts Festival performances requires movement, silence and often invisibility.

"When I'm trying on clothing in the shop people think I'm insane because I'm making all these weird arm movements without a camera in my hands while I think 'can I do this, can I do that'," Catto says. "There's also the need to be invisible as much as possible, particularly when shooting the NZSO at the Michael Fowler Centre which means I do own a lot of black clothing. I'll test shoes on the kitchen floor to make sure they don't squeak."

Originally from Canada, Wellington-based Catto began his career as box office manager and lighting designer for theatre, dance and opera which led him into photography.

"As a lighting designer for theatre there is no record of what you do unless you photograph it yourself so I started doing that. As I got better, other lighting designers wanted me to photograph their shows so I switched careers."

The role that brought him to Wellington was a box office job for the New Zealand International Arts Festival in 1998. Since then he has collected T-shirts from each festival he has worked on.

"I think for me, clothes are a lot like music – you can see them, or put them on, and be transported back to the time and place when you first got them or wore them right away, just like a good song reminds you of another time in your life," he says.

"You know the Don McGlashan song, *Last Year's Shoes*? It's like that, I think. The lyrics are: 'Lace up last year's shoes and see how they feel You're not the same person anymore There's something new about you A thin strand of winter in you Something that wasn't there before...'"



### Tag Heuer from Trademe

I first bought a Tag Heuer about 20 years ago and have gradually been trading up to better models ever since. This one's great because it tells time in two time zones, plus it's automatic. The downside, I discovered during the last NZ International Arts Festival, is that you can throw the mechanism out of balance by clapping too much.



### Fluevog shoes from Toronto

I always wanted a pair of these shoes by the great Canadian designer John Fluevog, but somehow never found an excuse to get some. I happened to pass their shop when a sale was on, and I was looking for shoes that would work with a dark blue suit suddenly, I was making room in my luggage.



### Personal style

My motto is always that "the purpose of fashion is to amuse" – so if something's not going to make you smile when you put it on, why bother? Also, I've got to know the lovely Trudi Bennett at Wardrobe Flair (wardrobeclair.com) recently, and she helped clarify a lot in terms of how I shop and look at my wardrobe.

### Earliest fashion memory

Well, perhaps it's not quite fashion in the usual sense, but I remember being given my late cousin Eric's blue blazer for my final year of high school. He'd just died in a car crash and I was going to the same school he'd gone to, for that one year. I always thought of him as more of a brother than a cousin, so having his jacket, the one he'd worn in the same classes, helped get me through that. That's when clothes started to take on more meaning for me.

### A woman always looks good in . . .

a shirt that isn't hers. Always.

### Latest fashion buy

I got a great short trench/jacket by Christchurch designers MisteR at a fundraising event late last year.

### Worst fashion moment

Oh, that's tough – I remember being mistaken for a girl once (in a men's clothing shop!) when I foolishly had quite long hair in the early 90s.

**Time and place:** Clothes can have the same ability as music to transport you, says Robert Catto.

Photos: KENT BLECHYNDEN/FAIRFAX NZ



### Kilt

Now this is a little special. The kilt was made for my grandfather's 21st birthday, by his grandfather, at the Catto's Dry Goods & Tartan shop in Toronto. It's been passed down in my family ever since; basically, when your waist is slim enough, you get it. My nephew's quite small, so I'm probably safe for a while.



### Etro suit from Toronto

This is from my favourite shop, Off The Cuff (offthecuff.ca) which deals in resale men's couture. Best place to shop, ever! I stop in every time I'm back home visiting family.

### Lalique Encre Noire cologne

I discovered this almost by accident while travelling, wandering through the amazing Galeries Lafayette in Paris. I'd seen the Lalique exhibition at The Dowse a few years ago and was surprised to see a perfume with that name. I've been addicted to it ever since.



designer • casual • essential | Fashion 14 +

# Zebrano Summer SALE

30% 40% 50% OFF

zebrano all sale fashion

WELLINGTON 40 Johnston St, T 472 3533  
127 Featherston St, T 471 2625  
LOWER HUTT 330 High St, T 569 1311  
also Auckland & Christchurch

## STOREWIDE Summer SELLOUT

Online shopping available

### EVERY item is reduced up to 50%

\$60 off all Tunics  
\$80 off all Vests  
\$60 off all Pants  
\$100 off all Suits  
plus 1/2 Price Racks

**KOOKY**  
NZ Designer Fashion

Wellington AMP Chambers, 187 Featherston St. Ph (04) 499 1647  
Lower Hutt 22, 132 High St, Centre City Plaza Ph (04) 566 7767  
Palmerston North Downtown, 60 Broadway Ave Ph (06) 358 0691

www.kooky.co.nz

backhouse **b**

backhouse interiors  
12 kaiwharawhara rd  
kaiwharawhara  
wellington

04 499 8847  
04 499 8849  
backhouse.interiors@xtra.co.nz

www.backhousesnz.com  
hours  
mon to fri 8.30-5.30  
sat 10.00 to 4.00