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**THE BIG ISSUE** was set up as a business in 1991 to give homeless people the chance to make an income. It campaigns on behalf of homeless people and highlights the major social issues of the day. It allows homeless people to voice their views and opinions.

**TO BECOME A VENDOR** you must be homeless or vulnerably accommodated. However we recognise that for many homeless people, being housed is only the first stage in getting off the streets. Therefore if a rehoused vendor needs to continue selling The Big Issue we may allow them to do so.

**VENDORS BUY** the magazine for 40p and sell it to the public for £1. All vendors receive training, sign a code of conduct, and can be identified by badges with photos.

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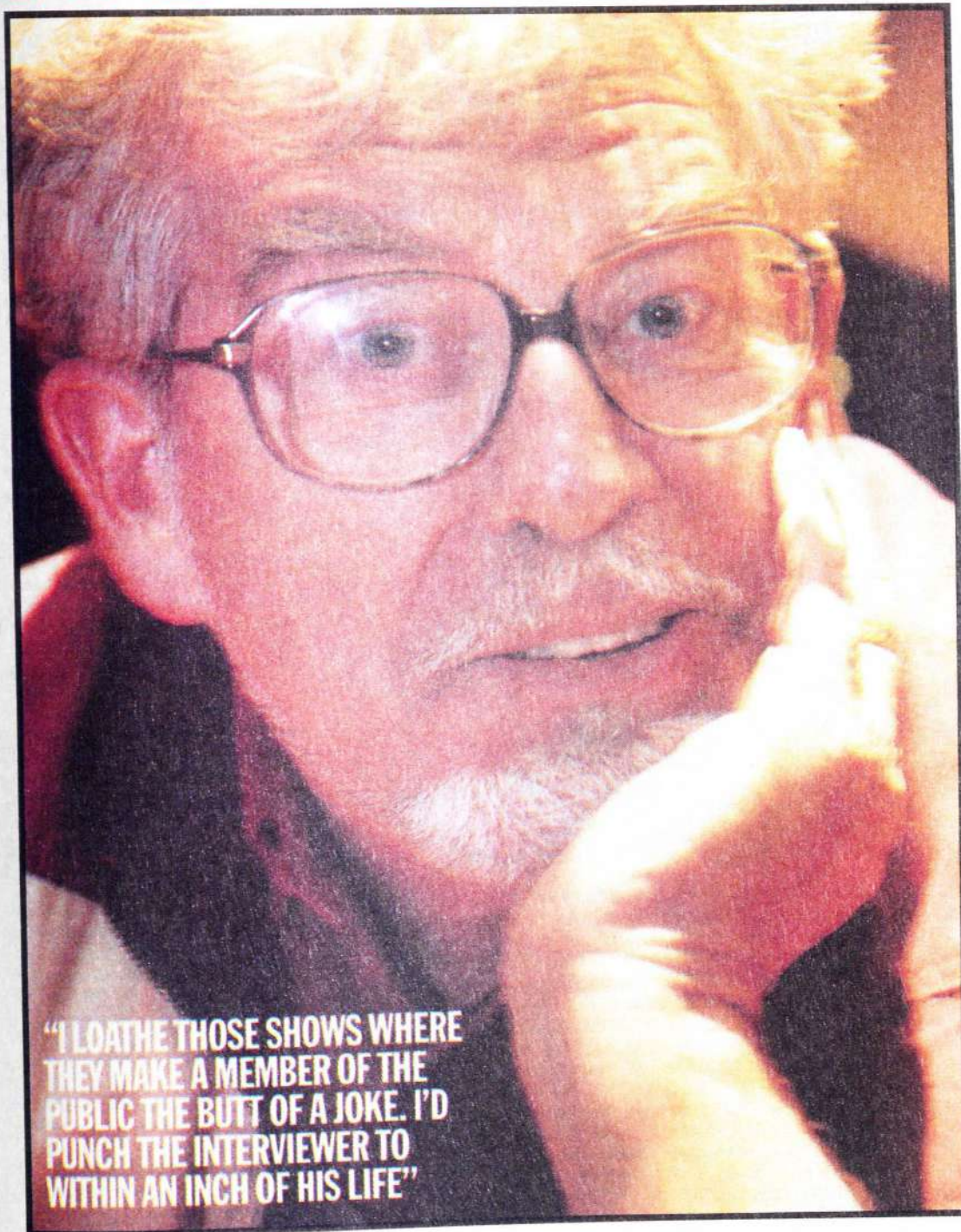
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**COMING NEXT WEEK**

**NOEL GALLAGHER ON MEG, LIAM AND COCAINE**  
**IBIZA WILL HARRY ENFIELD RUIN CLUBBERS' PARADISE?**

ROLF HARRIS, GENIAL CARTOONIST AND ANIMAL-LOVER, IS THE NATION'S FAVOURITE UNCLE — BUT JUST WAIT TILL HE GETS ANGRY, SAYS **SAM HART**

# RUDE BOY



**"I LOATHE THOSE SHOWS WHERE THEY MAKE A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC THE BUTT OF A JOKE. I'D PUNCH THE INTERVIEWER TO WITHIN AN INCH OF HIS LIFE"**

Rolf Harris is exhausted. He shuffles into the hotel lounge, slumps back in his seat and orders a coffee. His trademark twinkly eyes and breathless enthusiasm for life seem to have deserted him. In fact, he looks dangerously close to nodding off.

It's completely understandable. He has just celebrated his 70th birthday and while many men his age are getting well acquainted with their armchairs and daytime TV, Rolf has been up since 5am filming a new series for *Animal Hospital*. It's a gruelling schedule but one to which he is obviously committed.

He is keen to talk about the show and explains in disturbing detail what happens when dogs' anal glands get too swollen. "You've got to squeeze the pus out of them," he says gravely. It's all alarmingly graphic but Rolf is a plain-speaking man and calls an anal gland an anal gland.

"I was very clear about that when I started on *Animal Hospital*. There's no point in beating around the bush and saying 'Oh he's gone for a wee wee.' The vets have got to be able to say 'This is the penis and this is the bladder and this is the anus. You've got to give it the proper terminology and not treat people like babies.'"

Rolf is very stern about people being treated like babies. He hates the thought of the public being conned and believes passionately that TV should be honest with its audience. Anything that makes the Ordinary Bloke look stupid makes him mad. Really mad.

"I loathe those shows where they make a member of the public the butt of a joke. It's supposed to be hysterically funny to dig up some fella's garden and then watch him get angry and then say 'Smile! You're on *Candid Camera*' or whatever. Smile? I'll smash your bloody face in. You've destroyed my composure and given me a stomach ulcer. I think GBH would be permissible under those circumstances. I'd punch the interviewer to within an inch of his life."

He looks quite fierce and it's hard to imagine that this is the same man who diddle-iddle-iddle-dummed his way through *Jake The Peg*. But this desire to be straight with people is all part of his appeal, which is nothing ►

if not wide-ranging. In *The Court Of King Rolf* – a gushing tribute book, published in time for his 70th birthday – a bizarre concoction of stars ranging from Kate Bush to Chris Tarrant pays homage to his integrity and general niceness.

Born in Perth, Australia in 1930, Rolf came to London aged 22 hoping to become a portrait painter like his Welsh grandfather. He went to art school where he met his wife Alwen and made ends meet by playing piano in cabaret bars at night. He made his TV debut in 1957 and since then his career has followed a zig-zagging path involving music, cartoons, presenting and photography.

His musical career alone has ricocheted from the tear-jerking *Two Little Boys* (Mrs Thatcher's choice on *Desert Island Discs*) to Led Zeppelin's *Stairway To Heaven* (a top ten hit both here and in Australia). His forthcoming album, *70/30* (so-called because he was 70 on March 30) manages to place *How Much Is That Doggy In The Window?* alongside a cover version of Robbie Williams' *Angels*. "It's such a beautiful song," he says, looking a bit misty-eyed. "I knew when I first heard it that I wanted to cover it."

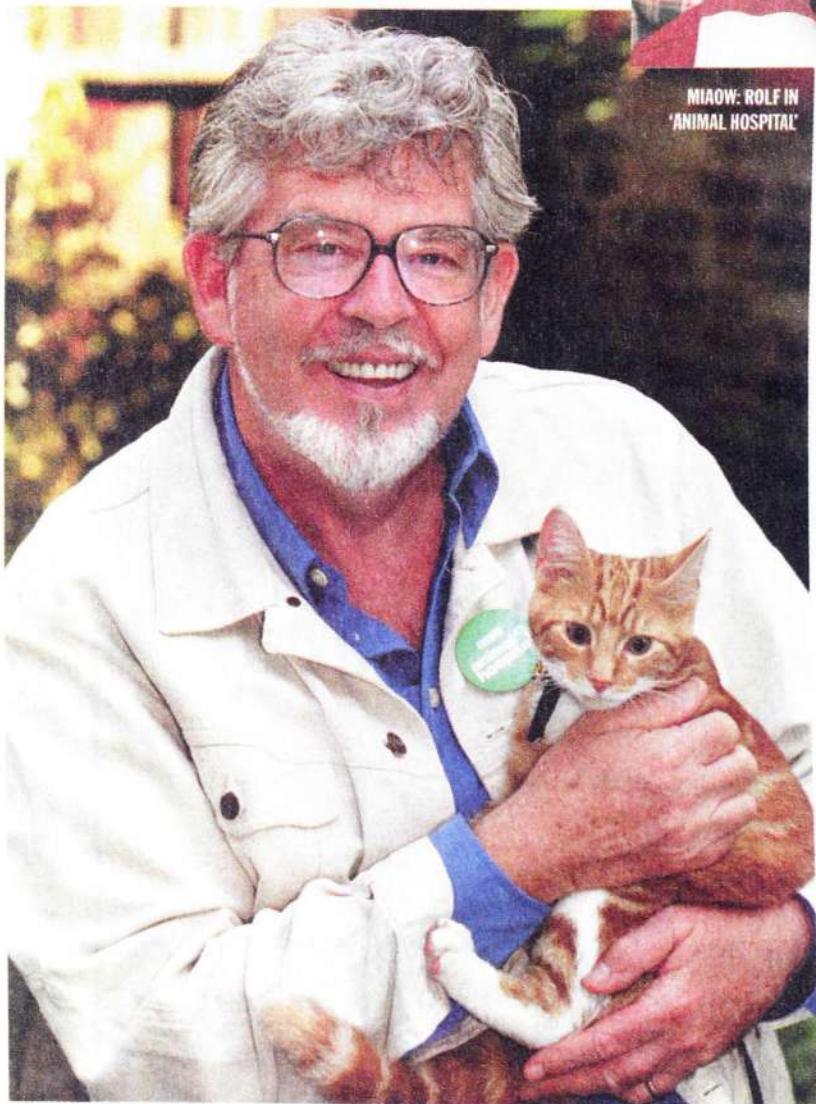
Williams has yet to hear the new version of his number one hit but will get a chance at this year's Glastonbury festival, where Rolf is making his third appearance. Glastonbury organiser Michael Eavis, who first booked Rolf in 1993, admits it was a bit of a gamble, but one which paid off. "There

were tens of thousands of people waiting for him and more pouring in... it was absolutely incredible."

The festival was a godsend to Rolf's career which was poised to nosedive after his long-running kids' TV show *Cartoon Club* was axed the previous year. He was instantly transformed from ageing cartoonist to cult figure.

"Before, it was really square to like Rolf Harris. It was like saying you liked Val Doonican or something," he says, his eyes getting a bit more twinkly. "But suddenly it was OK – they could

ROLF HARRIS ON  
CONCEPTUAL ART:  
"A GIRL MAKES LOVE IN  
A BED AND THEN GETS  
OUT OF IT AND THAT'S  
ART? THAT'S BULLSHIT"



own up that they liked me. It was a real buzz for me, a real shot in the arm. There were 80,000 people singing every word."

Despite his new-found street cred he is most famous for kids' TV, a subject still close to his heart. He is scathing about some of the newer presenters. "You see so many people who use kids as an unpaid backdrop. They are told to pretend to enjoy something and when to scream and shout and when to shut up. You get the impression that the kids are the last thing on their mind."

Because of his associations with the lighter things in life such as wobble boards, stylophones and populist TV – it's easy to forget that Rolf Harris is very talented. His work has been exhibited at the Royal Academy of Art, he is an accomplished photographer and has rare talent for music. He was even junior backstroke champion of Australia as a teenager. Does he feel he has dumbed himself down for TV?

"I've been hampered by the fact that I do so many different



things. I saw a programme about Picasso the other day – now there's a guy who faced a blank canvas every day of his life. That's dedication, and I often wonder what would have happened if I'd concentrated on painting. But at the end of the day I bring art to the public and I enjoy all the things I do so much."

The subject turns to conceptual art. He is not impressed with the likes of Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin. Again he's outraged on behalf of the Common Man. "It's another con-trick. A girl makes love in a bed and then gets out of it and that's art? That's bullshit. The man and woman in the street don't go to galleries because they know they're going to be faced with a canvas that is worth £400,000 because it has got a red spot and a black line on it and they'll think 'I must be stupid because I don't understand why it's worth that'."

He also feels passionately about racial politics in Australia and is deeply embarrassed about a verse, now omitted from *Tie Me Kangaroo Down Sport*, which caused offence. "Let me Abbos go loose, Lou, let me Abbos go loose/They're of no further use, Lou so let me Abbos go loose."

"I wrote it in a bar in England trying to make a bunch of Australians laugh. I didn't realise it would cause offence. I haven't sung that verse since the 1960s."

Owning up to mistakes is a big part of his personality. In *The Court Of King Rolf*, Lorraine Chase, who worked with him in pantomime, recalls him apologising to the entire cast over a tannoy after he'd messed up on stage. It's all part of his quest for the truth. "You've got to be real, you've got to be honest and not con people. You've got to be able to say to the audience, 'Oops – I've forgotten the words.' Then they know you're not pretending." ■ *The Court Of King Rolf* (£12.99, Partridge) and new LP '70/30' on Rolf Harris Enterprises are out now.