

## Grizabella Speaks

*Justin W. Sanders*

She's old and she's having a rough time physically, says Cats star Claire Blakely of her role as Grizabella, the Glamour Cat. Her dreams of fame and fortune shattered, the musical's story finds Grizabella returning to her junkyard home to find that her old friends have shunned her.

Her movements are a lot more hesitant, smaller than the other cats, continues Blakely on her beleaguered character, and she's sort of hunched over, but with her back up to protect herself.

To develop her characters individual felinity, Blakely studied real-life cats and mimicked their movements.

It involves a lot of movement from your back. You have to learn how to respond to having a tail and having ears on top of your head. Cats also incorporate lots of stillness.

In addition to their unique physicality, Blakely was inspired by cats emotional nature. They're completely honest to their emotions, she says. When they're mad, they're mad and when they're happy, they're happy. They're strictly what they feel at all times. That's cool, I think.

And of course, cats are cool under pressure, particularly when dangling from high places a quality Blakely definitely calls upon during Cats climactic closing sequence, when Grizabella ascends from the stage on an old tire, belting out the show tune classic, Memory.

I am terrified of heights, so it is very scary, she laughs. It definitely helps to be in character at that moment!

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