

Opening Chorus



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Eye of the Cat

Born into a heavy musical legacy, singer Catherine Russell forges her own path

Forget what the Chinese zodiac tells you; this is shaping up to be the year of the Cat. After years on fame's periphery, singer Catherine "Cat" Russell is, with the release of her dazzling sophomore platter *Sentimental Streak* (World Village), at long last earning the critical praise and widespread attention she so richly deserves.

She has been immersed in show business virtually since birth. Her father, Panamanian musician and songwriter Luis Russell, literally won his ticket to Stateside success nearly a century ago, scoring a then-whopping \$5,000 in his native land's national lottery and using the money to pay his way to America. There he signed on with King Oliver, emerging as leader of one of the hottest jazz orchestras of the 1920s and then serving as pianist, arranger and music director for fellow Oliver alumnus Louis Armstrong. Russell's mother is acclaimed bassist and vocalist Carline Ray, whose résumé includes stints with Duke Ellington, Sy Oliver and the celebrated, all-female International Sweethearts of Rhythm. She still actively performs at age 82.

As early as age 6, Catherine was dancing with Katherine Dunham's acclaimed company. Professionally speaking, Russell has remained true to her feline nickname, steadily moving from one show-biz life to the next. She sang gospel in San Francisco; worked as an actress both off and on Broadway; belted out pop hits between comics' standup sets at Catch a Rising Star; learned the art of big-band singing with Jimmy Vivino's outfit; performed with Steely Dan, Paul Simon, Cyndi Lauper, Jackson Browne, Rosanne Cash

