



Eartha Kitt: Fabulous at 80

After six decades in the spotlight, the feline songstress is still on the prowl. By Laura Brown

The luminous Kitt in black and white. Ralph Lauren Collection blouse, \$398, and skirt, \$5,998. runway.polo.com. De Beers necklace. Cartier ring. See Where to Buy for details.

From Catwoman to cabaret, Eartha Kitt remains the dictionary definition of *fabulous*. (Orson Welles once described her as “the most exciting woman in the world.”) In a year in which she is celebrating her 80th birthday with a lineup of concerts around the world, the divine Ms. Kitt shares her secrets.

Harper's Bazaar: Can you share with us the history of the Orson Welles quote?

Eartha Kitt: When I played Helen of Troy with him in *Time Runs*, he'd kiss me. One time, he bit me. I ran to him when the curtain went down and I said, “Why did you bite me?” and he said, “Well, I got excited.”

HB: I expect you've excited quite a few men in your day.

EK: Well, I like men. I love men.

HB: Do you have a type?

EK: I don't go for very handsome men. Like they say in England, toy boys break too easily.

HB: You once said that you are still playing Catwoman.

EK: Well, a gentleman who wrote [the late 1960s TV series] *Batman* said he wrote that character especially for me. He said, “You are a cat, you look like a cat, you act like a cat.”

HB: How have you stayed so amazing all these years?

EK: I don't think about it. I take life for what it has to offer me. I don't get aggravated about [getting older]. The wrinkles on my face are a natural process, so why should I get angry?

HB: I saw you in *Nine* on Broadway four years ago. It's like you were powered by a superengine. Do you take vitamins, exercise?

EK: I walk at least two, three miles a day. If I can't get outside, I'll do weights. The weight I have here in my hand is eight pounds.

HB: You're doing weights while you're talking?

EK: Oh, yes. I'm walking around the room with weights around my ankles. I'm also lifting my eight-pound weight in one hand.

HB: What are your opinions on plastic surgery?

EK: I'm very happy with what the gods have given me. I take life as she presents herself to me, and whatever you see in my face is what I have earned.

HB: What is great style to you?

EK: Simplicity. I don't have to have the biggest house or the biggest car or the longest mink, but quality of life is really glamorous.

HB: Who has great style now?

EK: Oh, my God, that makes me think hard. They're all so into the camera, into making so, so, so much money, and I think that they lose their souls. Denzel Washington, he's okay. And Halle Berry—she's well dressed; she's a very beautiful woman.

HB: What do you think of starlets like Britney Spears?

EK: Oh, I thought Britney Spears was absolutely marvelous in the beginning. But now I think she's gone off the deep end.

HB: Did you ever behave badly when you were younger?

EK: No. I was called a naughty girl only because I was singing naughty songs.

HB: How important is applause to you?

EK: I've always accepted applause as making me feel worthwhile. I hope I die being applauded. Just put a chaise longue under me and let me go. ■