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# CAT FANCY

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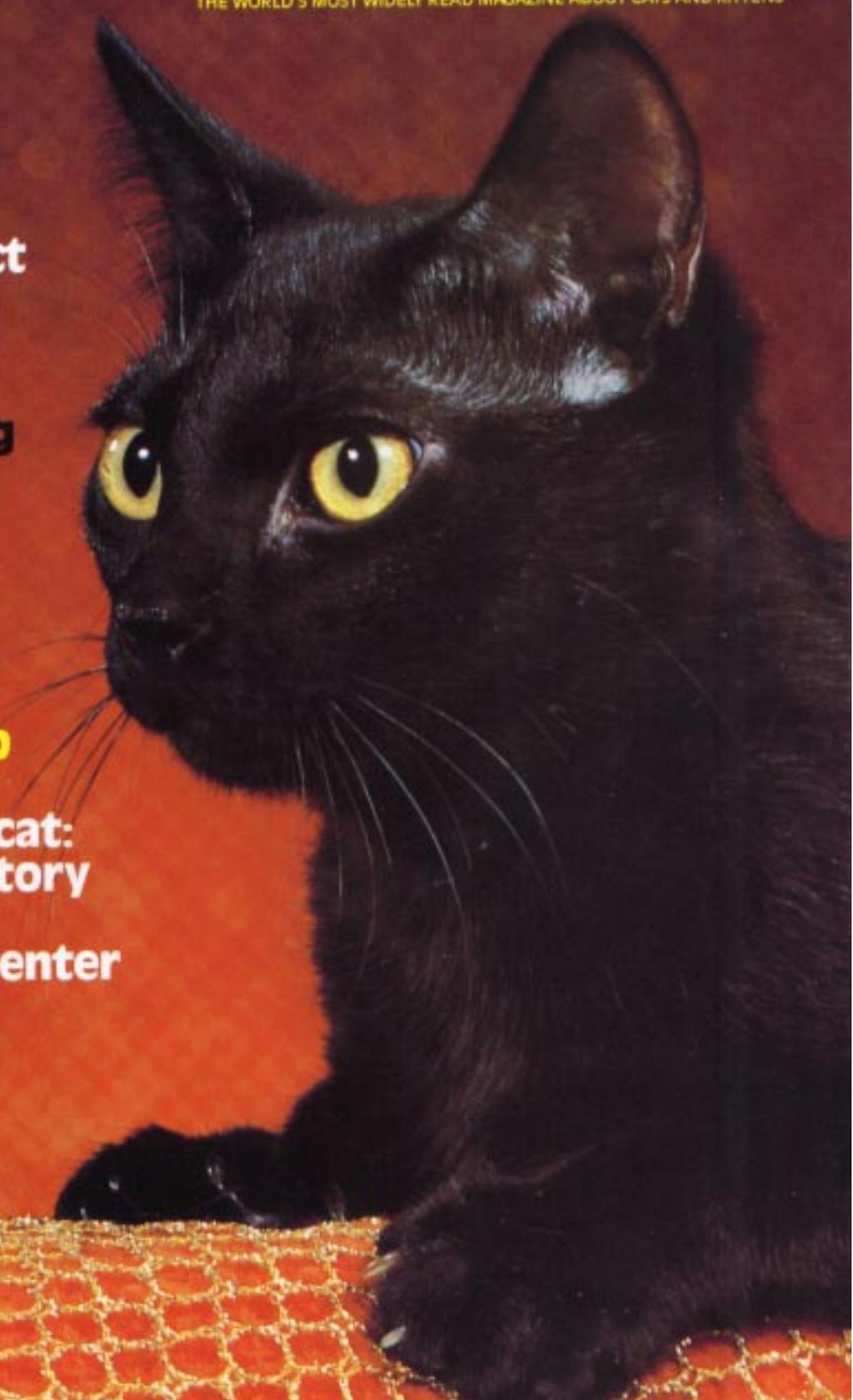
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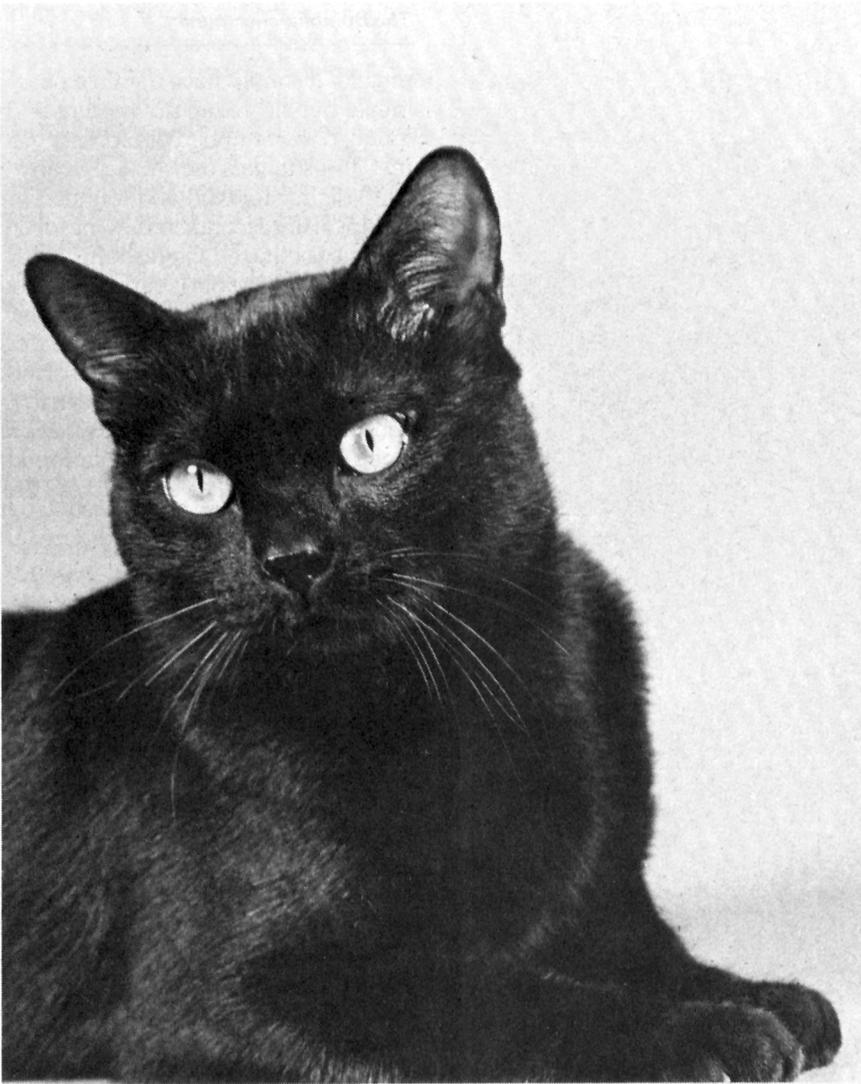
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**Lucky Bombay—  
The Cat Fancy's  
Black Beauty**





# Lucky Black Cat – The Bombay

*What can compare  
with a sleek, black  
cat for pure mystery?*

*CFA and TICA Grand Champion Kejo Zanzabar of Gotagato was bred by Patt Taylor and is now owned by Joanne Pantaze of Austin, Texas.*



*Kejo Kyrie, bred and owned by Patt Taylor was CFA's first Bombay Grand Champion.*

*by Charlene Beane*

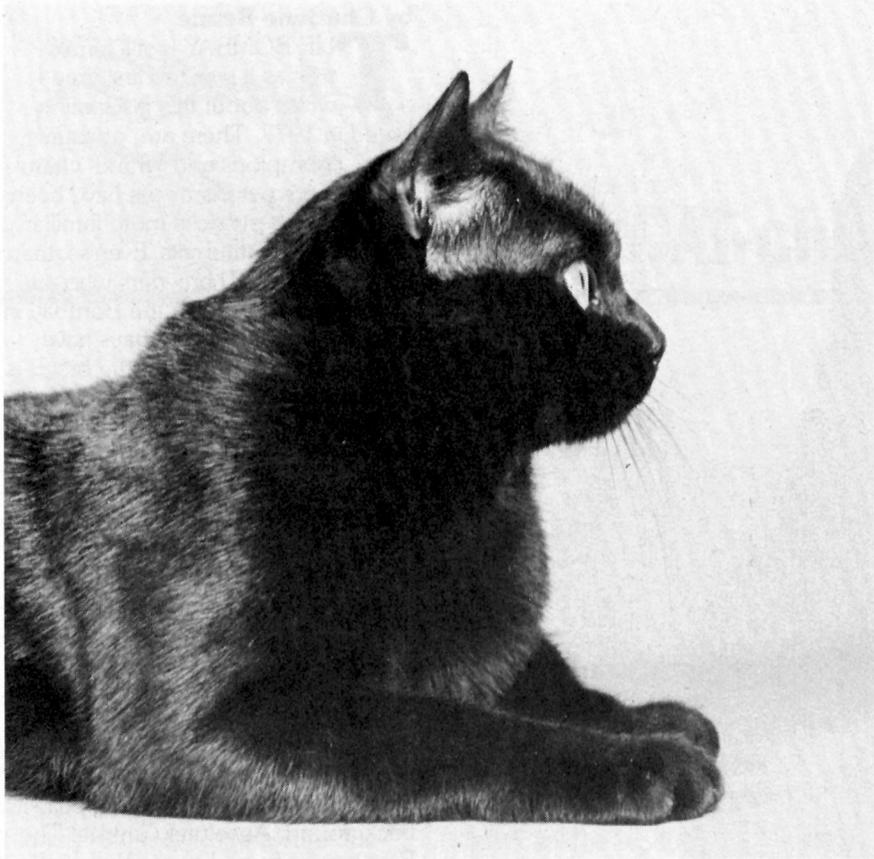
**T**HE BOMBAY is still almost as rare as it was the first time I wrote about this fascinating breed in 1977. There are, of course, more champions and grand champions, more pet Bombays have been sold, and the public is more familiar with these beautiful cats. Even so, there are only about 10 breeders who are seriously working with the Bombay in this country. A few Bombays have been exported, but since the breed is not recognized by foreign associations, the U.S. breeders are the suppliers for the world Bombay market.

The Bombay was recognized for championship status in CFA in 1976. It has since gained acceptance in ACFA and TICA, as well. Technically, it is still a relatively new breed. However, it has about 25 years of work behind it.

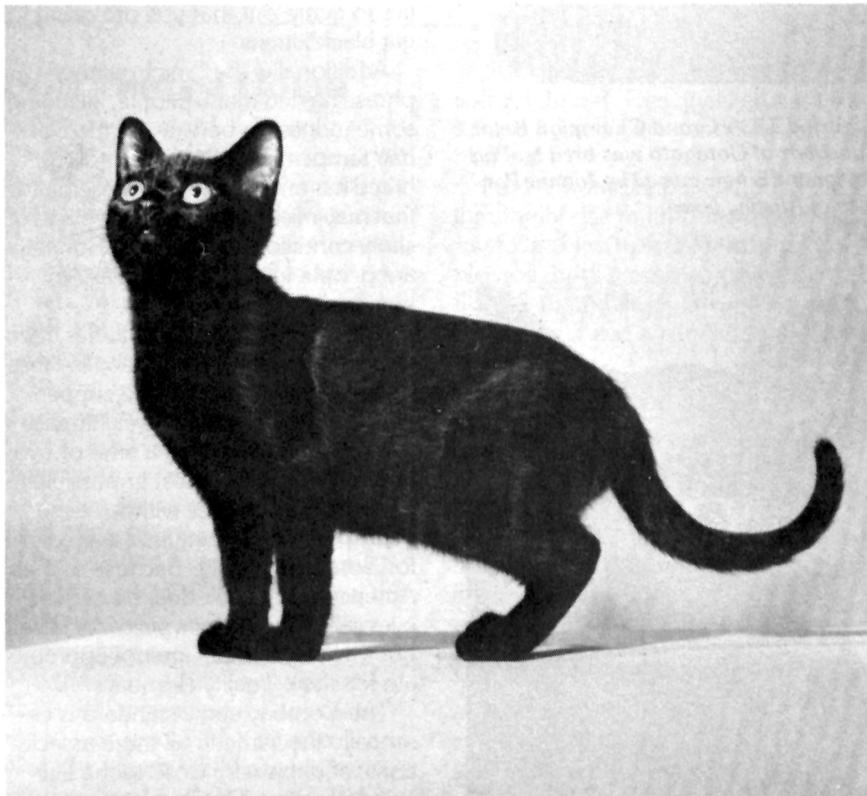
Some of the early publicity about the breed may have actually created problems. For example, the Bombay was touted as a "mini-panther." This phrase left the impression with some people that the cat had wild blood in its background. Absolutely untrue! The Bombay is a hybrid created by crossing the best available Burmese with an outstanding black American Shorthair. Since sable Burmese are genetically black, it doesn't take a degree in genetics to figure out that you are going to get black kittens.

Additionally, the "mini-panther" phrase has led many people, including some judges, to be wary of the Bombay temperament. Although every breed has an occasional representative that may misbehave under the stress of show conditions, as a breed, Bombays are people-loving, playful, easy-to-handle, sweet-natured cats.

Another catch-phrase that has been disadvantageous to the breed is "the patent leather cats with the copper penny eyes." That is a lovely fantasy that has been achieved a time or two, but in reality,



*Grand Champion Kejo Zanzabar shows off his pretty face.*



*Bill and Harriett Priess think Champion Gotagato's Ebony of Duplicats is something special.*

it is almost impossible to produce copper eyes without close Persian blood. The natural eye color for Bombays is gold. Because of their American Shorthair ancestors, their eyes can also be green, yellow or hazel, but these eye colors are not appropriate for show quality Bombays.

The Bombay show standard is essentially the same in all three associations, and it is very close to the Burmese standard. The Bombay is a moderate cat, medium in size, muscular in development, neither cobby nor tubular. The head is rounded with wide-set, large eyes and a short, well-developed muzzle. It should have a visible nose-break, but "it should not present a 'pugged' or 'snubbed' look. The medium-size ears are set well apart, tilted slightly forward and rounded on the tips. These features combine for an open, sweet-faced expression.

The Bombay coat is supposed to be so short and so black that it is the only breed that places 55 percent of its total points on coat and color. In spite of this unusual emphasis, there has been a recent surge of interest in conformation. Specifically, the controversy surrounding the Burmese has also affected the Bombay.

To digress for a moment, Burmese breeders are currently divided on the issue of "classic versus plastic" (isn't that an awful phrase?). Briefly, in laymen's terms, the classic Burmese is a lovely, moderate cat with lots of roundness to its beauty. The so-called plastic Burmese maybe pushing the standard a little bit. It is a typier cat tending toward a more exotic head type and a cobbier body. The more extreme Burmese are eye-catching and some have been doing well in the shows. Apparently, judges who like this new extreme Burmese have begun looking for the same features in the Bombay, which is, after all, essentially a black Burmese.

To put it bluntly, the Bombay as a breed is not well enough developed to

accommodate a change in style; yet it is human nature to try to breed and exhibit the type of cat that seems to be winning. Breeders who succumb to this temptation risk setting back their breeding programs if they breed cats too closely related or introduce characteristics that may be detrimental to the cat's long-term health.

Fortunately, the Bombay is a hardy, resilient cat—a tribute to hybrid vigor. Bombay breeders enjoy bragging about their lack of vet bills. They are so confident of their cats' reproductive ability that some will guarantee females they sell as breeders. Bombays have a low kitten mortality rate. They have easy births of four to eight kittens, and the kittens will live. Both parents enjoy the kittens—probably because the adults act like kittens themselves.

Except for their size and physical appearance, Bombays never grow up. They remain playful and affectionate, and although they do not engage in random chatter, they will carry on a conversation with their favorite people. They love being in the middle of things and are not shy with strangers. They adapt well to children and family pets, but if you inquire about adopting a Bombay, you may be questioned about the other pets in your household because even though Bombays are amiable and easy-going, some other breeds of cats will dominate or persecute Bombays.

Bombays mature slowly. The earliest kittens can be sold is 12 to 13 weeks, and even then their quality is undetermined. If they are going to be show quality, they will not reveal it until six or seven months of age. At that time, a cute, possibly shaggy kitten may be transformed into a hard-muscled beauty with a short, silky, sleek coat that may continue to improve until it is 14 months old. If it is good at 14 months, it will be even better at two years and will



*The appeal of this shiny, black cat is evident in Grand Champion Argayle Minaxi of Sankachi, owned by S. Sulloway and J. Kachler.*



*Champion Premiere Midnite Little Boy of Late Start is simply "fun to be with," says owner Lucia Pozzi.*

continue to improve until it is five. This slow, glorious maturation guarantees Bombays a long and exciting show career.

Making allowances for a few cats that simply don't like shows, Bombays are one of the easiest breeds to exhibit. They require very little grooming because a Bombay show coat is so short and so shiny that there is little a person can do to improve it. They thrive on a balanced diet of good commercial cat food. They

have good appetites and maintain a proper, healthy weight without human interference.

As a rule, stud cats are gentlemen. They do not have a reputation as sprayers. It is not unusual for Bombay studs to have the run of the house much of the time. If they are confined, they like to have their kittens with them for play and companionship.

Bombays have been known to breed as early as five to six months and as late as 14 months, but on the average they start to get interested in the opposite sex at about seven to eight months.

It is still permissible to start from scratch in creating a Bombay, using a black American Shorthair and a Burmese, but there are enough Bombays now that it is not necessary and might even be unwise. People who do use black American Shorthairs use only those that are color-bred blacks for about six generations so that they are sure that black is the only color they are dealing with. Most Bombays are from Bombay x Bombay or Bombay x Burmese matings. It has been found that going back to a black American Shorthair causes a loss of type and coat and little is gained. However, crossing with a Burmese will probably improve type and coat.

I will spare you a lecture on genetics, but it is interesting to note that certain breeding combinations, especially those including first and second generation Bombays, may produce some sable kittens. These kittens look like Burmese and are sold as pets without papers. Although there are not many brown Bombays born (some figures indicate 1 in 4, others estimate 3 in 20), they do appear from time to time and the breeders are open about this possibility.

Breeders, of course, would prefer not to have sable kittens, but they may be a boon to the pet owner. This is one of the delights of hybridization. Exotics produce kittens that look like Persians; Colorpoints

have kittens that look like Siamese; sable Bombays look like Burmese. Usually these nonconformists are sold at prices much below their purebred look-alikes. If you've been wanting a Burmese pet but can't find one in your price range, call a Bombay breeder. You'll get a bonus-the cat will have hybrid vigor. On the other hand, if you have your heart set on the ultimate black cat, the good news is that Bombays are not expensive; the bad news is that you may have to spend some time on a waiting list because Bombays are still a rare breed.

Pet-quality Bombays cost approximately \$100 to \$150. Pet-quality kittens usually have some feature which would disqualify them as show cats: a locket, green eyes or a tail kink (uncommon).

Breeder-quality usually ranges from \$200 to \$250. These cats have no disqualifying faults and could probably make their championships easily in any or all of the associations in which they are recognized, but they are probably not of a quality that could become a grand champion.

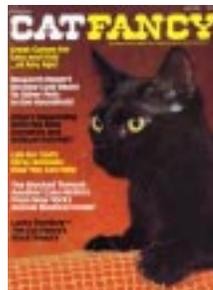
There are no guarantees of fame and fortune for show-quality kittens, but show quality Bombays have more potential for recognition, in the breeder's judgment, than their breeder-quality littermates. If you could find a show-quality Bombay for sale, it would cost \$300 or more, but the possibility is unlikely. Breeders are keeping most of their show-quality kittens, but you might get lucky. The International Bombay Society maintains a reference network to help interested people locate available kittens.

Probably the best testimony for the charm of the Bombay is that pet buyers have a pattern. They buy their first Bombay for its looks-they are entranced by that shiny black, big-eyed, cuddly cat. They live with it awhile, and then they have to have another. This time they don't care what the cat looks like-black or sable, green-eyed or gold-they want it for its personality.

Personally, I think the one thing that has kept the Bombay from getting all of the attention it deserves is that it is nearly impossible to photograph well. These cats are so black that they simply soak up light and end up looking like the black hole when they are shown on the printed page. We've tried to choose from the best available photographs of Bombays. The selection of photos accompanying this article are some of the best I've ever seen, but you may still

have to use your imagination to sense the glistening coat and the rippling muscles.

People interested in learning more about the Bombay should write to the International Bombay Society, c/o Patricia Taylor, 2741 E. Sylvia, Phoenix, AZ 85032.



*This striking Bombay is Furrfayer's Starfire, owned by Cam and Belle Nau of San Jose, California. Photo by Robert Pearcy.*