

## ■ ASTRID HADAD

# Esthetic, diuretic and unashamed

Provocative Mexican artist makes a mockery of machismo

BY KEVIN GRIFFIN  
VANCOUVER SUN

One reviewer described Astrid Hadad's costumes as so unusual they make Salvador Dali look like Norman Rockwell. *The New York Times* said her political cabaret was "one of the most provocative stage acts since the Weimar Republic was in bloom." She's also been called a Frida Kahlo painting come to life.

A legend throughout Mexico but especially in her hometown of Mexico City, Hadad is bringing her performance art to Vancouver for the first time for one show only at the Chan Centre for the Performing Arts at the University of B.C. on Saturday evening.

"My show has its roots in cabaret," she said in an online article in *Latinas on Stage*. "My style is syncretic, esthetic, pathetic, and diuretic, and demonstrates, without shame, the attitudes of machismo, masochism, nihilism, and 'I-could-give-a-damn' inherent in all cultures."

Hadad's performances with her band Los Tarzanes (The Tarzans) combine everything from ranchero and bolero music to rock and jazz into a unique genre she calls Heavy Nopal, named after the Mexican cactus used to make tequila. She takes what she describes as the essence of Mexican culture and its mix of Aztec and colonial Spanish symbols and values to attack macho male culture, submissive female stereotypes, the Mexican ruling elites and American imperialism, the latter which she skewers with lyrics such as "Visit the United States... before



Astrid Hadad takes a shot at the 'I-don't-give-a-damn' attitude.

it visits you!"

In performances, her frequent costume changes may include an Aztec Pyramid with carved snakes, a psychedelic plant with all-seeing eyes, and the eternal whore with huge breasts that spill out of her chest and down to her knees.

Although the lyrics of her songs are in Spanish, and those not fluent in the language may miss the occasional joke or political insight, Hadad said she will add explanations and asides in Spanglish.

"I will speak in very bad English," she said in a phone interview from Mexico, "but everyone will understand."

"This is what I do in my show — mix these cultures and images that are so deep in the mind of the people in Mexico," said Hadad, the middle child of 11 whose grandparents on her father's side emigrated from Lebanon. "Some people think I am dangerous because I make people think — and this is prohibited on TV. You must sing and say nothing."

## ■ WHERE TO GET TICKETS

Astrid Hadad's show is part of the fourth LIVE Biennial of Performance Art, which continues to Nov. 25th with more than 35 events featuring local, national and international artists.

Tickets for Astrid Hadad y Los Tarzanes range from \$28 to \$45 plus service charges from ticketmaster.ca, or by calling 604-280-3311.

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