

Ten things you didn't know about... *Diamanda Galás*

Born to Greek Orthodox parents in California, avant-garde icon Galás releases her thrillingly dark new album 'Guilty, Guilty, Guilty' on March 31 and plays QEH on Tuesday and Thursday 20.

She finds it difficult to watch a man emote onstage without wanting to blow his head off.

'I just find it repulsive. I don't wanna see a man doing a female emotional thing onstage, I prefer my male performers to be cold and stiff.'

She doesn't think about whether she's a woman or a man on stage.

'I tend to think more in terms of animals, you know, snake, wolf, a panther or a leopard. Maybe sometimes a crocodile, I don't think maybe so much in terms of being a human being.'

She's not keen on Lou Reed.

'We had a conversation that was unattractive. He told me that singers don't need to sing in tune. But if you had a guitar player and he didn't play in tune, you'd fire him. It might've worked for him and there's a few who can get away with it, but I wouldn't brag about it. Ha ha ha! So we just didn't hit it off. But I'm not denigrating him at all because he's done a lot of great stuff.'

She thinks the British rock press is stupid.

'Well, the uneducated, which comprises 99 per cent of the rock press anywhere. I once jokingly described my singing style in a press release as "Schrei opera" to give people an idea of my approach, which came from a similar place as the German expressionists. The next thing I knew, they were saying that my singing was taken from this German tradition – and 15 years later they're still looking for it, and I'm sayin', "Yeah, you ain't lyin' that you can't find that thing!"'

She decided to teach Yoko Ono a lesson.

'She came to my shows and said she liked them – and suddenly decided that I had been influenced by her. Which was a bunch of shit because I hated The Beatles; I never listened to rock music except for the Stones. So I said to a journalist, you know, Patty Waters – who did an incredible record called "Black Is The Color Of My True Love's Hair" – was a gigantic influence on myself and Yoko Ono. And suddenly, the press came out saying, without the influence of Patty Waters, there would be no Yoko Ono. And I fucking howled laughing, I said, "Take it! Now you can see what it's like!"'

She's not flamboyant.

'In daily life when I walk down the street, I get these guys saying: "What, d'you think you're a man?" Usually I keep a low profile, I try to get to the store and back



AUSTIN YOUNG

and I'm very unadventurous. Except for sound. Then I'm very adventurous.'

She thinks there are very few people who can tell a joke.

'Most of them, I'm just like, "Shut up! I don't wanna listen to this crap-assed punchline already!" I like people who make shit up on the spot much more.'

She likes to lie in the darkness making educated calculations...

'...about the suffering of my enemies, yes, I like that. Practical jokes or little plans, certain things that I might have done that even the score, I'm big on that. It's fun for me and then I can have a nice night's sleep.'

She thinks Al Jolson was the first and the best rapper of them all.

'I'm telling the truth, on "The Big Show", you can hear the first rap. Okay, I don't like the black-face stuff, but he did these raps incorporating the Jewish cantorial style, they were very rhythmic, very Brooklyn, and sharp and funny. A lot of rap artists don't have the rhythmic ability that he has. And the worst part is it's like the minstrel tradition, they're jumping up and down and making fools of themselves, talking about bitches and fags for other straight men to prove they're macho. It's dressing-up and playing gangster, when you're going home and wearing your mommy's nightgown and saying, "Was I good tonight?" There's so much bullshit.'

She wants her own chemistry lab in the basement of her house.

'I'd make the things that a lot of people need. Like, you're not gonna get people who take speed to stop taking it just because they're gonna have a crazy sex life, so what you should do is make cocktails of anti-virals and speed. Or producing derivatives of opium or morphine for people who just wanna take it easy while they're *not* sick. Why is it that all the good drugs are only given to people who are dying? How about the people who are living? They could use a little morphine from time to time, so they could have a nice weekend.'

Interview: Sophie Harris