

## **La Dolce Dita**

### **The International Burlesque And Pin-Up Star Dita Von Tesse Takes Time Out to Talk to CW—Keeping It Hot!**

**By Tracey Porpora**

In the age of strip clubs, international burlesque star Dita Von Teese has taken the art of exotic dancing to new levels as she travels around the world entertaining everyone from superstars to elite groups of businessmen with her elaborately-staged strip teases. But this modern-day pin-up girl does more than entertain crowds by seductive dancing. She's also an author, business woman, spokeswoman and budding film star. CW spoke with Von Teese (AKA Heather Sweet) about what it's like to live the life of a celebrity stripper.

**An international sex icon and modern day pin-up girl, we want to know your definition of “sexy?”**

I think [being] sexy is about confidence, individuality, and being in touch with your sensuality.

**How did you begin your modeling career?**

I wanted to be photographed as a 40s style pinup in my vintage lingerie. It started off as a hobby when I was 18. I started a website in 1992, and I sold little packets of pinup postcards on it.

**You were born Heather Sweet. Why did you change your name?**

At the time, I was working at a lingerie shop, and moonlighting at night at a strip club.

Every dancer at a strip club chooses a name. It never occurred to me that I would be using this name for all these years; it was just for fun! But I did not legally change my name; I'm still Heather Sweet on my passport.

**What's your favorite feature?**

I don't really think about what my physical attributes are; I think my best asset is my styling ability. I don't remember a time that I ever looked in the mirror and thought, 'I have great----.' I don't think like that. I might think that I did a terrific job on my marcel waves, or my eyeliner, or that I picked a fierce outfit!

**How and when did you revive the burlesque show in the age of exotic dancing and strip clubs?**

In 1990, I started working in a strip club because I was obsessed with dressing in retro lingerie. From there, I slowly built that idea into a show, and it got bigger and bigger over the years.

**What type of preparation do you need to do for every burlesque show?**

I like to be backstage in my dressing room with plenty of leisurely time to put on stage makeup, dress, listen to music, and have a glass of champagne. I like to be alone for the most part, with no chaos!

**How would you teach someone the art of striptease?**

I would look at that individual's character, and go from there. It's not about trying to be

sex or learning the moves, it's about making it look natural and effortless, and above all, fun.

**You put on elaborate types of shows that include everything from a striptease in a cocktail glass to boudoir/bathtub exhibitions. What are the reactions from your audience?**

I get different reactions at every show, it doesn't matter which country I'm in. It's more about the feel of the venue, and the type of event. Sometimes it's a rollicking and wild party, and sometimes it's a very polite and distinguished sit-down dinner, or a theatre. The crowd reactions usually reflect the whole feel of the event.

**How is your live burlesque show different from exotic dancing?**

Burlesque is exotic dancing. In the 1940s, a burlesque dancer would be called an 'exotic dancer.' During World War I, Mata Hari was called an exotic dancer. It's dancing, and it's exotic. I think that what you really want to know is what makes burlesque different from modern day strip shows. Burlesque is what striptease was in the 30s and 40s--an elaborate and opulent striptease show that was usually held in theaters. I'm trying to keep the spirit of that alive with shows with lots of glamour.

**Who makes your elaborate costumes?**

**DVT:** "Catherine D'Lish [an American performance artist specializing in classical [strip tease](#) and [burlesque](#)] makes them, and they take thousands and thousands of hours, and usually about 300,000-400,000 Swarovski crystals, along with very expensive and rare

feathers.

**There's rumor you may be headed for the big screen in the role of Mata Hari role.**

**Are you excited for this new challenge?**

Yes, the true story of this great showgirl who was executed for being a spy has never been told, and it's about time.

**You're a spokeswoman for PETA: Tell us about the ad campaign.**

PETA approached me to be the face of their animal birth control campaign to get the word out about the importance of spaying and neutering your pets. As a pet owner who has always taken the responsibility to do this for my animals, it was easy for me to take a stand with this campaign.

**What's been your biggest oh-no moment?**

Whatever it is, I care not to remember, so I certainly won't be disclosing it here!

**What's your most memorable moment?**

I have memorable moments all the time; I just do my best to take mental photographs.

**What was your weirdest audience experience?**

It felt pretty weird to perform at the Cannes film festival in front of a crowd of the world's most famous movie stars.

**What type of guys are you attracted to?**

I don't have a type of guy I'm attracted to, chemistry is what matters.

**Do you have a current it guy?**

I have several.....

**What's on your nightstand?**

An art deco era lamp, a clock, a scented candle... oh, and condoms! Safe sex!

**Tell us about your line of stockings?**

[www.secretsinlace.com](http://www.secretsinlace.com) sells my own range of authentic 1940s style fully fashioned stockings. You can't buy a more couture stocking. They have the French heel, a real stitched seam, and the keyhole at the welt. I don't wear any other stockings.

**What are your future goals and ambitions?**

I have lots of projects that I'm really excited about for 2008. I'm writing my second book, [Her first book was *Burlesque and the Art of the Teese/Fetish and the Art of the Teese* (Harper Collins Publishers, \$39.95)], creating new burlesque acts, and launching a lingerie range. I'm excited about continuing my work as Viva Glam spokeswoman [100% of the sales from the latest MAC Cosmetics Viva Glam lipsticks and glosses will be donated to HIV and AIDS programs], and about my new ambassadorship with Cointreau." [Cointreau is a leading purveyor of spirits who recently made Von Teese its worldwide brand ambassador].