



Dita Von Teese

is a femme totale

ELLA GAUCI talks to the iconic performer about being an LGBTQIA+ ally and bringing burlesque into your bedroom

Wearing a gravity-defying blue feather plume on her head, Dita Von Teese smiles coyly at the audience. She pops open her blue satin skirt to reveal the glistening, bejewelled garters hiding under her clothes. Her black hair is shining under the spotlight, and her iconic red lip is stretched into a knowing smile. In one moment, she has everyone in The Venetian Resort, Las Vegas, under her magical spell.

Dita Von Teese is probably best known by her moniker, “the Queen of Burlesque”. There is no doubt about it: she is an icon. The performer, model, actor and businesswoman is often credited for the rise in popularity of burlesque. For the last two decades, she has travelled to every corner of the world, performed on some of the biggest stages, and garnered a huge audience of adoring fans. Now, she is bringing her most glamorous, awe-inspiring and spectacular show, *Nocturnelle*, to the UK and around the world, combining magic, burlesque and old-Hollywood glamour.

Growing up in a farming town in Michigan as a “dishwater blonde”, Dita has always aspired to reach the glamour she had seen on screen. Her mother had liked old movies, and she was captivated by stars like Rita Hayworth and Marilyn Monroe. As soon as she was allowed to buy makeup, she bought her first red lipstick for 99 cents. “Putting that lipstick on, I felt like I had something in common with those glamour girls I grew up watching,” Dita recounts. She’s just arrived in London, and despite her

hectic schedule, there’s an air of calm collectiveness that radiates just from her voice.

Before Dita became a cornerstone of burlesque, she was a pin-up girl during the nineties. Embodying vintage glamour and fetish mystique, it was here that she first found her signature look: blue-black hair, crimson lips and that infamous beauty mark. Obsessed with the golden age of cinema, Dita decided that she was going to be the next Gypsy Rose Lee.

It was in the world of pin-ups that Dita was first introduced to burlesque. She embraced the spirit of the “femme totale”, a phrase she coined, and decided to follow her dreams of being whoever she wanted to be. When she started burlesque, there wasn’t really an industry to speak of. Now, she gushes about the exciting developments in burlesque around the world. “It’s this global movement,” she explains. “People are making money doing

this every night of the week.”

Dita’s career is not lacking in milestone moments. From her Vegas residency to performing on iconic stages like the London Palladium, it’s dripping in all the glamour of a true legend. “I don’t take it for granted,” she says. “When I started doing this, I didn’t think I’d be doing it for so long. I didn’t think it would be inspiring other burlesque dancers around the world. If I had retired 10 years ago, like I thought I would, I wouldn’t have had my Vegas residency!”

From the beginning, LGBTQIA+ audiences have resonated deeply with burlesque and Dita’s work. She even makes a cameo in the latest season of hit Netflix show *Queer Eye*. “I think there is an eccentricity that is attractive to the queer community,” Dita tells me. “The neoburlesque movement has always been about diversity and inclusion.”

Throughout her career, Dita has been both a style and personal icon for many. She tells me about interactions with trans fans who have told her that her shows are the first time they can dress as themselves. Other times, fans have even come tied up in bondage gear just because they feel safe enough to do so in the community she has built.

We could all do with a bit of burlesque in our own lives. I ask Dita how >>



Photo: Jason Lloyd Evans



» we can each channel some of her onstage charisma and confidence at home. “One of my favourites is just dancing around the house and letting your body go. Tapping into your own sensuality and eroticism is a great place to start.”

Looking back on her small town in Michigan, Dita admits that she wouldn't have imagined the life she now leads. “I never really had any goals or distinctive ambition. There weren't any examples of someone making a big living doing this. Everything I did with integrity, and I enjoyed myself more than anything.”

It's this distinct approach to burlesque that Dita advises anyone

looking to get into the industry to adopt. “You don't get the reward of

“Tapping into your own sensuality and eroticism is a great place to start”

being known and being successful unless you're actually doing it for the right reasons. Tapping into yourself

and what makes you special and what you can bring to the stage makes people take notice.”

During these dark times globally, it's so important to hold onto glamour and joy. “You have to remember that you have one life to live. Whether it's meditating or dancing, nature or art, you have to turn to its beauty.” **D**

Dita Von Teese will be performing *Nocturnelle* in Manchester, London, Birmingham, Stockton-On-Tees and Edinburgh in January and February 2026. For tickets and more information, visit myticket.co.uk/artists/dita-von-teese