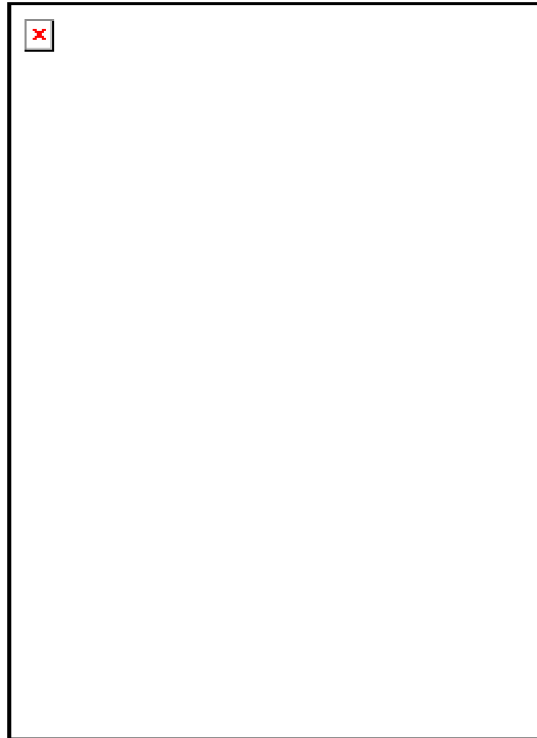


NINA Rising

Start spreading the news, Nina Hagen-the planet's most electrifying and whacked-out punk diva-is resurfacing to celebrate the creative energy of our fabulous, freaky city. Just when you thought it was safe to go back to Webster Hall...

**By Greg Saphiro
Studio Holger Scheibe**



Cosmic earth mother and quintessential European punk opera diva Nina Hagen is back! The legendary rock maven (left)-who's been ranked on a par with German legends Marlene Dietrich and Lotte Lenya, and has wowed the world with her music, her madness, and her activism (and there was that time she masturbated on Austrian TV!)-will perform in a brand spanking new show New York, New York at Webster Hall on Sunday September 8th at 9pm. Joining the viciously vivacious Ms. Hagen in her triumphant return-her first New York appearance in four years (!)-will be New York queer rock hellions The Toilet Boys (boasting a brand new member) and special guests

ARI-UP (of The Slits) and Theo (of The Lunachicks). This bounteous bonanza will be followed by an after-party which will feature a veritable who's-who of clubland's finest. We recently caught up with Nina to get more details about where she's been, what New York means to her, her new book, and what becomes a punk icon most.

*It's hard to know where to begin with you-but I'll try. You have a book on the way titled *That's Why The Lady Is A Punk*. Let's start with that.* [Laughs] Yeah! It's coming out this September or October in Germany. It's a fat, huge book, very big format like a [coffee] table book, with stories that even I have not even known before, like how my mother met my father, and very interesting stories about my upbringing in East Germany.

So it's autobiographical?

It is very autobiographical, but on top of everything it is all my friends, my colleagues, people who walked part of the way with me; they are all being interviewed in the book. And there will be loads and loads of pictures. It will show me as a human being and as an artist. It will show all my aspects as a fellow creature. [laughs]

It's been almost a year since the 9/11 attacks had such a devastating impact on America and New York.
And the whole world.

Absolutely. And your show at Webster Hall is named after your 1980s song "New York, New York." What does that mean to you today?
I had to change one line, because there is this one line, "New York City has the fanciest rule/when you want to live in this town you just have to be a fool." I didn't mean it, back in the 80s, as a bad thing, I just meant all the funny and life-hungry artistic people. I changed it and now I say, "New York City has the fanciest rule/when you want to live in this town you just have to be so cool." I don't want to have any misunderstandings with my love and affection for New York and for my friends in New York. I was devastated by this. I was in an airplane that day myself, September 11th, flying from Berlin to Ibiza. I thought someone was making an ugly joke and then we were glued to a TV. It's changed everything in the world.

*Your 1999 Internet-only album *Om Namah Shivay* contains your interpretations of traditional Indian spiritual songs. Is this the material that you will be performing at *Shiva Nights at The Slipper Room*?*
Yeah, all the songs I've learned at the foothills of the Himalayas on my many visits to India since 1993, when I met my teacher from India who was on tour in Europe, Sri Munirajy. And also, I'm putting out, in October, a new CD with some recordings of some of my best friends who I've met in India, and some are from Italy, some of them are from America, and from France, like an international band. We went on tour with the Om Namah Shivay music, so we are bringing a live album out.

How do you manage to balance the sacred side of yourself with your other outrageous stage persona?
Yeah, but my rock concerts, I consider them spiritual also. Of course, they are more rock-cabaret and it includes all sorts of human emotions of true stories. [I have a song] dedicated to my friends from Greenpeace and songs about the ugly side of life, the dark side-like a song about Anita Berber, who was a cabaret icon in the 20s, of the swinging Berlin, before the Nazi invasion. So my rock music is also... I can not say that it is not spiritual either.

You sang on Dee Dee Ramone's album, I Hate Freaks Like You. What did his recent passing mean to you?

I was devastated because I was hoping he would be around for a long time. But there was another master plan for him, apparently. I believe that a soul is never lost, we [will] always be where we belong. In the thereafter, it's nice too. I'm not afraid. There is eternal life, that's for sure. When I go over, I will look out for him.

Well, don't go yet!

Oh, yes!! My son just had his 12th birthday and my daughter is 21. I'm a working mom and I don't want to go. I want to stay as long as possible. I enjoy getting old. I'm 47 now and I didn't have any alteration done on my body and I'm happy about that, because I don't believe in plastic surgery. It scares me. It's so scary. I can make a ponytail and lift my skin up!

You have also gained renown as an activist for various causes, including PETA. What response do you get from your activism?

Only good reactions. We just made a little demonstration in front of the embassy of mother India in Berlin, because we were stressing the point of the law in India for animal rights laws. It was a positive demonstration, nothing aggressive, very funny-activists came with big cow heads. And the other day I was invited by children from 12 different states in Germany for a demonstration to save the ancient forest. I love that the young people are bringing us back to that we all have to get involved and stressing the point to our government that we are able to preserve our world.

You've long been regarded as a gay icon. What have you gotten from the gay community?

God, so much inspiration and lovely friendships. The gay community in Berlin, for example, and me, we have the greatest fun. I'm working with many gay people in professional life. My co-producer for my Internet TV show, which now will turn into a real show; most of my colleagues are gay people. In a way, I'm gay too-I'm a happy camper. And I say, always say and I feel it from my heart, that it's nobody's business who you fall in love with as long as nobody gets hurt.

Editor's Note: New York, New York: Nina Hagen in Concert is 9pm, Sunday, Sept. 8th at Webster Hall (125 E. 11th St.; 212-353-1600). The after-party will follow immediately.

Tickets are available at the Webster Hall box office, online at www.websterhall.com, or at Other Music (15 E. 4th St.), Second Hand Rose Music (127 W. 22nd St.), and Rebel Rebel Records (519 Bleecker St.). Hagen will also perform her Shiva Nights show at The Slipper Room (167 Orchard St.; 212-946-1799) at 9pm on Thu & Fri Sept. 5th & 6th.