

# The Guardian

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## Lhasa

The Living Road (Warner Jazz)

★★★★☆ £13.99

Lhasa de la Selá was born in the US to a Mexican father and American mother, but ended up working and living in French-speaking Quebec. She sings in French, English and Spanish (the album is divided between the three) and has developed an extraordinary, highly personal style of her own. French chanson is given a brassy Mexican edge, Spanish ballads are accompanied by steel guitars or subtle, slinky percussion breaks, while the often quirky English songs mix all of those influences with intense, intimate lyrics and a dramatic intensity worthy of Leonard Cohen. Lhasa is probably best known here for her appearance on the last Tindersticks album, but in Canada and France, she is already a major star, and rightly so. This is a subtle, thoughtful and wildly original set, in which she mixes fine, breathy and passionate vocals with such unexpected, personal lyrics as "I love a man who's afraid of me." She's backed by an equally classy band, matching majestic piano with drifting, south-of-the-border brass and that inspired clattering percussion. Here, surely, is a multi-lingual global diva. (RD)