

BUSINESS WOMAN

CELEBRATING TEN YEARS AS THE VOICE FOR BAY AREA WOMEN

10th Anniversary
Issue!

Pushing the Mariachi Envelope

— By Eve Goldberg



Juanita Ulloa performs at a recent concert in Berkeley.

Juanita Ulloa and her band, the Picante Ensemble, are doing nothing less than redefining mariachi music, a traditional Latin genre that historically has been dominated by male musicians.

The lyrics to most mariachi songs, heard frequently at Mexican festivals, birthdays and weddings, are usually performed exuberantly by 12-member male mariachi orchestras and involve a man speaking about some aspect of his love of women. That convention has been undergoing a very significant change, thanks to Ulloa, who composes her own music and writes original lyrics from a woman's point of view about themes that interest women.

She even commissioned a fashion designer, Zenon, to create a nontraditional mariachi costume, a feminine evening gown that contrasts with the colorful male mariachi costumes and sombreros.

There are some mariachi

musicians who are female, but not many. The earliest photographs of female mariachis date to the 1940s, and there are a few other current women's mariachi bands that exist, primarily in Los Angeles. They have made history by including women musicians, but they still usually perform the traditional "cover" songs. Ulloa hopes more women will begin writing, singing and playing their own mariachi music.

"Why are there so many songs where a man sings to, or about, a woman? It doesn't only have to be that way. If music is truly universal, it is genderless — it represent both sexes. The whole thing for me has to do with mental freedom," she commented, explain-

(Ulloa... cont'd on next page)

