

# NOTORIOUS AND BEAUTIFUL

Outspoken, opinionated, political, fag hag: nothing is sacred with MARGARET CHO. Especially not gays. AXN caught up with the notorious comedian ahead of her new show *Beautiful*, which makes its world premiere at this year's Mardi Gras Festival.

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**IF YOU WERE** playing a game of word association and someone said 'Margaret Cho', you'd be fucked for a singular right answer. She's a comedian, Asian-American, a Californian, queer, political, a fag hag and about a million other things. Think *Will & Grace*, *West Wing* and a naughty Asian show in one package. Not that she even mentions it during our interview, between all her Californian 'y'knows', 'likes' and 'kindas'.

Margaret Cho began performing comedy touring the college circuit in her late teens. Such was her popularity that within the space of two years, she performed over 300 concerts and garnered a slew of awards. In 1999, she garnered more fame with her one woman show, *I'm the One That I Want*, but it was her 2001 show, *Notorious C.H.O.*, that would truly cement her, well, notoriety. The show eventually played to 37 cities, culminating at the prestigious Carnegie Hall.

What followed was a series of sold-out shows and performances, including a spot touring with artists such as Cyndi Lauper, Debbie Harry, Erasure and Rufus Wainwright at the *True Colours Tour* last year.

After 20 years treading the funny planks, Cho has honed a stage persona that's not only original but wild, sexy,

crazy and funny. But don't expect the same if you meet her in person.

"I'm pretty shy," she tells AXN. "I'm a quiet kinda person, I'm not really, like, crazy or wild [in real life], and I don't really party a lot."

Get her behind the mic though, and she is fierce. Nothing is sacred. Especially not the gay community.

"I love going to gay bars," she laughs, "but it's, like, really horrible if you're a woman. It's fun until it hits dick o'clock, which is around 12:15am. At that point, if you don't have a dick, there is no point for you to be at the bar. You don't exist any more for gay men. You could be Judy Garland back from the dead, nobody gives a shit. I'm trying to

lobby for all gay bars to have a fag hag shuttle that will pick us all up at dick o'clock and take us somewhere where we are wanted."

Of course, her lobbyist streak and political aspirations don't end there.

"I'm very political," she says. "It's been really great to have my point of view reinforced by audiences, because I'm very disappointed with the government in America. What we've done with the Iraq war, how much homophobia there is in government, and we don't have gay marriage."

And did I mention she's gung-ho on queer politics? A Margaret Cho show wouldn't be complete without a political discussion of her community.

"I think it's pretty exciting to talk about gay issues and gay concerns and to have fun with it," she says. "When you bring all of these issues into entertainment, there's a really strong feeling of visibility and of inclusion. I think it really helps us feel stronger as a community."

She'll definitely feel a strong sense of community as she descends on this year's Mardi Gras. Her new show, *Beautiful*, is making its world premiere at the festival. It's the first time she's ever premiered a show abroad. As she exclaims proudly on her website: "I love Australia! The audiences are so smart

and rowdy, it's really exciting. I love that they just voted out Bush's boyfriend, John Howard. How thrilling!"

Like the rest of the gay guys who make the journey to Sydney, Cho admits

the show is going to be very randy.

"This show that I'm doing is really sexually orientated," she says. "It's very much about sex. It's about gay sex, it's about straight sex, it's about sex in general, it's about the body, it's about women's bodies and men's bodies, and how we are political through our bodies."

"Queers should feel beautiful," she continues, referring to the show's title. "It's very political for a queer community to feel beautiful because it gives us an extra edge in the world, it gives us power. When you're queer, you have to take on the world every day – so we should have something extra to feel good about to carry us through." **AXN**

***Beautiful* is on February 27 and February 28 at Sydney Theatre, 22 Hickson Road, Walsh Bay. For bookings visit [sydneytheatre.org.au](http://sydneytheatre.org.au).**

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