

The Beautiful MARGARET CHO

By Christine DiPaolo

Brash comedian Margaret Cho built her empire on her no-holds-barred stand-up routine, which is notorious for both its honesty and social commentary. The daughter of Korean immigrants who grew up in San Francisco, the outspoken Cho has a definite opinion about the world at large and isn't afraid to share it with anybody. Her projects have run the gamete from stand-up to burlesque to television and film. Currently on the road performing her Beautiful act with Liam Sullivan as an opener, Cho looks back at the road to this point.

"Beauty, sex, race, gay men, lesbians, me, everything," is how the comic describes the content of her current set. An unsurprising collection of topics as all the above have long been staples of Cho's jokes and life. Having had a once-public battle with her self image in the '90s, Cho has taken a stand against the preconceived notions of beauty. 2007's *Sensuous Woman* tour saw her performing a retro-styled burlesque show in lieu of telling jokes.

"I am permanently retired from burlesque," she declares and explains, "I have scars on my nipples from wearing pasties for eight weeks straight," but also adds, "The *Sensuous Woman* will rise again."

While Cho may not be taking her clothes off for the public anymore, she has begun taking different routes to celebrate her body. A tattoo enthusiast, she currently has an estimated 20 percent of her body covered in "Mostly Japanese and floral. I want 100 percent covered."

Like most things in her life, Cho shared her love of tattoos with the public via an episode of TLC's *L.A. Ink* with celebrity tattoo artist Kat Von D. "I did the show and Kat Von D. did a lovely tattoo on my back of an art nouveau peacock," Cho explains.

Sex and gay rights have long been part of the comic's routine and her humanitarian efforts as well. The outspoken advocate, who is an ordained minister, was deputized to perform same-sex marriages in San Francisco during the short time before the law permitting the marriages was repealed. In the brief window of legalization Cho performed two ceremonies. In addition to officiating, Cho also acted as emcee of the True Colors tour which featured The Dresden Dolls, Cyndi Lauper, Esauer, Debbie Harry, and the Indigo Girls. The tour helped to raise proceeds for The Human Rights Campaign, PFLAG, and The Matthew Shepard Foundation.

Their subjects are also prevalent in *The Margaret Cho Show* on VH1. Having recently wrapped production, Cho says viewers can expect the following: "I record a hit single then make a sex tape to promote it, I get my own day in San Francisco, I get anal bleaching, I have my own beauty contest. I force gay men to go camping."

Along for the ride, unsurprisingly, are Cho's parents who have also long been a part of her stand-up act. Getting her parents to agree to do the show wasn't easy and the comic admits, "Yes, [it was hard to convince my parents] but I wouldn't let them out of it," and adds, "I forced them into it and now they can't wait for season two."

For as involved a project as having one's own television series may be, Cho also has several other side projects that she is deeply involved in. Like many other celebrities, Cho has taken to cyber space to interact with her fans and voice her opinion on a daily basis about the world at large. When asked why she decided to take it to the Internet



on a regular basis, Cho's answer is simple: "To connect with people, it is fun! I love sharing my life with friends and fans."

One of her other more time consuming side projects is working with Good Vibrations, a sex

toy company which she has sat on the board of since 2006. Getting involved with the company was an easy decision for Cho and she says she decided to work with the firm "because I love vibrators and they said I could get them for free."

Catch Margaret Cho, along with Liam Sullivan, at the Radio City Music Hall in NYC on Oct. 4. For more info, visit margaretcho.com.