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SKIMPY COMIC MATERIAL

By FRANK SCHECK

THEATER REVIEW

Rating: ★★☆☆☆

October 8, 2007 -- THERE'S something rather sweet about the eagerness of the current generation to embrace old-time burlesque.

In "The Sensuous Woman," the new variety show hosted by comedienne Margaret Cho, the raunchiness comes fast and furious, filtered through a gender-bending sensibility.

And yet, for all their attempts to be provocative, the performers often seem like naughty children playing dress up... or dress down, as the case may be. Many of the performers, including the star herself, strip down to next to nothing during the course of the evening.

For the most part, their antics are confined to the stage. But watch out for the acrobatic male stripper gyrating to "Dirty Diana," since at one point he gets uncomfortably up close and personal with a hapless audience member.

Cho, whose own body image issues have long been the subject of much of her stand-up work, has declared that she wants this show to represent "a new ideal, expanding our notion of what is beautiful." Thus, the performers disrobing onstage include Selene Luna, a dwarf, and Dirty Martini, a downtown favorite for whom the word "zafig" might have been invented.

The show also includes numerous comedy portions, including some stand-up routines by Cho that deal with some familiar topics, like Britney Spears - and some less familiar ones that can't be described here.

Other performers include Ian Harvie, a lesbian transgender comic; Kelly, chanting a strangely hypnotic musical number about shoes; and comedians Diana Yanez and Kurt Hall as a lesbian/gay rapper team.

Cho herself gets in on the action, participating in a couple of physical comedy routines and closing the show with a feather dance in which she reveals all.

"If you don't think that I'm beautiful, then you're missing out," she declares at one point. Judging by the cheers that greeted her exertions, the crowd seemed to agree.

THE SENSUOUS WOMAN *The Zipper Factory, 336 W. 37th St.; (212) 352-3101. Through Nov. 3.*

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Comedienne Margaret Cho (center) and the cast members of her new raunchy variety show "The Sensuous Woman," in which everyone reveals quite a lot.

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