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New York

The Sensuous Woman

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Margaret Cho claims that she wants her new variety show at the Zipper Factory, [The Sensuous Woman](#), to be sort of like the *Donny and Marie Show*: "a little bit of country, a little bit of anal." She only partially succeeds; there's not much of the former, but quite a bit of the latter.



Margaret Cho and company in *The Sensuous Woman*
(© Carol Rosegg)

The entertaining production falls somewhere between burlesque and performance art. Cho stars in several of the more risqué segments, as well as regaling the crowd with hilarious, politically inflected stand-up that promotes the idea that bodies of all shapes and sizes are beautiful. The acts she's chosen to showcase reinforce that idea, even if not all of the performances are of equal quality.

The most jaw-dropping routine is performed by Dirty Martini, who starts out in a star spangled costume, along with a blindfold and scales that signify she's impersonating Lady Justice. Dolly Parton's "God Bless the USA" plays as Martini strips, displaying her ample flesh that is far from the conventional [read: thin] ideal of feminine beauty. And what she does with the dollar bills that feature prominently in her performance just has to be seen to be believed.

At the opposite end of the body spectrum is Selene Luna, a dwarf who begins her act in a baby carriage and then proceeds to do an amusing, yet still sexy striptease. Princess Farhana does a fun number that riffs off *The Wizard of Oz*. Despite the show's title, there are men in the show, as well. Ryan Heffington performs a wild, high energy dance, while Kurt Hall joins Cho for one of the more bizarre acts. Dressed in skintight, full body outfits, they move like automatons while striking blatantly sexual poses.

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Songs and stand-up are scattered throughout the performance. When Cho is at the mic, it's almost always spot-on. But some of the other acts wear out their



welcome rather quickly. Hall and Diana Yanez perform two rap numbers, but should have stopped after the first. That's also true of Liam Sullivan's two songs as "Kelly." The quirky performer presents an odd, weirdly funny tune about shoes, but his follow-up sounds exactly the same, except it's now about borrowing a top.

Yanez performs a couple sequences as "Margarita," who is supposedly Cho's maid, but they're not very funny. Her duet with Cho as a lesbian couple is also surprisingly flat. Transgendered comic Ian Harvie starts out roughly with a few lame jokes, but ends her stand-up routine on a

strong note.

But it's Cho that holds the show together, making it cohere and maintaining the right balance between humor and sensuality. This is most evident in Cho's own burlesque solos. "Chairman MeeOw" has her outfitted as a Red Army guard in pigtails, and is wonderfully over the top. Her finale -- which makes good use of the large feathered fans that are a hallmark of burlesque -- is much more traditionally sexy until the final reveal which has the audience screaming with laughter and applause.

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