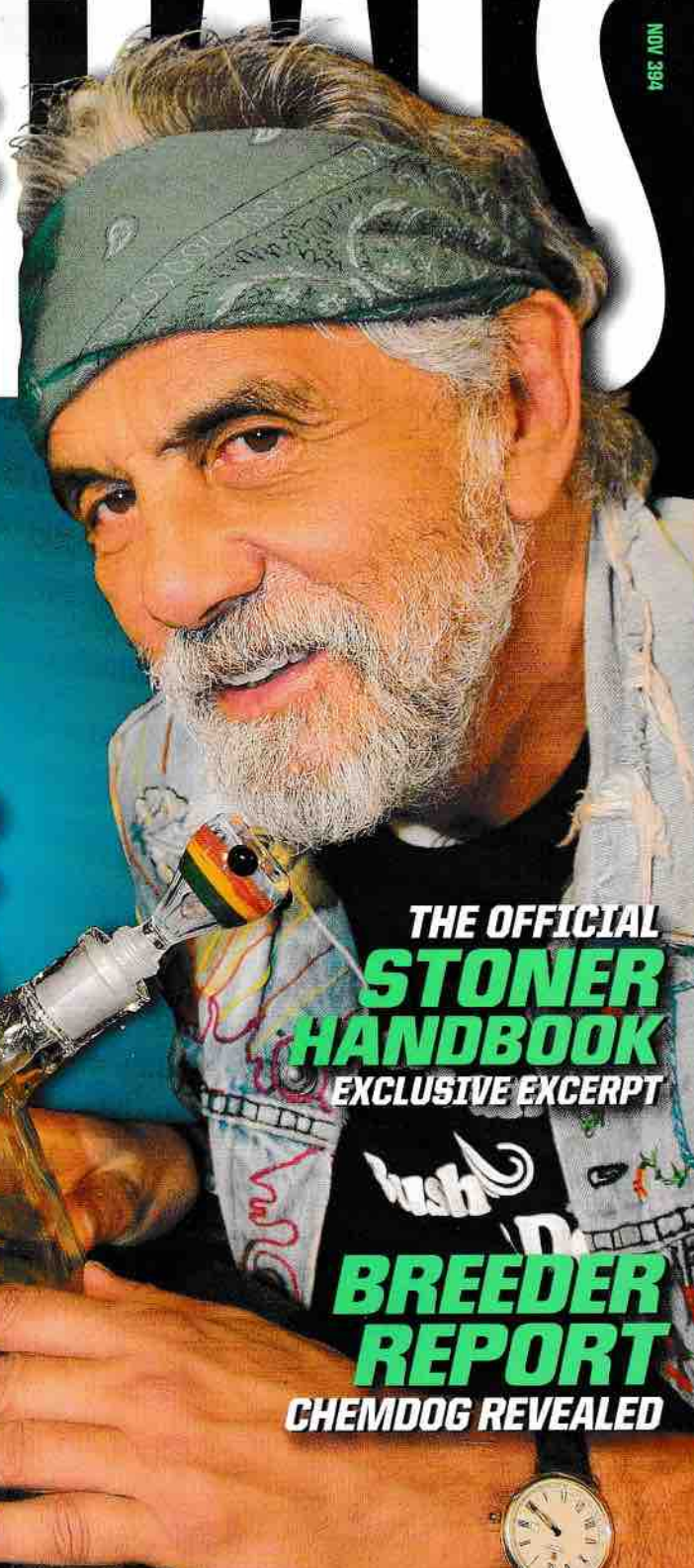
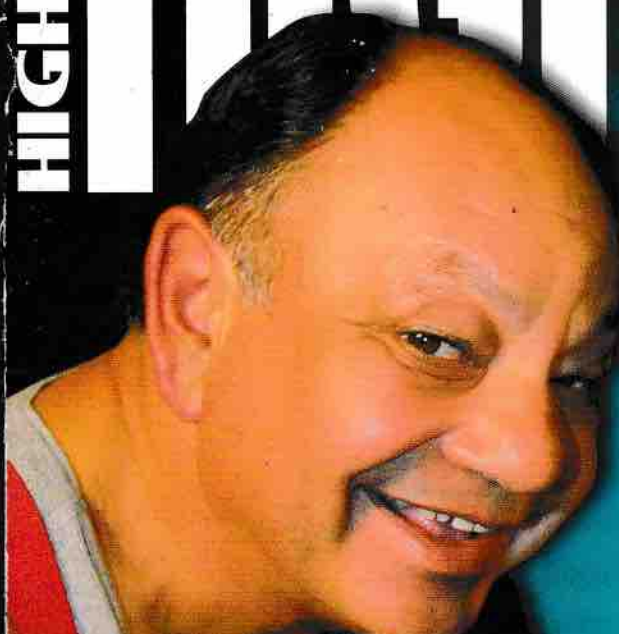


HOW TO GROW STRONGER PLANTS

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NOV 394



CHEECH & CHONG

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REUNITED AT LAST!

Cheech & Chong team up for a new era of stoner comedy. By Steven Hager & Justin Hampton, Photos by Dan Skye

Tommy Chong had barely finished writing his recently published "unauthorized" autobiography of Cheech & Chong (Simon and Shuster) when—out of the blue—his old comedy partner, Cheech Marin, invited him over and dropped a bomb on him: After 30 years of separation, Cheech was ready to reunite the world's most famous stoner duo.

They had kicked the idea around before, but something always kept it from happening. Sometimes it was the trivial showbiz squabbles that other legendary comedy teams, like Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis, had experienced. Other times, outside factors—like Tommy's incarceration for Internet bong sales—sidetracked their plans. In fact, just a year ago in *HIGH TIMES* (Sept. '07), Tommy said that "Cheech wants to be a serious actor" and saw little hope of a reunion. So when Cheech broached the idea of getting back together, it was so unexpected that Tommy actually turned him down. Then he went home and thought it over.

Guess what? They're back! They kicked off a four-month tour on September 5, 2008—their first in 25 years. And it looks like there's a lot more of Cheech & Chong on the horizon.

Light up and celebrate!

So the long-awaited reunion of Cheech & Chong is finally happening.

CHEECH: It's official—Cheech and I made nice. He promised to wear the tutu again, and that's all it

took. Because before, he said that he would never wear that tutu again; I insisted, and finally he came around. But he's gonna have to wear knee braces, because his knees are giving out. So it'll be funny—a guy with leg braces wearing a tutu. We're going to be touring starting in September through November, maybe longer. And we're going to hit everywhere—from Los Angeles to New York to Vancouver. **CHEECH:** They wanted us to name this tour, so we went through a bunch of names. We never had names for tours before; it was just called "On the Road—Forever." But the one that kind of emerged but was shot down at the end was "What's That Smell?" Then we were gonna call it "Catch 'Em Before They Croak." But we decided to be all-embrasive of the whole country and named this tour "Cheech & Chong: Light Up America." **CHONG:** It's gonna be fun, because this is a moment that I've been looking forward to for many, many years. Because we have such a legacy and such a history that we couldn't escape it even if we tried. So, at the end of the day, we just looked at each other and said: "Hey, we better do this now, man, because there ain't no tomorrows." So that's why we're here, and that's what we're planning to do—just go out and do the old Cheech & Chong routines and just have a good time. The show will be opened by my wife Shelby, then we'll be coming on, kickin' ass the rest of the way.

What took you guys so long?

CHONG: Uh, we were fighting. **CHEECH:** It was like a marriage—

you know, after a while, "Enough of this shit." We had been together every day of our lives for 17 years—**CHONG:** And we ran out of shit to fight about.

CHEECH: So our trial separation lasted 25 years.

CHONG: You know, people ask me who really put the tour together. Well, I gotta tell you right now, I figured it out: *God*. God put the tour together for one reason—well, two reasons: to get us back together, and also because I got a book called *The Unauthorized Biography of Cheech & Chong*, which is coming out—oh, fuck! Umm ... it's gonna be on tour with us. So that was another reason why God said: "Okay, you guys gotta get together and tour."

Did the success of the *Harold and Kumar* movies persuade you guys to reunite?

CHONG: Yeah, because when we saw those two brown guys doing movies about pot, we thought: "Jesus, that's a helluva good idea!" **CHEECH:** Yeah, we thought maybe that could be our job!

How do you explain your appeal to younger audiences?

CHEECH: We've had the younger audience all along. When they hit that certain age, they go through a Cheech & Chong period of watching the movies and listening to the records. It's almost like a rite of passage.

CHONG: Our humor is very—**CHEECH:** Juvenile.

CHONG: Yeah, there's no other way to describe it. But there are generations of Cheech & Chong fans out

there.

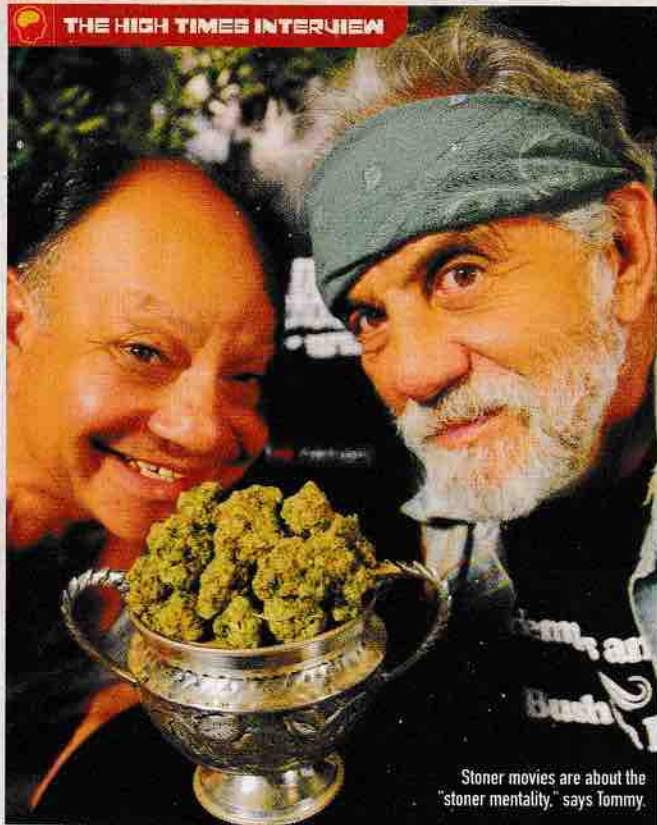
CHEECH: Yeah, we were also thinking of calling it the "Womb to Tomb" tour.

What do you think of the current state of pot comedy?

CHEECH: Well, the humor right now is for the ages and times of right now. Pot humor, for us, has more to do with the stoner mentality. **CHONG:** Yeah, recently *HIGH TIMES* pointed out that whereas other comedians talk about pot, Cheech & Chong actually *are* stoned—we are the butt of the joke. That's what makes us so popular, or made us so popular, is that everybody is smarter than we are.

Cheech, you recently spoke on the Los Angeles Film Festival panel "Back to the Stoner Age." Did you learn anything there?

CHEECH (*sotto voce*): I was there to teach. (*Laughs*) It was an interesting panel. It was me and Jenji Kohan, who created *Weeds*, and then two comedians, Doug Benson and Jay Chandrasekhar, and their question basically was: "What denotes a stoner movie now [versus] the stoner movies that you did?" And I think from my point of view, what it came down to was, stoner movies are not *really* about smoking dope; they're about a stoner mentality. That's what makes it funny—like the mentality of Cheech & Chong to kind of be in a haze, focus for a minute on something that was very true, and then move off. It's like that delay or that pause that's built into it, sort of like: "Wait a minute, wait, wait a minute, man



Stoner movies are about the "stoner mentality," says Tommy.

.... [LONG pause] What was it?" And that stoner mentality is what really makes a stoner movie. It has nothing really to do with the act of smoking a big blunt.

Your renowned Chicano art collection has been shown in galleries and museums across America. The collection seems utterly absent of irony or detachment. It jumps out at you.

CHEECH: This is very spontaneous art. They're great painters, and it's almost analogous to being great jazz musicians—they're not counting anymore, they're not playing three-chord songs, they can really put it on. It's like all of a sudden you're walking through the jungle, and you turn a corner and you see John Coltrane and Miles Davis and Charles Lloyd and Herbie Hancock playing: "Where did these guys come from?" Well, they've been here all the time! And there is an urgency and a vibrancy and a technical virtuosity that exist in all these guys.

Do you feel that pot may have enhanced your eye for art?

CHEECH: Stoners are more enlightened people anyway, if only because they've made a conscious choice to slow down their perception for just a minute and take a look. I mean, that's the era that I came from: "Wait a minute, why am I in this line? Why am I shuffling along this line that's painted

on the ground, and I'm just turning where they tell me to?" And it's during that era that I got wise and smoked pot, and I go: "Wait a minute—they said this is gonna kill me and lead to heroin and ruin my life. Well, what other things have they been lying about?"

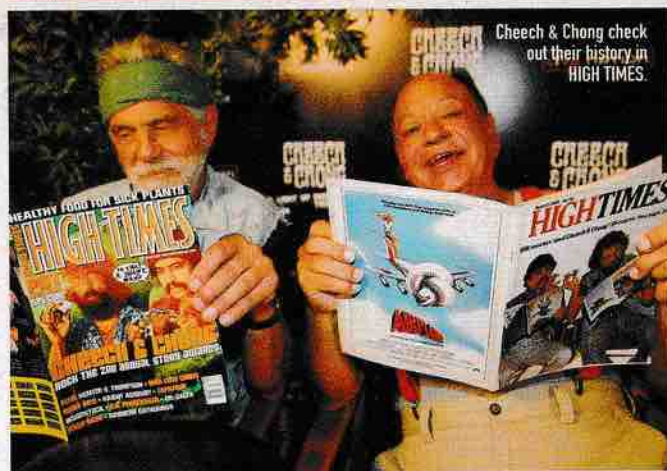
So that was the attitude. And artistic people, by and large, are subject to getting high; I think that it goes hand in hand. It really enhances the appreciation and understanding of art. And it's an age-old urge for everybody on the planet—I don't care whether you're from New Guinea or New York.

Do you feel your advocacy of Latino-American art can peacefully co-exist with your legacy as a stoner comedian?

CHEECH: Absolutely—"marijuana" is a Spanish word! [Laughs] Come on, you wonder where it came from? It came from us, homes. [Holds out hands] We came sharing, bearing gifts to you: "White people, smoke peace pipe. We come in peace"—like you said you did. But you didn't. [Laughs]

Tommy, you've been writing books—two high-quality books in two years. It didn't even look like you were breathing hard.

CHONG: Well, I've got a lot of stories. Halfway through the Cheech & Chong book, I was stuck, so a writer friend named Pat gave me good ad-



Cheech & Chong check out their history in HIGH TIMES.

vice. He said, "Just write it—don't read it. Let someone else read it."

How long did you spend on that book?

CHONG: A few months. Not long.

In the beginning it looks like you're going to drop a bomb on Cheech, but you don't. You paint a very nice picture of him. You explain why you got upset when he went off on his own, but you didn't really belabor it.

CHONG: Thank God I didn't or we wouldn't be having a reunion. The bottom line between Cheech and I is, there's a lot of love. Cheech had to grow up—he grew up, and I never did. And I owe it all to the pot. Pot has kept me in a juvenile state of mind. I mean, you suffer for it in some ways, but in other ways you're happy.

Will you be performing new material?

CHONG: Everything we do is new for us. We haven't been onstage together since '81, so anything we do is gonna be new to everybody. Everything that's happening is always part of the act. We're gonna be talking about what we're doing today, or yesterday—you can't escape it. That's the beauty of comedy: It's not written in stone. You have to update everything. For instance, we're not gonna be doing any Nixon jokes.

Do you have plans for a new Cheech & Chong movie?

CHONG: Yeah, actually, we do. Everything you do nowadays turns into a movie.

Will you use real pot in the movie?

CHEECH: The last time we used real pot in a movie, it got stolen

by the Teamsters. So we stopped doing that.

Will you guys be performing your music again?

CHEECH: Yes, we will. We'll be doing some musical stuff with whatever city provides a symphonic orchestra. It's gonna be very theatrical—everybody's gonna get their money's worth.

By the way, what happened to your TV careers?

CHONG: What happens to anybody's television career? It comes to an end. No matter who you are... you can be Elvis.

Do you guys have medical cards?

CHONG: I have an honorary membership.
CHEECH: Yeah, we have medical-marijuana cards—absolutely. It's gonna be interesting in politics to see who's gonna be the first candidate to endorse legalization.
CHONG: The truth is, I got busted for bongs, I went to jail—all that stuff. We've got to really make a serious effort to bring attention to the medical aspects of marijuana. Whereas Cheech and I before, we had a lot of fun doing the movies and that, but we also became a catch phrase for the recreational use of pot. You look at us: I'm 70 years old, Cheech is a little younger....
CHEECH: A lot younger.

CHONG: We're ready to go on tour, and people wanna know, for a 70-year-old man—y'know, I'm the same age as McCain. I attribute all my youthfulness, my... my—

CHEECH: Memory....
CHONG: —to marijuana. You can write that down! ✨

For more information on the tour, visit cheechandchongtour.com. Tickets available at livenation.com.