



STILL SMOKIN'

EW lights up with legendary stoner, comedian and activist Tommy Chong

PHOTO: NEIL VISEL, COURTESY OF CHEECHANDCHONG.COM

Eugene Weekly sat down with Grammy Award-winning comedian, activist and stoner legend Tommy Chong this week to discuss his views on cannabis regulation, 6-foot bong rips, the unveiling of “Chong’s Choice” and his comedy partner Cheech Marin overdoing it.

You can catch Chong live when he speaks at the Oregon Marijuana Business Conference at the Hilton on Sunday, April 24. Visit oregonmbc.com for tickets.

What makes you such a happy person?

I love to laugh. When I was a little guy, I remember, I just loved to laugh. I was a dancer when I was real young. I’d go to dances and the black people were the ones that could dance the best. So I ended up dancing with a black girl and she became my girlfriend and then I got in with the crowd. And that’s a culture that loves to laugh. I mean, you know, from Redd Foxx to Richard Pryor to Chris Rock, I mean their sense of humor is so beautiful, and I’ve always had that hip sense of humor.

I’ve heard stories from friends who say their weed was so strong it made Snoop Dogg take a knee or George Clinton invite them on tour. What’s the most ridiculous story you’ve heard about yourself?

Well, it’s not really me — it’s Cheech [laughs]. Cheech always has a habit of doing too much at the wrong time. And he’s been doing it just lately, too. We get a lot of free weed, you know, and I shared a lot with Cheech. One guy gave us a syringe full of Rick Simpson oil and Cheech thought it would be a good idea to do the whole syringe. He was cooking a meal at the time and he went up to his office and he saw the syringe there and ... he put the whole syringe in his mouth. I’ve never heard a story where projectile vomiting was so funny.

Was it like the time you took a 6-foot bong rip?

Oh, oh, oh, that was killer. That was at Snoop Dogg’s show. Yeah, it was a 6-foot bong. Oh my God. I had to be carried home that night. That was crazy, yeah. That brought tears to my eyes.

You have said you take a lot of sabbaticals from weed. Do you just take a few days, a couple weeks?

It depends. You know, if I’m going to jail or if I’m on probation and they’re drug testing me, then I’ll take the time to quit. Since I had my cancer operation, though, I’ve been, thank God, smoking every day. You know, I’m back to every day now. But, yeah, yeah, I’m pretty, uh — I’m medicated. That’s for sure.

Tell me something that people might not know about you?

Oh, I’m really a lightweight when it comes to weed. You know? Weed will last me forever, for years. I give so much away because I take just a little crumb and I put it in. I make bongs, you know; that’s my hobby. I make ’em out of antique kombucha bottles. And so I’ll do a little hit. I’ll do a tiny, little nugget. And then I’m good. And if I need more, then I’ll go down in the basement or — I got a bong in every room of my house, so I’ll stop and do another hit. And that’ll be it. That’s all I need.

Here in Oregon, we’re still hashing out the rules with legal weed, and they’re talking about separating medical and recreational cannabis — having different dispensaries for each. What do you think about that?

[Laughs] That’s so stupid. They gotta realize that all marijuana use is medical. It’s just like if you take aspirin. If it gets you high or cures your headache, it’s still aspirin ... Well, marijuana is used by people with epilepsy, Alzheimer’s; you name the disease and marijuana is helping it. It helps as a sleep aid, you know, everything. So all marijuana use is medical. So they gotta get their heads out of their asses, these people. Don’t push ’em and don’t bug ’em; let ’em go through their little dance. Because the truth is, they don’t know what the fuck they’re doing. When they put the law against marijuana, this is part of the problem that they have. They’re doing something so contrary to human existence. You know, here’s a plant that was given to us by our Creator for our health and happiness — the pursuit of happiness. And marijuana makes you happy. Now how do you regulate fucking happiness? All they’re trying to do is find some kind of hoop they can make you jump through so they can charge you for it.

When did you first become an advocate for cannabis?

It came when I got busted. But I got busted for bongs ... [referring to his 2003 arrest in Operation Pipe Dreams; Chong took a plea deal to save his wife and son from prosecution and spent nine months in jail.]

You’re unveiling your latest product, Chong’s Choice pre-rolls. Is this something we’re going to see in Eugene?

Absolutely. You’re gonna see my gorgeous face all over the place with a big joint in my mouth.

This is developed from one of your favorite strains, OG Kush, correct?

Yeah, yeah ... yeah. You know, every strain has a different use and a different taste and I’m still looking for the perfect strain. I’ll die in my grave looking. ■

Greg Butler works as a marketing consultant for Eugene Weekly. He is an adjunct faculty member and lecturer at Lane Community College and has published several popular and scholarly articles.



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