

## Cheech Marin Bio

Best known as one half of the hilariously irreverent, satirical, counter-culture, no-holds-barred duo Cheech and Chong, Cheech Marin is a paradox in the world of entertainment. Cheech is an actor, director, writer, musician, art collector and humanitarian, a man who has enough talent, humor and intelligence to do just about anything. He is truly a multi-generational star—or as Cheech jests, “People know me from the womb to the tomb.” To this day, Cheech and Chong films remain the number one weekend video rentals, and Cheech is widely acknowledged as a cultural icon.

Cheech (real name Richard) Marin was born July 13, 1946 in South Central Los Angeles and raised in Granada Hills, a suburb in the San Fernando Valley. He has always loved music. “As a little kid, I was a singer and made records. I was always in bands—you name it, I sang it—R&B, jazz, funk, I did it all,” he says. After attending California State University, Northridge to study English, he left—eight credits short of a degree—to “pursue pottery and avoid the draft.” However, in 2004, he received a Distinguished Alumni Award from the university.

Moving to Vancouver, British Columbia as a political refugee, Cheech soon met Tommy Chong who owned a topless club. He worked there for nine months, combining music and improvisational comedy in a troupe called City Works. “It was great—you could call it a hippie burlesque,” he quips. Eventually, Cheech and Chong teamed up and moved back to Los Angeles. They performed their stand-up/music act at clubs all over Los Angeles until they were discovered at the Troubadour by music industry magnate Lou Adler. “The rest,” Cheech says, “is history.” Between 1972 and 1985, they released nine albums: *Cheech and Chong* (1972), *Big Bambú* (1972), *Los Cochinos* (1973), *Cheech and Chong Wedding Album* (1974), *Sleeping Beauty* (1976), *Up In Smoke* (soundtrack, 1979), *Let’s Make a New Dope Deal* (1980), *Cheech and Chong’s Greatest Hits* (1981), *Get Out of My Room* (1985). *Big Bambú* became the largest-selling comedy recording of all time, retaining that distinction for many years. Six of the albums went gold, four were nominated for Grammys, and *Los Cochinos* won the 1973 Grammy for Best Comedy Recording.

The critically acclaimed duo made a fluid transition to films, starring in eight features together. The first, *Up In Smoke*, was the highest grossing comedy of 1978, topping \$100 million at the box office. Others were *Cheech and Chong’s Next Movie* (1980), *Nice Dreams* (1981), *Things Are Tough All Over* (1982), *Cheech and Chong: Still Smoking* (1983), and *The Corsican Brothers* (1984). They co-wrote all of the films, with Chong receiving sole directing credit for several, despite Marin’s uncredited co-direction. The twosome also made guest appearances on *Yellowbeard* (1983) and Martin Scorsese’s *After Hours* (1985). In 2005, Cheech and Chong re-united for the first time in more than a decade when they were honored at the Aspen Comedy Festival. On April 20, 2008, they appeared together at a commemorative screening of *Up in Smoke* at the Arlight Cinemas in Sherman Oaks.

After splitting with Chong, Cheech wrote, directed, and starred in Universal’s hit comedy *Born In East L.A.*, which, in 1987, won the Glauber Rocha International Critics Award and Grand Coral Prize for Best Picture, as well as Best Screenplay at the Havana Film Festival. Marin’s individual acting career has also been very fruitful. He has appeared in over 20 films, including his scene-stealing role in *Tin Cup* (1996) where he played Kevin Costner’s caddy, and six of Robert Rodriguez’s movies for which he played internationally loved characters including the bartender in *Desperado* (1995), and three different roles in *From Dusk Till Dawn* (1996). He also played alongside Johnny Depp in *Once Upon A Time In Mexico* (2003). On television, Cheech made his debut as a sitcom regular on the CBS show *The Golden Palace* (1992-1993) before joining Don Johnson on the highly successful CBS drama *Nash*

*Bridges* (1996-2001). He later appeared in CBS' *Judging Amy* (2004-2005) in the role of love interest Ignacio Messina. Currently, he has a recurring role as Hurley's dad on the hit NBC show *Lost*. Cheech played Otis in a guest appearance on *Grey's Anatomy* in 2008. Upcoming, he can be seen in the following movies: *The Perfect Game* (Lionsgate Entertainment); *Beverly Hills Chihuahua* and *Race to Witch Mountain* (Walt Disney Pictures); and *The Miracle of Dommatina* (Hallmark Channel). In 2005, Marin directed the Broadway production of *Latinologues*, a collection of comedic, poignant monologues revealing the Latino life in America.

Cheech is a favorite with children around the world through his many roles in animated movies and music projects. "I love animation because it is such a pure form of acting, created just by the voice," he says. He began lending his distinctive vocal talents to cartoon characters with his winning portrayal of a peppy Chihuahua in Disney's animated *Oliver & Company* (1988); he then teamed with Whoopi Goldberg and Jim Cummings to play hyenas in Disney's animated blockbuster *The Lion King* (1994) and played Ramon in Pixar's *Cars* (2006). Cheech has also maintained his popularity with the children's audience through his role as Uncle Feliz Gumm in Robert Rodriguez's trilogy *Spy Kids* (2000, 2002, 2003) and through his phenomenally successful bilingual children's albums *My Name Is Cheech, The School Bus Driver* (1992) and *My Name Is Cheech, The School Bus Driver: Coast To Coast* (1994). According to Cheech, "The music speaks directly to kids in an intelligent way—they're fun, but educational." In fact, the impact of the record was such that the Los Angeles Unified School District uses one of the songs to teach kids about how to mix and use colors. In July 2007, HarperCollins Children's Books released Spanish and English versions of his *Cheech, The School Bus Driver*, based on the album's character. His second children's book, *Captain Cheech*, was released in July 2008 with yet a third (*Cheech and the Spooky Ghost Bus*) to be released in 2009. (He also has a comedic book aimed at adults targeted for publication in 2009.)

A third-generation Mexican American, Cheech has been recognized for his work on behalf of Latinos by the Imagen Foundation with its 2000 Creative Achievement Award and by the National Council of La Raza and Kraft Foods with the 1999 ALMA Community Service Award. In 2007, he received an honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts for his contributions to the creative arts from Otis College of Art and Design, and received the inaugural Legacy Award for Arts Advocacy from the Smithsonian Latino Center. He currently serves on the boards of the Smithsonian Latino Center and the Hispanic Scholarship Fund.

Cheech Marin contributes a lot of time and energy to promoting Chicano art. Since the mid-1980s, he has amassed a renowned private collection of Chicano art. Much of it formed the core of his national exhibition *Chicano Visions: American Painters on the Verge*, which broke attendance records during its groundbreaking 12-city tour during 2001-2007 to major U.S. art museums. The exhibition, *The Chicano Collection/La Colección Chicana: Fine Art Prints by Modern Multiples*, consists of 26 archival-quality digital prints (*gicleés*), primarily of paintings from his collection, and 26 linocut artist portraits by Artemio Rodriguez. His exhibition, *Papel Chicano: Works on Paper from the Collection of Cheech Marin*, includes an award-winning artbook and is now touring to mid-sized museums. Selections from his collection can also be seen in his *Los Angeles/Chicano Painters of L.A.*, an exhibition on view at LACMA in Los Angeles, now through November 2, 2008. This year, he celebrates his 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of collecting with a new commemorative series of exhibitions and art books.

Cheech resides in Malibu, California. He is a nationally ranked golfer active in the charity golf circuit. His line of gourmet hot sauces is sold nationwide. To learn more, visit [www.CheechMarinOnline.com](http://www.CheechMarinOnline.com).