

ON THE BRINK

CYNDI LAUPER SHOWS HER TRUE COLOURS TO KATRINA FOX.

She dresses kooky, loves the queer community and sings catchy songs about topics ranging from social justice to masturbation. It's not hard to like Cyndi Lauper.

The fast-talking pop star from Queens in New York rose to fame in the '80s, with the release of her album *She's So Unusual*. Since then she's won a slew of awards including a Grammy and Emmy and released 11 more albums, including the latest *Bring Ya to the Brink*. One of the songs from the new CD is 'Same Ol' Story', which Mardi Gras party-goers were treated to earlier this year when Lauper headlined the event.

"It came out of a conversation," she tells *CHERRIE* when asked about the inspiration for the song. "The thing is I wanted to take a snapshot of the time I was living in: 2007 to 2008. Everyone is disgruntled in my country and they think it's the same old fucking story. I thought about it and within my community of family and friends I kept hearing about apathy and I thought, 'No that is not right, we

shouldn't give up on things, we should feel empowered and come together not fragment.'

"Instead of [accepting] the same old fucking story – say it!" Lauper continues. "Everybody's been saying it. Fucking say it, only stand up again. Get up! Get up! You don't have to lay down and take it, you can get up. If someone is down long enough, you can beat the life out of them but heat is the trick from someone coming out the cinders all the time. The embers are always waiting to ignite. So I wanted to do a CD of music with energy and stories of people I heard around me. It's about the human spirit – igniting the human spirit

"WE SHOULD FEEL EMPOWERED AND COME TOGETHER."

not to give up on [itself] or the future. You get up again and brush yourself off. It's about being on the brink of life, because life is what takes you to the next step."

In addition to giving us light and dancey pop tunes such as 'Girls Just Wanna Have Fun' and 'She Bop' (the one about masturbation), Lauper has given her time and lyrics to projects in support of the environment (she contributed to the track 'Put On Your Green Shoes' in 1993) and human rights. And she's shown considerable passion for GLBTIQ issues. The title track of her 1986 *True Colors* album became a gay

anthem and Lauper, who has a lesbian sister, organised an annual True Colors tour in support of queer rights in 2007. She enlisted the help of artists including Debbie Harry, Erasure, the B52s and Joan Jett to take part in a North American tour in partnership with organisations such as Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), to bring people together to voice their solidarity for GLBTIQ equality and raise awareness about the continued discrimination the community still faces.

"I'm a friend and family of the community," Lauper asserts. "Towards the end of my pregnancy I read so many letters online from gay people who were disenfranchised from their family. You're not settled till you're 25 and before that age it's a difficult time – even after that age – and they wrote of their experiences and said *True Colors* gave them courage.

"*True Colors* came to mean a lot to the community," she continues. "I didn't want to do a tour called True Colors that wouldn't include the community. I asked my friends and colleagues to help me and they worked tirelessly. We wanted to create a community where people would feel good about themselves. This year it was focused on voting. It wasn't telling them who to vote for. No, you should pledge to vote and HRC and PFLAG will send you information on everyone who's running in your district up to president, what they voted for and against so you know you can vote yourself. You make up your own mind and go in there and vote. That's important. I wanted to make a tour that would help people. It changed me too – it always changes me. If you weren't changed by the people around you and the people you see, you have a heart of stone."

For a self-described misfit who may be heterosexual but is far from 'straight', headlining Mardi Gras' 30th anniversary party was one of the highlights of her year.

"It was unbelievable!" she enthuses. "I loved it. It was the most fun. I got to dress like Marie Antoinette – I even had a boat on my head, come on! The organisers were fantastic and the costume guy was great – he made me look pretty, God bless him. And everyone was walking out singing 'Same Ol' Fucking Story'. Can you believe that?"

Yes, Cyndi, I think we can.

***Bring Ya to the Brink* is in stores now.**



