For Comedian Margaret Cho, 'Rock and Roll is a Religion.'

The comedian revisits Pamela Des Barres' iconic groupie memoir, I'm With The Band, and shares her unique reading.



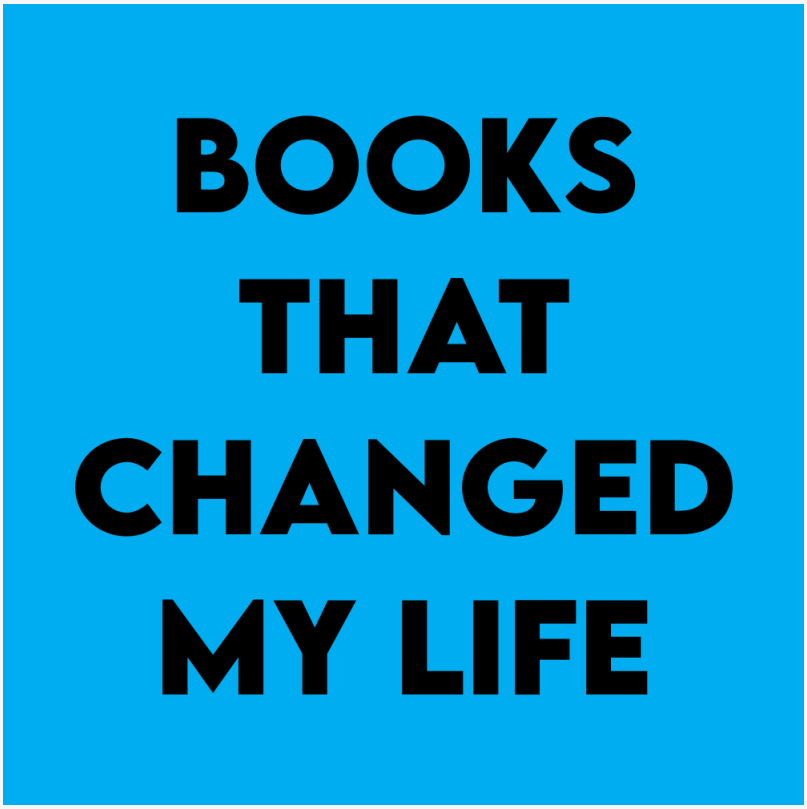
Margaret Cho poses with her copy of I'm With the Band.

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, September 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On a recent episode of Books That Changed My Life, comedian Margaret Cho, accompanied by her adorable dog, joins host Chris "Bulldog" Collins to make the case for Pamela Des Barres's legendary memoir I'm With the Band: Confessions of a Groupie. Cho first encountered the book as a teenager working in her parents' San Francisco bookstore; she says it taught her that "longing and bubbling over with life is a lifestyle."

For Cho, the pick is personal. Des Barres has been a friend of Cho's for years and once worked as her editor. But Cho argues the book has been badly served by its reputation. Where early readers reached for the celebrity list (Mick Jagger, Jimmy Page, Keith Moon, Marlon Brando), Cho returns to it as a historical record of the 1960s and a portrait of a young woman "so in love with life."

The conversation traces the shape of that influence. Cho grew up at Paperback Traffic, the gay bookstore her Korean immigrant parents opened on Polk Street in 1978, when she was nine. An introverted kid, she read constantly. I'm With the Band, she says, was "probably the first adult book that I read," and it planted the fantasy that eventually drew her to backstages of her own — first Fishbone at 17, later Chris Isaak, whom she briefly dated after meeting him after a show.

Cho reads Des Barres's diary entries — the Paul McCartney rituals, the abrupt swings between Chris Hillman infatuation and Chris Hillman analysis — as a spontaneous discovery of what gurus today refer to as “manifesting.”



Books That Changed My Life.

That framing opens onto her own spiritual practice. Cho begins every morning by writing a joke, then sits for an hour of silent meditation. She admires the Muslim call to prayer for the structure it provides— "five times a day you've got to stop and talk to God"— and treats the rock concert as a site of transcendence in kind. Asked at the close of the episode how I'm With the Band changed her life, she offers the line that gives the episode its shape: "Rock and roll is a religion, and she showed me the way to live."

The episode touches on the difference between comedy and music audiences, a backstage story from GWAR's Bonnaroo set involving Altoids and silicone costumes, the moment Des Barres told Elvis Presley no, and, in a memorable aside, the rules and regulations of Cho's hypothetical cult movement, the "CHOsen."

Cho closes the episode by discussing her current stand-up tour, Choligarchy, which she will tape as a special in Palm Springs on November 7, and her role in Gregg Araki's forthcoming film I Want Your Sex, opposite Cooper Hoffman and Olivia Wilde.

Watch the full conversation HERE.

ABOUT BOOKS THAT CHANGED MY LIFE:

"Books That Changed My Life," hosted by bestselling author Chris Collins, is a YouTube show exploring how great books transform us in profound and unexpected ways. Each episode features a special guest sharing a book that shaped or inspired them, sparking deep conversations and unearthing unfiltered personal stories.

Recent guests include actor and comedian Patton Oswalt, soap opera legend Susan Lucci, former covert CIA officer Andrew Bustamante, actress and reality star Lisa Rinna, Dancing With the Stars pro Jenna Johnson, Good Morning America icon Joan Lunden, and television legend Kelsey Grammer.

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