

CHLOE PETTS IS KEEPING HER EYE ON THE BALL

Fertility equality
Kind iVF 28

Jealousy in relationships
Is it destroying yours? 30



Fighting with pride 34

“We can be brutal, dominating machines, jump off of a steel cage, or eviscerate you on the microphone”

Discover WWE's wild history with sapphic representation

My dating story
5 dates that changed my life 38

“Nice nipples!”
Top surgery tattoos 40

LGBTQIA sex workers
Equality, rights & activism 42

ELLA GAUCI speaks to the stand-up superstar about football, her new show and surviving the Fringe

As Chloe Petts walks on stage, there's only one word that comes to mind: swagger. Donning a leather blazer, black boots and cheeky grin, the British stand-up stares out at the crowd mischievously. “I’m a butch lesbian,” she announces to the packed room. “I love butch lesbians... not in a gay way.” The crowd erupts into laughter. >>

Photos Matt Stronge



“I’M LIVING AUTHENTICALLY AS MYSELF IN THE PUBLIC EYE. I REALLY HOPE THAT CAN BE IMPACTFUL AND HELPFUL TO OTHER PEOPLE”

» Resident butch icon, standup comedian and Crystal Palace supporter Chloe Petts is taking the comedy world by storm. The rising star has featured on beloved shows like *Have I Got News For You*, Jonathan Ross’ *Comedy Club* and Hannah Gadsby’s Netflix comedy special *Gender Agenda*. Last year she had audiences in hysterics when she supported Ed Gamble on tour. Earlier this year marked her *Live At The Apollo* debut. Lauded for her butch-next-door persona, Chloe makes comedy look like a walk in the park. There’s something innately stylish about the way Chloe commands the stage. As she says herself, while she may not have a penis, she does have the “aura of a nine-incher”.

But as Chloe dials into our call from Australia, where she’s currently performing, it becomes clear that there’s a lot more thought that goes into a fingering joke than you might first think. She is full of her signature warmth and smiles, but she is also an incredibly introspective thinker when it comes to her career. While her sets may seem to roll off the tongue, Chloe explains that the journey to building this platform hasn’t always been straightforward.

After initially trying to join her university’s drama department

aged 18, Chloe decided to try out comedy. She admits that when she started out she “hated” doing gigs. “I think that’s because I was a bit shit,” she laughs.

She recalls being sat night after night in dimly lit open mics with only three members of the general public present and just constantly “eating shit”. It’s safe to say it was a disheartening experience. However, as Chloe went from mic to mic, audience to audience, she began to work out what made people tick. She explains, “You start to get this muscular understanding of why things go well or not.”

It’s perhaps this diligent precision and appreciation for comedy as an artform which has landed Chloe on the path she sits comfortably in today. As she sky-rockets through the trajectory we’ve seen from comedy giants before, I ask how she copes with the jump from “shitty open mics” to being on beloved British comedy shows like *Have I Got News For You*.

“Obviously it’s so scary because you’re sitting next to these stalwarts of comedy and you’re being thrown in the deep end,” she shares. “I always try to see it as a privilege. At the end of the day, it’s a three-hour record, and it’s a half an hour edit – as long as you say enough funny

stuff, you’ll be fine!”

While Chloe’s time on telly has mostly been positive, one experience initially stumped her. When she was offered a spot on *Sky Sports*, she was naturally elated. As a staunch Crystal Palace supporter, it felt like the opportunity of a lifetime. It should have been perfect. And it was... until Chloe went online after the show had aired. Her feed was full of trolls and hate comments, all targeting her appearance. Initially, she was in shock.

What should have been the biggest moment in her career so far was now tinged with a feeling of dread. Despite setting limitations on her phone to filter out the nastiness, some still seeped through. It would have been easy to fall down the rabbit hole of reading every single message. But that’s not really Chloe’s style.

It wasn’t long before Chloe brushed off these trolls, and did what she knew best – wrote a show about it. Marking her third show at the Edinburgh Fringe, *How You See Me, How You Don’t* is a hilarious set dedicated to unpacking this experience. She’s quick to tell me that while the subject matter may seem heavy, jokes are always at the forefront of what she does.

“To be honest, I don’t want to »



“BACK IN THE DAY, COMEDY WAS A BOYS’ CLUB AND EXCLUSIONARY”



» be responsible for those ignorant dickheads. I don't need them to like me and I don't necessarily want them to like me," Chloe says. "I just hope that there was someone like myself – a young girl – who might have seen me and realised that they can look like that and access football spaces."

Football has always been a part of Chloe's life. She grew up playing the game outside school, going to Crystal Palace games with her family on the weekends and watching pundits discuss her favourite players on Match Of The Day. "It's always been a massive part of my identity," she laughs. "It would always be, 'I'm Chloe, I'm a standup and I support Crystal Palace.'"

But as Chloe grew up, she began to recognise the "social ills" of the game. The lack of inclusion at the men's matches could feel isolating. Like many queer people, Chloe has since been able to find a home in the women's game where she feels "wholeheartedly" accepted. She reflects, "When I walk into the women's toilets there's not going to be a problem because people will just be like, 'Oh there's another gay person.'"

Throughout her career, Chloe has not been afraid to make her sets unapologetically queer. From making jokes about the gender euphoria

she gets from being called "boss-man" by the chicken shop owner, to addressing whether painting your nails makes you better at fingering, Chloe is proof that comedy is becoming a space where queer comedians can flourish.

After 10 years in the industry, Chloe admires the way that the comedy scene is changing. "Back in the day it was a boys' club and exclusionary. You'd take it because you didn't know anything else," she explains. "Now I think we're good at looking after each other and doing gigs that reflect the massive diversity in our society. We're good at calling out stuff that we don't like."

There's arguably no better representation of this changing comedy scene than at the annual Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Like many comedians, the Fringe has become a yearly pilgrimage for Chloe. It was in fact at the Fringe that she co-founded The LOL Word, a collective of queer women and non-binary comedians, in 2016. Alongside other beloved queer comedians like comedy duo Shelf (Rachel Watkeys Dowie and Ruby Clyde), The LOL Word is carving out a space for queer comedians to take the spotlight.

Although the Fringe offers the opportunity for comedians to flex their latest material, it can also be

incredibly stressful. Such as during the run-up to putting on *How You See Me, How You Don't* at the 2024 festival: "However much I love the Fringe, it does feel like an exam period," she jokes. "It's mentally taxing because you're putting yourself out there and doing an exam that the Guardian comes and reviews!"

Despite her openness about her own identity and experiences, Chloe does keep some things separate from her shows. Having just gone through a breakup, she admits that while she does want to talk about it on stage, she also doesn't want to "mine" really personal experiences for other people's entertainment. "I always try to add an element of fictionalisation. A lot of my stories will be true, but I will make a character an amalgamation of three people. I think we've got to a point of critical mass with comedy where we're looking for more trauma. And I just think we don't need that. We just need to be funny."

It's obvious that Chloe is thriving. Her career is going from strength to strength and 2025 is only going to see her star ascend even further. I ask what her younger self would think, looking out from those dingy open mics 10 years ago. "I feel like my younger self would be absolutely buzzing. I feel like I've worked really hard and I've got »



“TAKE YOUR TIME.
DON'T LOOK SIDEWAYS.
JUST LOOK AT WHAT
YOU'RE DOING AND
WHAT'S IN YOUR
CONTROL”

» good at it,” she exclaims. “I think my younger self would be proud that I have never compromised and I’m living so authentically as myself in the public eye. I really hope that that can be impactful and helpful to other people.”

Comedy is a notoriously challenging career which can leave many left feeling hopeless. What advice would Chloe give to aspiring comics? “Take your time. Don’t look sideways. Just look at what you’re doing and what’s in your control,” she smiles. “The thing that is in your control is getting your head down, writing, getting on stage, and getting better at standup. If you do get better, all of the things that you want will come. Perform every gig like you are smashing it at Live At The Apollo.” **D**

Chloe Petts new show, *How You See Me, How You Don't* tours nationwide, kicking off at London's Soho Theatre, Downstairs until 25 January and from 9 to 14 June. It tours the UK, including Chloe's home county of Canterbury, Kent 21 to 22 February and Brighton 9 March. Full dates and tickets at chloepetts.org