

Nerd alert!

Chris Hardwick, the comic behind Nerdist Industries, brings his stand-up act to Portland

BY SUE ZALOKAR
STAFF WRITER

Chris Hardwick is the quintessential nerd — with benefits. He is also a stand-up comedian, actor, screenwriter, musician, podcaster, television host and voice actor. Though he lives in Los Angeles now, he claims roots in Louisville, Ky. Kids of the '90s might remember him as one of the original hosts of MTV's "Singled Out," along with Jenny McCarthy. He hosts the late night, improv comedy show "@midnight" on Comedy Central and interviews guests on AMC's "Talking Dead," the hour-long live talk show in which Hardwick discusses "The Walking Dead" episodes with various people.

Four years ago he started The Nerdist Podcast — a weekly interview show "about what it really means to be a nerd." What started as an hour-long podcast — in which, as Hardwick will tell you, he basically talked people he wanted to meet into doing his show — has evolved into Nerdist Industries, a network of podcasts, a premium content YouTube channel, a news division (Nerdist News), and a television version of the original podcast produced by and aired on BBC America.

Hardwick will be in Portland for five shows at the Helium Comedy Club, 1510 SE 9th Ave., June 12 through 14. The man is a little busy these days, to say the least. I was able to catch up to him the weekend after the movie "X Men: Days of Future Past" hit the box office. I assumed that, like any good nerd, he would have seen it already. I was wrong.

Chris Hardwick: I haven't seen it yet because I haven't stopped working for the last month. I was on the set of "The Walking Dead" for the first part of the week and now I'm in Salt Lake City. I just literally have had not time between travel and work.

Sue Zalokar: Describe nerd culture

C.H.: I don't see it as the accidental qualities of what people think of as our culture in terms of "this person likes this comic" or "this sci-fi show or film," so that makes him a nerd.

Nerds tend to like those things. I think nerds tend to like things that involve fantasy and imagination and science and science-fiction just because nerds are imaginative.

I think that the thing that makes someone a nerd is how they process

information. How much they will try to understand something more than anyone else. How deep down rabbit holes they're willing to go and how much they're willing to devote to something.

S.Z.: For our readers who might not have seen your show, "@midnight," what can they expect when they tune in?

C.H.: "Jeopardy" with dick jokes?

S.Z.: I watched a bunch of segments last night. I was laughing my ass off.

C.H.: It has the engine of a game show with the soul of a British panel show. It's basically a reason to get three comedians together to screw around and use internet culture as source material.

S.Z.: How has social media influenced comedy and vice versa?

C.H.: Not just as a source to draw comedy from, but it's also changed the way that comics interact with the world. In the '80s there were a million comedy shows on every channel. It was very easy, all the comedian had to do was just do the circuit of all the TV shows and people would watch the shows, liked them and would go see them live. When that all went away ... if there hadn't been podcasts or social media, those were just things that comics found to survive. That was our evolution. That was our proto mammals crawling out of holes and trying to find ways to survive and evolve. That was the best way to communicate with our audience. Finally a paradigm that didn't involve a large, corporate entity telling you whether or not you could communicate with people. It didn't just change for comedy, it's changed for anyone who wants to put something into the world.

S.Z.: You have a segment on @midnight called #hashtagwars. What do you think about the #notallmen #yesallwomen hashtag

See HARDWICK, page 9

