

POP Nerdy tricks

Nashua magician performs fandom-inspired shows



Mark Pinksten presents The Fantastic Magic of Potter. Courtesy photo.

By Angie Sykeny
asykeny@hippopress.com

A magician for work and cosplayer for fun, Mark Pinksten of Nashua once found himself staring at his Star Wars cosplay Stormtrooper helmet, imagining how it would look with a straightjacket in one of his escape routines. That's how the idea for Magic and Pop Culture was born.

Pinksten's Magic and Pop Culture shows are a unique blend of theater, comedy, magic and fandom. His most popular shows are The Magic of Who, inspired by *Doctor Who*, and The Fantastic Magic of Potter, inspired by Harry Potter, but he has also done shows inspired by *Back to the Future*, Indiana Jones, *Jaws* and *Star Wars*.

"I seem to have invented a new concept, here," he said. "I have no competition. I haven't seen anyone else doing this at comic cons or anywhere else, but it seems to be working, because I've been very busy."

Pinksten performs at comic conventions and fandom festivals, and he will make a rare appearance outside of those settings at two upcoming Fantastic Magic of Potter shows: one at Jupiter Hall in Manchester on Saturday, Dec. 22, and one at Newmarket Mills in Newmarket on Saturday, Dec. 29.

With an original storyline created by Pinksten, Fantastic Magic of Potter is set during orientation day at the wizard academy, where the headmaster, played by Pinksten, has invited guest speakers from the past, present and future to talk to the first-year students. Things go awry when a rogue wizard from the past crashes the event and tries to change history.

The show is marketed as a parody so that it adheres to copyright laws, but it alludes to things in the Harry Potter universe, like wand ceremonies, golden snitches and butterbeer.

"Potter fans will get all the references," Pinksten said. "There is a lot of stuff in the show that they will recognize from the books or movies."

Magic and Pop Culture shows are not "magic shows," Pinksten said, but rather, theatrical performances with dramatic and comedic elements and magic tricks that "make logical sense" within the story.

"I'm not a regular magician who just says, 'Look at this cool thing I can do that you can't,'" he said. "I hate that. My shows are about much more than that. The magic is just one part of it and helps tell the story."

Pinksten has a few regular cast members for his shows but relies largely on volunteers from the audience to play smaller roles and help with individual magic tricks. Much of the comedy in the shows, Pinksten said, stems from the improvisational nature of inviting audience participation.

"I have a script, but you never know where it's going to go when you have people come up," he said. "People do some really weird and unexpected things, especially when they don't know what's happening or don't know what to do, and that ends up making the show even funnier."

Pinksten said people attend Magic and Pop Culture shows for the same reason they attend comic conventions; the shows provide a venue for people to express and revel in their fandom and meet other fans.

"People love the material, and they want to consume more, but you can only read the books and see the movies so many times," he said. "[The shows] are just another way to enjoy like-minded content with like-minded individuals." 🍷

Fantastic Magic of Potter

The show at Jupiter Hall (89 Hanover St., Manchester) is on Saturday, Dec. 22, 7 p.m. Tickets cost \$15.

The show at Newmarket Mills (55 Main St., Newmarket) is on Saturday, Dec. 29, 7 p.m. Tickets cost \$10 in advance and \$14 at the door.

Shows are appropriate for adults and kids age 10 and up. Visit magicpopculture.com.

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