

METRO in focus

It's the week to be a chic geek

STUART ASHEN has done what millions of us of a certain age could only dream of doing.

He has put on the Helmet of Justice. If that means nothing to you, then you obviously aren't a fan of Knightmare, the TV show that captured the imagination of a generation more than 25 years ago.

In the Dungeons & Dragons-esque show, a team of prepubescent children guided one of their friends through a realm of dodgy special effects and overacting extras. It was brilliant.

The catch was the team member performing the quest was unable to see where they were going, as they wore a huge double-horned helmet with no eye-holes. Last week, this was bestowed upon the head of Ashen,



The geek has inherited the Earth. But who are geeks these days, anyway? All of us? **ROSS MCGUINNESS** talks to the video stars behind YouTube's upcoming Geek Week to find out.

or Ashens as he is known to thousands of fans online.

He was taking part in a recording of Knightmare, which will be broadcast online as part of YouTube's inaugural Geek Week – the site's celebration of comedy, gaming, tech, superheroes, comics and sci-fi.

Ashen, who produces comedy videos and gadget reviews for 388,000 YouTube subscribers, said stepping on the programme's set in his home town of Norwich was special.

'It was one of those things I agreed to immediately when they asked,' he explained. 'I thought, bloody hell,

Knightmare, you don't turn that down.

'That was the coolest thing in the world when I was 11 or 12. I think I would have been too shy to have actually gone on it back then. Now I'm 36 I don't really mind too much.'

Less strange is the rise of the YouTuber. With a dearth of individual voices on TV, it was inevitable viewers would go elsewhere for entertainment. There are more than 1million YouTubers

You Tube Geek Week

Sunday, August 4 – Saturday, August 10

More than **100**

YouTube creators will showcase new videos, series premieres, music and collaborations

1bn unique users visit YouTube every month



Some of Geek Week's YouTubers:

Name: **Stuart Ashen aka Ashens**
Age: **36**
Subject: **Comedy, technology, gaming**
YouTube subscribers: **388,000**
YouTube views: **78m**

YouTuber and make-up artist Michelle Phan as Japanese Vocaloid character Hatsune Miku
Source: **YouTube**

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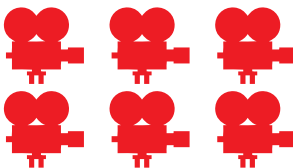
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of the top 20 non-music YouTube channels are 'geek content', covering sci-fi, gaming, animation, technology and movies

The creators of more than 1m YouTube channels are earning money through the site's partnership programme. Thousands of YouTubers make six-figure salaries through the site



6bn hours of video are watched on YouTube each month

100 hours of video are uploaded on YouTube every minute



Name: **Thomas Ridgewell aka TomSka**
Age: 23
Subject: Comedy, cartoons, sketches
YouTube subscribers: 2m
YouTube views: 398m



Name: **Emma Blackery**
Age: 21
Subject: Comedy, music
YouTube subscribers: 300,000
YouTube views: 11m



Name: **Alex Day aka Nerimon**
Age: 24
Subject: Music
YouTube subscribers: 713,000
YouTube views: 117m

paid for their channel's content. Geek Week cements this phenomenon.

DIGITAL media producer Thomas Ridgewell's YouTube videos are a dazzling mix of live-action comedy and animated antics (if you haven't yet witnessed the brilliance of Mine Turtle, you need to change your online habits) that have been watched almost 400million times.

He told Metro it is a 'golden era' for online content. The 23-year-old Londoner, known to his 2million fans as 'TomSka', is a YouTube veteran.

'I've always wanted to make people laugh and be something on the internet,' he said.

'I was making cartoons before YouTube existed. As soon as YouTube came along I bunkered down and

said, "This is what I'm going to do". I consider myself a scientist before an artist when making a video.

'I'm thinking about if it's going to work before it's funny, which is probably an unhealthy view to take.'

But does he consider himself to be a geek? 'I don't think you could point at a single YouTuber and say they're not a geek about something,' he said.

'We're all either film geeks or video game geeks. Even the make-up YouTubers, they're make-up geeks.'

He said the title Geek Week might rile some 'who don't like their word being thrown around'.

But YouTube's Zayna Aston said: 'Geek has a slightly amorphous definition but I think it stands for being passionate about something.'

Musician Alex Day, aka 'nerimon', has had a string of Top 40 hits simply because of his channel.

His YouTube life got going a few years ago through his highly addictive collection of videos in which he reads the novel Twilight.

'I was just bored,' he recalled. 'I didn't really think about it in the slightest.'

For Geek Week, he and his Doctor Who-inspired band Chameleon Circuit have recorded a video of their song, Teenage Rebel. Day has no problem with the geek tag.

He said: 'There are people who are really, really, really not geeky in the slightest and they'll say things like,

"I've just spent too much time playing Temple Run - I'm such a geek!"

'You're just a human, you're fine. You're not a geek until you've owned a Red Dwarf box set or something.'

Perhaps it's no surprise Red Dwarf actor Robert Llewellyn will appear with Warwick Davis in Ashen's feature, Ashens and the Quest for the GameChild.

Ashen says the secret to a compelling channel is being unique.

'You hook on to the personality and so you've almost got an edge of soap opera to it where you become interested in the person and what's going on. You feel in some way invested in the person as well as the content,' he explained.

Musician Emma Blackery, 21, from Essex, was one of the YouTubers who helped guide Ashen through the Nightmare dungeon.

'Many years ago, geek meant you were a complete social reject, whereas now it's almost cool to be seen as a geek,' she said.

She swapped waitressing for YouTube last year and hasn't looked back, recently releasing an EP.

'I was stuck in a dead-end job and now my only way of living is making YouTube videos. It's amazing to actually be able to live just by doing what I enjoy,' she said.

YouTube's Geek Week launches this Sunday and runs until August 10. Visit YouTube.com/GeekWeek

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