

## SXSW Spotlight: Nerdcare Rising

*Shine A Light* and *Lou Reed's Berlin* may be the SXSW music documentaries everyone will be talking about, but neither of those bloated hagiographies feature lyrics like "Lurking in #pass chans on the IRC / Got dcc'd unexpectedly / With an 80-minute XviD: *Nuns In Heat*." For rhymes like that, you'll have to probe the unapologetically uncool mind of MC Frontalot, star of *Nerdcare Rising* and hip-hop hero to techies everywhere. *Nerdcare Rising* follows Frontalot (the "godfather of nerdcare") as he embarks on his first national tour and strives for mainstream success, while examining the genre through trailblazers such as "Weird Al" Yankovic and contemporaries like *Adult Swim's* MC Chris. For a nerdcare primer, *The A.V. Club* asked the film's official Austin ambassador, Terp 2 It (a.k.a. Chris Trew of comedy troupe ColdTowne), about getting his own start in the geek game, drawing inspiration from Lil Wayne, and whether a certain "soulja" should watch his back.

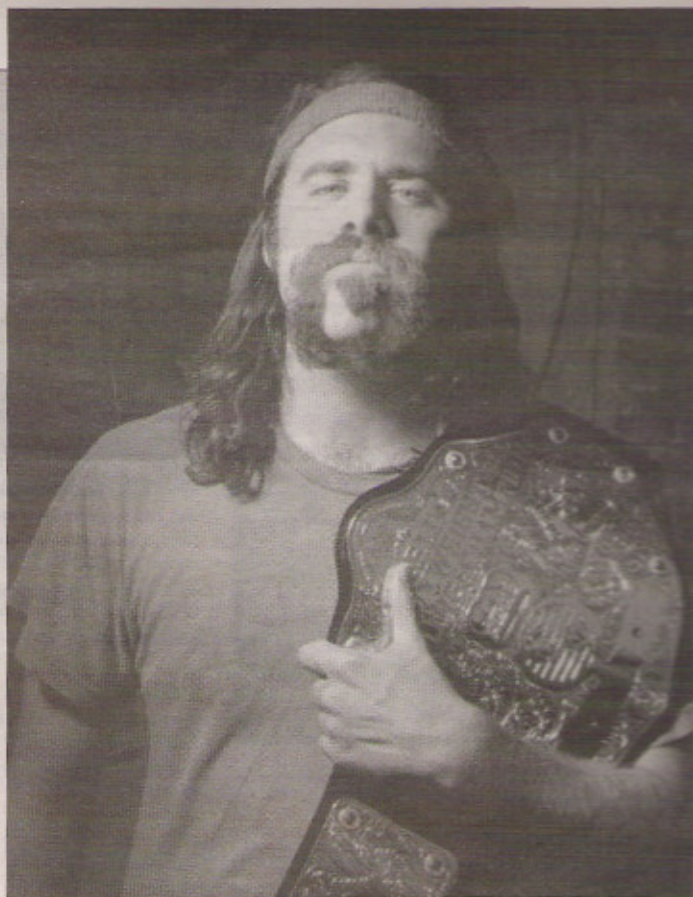


PHOTO: AUBREY EDWARDS

**The A.V. Club:** What is "nerdcare"?

**Chris Trew:** The way most people define nerdcare is rapping about something a nerd would talk about, like *Star Wars*. But I feel like it can be a nerd rapping about whatever he wants—even if it's the same thing Ice Cube is rapping about. I classify myself as "nerdcare" only because I'm kidding myself if I think I'm going to be taken seriously in the hip-hop world. I don't actually know anything about *Star Wars*.

**AVC:** Are you losing nerdcare street cred by admitting that?

**CT:** Quite possibly.

**AVC:** How did you get into hip-hop?

**CT:** I've always been a big fan of hip-hop—like, almost every night in junior high I'd fall asleep listening to *All Eyez On Me* or *Ready To Die*. The Studio8 guys I used to do sketch comedy with, one of them had a big, fancy studio because he produced hip-hop in Houston. We made this fake rap group called The Muggs, but when it came

time to record, it turned out I was the only one who took it seriously, so I did it myself. The guy liked it and said we should do more, but I was kind of shy about it. I didn't want people to be like, "Is he being serious?" I was being serious, but I wasn't serious about being a rapper. I didn't really know how to classify myself until I heard MC Chris and realized there's a way to be taken seriously as a rapper without taking yourself too seriously.

**AVC:** Where did "Terp 2 It" come from?

**CT:** I actually got this idea from *Austin Stories*. If you go to a theater and say, "I work for the Alamo," they'll let you sign a list and see movies for free. My friends and I would write fake last names that looked like ours, and I'd always write "Chris Terp." Eventually people started calling me "Terp," and I arbitrarily added the "2 It" and it stuck.

**AVC:** What goes into writing a nerdcare song—is it a matter of writing a standard rap song and then "geeking it up"?

**CT:** I usually get inspiration from legitimate rap. But when I listen to Lil Wayne, I'm not taking Lil Wayne's idea and making it my own. I get really excited, like, "I'm listening to somebody who's making a living doing this." It amps me up. A lot of times the chorus will come from me goofing around with friends. "Don't feel like learning? That's a good song title." I don't force anything.

**AVC:** How is it different than doing improv?

**CT:** It's a solo effort, whereas improv relies on a group mind. Other than that, though, one of the reasons I've stuck with improv for so long is I feel like the philosophy applies to everything. Writing a rap song, a

screenplay, a column, I always go back to my improv roots.

**AVC:** Do you consider *Terp 2 It* to be a character?

**CT:** No, and I thought long and hard about that. The first couple of shows I did I wasn't sure. But the more I've done, I've realized that I'm more comfortable just being myself.

**AVC:** What's your relationship to other nerdcare artists? Is there such a thing as a nerdcare dis track?

**CT:** Actually yeah, there's a whole web forum for dis tracks. Most nerds have access to home recording, so they can easily make a track making fun of someone and post it within an hour. But I don't get into that, because I feel like it's small potatoes. I'd rather work on an actual song that could get me somewhere instead of getting in a flame war.

**AVC:** But a rapper is only as good as his enemies. So c'mon, let's start a war.

**CT:** Oh, all right. If I see Soulja Boy on the streets during SXSW, I will give him a very nasty look. And I'll commit to it. I won't turn away if he looks at me and says, "What are you looking at?" I'll maintain that look no matter what. That's my promise. —Sean O'Neal

*Nerdcare Rising* screens during the SXSW Film Festival at the Alamo Drafthouse Lamar on March 9 and March 11 at 10:30 p.m. and again on March 14 at 1 p.m. at the Austin Convention Center, all with appearances by Terp 2 It. The March 9 screening will also be followed by an after-party featuring MC Frontalot and Prince Paul. For more info, visit [nerdcarerisingthemovie.com](http://nerdcarerisingthemovie.com).

Terp 2 It performs with the Upright Citizens Brigade on March 12 at The United States Art Authority at 8 & 10 p.m. and again at the Ninety Proof showcase during the SXSW Music Festival. For more info, visit [terp2it.com](http://terp2it.com)

