

Chris Dingli: 'I wasn't ready for fatherhood mentally, emotionally or financially'

Award-winning actor and comedian Chris Dingli has worked with Hollywood actors but fatherhood, as he says, was his greatest challenge



Award-winning actor and comedian Chris Dingli has performed in a multitude of stage shows, directed and performed at the Edinburgh Festival, featured in Michael Bay's *13 Hours* and BBC's *Doctors*, and is well-known for writing and performing in *The Comedy Knights* and his one-man show, *Bad Dad*, touring to North America in 2018. He hosts the radio show *Let's Do Lunch*, daily on XFM 100.2

What's the first thing you do when you wake up in the morning?

Say good morning to my wife and kids who are all already up and about.

What is the best advice you've ever received?

Someone gave me a mug with "Be silly, be honest, be kind" written on it. I've tried to adopt that as an approach to life. It's not exactly advice, but it works for me.

What do you never leave the house without?

My phone, although I hate being so attached to it!

Pick three words that describe yourself

Still. At. It.

Tell us...

What do you consider to be your greatest achievement?

Somehow I managed to end up with a family that's just perfect for me.

What is your guiltiest pleasure?

Chocolate after every meal!

What is the most important lesson life has taught you?

What you want might not be what you need.

What's the most expensive thing you've ever bought?

My apartment. Still paying for it!

What is one thing you wish you knew when you were younger?

Everyone's path in life is unique. Don't worry about what other have done, just forget your own path. Take advice with caution. Having "something to fall back on" is not necessarily a good thing.

Who's your inspiration?

I wish I could mention someone famous, but in actuality I find our existence pretty inspiring. We're a unique collection of atoms pulled together for a while to form our existence, and when we expire, those atoms will move on to become something or someone else. We don't just live in the universe, we're made of it. I think that's inspiring!

What has been your biggest challenge?

Becoming a dad. I wasn't ready for it mentally, emotionally or financially. It took a lot of getting used to, and I had to completely reinvent my career, identity and values in life.

If you weren't an actor, what would you be doing?

I'm not sure. I'm a terrible employee, so I don't think I'd last long in many corporate environments!

Do you believe in God?

Not in the traditional sense.

If you could have dinner with any person, dead or alive, who would it be?

My grandparents. I loved having dinner with them when I was younger, listening to their stories, enjoying their company.

What's your worst habit?

Procrastination.

What are you like when you're drunk?

Depends on my mood. Drunkenness only amplifies my feelings in that moment.

Who would you have play you in a film?

All my life I've been compared to Rowan Atkinson. Or maybe Jim Carrey? Perhaps casting a woman in the role would be interesting. Movies aren't exact representations of life, so why not?

What is the trait you most deplore in others?

Not sure if it's a trait, but a surefire way to make me instantly dislike you, is to call me "buddy", especially if I don't really know you. I'm not a dog, or a two-year-old child.

What music would you have played at your funeral?

I'm not sure I'd like a funeral in the traditional sense. No fuss, just put me in a box, burn me, and throw my ashes into the sky, preferably somewhere mountainous.

What is your most treasured material possession?

I have a terrible memory, so I guess my journals are most precious to me. Also my old photos.

What is your earliest memory?

I seem to recall being in my childhood bedroom at a very young age, lying on my bed. I also remember being potty-trained. I hope that's an early memory!

When did you last cry, and why?

When reading a news piece about BBC presenter Rachel Bland who died of breast cancer a few weeks ago. Before she died, she wrapped a birthday present for every birthday her three-year old son will have until he turns 21.

Who would you most like to meet?

Steve Martin, Martin Short, Mel Brooks. Comedy heroes. I actually met Martin Short once but was too star struck to say anything!

What's your favourite food?

Pizza and Ben & Jerry's ice-cream.

Who's your favourite person on social media right now?

There's a spoof account on Instagram called Unspirational. It parodies inspirational quotes that many people love posting (especially on a Monday morning!) with not so inspirational messages.

If you could travel in time, where would you go?

Back to the early days of mankind, before history started being recorded. Just to hang out and maybe gain some insight into some of the ancient world's great mysteries.

What book are you reading right now?

I just finished reading James Vella Bardon's fantastic historical novel The Sheriff's Catch. I'm about to start reading Emotional Intelligence by Daniel Goleman.

If you could have any superpower, what would it be?

Playing with time (slowing it down, speeding it up, etc).

What's one thing you want to do before you die?

I'd like to go into space.

What music are you listening to at the moment?

Mostly orchestral music. Film scores and Bruch's violin concertos. Also Edvard Grieg's Peer Gynt suites for work purposes.

In the shower or when you're working out, what do you sing/listen to?

Podcasts, particularly WTF with Marc Maron, The Tim Ferriss Show and On The Page with Pilar Alessandra.

Tell us...

What is the most exhausting thing about acting in Malta? And what is the most rewarding thing?

The most exhausting thing is constantly having to create new material, as shows have an extremely short shelf life in Malta. The most rewarding thing is that I get to constantly exercise my creative muscles.

What advice would you give anyone interested in the comedy scene in Malta?

Be honest, be yourself, be nice. Don't expect it to go well every time. Be prepared to learn, improve and remember, it's only comedy. Have fun with it.

What's next for you?

In October I'm touring Canada with my one man show, "Bad Dad." I'm also adapting Ibsen's "Peer Gynt" for the Malta Youth Orchestra and ZiguZajg Festival. Whilst on tour I'll be preparing for this year's edition of

"The Comedy Knights" in December and January. In addition, I'm booking more stand up comedy dates and hosting the daily lunchtime show Let's Do Lunch on XFM 100.2.