

Q. AND A.

Why JUDD APATOW loves Montreal, not just its circus.

Montreal, which is celebrating its 375th birthday this year, is known for history, food, architecture and the hometown performance group Cirque du Soleil. But for the filmmaker Judd Apatow, whose credits include "The 40-Year-Old Virgin" and "Bridesmaids," the Canadian city is synonymous with comedy. He has planned a trip there this month to appear at the annual Just for Laughs comedy festival, running July 12 to 31, which will feature stand-up acts by Jerry Seinfeld, Trevor Noah and Ali Wong.

"I'm excited to get my show out of the way and see other people," said Mr. Apatow, who will be doing four stand-up performances over July 28 and 29 that Netflix will be filming for his first solo comedy special.

The following are edited excerpts from an interview with Mr. Apatow.

What was, and when was, your first impression of Montreal?

In 2008, I did a show there called "Apatow for Destruction." I had everybody who's in our movies who does stand-up perform in a show: Russell Brand, Craig Robinson, Dr. Ken Jeong, a few others. At the time, I was writing jokes for Adam Sandler for "Funny People." I thought doing some stand-up to write for him would be good and I had a great time. I went back last year and did a few shows. Netflix happened to be at a midnight show. They asked me to do a special, and I said, "O.K., give me a year."

What's the Just for Laughs festival like?

As a comedy nerd, the idea that there's



Judd Apatow, film director, producer and writer, loves Montreal's comedy scene and will be in the Just for Laughs festival this month.

a place you can go where there's an enormous amount of your favorite comedians all performing and you can jump around to different shows is just crazy. As a fan, I ran around and caught Andy Dick, the "Oh, Hello" show, Maria Bamford. I brought my daughter who was about to run off to college and we had the best time.

How are the audiences, compared with other places?

I thought they were so warm and excited about comedy that it felt like the perfect place to tape a special. I like getting out of major cities like New York and talking about my life, show business and politics in a place where people are watching it from a distance.

People who come are so receptive to comedy. That made it fun and allows you to experiment more.

How do you characterize Montreal's sense of humor?

I don't know if cities are funny, but you definitely feel the vibe of certain cities or people who go to comedy shows.

When you play San Francisco it's different than Philadelphia. It's a little more raucous in Philadelphia. There's a fun, aggressive energy in the crowd in Philly and very attentive energy in San Francisco. Montreal feels like a very smart, warm, enthusiastic crowd. There seems to be some sense of the absurd. I also think because Hollywood is so far away that they seem pretty amused by any story I told about the ridiculous things that happened there.

How does Cirque du Soleil fit into the comedy scene in Montreal?

I'm such a fan of Cirque du Soleil. My

daughters are 19 and 14 and we've probably seen 80 percent of all the shows they've ever put on. When we travel around the world promoting things, we try to see the Cirque du Soleil show in that city. It's scary and funny and beautiful and experimental. A city that creates and embraces, that is the best kind of city.

What did you most enjoy when you were in Montreal last?

I went to a Haitian restaurant, Agrikol, that Win Butler from [the band] Arcade Fire owns. It was the best meal ever. I was there with my daughter Maude, and it was so good. It's in a house and it felt more like eating at the house with someone who is the best host ever. Win Butler and his wife, Régine, was there, and they sat with us and it was a great memory we have of Montreal. ELAINE GLUSAC