

Cary Harrison

Life on the Edge as the Gay Larry King

By Kimberly Nichols

When Cary Harrison hosted the popular morning show *Harrison on the Edge*, on the first ever national 24-hour gay radio channel OUT Q on Sirius' web-based broadcast, he found instant notoriety. People took notice and although they could not see the piercing blue-eyed blonde on the other end they were hooked on the witty, mind-biting and articulated commentary about life in the U.S.A. he provided.

"It's wasn't about Democrats or Republicans but negotiating somebody into the sack for a night of frolic," he says. "Sex is, in fact, a political mechanism," he adds, "and so is dating, prayer, meditation and wild histrionic laughing at a ribald joke; all of these things involve how we interact with each other and I liked to discuss how best to finesse those relationships."

When he came out of his own closet at 39, Harrison leaped into the world of West Hollywood with vigor, finding the clarity of self, mingling with the translucence of sobriety, to render him one of the most poignant and intellectual satirists of human nature the Southern California boys and girls had seen. *Harrison on the Edge* was not a gay political show by any stretch but showcased that the nature of human interaction is of course political.

"I come from a mainstream background and I prefer a mainstream existence," he explains, "so, doing a stereotypically gay show, whatever that is, didn't fit my notion of 'radio for the rest of us.'"

"What's so cool is I got to take us out of the Petri dish of random gay chatter and custom-create a chemistry set for what we frolicky alternative lifestylers really want, think, expect, and often demand, in and for our entertainment," he explains. "How cool it is



to say that most of us really don't want cliché — you know, all that stuff that really reinforces the gay stereotype and doesn't require any homework or higher thought to engage in."

Amazingly, after six months, 50 percent of Harrison's audience was straight.

"Our vibrant gay core was loyal, steadfast and rapidly growing," he laughs. "But our straight friends had never encountered a forum like this before which I termed Radio for the Rest of Us! — meaning all of us: straight, gay, ambisexual, pansexual, pan flute, pandemonium... whatever you call it. I got to perform this super-slick mainstream FM-style format pyrotechnically delivered with an edgy gay perspective. When *E!* referred to me as the gay Howard Stern I thought, is that a compliment? What I later found out was thousands and thousands of cool straight guys were listening in and calling."

He had taken what was supposed to be a gay morning show and evolved it quickly into mainstream fireworks — never for a second forgetting to infuse generous portions of pixie dust, cuckoo and fantastic!

"Imagine redneck Army guys becoming on-air pals with black New York Divas," he screams, eyes flashing wild like a ten-year-old imp. "Or gay truckers having a hearty yuck with the LAPD. Drag queens debating gas stations attendants. How unbelievably cool having all the phone lines twinkling from Key West to Alaska! Just think: this mass of all kinds of Americans are now the ones who want to share their toys and make nice in our national sandbox of fun!"

Harrison believes the general public is not looking at a valid gay mainstream but a combed-slick version of gay masculinity in the form of outlets such as *Will and Grace*.

He says, "Will, a gay man played by a straight actor, is sexless, passionless, penisless. It's a poor portrayal of gay masculinity: spiritless, insensate and the loyal lap dog to his straight girl master."

Harrison thinks *Queer Eye For The Straight Guy* is "the most focused and volupt image of gay men as hairdressers, manicurists, cleaning ladies and bitchy queens."

"The mainstream straight world thinks that gay people are silly," he summarizes. "I agree, as shocking as that statement might be, because what we have put out so far as gay

people in mass programming is that we will come and clean your house, do your hair and nails: or, in a fictional sense, we live in nightclubs and rambusticate wildly in large black rooms."

So where did his love of opening the perpetual Pandora's box come from?

"I've seen so much going on in the world," he muses, "have read such volumes of material, participated in such intense joys and depressions, and realized that there were very few voices who were willing to pierce the cloud of mainstream entertainment to talk about this stuff, this meat of life, this dive into our real everyday existence. And so, some years ago while doing host duty during morning drive, on a big FM rock station, I created "Reality Checks" in which I was able to use humor and perspective in delivering the grimness of network news so that it somehow had relevance to people's daily lives."

This method a la Jon Stewart's *Daily Show* is what set his brilliance into motion.

Now his attempts at shaking up the collective thinking man's system are being groomed for television. Harrison is currently at work on pilot episodes of a television show in which he hosts elegant dinner parties for guests who vehemently clash ideologically; or takes celebrities out of their starry-eyed boxes for opinions on world issues; or investigates pertinent issues with his brand of wide-

eyed, intellectual satire. The show, *Politically Uncut*, Harrison says, was "able to achieve a real programming orgasm with its pilot episode that paired a Catholic archbishop who flew in from the East Coast against porn star Jeff Stryker, and then against a self-loathing gay Republican to have an interactional dalliance."

Harrison's plan is to focus on the distinctive intelligence, talent, humor and personality of each guest, getting the very best out of celebrities and political thinkers.


"I'm never going to ask a celebrity 'who does you hair?'... or 'where'd you get your dress?'" he laughs. "Think about how you'd feel if all you were was a snarl of lacquered hair or a wad of polyester panties to an interviewer. Not to give too much away... it's a hipper, funnier and younger collision of commentary, rollicking celebrity interviews, and even some side winding investigative reporting — all served over a bed of travel, humor and an endless television enema of social reverie."

After all, he thinks entertainment should invigorate the public, incite a fiery heartbeat. It should be deliciously gay inclusive, never gay exclusive and must always speak to the overlooked and untapped awakening giant: the hundred million open-minded, open-hearted Americans.

For more information on Harrison's upcoming antics, visit www.goharrison.com.

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