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Booze-Free Belly Laughs

Ian Harvie brings sober comedy
to Q Center

BY ERIN ROOK

Ian Harvie is a one-of-a-kind comedian determined to show audiences they have more in common than they think. As the only FTM comic currently on the road, however, convincing people of this fact requires a little edutainment.

"I'm not preachy on stage, I really just talk about my own personal experience and how I feel about myself and my body and my experience with my body and my sexual life," Harvie, 42, says. "It's educational through narrative comedy and I think what it does is just allow people to think about things in additional ways."

From Harvie's perspective—which he stresses is his alone—everyone should be able to relate to the experience of not feeling 100 percent comfortable in his or her body.

"Everybody feels this way on some level. Most people don't feel enough in some way and ... I just happened to choose these things [testosterone and surgery] to make myself feel better. Some people work out, some people get breast augmentations. But I think that on some level everybody feels this way. We're not so different," Harvie insists.

It's this unique perspective that caught the attention of comedy icon Margaret Cho and helped launch Harvie's comedic career back in 2006.

Shortly after moving to Los Angeles from Portland, Maine, Harvie met Cho at the East L.A. queer club Akbar, where Cho sometimes tested out new material. The two chatted, Harvie sent her his reel and, before he knew it, he was spending the next three years on tour with her.

"I started drinking when I was a kid and I felt like it helped quiet the voices inside me that told me I was different. I felt like it helped make me one of the boys in the neighborhood."

—IAN HARVIE

"She basically just scooped me up and made me go with her everywhere she went. Within a couple of weeks we were on the road in the Midwest somewhere," Harvie says. "I feel like that is the dream that you hear about. That's the really esoteric version of how you hope things would work out when you move to L.A. You meet some-

body who's a huge, iconic queer comic ... just fucking amazing and someone says, 'Yeah, I think you're funny, come with me.'"

Two years later, Harvie is building on other unexpected connections for his current tour, *Laughs Without Liquor*, with two fellow comics-in-recovery bringing their own unique perspectives and similarly raw approach.

There's Felon O'Reilly, an Irish former bank robber and heroin addict; Amy Dresden, a Jewish recovering methamphetamine addict; and, of course, Harvie, a transgender alcoholic from the other Portland.

Despite their differences, O'Reilly and Harvie have been friends for nine years.



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— January 2011, *Saveur Magazine*

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