



The Box

NIGEL MERCIER

in association with



chorus

All dickied out

NOTORIOUS hellraiser and Hollywood legend, was how Sky News described Richard Harris last Saturday morning on the announcement of his death, but the evening news on RTE1 later the same day was a bit more sedate when he was called simply "an Irish actor".

No doubt there are many tributes, obituaries, and memories written in this paper this weekend and I don't have much to add except to say that he used to throw stones at my father on his way home along Ennis Road back in the Forties; that, and the fact that I probably wouldn't have become an actor if it were not for Richard Harris.

Because you see Harris was a Hollywood legend and he made it right to the very top of his career at a time that there were very little Irish heroes or stars. Not only that but he was from Limerick.

If he could do it then anyone could, and like the many bands that were inspired by U2, I was going to be the next Richard Harris.

Now while I may have changed tack a long time ago I can now look back with satisfaction and pride that at least I tried.

Thanks for the inspiration, Dickie.

"Ever had a problem that you just couldn't solve, or a dream that you wished could come true, the sort of thing that left you desperately seeking someone, anyone, to come to your rescue? Well worry no more because I'm your very own agony aunt, your new best friend, the fairy godmother you've always



Richard Harris: hellraiser, Irish actor, but, most of all, Limerick man

wanted. I'm Anna and I'm here to help. And all you've got to do is ask."

So promises the voiceover at the start of Ask Anna (RTE 1 Thursday, 8.30pm), the new series presented by former Big Brother contestant Anna Nolan.

I was very disappointed however to discover that the theme of this particular programme was a makeover, with tips on how to attract the opposite sex. Now this idea has been done to death on programme after programme so it was no surprise to find that Ask Anna came up

with no new formulas or ideas.

The basic proposal last Thursday was this: find a dork, video dork's unsuccessful attempts to flirt, point out to dork what he's doing wrong, give dork a makeover, unleash dork on an unsuspecting selection of people, then ask selection who was the real dork, big hurrahs if selection of people guess the wrong man, end of programme.

So, step 1, find a dork. This step was very successfully fulfilled when Bryan Hogan contacted the producers, a 42-year-old Australian

who claims not to have pulled since last century—a woman I assume as this programme was on early! Bryan is small with red hair and wears a Wrangler jacket with the sleeves rolled up. When I say red hair, picture first Bozo the clown and you get a rough idea—bald as a coot on top with hair protruding from his ears and neck.

If the makeover was the simple solution then a simple change of clothes and a number 1 haircut would've been enough to see a transformed Bryan "pull".

But no, Bryan needed a personality transplant also. With very effeminate gestures and an over enthusiastic demeanour, one suspects that Bryan came to Ireland eighteen months ago because he had gone through the entire female population of Australia with little or no success, and then resigned himself to try elsewhere.

But after a year-and-a-half with the colleens he was still not getting anywhere, so he decided to ask a lesbian, former nun, former Big Brother star for some tips on how to flirt.

So Anna got him some advice on how to stop being effeminate, to stuff food down his throat with his hands in order to be more in touch with his masculine side, and dressed him up like a member of a boy band.

Oh yes, and complete with a haircut that would have made Jimmy Somerville proud, Bryan was ready to pull. Only problem was, after this particular makeover one wonders if Bryan was going to attract a male or a female.

There was one very good scene where Bryan and Anna were video'd sitting at a street café watching the female talent walk by in order to get an idea of Bryan's taste in women.

Only problem was Anna seemed to be having more fun watching the female talent than Bryan!

• Nigel Mercier is the director of the Limerick School of Acting and Personal Development. Email: thebox@utvinternet.com