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By Jeffrey Hartinger

The Advocate

Jason Stuart, a gay comedian with appearances on popular shows such as The Closer, and Entourage, talks with The Advocate about how sexuality plays into comedy, how his tumultuous high school years helped his career, and why he wants to raise children with Ricky Martin.

Jason Stuart, a gay comedian with appearances on popular shows such as It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia, The Closer, and an upcoming cameo on HBO's Entourage, talks with The Advocate about the role sexuality plays in comedy, how his youth as a bullied LGBT teen ultimately helped his career, and why he wants to raise children with Ricky Martin. Stuart is currently the national co-chair of the LGBT Committee for the Screen Actors' Guild and can be seen in the upcoming thriller Home Invasion.

The Advocate: When did you get your start in comedy and performing?

Jason Stuart: I started out with comedy during grade school; all the kids used to make fun of me because I was gay. Like Barbra Streisand says in Funny Girl, — I know, gay guy quoting Barbra, don't tell anybody — I made the joke first so they could laugh with me, rather than at me.

Do you believe that making jokes about sexual orientation helps to educate those who are not part of the LGBT community?

When you are out, you have the power in your life and as an artist; rather than being a victim who lives in the closet. It makes my job easier and more joyful to just be myself. Now I can talk about what I think is funny without thinking about whether it's "gay or not."

You have a variety of diverse acting roles under your belt. For you, is there any difference between playing a gay or straight character? Most of my roles are not big enough to have a sexual orientation. However, there are all types of gay and straight characters for that matter. So for me, it's about the character I am playing.

What are some of your gay-related upcoming projects?

On Friday Aug. 12th, I am headlining The Muckenthaler Outdoor Theatre in Fullerton, Calif. to benefit the Center Orange County with Jennie McNulty. I am also in two gay films that are soon to be released. In Walk A Mile In My Pradas, with Tom Arnold & Dee Wallace, I play a Jewish doctor — my mother is thrilled. In Finding Mr. Wright, starring Matthew Montgomery, Rebekah Kochan, and David Moretti, I play one half of a couple that is obsessed with the movie star Rebekah plays. My husband is Scotch Ellis Loring.

Being a gay male, has this made you sympathetic of other minority groups, such as the struggles of immigrants and African-Americans?

Yes. Also, being Jewish and having a father who was in the Holocaust has made me even more aware of others. The comedy from my Jewish family just never stops. I called my mother on the phone recently and I told her I met a new guy in Key West named Darren. She asks, "Is he gay?" I said, "No, he's a leprechaun! Of course he is, that's the most important part!"

Have you ever had a bad experience in performing stand up where someone in the crowd did not accept you because you were gay?

Yes, I was in Texas at the LAFF STOP where I was selling out and having a great show. This guy who was really drunk yelled out, "You all have AIDS." After a beat, I said, "I guess we are having uncomfortable moment!" and the crowd roared. This is where I learned not to give

my power away as a comic. Now that has become a catch phrase in my act. So, I should really thank that guy.

What is your best gay joke?

Come on straight people...If you let us marry each other, we will stop marrying you!

As a comedian, what is your opinion on the Tracy Morgan scandal: Did he go too far or do you think people overreacted?

I feel that Tracy, as a fellow comic, has the right to say whatever he wants on stage BUT when he does, it affects many other people and he will have to live with the consequences. When I started doing stand up in the 80's I was teased and badgered by other comics, bookers and the audience. This was part of the job and I understood this coming into the business. I cannot tell you how many times I was rudely introduced or made fun of for being gay -sometimes it was very funny and other times incredibly offensive and uncomfortable - to both the audience and myself.

Being bullied was a large part of my childhood. So, when I became a comic and an actor, I came upon this kind of prejudice all the time in many different forms. I learned that it was a part of the job and my plight as an artist to move gracefully through the wreckage of my past and onto the front lines of advocacy for openly gay performers. I am actually a huge fan of Tracy's. I know Tracy meant us no harm BUT when you are given the gift of talent and the ability to make people laugh, and have such success and popularity one must know that ALL of us are listening. Ten years ago this would not have gotten into the press, however, now the year is 2011 and the times they are changing, thank god.

Many comedians draw their comedy from a "dark place." Would you agree to that belief?

Yes, for sure. My comedy comes from a place of pain. It was a way to get my feelings out. Now that I am in recovery in my life my comedy comes from what makes me laugh. But it also comes from things that make me mad, like not having equal rights in this country.

Gay marriage just became legal in New York. If you could fly there and get married, what gay celebrity would it be to, and why?

Ricky Martin for sure. I am obsessed with him. Why? Because he's perfect for me. So Ricky... if you are reading this call me, email me, text me! I would even help raise your twins. I don't have kids myself because I have nice furniture. For Ricky, I would change all of that!