

# Why this man finds us so funny



Graham Norton's talk show and its naughty sense of humor have found a home in the U.S.

## Graham Norton ready to laugh it up in the U.S.

By MICHAEL GILTZ

**T**APING dozens of promotional spots plugging a show for local cable companies can get tiresome. But Graham Norton — the naughty-minded UK talk show host set to conquer America — is finding it a source of endless amusement.

Norton giggles helplessly after he realizes that he is about to read a prepared line that goes: "Oh, come now, Cox customers, don't try and pretend that wasn't fun." (He does not know that Atlanta-based Cox Cable is one of the biggest operators in the U.S.)

"Why would you call something that?" laughs Norton, who has just begun a 13-week run on Comedy Central with a new talk show, "**The Graham Norton Effect**." "That's just mean."

Mean is exactly what Norton's good-natured shtick is not. Though his talk show is filled with silly sex toys, randy Web sites (like one devoted to a man's fetish for watching women brush their teeth) and stories that

would make Congressman Jack Ryan blush, Norton isn't mean or dirty in the Howard Stern way.

He just reacts with shocked glee over the awfully embarrassing things celebrities and audience members can't wait to reveal.

A huge star in the UK, Norton's most recent show aired five days a

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week (almost unheard of in Great Britain, where they have no tradition of daily talk shows like "**The Tonight Show**"). So filming one show a week here (it airs Thursdays at 10 p.m.) seems like a vacation.

"That's a good thing but also a bad thing," says the 41-year-old Irish-born comic. "I'm not sure what will finish first — the series or my liver."

"I'm living in New

York, and I haven't quite figured out yet that that doesn't mean you have to stay out 'til four every night. The city that never sleeps? That can't be true. Oh, but it is."

He's just bought an apartment in Chelsea, proof that he's serious about putting in the time to become as well known here as he is in the UK.

Of course, if the U.S. show clicks, Norton could have a terrible problem: He's committed to both Comedy Central for two years (which has an option for an extra nine shows and a second season) and a brand-new, family-oriented variety show for the BBC. That's set to launch in October but doesn't even have a firm format yet.

Point out that those two commitments could very well overlap, and Norton laughs.

"It's a lovely problem to even contemplate," says Norton. "Presumably, if this show is a disaster, I'll be on my way to JFK with a thank-you note, if that."

"And I'll be paying for the cab myself."