**Long biography of Liam Horan**

**On The Way Out**

Liam Horan is the author of *On The Way Out*, the debut novel that won the 2025 Gerald Griffin Competition for First Original Adult Fiction and announced him as a major new voice in Irish storytelling. The book, published by Savoy Editions (an imprint of the Limerick Writers’ Centre), has been praised for its sharply observed portrayal of small-town life, its emotional richness, and its deeply humane characters.

Joseph O’Connor described Horan as “a storyteller of great gifts…all to be admired in this deeply impressive debut novel.”

Set in the fictional west of Ireland town of Rathfin, *On The Way Out* follows Louise, a shopkeeper fighting for survival; Matt, a widower clinging to the past; and a community project that unexpectedly upends the fragile equilibrium of a rural town.

Judges of the Gerald Griffin Award highlighted the novel’s wit, its savvy understanding of ‘small-town politics and atmosphere’, its deft dialogue and its deep appreciation of the quiet dangers facing vulnerable communities.

At the packed launch in Ballinrobe Library, fellow Ballinrobe author Declan Varley described Rathfin as ‘a living, breathing presence, praising Horan’s ability to portray rural Ireland with warmth, honesty and humour.

*On The Way Out* represents not just a high point in Horan’s career, but the culmination of years of writing, community involvement and storytelling in many forms.

**Short fiction, awards & creative development**

Before turning to the novel, Horan made his mark with short fiction. His debut collection, *Second Chance & Other Stories*, was launched at the Wild Atlantic Words Festival in 2022. Critics praised the book for its emotional intelligence, authenticity and deep understanding of west of Ireland life, with reviewers from the *Western People*, *Connaught Telegraph* and *Mayo News* noting its tender treatment of loss, nostalgia and second chances.

His story *A Home Game* won the inaugural Maura Varley Short Story Award in 2022, reinforcing his reputation as a writer capable of capturing both the humour and ache of ordinary lives.

Horan later completed an MA in Creative Writing at the University of Limerick, achieving First Class Honours in the *Creative Writers in the Community* module for a project with Ballyhaunis Community School. This academic work deepened both his craft and his longstanding commitment to creativity as a community force.

**Radio, stage & multidisciplinary writing**

Beyond the page, Horan has a substantial body of work across radio and theatre. He is the creator of the *Championship Man* radio essay series for RTÉ Radio One’s *Drivetime* and *Countrywide* programmes (2005–2009), and a regular contributor to *Sunday Miscellany* and *Countrywide*.

He co-wrote and toured the stage play *The Pull* from 2012 to 2015, exploring themes of identity, rural culture and the tensions of Irish life – concerns that echo through his fiction.

**Community roots & local leadership**

A native of Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo, Horan has long been active in community development, arts initiatives and youth engagement. His work in schools, writing groups and local cultural projects reflects a belief that writing thrives when embedded in shared experience. This deep-rooted community focus informs much of his fiction: the sense of place, the complex webs of small-town relationships, and the belief, expressed by judges of *On The Way Out*, that ‘dialogue is vital for the health of society.’

His involvement in local writers’ groups, and his encouragement of emerging writers, have been cited by peers as an important part of his make-up.

**Journalism & Early Career**

Horan’s writing foundations lie in journalism. He worked across a range of publications and served as Gaelic Games Correspondent of the *Irish Independent* from 1995 to 2000. This background shaped his narrative instincts: the search for character, the reading of community dynamics and the ability to find humour and humanity in everyday events.

His journalistic eye remains evident in *On The Way Out*, which blends sharp observation with emotional insight.

**Themes & Artistic Identity**

Across all his work – fiction, essays, stage writing and radio – Horan returns to certain concerns:

* the challenges and opportunities of middle age
* the fragility and strength of communities
* grief and recovery
* the enduring echoes of past relationships
* the humour and rhythms of rural Ireland

He writes ‘thoughtful and measured prose,’ often set in the west, bringing characters on ‘journeys that are both real and metaphorical.’

**Personal life**

Liam Horan lives in Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo, with his wife Noreen and their two canine companions, Bonnie and Toby. His connection to place – its stories, its people, its challenges and its potential – continues to shape his fiction and his role as an advocate for creativity in community life.