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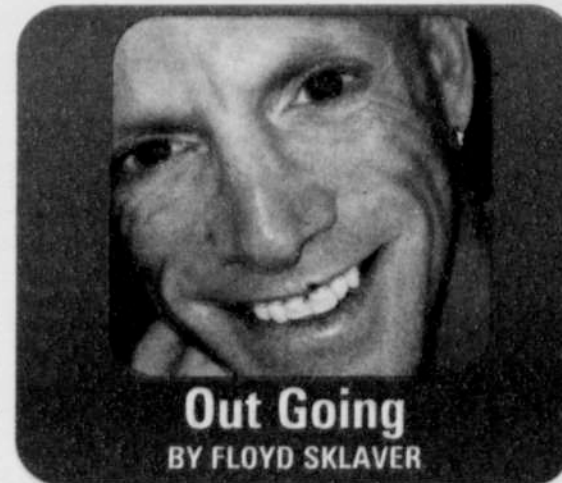
Dragged to drag

I'm the first to admit when I'm wrong. Well, second—my partner, Marc, is usually first.

Anyone who knows me knows drag's not my thing. I'm left cold by the little I've seen—but I admit I've seen very little. I'm sort of like the fundamentalist protesters at Terrence McNally's play *Corpus Christi*: I haven't even seen the piece before objecting. My background is live theater, and so, to me, lip-syncing while posing as a department store mannequin just isn't a talent. As a result, you can imagine what went through my mind when Karl Rohde called and insisted that I come to the 25th annual La Femme Magnifique International Pageant.

Well, I stand corrected. I had a ball—a real drag ball. Darcelle XV and Roxy LeRoy, along with Kimberlee Van Patten and a crackerjack cast and crew, staged a first-rate spectacle filled with glitz, entertainment and just plain fun. There were even some tender moments that caught me by surprise.

For anyone who doesn't know (like me, for instance), La Femme Magnifique occurs every



Out Going
 BY FLOYD SKLAVER

My own heartfelt thanks go to Celeste Towers for inviting me to join her ringside table. Watching in the crowd of 600 with me was handsome Tim McNichol, who caught my eye when I spied a horizontal piercing above his right brow. *Willamette Week* columnist Byron Beck told me that his friends contributed more than \$3,500 to Basic Rights Oregon at his recent birthday party. Mr. Gay

Latin Oregon Rogelio Villa was also there, as was John Oules, who announced that the theme of the next auction to benefit Our House of Portland is "The Emerald City." Perhaps I can borrow a fabulous La Femme frock.

Speaking of fabulous frocks, Kristin Arnett invited me to the opening of "Papier Couture," a fashion show of gowns made entirely from paper. The designs were breathtakingly intricate, and the entire



From left, Lotta Marie Liquor, Kayla Krawford, Floyd, Christina Von Tramp and Allison Grey get their drag on.

Labor Day weekend and coincides with Darcelle and Roxy's anniversary (39th this year). Contestants and attendees fly from around the country to crown "the most glamorous female impersonator in the universe." This year's beauties hailed from around the Northwest and Honolulu.

Judging occurs in four categories: theme ("The Return to Disco"), talent (that damned lip-syncing), formalwear and showgirl. Each requires an elaborate change of costume, including ornate emu-feathered headdresses like Cher's, and a parade down the catwalk, often accompanied by complex choreography and backup dancers. Points are awarded to the most glamorous, although, to be honest, they're all so gorgeous and perfect that it reminds me of the state fair where you see a row of identical bunnies and one cage has a blue ribbon.

Between categories, local drag queens, including past winners Poison Waters, Perla and Kelly Cheval, lip-synced to popular songs and received dollar tips from admiring fans. While I had sneered at this practice in the past, finding it too insular and self-congratulatory, I was surprised by the intimacy with which the bills passed. As each performer took the dollar, she held the giver's hand and offered thanks by looking into his or her eyes with a tenderness usually reserved for lovers.

production (Kristin did the makeup on the models; Jim Feild built the runway) was worthy of Paris, London or Milan.

Of course, the Emerald City came to Portland last month with the opening of *Wicked*, which was every bit as good as the Broadway original. Among those I chatted with on opening night were Steven Nash and David Sherwood, who are co-chairmen for this month's BRO dinner, and Portland Opera stage manager Laura Heller, who says she needs acrobats and jugglers to perform in the opera's first production, *Faust*. (Contact Laura at the opera if you're interested.) Liza Minnelli impersonator Bryan Hall was also there; after seeing *Wicked* in New York City just a few weeks earlier, he was appalled by the bad acoustics at Keller Auditorium. (Amen!) And Melissa Egan sat a row in front of me, fretting about whether she was going to spend the weekend at the Time-Based Art Festival or MusicfestNW.

I opted for TBA and will report in my next column. But it was a close call. With so much happening this fall, it's tough to choose where to be Out Going. **io**

FLOYD SKLAVER wants to know about your event. E-mail him at floydsklaver@comcast.net.