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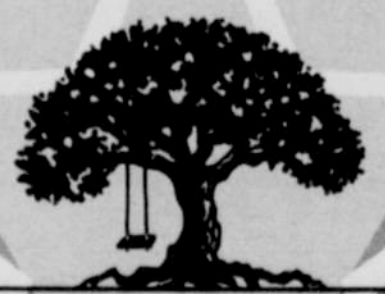
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## Junket Junkie

I could learn to love this

**M**ichael Cunningham walked in and took my breath away. The silver hair, the inviting smile, the dimples you could swim laps in. I almost swooned. But let me back up and explain how I ended up alone in a hotel room with a Pulitzer-winning novelist.

Last month I received a "golden opportunity" from *Just Out* Arts and Culture Editor **Jim Radosta**. Did I want to go to New York City for two days to attend a press junket for *Evening*, a new film with an all-star cast that's written by Cunningham?

New York City? All expenses paid? Score! The only hitch was that I couldn't bring a guest, which meant my partner had to stay home. "Marc who?" I replied.

So, Saturday morning at 5 a.m., a car service whisked me off to PDX. (Car service—the two most beautiful words in the English language.) From there I traveled (car service!) to the Loew's Regency Hotel, the poshest place I've ever stayed, with its plush robes, plasma TV and walk-in shower (which seemed really cool until I flooded the bathroom by accidentally pointing the shower head toward the entrance). Now I know why Heloise stayed so long at the Plaza. The Regency is also where **Michael Feinstein** performs, but I had a movie to see.

I also had a \$125 per diem to spend. So, I immediately got on the phone to Marc's cousin, composer/lyricist **Tim Acito** (off-Broadway's *Zanna Don't*), and told him to get his ass to the Regency because there was no way I could use up this per diem unless he helped me drink it.

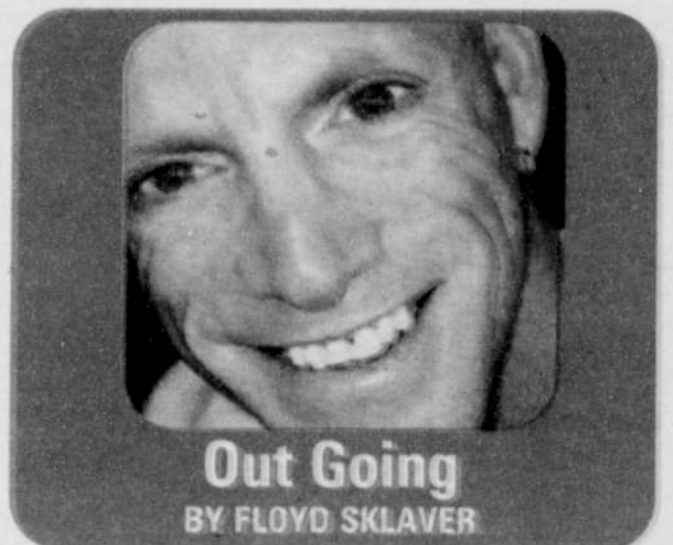
But first was the screening, where I met writer **Jason Rowan**, who was covering the movie for *Esquire*. Since he was cute, I invited him to the hotel to help kill the per diem as well.

The film is a touching work by a masterful team. It stars **Vanessa Redgrave** as a dying woman who, drifting in and out of a morphine-induced haze, recalls the true love of her life, played in flashback by the thoroughly edible **Patrick Wilson** (*Angels in America*, *Little Children*). Cunningham has revised the story significantly, including beefing up a minor character into a sexually ambiguous dreamboat (**Hugh Dancy**) who kisses Wilson full on the lips.

But the real treats of the film are **Redgrave** and **Meryl Streep**, who appear briefly together, two pros at the height of their expressive powers reveling in the delight of their craft. The film also features **Redgrave's** real-life daughter, **Natasha Richardson**, as her reel-life daughter, while **Streep's** daughter, **Mamie Gummer**, plays **Streep's** younger self. Upping the diva index is **Glenn Close**.

And did I mention **Hugh Dancy** kisses **Patrick Wilson** on the lips?

Back at the Regency, **Tim**, **Jason** and I easily coast through my per diem—and then some. But the conversation is so



lively, and the atmosphere so vibrant—sexy **Peter Gallagher** (*The OC*, *American Beauty*) is at the next table—that it's worth it, and I fall into my 300-count cotton sheets drunk and very happy.

The next morning, I arrive at the hospitality suite to request a one-on-one interview with Cunningham. **Jason**, a junket regular, told me these usually last 10 to 15 minutes. I locate the publicist in charge and ask whether I can have 30. She's skeptical until I explain that I'm from a queer paper in Oregon and want to devote a whole column to Cunningham. She looks at her schedule, crosses out *The Newark Star-Ledger* and writes me in for two slots. Score.

My interview is scheduled for the afternoon, and the morning is filled with roundtables where 10 to 15 journalists sit while publicists shuttle the cast and crew between rooms for 20 minutes of questions and answers. **Dancy** is first in our room. He's short, boyish and very intelligent. He's also terrific in the movie. I'm so taken with him, I even forget to ask the one question I most want to know: "What was it like to kiss **Patrick Wilson**?"

Cunningham enters next and I sit back, contentedly knowing that he and I will soon be having a private tête-à-tête. (Marc who?) But I'll have to save the tale of our brief affair for my next column. Suffice it to say, rewards come to those who are *Out Going*. 10

*EVENING* opens June 29 at Fox Tower Cinemas.

FLOYD SKLAVER wants to know about your event. E-mail him at [floydsklaver@comcast.net](mailto:floydsklaver@comcast.net).



**Hugh Dancy** locks lips with **Patrick Wilson** in the touching film *Evening*.

GENE PAGE