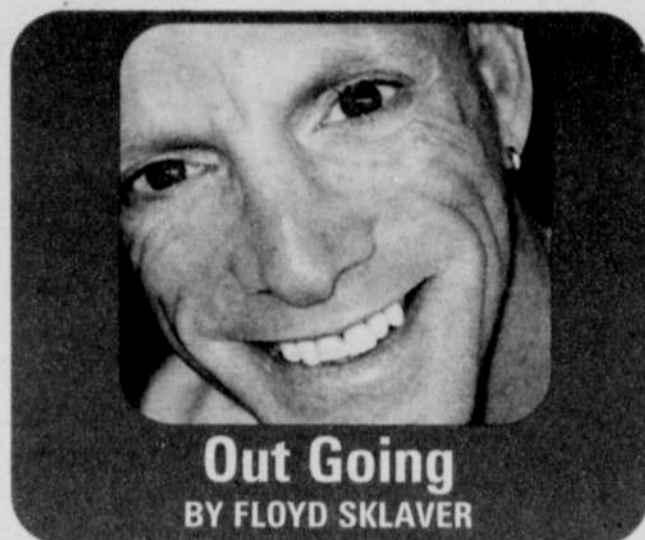


# Pretty in Pink

Leslie Jordan trips down the pink carpet

Leslie Jordan may be diminutive, but his wit packs a punch. Best known as Beverley Leslie, Megan Mullally's nemesis on *Will & Grace*, the acerbic 53-year-old Southerner is touring the country with a one-man show promoting his latest book, *My Trip Down the Pink Carpet*. In both, he recounts some of his hilarious encounters with celebrities over his quarter-century career. I spoke via phone with Jordan about his life and his work, including one of my all-time favorite movies, *Sordid Lives*.



**Floyd Sklaver:** What was the genesis of *Sordid Lives*?

**Leslie Jordan:** Long before the film there was the play. I am sober 10 years, and I was not sober when we did the play.... In fact, I went to jail five times during the run of the play. Everything from drunk driving to several indiscretions I'd rather not discuss. I gave Del Shores a book of short stories years ago by one of my favorite Kentucky writers, Bobby Ann Mason, called *Shiloh and Other Stories*. I said to Del, "You can write like this." So he wrote a story called "Nicotine Fit," about three women trying to stop smoking, and it became the germ of *Sordid Lives*. He also had a short story called "The De-Homosexualization of Brother Boy."

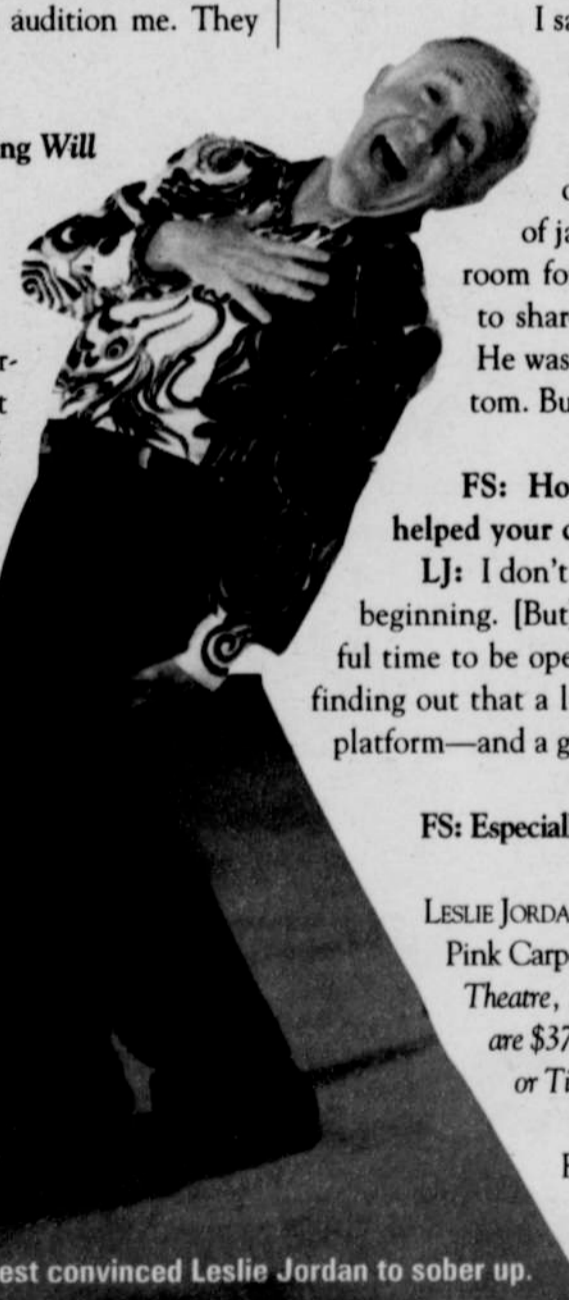
**FS:** How did you create the role of Beverley Leslie?

**LJ:** That part was written for Joan Collins, believe it or not. They wanted Joan to steal Rosario, the maid, from Megan's character, and they were going to do a *Dynasty* catfight over a billiard table pulling their wigs off. And Miss Collins said, "I'm not having my wig pulled off." My agent called and said: "They're looking for a bitchy, Truman Capote-like character. Put on [your] white linen suit...." I walked in there chattering away like castanets. They didn't even audition me. They said you are it.

**FS:** What was it like doing *Will & Grace*?

**LJ:** I'm a scene-stealer. I'm 4-foot-11 and have a Southern accent. I can steal anything. But it was like verbal pingpong. No matter what I threw out [at Megan], it came back faster and higher. I thought, "I've met my match." The director would say, "Cut," and I'd look at her and say, "You bitch." She'd just shove those titties at me and walk away.

**FS:** Which of your characters is most like you?



A drunk-driving arrest convinced Leslie Jordan to sober up.

**LJ:** Probably...gosh...I made a decision when I first got here, because I was told in 1982, when I arrived, that I would have to get rid of my accent...I remember thinking, "I'm never going to be Robert De Niro or Meryl Streep. And quite frankly I've never been asked to play a role I thought was more interesting than me." So all the characters I play are really Leslie Jordan.

**FS:** Tell me about *My Trip Down the Pink Carpet*.

**LJ:** After I won the Emmy—I had to get that in—a dear friend at Simon & Schuster relentlessly pestered me to write down these dinner party stories that I'm so famous for. What I started to write was, "I had a series with George Clooney before he got famous." Same with Billy Bob Thornton, Mark Harmon, Matt LeBlanc.... During the writing process, I veered into the recovery process.

**FS:** What finally sobered you up?

**LJ:** I got arrested for the third DUI, and I got put in jail. Sentenced to 120 days.... On the 17th day I had a panic attack; I've always been a little claustrophobic...I thought I was going to start screaming and clawing my face.

I said a little prayer, "Just get me out of here and I'll never do alcohol or drugs again and I'll help everyone I can." They let me out of jail because they needed the room for Robert Downey Jr. I had to share a holding cell with him. He was the top, and I was the bottom. Bunk beds.

**FS:** How has being openly gay helped your career?

**LJ:** I don't know that it did in the beginning. [But] now it's such a wonderful time to be openly gay in Hollywood. I'm finding out that a little bit of fame gets you a platform—and a good table at a restaurant.

**FS:** Especially if you're *Out Going*.

LESLIE JORDAN presents *My Trip Down the Pink Carpet* 8 p.m. July 1 at Newmark Theatre, 1111 S.W. Broadway. Tickets are \$37.75-\$48.75 from the box office or Ticketmaster.

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

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