

L.A. Story: Part One

Setting the Standard

"Who are you going to kiss this time?" asked my boyfriend, writer **Marc Acito**, when I told him I was invited on another press junket. He was referring, of course, to my lingering liplock with a notable gay author (not my husband) during a previous junket.

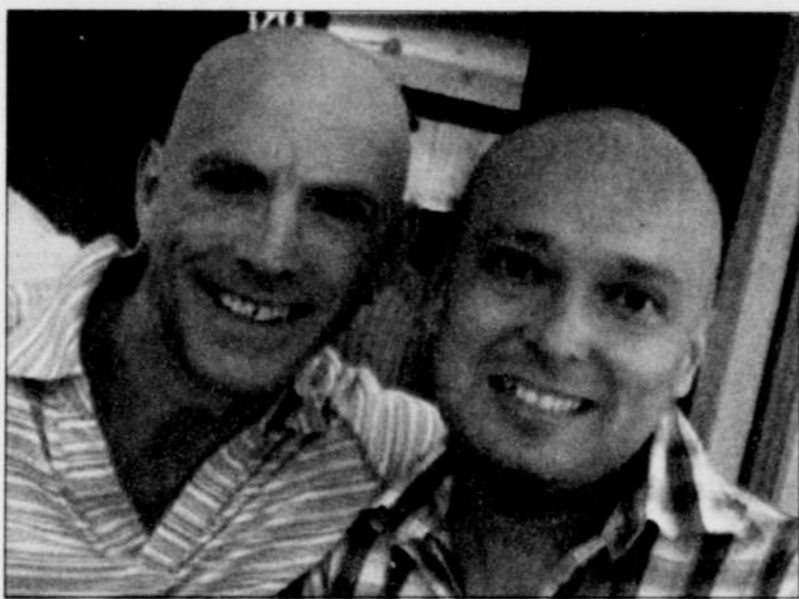
This time, however, General Motors had invited me and nine other journalists to Los Angeles to test-drive the new hydrogen-powered Equinox. As a further enticement (as if an expense-paid excursion weren't enough), we would be attending the opening gala of Outfest, Los Angeles' 25-year-old gay and lesbian film festival.

I know you're all thinking: "Why Floyd? Why choose the guy who thinks a dipstick is an anatomical feature?" I'd like to believe it's because I'm an influential journalist who writes for a prestigious paper and has a rabidly loyal following. In reality, GM's publicist is my friend and former No on 36 fund-raiser **Calvin Fleming**. Oh. And my editor, **Jim Raddosta**, couldn't go.

The purpose of the trip was to review cars, and I'll get to them in the next issue. But first, as a courtesy to you readers headed to West Hollywood, let me tell you about the hotel. Warn is more the word.

The Standard Hollywood on Sunset Boule-

vard has been described as a vintage hotel. Unfortunately, the vintage appears to have been a 1960s Howard Johnson's motor lodge. Walking into the lobby with its shag carpeting on the ceiling, potted cacti and beautiful bikini-clad female lying in a Plexiglas aquarium makes me feel chic. The room, on the other hand, is so hip it makes me feel square.



Floyd and Calvin Fleming poolside at The Standard.

For starters, there are no drawers to store my clothes, which seems to be a trend in hospitality, forcing me to stack everything on the countertop/desk. In the corner where an easy chair would be sits a silver cone-shaped sculpture. I poke it and determine it's a beanbag chair, which I plopped into.

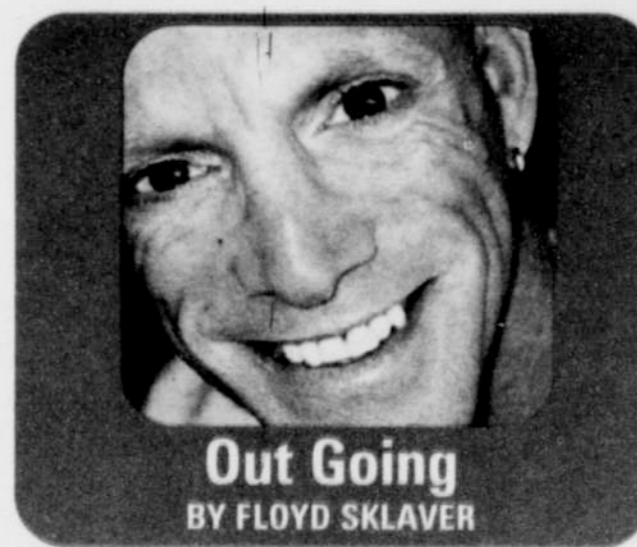
However, it's easier getting into than out of, as I discover when the phone rings. It's the twenty-something front desk clerk responding to my request for a quieter room. "I'm

sorry," he says in a tone that clearly indicates he isn't. "That's the price category GM paid for. So you'll have to look out onto the street."

Everything at The Standard is ultra-cool, including the bathroom tile, which is safety-orange. It's blindingly bright and adds to the HoJo's feel. The tub has been removed and a glass-enclosed shower installed in its place. Here fashion trumps function as I sit down on the toilet and bang my head against the glass.

The Standard lies just outside the boundary of West Hollywood. Management obviously understands its clientele, because the mini-bar is stocked with a tiny box of condoms that reads: "Slip it on. Slide it in." The room key also says, "Slip it in," and the pencils on the countertop/desk read, "*#&! ME!" In other words, I feel like a loser for sleeping alone.

At dinner I meet the other journalists who are from *Genre*, *The Advocate*, *Passport*, *Car & Driver*



Out Going
BY FLOYD SKLAVER

and Logo. Many of these guys are car geeks, and I try not to feel like the ugly stepsister invited to the ball. They all seem so cool, I wonder if they

like their rooms.

After dinner, I hit the sack because we're scheduled for an early start. But I wake up at 2 a.m. shivering from the cold. The lamp on the countertop/laundry pile is so chic I can't figure out how to turn it on, so I stumble in the dark to find the thermostat, which is marked "Blow." The design team must have been gay, because the temperature settings are "Hard" and "Harder." I opt to turn the blower off, only to wake up an hour later sweating. This time I open the door onto the terrace overlooking busy Sunset Boulevard and watch a group of rowdy partiers head home.

L.A. bristles with excitement in a way that sleepy Portland can't match. Rocker **Storm Large** says that Portland is the woman you marry but that Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York are the ladies you take as lovers. I need more of those in my life, with or without liplocks. And for that, I need to be more Out Going. **10**

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