

SETTING THE STANDARD
André Balazs, owner of the Standard, reclines on a Richard Schultz chaise longue by the pool of his new, 140-room West Hollywood hotel.



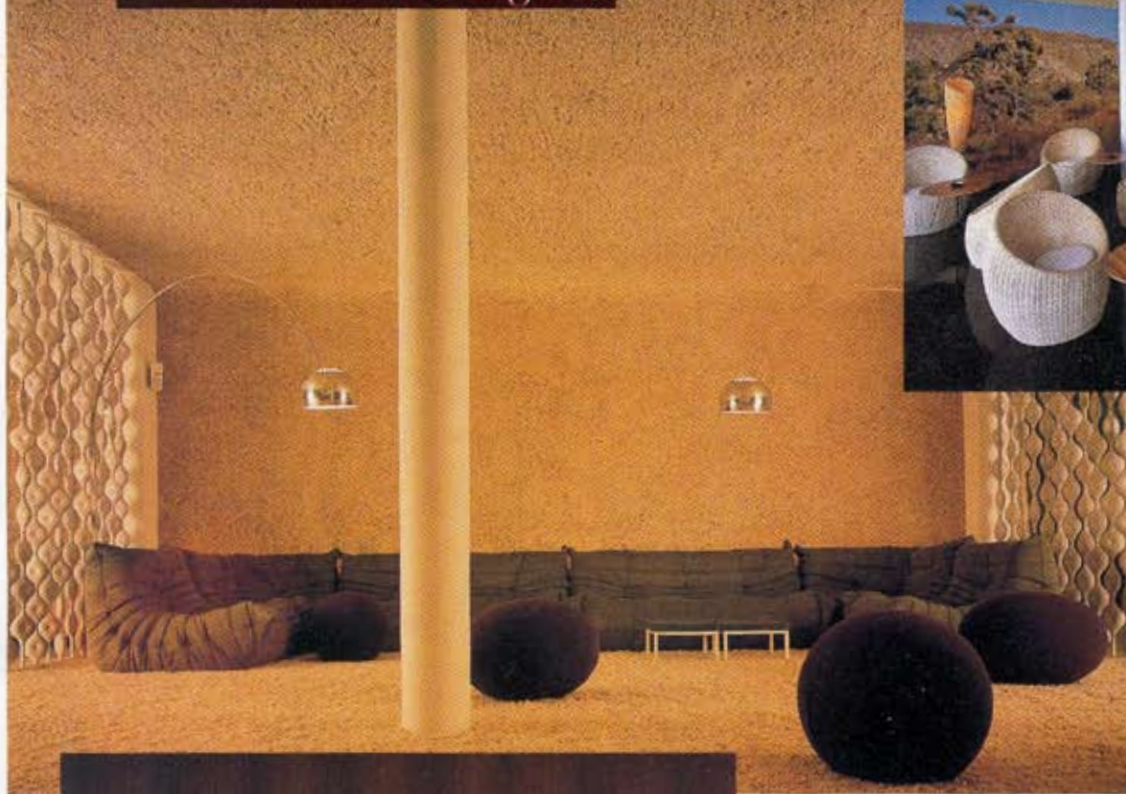
HOTEL CALIFORNIA

The Standard, André Balazs's newest hotel, is designed to lure the young and restless by marrying chic with cheap, and past with future

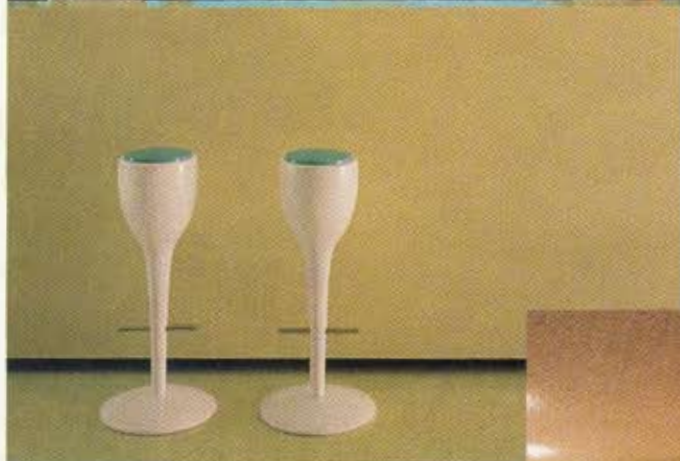
BY MATT TYRNAUER

The sign on Sunset Boulevard reads *GRVGNVLS EHL*, which is the first indication that André Balazs's new, West Hollywood hotel is anything but. "It's meant to be a new twist, an entirely different take, on the idea of an inexpensive hotel—a category that has suffered greatly from lack of innovation," says the 42-year-old Balazs, who is also the proprietor of the legendary Chateau Marmont (200 yards due east of the Standard on the Sunset Strip) and the stylish Mercer hotel in New York City, which is around the corner from the SoHo loft Balazs shares with his wife, Katie Ford, president of Ford Models, Inc. "I've found in looking at hotels over the years that the way we live changes about every decade," Balazs continues, "and this is an attempt to address the already existing sophistication of a younger group of people who are not traveling with

PHOTO STYLED BY MICHAEL REYNOLDS



In the rooms, guests will find inflatable sofas, Eames surfboard tables, and Warhol draperies.



THE MODERN ERA

Clockwise from top: the hotel's "conversation pit" is lined with white shag carpet (floor and ceiling) and features Ligne Roset sectional seating, Arco lamps, and Baleri egg seats; a photomural of Joshua Tree National Monument in the hotel's lounge; the restaurant, which looks out onto the Sunset Strip, is done in a spare, 50s style; behind the clerks at the front desk, a model reclines in the wenge-wood-and-glass vitrine.



the budget of a luxury traveler, but are every bit as sophisticated." In other words, Balazs hopes the Standard will become a cheap-chic mecca for the ever expanding Prada-Gucci tribe, the style-conscious Gen-Xers and baby-boomers who worship at the Carraramarble altar of jet-age modernity, an aesthetic the Standard offers in near-lethal doses.

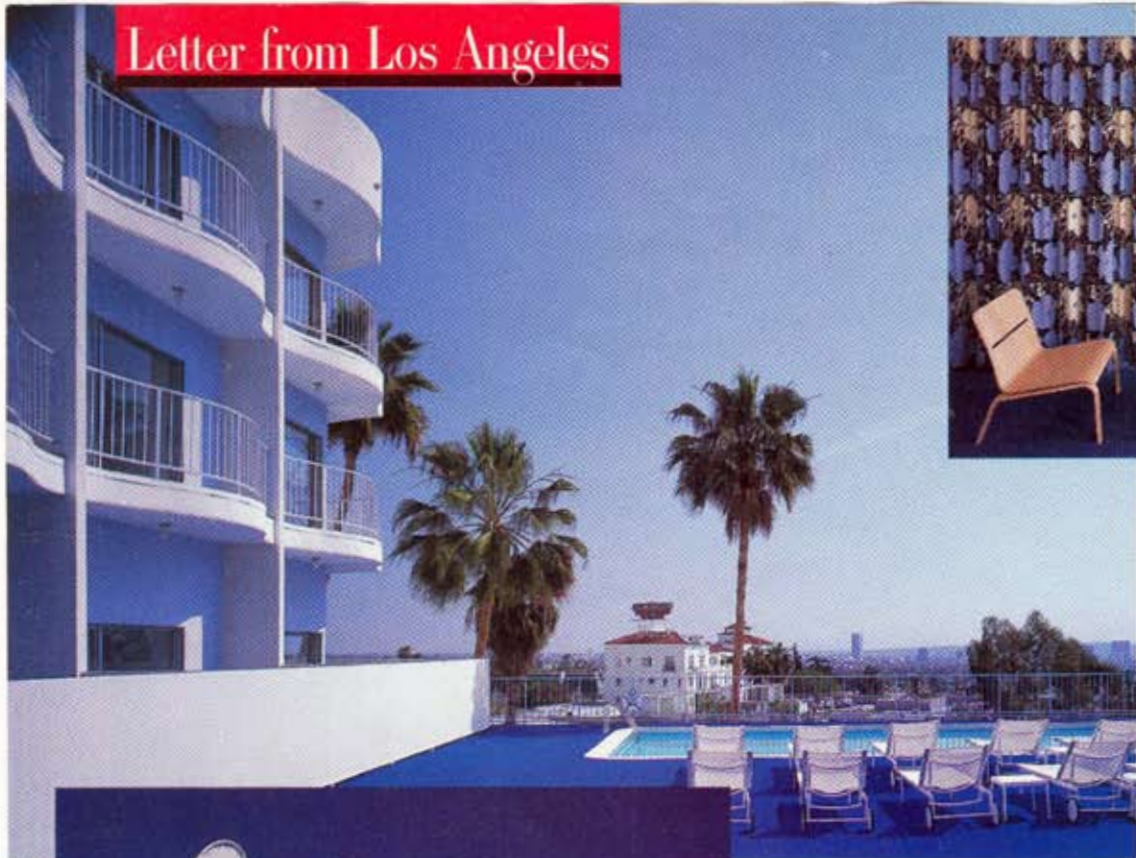
"The intention was to push the boundaries of what hotel design is, and recognize that there are new tastes and new expectations," says Balazs, who worked closely with production designer Shawn Hausman on the plans for the *Barbarella*-meets-Charles Eames-meets-Sheikh Abdullah's 707 look of the 140-room hotel.

"I'd call the look of the place 'timeless modern,'" says Hausman, who also helped refurbish the Chateau Marmont interiors. "You know, taking things from the 50s, 60s, and 70s—Arco lamps, Ligne Roset chairs, and new pieces—then combining them to add up to 2000."

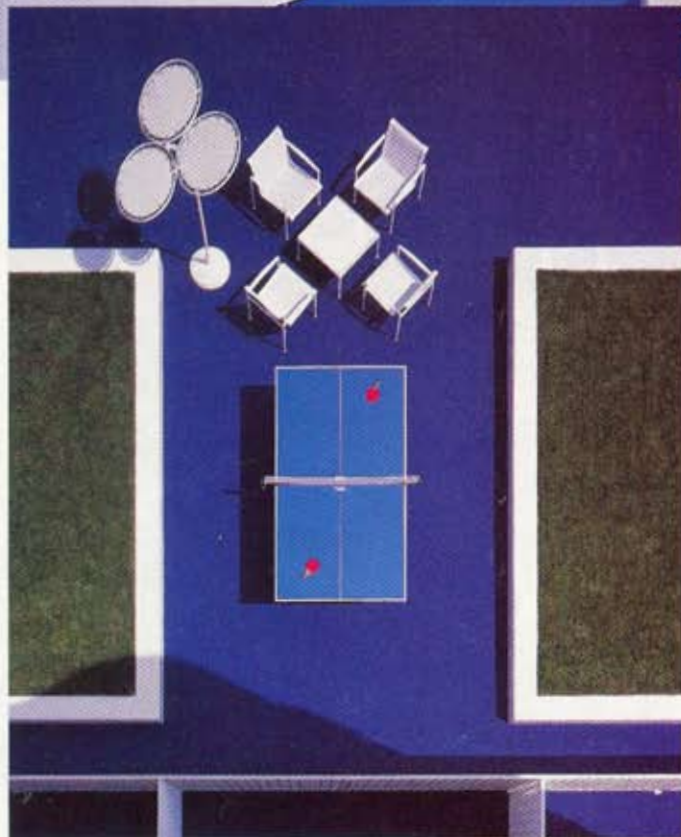
"But the Standard is not meant to be a retro incarnation of a hotel," Balazs is quick to add. "It is meant to be forward-looking."

From the white shag carpet (floor and ceiling) in the lobby's "cocoon/conversation pit" to the large vitrine behind the front desk which houses a slumbering nude woman (she is alive and she is allowed to take breaks, "for obvious reasons," says Balazs), there is no dearth of creativity in the design scheme. Among the more significant examples of millennial hotel innovation: a disc jockey's booth built into the front desk, a performance artist-gardener who "mows" the electric-blue Astro-Turf surrounding the rectangular pool, a screening room in the lobby, and a tattoo parlor and barbershop.

Up in the pared-down rooms (which *CONTINUED ON PAGE 110*)



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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 104 range from \$95 to \$200 a night), guests will find inflatable sofas (maids carry air pumps on their carts), Eames surfboard tables, Andy Warhol flower-print draperies (Balazs licensed the print from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts), Ultrasuede floor pillows, and such crucial mini-bar amenities as cold sake, patchouli and ylang-ylang candles, Vaseline, and Saint-John's-wort soft drinks. For business travelers the rooms are wired with T1 Internet hookups. Even low-tech fixtures have been revised—Balazs refitted the thermostats with only four settings: BLOW, HARD, HARDER, and STOP. "I really wanted the place to have a sort of sexiness," he says, flashing a sheepish grin.

In the brief period since its opening, the West Hollywood Standard has become a hit, and there are plans to open branch operations in New York and Chicago, each with its own distinct style. (Investors in the L.A. venture include Leonardo DiCaprio, Cameron Diaz, Benicio Del Toro, and the Smashing Pumpkins' D'arcy Wretzky and James Iha.)

The greater scheme, Balazs says, is to "redefine what people have come to expect in a hotel . . . up the aesthetic stakes so that we can deliver something that's really high-quality, that does what it's intended to do but that isn't sullen—something that will eventually be so, well, so standard people know what to expect from it." □

BLUE HEAVEN
Clockwise from top: the Standard's undulating rear façade, which overlooks the swimming pool and the flatlands of West Hollywood; Warhol draperies decorate a room; Eero Aarnio bubble chairs hang in the foyer; the beds are inspired by a Gio Ponti design; at the pool, blue AstroTurf is offset by planters of green grass and a Ping-Pong table.

