

# Sam Bobrick's comedy thriller takes place all in the mind

By JACK MATCHA  
Staff Correspondent

Most playwrights would give their blood to open a new play on Broadway and add an arm and a leg to stay there, one reason being that in a solidly packed house he can walk off with as much as \$15,000 a week, maybe more. So why does Sam Bobrick pick the small, cozy Back Alley Theatre here to open his newest work, "Are You Sure?"

One reason is that New York critics, who like to type people, insist he is a TV writer and have savaged the four plays he wrote with Ron Clark. Not that he is bitter against them.

But Sam feels lucky with the Back Alley. The last show there, "24 Hours," which included two short plays of his, was a great success and has just been picked by Dramatist's Play Service for the highest advance ever given to a work that did not open first in New York.

Secondly, he is moved by the deep loyalty of Laura Zucker and Alan Miller, the directors of the Back Alley, to the playwrights who work there.

Thirdly it will cost much, much less to open here than on Broadway where a one set play can cost \$600,000.

Fourthly, he has been blessed by actors of stature who are willing to give life to his play for nothing down — actors like Lois Nettleton, Ronny Cox and Jeff Haddow.

The new play, which Alan Miller, an excellent playwright himself ("The Fox") will direct, is a comedy thriller about a crime that takes place in someone's mind.

The play is a new direction for Bobrick, who not only thinks funny, but is always cracking jokes. "Are You Sure?" combines both comedy and drama and understandably Sam is a bit nervous. But not too nervous. Supported with a strong cast and director, a loyal producer and a theater where his plays have fared well, he feels optimistic. Nevertheless Sam is not changing his ways one whit.

"One of the secrets of playwriting is to keep going no matter what," he says. "So I always make sure to have one in the typewriter while the last is being mounted."

Of course in the lively Bobrick house in Encino this isn't always easy. There are three younger Bobricks, Laurie, 18, Stephanie, 16 and Joe, 11, all of whom love music

good and loud. Sam's wife, who is also his best critic, tries to keep them calm but occasionally Sam has to flee to an obscure office nearby. Only occasionally, because the sounds of life also help to stimulate Sam's juices. And maybe, as he awaits the reaction to his latest solo flight in the theater, they remind him that he has another life too.

Sam's plan is to keep writing plays at least until he reaches the age of his idol, George Abbott, the legendary Broadway writer-director who directed "Norman Is That You?" At the age of 96, Abbott is in Seattle whipping "On Your Toes" into shape before taking it back to New York. Like Abbott, Sam is always full of projects and at least two plays are bubbling in his head right now.



**SAM BOBRICH**  
Author of "Are You Sure?"