

Los Angeles Times

ED KRIEGER



Talking it up in "Cisterns," from left, Jennifer Salt, Michael Cavanaugh and Jenny O'Hara.

STAGEREVIEW

CONVERSATION IS ALL IN 'CISTERNS'

By LAWRENCE CHRISTON

Cisterns," a play by Julie Jensen at the Back Alley Theatre, is mercifully brief. So will this notice be. The setting is an old house in Utah. Two sisters, Samantha and Winifred, come together on the occasion of their mother's birthday. Mother here is represented by a tailor's dummy that occasionally gets spun and batted around and at one point is festooned with a Frederick's of Hollywood get-up (the girls think it's a scream). In the meantime, they talk. And talk. And talk—until a glaze comes over your face. What do they discuss? Nothing directly. The relativity of aging. The tensions of sibling rivalry—which are safely tucked away by now. Relationships. Sam has broken up with Legrand, an actor who, at 46, hasn't been able to graduate from the dinner theater circuit and is about to marry a 23-year-old. But lo and behold! Legrand rediscovers Sam and all's well that ends in the sack.

The girls are bright and clever enough, and well-played by Jenny O'Hara and Jennifer Salt. Michael Cavanaugh gives us a fairly wooden, stentorian Legrand—and what does his diamond earring signify?

If "Cisterns," as billed, is about three people dealing with sexual disaster, they all seem to have escaped safely enough to reconvene in the spirit of a slumber party. Laura Zucker directs. Performances Thursdays through Sundays, 8 p.m., at 15231 Burbank Blvd., Van Nuys, 780-2240. Ends July 17.