

## Pick Of The Week



Ed Krieger

Above: Ronny Cox and Ellen Maxted in *Are You Sure?* Above r: Linke Vs. Redfield. Below r: A scene from *Eddie Cottrel at the Piano*.

Wouldn't you know it — weeks can go by without one single pick and then all of a sudden, it's pouring. Which means that this week there's not one but five highly entertaining and commendable plays worth your attention. Ann Haskins finds *Are You Sure?*, at the Back Alley Theater, "a clever and literate theatrical Rubic's cube";

## Theater

### NEW REVIEWS

**ARE YOU SURE?** "Whose Mind Is It Anyway?" could be the subtitle of this clever and literate theatrical Rubic's cube. With a nod to Pirandello, six characters move through a series of scenes in this comedy/mystery. It's a theme and variations, the basic motif involving Caroline (Lois Nettleton), a wealthy woman, and her third husband David (Ronny Cox). Either she is insane or he is trying to kill her, or maybe both. The variations involve the tone, the circumstances, and the victim as characters shift about. There is Charlie (Jeffrey Haddow), Caroline's perhaps deceased second husband who mid-scene becomes a police detective investigating the murder of Caroline's daughter (Ellen Maxted), who just the moment before was the attractive young maid Marie. But there's also an older Marie (Catherine McLeod) who is also sometimes Caroline's mother, while Caroline's father (Jack Collins) is sometimes her first husband Simon. Sam Bobrick has written something that initially feels like a stream of consciousness, but at second glance

is constructed like a devious jigsaw puzzle whose pieces fit together in various ways but never quite make a whole picture. It's an opportunity for tour de force performances, and under Alan Miller's sure, subtle direction, the ensemble delivers. Everyone gets the spotlight as Jekyll, Hyde and the victim in distress sooner or later. The only noticeable false note is struck by Hilary Sloane's distracting and inappropriate costumes. On the other hand, Jim Billing's leather and wood beam library set and Steve Zinn's muted lighting understand and serve the play. This is a lot like those dreams that often end without being resolved, either because you wake up or because the next dream begins. Back Alley Theater, 15321 Burbank Blvd., Van Nuys; Thurs.-Sun., 8 p.m.; thru March 27. Call 780-2240 or 841-9750.

— Anne Haskins