

Los Angeles Times

STAGEREVIEW

THE DARK'S NOT LIGHT ENOUGH IN 'DAYS'

By DAN SULLIVAN,  
Times Theater Critic

East Berlin, 1950. Elsa (Anna Katarina) returns from Munich to search for her foster father. She is arrested as an American spy. A prison interrogator (Allan Miller) sets out to find what she knows.

That's the premise for "Days and Nights Within" at the Back Alley Theatre, and drama would seem to be built into it. Playwright Ellen McLaughlin certainly seems to think so. Her aim is to celebrate Elsa as both the victim and the

victor of a dehumanizing process, which we are perfectly willing to do, especially in Katarina's sympathetic portrayal.

But do we really see the process in action? The interrogator's announced strategy is to bring his client to a point where she confesses out of a sense that "we are all prisoners," and Miller and Katarina do their best as actors to make this their journey through the play.

But the text of the play doesn't really substantiate the journey. "Days and Nights Within" needs more sustained scenes where something actually happens between interrogator and suspect, and fewer of Elsa's poetic meditations and (especially) surreal nightmares.

The ending is meant as an ironic victory for Elsa. If she has been driven to a point where she will confess anything, her revelations have no objective value to the interrogator. But as Miller plays him—and it's hard to imagine playing him any other way—he is the victor, having broken down his prey.

A program note from director Michael Pressman sees Elsa as having conquered the situation through love, but as far as we can see Elsa ends up insane. This is not the same state as being blessed—although Katarina, yielding to the text, plays it that way.

It's a play that could use some hard thinking. Pressman's production is well-crafted. Prison sets are often dull, but designer Rich Rose came up with the idea of putting Elsa's cell and the interrogator's office on two "islands," with a fissure between them—an emblem of division that's not taken too far.

than an hour, but it's easy to feel, with Elsa, that years are going by in the outside world.

**'DAYS AND NIGHTS WITHIN'**  
Ellen McLaughlin's play, at the Back Alley Theatre. Director Michael Pressman. Producer Laura Zucker. Set Rich Rose. Lighting Leslie Rose. Costume Sylvia Moss. Sound Jerry Sider. With Allan Miller and Anna Katarina. Plays Wednesdays-Sundays at 8 p.m. with Sunday matinees at 3 p.m. Tickets \$13-\$15. 15231 Burbank Blvd., Van Nuys. 818/780-2240.

TIMBUK 3

Continued from Page 6

change it? [The jam box] keeps the intimacy of just Barbara and me

"In a sense it was just kind of a fun challenge, feeling like you're pioneering an ultra low-budget way of doing it. The world keeps changing and new mutations keep popping up, and I just thought we were another interesting mutation that came out of the '80s."

□

**LIVE ACTION:** Tickets go on sale Monday for David Lee Roth's Dec. 20 concert at the Forum. . . . Tickets will be available Sunday for John Fogerty's Universal Amphitheatre appearance Dec. 11, and for two Hollywood Palladium shows—Gene Loves Jezebel Dec. 5 and Berlin Dec. 13. . . . Cameo will be at the Santa Monica Civic Nov. 28. . . . The original Dead Boys will reunite for a show at Fender's next Saturday.

**Philippe Noiret**  
**Claudia Cardinale**  
**Fanny Ardant**  
**Jean-Louis Trintignant**

**MON. - FRI. 6:45-8:50**  
**SAT. & SUN. 2:35-4:40-6:45-8:50**

**A DELIGHTFUL ROMANTIC FRENCH COMEDY-DRAMA**

**LaMonica's MONICA**

**SANTA MONICA**  
1332 2nd St.  
394-9741

**NEXT SUMMER**

**"THE HOTTEST TICKET IN TOWN."**  
—JOEL SIEGEL, ABC EYEWITNESS NEWS

**SHE'S GOTTA HAVE IT**

ISLAND PICTURES PRESENTS  
A SPIKE LEE JOINT

**ISLAND PICTURES**

**NOW PLAYING**

<b>BEVERLY HILLS</b> Beverly Center Cineplex 652-7760 Daily: 12:00 • 2:00 • 4:00 • 6:00 • 8:00 • 10:00 Fri & Sat Late Show: 12:00	<b>BALDWIN HILLS</b> Baldwin Complex 290-1991 Mon-Fri: 3:30 • 5:30 • 7:30 • 9:30 Sat & Sun: 1:30 • 3:30 • 5:30 • 7:30 • 9:30
--	---

HUNTINGTON PARK CALIFORNIA 585-1174 LOS ANGELES DOWNTOWN TOWER 624-6272

**WINNER OF 8 OZCARS** (AUSTRALIAN FILM INSTITUTE AWARDS)

BEST PICTURE • BEST DIRECTOR • BEST LEADING ACTOR • BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR • BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS • BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY • BEST SOUND • BEST EDITING

**"A DAZZLINGLY INVENTIVE, TENDER, ..."**

★ 26TH SMASH WEEK! ★