

'In the Sweet Bye and Bye' takes a comical look at real life

By **CHRISTI ABE**
ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

The setting is an old-fashioned country kitchen with homemade window curtains, flowered wallpaper and a raised four-legged stove. It's a kitchen that could be found anywhere in "smalltown" U.S.A.

"In the Sweet Bye and Bye," a play written and directed by Donald Driver, is a comedy that deals with real life situations that are just as common as the kitchen where the play takes place. However, the way in which Driver treats these situations results in a surprisingly entertaining play.

Starring at the Back Alley Theatre in Van Nuys are John Anderson, as Hagen, and Rue McClanahan (also known as Vivian on the TV sitcom "Maude") as Jessie. The play centers around a small town family as it attempts to cope with gossip, sibling rivalry, funerals and love.

Jessie is an eccentric, middle-aged, insecure woman who is constantly contemplating her self-worth. Throughout the first half of the play she often talks to her best friend via an old-fashioned switchboard and headset. Ordinarily, one

would not consider this peculiar, however, her best friend is dead and the switchboard is no longer operating.

Hagen has been having an affair with Jessie's younger sister Neva, played by K Callan. Neva is an attractive, sophisticated widow (she's been married three times) who seems to have no problem loving her sister dearly and loving her sister's husband sexually.

Jessie overreacts at funerals by jumping on coffins and is barred from future funerals. Neva tends to be more sensible, but she is obsessed with her Wednesday night rendezvous with Hagen. And Hagen has given up work because he believes that "Man's greatest contributions have already been made: the wheel and the sneaker."

The members of the cast, under the direction of Driver, work well together, and the collaboration of their talents makes this a production worth seeing.

"In the Sweet Bye and Bye," will run through August 18 at the Back Alley Theatre located at 15231 Burbank Blvd. in Van Nuys. For ticket information and reservations call (818) 780-2240.



John Anderson, Rue McClanahan and K. Callan star at the Back Alley Theatre in Donald Driver's comedy "In the Sweet Bye and Bye."

The Back Alley Theatre, 15231 Burbank Blvd., Van Nuys.

"In the Sweet Bye and Bye," is a new play written by Donald Driver about a small-town family dealing with gossip, sibling rivalry and funerals. The play stars John Anderson and Rue McClanahan. For more information, call (818)780-2240.