

# L.A. WEEKLY

## Pick of the Week



Found a Peanut at the Back Alley Theater.

L.A. WEEKLY July 11-17, 1986

## New Reviews

### Theater

**FOUND A PEANUT** When I first read the description of this play I figured the smog had finally gotten to the folks at the Back Alley. Adult actors portraying children in order to re-create a child's world. Yeah, sure. I was more than surprised, then, to find this production of Donald Margulies' play to be a startlingly convincing journey back to childhood, reviving memories and feelings long stored away in the mind's attic. The "story" is simply a series of incidents that occur behind a Brooklyn apartment building on a summer day in 1962, connected by the burial of a dead bird. What makes this show so effective is the combination of Margulies' straightforward script and Michael Arabian's uncanny direction, neither of which lowers the world to a child's point of view, instead *returning* it to that perspective. Arabian in particular succeeds in making his talented actors seem like children and not like grown-ups jerkily trying to parody children's movements and speech patterns. There are occasional stagy movements and overly precocious lines, but never enough to remotely challenge the complete illusion of children playing out moments of greed, wonder and cruelty as they dimly catch sight of the adult world that jealously awaits them. This may all be dismissed as just a grandiose theater exercise with little meaning or merit, but if so, it's an exercise that is more intriguing than many plays I've seen recently. Special mention must be made of Rich Rose's set, the kind of brick, asphalt and cyclone-fenced milieu that hardly registers in our consciousness today, but which once provided us with a universe of possibilities. Back Alley Theater, 15231 Burbank Blvd., Van Nuys. Wed.-Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 3 & 8 p.m.; thru Aug. 10. Call (818) 780-2240. (Steven Mikulan)