

Tues., July 8, 1986

LEGIT REVIEW**Found A Peanut****(Back Alley Theater;
93 seats; \$15 top)**

The west coast premiere of Donald Marguiles' "Found A Peanut" has an interesting concept — adult actors play children ages 5-14 — but the production is uneven.

Set in Brooklyn in the early '60s, Marguiles uses a harsh, urban street scene, superbly designed by Rich Rose, to create a "playing field" for the volatile game of children.

Director Michael Arabian feels that "the play examines man's primal instincts and, an adults watching adults play children, the audience realizes that our basic values, needs and desires change very little." Arabian's ideal is weakened as actors often use obvious choices resulting in stereotyped villains and heroes, i.e. bullies and protectors.

William DeAcutis (Jeff) is a refreshing exception to some of the stereotyped acting. He offers a sensitive Portrayal of "the class brain," revealing his character's deep need for friendship. Although DeAcutis captures the child quality, he doesn't depend on this to carry him through the scenes.

As Mike, David O. Cameron is not entirely believable in his earlier scenes, but develops into a many-faceted character as the play reaches its climax. He shines in his confrontation scenes with DeAcutis and in his moments after being terrorized.

Jeffrey Rogers (Scott) is best when playing "Judas." His final moments with Ben Mittleman and Kenny D'Aquila, as the bullies, and Cameron raise the performance level of all. Mittleman, as the anti-semitic terrorizer, gives one of the strongest performances in the production.

As little girls who get in the way, Winifred Freedman is a sympathetic Joannie and Lycia Naff an irascible Melody. Naff, however, needs to pick up her cues and learn not to play at being cute. Leslie Jordan's Little Earl is charming at times, but he often overplays the wide-eyed innocent five-year-old.

Technically, production is flawless. Leslie Rose's lighting enhances the fine set and Barbara Cox' costumes and Andrew McCarl's street sounds are effective. *Pros.*