

CASTING CALL CRITICS CORNER

By John Everest

Tom Hulce is one of our finest actors. He takes stage in "NOTHING SACRED" and turns a comedy of ideas and language into an evening of theatrical exhilaration. The wit and emotions of George F. Walker's play at times falters, but Hulce keeps jabbing the audience with dosages of excitement. The show takes place in 1860's Russia, but Hulce's character would not be out of place in 1960's U.S.A. Franklin Seales is impressive as all Hulce is against: aristocracy, tradition, and foolish romantics. Margaret Gibson is fiery as a female revolutionist, and all the performers are fine. The direction by Micheal-Lindsay Hogg is imaginative, but the sets are not, and the lighting was wildly erratic on Press night. This play of thought, this examination of revolution in its infancy should be seen by every thoughtful theatre goer and would-be political scientist. Also by everyone who wants to see a Tony-award calibre performance by Hulce. (Mark Taper Forum, through 10-23, 213-410-1062)

"A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE" was a mediocre movie, and I'm afraid it is an even worse musical. Imagine "Li'l Abner" meeting "Porgy And Bess" in "The Best Little Whorehouse" as seen by Tennessee Williams. It's a mess. The script and score, by Will Holt, fails miserably to capture the spirit and poetry of Nelson Algren's novel of the Depression and a New Orleans brothel. Jeb Brown plays the lead as an unpleasant stupe who does not deserve our attention, let alone our concern. The characters have no character, and the plot has been reduced to cheap melodrama. Oh, Louise Heath, Adrienne Barbeau, and Hamilton Camp try valiantly to bring life to the stereotypes they play, but are defeated by the script. Miss Heath does manage to bring the house down with her "Cawfee Man" number, and the second act opens with a delightful song and dance tribute to 1930s movie musicals (I'm still trying to figure out what connection it has with the show), but the over-all effect is a crawl on the vulgar side. (Back Alley Theatre, 15231 Burbank Blvd., Van Nuys, 818-780-2240, thru 11-14)