

Amazing Grace. Grace is an Alabama psychic now living in Malibu with her retarded grandson. She and her powers are courted by an actress who wants to make a movie of Grace's life and by an LAPD lieutenant who needs help solving a series of child murders. Grace wonderfully helps them resolve their personal problems. Sandra Deer's play is sweet and life-affirming, though occasionally sentimental. Allan Miller directs with power and simplicity. Patricia Huston is especially fine in the title role. (Reviewed by Rondo Mieczkowski.) Back Alley Theatre, 15231 Burbank Bl., Van Nuys, (818) 780-2240. Thurs at 8, Fri-Sats at 7, Sun mats at 2. Closes August 14.

WEEKLY June 30 to 1988

AMAZING GRACE Grace, a Malibu channeler and a psychic, has helped the LAPD solve murders before, and now a serial child-killer is running loose, so a beleaguered though-skeptical detective wants her help. Meanwhile, an ambitious actor friend wants to star in a projected movie about her life. Neither the detective nor the friend believe in Grace's powers. Slowly, the unconverted become converted. Neither a New Age tract nor a mere murder mystery, Sandra Deer's drama dovetails the visible and the invisible to suggest that unseen forces may nudge us to make positive life decisions. The show is too mild-mannered and conventionally laid out to raise substantial excitement. Nevertheless, this optimistic, well-structured drama is apparently convincing enough to cause some damp eyes in the audience. Under Allan Miller's direction, Patricia Huston performs very well in the title role and the other performers (Daryl Roach, Carmen Duncan, Jim Hiestand and Christine Borna) are certainly competent. Back Alley Theater, 15231 Burbank Blvd., Van Nuys; Thurs., 8 p.m.; Fri-Sat., 7 p.m.; Sun., 2 & 7 p.m.; "Talkback" discussion series with psychics and parapsychologists after Thurs. perf. thru August 14. (818) 780-2240. (Mary Jo Fox)