



PHOTO: Ed Krieger

Jeb Brown and Talya Ferro in the Back Alley Theatre production of *A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE*.

One show that probably won't see Broadway but still manages to offer a provocative and entertaining evening is "A Walk On the Wild Side" at Van Nuys' Back Alley Theatre. Will Holt has both composed the songs and written this adaptation of Nelson Algren's gritty novel about a teenager's rite of passage into the world of sex and corruption.

Holt has obviously spent a good deal of time and effort to create his own variation of Kurt Weill's "Threepenny Opera." There is an admirable lack of time-worn Broadway glitz in Holt's work. On the other hand, Holt's unwillingness to compromise Algren's vision may very well cost him a commercially viable show. Good as the score is, "A Walk On the Wild Side" seems to lack focus.

Though the title character of Dove Linkhorn (a talented Jeb Brown) is constantly before us, he is often overshadowed by minor characters and seems to react more than he usually acts. No doubt, a skilled librettist might have aided Holt in his dramatic and musical choices. But Holt functions as his own dramatist, so the chips must fall as they may.

Still, co-directors Pat Birch and Alan Miller have mounted an impressive and lively production, with Birch adding evocative dance and movement. The impressive supporting cast includes excellent work from Adrienne Barbeau, Hamilton Camp, Alex Daniels, James Dybas, Talya Ferro, Mary Pat Gleason and Richard Ryder, among others. This is a musical for people who like their shows without the traditional whipped cream exterior.