

# CRITICS' CHOICE

## THEATER

**Make a 'Deal':** The theater can be a powerful public forum, as Matthew Witten demonstrates in his play "The Deal" at the Back Alley Theatre. Witten depicts the behind-the-scenes drama of an Abscam-like FBI investigation, and he raises this provocative question: When undercover agents snare public officials by offering them bribes, are they stopping corruption or creating it?

The story is all the more compelling due to Allan Miller's crisp staging and the four actors' convincing performances.

The run continues through Oct. 29 at the theater, 15231 Burbank Blvd., Van Nuys. Performances are at 8 p.m. Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, and 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Sundays. Tickets cost \$15.50 to \$19.50. For more information or to make reservations, call (818) 780-2240.

— DARYL H. MILLER



John M. Jackson, left, and Michael Cavanaugh in "The Deal."

**Also up your Alley:** FBI agent Lawrence Lawler will talk with the audience after the Back Alley Theatre's Thursday performance of "The Deal."

Lawler is special agent in charge of the FBI's Los Angeles division. During his tenure at the agency, Lawler was in charge of the Patty Hearst case, the investigation of the attempted assassination of President Gerald Ford and the Jonestown, Guyana massacre.

Lawler is appearing as part of the theater's TalkBack program, which is designed to help audiences delve into real-life aspects of topics dealt with in plays. Lawler's appearance coincides with the Back Alley's production of Matthew Witten's play about a problematic FBI bribery sting.

For more information, call the theater at (818) 780-2240.