

'Gloria Duplex'

Saturday Night Gets It On With Sunday Worship

By NORMA ISAAC

Joyousness is the key word to introduce "Gloria Duplex."

Set in the Kitten Paradise Temple and lounge—a bar and preaching room where "Saturday Night and Sunday morning are all rolled into one," you are greeted as you enter by the Reverend Mother Willie Mae Felix, guest pastor and spiritual advisor; Lu Gremillion, proprietor of the Kitten Paradise; and Bud Joseph, former rodeo rider who makes sacred art out of trash.

Framed by foot-tapping, hand-clapping music ranging from country gospel, Cajun fiddle playing and New Orleans jazz, the action of *Rebecca Wells'* play is centered upon Gloria Duplex herself, a sad little piece of "white trash" convincingly and passionately played by *Brenda Thompson*. She has made her living waitressing and lately, finding her place in the scheme of things, by becoming an exotic dancer in the Kitten Paradise. Aply assisted by *Gregg Henry*, playing Bud Joseph, who knows a good bit about creating beauty from the dross of the streets, she transforms herself by grace and courage to a woman aware of her worth and humanness.

The play sparkles with raunchy, rowdy energy, revival tent sing-a-longs, and glorious gospel music on the part of the

Rev. Mother (powerfully belted out by *Jean Hubbard Boone*). *Rhoda Gemignani* plays Lu Gremillion with verve and panache.

The first act did drag a bit toward the end, but the show quickly regained its pace, and never faltered again. Tight direction by *Teri Raiston*.

The band spells pure joy: *Eddie Field* on Bass Fiddle; *John Harvey*, Percussion; *Larry Wilkins*, Guitar; *Bill Shepard*, Cajun Accordion. *Larry Wilkins* is Musical Director, and *Shelley Markum* is Vocal Director.

Go. Be happy. Enjoy!

Through August 13. Wed., Thurs., Fri., Sat. at 8 p.m. Sundays at 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Back Alley Theatre, 15231 Burbank Blvd., Van Nuys. (818) 780-2240.



GREGG HENRY (Bud) shimmyes with Brenda Thomson (as Gloria) in a casual moment from "Gloria Duplex," continuing at the Back Alley Theater through August 13. Ticket information: (818) 780-2240.