



# Backstage Bites

## VAN NUYS

One of our most progressive and community-oriented companies, The Back Alley Theatre, was founded by Laura Zucker and her husband Allan Miller in 1979 and is still going strong. Always well attended, the theater offers discounts for seniors and students, sponsors post-performance Talk-Back discussions on Thursdays and has received impressive critical acclaim for many of its productions.

Currently showing is the West Coast premiere of Will Holt's musical adaptation of Nelson Algren's *A Walk on the Wild Side*, directed by Pat Birch. This is the story of Dove Lincoln, an innocent, illiterate country boy, and his experiences in the bordellos of New Orleans. Tickets are priced at \$13.50 for Thursday and Sunday, \$15.50 for Friday and \$17.50 for Saturday. The Back Alley is located at 15231 Burbank Blvd., just off the San Diego Freeway. For information, telephone (818) 780-2240.

Zio's, the popular local Italian deli-

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*After the show at  
The Back Alley Theatre, pop  
round to L'Express for a  
top-nosh designer pizza.*

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bistro, always looks crowded because of its whimsical decor of oversized papier mâché figures hanging out near the tables and deli case. But "Uncle" Sal in the kitchen isn't kidding when it comes to the food and flavors. There's eggplant parmigiana with layers of mortadella (\$6.75), chicken Florentine (spinach and garlic) or involtine (stuffed with



prosciutto and cheese), both of which are priced at \$8.50, and a zingy lemon chicken coated with herbs (\$8.75).

Among the salads are jewels like calamari with red and green bell peppers, red-jacketed potato in dill mustard dressing, and an exquisite zucchini vinaigrette. You get your choice of four different salads for \$6.75 per person or \$12.50 for two willing to share. And to end it all, try some Italian ice cream, or a slice of mamma's ricotta cheesecake or Zio's espresso-chocolate cake (\$3 each)—they're just what the doctor ordered.

The important attributes of **L'Express** are that the menu is exceedingly diverse and the hours are flexible enough for either pre- or post-theater dining. If you stop in beforehand, they do a perfect steak tartare with fries (\$8), trendy salads, soups, pasta and burgers. Serious diners looking for, say, boneless duck with citrus sauce (\$13.50) and an exceptionally delicate fresh trout (\$10), won't be disappointed. But if you're a connoisseur of Cajun, avoid their version of blackened red snapper.

Après-theater, there's designer pizza



(from \$7.50); try the one topped with duck sausage, sun-dried tomatoes, garlic, basil and feta cheese. There are also crepes, egg dishes and glorious desserts (\$5 to \$6.50) from waffles with homemade ice cream to souffles. L'Express is chic and sharp, with a hip young clientele who blend right into the avant-garde, high-tech decor. Service is excellent and the restaurant is just a few minutes' drive to the Back Alley Theatre, Universal Studios or the Hollywood Bowl.

**Zio's**, 5242 Van Nuys Blvd., Sherman Oaks, (818) 784-8051. Lunch Tuesday through Saturday, dinner from 6 PM Wednesday through Sunday, closed Monday. Reservations imperative. Beer and wine. MasterCard and Visa. Parking on the street.

**L'Express**, 3575 Cahuenga Blvd., (213) 876-3778. Breakfast, lunch and dinner daily until 1 AM, Fridays and Saturdays until 1:30 AM, Saturday and Sunday brunch. Cocktails, beer and wine. American Express, MasterCard and Visa. Valet parking in rear, \$1.50.

## NEWPORT BEACH

Capitalizing on the current fascination with the fifties, the Newport Harbor Art Museum, 850 San Clemente Dr., is showing *The Figurative Fifties: New York Figurative Expressionism*, an exhibit exploring the figurative work of an art scene that is generally best known for abstraction. Willem de Kooning, Robert Goodnough and Grace Hartigan are among the artists included in the show. The exhibition continues through the 18th. Regular admission is \$3; seniors and students, \$2; children 6 to 17, \$1. Admission is free at all times to museum members and is free to the general public on the first Tuesday of every month. The museum is open Tuesday through Friday, 10 AM to 5 PM; Saturday 10 AM to 6 PM; Sunday 12 noon to 5 PM; closed Monday.

As a supplement to the exhibition, the Newport Harbor Art Museum is screening a series of landmark films of the fifties, including *On the Town*, *Rear Window*, *Marty*, *The Blackboard Jungle*, *Flesh and the Devil* and *The Apartment*; there are also screenings of documentaries on Willem de Kooning and Larry Rivers. For more information, call (714) 759-1122. Note: There is a restaurant on the Newport Harbor Art Museum's premises, serving lunch only, Monday through Friday.

In the same Newport Fashion Island complex where you'll find the museum, **Savannah Grill**, strategically located between Nordstrom's and Robinson's, is celebrating its first birthday. Don't let the name lead you to expect some sort of subtropical decor. The look here is all chic and shiny, with richly polished woods, brass, stately plants and a marble tile floor. There are various sections and levels, seating in comfortable booths and terrific service.

Behind the exhibition kitchen is a wood-burning grill that turns out really tasty meats and fish. Two definitive pork chops (\$9.75)—truly tender and marinated in ancho chili powder, garlic and olive oil—are charred to perfection; they're so good, you'll want to gnaw on the bones. They come with black beans topped with melted Sonoma pepper-jack cheese and a slim Anaheim chili stuffed with a mixture of Jarlsberg, Sonoma jack and blue cheeses.

Another excellent choice is their chicken half (\$9.50), smoked on the premises and served with a grilled leek stalk and a wild rice mixture dotted with scallions, sesame seeds and pine nuts. There are also regular pasta dishes, ribs, N.Y. steaks, veal chops, gulf prawns and a slew of nightly specials. To conclude, try the silky chocolate ganache torte with pecan crust and caramel sauce (\$4.50); it's the absolute end.

**Bouzy Rouge** is a typical Parisian brasserie in appearance, but it's all-American in spirit. The place is so much fun you'll want to return for each and every one of their wine and food "events," which owner Tony Hermann plans meticulously several times each month. Be sure to pick up one of the flyers announcing coming attractions, so you can book your table in advance.

Aperitifs and unusual wines from France, Australia, Oregon and California are poured by the glass or the bottle, and the bistro fare is unbeatable. Pasta, pizza, crepes, fondues and salads are ever-present. But the latest rage are the tapas—small portions of widely varied hors d'oeuvres, a dining custom that originated in Spain. Here, the tapas are thoroughly internationalized. The best way to try almost everything is to order the Tapas Sampler (\$12.95), a platter designed for sharing. On my visit, it had smoked salmon tartare, raclette cheese

stuffed into a chili pod, a lamb sausage seasoned with Indian spices, celery root vinaigrette, a mixture of escargots and mushrooms, a Portuguese escabeche of mahi mahi, marinated roasted vegetables, a mound of risotto, lentil salad and assorted marinated olives.

If you're still hungry, order a mini Greek-style lamb souvlaki en brochette (\$7.95), shrimp sauteed in herb-and-garlic butter (\$7.95) and chicken liver pâté with crackers and cornichons (\$3.50)—as fine a mixed bag of culinary magic as any that's ever been pulled out of a chef's hat! Desserts are homemade and the staff is warmly welcoming.

**Savannah Grill**, 545 Newport Center Dr., (714) 759-0404. Lunch and dinner daily, Sunday brunch. Cocktails, wine and beer. American Express, MasterCard and Visa. Valet and self-parking.

**Bouzy Rouge**, 3110 Newport Blvd., (714) 673-3440. Dinner nightly, lunch Monday through Saturday, Saturday breakfast, Sunday brunch with music by live string quartet. Cocktails, wine and beer. All major credit cards. Valet parking.

*Ingrid Wilmot is a frequent theatergoer and veteran Southern California restaurant critic.*



## BRITISH VIDEOS

### COMEDY-DOCUMENTARY-OPERA-FILMS

COMEDY: Spitting Image-Fawley Towers-Benny Hill-Tony Hancock-Steptoe & Son-Monty Python's Flying Circus-Two Ronnies-Morecambe & Wise-'Carry On' films (20 titles)-& many more.

DOCUMENTARY: Royal Weddings-Trooping the Colour-Edinburgh Military Tattoo-Princess & the People-60 Glorious Years-Treasures of the British Crown-Number 10 Downing Street.

FINE ARTS: (Stereo) *Royal Opera Covent Garden: Tales of Hoffman-Fledermaus-Tosca-Falstaff. Verona: Aida-Turandot. Glyndebourne: Idomeneo. All star casts in more than 40 operatic masterpieces. Royal Ballet: Nutcracker. Kirov: Giselle-Swan Lake. Westminster Abbey: Messiah.*

NEW RELEASES: Olivier: *Henry V, Hamlet, Richard III. Dickens' Great Expectations, Oliver Twist. Trevor Howard in Brief Encounter.*

TV SERIES: *National Geographic, Upstairs Downstairs, The Avengers, The Prisoner, World at War, Butterflies, Miss Marple, Reilly Ace of Spies, Brideshead Revisited.*

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