

PM PLAYS ON EXPERIMENTATION

By R. CULLEN FINK

What do you do when you have eleven different playwrights with twelve interesting ideas and you want to put on one show? The answer is the play *PM*; which is the second half of the production *24 HOURS*. *24 HOURS* is produced by Laura Zucker and Allan Miller at the Back Alley Theatre in Van Nuys. It is the type of experimental theatre that should be more common in Southern California.

In the course of two hours (and twelve separately titled scenes), you will be amused, enthralled, and touched. Fortunately, there was no attempt to weave these scenes together with a central theme. Otherwise, the results might not have been as entertaining. Topics range from pseudo-intellectualism to futuristic dating methods.

Zoe Wells' simple set design is a perfect backdrop for this kind of show. A few chairs, a table, a short staircase and an upper landing become everything from a conference room in a corporate building to an existential space where a spirit awaits his rebirth into our world. To achieve these transitions, Christopher Milliken has come up with some very subtle and effective lighting techniques. However, the real strength of this show lies in the actors and playwrights.

PM is full of bright moments.



AEROBICS is one of the twelve scenes from the production *24 HOURS, PM*. (From left to right) Sandy Kenyon, Jackie Cassel, Rosanna Huffman, and Phillip R. Allen.

make a very moving story. Jack Matcha's *Aerobics* explores the inner thoughts of four characters who never directly speak to each other. Marcia Rodd's *Conversation 2001* gives us a peculiar point of view on future human relationships. My personal favorite in the show is Sam Bobrick's *An Eastern Fable*. This farce is nothing short of hysterical. It not only makes you laugh but also brings to light an acute statement on modern values.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the contributions of the five directors of these twelve scenes. Marcia Rodd, Dona Cooper, Beverly Sanders, Barbara Schultz and Michael Lessac must all be congratulated for their accomplishments.

My advice would be to go see *24 HOURS* and pick your own favorite scene. Unfortunately, the show will be closing very shortly. Keep your eye on the Back Alley Theatre for similar productions.

To list all of them would be giving away too much. Still, certain performances cannot be overlooked. Phillip R. Allen and Sandy Kenyon show exceptional timing in Sam Bobrick's *Opening Night*. Val Bettin and Rosanna Huffman paint a complex and unique father and daughter in Ann Raymond's *Lifeline*. Jackie Cassel creates a very real portrait of a lonely woman in Fredi Towbin's *Love in a Tub*. Peter Van Norden and Mary McCusker are perfect as the husband and wife

in Dona Coopers's *Rules of the House*. Maxine Stewart is engaging as the middle-aged wife in Oliver Hailey's *About Time*.

Not all of the credit for this show can be given to the actors. Without the chances taken by many of the playwrights, this show would be slow moving. Michael Lewis' *Sunrise on Earth* is a monologue that raises some very poignant questions about our existence. Beth Henley's *Hymn in the Attic* combines realism and religion to