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One on The Aisle by Sam Birkkrant

Would you believe 24 plays dramatizing every hour of the day? Believe it. Oliver Hailey, author of *Father's Day*, *Who's Happy Now?* and other successful plays, has come up with this novel idea for his writer's workshop at Back Alley Theater. It works.

Presented in separate evenings, the playlets are divided into A.M. and P.M. The A.M. sketches seemed to me a shade more original, containing the finest playlet of the series, Susan Silver's *5 Minute Romance*. It packs more insights and humor into its 7 or 8 minutes than most romantic comedies manage in a full evening.

The day section also boasts the series most accomplished performer, Doris Roberts, who appears in three outstanding sketches—Bonnie and Paul Zindel's biting satire of show biz, *Lemons In The Morning*, Lee Thomas's amusing tale of a frustrated afternoon idyll, *Joe's Not Home*, and Michael Leeson's wry portrait of a slovenly wife who can't offer her husband anything but love.

There is also an intriguing

character study of an anxiety-ridden wife who communes with herself in the wee hours. It's called *4 In The Morning*, by Daniel Gregory Brown. I'm not telling how it ends.

Though the A.M. group tilts perhaps a jot too far toward the subject of show biz (it could do with one less sketch) it has ample variety and standout performances by Allen Oppenheimer and John Anderson.

The P.M. group (if you choose to attend A.M. on a weekend afternoon, you can dine after the show at a nearby restaurant and return at 8 to catch this batch of 12) is even more variegated and equally entertaining. Sam Bobrick has written a very funny satire on the rivalry of the Manhattan-L.A. axis titled *An Eastern Fable*. Why would anybody in their right mind want to leave civilized Gotham for the wilds of L.A.? his protagonist wants to know. Fred Allen ("California's okay if you're an orange") would have loved it. Even I thought it was funny. Bobrick's second piece, *Opening Night*, is a mildly amusing show-biz inside joke about a playwright murdering an unappreciative drama critic. (To be on the safe side, I won't pan it).

Next up is a sharply turned out old man (Val Bettin), addressing our

planet from the Beyond, wondering whether it was worth all the effort to return to life. Bettin makes the most of his affecting, poetic monologue in the beautifully-titled *Sunrise On Earth*. Strong echoes of Ionesco's *Exit The King* here, but moving, nevertheless.

Hailey's own *About Time* wittily holds up a mirror to various aspects of time, sprinkling insightful lines along the way. ("I had an aunt who had plenty of time on her hands but none at her side").

You're bound to find something to your taste in *24 Hours* at the Back Alley Theater, 15231 Burbank Blvd., Van Nuys. Phone: 780-2240.