

L.A. WEEKLY April 25-May 1, 1980

RUBBERS, YANKS 3, DETROIT 0; TOP OF THE 7TH.

Out in Van Nuys, the Backalley Theater is once again giving us a vibrant, albeit uneven, evening. The choice of these one-acts by Jonathan Reynolds is laudable (they enjoyed a healthy run at the American Place Theater in NYC.) This guy has a sharp comedic talent, a divine flair for elevating the colloquial, and a predilection for the quirky character in name and concept. *Rubbers* puts us smack in the middle of a session of the New York State legislature and its workaday chaos. The core of the piece is a confrontation between a woman legislator and "the rest," with the attendant complexities of the male-female struggle. The cast is obviously stimulated by the material. Jessica Rains, looking absolutely right, plays the irritating firebrand with intelligence but too much demagoguery and little nuance. She is well supported by the men, and all are cushioned by good direction from Laura Zucker.

Yanks 3 fares less well. The more profound of the two pieces, (and probably should be a two-acter), it is about the angst of a 37-year-old major league pitcher striving for a no-hitter. Game time and play time get a little weird but we learn who he is and we watch him fail. The sheer graphic power of the pitcher-on-mound image sets the theatrics, yet the actors and the production don't deliver. The piece is a tour-de-force for the pitcher, here played by Tom Bowet, but the thing is a god-damned sonata and he can't play it. To begin with, one wishes he were physically more able, and every one is terribly busy indicating "ballplayer" and plucking at all their balls. Its ragged and unspecific. Yet the energy of the evening is felt right thru, and the group, headed by Allen Miller, has an air of the genuine about it. Back Alley Theater, 15231 Burbank Blvd., Van Nuys, Fri.-Sun., 8 p.m.; thru May 4. Call 780-2240. (JA)