

Rubbers Yanks 3, Detroit 0

Back Alley Theatre, indefinite run

Producer Allan Miller is currently presenting two applaudably offbeat one-act comedies, "Rubbers" and "Yanks 3, Detroit 0," both written by Jonathan Reynolds, at the Back Alley Theatre in Van Nuys.

"Rubbers," by far the funnier of the two, is set on the floor of the New York State Assembly and chronicles the madcap antics of nine unscrupulous assemblymen as they put the screws to the feminist assemblyperson Brimmins' Prophylactic Bill.

Sexual insults provide the bulk of the humor in a play peppered with comic gems, the likes of "If God had wanted a permissive society, he would have given Moses The Ten Suggestions," and in a vitriolic denunciation of Mrs. Brimmins, Assemblyman Damiano jibes, "She never had a child . . . she never even had a mis-carriage."

Jessica Rains is perfectly repulsive as the strident Mrs. Brimmins, and Wynn Irwin is wonderfully reprehensive as the wheeler-dealer Majority Leader. John Anderson, as the senile, suppository-crazed Mr. Pard, and Robert Lesser, as the slimy Mr. Damiano, spearhead the fine supporting cast made up of William Utay, James Hornbeck, Eli Rill, Bruce Kirby, Clarke Gordon, Roger Reid and Ilene Kristen, all of whom bring life to their abhorrently funny characters.

The second play, "Yanks 3, Detroit 0," is the story of Emil "Duke" Bronkowski, 37-year-old major league hurler and veteran of two Rapid Shave commercials who's in the process of losing his slider, his no-hit shutout and his mind all at the same time.

Set entirely on the pitcher's mound in the top of the seventh inning in Yankee Stadium, Tom Bower gives a commanding performance as the existentially handicapped righthander, but even his manic swings of mood and his frenetic flights of fancy can't compensate for the slowly paced, often repetitive nature of the play.

Essentially a one-man show, Bower is helped considerably by Robert Lesser as his idiot catcher and by John Anderson as the philosophically confused manager, with cameo appearances by James Hornbeck, Ilene Kristen, Roger Reid, William Utay and Gary Lee.

Director Laura Zucker does a superb job of getting the most out of her actors in both plays and earns high marks for her control of these two diametrically different, unusually set plays, though the pace could be tightened considerably in "Yanks 3."

— David L. Robb