

# LA WEEKLY

## THEATER NEW REVIEWS

LOS ANGELES FESTIVAL REVIEWS

**JUPITER 35** It has been said that the least that can be expected of theater is that it take its audience to a place they have never been before. In this encore staging of their 1989 work, the Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD) easily meets that objective in a gritty, often viscerally disturbing and unexpectedly sentimental effort. The story is a simple one — human survival. Directed by John Malpede, Kevin Williams and Elia Arce and written around the real-life experience of company member Leroy "Sunshine" Mills, the group details Mills' painful hospital recovery after being thrown out of a

fourth-floor Skid Row hotel window. The telling is not so simple. A collaborative writing effort by the entire company, *Jupiter 35* combines video, pastiche, some caustic improvisation, cutting satire and even moments of lurid melodrama in an artistically sophisticated performance that lends a human face to the day-to-day poverty of the urban homeless. Behind it all, of course, are the company members. Exemplified in the still-battered and toothless visage of Mills — who portrays himself — the very stage presence of the rough-edged ensemble (most of whom are street veterans) never allows an audience an easy romanticization of street life. And although the end note is one of affirmation (Mills ulti-

mately pulls through because of the love and support of his fellow members), the show's real message always remains up front: the real crime of homelessness is that society allows it to exist. Highways, 1651 18th St., Santa Monica; Thurs.-Sun., 8:30 p.m.; thru Sept. 18. (213) 623-7400 or 480-3232. (Bill Raden)

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 14-THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 20, 1990 LA WEEKLY