

# Right on the button

Phil Penfold at  
last night's

**First Night**

WESTERLY  
True West,  
Peoples Studio Theatre

AUTHOR Sam Shepard writes about what he knows best, which is always worth about 500 bonus points in any play.

And if he doesn't know

loneliness and alienation and the stamp of the individual from his own experiences, he has a unique perception of all three states and an ability to amplify and express them through some fascinating characters.

Each of his stage works and screen plays to date contain at least one isolated character, but in the current, Peoples production there are two of them — brothers who are constantly at each other's throats and always comparing notes on their very differing lifestyles and ambitions.

We find them as they meet up at their mother's house in Southern California. One is a moderately successful writer, the other a drifting opportunist who makes his (occasional) cash from burglary expeditions.

During the course of a few days, the roles are reversed and each proves to the other they are capable of more than either hitherto imagined.

The fact that the whole thing backfires into a violent confrontation is inevitable. Close relations — brothers, sisters — are constantly warring, one with another.

## Surprises

But Shepard takes this theme much further than other playwrights; he explores levels of resignation, pathos, deliberation and elation, and all stations in between.

Life, he tells us, is conducted in set patterns, but can still spring some surprises.

All this is immaculately acted with a deep level of commitment by Mike Elliott and Christopher Goulding, who deliver two performances the like of which many professional fringe theatres would be hard put to equal.