

# HIGHLIGHTS

**ARTISTIC OFFERINGS:** At the Way Off Broadway Playhouse, Mark Turnbull's offbeat show of jazz-folk songs, woven together with tales of local entertainment lore, is thoughtful, witty and consistently amusing. Reviewed by Jan Herman. **F1**

## HERMAN

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especially "Teach Me."

The "friends" who get top billing with Turnbull never appear in person. Instead, they populate the rich tapestry of stories he weaves from his personal history and his backstage memories of the scene at the Golden Bear, a legendary club in Huntington Beach (now defunct) where he got his arts education listening to everyone from Ramblin' Jack Elliott to Lord Buckley.

Turnbull might be accused of name-dropping if his stories weren't so much fun. He tells how he met George Harrison in an effort to get recorded by Apple, when the Beatles were starting up the label. He tells how he used to ditch school ("actually sixth period—we were good bad boys") with Frank Marshall, the future Hollywood producer of "E.T.," "Back to the Future" and the "Indiana Jones" pictures.

One of the more comical stories relates his encounter with John Wayne at a Christmas bash thrown

annually in Newport Beach by a big-time record producer.

Turnbull, the high school prodigy, was invited to write and perform a Yuletide tune. Proud as a peacock, he showed up in "Spanish bedspread pants, a white shirt with red polka dots and a purple, floppy Edgar Allan Poe bow tie."

Wayne just blinked.

"I looked," Turnbull recounts, "like the unraveling of the American flag, the death of Betsy Ross, the dissolution of America itself."

These days, any sign of the extroverted dandy is long gone. Turnbull seems like nothing less than a performer on a spiritual quest, unwilling to pander even when he's being funny, full of quiet conviction, poetic vigor, clever whimsy and touching insight.

Which makes it easy to understand why Peter Tork of the Monkees once told him: "Mark, I see nothing between you and success except a long hard road."

■ "Mark Turnbull & Friends—A One-Man Show" continues Friday and Saturday and May 13, 14, 20 and 21 at 8 p.m. at the Way Off Broadway Playhouse, 1058 E. 1st St., Santa Ana. \$10. (714) 547-8997