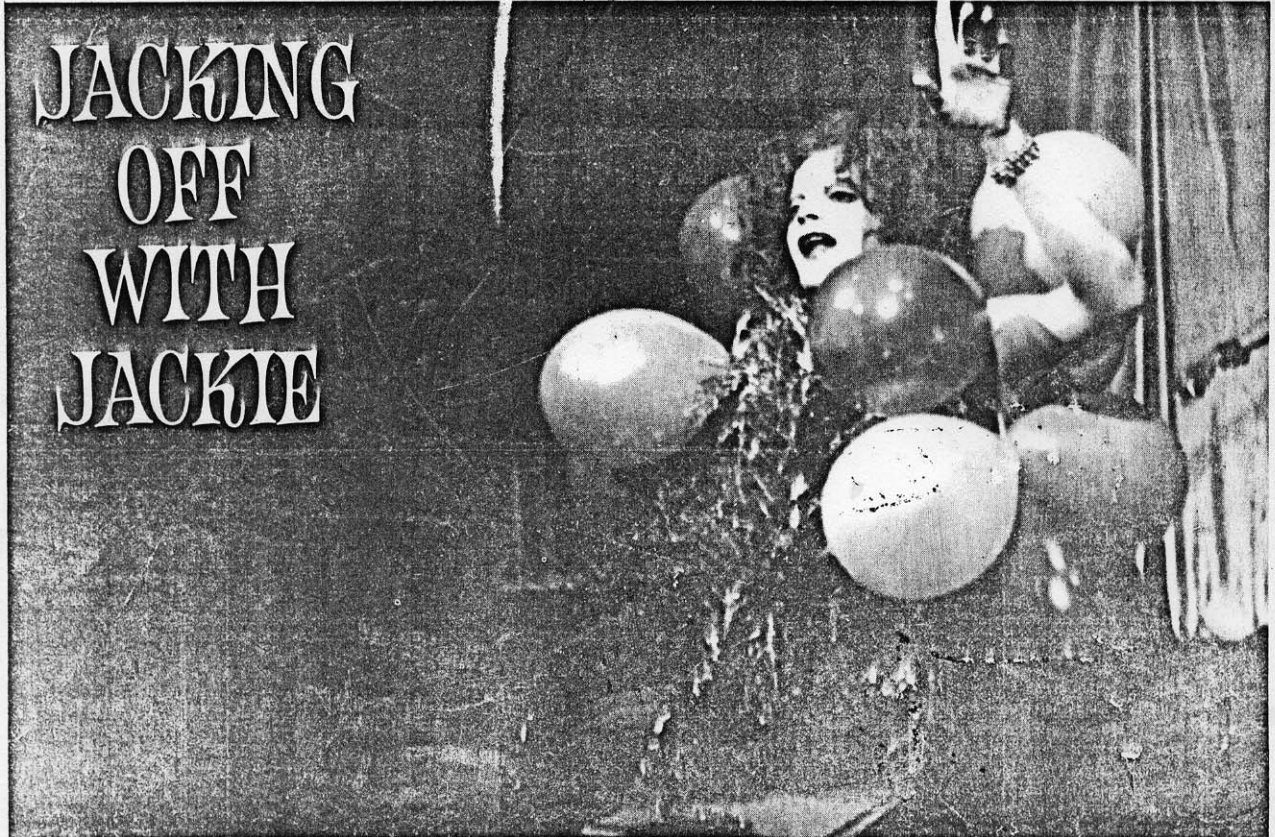


JACKING OFF WITH JACKIE



Jackie Curtis, the Unique

BY EVERETT HENDERSON

Bringing the old standards to the new theatre is one hell of a mistake to make. Don't look for plots or themes or logical character development when you visit the Off-Off Broadway playhouses. Look for life. The new theatre is concerned with assault, much the way most of the other new forms are. Your sensibilities are to be assaulted using any means possible. Song, dance, the insult, the past, satire, mockery, even the lyric odes of the classical Greek drama—any of these in any possible combination can be the effective theatrical devices of a form trying to recreate itself in a way that will communicate to a media-ridden audience suffering from more information input than any other audience in the history of the world.

I kept this in mind as I watched Jackie Curtis' new play, *Femme Fatale*, at Cafe La Mama. An ongoing event, *Femme Fatale* is soon to be revived at Max's Kansas City's upstairs room. It will no doubt be brand new in many ways, since the new theatre thinks nothing of changing its texts or performances from night to night.

Jackie Curtis is a real star. This judgment (and when it comes to a thing like this I hate making any judgments at all) is based not on her talents or lack of them but her ability to reach through the invisible wall and affect those who come to view her. The lady has presence. One day, Jackie decided to become Miss Curtis. She had discovered that leading ladies always got more applause than

their leading men. Jackie put on a dress; she put on false-eyelashes. She became a leading lady. Miss Curtis is no transvestite; she is no drag-queen. She is an actor who has assumed a role and plays it in life as well as on stage to stimulate and enrich her art.

Her play is an uneven, amusing, boring, hilarious, weird, simplistic study of lots of old movies, gangster riffs and the Sharon Tate murder. Tate's murder could not help but become folklore in our cynical, astringent society. Miss Curtis helps the process of immortality on its way.

I do not dare judge the performances

or direction. Anthony Ingrassia's direction successfully got the actors on the stage and whipped them through a suitable number of convulsions. Miss Curtis' supporting cast energetically played projected images of themselves as stars. The standout is Penny Arcade. Miss Arcade is angel-faced and tough as nails. She is like one of those *Our Gang* kids on speed and she uses all her skills to parody all the molls and toughies we've ever seen. She is an endearing and brilliant comedienne. Wayne County also deserves mention and there was even a guest appearance by Mary Waronov (formerly Mary Might) as Johnny Apollo. Sexes as

well as identities are, scrambled in remarkable ways in these particular productions. The musical numbers included "Since You Lose Your Legs," and "Kissin' Asses for the Man I Love." The latter had a special lyric written by Miss Curtis.

I look forward to seeing the revival of *Femme Fatale*. If you are fed up with the slick, stainless steel emptiness of Uptown garbage like *Company*, find your way to Max's some evening. It may amuse or irritate you, thrill you or bore you, but it is robust and it is alive.

And that is what we are saluting today.



Jackie flips out with her friends

Everett Henderson