

## NIXON'S NIXON

By Russell Lees

Virginia Premier Theatre

Oct. 10-Nov. 1 Kimball Theatre & Williamsburg Library Theatre

For tickets: 1-866-430-1630

Hello, I'm Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large.

This highly entertaining political satire is given an impeccable, production under the direction of Rebecca Taylor. She captures every jowl shaking nuance of Richard Nixon and let's us peer into the brain of his slick and scheming Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger. Two exactly right actors, David I. Carson (Nixon) and Jeffrey Farber (Kissinger) with Taylor, create a theatre experience of a caliber we are rarely privileged to behold. And, they do it in a sizzling, electric 80 minutes that crackle with wit and a good deal of pathos as well, .

This is the fifth season of this extraordinary, professional theatre company. I think I've seen everyone of their productions. Each has been done with fine actors, peerless taste and skill. However, I would rank NIXON'S NIXON as their best effort to date. It is indeed not to be missed.

It all happens just before midnight on August 7, 1974 in the White House Press Room, minimally but most cleverly designed by Lausanne Davis-Carpenter. There is foreboding, effective lighting by Todd Cooke.

All is quiet because Nixon's minions have either quit or been indicted. Kissinger has come to persuade the president to resign the next day to avoid impeachment. He is also very much concerned about the future of his own career. As the two men recall their times together, the liquor starts to flow as rapidly as the memories they dredge up. And, since neither could be called modest or self-effacing, their egos, at times, clash like swords in combat.

Well into their cups, they role play some of the major public figures they have encountered in their years together including Mao, Golda Meir, and Leonard Brezhnev with hilarious effect. Even though these happenings, while historically factual some of the time, are primarily "what ifs" in the playwrights mind, experiencing this play is as close as most of us will get to the intimate, one-on-one machinations of our government. I tried to note memorable lines but there are so many I lost track. I do remember Nixon saying, "History is a bunch of crooks."

Finally, Nixon's mind, sodden with alcohol, is as confused and messed up as the boxes of entangled recording tape he occasionally plays with. I should point out that this play is by no means a totally negative portrait of one of our most complicated presidents. It presents quite moving aspects of his brilliant but paranoid persona. He takes us from his humble beginnings to his being thrown out of heaven like Satan. He declares that men of ambition should commit suicide. The problem though is when to do it. Throw in the towel too soon and you may destroy all that a politician finally has which is his place in history, his all important legacy.

NIXON'S NIXON is a highly recommended relaxing pause filled with extra special merriment to ease our ways in these troubled days that can linger on into the night.

This is Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large and I'll see you at the next opening.