

★ *As Is*
Hippodrome

Recently, the Hippodrome sponsored an entire week of interrelated events in hopes of enlightening people about AIDS. They showed movies, they held public forums, and they involved the local community through art and the Gainesville Actors Improvisational Teen Theatre.

But perhaps nothing will be as effective or memorable as their production of *As Is*.

In a way, the battles this drama wages were won before it even came here. We want to understand, to empathize, and *As Is* finds itself repeating what we already know, not educating as it did during its original off-Broadway run.

Like other "message" dramas, *As Is* loses a little fire as

the ideas it so passionately puts forth become accepted and common.

But William Hoffman's play manages to retain a good deal of dramatic impact, especially in the fast, episodic scenes involving a Greek chorus of people affected by AIDS in one way or another.

It is strongest during these moments of public lament, and weakest when focusing on the archetypal story of Richard and Saul. Scott Winters stands out in the cast as the confused lover, but Robert Browne (Rick) has all the bravura moments, and he makes the most of them. Mary Hausch directs with clean efficiency, and the entire production is satisfactory, if not revealing. We can take this play "as is," which is all it ever wanted.

Michael Giltz