

NEW YORK POST

NEW YORK POST, TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 1998

Sketches artfully rapped

HE opens with a ragged string of doggerel, hip-hop rapper stuff, and you might be tempted to think — indeed, I did myself just so think — that, heck, kid, this is no adult entertainment. Let me out!

Then, just a minute or so later, Danny Hoch — for that's who it is — moves into gear with the smoothest of arias about some poor hick immigrant landing on Rikers Island, picked up for selling O.J. Simpson T-shirts without a license.

Now he's on an instant roll with this sweet, crazy and politically ironic monologue about the illegal T-shirt salesman who took as his shining example simply our American way of life typified by that princess of honest capitalism, the little girl on TV who's selling homemade lemonade on her stoop.

Did she have a license, he moans. Was she arrested? Sure, it's funny, but what makes it much more than funny is Hoch's indelible



Theater review

Clive Barnes

**JAILS, HOSPITALS,
HIP-HOP**

Written and performed by Danny Hoch. Developed and directed by Jo Bonney. Setting: George Xenos. Lighting: Stan Pressner. At Performance Space 122, 150 First Ave., at Ninth Street; (212) 477-5288.

and unshakable belief in the character, ranking him with the likes of Eric Bogosian and John Leguizamo.

Hoch's way with language — the sprung rhythms of modern argot, the mindless jazzy spins of rapper rap interspersed with the gentler, lamer diction of the dispossessed and misfitted — helps him create his own world.

A kid fantasizing about

Jay Leno's "Tonight Show" while living in white conformity who can say, "I still have the ghetto in my heart"; the corrections officer who is under psychiatric evaluation for roughing up a prisoner but is most worried about his child visitation rights following his broken marriage; an enraged drug addict prison inmate with AIDS; or Victor, a sad little Puerto Rican quadriplegic looking for life and love: This is a great gallery.

And one of the funniest parts of the evening is Hoch's story of how he was fired, without being paid, from "Seinfeld" after he refused to put on an Hispanic accent to play a bath attendant.

Told that the accent was both necessary and funny, Hoch says he responded: "Accents are not funny; people are funny."

It is people being funny, sad and eccentrically memorable that gives "Jails, Hospitals, Hip-Hop" its special flavor and savor.