



**Film & Video**  
 'Bobby' .....4  
 Film Capsules .....8



**Hot Music**  
 Club GO! grid .....12-13  
 Cruzin' .....14  
 Intermezzo .....15



**Stage Scene**  
 'Spoon River' .....16  
 Onstage .....16



**Wine & Dine**  
 Che'Pez Grill .....22  
 Top Picks .....23



**Notable Art**  
 Holiday Lites .....25  
 Art Calendar .....25



**GO! Calendar**  
 GO! with Kids .....37  
 Santa Cruzin' .....38  
 Beyond the Bay .....39

**GO!**

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# Two legends

HAL HOLBROOK BRINGS HIS TONY AWARD-WINNING 'MARK TWAIN TONIGHT!' TO THE GOLDEN STATE THEATRE

By **KATHRYN PETRUCELLI**  
*Herald Correspondent*

**H**e can quote any of thousands of lines off the top of his head, though he'd never dream of simply rattling off speeches in a hit and run of quippy verbiage.

Instead, Hal Holbrook holds out the language to show you up-close his favorite bits, unfurls it and admires its texture, its unparalleled exactitude, laughs at jokes he's told for more than 50 years.

"There are shoals and shoals of fools out there," said Holbrook, quoting Mark Twain. "Isn't that a great word? 'Shoals.'"

"Twain talked about men outside the asylum (running around with a) 'specialized insanity.'" He laughs, then repeats triumphantly, "Specialized insanity!"

If you would like to see Hal Holbrook performing his award-winning one-man show "Mark Twain Tonight!" at the Golden State Theatre on Wednesday night, stop reading now and go buy tickets — they are selling out fast.

Although Holbrook rejects the notion that Twain has acted as a kind of mentor for him over these many years (Holbrook says he doesn't even like the word), the two men have at minimum shared an



Award-winning actor Hal Holbrook, who has been doing his one-man show on Mark Twain for more than 50 years, performs it Wednesday night at the Golden State Theatre in Monterey.

amazing journey together.

Beginning in 1954, Holbrook has performed "Mark Twain Tonight!" for 52 consecutive years, and over that time developed some 16 hours worth of material that he chooses from as the

evening unfolds.

Holbrook's first paying job as an actor came in the summer of 1942, at the Cain Park Theatre in Cleveland where he played the son in "The Man Who Came To Dinner" making \$15 a week.

Still relatively early on in his career and in the evolution of "Mark Twain Tonight!" he managed to land a regular role on a soap opera called "The Brighter Day" — thus, he says, escaping the path that lead to a job running elevators.

His credentials since range from "King Lear" to "The Sopranos." Most recently, he's finished up filming the movie "Into the Wild," with writer/director Sean Penn.

Amidst the movies, the plays, the sitcoms, the soap operas, there was always Twain.

"It's like a homecoming," he said. "Like going back to the absolute basics, going back to something I feel safe with because I trust what the man has to say. It's

mostly beautiful because the truth is behind the words."

When Holbrook began his odyssey as old man Mark Twain, he was still in his twenties. (He spent an average of four hours in makeup before each staging.)

## HotMusic



**Mac McDonald**

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 Mac About Town

## Hello, goodbye

**O**ne of the great things about the strong jazz programs in local schools and the Monterey Jazz Festival's jazz education program, is that we get to witness the growth and maturation of young artists, many of whom return to the area to perform.

Artists such as Rushad Eggleston, Tanya Darby, Milton Fletcher, Erik Telford, James Williams and more have

and Carmel High grad **Ryan Scott** returns for a concert Saturday night at The Jazz & Blues Company in Carmel.

Scott, who moved to New York City in 2001 and is a sought-after session player, returns with a CD, "Five O'Clock News" and will be accompanied by up-and-coming young classically trained violinist/singer **Christina Courtin**, a recent Juilliard grad.

The duo will perform blues

624-6432 for tickets and more information.

► Barry Manilow guitarist **Michael Lent** is back at Monterey Live this weekend with keyboardist **Ruben Valtierra** (Weird Al, Funk Attack, etc.), bassist **Dennis Murphy** and **Kim Edmundson** on drums.

Show time is 9 p.m. each evening, cover is \$5, details at 375-LIVE (5483) or www.montereylive.com.

► The final Bring Back the Music fundraiser for New Orleans musicians affected by Hurricane Katrina takes place from 2 to 4 p.m. Saturday in the

pianist **Bob Phillips** hopes to get many of the 60 to 70 musicians who have played over the past year to join in the huge jam session.

The benefit has raise almost \$10,000 in the past year . . . almost \$10,000. Phillips hopes to top that this Saturday.

► FolkYeah! follows up its "Two Days in Autumn" concert series with a concert Friday night featuring Swedish metal band **Witchcraft** performing with Corralitos band **Mammatus**.

Show time is 9 p.m. and tickets are \$10 at the door or \$8.50 online at www.fernwoodbigsur.com.

Not long after the success of "Mark Twain Tonight!" off-Broadway, Holbrook turned down a significant role in a Broadway show because he was asked to play an 80-year-old and was concerned about being typecast.

It was a risky and unconventional move: "Very few people make up my mind for me," said the actor.

Speaking from his San Diego hotel room, Holbrook said his portrayal of Twain is "based on an intense respect for his mind and his thought processes and his genius in knowing how to express ideas."

Besides passages from the writer's work, such as the five different selections from "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," Holbrook chooses to read on various nights, there

**Beginning in 1954, Holbrook has performed 'Mark Twain Tonight!' for 52 consecutive years, and over that time developed some 16 hours worth of material**

are also bits in the show that, while comprised of 100 percent Twain, were never written by him as such. Ten minutes could include, for example, 15 different patchworked sources.

Holbrook has always done all his own research and editing.

Just as Twain used his writing to critique (often harshly) the state of society, so does Holbrook use these same

writings to critique a new age.

Both actor and writer have more than a little to criticize about journalism. While Holbrook takes aim at TV journalism in particular, he is unwilling to update or paraphrase anything of Twain's.

His research finally turned up a letter which included an unflattering journalistic reference to "these talkers." And now, it is up to the audience to make the connection.

Another of his causes — about which Twain has no scarcity of material — is responding to the anger between the political parties in this country. Holbrook refers to the rift as "a desperately unhealthy thing for a democracy."

Before any show he always

**PERFORMANCE**

- ▶ **What:** Hal Holbrook in "Mark Twain Tonight!"
- ▶ **Where:** Golden State Theatre, 417 Alvarado St., Monterey
- ▶ **When:** 8 p.m. Wednesday, Nov 29
- ▶ **Tickets:** \$45-\$75, available by calling 372-3800 or at the box office (open every day from 1 to 6 p.m.)
- ▶ **Information:** Online at [www.goldenstatetheatre.com](http://www.goldenstatetheatre.com) or by calling 372-3800

makes sure to read the paper, "in case some other idiocy" has arisen. He says his real motivators are frustration and dissatisfaction with the status quo.

It's not a stretch to think the literary figure he embodies shared that motivation. Holbrook spoke on the much-spoken-on use of the "n-word" in "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn."

Having had perhaps more time and opportunity than most to ponder such things, Holbrook has an extensive opinion on the subject.

He kindly recreated his tour of deduction in which engages himself in a question-and-answer session.

The disturbing thing about the "n-word" in "Huck Finn," he says, is that "the boy using it is telling the story." This is a boy with whom readers must identify.

The internal debate begins: "OK, Holbrook, was Mark Twain a good writer?"

"Yes," comes the answer from himself.

"Was he intelligent enough to know what he was doing?"

Again the answer comes, "Yes."

After several more lines of questioning, he discovers the word makes him feel embarrassed.

"Oh!" says his other half. "He wants me to feel embarrassed."

"OK, Holbrook, then why do you think he's using it so often?"

"He uses it like a hammer," he concluded. "And in those days, you had to hammer pretty hard."

Holbrook's biography is extensive, as one might imagine any successful 80-something actor's to be.

Nonetheless, his bio contains information often absent — at least from the versions put out by actors themselves.

For example, his explains how his mother left when he was 2, his father followed close after, and his grandmother was uninterested in reviving her childrearing duties.

So, Holbrook and his two sisters (1-, 2-, and 3-year olds) were raised by his grandfather, a shoe salesman.

"Being an actor, I'm interested in people," he said of the details.

Holbrook commented further on why others tend to leave off the kinds of biographical things he's gone out of his way to include: "For me, it's a misguided sense of embarrassment about being too personal."

"I think it's possible to be personal without crying over spilled milk and asking for sympathy. I mean, these are facts," he said of his own life. "You either survive or you don't and shut your damn mouth."

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Hal Holbrook distills more than 16 hours worth of Mark Twain's writings into one award-winning show, "Mark Twain Tonight!" playing Wednesday night in Monterey.

up your dark alley.

▶ Dance off all that turkey Friday night at Baja Cantina in Mid Carmel Valley when the **Cachagua Playboys** host its annual "Hobble Off Your Gobble" show from 7 to 10 p.m.

All the usual shenanigans will ensue when the 'Boys play "a little cajun, a little surf-zydeco and Americana" that night.

▶ It was with a heavy heart that I read on Monday that local actor/writer **Jeremy Slate** had died in Los Angeles at the age of 80 of complications

If there was a musical happening in the area — especially in his beloved Big Sur — Jeremy would be there, dressed like an elegant hippie, with that unruly shock of white hair and a big smile always on his face.

Some music fans may know him through his three sons — all musicians — Jason, Jeremy and the late Jeff. Jason was a longtime guitarist for the popular Young Presidents rock band and played with his brothers in the legendary Big Sur rock band Canyon.

And perhaps unknown to

("How Come Every Time I Itch I Wind Up Scratching You?" was the flip side to the hit 45 "Galveston") and Tex Ritter (the 1967 hit "Just Beyond the Moon"), among others.

According to Jason, his dad also played a little harmonica and piano. "I was proud of my dad," said Jason. "He was a good guy."

Also relatively unknown was that although a pacifist, he was a member of Veterans for Peace and served proudly in the U.S. Navy in World War II, serving on the U.S.S. Murphy of Normandy.



# Happy Thanksgiving!

**Closed Today (So we can eat and drink!)  
We'll be open Friday at 10 am  
to help with all your holiday orders**



**Featured Cheeses: Chevre de Bellay, Ford Farm Catswold, Champignon Montagnolo**