

CALENDAR

Los Angeles Times ORANGE COUNTY

** SECTION F • FRIDAY APRIL 29, 1994

Rich Talent, Poor on Fame

O.C. THEATER REVIEW

By JAN HERMAN
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

SANTA ANA—In a thoughtful and entertaining show at the Way Off Broadway Playhouse, Mark Turnbull offers the bittersweet reflections of a genuine artist who should have become rich and famous but didn't.

Poet, songwriter, singer and jazz guitarist—a modern troubadour of sorts—he started out in a blaze of glory. If early promise meant anything, Turnbull was destined for big things. As a junior at Newport Harbor High School in the late '60s, he wrote a Grammy-nominated children's album for Disney called "A Happy Birthday Party With Winnie the Pooh." As a senior, he recorded his next album, "Portrait of the Young Artist," for Reprise.

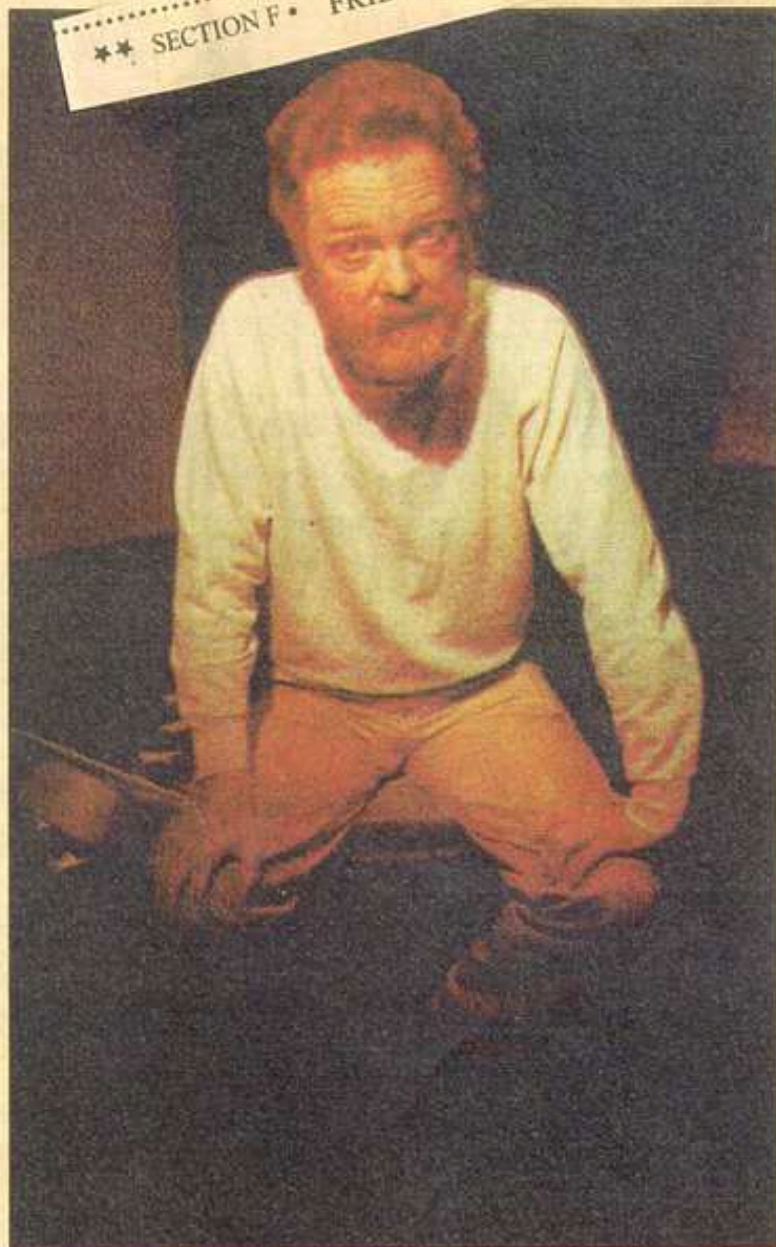
"I was one of the fortunate ones who knew what he wanted to do from the beginning," he remarks, a tall, thin, bearded redhead sitting under an amber spotlight and looking like a bohemian lumberjack. "Well, here I am. What went wrong?"

Nothing actually—not if you care for witty lyrics and offbeat irony, musical warmth and coffeehouse charisma. They're all abundantly evident in "Mark Turnbull and Friends—A One-Man Show."

Both as tunesmith and storyteller, Turnbull has a self-deprecating talent for combining the heartfelt with the facetious. And that keeps his retrospective look at himself, and his downward climb on the mainstream ladder of success, consistently amusing.

The nearly two dozen songs he has chosen from his prolific output date mostly from the '70s. Often delivered just above a whisper in a high-pitched voice, all are worth hearing and some are worth treasuring. My own favorites are "In a Classroom," "Baseball Cards," "Baggage," but

Please see HERMAN, F27



ALEXANDER GALLARDO / Los Angeles Times

Mark Turnbull's witty lyrics, offbeat irony and musical warmth are abundantly evident during his one-man show in Santa Ana.