

# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

## Robert Ackerman's *Blood*—'Political Thriller With Music'—Returns At The Complex

The inspiration for Robert Allan Ackerman's play *Blood* is a story that had to be told—a little known or remembered incident in the early '80s when U.S. companies knowingly sold AIDS-tainted blood to Japan with the collusion of the Japanese government—resulting in the deaths of more than 2,000 hemophiliacs.

The impetus for the play is mysterious and worthy of a film in itself, as the 15-year resident, working in Tokyo with a Japanese theatre troupe at the time, was approached by a Japanese film company for a film adaptation of the story and presented with reams of research and videotapes.

The film version didn't pan out, so Ackerman wrote a play, encouraged by his friend actress Glenna Headly (*Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *Dick Tracy*), who stars in the current production running through Sunday



**Robert Alan Ackerman**

Dec. 18 at the Complex, 6476 Santa Monica Blvd. (A run in Hollywood earlier this year drew rave reviews, but had to close due to theater availability.)

Headly stars as an American Jewish reporter who uncovers the conspiracy and teams with a Korean-Japanese lawyer who heads up the investigation that leads to a suit against the government.

Ackerman has directed both productions—"I wouldn't want anyone else to do it and it was written in a specific way to get through 60 scenes. I envisioned it



**Glenna Headly and Rob Yang in *Blood*.**  
*Photo by Ed Krieger*

as a 'theatrical opus' incorporating kabuki and other Asian theatre traditions, vaudeville elements and music.

"Writing it as a theatre piece, it was really dark," says Ackerman, and I was doing it for my own amusement, so I thought it would be fun to make the villainous government ministers into buffoonish clowns. And it would be fun if they sang." Dressed as Charlie Chaplin in *The Great Dictator* they sing music from *The Mikado* with re-written lyrics.

Original music is by his son, The Virgins bassist Nick Ackerman and Jet drummer/vocalist Chris Cester.

"The music is terrific and it's a fun production," Ackerman says. "It's about something horrific, but its fun to watch and moving and upsetting. And a story about taking action against government greed, hypocrisy and corruption is still relevant today."

Tickets, at \$35 for performances Fridays-Sundays, are available by calling 323-960-7745 or visiting [www.plays-411.com/blood](http://www.plays-411.com/blood).