

Killer's Head: A Monologue by Sam Shepard

Killer's Head was first performed at the American Place Theatre, New York, in 1975.

It was directed by Nancy Meckler, with Richard Gere as Mazon.

SCENE

Bare stage. Center on slightly raised platform, MAZON sits in electric chair facing audience. Hands, arms, legs, feet, chest, neck bound with bands of steel to the silver chair. He is barefoot, blindfolded, wears T-shirt and jeans, yellow spot on chair, rest of stage black. Lights rise slow on MAZON (speaks in clipped, southwestern rodeo accent).

MAZON: Oh yeah, today's the day I buy the pickup. I've decided. Six-cylinder, three-quarter-ton bed, heavy-duty rear springs, three-speed column. Should pull the horses all right. 'Course with the three-fifty V-8 you'd get more power. Don't really need it though. Won't be goin' off the road much. Just to Santa Rosa and back. Maybe sixty miles round trip. Just to take that mare up and get her bred. Jesus! You should see that stud, boy! Does the quarter mile in twenty-one seconds dead. Like to rip the silks right off that jockey. Said they never seen an Appaloosa like him. Should throw a blanket foal, that's for sure. Got a leopard on both sides of the pedigree. Could make a cuttin' horse too, what with that mare. She's almost one-third quarter horse herself. She can move, boy. I've seen her doubled in half over a cow. Anyway, that six-cylinder should do it. Save us some on gas. Don't plan on doing much rodeo. That old Tommy Ferguson's got it wrapped up. Might try some halter shows up north. We got those yearling fillies we could show. They got class boy. That's the ticket, see. You take those quarter mares and you breed right back to Thoroughbreds, racing stock, and you got yourself an all-purpose-type horse. You got refinement when you outcross like that. You take Three Bars. If it weren't for that damn stud horse the whole quarter horse breed would look like Angus steers by now. That's the truth. Refinement, that's what he brought to the breed. Look at the heads he threw. Anyway, the Appaloosa isn't hurtin' from Thoroughbred blood neither. What's that Indian Hemp stud they got now? Forget his name. Good blood. And that Sheljet horse outa' Colorado. Shit man, you never seen a pedigree like that. Jet

Deck on the top side. Lady Bug Moon on the bottom. Bright red sorrel horse. Sure to throw colored foals. You take any Appaloosa mare to him and I guarantee you'd get a colored foal. Speed too. He's a flyin' machine. 'Course they all got speed outa' Colorado. It's that mountain air. Must be. Grass ain't bad either. Out here they got that all-purpose pasture. Ain't worth a damn. Too much blue alfalfa. Blows' em up. Blow a horse inside out with that stuff. Gets inside there and ferments. I've seen it. Swells' em up like a Goodyear blimp. That Colorado grass is the real stuff. Rocky Mountain. No wonder they got so many triple-A horses comin' outa' there. Out here they feed pellets and then wonder how come a horse don't put the flesh on. Can't beef a racin' horse up like that. Needs grain and good pasture. I'd send the whole string out there for the summer if I could afford it. I would. 'Course out here you got the money. You got the mares too. Never seen such mares. You take that T-Dok mare. I was ridin' her flat out the other day and I swear to God she wasn't even blowin' at the finish. Musta' done six furlongs at full tilt, and she had everything left. Took all I had to haul her in. We had that gelding out there with her and she left him standin'. Had six lengths on him. He's a tough horse too. Barrel racer. 'Course the shoer said he's got a slight touch a' ring bone. That shouldn't hurt him though if we keep him workin'. I noticed he was a little turned in on his front feet but I took him to be over-muscled. Shoer says he can compensate by filing down on the outside horn. You know, that gelding was out to pasture for four months straight, never had a soul on his back, and I took him straight in and cut five calves with him. Right off the dime like that. Five calves. That's what I call cow sense. Too bad he ain't registered. We could make some money off that pony. Put him in the Snaffle Bit Futurity and clean up. I put a snaffle on him the other day and it made all the difference. That curb was puttin' too much pressure on his jaw. You could tell the way he was tossin' his head all the time. Skeeter told me to try a martingale on him but I could tell that wasn't it. It was that damn bit. Too much pressure. Soon's I put that snaffle in his mouth he turned as soft as butter. Just neck reinin' to beat all hell. Dandy horse.

(He stops suddenly and just sits silently, no movement, lasting for one full minute, then he begins again.)

MAZON: Dude says he can give me a deal on that blue truck. Almost four hundred off the list price. Smells good inside that thing. Sweet. Steers like a damn

cat. Got that big eight-foot bed. No extras. Got those skinny bicycle tires on it. Comes stock like that. Put some big mags on there and she'll be tough. Should pull that two-horse trailer. Furthest I'd take it is down to L.A. Highway Five all the way. Right down through the center. Over the Grapevine. Bakersfield. Should pull that okay. That V-8 would do it better but I can't afford the gas. Damn thing only gets about twelve to the gallon. Ain't worth it in the long run. Only be makin' that long haul once a season. Just to hit that fair circuit. 'Couple a' auctions maybe. It's a full eight hours no matter how ya' cut it. Specially with a double rig. Full day's ride.

(He stops suddenly again and sits silently. The lights begin to dim very slowly and take a full minute to come to black. Just as the lights reach black the chair ignites with an electric charge that lights up MAZON's entire body. He makes no sound. The electric charge is very short, just long enough to take in the illuminated body, then back to black.)

CURTAIN