

Sahl, Producer Swap Charges

By JEANNE MILLER

"Here I am, big as life. You can see I'm not hiding from anyone," Mort Sahl said yesterday at the hungry i where he explained to the press why he left his own show in New York.

The revue, "An Evening With Mort Sahl," was scheduled to open for previews last Friday at the off-Broadway East 74th St. Theater. Sahl declared that he returned to California on Thursday, after notifying producer Martin Brandman of his decision and his reasons for it.

Brandman, however, reached by The Examiner in New York last night, denied that he knew anything about Sahl's plans "for abandoning the show" until he received a wire from the comedian on Friday stating that he had gone back to California. Brandman plans to sue.

GRAVE DISSERVICE

At the hungry i, where he opens an engagement tonight, Sahl said he did not walk out on the show, but instead had informed Brandman it was in no shape to open, that it would be a disservice to the audience to raise the curtain.

"I was in New York four weeks, working on the show 17 or 18 hours a day," he said. "I had brought three actors with me from California, including John Brent of the Committee. There they were, sitting around for weeks without contracts. They were hired, fired, and re-hired, causing demoralization.

"Elaine May was hired as the show's director and she promptly rejected most of the material I had written. There were union disputes which the producer refused to negotiate. No settings were constructed.

NEVER PAID

"Not one rehearsal was held. I was never paid. I finally informed Brandman that since no actors were hired, no material was prepared and nothing was in



MORT SAHL

At hungry i conference
—Examiner Photo

shape, it would be impossible to open. He then insisted that I go on alone and do my monologs

"I refused, since the advance sale was predicated on a revue, with other performers, not on my club act. If I were to go on alone, the backers needn't have put up \$20,000 to capitalize the show. A theater audience demands a different kind of entertainment than a night club audience expects.

"I'm hoping this can all be ironed out because I hate to see another year go by in America without political commentary, just because I couldn't get along with some people."

Brandman's version of

the fracas was entirely different.

"Sahl's unexplained disappearance was the greatest shock of my life," he said. "Yes, I'd had complaining letters from him. But he and his representative, Enrico Banducci (hungry i owner), both assured me Wednesday that Sahl would be on hand that night for the tech rehearsal and Thursday for the dress rehearsal. Banducci said he would deliver him bodily, if necessary.

"His charges are wholly unwarranted. He was in total control of the show's content. Elaine May was not the director. She was brought in as a production consultant to try to organize Sahl's material and rehearse the actors. She did not fire any performers or reject any material. Sahl told me he wanted to get rid of the actors he brought from California because

they betrayed him. To placate him, I fired them. Then he had a change of heart, and I rehired two of them. They subsequently quit.

"But I did assemble a cast of four of the best revue performers in New York — Paul Dooley, Allan Sues, R. G. Brown and Carol Morley. We had regular rehearsals and the others were prepared to go on. I don't know about Mort. He refused to attend rehearsals.

NO NEW START

"He didn't know about the set because he never showed up at the theater. As a result of his run-out, I was forced to disband the company, give up the theater and refund the money from ticket sales.

"I invested four months of my life and considerable money because I had great faith in Mort.

"I can't explain why he blew the opportunity.

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"Starting all over again is out of the question. I've already instructed my at-

torneys to take legal action against him for substantial damages."