Players interpret vision of terror
in premiere of ‘Birthday Party’

By STEPHEN THORPE

The Rice Players will open their first production of the 1966-67 season this Wednesday night in Hamman Hall. It promises to be a real theatrical event with the introduction of a British playwright to Houston audiences.

It’s called “The Birthday Party” and it is a Pinter play—a name which (if you’re in the know) conjures up an entire genre of modern drama based on undercurrent, fear, and basic terror. Harold Pinter’s work has been hailed on two continents as a milestone in modern drama and the Players are presenting the first such full-length play in Houston.

Paroxysm and Necklines
Cast in “Birthday Party” are Roger Glade as Stanley, a musician hounded to death in a paroxysm of verbal agony; Bob Sculley as Goldberg, the “true Christian” with Jewish overtones who leads the way through Stanley’s ritual murder with the cool assuredness of a priest; Mike Maguire as McCann, Goldberg’s sidekick who delights in tearing strips of newspaper slowly and hypnotically.

Then too, there’s Mary Strozier as Meg, a homebody with the bizarre talent of unleashing the forces of darkness with a single, simple non sequitur; Tom Davis as Petey, Meg’s husband, who leads the life of a mollusk and wants little more; and Roberta Reed as Lulu, a girl with high ideals and a low, low neckline who’s addicted to opening briefcases.

Provoking Reality
If this seems disconnected, and strikingly unrelated, don’t panic. The combination of such characters makes for a drama of highest intensity with little provocation. Pinter isn’t absurd, but frighteningly real—and “The Birthday Party” becomes an adventure into reality.

Neil Havens, director of the Players, has described this play as one of the most exciting things the Players have ever done. From rehearsals thus far, the statement seems to hold true.

Tickets go on sale today in the RMC. All seats are reserved and should be snapped up as soon as possible. Performance starts at 8 pm Wednesday, October 12, and runs through Saturday.