

'Sex, Lies' show zips along using top-notch improv

Gross National

Product troupe

takes comic jabs

at all the

politicians

you love

to hate

By David Armstrong
EXAMINER STAFF CRITIC

IT WON'T LAST as long as Kenneth Starr's investigation of the Clintons, of course, but Gross National Product's political comedy show at the Push Room, which opened in April, has just been extended through the end of August.

Another thing: Unlike Starr and his prurient, pricey and plodding efforts, the Washington, D.C.-based GNP are funny on purpose.

GNP's "Sex, Lies and Zippergate" is a fast-paced 90 minutes without an intermission. Running Friday and Saturday nights at the Push Room — the die-hard home of cabaret in San Francisco — "Sex, Lies..." is about one-third improvisation. The balance of the show, performed by a three-man, two-woman troupe, is scripted sketch comedy, with a good number of musical parodies thrown into the mix.

'Sex, Lies' uses top-notch improv

disapproval, Monica Lewinsky's knowing innocence, former NEA head Jane Alexander's prim superiority, and a transparently goofy and greedy evangelical couple ("Wayne and Ellen") who push a New Age brand of disrespect con-

sciousness.

The Push Room, with an elevated stage that's big enough to hold the troupe and space for the audience that's small enough to be intimate, is a good venue for this show, with its frequent interaction between audience and performer.

Blessedly, the Push Room also honors California's no-smoking



The players worked smartly off audience suggestions and news items such as the Federal Reserve Bank's move to prop up the Japanese yen, which doesn't sound like it would be funny on the face of it.

However, San Francisco actor Chris Pray, whom comedy fans will remember for his work with S.F.'s now-dispersed National Theater of the Deranged, took the yen suggestion and ran with it. Pray improvised a clever, fast, finger-snapping "Beathnik poem" about America and Japan that ended with "Godzilla is coming our way — and he's gay!"

The GNP players are especially good at lampooning Bill Clinton's libido, Hillary Rodham Clinton's wooden

[See SKETCH, C-6]

Perched at the bar, casting a rueful glance toward the door, a guy complains "I'm trying to forget. But I can't smoke in here, and I can't drink out there." What's a hardboiled, angst-ridden, film noir type to do? Or a politician accustomed to smoke-filled rooms, for that matter?

A gray-wigged Scott Keck does a fine turn as Bill Clinton, complete with a presidential press conference in which the audience poses questions. "To a woman who said she works in a high school, Keck-as-Clinton — all scratchy-voiced warmth and good old boy inflections — quips "I can get you a better job. You might like a private tour of the executive branch."

Best of show, though, are Simmons and Christine Thompson as Wayne and Ellen, frenetically working the room giving their get-rich pith. With Thompson tossing her hair and barking "Go for it!" and "Whoaaaa!" they assure us that "Getting money and getting stuff is what life's all about. We can all live our lives much more goonder and much more better."

This worked for me. Politicians come and go, and logical humor ages fast. But greed and self-delusion, fueled by the huckster's art, are forever.

Gross National

Product founders

Christine Thomp-

son and John Sim-

mons in perfor-

mance at the Push

Room.