

WashingtonWeekend

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SECTION M

COMEDY TROUPES

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Comic 'explosion' set off by troupes old and new adds fresh fun to city made for satire

Gross National Product

The Bayou

3135 K St. NW

333-2897

Saturdays at 7:30 p.m., \$11.50.

(Scandal Tours meet Saturdays at

5 p.m. at the Ritz-Carlton hotel.

Call 783-7212 for more information.)

Gross National Product's "Bushcapades" revue of skits, songs and improv has a reputation in town for having the fastest guns when it comes to current parody.

As well as its Saturday night show, GNP prepares brief political "cartoon" sketches for TV news shows each Friday. "You've got to see a story coming," said GNP founder and writer John Simmons, sounding like a news reporter. "It's just a matter of time before something happens."

That was true of the GNP frying-pan Public Service Announcement, a popular spot since last spring: Holding up a pan with a photo of Marion Barry in it, a GNP member says, "This is your mayor." He throws in a fried egg. "This is your mayor on drugs."

Only the most humorless extremist could label the GNP "Bush-bashers," Mr. Simmons maintains. And the group's even-

handed performance last Saturday bears that out. "Bush is a major figure in the show, but he happens to be the president. If it were [Michael] Dukakis, it would be the same," he said. "How can you do complimentary political satire?"

Playing the president on a recent Saturday night, Mr. Simmons delivered an upbeat monologue full of get-tough talk: "We're in the midst of a drug war, and we're taking prisoners: Manuel Noriega and Marion Barry, for instance," he said, to roars from the crowd.

The mayor's arrest was, not surprisingly, a big topic last weekend. A Lee Atwater impersonator, hosting an "America's Most Wanted" sketch, described Mr. Barry as a man "with an eye for the ladies and a nose for trouble."

Vice President Dan Quayle came in for his share, as did ex-hippie yuppies, the B-3 bomber and big-bank corporations.

GNP has been making Washington funny business since 1980, when the city was completely without a comedy troupe — or a venue for one.

"We used to have to perform between rock bands at the Psychedelly or the Childe Harold," Mr. Simmons said.

Over the years, the show's themes have changed with the times. When the Iran-Contra scandal broke, it was "Man Without a Contra." When the Democratic presidential candidates were on the campaign trail, it was "Ten Little Candidates." And when the musical "Phantom of the Opera" opened on Broadway, it was "Phantom of the White House." "Bushcapades" has been the show's title since the inauguration last year.

To warm up audience members — especially tourists — before the show, GNP offers its much-publicized "Scandal Tour" of Washington, a bus tour hosted by impersonators of Richard Nixon, Fawn Hall, Marilyn Monroe, Marilyn Quayle and G. Gordon Liddy, among others, who point out their favorite scandalous landmarks.

The bus leaves from the Ritz-Carlton hotel at 5 p.m., and arrives at the Bayou just in time for the show at 7:30 p.m.