

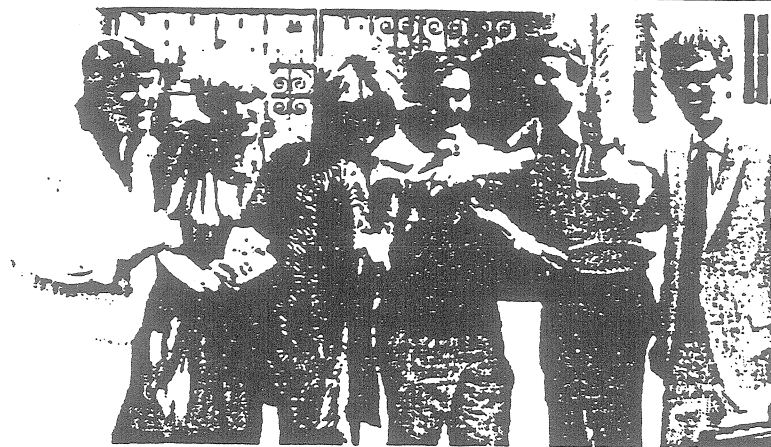
# DRAMA-LOGUE

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## THEATRE REVIEWS



The Gross National Product comedy troupe from Washington, D.C., pose before the Paramount Studio gates prior to opening 'Man Without a Contra'

### Man Without a Contra

Presented by GNP; Cast Theatre, 800 N. El Centro, Hollywood; (213) 462-0265. Opened July 31; plays Fri.-Sat., 10:30; runs indefinitely.

BY STEVEN ZELLER

There's really no difference between *Saturday Night Live*, *SCTV* and *Gross National Product*, that is except for the fact that the latter six-member comedy troupe is now in town from their home base of Washington, D.C. to let us Los Angelenos see why they're so popular in the nation's capital. All three, in fact, have much in common: non-stop comedy sketches, irreverent and sarcastic attitudes on topical issues and life in general, absurd but likable silliness, talented performers (some of whom double as writers) and the unerring ability to put as much energy and excitement into the skits that are clinkers as they do with the good ones.

*Man Without a Contra*, GNP's current show, fortunately has many more winning elements than not. Their 15 sketches are drawn from today's headlines and television programming, all of which makes sarcastic fun of Ollie, Tammy Faye, condoms—anything that happens to be hot and trendy and worthy of ridicule. There are no props or set pieces to speak of, save for a few folding chairs, so all the performers have to rely on is themselves and their well crafted material. They work hard and furiously for an hour, and though no revelations or breakthroughs are made artistically or otherwise, it's time well spent.

It is hard not to like "Haagen Dasz," the Norse Opera, where H.D., Flusen Gladje and Mr. Frostie Freeze are saved by the Dairy Queen. Or, "Tiger Beat," where a couple of adolescent girls are screaming and gasping over photos of Gary Hart and Oliver North in their favorite mag. Or, "The Prince," the story of a young royal suitor asking for the hand of a princess in three speeds—33, 45 and 78. Or, a confrontation between the Pope and the surgeon general over condoms in "The Papal's Court." Or, Democratic presidential hopefuls singing "I hope I get it. I really need this job" in "A Caucus Line." Or . . .

Of course, not all of the routines work. The Bakkers' hosting "The Late Show" is tired and tedious while "Oliver's Travels," a somewhat funny but overly long three-part "Mission Impossible/The Wizard of Oz/Let's Make a Deal" parody is just too overdone.

James Bowling, Jayne Hamil, Chuck Kovacic, Peggy Maltby, Joel Perry and John Simmons are the choice performers who change characters, looks, clothes, voices and personalities faster than Tammy Faye can cry. Written by Simmons and Petty and directed by Simmons with Susan Marya Baronoff, *Man Without a Contra*'s content may be rehashed news stories but they're made fresh and vibrant by dead-on talent.