

San Francisco Chronicle

DATEBOOK

SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 1998

COMEDY REVIEW

Making Headlines Hilarious

D.C. troupe satirizes sex scandal and more

By Mick LaSalle
CHRONICLE STAFF CRITIC

Not to take anything away from Gross National Product, the talented comedy troupe playing the Plush Room, but these are good days for political satirists. Put a woman onstage in a beret, and you're halfway home. A few jokes about certain forms of lovemaking, and the audience is in stitches.

"Sex, Lies & Zippergate," which opened Thursday, is 90 minutes of sketches and songs inspired by today's headlines.

The crowd pleaser that begins the show has Hillary Rodham Clinton (Chris Thompson) confronting Monica Lewinsky (Cici Sangley): "Ross Perot warned us about a 'giant sucking sound.' He thought it was coming from Mexico, but it was coming from you!"

Two things, in particular, make the Washington, D.C.-based Gross National Product stand out from other satirical troupes. The players



MICHAEL MALONEY / The Chronicle

Chris Thompson as Hillary Clinton (right) confronted Cici Sangley as Monica Lewinsky in "Sex, Lies & Zippergate."



SEX, LIES & ZIPPERGATE:

Political satire. Written and performed by Gross National Product. Directed by John Simmons. (At the Plush Room, York Hotel, 940 Sutter St., San Francisco. (415) 885-2800.)

are funny, and they are equal-opportunity bashers. Republicans, Democrats, Gingrich, Clinton, Gore — they all get it, and they all should. Satire needs a cold eye.

With satirists, warmth is a sign of death.

Monica material ("I wanna play swallow the leader!") makes up only part of the show. One of the funniest bits has former NFA honcho Jane Alexander (Thompson) making a grim speech about arts funding, flanked on one side by a sign-language translator and on the other side by a mime.

The cast is versatile and energetic. Jim Ward does a good Clinton impersonation and a dead-on Gin-

grich. John Simmons plays Gore and imitates Lee Greenwood singing the '84 Reagan campaign theme. He sounds just like him.

On Thursday, Chris Pray, who also does a smiling Ken Starr, stole the show by quickly extemporizing a rhyming poem, in Beat style, about two topics tossed out from the audience — Willie Brown and the location of Linda McCartney's death.

It was either an amazingly slick trick or a brilliant feat of improv.