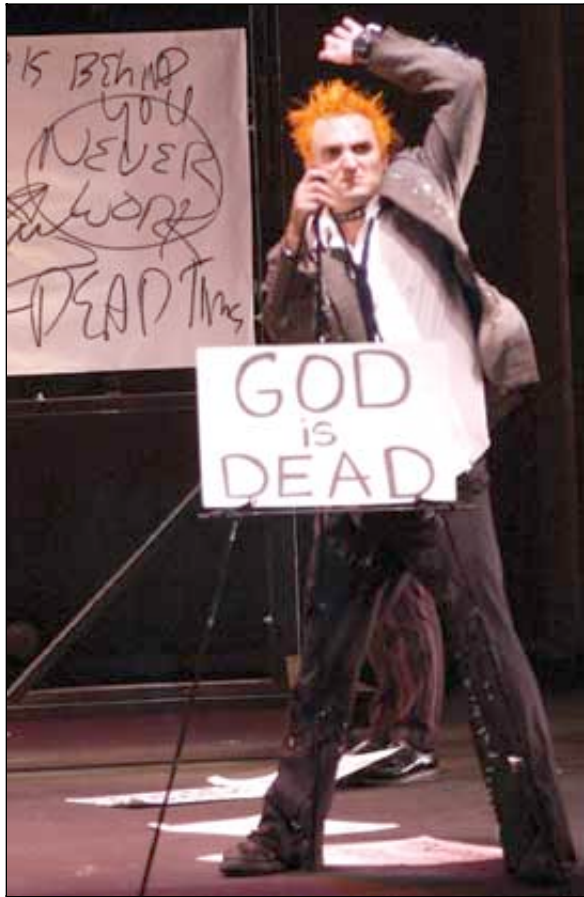


THE DAILY BRUIN ONLINE 9/30/2002

Birth of the Punk

Play 'lipstick traces' sends audiences on journey through genre's history



MARY HOLSCHER/DAILY BRUIN SENIOR STAFF
Jason Liebrecht portrays Sex Pistols legend Johnny Rotten in "Lipstick Traces," now playing at UCLA.

By **Siddarth Puri**
DAILY BRUIN SENIOR STAFF
spuri@media.ucla.edu

No, "Lipstick Traces" is definitely not about make-up.

In fact, it's about the punk revolutionary Johnny Rotten and the aftershocks of the Sex Pistols. It's a time-travel play exploring the punk movement through the ages. The journey is traced from 16th-century heretic John of Leyden (whose name is a precursor to John Lydon, Rotten's real name), to the intellectuals who were catalysts in the 1968 riots in Paris, to the present. It's history. It's evolution. It's punk.

Created and directed by Shawn Sides, and now playing at UCLA, "Lipstick Traces" is adapted from Greil Marcus' cult classic book bearing the same title.

Set against a plain black backdrop, the production is composed of a melange of melted scenes held together by the interspersed commentary from actors as well as from the self-proclaimed Dr. Narrator.

"The show is basically a punk rock concert for your head," said Melanie Joseph, artistic director for the Foundry Theater which produced the show. "If you need to work out your head or get a few gut laughs in, this production will definitely

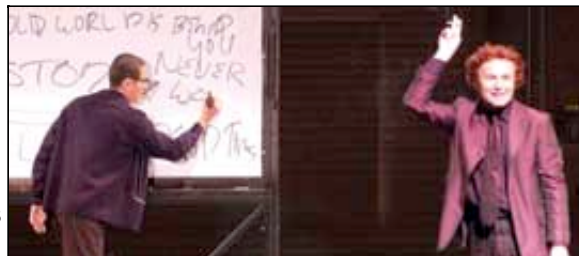
help you out."

Sides conceived this production on a dare from her colleagues and then decided to actually put her conception into action.

According to Sides, Marcus' 500-page novel didn't exactly jump out as a perfect play. However, after long nights, Marxist study sessions and group discussions, the play and its multifaceted themes began to emerge.

Marcus' original book recounts Johnny Rotten's voice and what that voice means to him. He covers history from around 1200 to the present through Rotten's voice and describes how important this voice was in punk history.

Marcus also raises the point that if punk music is so important to numerous people of that day,



why aren't the songs mentioned in history books or recorded as important events?

"Basically, the book is about the impulse of negation, Johnny Rotten's voice and where that voice emerges throughout history," said Kirk Lynn, who adapted the book for its current production. "It is an expression that this voice is important and the impulse that it conveys is significant to recognizing the movement."



MARY HOLSCHER/DAILY BRUIN SENIOR STAFF
Henry Stram (right) and Darren Pettie in "Lipstick Traces."

Though the play was based on the book's events, it takes the events and makes them into a fast-paced production that has everything from bedazzling lights to crazy characters, according to Sides.

"The play had to be fast and energetic – like a punk rock song," Sides said. "Just as Marcus wrote in his novel, there's something about a punk rock song; whatever it is, it has to say it very quickly and very powerfully."

Thus, the production team for "Lipstick Traces" decided to use all necessary prerequisites for a gnarly punk rock concert: loud banging background music, blinding fluorescent lights, gray clouds of smoke and, of course, the musings of Johnny Rotten.

Quickly moving from time period to time period, the play captures the essence of the punk rock movement with quick wit from Dr. Narrator as well as the cast, according to Joseph. Each period, the actors attempt to portray the evolution of the punk rock movement by using pertinent people such as John of Leyden, Johnny Rotten and the Sex Pistols group members, but also attempts to enlighten audience members.



MARY HOLSCHER/DAILY BRUIN SENIOR STAFF
Lana Lesley and Darren Pettie take the stage in "Lipstick Traces."

"We want audience members to walk out of the theater reliving their punk days," said Joseph. "Knowing the punk rock culture and either reliving it or living it for the first time opens your eyes to a new revolution of thought."

Just as Marcus took the mental state of the punk rock revolution to a different level in his novel, these artists attempt to take the history to a visually appealing level that entices the senses and draws the audience in, making them recognize the power of the movement, according to Maryam Griffin, a second-year mathematics and philosophy student.

"However, people come out of the play – we want them to know that they have learned something about the punk rock culture," Sides said. "Hopefully, for many audience members, the play will make them want to go get drunk and go argue with someone around a table."

THEATER: "Lipstick Traces" is playing at Macgowan's Little Theater every day through Oct. 20 (dark on Mondays) at 8 p.m., Sundays at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$15 for students and \$35 for general admission and can be purchased at the UCLA Central Ticket Office and at all Ticketmaster outlets.

Web Address: <http://www.dailybruin.ucla.edu/news/articles.asp?ID=20822>