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Punk history covered in 'Lipstick Traces'

Regan Michalski

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The off-Broadway performance of "Lipstick Traces : A Secret History of the 20th Century" will make its first stop of its national tour at the Wexner Center today until Sunday.

The loud, fast-paced, 75 minute adaptation of music critic Greil Marcus' book traces the history of anarchy and punk. "Lipstick Traces" asks the question, "Who makes history?" The six member cast attempts an answer through enacting events of Johnny Rotten's first audition for the Sex Pistols, a Dada evening at the Cabaret Voltaire and Michel Mourre's 1950 siege on Notre Dame.

Certain incidents become questionable and the characters begin to doubt history and discover possible alternatives. The characters make their own history in back alleys and smoky bars while finding pivotal life moments in things like lipstick traces on cigarettes.

"Lipstick Traces" is noted for its wide range in audience from young punk rock fans, Dada aficionados, intellectuals, to those who never go to the theater.

The Austin, Tx. theater group Rude Mechanicals composes the traveling cast. Writer Kirk Linn and director Shawn Sides of Rude Mechanicals created the stage version in 1999. It premiered off-Broadway to critical acclaim in early 2001.

Founded in 1995, Rude Mechanicals received national attention after their creation of "Lipstick Traces," which will tour through this spring. The group is committed to developing new voices in the theater and looks to Wexner Center favorite Anne Bogart's SITI company for inspiration.

Rude Mechanicals formed after a small group of performers became tired of the hierarchies in theater. They wanted to be able to use all of their talents together. There is no single artistic director, but rather a core of five who guide the young theater company. The company has received 75 nominations for artistic excellence from the B. Iden Payne Awards and Austin's Critics table awards and received 14 of those awards.

This year the group will be creating a new piece tentatively titled "The Mafia Project." This will explore the idea of "The West" through road movies, Western pulp novels, and James Dean. Over the next two years Rude Mechanicals will produce the world premiere of David Hancocks's "Ordering Seconds," world premiere adaptations of James Kelman's novel "How Late it Was, How Late" and Ann Bannon's classic lesbian pulp fiction series "Beebo Brinker."

The author Marcus gave a free reading from his cult classic book and discussed its adaptation to the stage yesterday at the Wexner Center. He had no hand in turning his book into a stage performance but responded

to what Rude Mechanicals created.

According to an article in ARTtalk, Marcus said, "they staged the book I wanted to write."

Marcus writes regular columns for Interview and salon.com. He also contributes to "Bookforum," "Threepenny Review," Rolling Stone, and The New York Times. He has become one of the world's most known music critics reviewing bands from The Clash to the Beatles and even Elvis.

"Lipstick Traces" will run today and tomorrow at 8 p.m., Saturday at 3 and 8 p.m., and Sunday at 3 p.m.

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