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## Full Disclosure

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TUESDAY, 28 JUNE 2011 12:15 | LISA JENSEN [A&E - THEATER](#)



### **Cabrillo Stage's fun, raucous 'Full Monty' delivers the goods**

As a property, "The Full Monty" is not for the fainthearted. A live stage musical based on the 1997 film of the same name about laid-off factory workers who produce a full frontal male strip act to raise some cash and reclaim their manhood, it's peppered with profanity, features various degrees of nudity, and demands plenty of singing, dancing and chutzpah from its actors. Any company that dares to put this show on the boards had better have the goods to back it up.

Fortunately, Cabrillo Stage makes all the right moves in its ambitious and entertaining production of "The Full Monty," the first of three shows in its 30th anniversary summer

season. A lively cast, er, rises to the occasion in every respect, under the bold and thoughtful direction of Dustin Leonard. Andrew Ceglio's choreography maintains a level of breezy audacity in the bump-and-grind numbers, but also creates specific movement for each character that helps define their personalities over the course of the show, especially the male characters nervous about their upcoming revelations; we can see them literally loosening up as the story progresses. Skip Epperson's inventive factory wall set reveals an evolving series of indoor and outdoor spaces. The live orchestra under the baton of conductor Jon Nordgren was a bit uneven on opening night, especially in the overtures, but they should tighten up during the run of the show.

With a smart book by veteran playwright Terrence McNally and buoyant pop songs by David Yazbek, the stage production relocates the film story from the depressed north of England to equally depressed Buffalo, N.Y., where laid-off workers are scrambling to pay their bills and cling to their self-esteem after months of unemployment. Chief among these is Jerry Lukowski, played with caustic humor and heart by the dynamic Kyle Payne. A fast-talking, good-hearted screw-up who can't keep up child support payments to his estranged wife, Pam (a sympathetic Jessica Payne, Kyle's real-life wife), Jerry is in danger of losing co-custody of the 12-year-old son he adores, Nathan (an appealing Darwin Garrett).



As the show opens, the ladies of the town (all still employed, and supporting their husbands) are getting raucous at a local night spot over a touring group of male Chippendale strippers. (Josh Saleh is great sexy fun as the deadpan professional peeler whose act opens the show.) Meanwhile, Jerry and his buddies are bemoaning their marked-down status as former breadwinners in the vigorous ensemble number, "Scrap." When Jerry and his chubby best pal, Dave (a funny and poignant Kevin High), sneak into the club via the men's bathroom and overhear their womenfolk raving about the show, Jerry hatches the scheme to put on their own strip act. The hook is, they'll be "real men" (i.e. straight and un-buffed) performing for their women.

Much of the story revolves around the challenges facing each participant. Dave not only has weight issues (he even sings a funny counterpoint to the love song, "You Rule My World," to his stomach), he's also been too depressed to "perform" with his frisky, devoted wife, Georgie (a boisterous Robin DiCello). Former shop foreman, Harold (Darin Dailey) still leaves for work every morning, afraid to tell his free-

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spending wife, Vicki (the scene-stealing Alice Hughes), he's lost his job. Timid Malcolm (Dan Housek, who has the sweetest singing voice in the group), still lives with his mother, and needs friends and a sense of independence.

Auditions also turn up an aging, black man called "Horse" (an exuberant Jarrod Washington, in his best Cabrillo Stage performance yet), whose soul/funk audition is a riot, despite a bum hip. Lovable young Ethan (an engaging Andrew Woodward-Willis) admits he's not much of a singer or dancer, but earns a spot in the revue thanks to his one singular asset; we don't actually see it, but the others' reaction—especially the frozen awe of Payne/Jerry's dumbstruck five-minute double-take—is the single funniest moment in the show. And the guys are egged on by rehearsal pianist Jeanette, played with brassy, showbizzy brio by Claire Hodgkin.

Recommended for mature audiences, due to language and some nudity, "The Full Monty" is an outrageously funny show, one of the most successful productions in Cabrillo Stage history. But serious themes of tolerance, solidarity, and self image are also handled with crowd-pleasing dexterity—especially when Jerry rashly promises to deliver "the full monty" (complete public disclosure) in their act. The show-stopping ensemble number "The Goods" is all about measuring up to impossible standards. Another highlight (in a completely different vein) is Payne's tender solo "Breeze Off the River," sung by Jerry to his sleeping son.

Which brings us to the grand finale, when we become the strip club audience. And, yes, this show delivers, albeit with some sneaky lighting effects. But, hey, that's why they call it striptease.

The Cabrillo Stage production of "The Full Monty" plays in repertoire through July 17, in the Crocker Theater, Cabrillo College. For more info, call 479-6154, or visit [cabrillostage.com](http://cabrillostage.com).

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