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# **In praise of older women**

**Quintet of comics taps bottomless source of mirth: 'We're laughing at ourselves'**

**Elizabeth Withey, The Edmonton Journal**

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COMEDY PREVIEW

Women Fully Clothed

Where: Jubilee Auditorium

Tickets: \$42.85 to \$52.85 plus service charges at all Ticketmaster outlets

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EDMONTON -- Don't expect a comic strip at the Jubilee Wednesday night.

Canadian comedy troupe Women Fully Clothed won't shed a single item of clothing. But the audience is bound to shed some tears of laughter at the five-member group's satirical sketches about women's everyday lives.

Contrary to some misconceptions, the name Women Fully Clothed is not an attack on alt-rockers Barenaked Ladies. Rather, it's a cheeky jab at the notion that females are expected to bare all -- we're talking skin, not soul -- to qualify as entertainment.

"It was a joke on nude women, since that's what you usually see," said Robin Duke, who is best known for her writing and acting on Saturday Night Live. "You know: Finally, women with their clothes on. We don't have to do that (undress) to get a laugh."

But the name has come to mean so much more. For Duke, it's a nod to the layers of life experience she has earned as a woman. For Kathryn Greenwood, an award-winning comedian whose TV credits include *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* and *Wind At My Back*, it's about facing new challenges.

The all-star cast of funny women bodes well for this performance, touring Alberta and British Columbia in 2008 after success at both the Edinburgh Fringe and the Montreal Comedy Festival. Television actress Debra McGrath currently stars in the CBC sitcom *Little Mosque on the Prairie*. Teresa Pavlinek is a Second City vet who starred in *The Jane Show* and the Gemini-nominated series *History Bites*. And comic legend Jayne Eastwood's credits include roles in the television series *This is Wonderland* and feature films such as *Chicago* (2002) and *Hairspray* (2007).

But all that experience, Duke said, was seen as past its prime in the industry.

"Who's going to produce five women, middle-aged? No one out there was looking for that," she said.

So the five women produced themselves. It was Duke who served as the catalyst for show, which grew out of a one-time Toronto fundraiser in 2003. "We did this show and the chemistry was just amazing. We just clicked. There was a feeling of joy."

Greenwood took the most convincing to keep the ball rolling. "You know those moms who can do everything and look great? Well, I'm not one of those moms. I was so prepared to be at home with the kids, not working. But Robin kept bugging."

Grudgingly, she went along with the idea.

"As soon as I started hanging out with these gals,

I realized it was healthy for me," she said. "Like every female experience, it's going out with your friends and laughing and eating."

Women Fully Clothed taps into experiences women can relate to -- getting a mammogram, trying to squeeze into low-cut jeans, being in a book club with someone who doesn't read the book. But Women Fully Clothed speaks to a broad audience.

"Our comedy comes from us," Greenwood said. "We are female, with female experiences, so the female part of the audience loves it. But the men love it, too."

"So many women say, 'You've read my mind; how did you know?' " she said. "Well, because we've been there. We're laughing at ourselves."