

THE VOTES ARE IN: BEST OF NEWFOUNDLAND INSIDE!

HERALD

The Newfoundland

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HERALD

by the name of Newfoundland

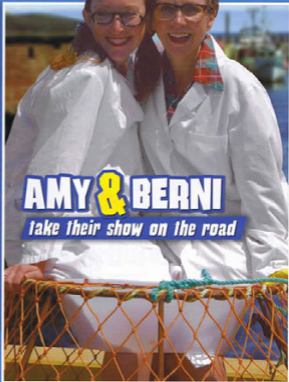
by the name of Newfoundland



TARZAN & JANE:
NTV'S NEW
FALL SHOW



THE TITANIC:
LARRY DALEY'S
INCREDIBLE
ADVENTURE



AMY & BERNI

take their show on the road



Berni and Amy

Comedy speaks for all of us

Berni and Amy, Amy and Berni, let's get this show on the road. Kinda got a ring to it, don't it?

The wickedly witty, wildly wonderful women of Newfoundland and Labrador comedy are up and running, and if you want to catch them you'd better get your tickets to the show.

Their new show, *One Unforgettable Night with Two Unforgettable Dames*, is directed by Lois Brown and stars the grand dames of comedy, the irreplaceable Amy House and the extraordinary Berni Stapleton. Treading the boards for over 20 years, this rat pack of two still doesn't look a day over ... 43? It's like Shirley McLaine meets Madonna, Lucille Ball meets Carol Burnett.

Glamour, vanity, and sharp comedy explore universal themes. How much comedy can you stand in one evening? Take your heart pills, bring your back brace, fasten your dentures, lock up your little houses outdoors, and dart out the road to see

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Amy House and Berni Stapleton use Newfoundland humour as fodder for their routines.

the girls. They'll soon to be in a legion or town hall near you.

One Unforgettable Night with Two Unforgettable Dames distills two decades of stand-up comedy, skits and monologues into one fabulous main-stage show. Two acts in 90 minutes focus on the universal issues of family, parenting, femaleness, and friendship. The characters they portray range from slick, stand-up stylists to elderly pundits. The male perspective is also presented, as is a Shakespearean translation, and both ladies shine when they demonstrate what Newfoundland theatre is best known for — the skit. The show is brand new to the stage. It debuted at the LSPU Hall for a two-week run this past April.

Berni and Amy's infamous fish plant workers, Beatrice and Wilma,

are on strike again — even though the plant is closed down. What odds. They'll go on strike about something. They need to be heard and hear them you will. "The only strike that will do any good now is if someone strikes.

Robert Thibault in the head." Jim and Joe, the old guys down by the stagehead, make up the most famous Newfoundland folk songs in five minutes, but they don't have a pencil to write them down. There are the familiar characters that we've come to love, but as never before House and Stapleton speak directly to the audience with wit and

generosity. This show moves with rhythm and sparkles with energy. *One Unforgettable Night with Two Unforgettable Dames* gives us Stapleton and House at their best, not only as writers, celebrities, performers of quality and depth, but

"We're both little devils on stage."

— Amy House

also as human beings.

The show includes new pieces from Stapleton's *Burred Bard Chick Tells All in Shakespeare's Women* and House's rich portrait of an elderly woman, musing on everything from tossed salads, hysterectomies, and artificial insemination.

Picking the best

"Last fall we dug out all the skits and monologues we'd written over the past 20 years to pick the best of," House says with a laugh.

"When putting the show together, we realized we had enough best material for several two-hour shows, and that's not counting the ad-libbing and spontaneous reactions we incorporate into the show at any given time," she adds.

This show moves with rhythm and sparkles with energy

"That's the magic of live performance, anything can happen. Every show is different. We're both little devils on stage. We're bound and determined to do something unpredictable or ridiculous that will crack the other one up during a performance. The challenge is to keep a straight face while the other one is working out."

Working out refers to flexing their comedic muscles, taking the situation to the nth degree, thinking outside the box, making a face that protrudes the chin farther than the nose can reach, and staring the other one down with a dare.

"I bet you can't not laugh. Together we do the same with the audience. We love to hear laughter," says House.

"Our comedy comes from real stories and real experiences. Truth and reality is humour. It just takes a specific slant on the story to make it funny. One of the funniest things for us is that people can't tell us apart. That's why our audience loves us, because they don't know the difference. We speak for the common people; that is the people of the fish plants or the people of the Commons, same thing. The truth is we thought we'd be someone by now, but we're not, we're some two."

Funny rules

On their own, their individual talents are forces enough to reckon with, but together they're no-holds barred. "One is not allowed to be funnier than the other. That's the rule. We just keep trying to outdo each other. That's one of the reasons people come to see us; they don't know how far we'll take the joke," says House.

Their talent doesn't stop with comedy. Stapleton has just recently returned from Toronto where she took part in a national playwriting workshop with Canadian Stage. She completed two new plays while she was there. Last month, *The Pope and Princess Di* was one of nine plays chosen from 350 nationally to be read at the On the Verge Festival in Ottawa. Next August, local theatre company Artistic Fraud will produce *The Pope and Princess Di*, a play about the journey of two women with breast cancer, at the Arts and Culture Centre in St. John's. Berni also has a one-woman show that will be produced by The Resource Centre for the Arts Theatre Company next January-

February. *Barred Chic Tells All in Shakespeare's Women* is a wacky account of the long-lost illegitimate great, great, great, etc. granddaughter of Shakespeare, Eve, who discovers her lineage while digging potatoes in a downtown St. John's backyard. From that day forward, she makes it her personal crusade to appear in every Shakespearean production within the known universe.

As for House, last year she was appointed artistic amateur of RCA Theatre Company. Her work there required a more administrative focus encompassing grant applications, budgets and reports, fundraising, production management, and media relations. "This job has re-established my con-

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On their own, their individual talents are forces enough to reckon with, but together they're no-holds barred



nection to all production aspects of theatre, from the seed idea of a show to the developed production on the stage, and every component in between. What's been wonderful is working with the many artists in the community. Actors, directors, designers, stage managers, technicians — this job has afforded me the opportunity to work closely with all these artists in the community and gives me a better appreciation of the true talent in this province, especially when we are all collaborating and working together toward one goal. There is a real feeling of camaraderie and I love it."

Back-room cavorting

Even with the responsibilities of her position at the Resource Centre for the Arts, House didn't cease her comedy routines for the convention and conference market. The darling of the private-party circuit, she brings that back-room cavorting and frolicking to the stage. House is also working on a new stage-play about the reunion of six high school friends called *Compared to What*, but says her first year at RCA Theatre Company



Fans often have trouble telling House (right) and Stapleton apart.

left little time for that aspect of her career. "I am hoping to have an assistant next season at RCA," says House "this will free up a little time to pursue other quests. Then Berni will teach me everything she has learned at her recent writing workshops so that I can be a great Canadian playwright just like her." Stapleton will dramaturge *Com-*

pared to What over the next year.

Lois Brown, the director of *One Unforgettable Night* with *Two Unforgettable Dames*, is delighted to be working with Stapleton and House, now that they are *Dames*. Last time she worked with the two gals they were just broads on the boards. Lois also directed the duo in *A Tidy Package*, a dramedy about two sisters coping with the cod moratorium. Written by House and Stapleton, *A Tidy Package* has recently been published for study in Canadian colleges, and was produced as part of the Grand Bank Summer Theatre Festival this year.

World famous

In September, the women are showcasing for Contact East 2003, Atlantic Canada's showcase of talent for regional, national and international buyers. "We're already world famous in Newfoundland and Labrador. Contact East will give us the opportunity to broaden our audience," says House. "Once we tell Canadians everything we have to say, then we can start on our world tour. We hear they have nice hotels and some very nice wine in Italy and Australia."

House and Stapleton's showcase



No topic is sacred when it comes to the comedy of House and Stapleton.

for Contact East will take place at the Majestic Theatre at 11 p.m. on Sept. 26.

"It is very important to both of us to have careers independent of each other, as well as to be performing as a duo. There was a time when most of our work was together; but it got to be too much," says House.

"Then we had a big racket, broke up, stayed away from each other, got our independence working as solo artists, and then we kissed and made up. That's the whole story in a nutshell. We missed each other, the fun we had. So, now, the two nuts are out of the shell and are on the road again," says House. "We love good food, fine wine, nice hotels and making people laugh. We thought we'd be rich and famous by now, but we're only famous in our own minds, and we're not rich in anybody's minds. We don't mind being famous, mind you, but we'd mind being rich better." ☛



*Be prepared for a blast at the upcoming tour **One Unforgettable Night with Two Unforgettable Dames**.*