

THE FULL MONTY

a detailed synopsis

act one

It's the present, in Buffalo, New York. The recession has hit, and many of the men in the community have been laid off from their jobs at the steel factory. The women of the city, many of whom are supporting their husbands at this time, seek some form of entertainment and they find it onstage at Tony Giordano's club. It's "Girls' Night Out" and the feature attraction onstage is Buddy "Keno" Walsh - the personification of male physical perfection in an expensive business suit, though not for long. Soon enough, Keno is down to a G-string and accepting the cheers and screams (and dollar bills) from the women in the club. "Who says Buffalo doesn't rock?"

While the women are having a night out, the guys are having a different kind of meeting. They're at their union meetinghouse to pick up their weekly cheques. Their discontent is beginning to show, and Jerry Lukowski commiserates with his best friend, the hopelessly overweight Dave Bukatinsky, as well as the somewhat simple-minded but good-hearted Ethan Girard and the sweet Malcolm MacGregor, who lives alone with his infirm mother - they all feel like "Scrap."

After the meeting, Jerry, who shares custody of his 12-year-old son Nathan, takes him to the bus stop outside Tony Giordano's club. Nathan tells Jerry not to worry, that he will get a job. Jerry says that he knows he will, but he's "waiting for the right situation. "You don't want to see you old man bussing tables, do you?" Nathan's response is simply "I wouldn't mind." Nathan tells Jerry he loves him; Jerry responds in kind and tells Nathan to get on the bus. In the meantime, Dave has been admiring the pictures of Keno that are outside the club. Jerry dismisses Keno's physique as a choice - "real guys don't look like that." When they overhear two women excitedly going into the club (and paying \$50 to do so), Jerry asks the women what the strippers have that he doesn't have. "Just about everything" is their response. When Jerry finds out that Dave's wife, Georgie is in the club watching, he insists that Dave go into the club and bring her out. Dave says he can't - he has to go home and do dishes, and besides it's ladies only, and Georgie organised the evening. At Jerry's urging they sneak in through the window of the men's room.

Once inside, the two hear the screams of the cheering women and then the sounds of Georgie and three friends entering the men's room because the line for the ladies' room is too long. Jerry and Dave take refuge in any empty stall while Georgie and her friends sing, "It's A Woman's World." Jerry's ex-wife Pam joins the three women, and Jerry and Dave overhear revelations about each other from the women. The women leave, and Jerry and Dave soon find themselves confronted by Keno in a G-string making a quick change into a cowboy outfit. Keno mistakes Jerry for a new dancer for the evening, and Jerry acidly proclaims his heterosexuality. Keno bitchily dismisses him, and as Jerry takes a swing at Keno, he misses, and Keno slugs him hard. He makes his way back onstage proclaiming, "Fairies: One. Christians: Zero!"

After Keno leaves, Jerry begins brainstorming about the money Keno makes and that if he and Dave - "real men" - were to strip, they could clean up. Dave needs to be convinced and Jerry does his best - after all, he's a "Man."

The next day Jerry is served with papers threatening to take Nathan away from him because he is over two months behind in child support payments. Pam is now living in a nice neighbourhood with a more stable man, Teddy Slaughter, who has asked to marry him. Pam tells Jerry that he should take any kind of job he can get and start to grow up. After an unpleasant confrontation with Teddy, Jerry leaves more determined than ever to make his stripping plan work.

Jerry and Dave are jogging (or rather, Dave is accompanying Jerry as he trains) when they come upon Malcolm attempting suicide by asphyxiation. They save him and offer him alternative ways to commit suicide, "Big-Ass Rock." Jerry invites Malcolm to join him in stripping and, since Malcolm has a part-time job as the night security guard at the abandoned steel plant, they now also have a place to rehearse.

Jerry engages Nathan to find them a dance teacher, and Nathan takes them to a dance school where they meet their old boss Harold Nichols and his wife Vicky. They're brushing up on their "cha-cha" for a trip to Puerto Rico. Harold hasn't told Vicki that he has been out of work for the past six months, and through desperation and the hint of blackmail Harold agrees to become the guys' choreographer. But before he can agree to that, Vicki tells them all about "Life With Harold."

The guys hold auditions and they aren't going well. However, their showbiz-savvy accompanist Jeanette Burmeister—who simply showed up “piano and all”—tells them they'll know when the right guys shows up. “He'll glimmer.” Enter Horse, a gnarled, depressing and seemingly arthritic 50-year-old man who seems to fulfil a certain kind of fantasy. “Big Black Man.”

Later, the good-natured Ethan shows up and openly proclaims that he can't dance or sing, but that he has something to offer. He drops his pants and Jeanette simply says, “Gentlemen, put on your sunglasses. We suddenly have a lot of glimmer.”

That night, while Georgie sleeps, Dave confronts his body image with a love song to his stomach. At the same time, Harold reflects on his adoration of Vicki. “You Rule My World.”

At the first rehearsal the following day, Harold is having a rough time getting the guys to do anything together. While Horse is off in the corner rehearsing “the funky chicken,” Ethan and Malcolm bond together over affection for the film “The Sound Of Music.” However, it is only when Harold reminds them that choreography is just like basketball that Jerry picks up on an idea, and suddenly their moves become teamwork—as long as they are imagining that they're playing with “Michael Jordan's Ball.”

act two

At rehearsal a week later, the mistress of understatement, Jeanette, sings that things could be better in “Jeanette's Showbiz Number.” To no avail, Ethan keeps insisting he can do Donald O'Connor's flip up a wall from “Singin' In The Rain.” And any attempt at choreography brings about disastrous results.

In order to perform at Tony Giordano's club, Jerry needs to come up with \$1,000 as a deposit. He tries to get it from Pam but she'll have none of it. Nathan, however, has money from his college savings account and gives it to Jerry. Jerry's watches his son sleep and is moved by the love he feels. “Breeze Off The River.”

Harold persuades Vicki to leave the house so that they can hold a rehearsal there. Jerry has given their group a name—Hot Metal. This is the day that the guys are going to take off all their clothes in front of each other for the first time. They are fraught with anxiety. When they are hypercritical of the sexy women in Victoria's Secret catalogue, they realize that their audience might be just as critical of them “The Goods.”

Nathan has gathered a small audience from a nearby nursing home for the final dress rehearsal at the steel plant, but as they are taking off their first layer of clothing they are raided by the police. In the confusion that follows, Malcolm and Ethan successfully escape to Malcolm's home where their attraction to one another is almost acknowledged, until Malcolm realizes something is wrong with his mother. Pam and Teddy arrive at the police station to pick up Nathan, and it's very clear to everyone that even if Jerry were to come up with the child support money, he wouldn't be able to share custody of Nathan.

At his mother's funeral, much to the surprise of Jerry and Dave and a few other mourners, Malcolm expresses his loneliness and longing, and finds that both will be ended by the warm heart and hand of Ethan. “You Walk With Me”

Jerry was afraid to disclose to the guys that sales for the show weren't going well. When told by a few women that the Buffalo Bills are playing that night, and, asked why after having seen “the real thing,” they should want to see a bunch of amateur local guys strip, Jerry quickly says (much to the shock and disbelief of the guys), “We're different—we go all the way! You heard me. What do they call it? The Full Monty.” Ticket sales start to take off.

Dave takes a job at Wal-Mart and tells Jerry he won't be performing in the show. Jerry considers Dave a traitor and their friendship is threatened. When Dave returns home from his first day at work, Georgie, upon discovering part of his stripping costume, confronts him about it. When, embarrassed, he confesses what he had been up to with the guys; she is relieved and supports him. She reaffirms her love for him, and he for her. At the same time, when Vicki finds out that Harold has been out of work, she reminds him that she loves him for himself, and not for what he can buy her. Both couples find their marriages and their love on stronger ground than ever “You Rule My World - Reprise.”

It's the night of the show, and backstage at Tony Giordano's club nervousness runs high. A beautifully coiffed Jeannette wishes all the guys good luck. Vicki tells them that Harold has gotten a job so he doesn't need to do this for the money, but she reminded him, “Harold, you have the rest of your life to wear a suit and tie—but only one night to be a member of Hot Metal!” Even Keno shows up to see if the guys will really go all the way.

Before they take their places Jerry decides that, since Dave chickened out, he also isn't going to do the show. But then Dave shows up and Jerry no longer has an excuse not to go through with it, except his old refrain—he's a failure. Nevertheless, the rest of the guys decide they can give a good show, without doing The Full Monty. They take their places onstage and the number begins. Backstage, Nathan confronts Jerry about why he isn't out there with the rest of the guys, and through a mixture of wisdom, passion and frank common sense, he tells his father, “This time don't be what everyone thinks you are—a loser.” Jerry realizes that this is a real opportunity to show the people who love him that he can follow through and not be afraid of his dreams and the responsibilities they bring. He joins his friends on stage midway through the number and by the end of the show, we know that The Full Monty isn't just about showing off the outside, it's about what all of us have in the inside, so “Let It Go.”