

POPULAR BREW

The Teabags make a refreshing change in live entertainment

When several madcap tea ladies were replaced by automated cafe bars in a large Melbourne office, they took to the streets to blow their horns and beat their drums. And they have caught the public eye in such a big way that they've become the toast of the town. There's rarely time for them to sit and have a cuppa these days!

This is the origin claimed by The Teabags, a group now making a splash in show business.

They say it helps to have a catchy name when looking as outrageous as they do — they wear vivid yellow uniforms and large headgear in zany shapes that combine to represent a tea-set. There are two cups, a big and a small teapot, a huge sugar bowl, milk jug, coffeepot, even a vase of flowers. The girls say that they made the headgear from papier-mache when they first became redundant.

The Teabags hand out imaginary sugar and dollops of cream as they make an extroverted statement on clarinets, saxophones, drums and trombones. Their mix of old-time favourites and rapcrackle-and-pop arrangements includes "Tea for Two", "Bushell's Blues" and "Carmen's Brew".

It's a slapstick blend that's always a



Lu Sexton, Marg Dobson, Jennie Swain, Kate Kantor and Kate Clere demonstrate their blend of entertainment.

crowd-pleaser, whether the group is busking in city streets, appearing at festivals in Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney, at conferences and conventions in some of the nation's smartest hotels, or kicking up their heels on a university campus. Right now, The Teabags are so "hot" they are invited to the swishest parties in town.

Unofficially, The Teabags confess they have never worked as tea ladies. They're a group of Melbourne friends, all

musicians, singers and actors, who created the tea lady characters as a gimmick. It worked — and they haven't looked back.

Not all The Teabags made The Weekly's photo call outside Melbourne Town Hall, but at full strength there are eight in the group — Kate Clere, Kelly Lappan, Kate Kantor, Tatiana Pago, Lu Sexton, Jennie Swain, Marg Dobson and Jo Trevathan.

— VERONICA MATHESON