

Breath of fresh Nova Scotia air

Ron James leaves 'em helpless with laughter

By COLIN MACLEAN, SPECIAL TO THE EDMONTON SUN

There is no doubt where Ron James hails from. Back home in the Maritimes, he was your funny uncle who convulsed us all at family gatherings. Or the MC who introduced Don Messer at the St. John Forum. Or the kid who broke everyone up at scout camp.

He's got the accent, the mannerisms and sense of humour that screams Maritimer - eh?

James is currently on yet another trans-Canada tour and the diminutive (five-foot-four), power-packed, big bang of Canuck comedy kept a full house rockin' with laughter at the sold-out Winspear last night.

James seems to be part fish. At least, when he's hot - as he was last night - the words tumble out of him at such a rate that he must be breathing through gills. In an age where situation and irony rule the comedic world, James is a breath of fresh Nova Scotia air. He has the classic comic's approach - rapid-fire setup leading to a killer delivery.



Ron James pumps it out at the Winspear Centre last night (Jordan Verlage/Special to the Sun)

Except that he is so all-fired funny that his whole act seems like one long punchline. Pyramiding joke on joke, he often left us helpless with laughter. He is a quick-jab verbal boxer dancing around a theme, taking his time and then closing in for the kill, delivering an ever-accelerating barrage of one- and two-line punches until you just want him to stop.

Although James is not above a cheap laugh from time to time, one is struck that this is a very intelligent comic with an eye for the absurd who bends and twists words and thoughts in a new and original way.

Half the fun is watching the pugnacious little guy go through his pumped-up physical gyrations on- stage. Packed with enough energy to hold off winter until Christmas, with his silly putty face and India rubber body, he is as comically animated physically as his impeccable timing and machine- gun delivery is hilarious verbally.

Says James:

"Saturday night in Edmonton. I'm livin' the dream."

"Fort McMurray is the land of the second chance. It's the only city in North America where the homeless make \$65 an hour.

As a kid, his school lunch sandwiches had a piece of ham so thin "the pig never felt it coming off his arse."

"It's not 9-11 that's killing the Americans. It's the 7-Eleven."

"Banff is the only place where you can buy a bear statue in the morning and get eaten by the real thing in the afternoon."

Harper: "I've seen more hair moving on a plastic Ken doll."

Peter and Belinda: "You can see the way she made her dough in the auto parts business the way she made him look like a tool."

"They smoke so much in Quebec they treat smokin' like it's a cure for cancer."

Bird flu: "Ahhh, it's spring and the birds are back. Run for your life."

Although many of his observations are salty, he is not an obscene comic. Such language as he uses only enhances his image as everyman on a rant. He assumes an attitude of mock outrage at the way average people are treated and so becomes the voice of us all - that is if all of us were as uncontrollably funny as Ron James.

James lances us with razor-sharp comment on life the way it's lived in Canada today.

We laugh at ourselves.

He knows it's the Canadian thing to do.

The popular comic is on his way to Peace River and Fort McMurray. The demand for tickets is so great that extra shows have been laid on. And if you missed his show - don't fret. He tells us he'll be swinging back this way for an encore on Jan. 18.