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James' laugh-a-minute performance perfect

By IAN NATHANSON -- Ottawa Sun

His name is Ron James. And, with all apologies to Molson's "Rant" campaign, he is Canadian. As the true ranteur of all things Canuck -- from Air Canada to Beavertails, from the bars of St. John's to cappuccino capitals Banff and Vancouver and all points in between -- the Maritime-born, Toronto-based stand-up comic let no subject go untouched with an I.V. of good ol' Canadian sarcasm, hey? To the laudable guffaws of the sold-out CentrepoinTE Theatre crowd Thursday night (ditto for last night), the 43-year-old James and his kinetic, manic stage antics pumped up plenty of history-meets-reality quotient. Not surprising, given James is head writer and star of the Global TV series *Blackfly*, which has just been renewed for a second season. Thus, Canadian Alliance leader Stockwell Day's knowledge of the Rocky Mountains is pitted against scientific fact ("Day's only off by about 4.5 million years"). James' broken-down Macintosh LC-520 may be outdated, but not old ("A Model-T Ford ... that's olllllddd! A Macintosh LC-520 ... fairly new!"). Even the Three Wise Men could've collectively thought of something more appropriate for Jesus Christ's birth ("Myrrh? How about a soother? Or something from Oshkosh, b'gosh?"). The rapid-fire pace of James' marathon routines -- delivered in that distinct Maritime accent, hey? -- covers so much territory, it's enough to send Olympic gold-medal triathlete Simon Whitfield into premature retirement. Among a gazillion others, there was his macarena-on-speed talk 'n' dance regarding the joys of camping, the conspiracy behind The Disney Channel, and the differences between the earthy, hard-faced Tim Hortons' staff and the phony, "Up With People" smiles of the Starbucks folk. And that was just the first half of his one-hour, 45-minute performance. The second half got through the "hellacious" RRSP season, the aforementioned technological "conspiracy" with the broken Mac and a horrid Air Canada Toronto-to-Halifax flight that took at least 18 hours, the latter intertwined with related tangents such as the in-flight meal ("Ya got a hard bun with a slice of pork so thin, the pig couldn't feel it coming off its arse").

"*** - Utterly brilliant!"**

Sun rating: *** out of 5**