

Ron James,
one of Canada's
best known
stand-up
comedians, brings
his latest show
to York Region

BY SIMONE JOSEPH
Staff Writer

Ron James has travelled to Mexico, had encounters with wildlife and made futile attempts to master new technology. And he is coming to York Region

HOW DO THEY DO IT?

Back when Yuk-Yuk's Comedy Club founder Mark Breslin was a comedian, he would crack jokes at cocktail parties and if he got a good reaction, try out the joke on stage.

"We, as the audience, often see comedy routines on stage but seldom know how the jokes are developed."

The truth is, like novelists, each comedy writer has his or her own technique.

Some actually write jokes on stage by improvising, then gauge if they will use a joke again by the reaction.

Developing material involves a lot of practicing on friends, Mr. Breslin said.

"By the end of the process, you won't have friends left, but you will have an act," he said.

Sometimes, groups of two or three comedians will try out material in a coffee shop after the show, he added.

But a large part of developing comedy is in the editing, Mr. Breslin said.

"You learn (to spot) the good ideas earlier. You learn to separate the good from the bad."

Markham comedian Neil Bansil says his best advice is to write about what you know, adding comedy is a process of writing and rewriting.

Many comedians go to small bars with a tiny audience to try out their jokes, he said.

"The best comedians try out their material in the weirdest places," he said.

to tell audiences all about it.

The 48-year-old is at Markham Theatre for Performing Arts April 4 and 5 as part of a province-wide tour, presenting his new show, *Gone With Ron*.

"You can see people doubling over, wiping their eyes," Mr. James said about unending attraction of comedy.

"There's always a crazy laughter in the house. It's an old art form. The rules haven't changed."

The fast-talking comedian has been showcased on *Just for Laughs* on The Comedy Network, CBC's *Comics!* and *Madly Off In All Directions*.

He won a Gemini award for his work as a writer with CBC TV's *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* and appeared on the NBC talk show *Late Night with Conan O'Brien* in 2004.

Mr. James' new show bounces from the War in Iraq to home renovations, mid-life meltdowns to airport security, family vacations to *Future Shop* "blue shirts", flatulent elders in church to party-hearty camping trips of youth, cutting a wide swath from past to present and back.

All this is done in a metaphor-laden, high-energy style complete with lengthy and verbose descriptions. Sometimes, his style makes jokes hard to follow, but that hasn't hurt his career.

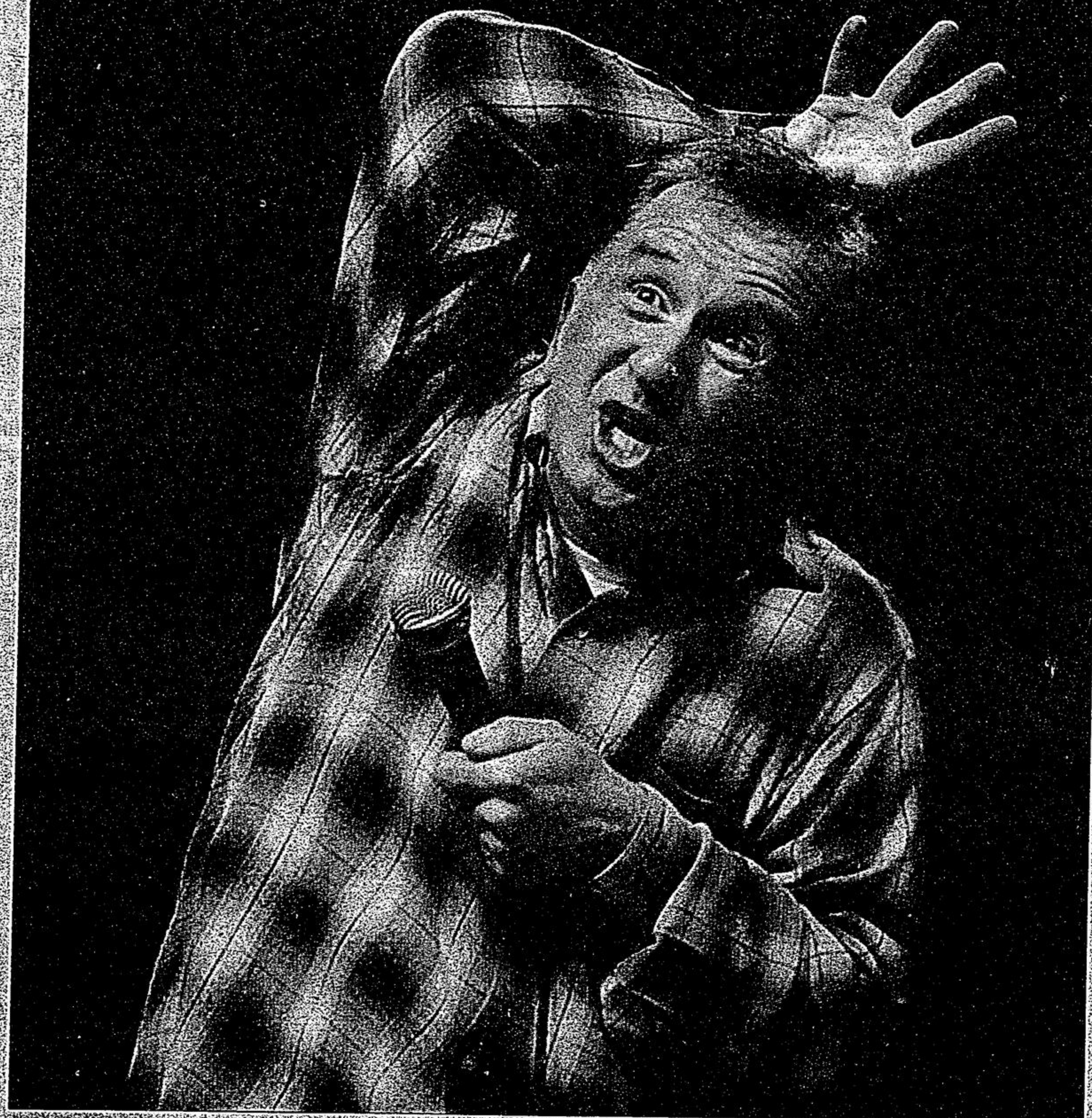
"James certainly belongs in the pantheon of Canadian purveyors, alongside the Gordon Lightfoots, Pierre Berton and Stompin' Tom Connors," a 2004 *Globe and Mail* review said.

When asked if there would be any York Region content, Mr. James said while he has lived in Toronto for 25 years, he has not spent much time north of Steeles Avenue.

"Perhaps, now's the time to walk around. If it (the local content) doesn't fly, I'll know who to blame."

Just a little ...

LOOPY



Ron James: Plaid-shirted funnyman "scarcely allows the audience time to breathe between fits of helpless laughter", the *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* said.

Even in conversation over the phone, Mr. James easily flows from comedy bit to bit, putting this listener into a contortion of laughter with no end in sight.

It seems for Mr. James, even an audience of one is not too small

to entertain.

For, while Mr. James is a veteran comedian, performing in front of an audience still has not lost its charm.

For information or tickets, call 905-305-7469 or 1-866-768-8801.

Showtime is 8 p.m. Markham Theatre is on Town Centre Boulevard, in the Hwy. 7-Warden Avenue area.

For more information, visit shantero.com or ronjames.ca

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