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Photo by Jessica Katz

## Colin Quinn Long Story Short

**HISTORY BOY** Quinn  
makes time.



**SHOW OF THE WEEK**



**Broadway Playhouse** (see Touring shows). By Colin Quinn. Dir. Jerry Seinfeld. With Quinn. 1hr 15mins; no intermission.

I'll go ahead and join most of my fellow critics in quoting the sharpest line of Colin Quinn's solo show, in which the comedian applies his gruff comic demeanor to a condensed history of the world. It comes late in the 75-minute piece, after Quinn has touched on the Greeks, the Romans, the birth of Islam, the Holy Roman Empire, the Silk Road, Incans, Mayans, Aztecs and more. He arrives at present-day America—which, for this Brooklyn guy and his Broadway show, is of course represented by New York. With a photo projected behind him of a Manhattan block jumbled with taquerias and kabob outlets, and with an hour's worth of history jokes under his belt, Quinn

says flatly: "America. The food court of the fallen empires."

It's an incisive bit, and representative of the best parts of Quinn's routine here, which posit history as a variation on the definition of insanity as repeating what's been done before and expecting different results. There are surprisingly highbrow references, as when the comic applies Plato's cave allegory to economists convening at Davos. Other solid laughs involve the anthropomorphization of empires, as when he describes Europe's sudden interest in Africa as "like your friend's little sister that grew up and got hot."

Still, those characterizations tip just a bit too often into easy and reductive ethnic-stereotype gags, with Quinn shifting into lightly rehearsed Arab, Indian or West African accents. At least the dialect bits prove the gravely voiced mutterer can actually enunciate.

—Kris Vire

PHOTO: CAROL ROSEGG