Astronaut exits space station with music video

Marcia Dunn, AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) -- In a high-flying, perfectly pitched first, an astronaut on the International Space Station is bowing out of orbit with a musical video: his own custom version of David Bowie's "Space Oddity."

It's believed to be the first music video made in space, according to NASA.

Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield's personalized rendition of "Space Oddity" was posted on YouTube on Sunday, one day before his departure from the orbiting lab. He's wrapping up a five-month mission that began last December.

He returned aboard a Russian Soyuz capsule, along with American Thomas Marshburn and Russian Roman Romanenko, late Monday to Kazakhstan.

Hadfield, 53, a longtime guitarist who played in an astronaut rock `n' roll band, recorded the video throughout the space station. He had some down-to-Earth help from a Canadian music team.

"With deference to the genius of David Bowie, here's Space Oddity, recorded on Station. A last glimpse of the World," Hadfield said via Twitter.

The spaceman altered some of the lyrics of Bowie's 1969 version, singing "Planet Earth is blue and there's nothing left to do." The Bowie version goes "... and there's nothing I can do." And instead of "Take your protein pills and put your helmet on," it became, "Lock your Soyuz hatch and put your helmet on."

Planet Earth provided a stunning backdrop for many of the scenes.

"It's just been an extremely fulfilling and amazing experience end to end," Hadfield told Mission Control on Monday. "We're, of course, focusing very much on flying the Soyuz home now and looking forward to seeing everybody face to face. But from this Canadian to all the rest of them, I offer an enormous debt of thanks." He was referring to all those in the Canadian Space Agency who helped make his flight possible.

Hadfield, an engineer and former test pilot from Milton, Ontario, was Canada's first professional astronaut to live aboard the space station and became the first Canadian in charge of a spacecraft. He relinquished command of the space station on Sunday.

He sang often in orbit, using a guitar already aboard the complex, and even took part in a live, Canadian coast-to-coast concert in February that included the

Barenaked Ladies' Ed Robertson and a youth choir, and featured the song I.S.S., "Is Somebody Singing?"

I.S.S. is NASA's acronym for the International Space Station.

Also last February, Hadfield joined the Irish band The Chieftains and two ground-bound astronauts in a Houston concert, singing the lead on "Moondance."

The five-minute video posted Sunday drew a salute from Bowie's official Facebook page: "It's possibly the most poignant version of the song ever created."

NASA broadcast the video on its daily space station update late Monday morning.

One of the video collaborators was piano arranger Emm Gryner, part of the Bowie band in 1999 and 2000.

"Planet Earth IS blue," she said in her online blog, "and there's nothing left for Chris Hadfield to do. Right. Safe travels home Commander!"

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