

# British Theatre Guide

News, reviews, features and podcast on theatre across the UK

## Howie the Rookie

Mark O'Rowe

Landmark Productions

Assembly Hall

1–25 August 2013



Mark O'Rowe has rewritten his taut 1999 two-hander to turn it into a solo play for Tom Vaughan-Lawlor and the actor repays his faith.

Under the writer's direction, the early part can be difficult for non-Irish ears to tune into as *The Howie*, a rough diamond, begins to relate a tall tale that fits right into a long Irish tradition.

This involves petty gangsters or perhaps just boys with too much bravado and time on their hands and drink in their stomachs.

The 80 minutes contains a stream of subtly larger than life characters, interacting in a milieu of barely suppressed violence.

At the midpoint, tragedy having struck once, *The Howie* gives way to the suaver *Rookie*, who is in place to report a dramatic finale to a story including laddism, love, death and car chases, though disease and homosexuality also impinge.

Using a single actor to play two boys with the same surname should make viewers consider whether these are two sides of the same coin, possible the dreams of a single person, though the opposite interpretation works as well.

On a bare stage, Tom Vaughan-Lawlor paints vivid verbal pictures that will inevitably draw in and entertain his audiences.

**Reviewer:** [Philip Fisher](#)