

British Theatre Guide

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Only the Lonely

Written and performed by Pip Utton
Customs House, South Shields
(2003)

There was a section of tonight's audience at the Customs House which was very disappointed. They came expecting a tribute to Roy Orbison and what they got was a play - with music - about a Roy Orbison tribute act. Disappointing for them - but they should have read the publicity more carefully! - but not for the rest of us.

Only the Lonely is a play which includes a number of Roy Orbison songs. In it Utton examines the mind of Dave Williams, a man who wants to be a star, wants to be famous, wants to be admired, but has no talent other than the ability to mimic others. It is the sad tale of a man who is completely dissatisfied with his own life, but it is also an examination of the nature of celebrity.

It is told through flashback conversations, direct addressing of the audience and Orbison's songs, which combine to lay bare the soul of the central character.

A member of the audience who was dissatisfied complained to me afterwards that Utton didn't sound exactly like Roy Orbison, but that was the point. At one occasion the character says that he knows there are others who look more like Orbison and sound more like him: what is special about him, he says, is that he feels like him.

And that, of course, is what the play is about. It's nothing to do with Roy Orbison really: it's about Dave Williams.

Since I first saw it at the Edinburgh Fringe in August (see my [review](#)) the show has sharpened and Utton has expanded the comedy, which has the effect of emphasising the sadness of the whole piece so that the final scene, in which Dave Williams is carried away by his vision of the appallingly slushy Christmas music video he wants to make to rescue his fading career, becomes almost unbearably sad.

Reviewer: [Peter Lathan](#)