

Roger (Not His Real Name) at DCAC, Reviewed

Posted by **Rachel Kurzius** on Sep. 12, 2014 at 1:37 pm

In *Roger (Not His Real Name)*, the titular bedraggled conspiracy theorist (played by **Matthew Vaky**, who also wrote the one-man play) does things a little differently than your run-of-the-mill tinfoil hat. Most would use facts from government reports and scientific studies as proof of their seemingly outlandish conclusions; Roger begins with his suspicions about the way the world works and then, almost as an afterthought, looks for supporting evidence. He knows



Duran Duran has something to do with the Mafia, but he's still searching for the details.

When the audience arrives in the DC Arts Center's black box theater (a phrase that takes new resonance in light of the topic), Roger is already on a foliage-strewn stage, pacing, slapping his thigh, and otherwise acting erratically. He looks and acts like a person you might see on the sidewalk in Chinatown and hurriedly pass by, lest he draw you into the machinations of **the Pope** and the New World Order.

But Vaky manages to turn **Roger** into a fully realized human without ironing out his quirks and vices. "That really fucked me up," he keeps saying, after recounting moments from his childhood. He's looking for the real reason why he spends all day muttering on a bench in a tattered suit while taking slugs of cheap whiskey. Is it the death of a classmate in second grade? Could **Oliver North** be to blame? Roger's explanation of **J. Edgar Hoover** is largely a projection of his own feelings of envy. The real proof that there is a conspiracy afoot, Roger seems to say, is me. Just look at me.

Most of the humor, and a bit of discomfort, stems from the **Rube Goldberg**-like theories that Roger spouts to explain everything from the death of the **Kennedy** brothers (it has to do with **Larry Flynt**) to the AIDS crisis (which also has to do with Flynt, a bigger player in global affairs than you might have thought) to the name of the

Washington football team (blame **Christopher Columbus** for that one). Like an expert improv show, the topics continue to build upon one another as Roger circles back, each time adding another layer until you've got a teetering parfait of lunacy.

It's fitting that the Hubble Telescope, humanity's tool to understanding the far corners of the universe, provides the keystone for Roger's conspiracy. What if the telescope isn't just the mechanism for finding meaning, but the explanation itself?

Roger sings, too, often angrily. He stares right into the audience and belts out tunes like "It's Only a Paper Moon." In some of these moments, Vaky could have been more haunting if he dialed it back slightly. Many of the most affecting parts of *Roger (Not His Real Name)* happen in the negative space between the manic outbursts.

The theater is well-lit for the show and the space well-suited to Roger's pacing. Other than **Gnarls Barkley's** too on-the-nose "Crazy" to start the show, the only other music from the soundboard is a hula tune. While it's funny to watch Roger hula dance, the inclusion feels disjointed without integrating any other music.

The show ends with a punch to the gut that Vaky pulls off, though it veers into schmaltzy territory. Profundity aside, *Roger (Not His Real Name)* spends most of its runtime endangering your gut with its hilariously entertaining speculations about what really happened in our country's history.

At DC Arts Center, September 12, 13, 18, 19, 20 at 7:30 p.m. 2438 18th St. NW. \$12-\$18.

SHARE

TWEET

Comments are closed.

SUBSCRIBE TO DISTRICT LINE DAILY

Email Address

SUBSCRIBE



[Advertising](#) | [Work Here](#) | [Freelancer's Guide](#) | [Internships](#) | [Find a Paper](#) | [Articles and Back Issues](#) | [Corrections](#) | [Masthead](#) | [Contact Info](#)
© CL Washington, Inc. All Rights Reserved. | [Privacy Policy](#)