



Life: Roy Orbison was a singer-songwriter and guitarist who was born in a small town in Texas in 1936 and died in Nashville, Tenn., in 1988. He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame a year after his death.

Music Hits: Among Orbison's hit songs are Only the Lonely; Oh, Pretty Woman; Crying; It's Over; Love Hurts and Running Scared.

Quotes:

- Bono, U2 lead singer said about Orbison: "He was at the time of his death the finest white pop singer on the planet."
- Emmylou Harris, who had years earlier claimed that she never wanted to sell her house after Orbison had sung in it, called him "one of the greatest singers that ever lived."
- Chris Isaak, when asked what it was like being the opening act for Orbison, remarked, "It's like doing card tricks before the Second Coming."
- Billy Joel said when he learned of Orbison's death, "He had the voice of an angel."
- Bruce Springsteen, when inducting Orbison into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, said that Orbison had the ability "to sound like he'd dropped in from another planet."

Persona: Peter Lehman*, popular culture analyst, describes Orbison's persona as unique for his time. "Most rock singers of the period...strutted around the stage." In contrast, Orbison took a stance with his feet firmly planted and moved very little when he performed. He created a "dark, mysterious persona, clothed all in black, hidden behind dark sunglasses."

Men in Black: Lehman concludes that "in an era of countless men in black, [Orbison's] blackness somehow seemed unique." He explained that, in the Western world, men wore many colors until about 1830 when they began to wear black formal evening clothing. According to Lehman, men wearing black suggest many ideas, moods and feelings such as mourning, night, death, formality, power and authority. World War I and II flyers wore black jackets; fascists wore black regalia; police uniforms are often black; and bikers wear black. Lehman proposes that "black [also] may be worn as a protective shell that hides weakness, fear and sensitivity." Lehman labels Orbison's persona as "masculine vulnerability."

Lyrics: Roy Orbison often wrote lyrics that spoke for men who were not confident but sensitive and fearful of loss.

Only the Lonely: "Know the heartache I've been through"

Oh, Pretty Woman: "Don't walk on by"

Crying: "I thought that I was over you"

It's Over: You'll be seeing lonely sunsets after all"

Love Hurts: "Love is just a lie made to make you blue."

Running Scared: "If he came back, which one would you choose?"

*Peter Lehman wrote Roy Orbison: The Invention of an Alternative Rock Masculinity published in 2003 in Philadelphia by Temple University Press.