

# REVIEW – The Shires at Liquid Rooms



The Shires by Pip for Decca Records

Liquid Rooms doesn't usually host concerts that involve country music. But tonight the venue witnesses an act that has made a significant impression in the UK with a top 10 debut album, and they've been signed to a major US label.

So it's no surprise that The Shires are supporting some huge names at both sides of the ocean, and packing out venues across the country. Packed to the gunnels– the venue has never been this full.

For a band that only formed in late 2013, The Shires seem overwhelmed by the growing support for them. The appeal for country music in the UK over the last few years can possibly be down to Country 2 Country, a set of concerts that brings over some of the biggest names in country – Eric Church, Carrie Underwood, Lady Antebellum, you name it. In return, The Shires are supporting some of these massive names over in the United States, adding to their ever-growing appeal.

The duo of Crissie Rhodes and Ben Earle were backed profoundly by a three-piece who added an important element to their wonderful vocal harmonies.

The Shires played material primarily from their album *Brave*, along with songs from the beginning when they were playing pubs and clubs. A cover of The Corrs' 'Runaway' was performed as a dedication to their future support slot, then the pair ended the show with a sing-a-long version of Dolly Parton and Kenny Rogers' 'Islands in the Stream'.

While the two both originate from Hertfordshire and

Bedfordshire respectively, they masquerade as deep south country musicians that come from Nashville – a place they love so dearly – in the way they dress and perform. It's all just a wee bit cringe-worthy.

They could develop their own distinctive twist on country music in the UK. The music is on point and the vocals are breathtaking, but the lyrics are pretty bad (“Get a little drunk on a Friday night, night, night”). In fact, the entire ‘Friday Night’ song, as an example, has appalling lyrics reminiscent of Rebecca Black’s ‘Friday’.

It's appealing the way The Shires are making country music relevant in the UK. They are making their mark in the US as well, performing on joint country tours.

The only way is up for Rhodes and Earle.