

British Theatre Guide

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Don't Wake the Damp

David Cumming, Natasha Hodgson, Oliver Jones and Zoe Roberts

Kill the Beast

Cast, Doncaster

9 November 2016

Following the success of [The Boy Who Kicked Pigs](#) (2012) and [He Had Hairy Hands](#) (2014) at the Edinburgh Fringe, Kill the Beast has returned with a zany new sci-fi show that showcases its performers' talents for physical and musical comedy.

Set in 2035, *Don't Wake the Damp* tells the story of June Berry (Natasha Hodgson), a washed-up actress who lives alone in a dilapidated flat in a Ballardian high rise. Formerly the sexy sidekick on a sci-fi TV show, June now shuts herself away from the world. That is, until her isolation is disrupted by the appearance of uptight council worker Terry (David Cumming), who informs her that her flat is in danger of being taken over by the Damp—a mysterious tentacled monster from below.

In the midst of chaos, June and Terry team up with two other eccentric residents of the tower block—self-absorbed Devlin (Oliver Jones) and June's number one fan Lexxie (Zoe Roberts)—to fight the Damp together. Will they succeed or will an ancient evil be unleashed upon the world?

Interspersed with the central narrative, there are clips/flashbacks from the delightfully silly space opera *The Crystal Continuum*, in which Captain Charismo (Oliver Jones) protects the planet with the assistance of his robot co-pilot Boobs (Natasha Hodgson) and domestic robot Fusspot (Zoe Roberts).

Don't Wake the Damp is a knowing tribute to low-budget science fiction that demonstrates a real affection for the genre. The show's sci-fi effects—including lizard men masks and hand-operated tentacles—are deliberately and charmingly naff.

The production is a visual treat. Rather than relying on a naturalistic set, the show's different locations are created through the use of three moving screens upon which Alex Purcell's enjoyably retrofuturistic animations are projected. In addition to evoking a strange dystopian future, this device allows for quick scene changes and contributes to the frenetic feel of the show.

The production is propelled forwards by Felix Hagan's excellent music, which runs the gamut from creepy synth music à la John Carpenter's *The Thing* (1982) to the delightful cheesiness of *The Crystal Continuum* theme tune.

The four young performers are hugely likeable and throw themselves into their bizarre roles with total abandon. With her guttural voice and strange costume, Natasha Hodgson evokes the grotesques that populated Royston Vasey in *The League of Gentleman*. David Cumming makes Terry a time bomb of nervous tics. Zoe Roberts brings a manic energy to the part of June's besotted fan, and Oliver Jones is amusingly pompous and conceited as Devlin.

Although the material calls for an exaggerated delivery, I can't help but think that the production would be stronger if the performances were not quite so over-the-top throughout. The frenzied pitch of the acting becomes wearying at times and results in some good jokes being thrown away.

There is much to enjoy in *Don't Wake the Damp*. Over the course of 75 minutes, Kill the Beast delivers a genre-hopping sci-fi yarn, performed at breakneck speed and crammed with sharp one-liners, amusing sight gags, inventive physical comedy and witty screen projections.

Reviewer: [James Ballands](#)