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Last Stand on Honey Hill

Liz Cotton

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Gilded Balloon Teviot

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Liz Cotton is a singer-songwriter who writes dirty songs. As an introduction, this serves to bring us into the world of poo and her fight, along with her Cambridgeshire homestead, against the resiting of a sewage plant in her idyllic countryside. Liz is also both a woman of discernment and at an age when the kids are all grown up.

We begin our performance with a few examples of the songs that Liz writes along with a clearly longstanding wish of how she could do without her husband, Phil. The cat, Purdey, is also introduced as one of our guides.

We then swing through a combination of pictures projected, songs sung and stories spun towards how Liz wanted to ditch her home, get rid of her husband and start afresh. This has been occasioned by the empty nest they inhabit as their children have flown onwards. Through the pandemic, this became increasingly desirable. Liz also gives us a tinge of her obsession with the colour green and *Bridgerton*.

It is then that the real fight around Honey Hill, which is in the Fens so not a hill, comes into play. A Christmas with an Anglian Water brochure brings the whole thing to a climax as Liz goes in search of people within her villages—her house is in one parish and her garden in another. Liz has lived there for 10 years but knows nobody. She then introduces us to a cast of characters onscreen as the story of the new sewage works being planned for Honey Hill unfolds and her activism is ignited.

What follows is the story of the formation of a Crap Choir, the recording of a Crap Song and the rehabilitation of Phil, though the fight against Anglian Water continues.

This has a delightful premise for a Fringe show: a combination of naughty and a fight. Cotton is a personable guide and has clearly honed her performance skills over many years to show a confidently creative songwriting streak allied with the ability to truly tell a tale. It makes for a very engaging combination. She has pitched her songs at just the right risqué level and by the time we hear of the Amazon delivery driver and of the man from Saville's, there to size up the house, we are ready for a move on—the structure therefore works as a set up.

Having engaged us as a willing audience, the drama of sewage may seem an odd topic, but you get a sense of outrage tinged with that Olde Worlde Charm that appears in English drama of a certain vintage. It's a fight that feels very cricket pavilion.

But it also feels quite prescient given the state of the country environmentally. Cotton manages to hit those notes by way of a nodding acquaintance. This is evident, never more so than when the

man from Saville's arrives to tell her that the new works shall have a shaft in the middle of her garden to pump effluent from the old sewage works to a new one which is not needed, at all, her outrage is palpable. Moderate and considered but present.

It is therefore a performance piece that uses the backdrop of filth to argue over the damage to an environment which is very idyllic—and flat. It's an environmental argument and a NIMBY dialectic with witty rhyme and intelligent objections. As a theatrical piece, it works well and reminds us that you don't have to glue yourself to things to get your point across, though I am sure they are not ruling that out!

Reviewer: [Donald C Stewart](#)