

A man with glasses and a patterned cardigan sits on a chair, gesturing with his hands. To his right is an acoustic guitar. Above him is a boom microphone. In the background, a large circular image of Earth is visible.

THE  
*Small World*  
OF  
*Clive*  
*Crudwick*

# Ten Years on from his last show, Clive Whaley talks to Fergus Byrne about life with Crudwick

Clive Crudwick hates the idea that, in the future, he may have permanently wet socks. He puts that down to global warming. But he also hates the “Earthwide Interweb” considering it “not at all healthy”. His friend Norman dislikes celebrity TV shows that are full of people he’s never heard of, and they both dislike plastic surgery when it’s used to enhance body parts. In a song based on his and Norman’s discussions on what really bothers them, Clive also expresses his irritation for silicone implants that always “seem to be pointing at me”.

As a singer songwriter, something he admits to with a hint of nervous hesitancy, Clive Crudwick has written songs that celebrate subjects from the “wiggly and mysterious path of love” to a protest at the irreverent use of a Greggs sausage roll in an advertisement—a song that was inspired by some clippings belonging to his friend Norman’s wife, Eleanor.

Norman prefers to call his wife Nelly, but Clive prefers to call her Eleanor—it’s more respectful.

*The Small World of Clive Crudwick*, and his often unintentionally hilarious views on life, are the brainchild of Bridport resident Clive Whaley. A fundraiser for two local charities: Bridport Harmony mental health group and the Bank of Dreams and Nightmares, this new show is scheduled for two nights at the Bridport Arts Centre in late October.

Although we never meet Norman or Eleanor, Crudwick goes to their house once a week with his guitar, and he thinks Norman is the ‘bee’s knees’, because Norman encourages him to play the songs and gives him advice from the music industry. Clive Whaley says Norman is the voice that eggs Crudwick on. ‘He’s the inner voice, which is more assertive and more aggressive, but also has perhaps a slightly misguided or manipulative edge to it.’

Combining ‘mockumentary’ film footage and live songs, it is billed as a tragi-comic tale of creative ambitions, misguided friendship and male vulnerability.

But where did Clive Crudwick come from?

‘He’s a vehicle for my songs’ explains Clive Whaley. ‘I’ve never pretended to be the world’s greatest guitarist or singer, far, far from it. But at one stage I discovered that the songs were funnier and more moving if they were played by Clive Crudwick than by Clive Whaley.’

Speaking with a pronounced northern England accent, not unlike the accent Clive was surrounded by in his youth, Crudwick was inspired by a role Clive played for Encore Theatre in the Alan Ayckbourn play, *A Chorus of Disapproval*. ‘I played a character called Guy Jones’ he says, ‘who is newly moved to the area and joins an amateur theatre group who are putting on *The Beggars Opera*.’ Clive envisaged Ayckbourn’s Jones, as a ‘really timid, sort of naive, lonely character.’ He played him with an Argyle cardigan and big thick glasses. ‘I played him as a bit of a geek’ he says. ‘The way I read the script was that he was desperate to please and desperate to fit in but quite nervous and quite shy as well. I really liked the character, and I almost missed him afterwards. So, I morphed this character, Guy Jones into Clive Crudwick’. He then gave him ‘a very, very silly wig and trousers that don’t reach his ankles. He also wears sandals and socks.’

Fans of the spoken word and fringe events around Bridport may have been fortunate enough to have spotted Clive Crudwick at open mic nights at ‘Apothecary’, a monthly spoken word open mic session held at the Beach and Barnicott a few years ago. Crudwick was also shortlisted for the 2019 UK musical comedy awards in London. Clive found the London performance experience ‘absolutely terrifying’ and felt like ‘a fish out of water.’ However, despite that, Crudwick began to grow as a personality, and if it hadn’t been for Covid, may have reached wider audiences some years ago. As it happens, Clive explains, Covid put Crudwick ‘into hibernation for a couple of years.’

The 75-minute show alternates between filmed monologues delivered by Crudwick to a documentary filmmaker and live, original songs on



stage. They are presented with increasing conviction and ambition—solo at first but progressing to a full band and string players. The show and the music give an insight into the many things that Crudwick experiences in his life, and touch on subjects that Clive Whaley has experienced himself. Clive says he felt a ‘strong philosophical and psychological connection’ with Crudwick.

Although the show follows on from Clive’s previous productions at Bridport Arts Centre with *Lonely Boys* a ‘musical documentary’ in 2011, which he revived for one night in 2012 and then *21st Century Blues* in 2015, a show that focused on mental health, he doesn’t see *The Small World of Clive Crudwick* as being quite as narrowly focused. As a former advocate with The Dorset Mental Health Forum and a psychological well-being practitioner with the NHS, his own experiences and that of those he has encountered inevitably inform some of the things that Crudwick has to say. However, Clive tells me, ‘It’s not meant to be a show about mental health or male mental health, but it is a show about male vulnerability and creative ambitions. It’s also about misguided friendships and unrequited love.’ He describes it as a ‘warm and funny show’ but says there are also ‘some poignant and more, what I hope are, moving moments.’

Talking to Clive Whaley about Crudwick and remembering Clive’s earlier shows, it is easy to see similarities between the characters. I ask Clive if they have in any way morphed into each other. ‘He’s a lonely hero for people with creative ambitions’ he explains, ‘and I try not to admit it, but he is really an exaggerated version of me. So, I can distance



myself from him and I can talk about him in the third person. In fact, I usually do, but I recognize that there is some crossover.'

Producing a show like *The Small World of Clive Crudwick* doesn't come without its own challenges. Talking about the length of time since his previous big production, Clive says, 'It takes time to put something like this together, especially without any funding or support. It also takes courage to put yourself out there in the public eye. I've had my own mental health struggles since the last show, and I guess it's taken me more than 10 years to be ready to put my heart and soul on the line once more.'

Clive is keen to point out that although it's about Crudwick's life, it is not a one-man show. Locally based photographer, producer and musician Pete Millson is musical director, and although some of the songs feature Clive on his own, others have a full rock band as well as a cellist, a violin player and backing singers.

'I hope people find it funny and moving' says Clive. 'Maybe they will see a less common portrayal of masculinity—a man who is kinder, more lonely and more vulnerable than you often see. I think it's quite a surprising format and will appeal to people who do not normally see themselves as theatregoers. Above all I hope people just have a great night out in the theatre. The Arts Centre is a perfect venue for this kind of intimate production.'

With special guest, Jinder, supplying a support set each evening, *The Small World of Clive Crudwick* promises to be a heart warming and captivating evening, with humour, emotion, and poignant storytelling.

*The show is at Bridport Arts Centre on Wednesday October 23rd and Thursday October 24th. For tickets visit <https://www.bridport-arts.com> or call 01308 424204.*



*Photographs  
by Elliot Millson*