Twitter Thread by Paul Duane



Paul Duane
@paulduanefilm

Hungover & bored, might do a thread of my favourite little known stories about The KLF/The Justified Ancients of Mu Mu

> Since The KLF are in the news, a reminder that my film about their return from a 23-year silence in order to build a pyramid of the dead in Liverpool has just been released streaming:https://t.co/o1TC5GeEtI
>
> — Paul Duane (@paulduanefilm) January 1, 2021

When they won at the Brits, their award later turned up buried near Stonehenge. They have a long standing interest in the place & K2 Plant Hire at one stage expressed interest in 'fixing it up', which would entail grinding all the stones down & making them into nice oblong blocks

which would then be replaced just as they were. K2 Plant Hire's feeling was that the place had been allowed to fall into disrepair & it was a great shame. Sadly the plan never materialised.

When they released their first record, 1987: WHAT THE FUCK IS GOING ON?, its bizarre use of sampling technology was met with surprise & disbelief, not least by a London DJ named Tony Thorpe.
He said "I had to meet these guys because I couldn't believe how shit they were."

"I was sampling James Brown, they were sampling the fucking Beatles & Dave Brubeck."
Tony Thorpe became a key part of their arsenal, crafting the machine-tooled Stadium House that made them the best-selling singles band of 1992.

The director of their excellent videos, Bill Butt, was once Daniel Day-Lewis's landlord.

When they were recording Justified & Ancient Jimmy said to Bill "We should get that country music singer woman for this."
Bill immediately got in touch with Tammy Wynette & ended up in Nashville recording the vocal in her house. He flew back with the finished track & played it -

- but Jimmy then figured out the one he'd been thinking of was Dolly Parton.
The record was a massive hit anyway.

They had an idea to do a rave version of the Dr Who theme but none of the house rhythms they tried worked. Then they realised that the Glitter Beat fit perfectly. Lsitening back they fell around the floor in helpless laughter. The record was a #1 hit & the beginning of it all.

There was the time they decided to build an enormous cube out of cans of Tennents Super & drive around London on Christmas Eve giving it away to the vagrants & alcoholics of the city. The plan was not a success. The cube had little structural integrity & subsided into a chaotic -

- booze-smelling, high-alcohol content mess on the back of their lorry. Then a man from a homeless charity gave them an angry talking to, saying there was one day a year in which it was possible to get these people sober enough to help them, what did they think they were doing?

Their intentions were good but unfortunately as with many of their actions, ended in a kind of benighted chaos. I think they left the rest of the cans in the corner of a lorry park or something.
6.237 cans were needed to make the perfect cube.

Photographic evidence:

As a teenager Jimmy Cauty drew a series of Lord Of The Rings posters which ended up being franchised by Athena posters & became the world's best selling poster for a time.

https://t.co/0upvLpKyUN

The idea for having an entirely studio-based came about when they went to see a rare live show by The Residents, who had carefully maintained a sense of mystery around themselves for decades.
One of The Residents had his long hair visibly poking out from under his eyeball mask.

This convinced Drummond & Cauty there was no way you could preserve any real mystery around yourself if you performed live. So they never did.

They had started out as a sort of shouty guerilla hip-hop act in 1987 but as rave music broke through they could see the possibilities in this new music.
They went to Heaven nightclub together to check it out.
They decided they should try out this ecstasy the kids were doing too.

Going to the bathroom, they carefully split a pill & went back out to the dancefloor.
As Bill tells it, he sat there waiting to be overwhelmed by the feeling of community & happiness promised by this new designer drug.
He was nervously rubbing his hands & gurning a little by now.

But he wasn't sure how long this feeling would take to come on, so he turned to Jimmy to ask him what he thought, and the words, "Jimmy? What time is love?" came out of his mouth.
Jimmy reckoned that this was a phrase they could work with, and they did.

In later years after The KLF had successfully left the music business & deleted their back catalogue, Bill Drummond was in Dublin in a nightclub & a waiter approached him with a bottle of champagne 'courtesy of the man in the corner.' Turning round, Bill realised the man was Van.

Morrison, that is.
Bill was staggered that Van would have any idea who he was but went over to say thank you.
"You're the fella that got out of the music business' said Van.
Bill agreed that, yes, he was that fella.
"HOW DID YOU DO IT" asked Van.

We just... DID it, said Bill.
"I KEEP TRYING!" replied Van. "THEY WON'T LET ME!"

One music paper had a feature where they allowed bands to run around HMV & take whatever albums they could grab in a five minute period then discuss why they chose particular each particular record.
The KLF were asked to do it & they grabbed as many blank cassettes as they could.

(I fucking love this photo of Bill, the madness is palpable)

Speaking of madness, their TOTP appearance for It's Grim Up North is one of the maddest things ever broadcast on prime time TV.

https://t.co/50EaaUcXMX

The band lasted exactly five years - 1987-1992 - because Bill & Jimmy reckon no band has ever been good for longer than a five-year stretch.
I don't know what that says about Bill's favourite group The Beatles, though.

Their famous exit from the music business, firing blanks at the audience at the Brit awards & dumping a dead sheep at the entrance to the afterparty, could have been a lot more dramatic. Bill had to be convinced not to sever his right hand & throw it into the audience mid-show.

He intended it as a reference to the Red Hand of Ulster, where a race to decide ownership of Ulster ended when the guy who was behind in the race chopped his hand off & threw it ahead, saying that he had touched ground first & could claim it. Bill wanted to claim the music biz.

The band's performance was met with a great deal of controversy but DJ Jonathan King said he thought it was very good. This was the final epitaph for The KLF.

They could not beat the music business.
It will co-opt whatever you throw at it.
Disappearing was the only option left.

Finally. Some think the whole story of The KLF was carefully stage-managed & planned from the beginning. Nothing could be less true.
The money they made from their freak novelty #1 hit Doctorin The Tardis got spent on making a quixotic road movie in Spain, THE WHITE ROOM.

They hired the crew who had just finished shooting an Indiana Jones movie & made the film, which ended up being an unreleasable mess that they pretty much hated.
But they had already recorded the soundtrack for it.
This music ended up being the basis for their run of huge hits.

It was all a huge, beautiful accident. There's been nothing like it in the history of pop music and there never will be again.
END OF THREAD
END OF POP
END OF THE ROAD

addendum: Bill Drummond in the NME in '91 talking about the thing with the dead sheep they dumped at the entrance to the Brit awards party.