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FROM
OPERATION MINDFK**
TO
THE WHITE ROOM



THE STRANGE DISCORDIAN JOURNEY OF THE KLF

by *J.M.R. Higgs*

In the 1980s, pop stars made movies. Prince, Madonna and the Pet Shop Boys all went in front of the cameras. The KLF made a film as well, but they went about it in a very different manner. Theirs was never released, or even properly finished, and they made it before they had a string of hit singles rather than afterwards. It was called *The White Room*.

The White Room is a very different beast to *Purple Rain* or *Desperately Seeking Susan*. It's a dialogue-free ambient road movie just under an hour in length, for a start. The band had experimented with ambient film before, shooting an experimental movie called *Waiting* on VHS on the Isle of Jura the previous year. *The White Room*, however, had been shot with a professional crew and cost around £250,000, money

they had earned from a Doctor Who-themed novelty record they had released under the name The Timelords.

The film starts at a rave in the basement of a South London squat known as Transcentral. Bill Drummond and Jimmy Cauty, the duo behind The KLF, leave the party and get into a 1968 Ford Galaxie American police car. In the back sits a solicitor, played by their own solicitor David Franks. He hands them a contract, which the pair sign without reading. Franks exits and Drummond and Cauty drive off.

Pretty much most of the rest of the film is them driving.

First, they drive around London at night. Then, they drive around the Sierra Nevada region of Spain. This goes on for some time. Not much happens, although they do find a dead eagle, and at one point they stop for petrol.

Eventually the pair stop and build a camp fire, an event which occurs twice in the film. At each point, the solicitor is seen in the smoke from the fire, studying the contract – a distinctly Faustian image. The solicitor discovers something in one of the contract's clauses, and writes 'Liberation Loophole!' on the contract.

Events in the film now gain more momentum. Drummond is seen throwing the contract into the air, obviously delighted. He has, by this point, changed into a pair of plus-fours and is dressed not unlike an Edwardian mountaineer. Cauty then paints the car white and they drive, past a burning bush, up into the snow-peaked mountains. When the car gets stuck in the snow they abandon it and continue up on foot. Cauty has not joined Drummond in sporting the Edwardian mountaineer look, instead wearing a more sensible white parka. Eventually they reach the summit, where they find a large white building with a radio telescope. They go in.

They find themselves in a white, smoke-filled void – the White Room. They find a pair of fake moustaches on a pedestal, and put them on. Then they find the solicitor, sitting at a white table. He shows them the clause he has found in the contract. They nod. The

pair then walk away, dissolving into the smoke and vanishing into the void. The End.

It was, all in all, an odd way to spend £250,000. The story of why it was made, however, is far stranger.

THE MOST INFLUENTIAL PHOTOCOPIER IN HISTORY?

In the mid-1960s a photocopier was state of the art technology, and having access to one was something of a privilege. The act of using an office photocopier after hours for personal projects, without the boss knowing, was therefore a far riskier and more rebellious act than it is today. This was certainly the case for Lane Caplinger, a secretary for New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison.

In 1991 Garrison was portrayed by Kevin Costner in Oliver Stone's movie *JFK*, a film based on Garrison's book *On The Trail Of The Assassins*. But this was 1965, a year before he became involved in Kennedy conspiracies and two years before the Summer of Love thrust hippies, psychedelic drugs and alternative lifestyles in front of an unprepared public. Things had not yet begun to 'get weird', in other words, and for a respected public figure like Garrison, there was little to indicate what surprises the future had in store. He would have been quite unprepared, then, for the book that Caplinger and her friend Greg Hill were clandestinely producing in his office.

This book was the original version of what would become known as the *Principia Discordia*, or *How I Found The Goddess and What I Did To Her When I Found Her*, by a writer named Malaclypse the Younger. They made a first edition of five copies. At the time it was little more than a joke for some of their friends, but its influence is now scrawled in a haphazard, and frequently illegible, manner across the history of the late twentieth century.

There was some debate in the 1970s, when the book's influence began to spread, as to just who this 'Malaclypse the Younger' was.

Some believed that the book was the work of Timothy Leary. Others claimed it was written by Alan Watts, or by Richard Nixon during “a few moments of lucidity”. It is now generally accepted that the book was largely the work of Caplinger’s friend Greg Hill, although large chunks were also written by Hill’s old school friend Kerry Thornley.

The ideas behind the book can be traced back to the late 1950s, when Hill and Thornley attended California High School in East Whittier, a rural Southern Californian town that was then nestled amongst vast orange groves. In school they were viewed as nerds. Hill was short, squat and introverted, while Thornley was tall, very thin, and bursting with a nervous energy. They both shared an enthusiasm for pranks and strange ideas. They were also both keen on bowling alleys, largely because they served alcohol and remained open until two in the morning.

It was in one such bowling alley in 1957 that Thornley showed Hill some poetry that he was writing. It included a reference to order eventually arising out of chaos. Hill laughed at this. He told Thornley that the idea of ‘order’ was an illusion. Order is just something that the human mind projects onto reality. What really exists behind this fake veneer is an infinite, churning chaos. For Hill, an atheist, the failure to understand this was the major folly of the organised religions of the world, all of which claim that there is an organising principle at work in the Universe.

Hill also told Thornley that the Greeks were an exception to this rule, as they had had a Goddess of Chaos. Her name was Eris, which meant ‘strife’ and which is translated as ‘Discordia’ in Latin. Clearly, if anyone wanted to worship a deity who could be considered real, in that they were genuinely and unarguably active in this world, then Eris was the only sensible option. All that was needed was for someone to create a religion around Her which, naturally, they decided to do. They called it Discordianism.

Slowly Hill and Thornley recruited a few like-minded friends into their new religion. Their aim was to undermine existing belief systems by spreading confusion and disinformation with as much humour as

possible. To this end they each adopted a host of new names under which their Discordian endeavours were credited. Hill became known varyingly as Malaclypse the Younger, Rev. Dr. Occupant, Mad Malik, Ignotum P. Ignotious or Professor Iggy. Thornley became Omar Khayyam Ravenhurst, Rev. Jesse Sump, Ho Chi Zen or the Bull Goose of Limbo. Many different Discordian chapters were founded – the majority of which contained only one member, and some contained none. Discordians would then write essays and letters under these aliases, only to then follow them with completely contradictory essays and letters under a different alias. Gradually this process spread and, by the time it reached its height in the late Sixties and early Seventies, it had become known as Operation Mindfuck. The aim of Operation Mindfuck was to lead people into such a heightened state of bewilderment and confusion that their rigid beliefs would shatter and be replaced by some form of enlightenment.



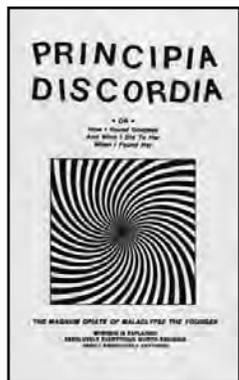
Eris

That was the aim, anyway. In practice it rarely worked out so well, with those heavily absorbed in Discordianism proving as likely to succumb to paranoid schizophrenia as to any form of enlightenment.

Discordianism is often described as being either an elaborate satire disguised as a religion or an elaborate religion described as a satire, a description which wrongly assumes that it cannot be both at the same time. It certainly was a joke, of course, at least to start with. The whole concept was an atheist satire or, at most, a way to deal with nihilism by wrapping it up with a Goddess and a sense of humour. As events unfurled and strange synchronicities began to stack up, however, it became harder and harder to claim that what was going on was ‘just’ a joke.

For those early Discordians it became increasingly tempting to believe that when Greg Hill used D.A. Garrison’s photocopier to

produce the first edition of *Principia Discordia*, something, some spirit of Discord and Chaos, emerged, or returned, or arrived in the world we know. Of course, Greg Hill was an atheist who intended



Discordianism to be a satire of religion. He certainly did not start out taking the idea of Goddesses or spirits seriously. By the late 70s, however, he was convinced that his Discordian adventures had stirred up something that he was unable to explain. As he told his friend Margot Adler:

If you do this type of thing well enough, it starts to work. I started out with the idea that all gods are an illusion. By the end I had learned that it is up to you to decide whether gods exist, and if you take the goddess of confusion seriously enough, it will send you through as profound and valid a metaphysical trip as taking a god like Yahweh [the Jewish/Christian/Muslim God] seriously.

The effects of invoking a made-up god, in other words, were no different to sincerely invoking a ‘proper’ one. This was going to be an eventful realization for those that invoked Eris. As Thornley once remarked to Hill, “You know, if I had realised that all of this was going to come *true*, I’d have chosen Venus.”

JUNG OF MIND

The psychologist Carl Jung credited a particular dream as being a turning point in his life, one which convinced him to embark on the study of synchronicity and the subconscious. He wrote about this dream in his book *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. In due course the Liverpudlian poet Peter O’Hallighan read about the dream in that

book, and came to view it with equal significance. In his dream, Jung found himself...

...in a dark, sooty city. It was night, and winter, and dark, and raining. I was in Liverpool. With a number of Swiss – say half a dozen – I walked through the dark streets.

Like many scousers, O’Hallighan’s home city was a significant part of his personal identity, so Jung’s mention of Liverpool immediately grabbed him. In later years, he researched Jung’s life in an effort to discover if there was a link that explained the setting of Liverpool in this dream. But he did not find any. Jung had never been to Liverpool, and didn’t have any obvious connection to the place.

Jung’s account of his dream continued:

It reminded me of Basel, where the market is down below and you go up through the Tottengässchen (Alley of the Dead), which leads to a plateau above and so to the Petersplatz and the Peterskirche.

...When we reached the plateau, we found a broad square, dimly illuminated by street lights, into which many streets converged. The various quarters of the city were arranged radially around the square.

The ‘Peter’ in the street names gave Peter O’Hallighan a personal connection to the dream, and inspired him to search Liverpool for the best candidate for the “broad square” mentioned. He came to believe that Jung was referring to the square at the end of Matthew Street. This was an area that then consisted of old warehouses between the centre of the city and the waterfront, and was also the exact same place where O’Hallighan had recently leased a building. Some years after Jung’s dream one of these warehouses would become a club called the Cavern, from where the Beatles would emerge to change the world.

Jung continued:

In the centre was a round pool, and in the middle of it, a small island. While everything around was obscured by rain, fog, smoke and dimly lit darkness, the little island blazed with sunlight. On it stood a single tree, a magnolia, in a sea of reddish blossoms. It was as though the tree stood in the sunlight and was, at the same time, the source of light. My companions commented on the abominable weather, and obviously did not see the tree. They spoke of another Swiss who was living in Liverpool, and expressed surprise that he should have settled here. I was carried away by the beauty of the tree and the sunlit island, and thought, "I know very well why he has settled here." Then I awoke.

Jung felt that his subconscious had shown him something of profound importance. "Everything was extremely unpleasant, black and opaque – just as I felt then", he wrote. "But I had had a vision of unearthly beauty, and that was why I was able to live at all. Liverpool is the 'pool of life'. The 'liver', according to an old view, is the seat of life - that which 'makes to live'." Jung had found, bubbling up from his subconscious, an image that inspired him. It was no more than a dream image, but it was more powerful and had a greater impact on him than things which physically exist.

Jung's dream had a profound effect on O'Hallighan because he too had had a dream. He had dreamt that he saw a spring bubbling forth from a cast-iron drain cover in the middle of the road where Matthew Street, Button Street and others converge. He came down to Matthew Street the next day and sure enough, there was a manhole cover where he had dreamt one. He also saw that one remaining warehouse had a 'To Let' sign outside. He had then gone to the bank, got a loan and leased the building. He turned the downstairs into a market, and opened a café above it. The market became known as Aunt Twackies, a pun on the scouse mispronunciation of 'antiques' as 'an teek wees'. He

would later discover that there was an ancient spring underneath the building, which fed into an old brick-built reservoir.

When he later read of Jung's dream, he was struck by the way that Jung seemed to have dreamt of the exact same location, and that he too had linked it to some elemental source of life. This seemed deeply significant to O'Hallighan. He arranged for a bust of Jung to be placed in the outside wall.

MARCHING TO THE BEAT OF A DIFFERENT DRUMMOND

The market began to attract members of the local music scene due to its proximity to Probe Records and Eric's nightclub, and because they could spend a day talking and planning in the café for the price of a cup of tea. One of the regulars was Bill Drummond, then 23 years old. Drummond was working as a set builder at the Everyman theatre having returned to Liverpool, where he had attended college, after spending some time working on the trawler boats in his native Scotland. One day he wandered in and found O'Hallighan hammering a nail into a piece of wood. O'Hallighan told him that he was planning to open what he called the 'Liverpool School of Language, Music, Dream and Pun'. He also told him about Jung's dream. "I didn't really understand what O'Hallighan was on about", Drummond recalled later, "but it resonated and I remembered it almost word for word."

The Liverpool School of Language, Music, Dream and Pun was planning on staging plays. O'Hallighan had persuaded the actor and director Ken Campbell to base his next project there. This was quite a coup, as Campbell's previous touring show, *The Ken Campbell Roadshow*, had been something of a success. It had featured Campbell, together with a troop of actors including Bob Hoskins and Sylvester McCoy, dramatizing weird and wonderful 'friend of a friend' stories. The reason why O'Hallighan wanted to

stage plays was, naturally enough, another one of his dreams. This dream had featured a building with a raging fire upstairs and a play being performed in a theatre in the basement. Strangely, there was a copy of *Playboy* magazine on a seat in the theatre, and though this didn't immediately make much sense, in the dream it seemed in some way significant...

FROM PLAYBOY TO THE ILLUMINATI

The editors of the *Playboy* letter pages during the mid-Sixties were Robert Anton Wilson and Bob Shea. In many ways their jobs were not that different to most office jobs, except that the secretaries tended to be prettier, and every week or so they'd be invited up to Hugh Hefner's mansion to "watch movies and stuff". A lot of the reader letters they received, though, were decidedly odd.

In part this was because some of these were from the small, initial group of Discordians, and the two Bobs found themselves in frequent letter communication with Kerry Thornley. They soon became committed Discordians themselves, with Wilson adopting the Discordian name Mordecai the Foul and Shea calling himself Josh the Dill. It was not long before the *Playboy* forum took on, under these two editors, a decidedly weird turn. Many letters proclaimed deeply complicated and contradictory conspiracy theories. The strange thing was, though, that they weren't writing them all themselves. Whilst many could be attributed to their small core of Discordian colleagues, there were many others which appeared to be from complete strangers. Or were they? This was a problem with Operation Mindfuck, as you couldn't trust your friends to be honest about their activities. But still, judging by factors such as the postmarks on letters and unknown handwriting, there appeared to be many conspiratorial letters arriving from people that they didn't know. The Discordian ideas, which Thornley had been spreading in

printed handbills and, eventually, in the *Principia Discordia*, were starting to spread. And they were spreading to people who liked to write letters to *Playboy*.

Wilson and Shea did their best to make sense of what was going on. The modern conception of the 'conspiracy theory' was emerging, fully formed, just a few brief years after the flaws in the Warren Commission report into the JFK assassination had become evident. People were now openly accusing sections of the U.S. Government of being involved in Kennedy's death, an idea that would have been unthinkable to the average American when the murder occurred in 1963. To Wilson and Shea, as they waded through all the different accusations, it started to look like *everyone* had killed Kennedy. Some blamed the CIA, others the Mafia. Some claimed that it was Castro, while others pointed to anti-Castro forces. As they joked to each other, what if every conspiracy were true? From all this came the idea for the three-novel series that they wrote together between 1969 and 1971, the award winning *Illuminatus!* trilogy, which they dedicated to Hill and Thornley.

The wilfully complicated plot of the book essentially boils down to a struggle between order and chaos. It features a secret organization of enlightened beings called the Illuminati, who secretly rule the world for their own evil ends. The Illuminati was a real organisation that had been founded in 1776 in Bavaria with the aim of exploring and spreading Enlightenment ideals. Shea and Wilson claimed that the organisation has existed in secrecy ever since, and even for centuries before, although most historians believe that it only lasted for about ten years.



In the book, the Illuminati are opposed only by small groups of Discordians, who have to prevent the Illuminati from bringing about the end of the world. The Discordians, in true Discordian fashion, go under many names, such as the ELF (the Erisian

Liberation Front), the LDD (The League of Dynamic Discord, also known as Little Deluded Dopes) and The Justified Ancients of Mummu, otherwise known as the JAMs. The JAMs are “at least as old as the Illuminati and represent the primeval power of Chaos.” They were once part of the Illuminati, but rebelled in order to fight for chaos. As a side line, they had also set up a record company to create some decent music. The rest of the music industry was controlled by the Illuminati, the book explained, which was how they were able to incorporate the anti-JAMs slogan “Kick out the Jams, motherfuckers!” into MC5 records.

Needless to say, publishers were initially baffled by the whole thing. Eventually, after four years of effort, the first volume was published in 1975. It has remained in print ever since and gone on to win awards and inspire conspiracy fiction from *Foucault's Pendulum* to *The Da Vinci Code*, as well as countless video games and comic books. It planted the idea into modern culture that the Illuminati are an organisation who are currently active and who secretly run the world. This idea was intended as no more than a joke, or a ‘mindfuck’. Nevertheless, there are now countless conspiracy theorists around the world who now believe it to be true. Imaginary ideas have a way of being just as influential, it seems, as more grounded ones.

A PLAY ON ILLUMINATUS!

Ken Campbell was paying for a stack of books in Compendium, an independent esoteric bookshop in Camden, when he noticed a copy of *Illuminatus!* on display by the till. He was searching for some science fiction that might be suitable to adapt into his next project, because, following a pleasant evening drinking with the sci-fi author Brian Aldiss, he had decided that he quite liked the company of science fiction people. So it was that in 1976 Campbell and the writer and actor Chris Langham formed the Science Fiction Theatre

of Liverpool, with the intention of creating a play to stage at Aunt Twackies. All he had to do now was find some science fiction.

His eye was drawn to this one book because it had a yellow submarine on the cover, an iconic image with obvious connections to Liverpool. The book itself is not science fiction, but booksellers had not known what to make of it and had placed it on the science fiction shelves for want of anywhere better. This, it seemed, was good enough for the Science Fiction Theatre of Liverpool.

Of all the books that he had bought, it was *Illuminatus!* that grabbed Campbell, in a way that none of the others did. Reading it was an eye-opener; it made him see the world differently. What had previously appeared to be hierarchical, ordered and neatly categorized now appeared as random connections of chance and ignorance. This effect was not just limited to the world in the book. The real world itself was changed, or at least how he perceived it. *Illuminatus!* made him simultaneously wiser and more baffled. It was good stuff.

Campbell decided to turn the entire trilogy into a cycle of five plays, lasting a total of eight and a half hours. There would be 23 actors playing over three hundred distinct parts. And this epic tale of global domination would be told on a small stage at the back of the warehouse café. Most people would not consider this to be a plausible goal, but Campbell just went ahead and did it anyway. As he saw it, things were only really worth doing if they were impossible. To quote the actor Chris Langham, who co-wrote the play with Campbell, “if it’s possible it will end up as some mediocre, grant-subsidised bit of well-intentioned bourgeois bollocks. But if it’s impossible, then it will assume an energy of its own, despite everything we do or don’t do.”

This was an attitude that Campbell drilled into Bill Drummond, whom he recruited to produce the sets for the show. It was never going to be easy. Campbell’s key piece of direction to the cast and crew was, when thinking about the tone of what they were doing, to keep asking the question ‘Is it heroic?’ Drummond went back to the table in the back room that doubled as his workshop and

painted the phrase 'Is it heroic?' on the wall in white paint. He then got to work.

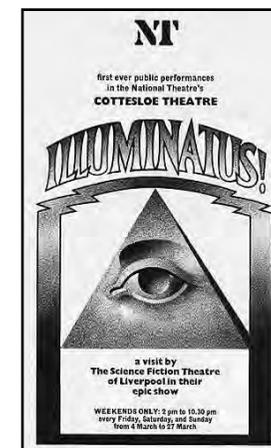
As cast member Bill Nighy would later remember, "...and fuck me, did he deliver!" Drummond's solution was to build the sets to strange scales, utilizing tricks such as foreshortening and strange angles, all of which perfectly suited the disorienting style of the play. Tables or beds were stood upwards and stuck to the rear wall, giving the audience the impression that they were looking down on the action from the ceiling. Despite the seemingly contradictory scales of the story and the café stage, Drummond took Campbell's advice, assumed that the impossible would be possible, and just knuckled down and did it. And why not? Everyone was achieving things previously unimaginable. Jim Broadbent recalled the production of *Illuminatus!* working on a "genius level... It's wasn't that Ken was being a genius...it was the whole creation of doing the greatest show yet done on Planet World... his creative imagination was just stunning."

The success of the play led to a move south, and a sold-out run at the National Theatre in London began in March 1977. It now featured a pre-recorded prologue performed by John Gielgud, who played a computer called the First Universal Cybernetic Kinetic Ultramicro Programmer, or FUCKUP ("The best anarchist joke ever perpetrated at the heart of the National," in the view of Campbell's biographer Michael Coveney.) It also featured Robert Anton Wilson himself, who was given a role that involved lying naked on the stage shouting Aleister Crowley's maxim, "Do what thou will shall be the whole of the law!" Wilson also brought a large amount of acid with him, which he offered to the cast. Bill Nighy recalls that "everyone went very quiet and then... 'Yeah, why not, thanks,' and we all dived in. So we were all tripping. It's a terrible idea if you want to act, but there you are..."

For many in the audience for the National Theatre run, this was their first exposure to Discordian ideas. Among them was young artist Jimmy Cauty. Cauty, then aged 22, had already had some

success painting best-selling *Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* posters for Athena (they were bought, he said, "mainly by student nurses".) He did not, however, meet Bill Drummond at this performance. Drummond had disappeared from the project back in Liverpool. After the sets were completed and as the premiere of the play grew nearer, Drummond had announced that he was just popping out to get some glue...and never returned. It was the late Seventies and punk was starting to rumble. As radical as the book and play were, the spirit of the age was not emerging in the form of eight and a half hour plays. Together with Ian Broudie, then a young guitarist whom Campbell had recruited to perform music for the play, Drummond formed the band *Big In Japan*.

Campbell had shown Drummond that the impossible was only impossible if you did not stand up and do it. It did not matter how big the practical problems were, or how crazy the enterprise may seem. Drummond took that attitude, got a bass guitar, and went off to make music. Years later, on New Year's Day 1987, he would phone Jimmy Cauty (whom he finally met whilst working in A&R for Warners) and suggest that the pair form a band called The Justified Ancients of Mu Mu. Under that name (and also as The KLF, a name they would increasingly use as their career progressed) they would bring the Discordian spirit of chaos to the music industry.



Poster for National Theatre presentation of *Illuminatus!*

FULL OF SHEET 8

Anyone who has been in a position which involves reading record company press releases will know that they contain more unreadable

bullshit than any other literary medium. An awkward amalgam of romantic fawning and angry political manifestos, music industry releases are frequently a stream-of-consciousness outpouring of rare and unlikely superlatives, written by people without first-hand knowledge of the music they refer to. The releases issued by Drummond and Cauty do not, at first glance, appear to be much different.

The statement issued in February 1990 and titled “Information Sheet 8” is a typical example. It begins with a classic summation of their debt to Robert Anton Wilson: “THE JUSTIFIED ANCIENTS OF MUMU are an organization (or disorganization) who are at least as old as the ILLUMINATI. They represent the primeval power of Chaos. As such they are diametrically opposed to the order that the Illuminati try to oppress on mankind and on mankind’s understanding of the Universe.”

It goes on to explain how Drummond and Cauty took on that mantle in order to make records without “anyone telling them how it should be done.” But within days of their first record being released, the statement continues...

...they began to receive mail and messages from very strange sources. The information they were getting was varied and confusing. They were being warned not to get involved with what they could never understand. They were being threatened. They were being congratulated in taking The War above ground. They were being welcomed on board as ‘brothers in arms’ in the only war that was ever justified, I quote; ‘To finally separate Time from Space, thus enabling Chaos once again to reign supreme.’

Most readers of music press releases would have skipped all this, under the assumption that it was bullshit. To anyone familiar with Operation Mindfuck, however, it seems extremely familiar. This raises the question as to whether Discordians were still engaging in those tactics in the 1980s, and directing them at Cauty and Drummond.

There is actually good evidence that Discordians did target the pair with hoax letters. In Pete Robinson’s well regarded JAMs history/fanzine *Justified And Ancient History*, he records a 1987 letter from an American called ‘Don Lucknowe’ who threatened them with ‘Deep Shit’ if they continued using that name. Drummond and Cauty were worried that they faced legal action from Wilson and they did not reply to the letter because, according to Robinson, they were “shit scared.”

Robinson did make contact on their behalf, however. The address was for a now-defunct parody news magazine called *Yossarian Universal*. The editor, Paul Fericano, replied to Robinson and told him that they believed that *Yossarian Universal* contributing editor James Wallis was responsible for the original letter. Wallis was a big Three Stooges fan, and the name ‘Don Lucknowe’ is based on a Stooges’ catchphrase ‘Don’t Look Now.’” This interest in Three Stooges-style comedy was a typical Discordian touch (Discordians are the type of people who consider Harpo Marx’s birthday a Holy day, after all.) According to Fericano, Wallis was “somewhat of a hoaxer, in our *YU* tradition (it’s one of our trademarks – and that’s an understatement.)”

Assigning any particular hoax letter to Operation Mindfuck is by definition extremely difficult. Wilson and Shea have explained that no Discordian...

...knows for sure who is or who is not involved in any phase of Operation Mindfuck or what activities they are or are not engaged in as part of that project. Thus, the outsider is immediately trapped in a double-bind: the only safe assumption is that anything a Discordian does is somehow related to Operation Mindfuck, but, since this leads directly to paranoia, this is not a ‘safe’ assumption after all, and the ‘risky’ hypothesis that whatever the Discordians are doing is harmless may be ‘safer’ in the long run.

There is a good reason to consider *Yossarian Universal*'s letter to The JAMs to be part of the Operation Mindfuck, however. 'Yossarian' is the protagonist in Joseph Heller's *Catch 22* and is also, according to *Illuminatus!*, a Discordian Saint.

Fericano's letter ends, "Sorry if all this caused anxiety, etc. Tell the members of the KLF that I wish them well, and would love to hear their music. Have never been able to find [music by The JAMs] out here." All this seems highly plausible. The British music press was widely available in the US, and a story about how ABBA's lawyers demanded the destruction of albums by The Justified Ancients of Mu Mu due to copyright issues was widely reported. The records themselves, however, did not cross the Atlantic in any numbers (indeed, most copies of their debut album were burnt in a field in Sweden). All that American Discordians knew about The JAMs would have been what they saw in the press, and all the adverts that Drummond and Cauty placed in the music press included a P.O. Box address. It seems likely, then, that American Discordians began sending strange and bewildering letters to Cauty and Drummond, believing that their adoption of the name 'Justified Ancients of Mu Mu' made them clear and deserving targets for Operation Mindfuck.

With that in mind, a further claim in Information Sheet 8 is worth noting. Drummond and Cauty claimed that their solicitor was sent...

...a contract with an organization or individual calling themselves 'Eternity'. The wording of this contract was that of standard music business legal speak, but the terms discussed and the rights required and granted were of a far stranger kind.

"Whether The Contract was a very clever and intricate prank by a legal minded JAMS fan was of little concern to Drummond and Cauty," Information Sheet 8 continues....

For them it was as good a marker as anything as to what direction their free style career should take next.... In the first term of The Contract they, Drummond and Cauty, were required to make an artistic representation of themselves on a journey to a place called THE WHITE ROOM. The medium they chose to make this representation was up to them. Where or what THE WHITE ROOM was, was never clearly defined. Interpretation was left to their own creativity. The remuneration they are to receive on completion of this work of art was supposed to be access to THE "real" WHITE ROOM.

The pair claim that they went on to sign this contract, despite the advice of their solicitor to have nothing to do with it. It is worth noting at this juncture that Cauty and Drummond were ignorant of Operation Mindfuck. Their sole knowledge of Discordianism came from *Illuminatus!*, which Cauty had never read and which Drummond had not, at that time, ever finished. By signing any such contract they were not simply 'playing along', for they would have had no context for what the contract was, or where it had come from.

In this reading of events, Drummond and Cauty appear to have taken a Discordian Operation Mindfuck prank letter at face value, and spent hundreds of thousands of pounds making a piece of work that would fulfil their part of a hoax contract that they chose to sign.

As to what the 'real' White Room which the contract alluded to was, Drummond and Cauty were typically candid: "Your guess is as good as anybody's." In Discordian terms, however, the meaning is relatively clear. The White Room refers to illumination, or enlightenment. The word 'room,' however, is interesting. The use of a spatial metaphor defines enlightenment as a place that can be travelled to, or sought in a quest. The search for the White Room becomes a pilgrimage, with the White Room itself taking on the character of the Holy Grail. Drummond and Cauty's film, when seen in this light, becomes a means to an end. *The White Room* was not

intended as a film that would make money or enhance their careers. It was, instead, a step along the path in a search for enlightenment.

DISCORD IN THE WHITE ROOM

The first hint that the film was not going to be released came in an information sheet from December 1989. “As you may already know the film was finished this summer and release was planned for autumn,” it said. “However, some strange things have happened to the KLF and they have decided to dramatically re-enact these events for inclusion in the film. For this further filming they need to lay their hands on a million pounds.”

The story goes that, following a gig at Heaven, they were accosted by a homeless guy called Mickey McElwee who told them the following tale: Before his life fell apart, McElwee used to do occasional jobs for an international arms dealer called Silverman. Silverman recruited McElwee to follow Drummond and Cauty to Spain during the filming of *The White Room*, in order to observe them at a distance. Silverman believed that Drummond and Cauty had been contacted by the actual Justified Ancients of Mummu, a secret organisation who not only existed but whose intention was to bring about nuclear war for shits and giggles. As McElwee watched the filming from a distance, he realised that a third party was also watching. This person, who McElwee believed was working for the British Government and who also knew of the existence of the ‘real’ Justified Ancients of Mu Mu, was intending to assassinate Drummond and Cauty with a sniper’s rifle. Drummond was apparently nearly shot during the filming of a scene where he walks up to a large Spanish castle. His life was saved, or so the story went, because McElwee killed the assassin before he could fire.

When Drummond and Cauty retold this story, they stressed that McElwee was probably a deranged fan who had made the whole

thing up but, nevertheless, the incident had scared the living crap out of them.

A more cynical interpretation, such as the one held by this author, is that they made this part of the story up. The ‘ambient road movie’ version of *The White Room*, it was acknowledged, was largely perceived as being very boring. It was hard to see why any viewer would care about the two directionless seekers on screen. Weaving a conspiracy-based version of the JAMs mythology into things, however, allowed them to keep the expensive footage that they had already shot and, at the same time, deliver a more traditional conspiracy thriller about two men who had become way out of their depth.

There were a few problems with this approach, however. The first is that all the Discordian humour had somehow become lost in translation, resulting in the fatal mistake of taking the whole thing seriously. The moment it is supposed that The Justified Ancients of Mummu is a real secret organisation that actually exists, then all that is interesting about them evaporates. In a related problem, the script for this version of the film was terrible. It would have resulted in something far worse than what they already had. The ambient road movie version may have been considered too boring to many to sit through, but it did at least succeed on its own terms.

Nevertheless the new script, which now included a dramatic recreation of McElwee’s story intercut with the existing footage, was budgeted. Paul McGann, who would later become the eighth Doctor Who, was cast in the role of McElwee. All that they had to do was raise the extra million pounds that filming this new script would entail.

To do this, they attempted to recreate the success of “Doctorin’ The TARDIS” and produce another number one record. Cauty and Drummond entered the studio and emerged with a cheesy pop single called “Kylie Said To Jason”. This, however, failed to even enter the top 100. Without the money they expected “Kylie Said To Jason” to make, they had no way of funding the rest of the film.

The soundtrack album for *The White Room* finally emerged in 1991. It was a critical and commercial hit which is still found in many '100 Best Albums' lists to this day. Drummond and Cauty successfully rode the spirit of Discord right into the heart of the music industry, igniting a chain of events that would eventually lead to them literally burning a million pounds in cash in a boathouse on the isle of Jura.

The film, however, was dead. The existing version was never released, and the final script was never shot. The 'real' White Room, of course, was never found. As Drummond once remarked, "[completing] that road movie thing, it can only end in death. We're not ready for that yet."

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