

Stewart Home interviews ex-K Foundation member Jimmy Cauty... eventually

There's no success like failure

IT BEGAN with a phone call from a publicist who asked if I'd like an all expenses paid helicopter trip across Dartmoor to witness former KLF star Jimmy Cauty demonstrate his sonic gun. Next came a press release which promised that the formidable and highly dangerous Saracen Armoured Personnel Carrier Audio Weapons System would transmit sonic frequencies and run down photographers for my amusement. The press statement was accompanied by sixteen pages of recent cuttings detailing the deadly effect Cauty's 'noise tank' had on cattle when he demonstrated the weapon for the amusement of a few friends.

From the start, I suspected something dodgy was going on. Cauty built his career in the music industry on the back of stunts and scams. The first KLF album 1987 received rave reviews, but the record was soon suppressed by lawyers acting for ABBA who objected to the heavy sampling of their hit single *Dancing Queen*. Drummond and Cauty milked the legal proceedings for press coverage, then released a new version of the LP with all the samples removed and detailed instructions on how to recreate the original sound. Later scams included dumping a dead sheep outside the Brit Awards ceremony at which they were named Best British Group. Shortly after this, the KLF announced that they would not be releasing any new material in the foreseeable future and that their entire back catalogue was deleted.

Having relaunched themselves as the K Foundation, Cauty and Bill Drummond turned up at the 1993 Turner Prize to humiliate winner Rachel Whiteread with a forty thousand pound award for being the world's worst artist. This was followed by a controversial trip to Scotland, during the course of which the duo burnt one million pounds. In November 1995, they selected the *Workshop For A Non-Linear Architecture Bulletin* to announce a 23 year moratorium on K Foundation activities. This privately circulated newsletter is so obscure that news of the moratorium is only just beginning to seep through to the general public.

While Bill Drummond is currently collaborating with former rocker Zodiac Mindwarp on a series of novels, Cauty is pursuing various solo projects, including an album of his sonic experiments for release on Blast First Records. After my initial dealings with this outfit, I was more than a little perplexed when further details of the Dartmoor trip were faxed to me by a PR company working on behalf of the band Black Star Liner. Having made it as far as one of the fifty block booked seats on a Devon bound train, I was presented with a set of ear plugs and a personal safety waiver to sign. Since most of those present were acting as though they were on some Boy's Own Adventure, I moved along to the next carriage where I was able to relax. After working out that I'd switched seats, publicists began dropping by to ply me with drinks and plug Black Star Liner, who were performing after Cauty had demonstrated his noise tank.

By the time we boarded a helicopter at Exeter airport, the majority of journalists present were at least mildly drunk. Then, after a twenty minute chopper

ride, disaster struck. The pilot announced that we couldn't land because a mist had swept across the moor. Instead, we returned to Exeter airport where we were told a coach would pick us up and transport us to the acoustic weapons test site. After an hour of waiting, the PR people were going crazy. Meanwhile, an assortment of journalists and photographers were having luggage cart races around an otherwise deserted passenger concourse. The airport had closed down for the night, until one of our party succeeded in activating the public address system and went into pirate DJ mode.

A security guard appeared and attempted to restore order when a bored music journalist switched on a luggage conveyer and one of his friends disappeared down it. Finally, a fleet of cabs conveyed us to the Latern Inn at Ashburton. We'd already miss Black Star Liner. The free bar only mildly improved the gloomy atmosphere that hung over the event. To make us feel better, every journalist present was promised an interview with Jimmy Cauty. We had to go through to another room and talk to Jimmy one at a time. First up was Tony from i-D, who came back quietly complaining that all he got was some incoherent babble about drugs.

When my turn came, I began by asking about the burning of the million quid. Jimmy flatly refused to talk about the K Foundation. Next, I asked Cauty if he was up on the latest research into frequency weapons, which got a much better response. "I know very little about military research into the uses of low frequency sounds as weapons. All this stuff about Advanced Acoustic Armaments is a joke, all I've done is mounted some disco gear onto my two Saracen tanks. Everything the press has written about the sonic guns I'm supposed to have built is just rubbish, the papers want to believe this stuff which is why they are so easy to hoax."

"The event cost fifty thousand pounds to put on,"

Cauty cackled after I told him about the debacle at Exeter airport, "and I'm really pleased with it. What happened at the airport was as much a part of the entertainment as what I did up on the moor. I'd intended to detain everyone up there, the fog coming down was a real stroke of luck. The performance was sponsored by Black Bin Liner and their record company because they thought they'd gain some radical credibility from the stunt. It might have blown up on the band, but it will still get their name around. After all, they've just played the most expensive pub rock gig ever!"

So there you have it. Jimmy Cauty the side-splitting avant-garde manipulator of the art of hype, who leaves journalists and PR people trapped in a web of their own making. Or, Jimmy Cauty the pop star whose promotional stunts end in Fiasco? The choice is yours. In a knowing post-modern sort of way, I think it's best to accept both versions of Cauty as true.



review

Lorna Miller
Witch

Witch is an independently produced comic by Glasgow Based artist Lorna Miller: after the usual treatment by the old poops in the painting department of Glasgow School of Art, she found healthier inspiration in her gradual awareness of a network of women artists producing comics, particularly through the example of Canadian artist Julie Doucet's autobiographical work, and Witch is now in its third issue. Miller is part of the group centred around Parade (with Chris Watson, Yves Tanitoc, Marc Baines and Craig Conlon) which is not just a comic but also a support network, and she is also part of SCCAM a loose association of 100 or so comic makers. While the comic scene in Glasgow can still be caricatured as having a 'loveable' tendency towards the sci-fi male anorak, thick spectacles and a certain retention in and around the anus, it has nevertheless endured, and—perhaps for reasons particular to the status of the medium—it can encompass an independence of spirit, invention and international influence, a strand of which includes the American underground of the 60s and 70s: for those familiar with such comics one could describe Witch as a raw version of Raw and Parade a less Arcadian version of Arcade.



Is Witch a comic for girls in a male dominated arena? According to Miller most of the readership has been male. Girl's comics are understandably something of an influence, but an influence which takes into consideration that they were designed by men and express plainly stupid notions of what those men thought girls were after. Sorry guys but it looks like all the Bunty's dedicated propaganda about ponies, good deeds, ponies, healthy out-door pursuits and ponies was either wasted on the young Lorna or has festered into subversion in the pages of Witch and its all your fault. As I remember it, the cut-out-and-dress doll was never a large kilted hunk with a thick tallywhacker or an 'Elvis Fertility Doll' with an even thicker one. Even though it is practically a certainty that masturbatory aids would have boosted the Bunty's sales, the guys who wrote it just didn't want to take their chances in court. Witch is better described as a comic for adults, all you need is some loose change and a slightly twisted sense of humour.

Stylistically Witch subtly shifts in its approach to drawing, responding to the mood of the artist, generating an appropriate pace and atmosphere for the subject matter created: a situation strip on the sheer rat-bastard tedium of relationships is loose and spontaneous; while 'Jane' is a combination of Commando style graphic art as a background, with its ever so slightly emancipated 'heroine' incongruously superimposed both graphically and in her satirical response to what the hell is going on around her. Other different approaches feature reworkings of 50's representations of women, including uncomfortably salacious material from ostensibly innocent film annual biographies of 'starlets,' or lunatic advertisements for various things unmentionable in polite society, but deliciously poured over here. While the wholesome world of 'true love' is not exactly ignored as a theme, its treatment does—like the activities of certain insects—have the tendency to end in at least G.B.H. if not the decapitation of the male, and yet imbue the feeling that this is no sad loss to the world.

Above all Witch is very, very funny and comes highly recommended, sadly though, as with most small press productions it has encountered the usual reluctance from distributors, even from 'Comic Shops.' Miller is open to responses from readers: "even if people don't want the comic I'd still be interested in hearing from other women out there and finding out their views on what I'm doing."

Witch can be obtained from Hi-Tone Art & Design, 120 Sydney Street, North Gallowgate, Glasgow G31 1JF. Readers can obtain a list of other titles distributed from: Peter Pavement, Slab O' Concrete, PO Box 148, Hove, East Sussex, BN3 3DQ