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‘YOU SHOULD TRY LYING MORE’

THE NOMADIC IMPERMANENCE OF

BILL DRUMMOND



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SCORE

1. IMAGINE

Imagine waking up tomorrow morning
and all music has disappeared.

All musical instruments and all forms
of recorded music, gone.

A world without music.

What is more, you cannot even remember
what music sounded like or how it was made.

You can only remember that it had existed and that it
had been important to you and your civilisation.

And you long to hear it once more.

Then imagine people coming together to make music
with nothing but their voices, and with no knowledge of
what music should sound like.

The music they would make is that of The17.

By the late 1990s I had started to have a fantasy choir that would perform choral music that I might one day compose. Right from its inception the choir in my head had a name: The 17. I didn't question why it was called The 17. It wasn't until I started going public about this and people asked me what significance the name The 17 had that I felt the need to come up with a reason . . . 16 is skitty and frivolous. All 'sweet little sixteen' – sexy but not downright dirty. Can stay out late but not all night. Has no hidden depth. 18 is dull, heavy with the dawning of adult responsibilities . . . But 17 is this dark and mysterious age in-between. Well it was for me . . . But there may be another reason. There is a choir from Oxford, England, that specialises in singing what is now called early music . . . They are called The Sixteen. So maybe I was just subconsciously wanting to be like The Sixteen and trying to go one better.

SCORE

5. PERFORM

Perform SCORE 1. *IMAGINE*.

Then find a suitable venue and announce a time, date and place for a performance by The17.
Instigate the allocation and distribution of 17 tickets for this performance.
At time, date and place of performance introduce yourself to audience with the following words:
'Good evening* my name is..... and you are The17.'

Ask The17 to perform SCORE 1. *IMAGINE*.

Then read to them SCORE 4. *AGE*.

Tell them they are going to perform an interpretation of *AGE* even though there is no building with five floors, and there are not five lots of The17 of the required ages, but only The17 that is there of whatever ages they are.

Record The17 performing the five notes F sharp, G sharp, A sharp, C sharp, and D sharp, for five minutes each, one after the other.

Provide a pen and a sheet of paper for the members of The17 to write down their names and email addresses.

Play back to them all five recordings simultaneously.

Tell them nothing has been added or taken away from the recording of their voices.

Tell them that they are all now life time members of The17.

Thank them for taking the risk of performing and not running away.

Delete all recordings so that they can hear the recordings being deleted from your trash bin.

Applaud.

Answer questions if asked and you feel in a position to answer.

Later: email admin@the17.org with list of 17 names.

If you need any technical advice regarding recording The17 contact info@the17.org

* *Good morning or Good afternoon* when applicable.

Graffiti



17



Still from the film *The K Foundation Burn A Million Quid*
(1994)



Richard Long's 'A Smell Of Sulphur In The Wind' part way through the cutting process

NOTICE

40 T-SHIRTS FOR SALE

THE 40 T-SHIRTS ARE RED
THE 40 T-SHIRTS ARE OF VARIOUS SIZES
THE 40 T-SHIRTS ARE OF VARIOUS BRANDS
THE 40 T-SHIRTS HAVE BEEN HAND STENCILLED
IN PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI BY CLAUDEL CASSEUS

THE STENCIL IS A WHITE THE17 LOGO INTERPRETED BY CLAUDEL CASSEUS
THE STENCIL WILL HARDLY LAST MORE THAN ONE WASH

THE 40 T-SHIRTS ARE TO BE SOLD ON 8 MARCH 2011
AT EASTSIDE PROJECTS, BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND
THE 40 T-SHIRTS ARE TO BE SOLD TO 40 DIFFERENT PEOPLE
THE 40 T-SHIRTS ARE TO BE WORN ONLY ONCE
ON EASTER SUNDAY 24 APRIL 2011

THE 40 T-SHIRTS ARE TO BE WORN WHEREVER THE WEARERS ARE
DOING WHATEVER THE WEARES ARE DOING

THE 40 T-SHIRTS BEING WORN ON THIS DAY IS A SCULPTURE
NO ONE PERSON WILL SEE ALL OF THE SCULPTURE

THE PRICE OF A T-SHIRT IS TWENTY QUID
CLAUDEL CASSEUS WILL GET ALL THE MONEY
THE DAY AFTER THE T-SHIRTS ARE SOLD

THE 40 T-SHIRTS EACH COME WITH A COPY OF THIS POSTER

Cally Callomon

'I consider Bill Drummond's art to be neither a search for any 'truth' nor for it ever to be finished.

However, I also know that if one is to make art, and if that art has a broad appeal, it may mean that others are willing to pay money to own a part of that art. To that end we devise and construct a series of items that could be of use to people in exchange for their money.

Chiefly these items rely on text. This is always Bill Drummond's text.

The text results from a series of activities or thoughts by Bill Drummond.

Structurally they come in the form of large printed text-pieces, books, text paintings and the odd fragment of re-appropriated artworks.

Aesthetically I have always admired both Trade Gothic Bold Condensed (I started to use it in 1990) and Walbaum. I stated to use Walbaum in 1994 after I experienced too many drawbacks with the typeface 'Modern'. I enjoy using the same typefaces much as a musician may enjoy playing the same violin. To the violinist the performance of the music is all, the instrument, though considered and looked after, is secondary.

With Bill Drummond; the actions thoughts and texts is all, the posters are mere postmen, albethey nice smelling ones if we screen print them.'

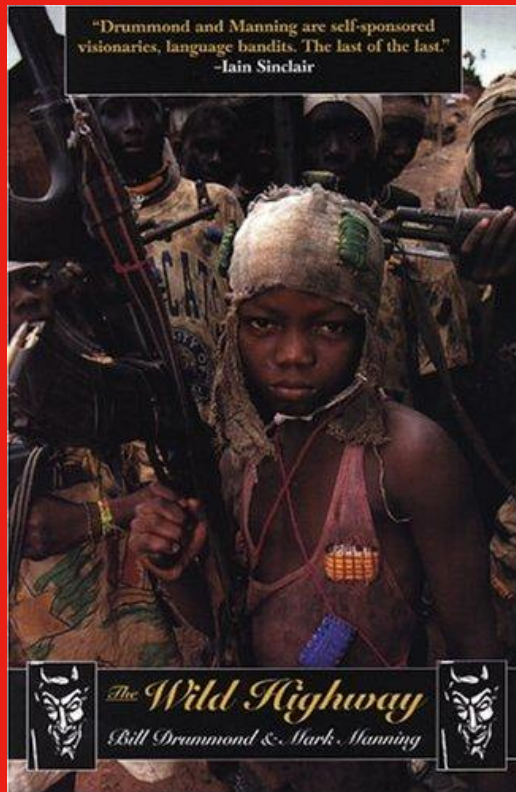
Drummond as Nomad

‘Let’s take, as an illustration, a piece of wood. Royal science will want it milled to established specifications – as a 2 by 4, for instance – so it can be used in building construction whose designs are based on the availability of lumber conforming to certain predictable ‘constants’ (size, regularity of grain, strength, surface appearance, and so on). Any knots that occur are considered mere imperfections, and may indeed lower the quality rating of the piece of wood as construction lumber, or preclude its use altogether. A sculptor, serving here as nomad scientist, will assess the piece of wood very differently. For the sculptor, knots, grain and irregularities appear as singularities, features that inhere in the wood-matter as its unique form of content. And in the sculptor’s hands, each singularity can become a substance of expression: a knot may become the eye of a fish; a grain pattern may become the waves of the sea. Or something else entirely: the content/expression relation here is one of contingency, not necessity.’

Eugene Holland ‘Studies in Applied Nomadology: Jazz, Improvisation and Post-Capital Markets’ 2004

Drummond as Unreliable Narrator

- *Bad Wisdom* (1996) with Mark Manning



- *The Wild Highway* (2005) with Mark Manning

The bag arrives. It's a beat-up affair, veteran of many a scuzzy tour, held together by at least three rolls of Gaffa tape.

Helsinki customs: no electronics, no screens – no problem. The World War Two issue Wehrmacht Luger and twenty rounds of ammunition secreted in Gimpo's rectum went undetected, as did the kaleidoscope contents of Bill's black leather doctor's bag.

Gimpo takes control. We stumble through customs and out into the grey light of early November 1992, Helsinki, Finland. We're not too sure what time of day it is. The time difference is two hours, but whether it is forwards or backwards we do not know. Mind you, none of us are watch-carriers. 'Time? Hey, that's for straights,' croaks a distant voice.

Drummond and Manning, *Bad Wisdom*, p. 21.

SCORE

2. INSTIGATE

Accept the contradictions inherent in SCORE 1, but act on it nevertheless. Accept the contradictions in all that you imagine The17 to be about and become a member of The17 by taking part in a performance or instigating a performance of one of these SCORES.

Or

Instigate the creation of an entirely different form of music that the world is yet to hear. This music may be diametrically opposed to everything you imagine The17 to be about.

SCORE

3. DRIVE

Choose a journey.

Record the sounds within your car or cab as you drive your journey.

Find 17 people willing to sing.

Gather The 17 together in a darkened room.

Play them the recording of the journey.

Indicate a dominant note in the recording for them to pitch to.

Ask them to open their mouths and bring forth noise.

Ask them to listen and respond to the noises being produced by the other singers.

Use your initiative.

“Question eight: why do you lie?”

“One lies to gain.”

“But why do you, Stewart Home, lie?”

“‘We arrive at truth through error,’ to quote Kant, and I love the paradox and I hate all that reaching for authenticity thing.”

I asked him this question because so much of his work seems to be about trying to undermine supposed bourgeois culture by spreading lies.

“That is my problem, Stewart. I’m always reaching for authenticity. One of the fundamental differences between us is that you like to make the world a better place by spreading lies while I like to try to do it by spreading truths.”

“You should try lying more, Bill. It works better.”

Bill Drummond ‘The Liar: Stewart Home – Theorist, Neoist, Anti-Novelist – Takes a Walk with Bill Drummond’, *The Guardian* (6 April 2004) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2004/apr/06/fiction>