

# Time Out

## Chicago

THE WHERE-TO-GO WHAT-TO-DO WEEKLY  
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### FRENCH KICKS

Parisian  
electro-rock  
duo Justice in  
its first U.S.  
interview

Cover Price \$2.50



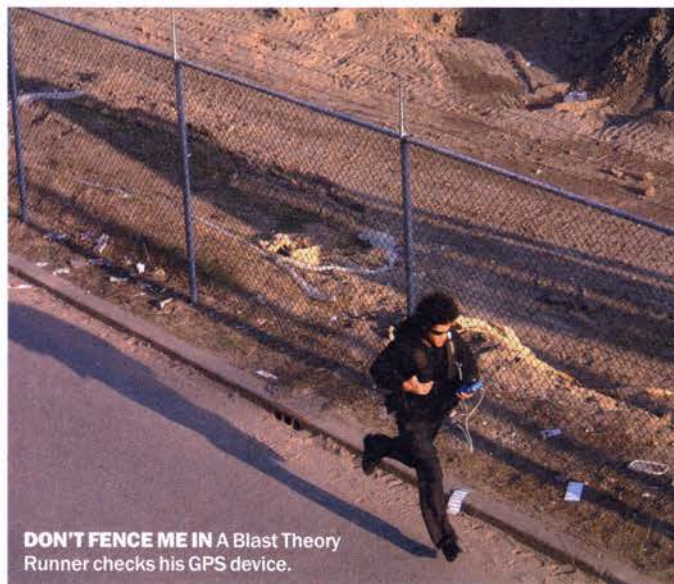
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Around Town

## Preview

### Can You See Me Now?



**DON'T FENCE ME IN** A Blast Theory Runner checks his GPS device.

**Museum of Contemporary Art,**  
Thu 2–Sun 5 (see daily listings).

This weekend in the Gold Coast, three performance artists armed to the gills with PDAs, walkie-talkies and GPS devices will chase down assailants. If you catch them dashing around the neighborhood, brows furrowed with purpose, you just might wonder—given that no one else is in sight—Who the hell are they chasing?

The Museum of Contemporary Art has invited the seven-member British performance art group Blast Theory to perform. And the troupe will do what it's known for: "mixed reality" games.

Here's the deal: Blast Theory's artworks are simple games (hide-and-seek, chase, etc.) that seem to play on the ambiguous definition of *reality* by blending its virtual and corporeal forms. In this weekend's game, titled *Can You See Me Now?*, the artists face off against computer players in a game of chase. The latter navigates around a 3-D map of the Gold Coast (*Delaware Ave south to Chicago Ave, Michigan Ave east to LSD*). In the same area of the real world, the performance artists—a mix of Blast Theory members and MCA employees—will "follow" the computer players, charting their whereabouts with high-tech gadgets.

Who are these desk-bound players? That's the fun part. They're you, me and anyone else who can quickly get to a computer (kiosks will also be set up at the MCA) during the game from 1 to 4pm Thursday 2 to Sunday 5. The first 20 of us to sign in on the *Can You See Me Now?* website get dumped at random locations. Then we can control our placement

by clicking on arrow keys, chat with one another, "see" the runners (there are three at any one time) and hear their walkie-talkie squawks streamed live through the website.

When the performance artists catch a desk-bound player, they take a digital picture of the site where he or she is caught, which is then posted on the website. Which is not to say you're out of commission for long: Unlike a normal game of chase, there are no winners or losers, per se. The game starts anew every hour with a fresh set of players.

*Can You See Me Now?* was made in collaboration with Nottingham University's Mixed Reality Lab and introduced at the U.K.'s 2001 b.tv festival in Sheffield. It has also been showcased at the Dutch Electronic Arts Festival and at forums in Germany and Japan.

Blast Theory's Matt Adams says their objective, essentially, is to stretch the limits of technology (mixed reality is a bit more sophisticated than Dungeons & Dragons) and bring to light the socially transformative nature of new technologies, such as cell phones. "Mobile phones create new social spaces, and they're also a very democratic form of technology," he says. "Access to mobile phones is enormously high. It's also powerful that immigrants can afford a cheap communication device before they even leave the airport where they arrive."

Still confused? You can hear Blast Theory explain the performance during a talk at the MCA at 2pm on Saturday 4.—*Greg Presto*

Play the game online at [www.canyouseemenow.co.uk/chicago](http://www.canyouseemenow.co.uk/chicago).