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Press Release

for Immediate Release

Blast Theory launches Kickstarter for new app experience *Karen*

Blast Theory presents:

Karen: an app that psychologically profiles you as you play

Pioneers of interactive art Blast Theory are now developing their most adventurous piece of work yet. They are seeking the support of Kickstarter backers to raise the £15,000 needed to create *Karen*, a new work for 2015 developed in partnership with National Theatre Wales.

Karen is an artistic app mixing games, storytelling and psychological profiling in a way that has never been done before. It explores how governments and companies are gathering our personal data without our consent.

When you launch the app, you meet Karen, who is a life coach. You interact with her via touch and text. As she gets to know you she gets more and more friendly, maybe too friendly. How does she know so much about you?

In fact, the app is using psychological profiling techniques in the background. Like Facebook, the app also monitors your every move, harvesting data such as your messages and your location to personalise your experience. This compelling and intimate work is a new departure for four-times BAFTA-nominated Blast Theory.

About Karen

Karen is a life coach and she's happy to help you work through a few things in your life. She asks you some questions about your outlook on the world to get an understanding of you. In fact, her questions are drawn from a well-established psychological profiling questionnaire called Mood Repair. She – and the software – are profiling you, and she gives you advice based on your answers.

As she gets to know you, she gets more and more curious. She seems to know things about you that she shouldn't. She asks for a snap of your bedroom. She gets you to hand your phone to a friend and asks them all about you. Where exactly is this going to end?

At the end of their experience with Karen, users are able to receive a report that exposes how the app uses data. This gives a unique insight into how apps can use your data to deliver personalised content.

In an interview for the Future of StoryTelling conference in New York, Blast Theory Artist and Co-Founder, Matt Adams said:

"We're really fascinated by Big Data. There's a belief that large amounts of data gives greater intelligence or greater knowledge, and that may not be the case. It's a massive social change, I think it's our job to try and get in among those changes and pose questions about it and unpick it.

...We're all familiar with Big Data as used by large companies like Google and Facebook. We're trying to think about what big data might mean for storytelling and those of us that work in culture. The promise of Big Data is that corporations and governments have an ever-greater degree of understanding about people who use their services and their ability to tailor those services to that individual. I'm very interested to try to explore that territory; to try to think about how gathering data about someone and reflecting it back to them might be a way to tell stories in a new way."

The Campaign

Blast Theory will be partnering with National Theatre Wales for a special live event connected to the app experience, but are seeking support through Kickstarter to fund the development of the app itself.

They need to hit their Kickstarter target of £15,000 by 5th November to enable them to develop the app for iOS.

<http://www.bit.ly/karenapp>

Contact

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Notes to Editors

BLAST THEORY: Four times BAFTA Award nominated group Blast Theory are renowned internationally as one of the most adventurous artists' groups using interactive media. They have shown work at Tate Britain, Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney, ICC in Tokyo, Sundance Film Festival, the Venice Biennale and the Royal Opera House. The group has won the Golden Nica for Interactive Art at Prix Ars Electronica and the Maverick Award at the Game Developers Choice Awards in the USA.

Images can be downloaded from http://bit.ly/karen_press.