

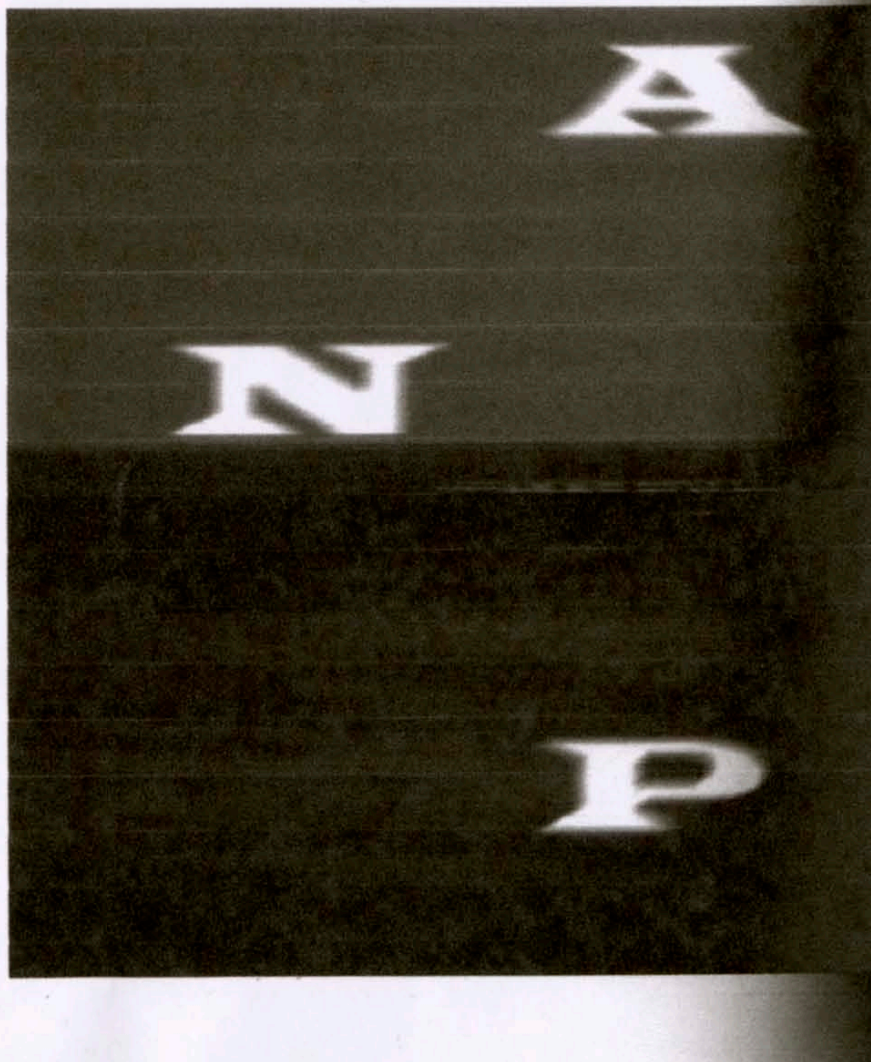
So who are *Blast Theory*? Their work has not yet been noticed by the »New British Art« scene, fixated on the commodity market of certain galleries, critics and art magazines. *Blast Theory* move in a circle of artists who work in the space between media to develop new products and experiences, working collaboratively to broaden the range of expertise. The two core team members Matt Adams and Ju Row Farr, shape the initial concept and then bring together a team to develop each project, more like the film industry than the solitary gallery artist. Their collaborators may work in pop videos, as professional actors, dancers and computer designers, bringing a wide range of skills to hand, with a specific team built for each project. They have grown in London towards a theatre or film production company, their live events are just one of a range of activities, including graphics, T-shirts and workshop activities.

**Anna Harding**

Their chosen audience is street smart, visually literate urban youth, brought up on mainstream cinema, sci-fi comics, computers, DJs and CNN news. Promoting an intelligent youth cul-

*Kidnap/Video, 1997; Video Still*

**B L A S T**





ture, they would make a good advert for Tony Blair's Millennium Britain rather than the Thatcher children Damien Hirst and Anya Gallaccio.

Definitely a London outfit, regulars at the ICA talks and Live Art programme – as well as the bar (they had a number of early breaks at the ICA where they were supported by Lois Keidan and Catherine Ugwu, who until recently ran a thriving and supportive setting for cutting edge practices internationally). They work in cities across Britain: Hull, Leicester, Nottingham, Lancaster, Liverpool and Bristol, where contemporary culture flourishes, unhindered by the demands of commercial art market or art tourist agendas.

#### KIDNAP

Have you ever considered what it would be like to be kidnapped? For a small fee, this possibility was offered to 500,000 cinema-goers in England during 1997 as they unsuspectingly watched the adverts before sitting down to the latest David Lynch film. The ad for the *kidnap* experience, commis-

sioned and produced by artists Chris Dorley-Brown and Zbigniew Jaroc for the *Blipvert* project, this 45-second work fits perfectly into the repertoire of *Blast Theory*, who have been making and performing provocative and engaging works for a youth following over the last 5 years. The *Kidnap* advert references genres of road movies, car chases, hijacks and shoot-outs, conjuring an atmosphere of suspense, excitement and glamour. Just like a Classic Car ad, the tantalising attraction of the unreachable, the unknown can be sexy and thrilling. Would you like to experience being submitted to the whims of a dominatrix – you can choose which type, by just phoning the free 0 800 number and paying a small fee to register.

In a sense, the idea of *Kidnap* is compelling in itself, and you wonder if it is necessary to follow this through in real life – like the fantasy porn industry, does the reality ever match the seduction of the offer?

Their practice speaks to a media-wise generation in its content and message. They create an environment using news clips, advertising and cinematic references, all from contemporary mainstream media culture. They use these references as tools, as source materials, and occasionally as weapons. Their projects often cross platforms between video projections, live environments and scripted performance – whatever the tools applied, they always manage to create a compelling environment of possible danger and thrill, where things may happen ... the what if? scenario.

*Kidnap* is the ultimate example to date of audience being invited as both performer and voyeur. You are encouraged to fulfill a hidden fantasy and take the ultimate risk. This is not a risk which many art works ask of us, and luckily *Kidnap* does not reveal itself as an artwork.

*Something American*, their last major stage show, stars a larger than life fantasy figure – the fake American cop. Just like so many kids act out the persona they want to be when they grow up, yet this guy is grown up and the distinction between fantasy and reality has got all blurred. He takes us through the realm of his fiction, mostly based on a love affair with Hollywood movies. The cinema screen appears full scale live on stage too.

In a previous performance event, *Stampede*, the ›Walk Talk scene from John Wayne classics, of cowboys riding out in line across the valley, becomes a key motif for the performers. Again there is a hint of the Hollywood fantasy in overlap with a hedonistic youth culture. The young mob thrash their bodies in total self-absorption to *Nirvana* in a faked disco scene; they scale a wall and fall into a danger zone patrolled by strobing searchlights and barking dogs on stage.

*Stampede* opens with a remote controlled model helicopter in flight around the outside of the venue – the show was literally under surveillance. As you enter the venue, a video identikit portrait is made of each audience member and logged for future use against you later in the show. Since the Jamie

## T H E O R Y

