

Kidnapped! A two-day break with a difference

IT'S a sunny July morning. You're walking down the High Street when you get the feeling you're being watched.

Suddenly an unmarked Transit van pulls up and you feel a tug on your arm. Two burly figures appear from nowhere and the door snaps shut. You realise you've been kidnapped.

Don't try and act surprised, after all it's what you paid for.

"Kidnap" is the brainchild of Matt Evans, director of London theatre group Blast Theory.

On July 15 two of the 200 Mancunians who registered and paid £10 to the group will be snatched and held for 48 hours "against their will" in a secret location.

Their capture and imprisonment will be relayed live to the Green Room Theatre.

Potential victims have been given the opportunity to "customise" their kidnaps.

For an extra £1 they were able to opt to be kept naked, or receive verbal abuse from the kidnappers for £3.

A whole host of other variations were offered, ranging from bedtime stories to kidnappers in clown costumes.

But most would-be victims have opted for simple "creature comforts".

Organiser Sarah O'Brien said: "A lot of applications seem to be from people with



• Kidnapped: The "lucky" victim will be bundled off by his or her captors.

by Edward Swinden

busy lifestyles looking for the ultimate chance to get away from it all. "They requested things like doughnuts or a massage to relax them."

But some people had more bizarre fantasies to explore.

Sarah said: "One request explained exactly how the victim wanted the kidnap to go. It said 'After a strict interrogation, affection between myself

and the heavily-armed Amazon women who have become my captors begins to grow. As lovers we go out to conquer a grateful world.'"

Another applicant asked to be held naked by men dressed in Nazi uniform.

Sarah said: "They have as much chance of being picked as anyone. If they are chosen the kidnappers will ensure that they fulfil the victim's request in every detail."

Because of the pitfalls such a

promise could involve, a team of lawyers spent three weeks trying to ensure the kidnap remains safe and legal.

And Greater Manchester Police will make sure the abduction goes smoothly.

Sarah said: "There's the possibility that a passer-by might try and save the victim and knife one of the kidnappers."

Ten potential kidnap victims, picked at random, will be kept under surveillance for a fortnight before the event.

What you can pay extra for!

JAM doughnuts at 40p each, or continental breakfast for £6.

Unlimited verbal abuse at just £3, or full interrogation for £9

20 cigarettes for £4.50 (but if you want matches, they cost £4.60 for 20)

One phone call for £5 or two days' full secretarial support for £23 (try getting a temp at that price!)

Only pretty or handsome kidnappers — £20. Massage and a hot bath for £12.

Kidnappers in New York cop or Nazi uniform, just £24.

A set of juggling balls will cost you £100.

A daily newspaper is £2.

Held wearing only underwear costs £15.00.

14th July 1998

VICTIMS VOLUNTEER FOR TERROR ON WEB SITE

BY DEBORAH HAILE

A TEAM of kidnapers will take two people hostage tomorrow.

The victims will be seized and held in a secret location for 48 hours, during which they could be interrogated and verbally abused.

And the whole event will be carried live on a web site.

Kidnap is an arts event, part of Manchester's Digital Summer '98 celebrations.

It has already been attacked by charities such as the Suzy Lamplugh Trust and the Missing Persons Helpline for glamorising the act but event organisers Blast Theory say it is perfectly safe.

Ten volunteers, ranging from shop workers to investment managers, were tracked by a Blast Theory team before the final victims were chosen.

"From the kind of entrants' forms we received, one of the biggest reasons for entering was to do something that was a bit unknown and sign up for something that you didn't know what the outcome was," said Matt Adams from Blast Theory.

"For some people, kidnapping was a fantasy. Organisation has been ridiculously complicated and my respect for kidnapers has now grown. We have been working on the project for 18

Net closes on kidnapping as drama unfolds

months. It's been a really lengthy and detailed process.

"It took us nine months just to sort out the legal implications.

"The main issue was consent — and whether you can legally consent to have something illegal done against you.

"In English Law, consent may not be an adequate defence.

"But the legal advice we have received is that a kidnap with consent is not a kidnap so it's not

a crime." The two victims, who will be seized tomorrow, will be monitored round-the-clock by a psychologist to ensure they don't suffer any negative effects. They can stop the kidnapping at any time by giving a special password.

And they can even choose the kind of kidnapping they fancy — tough interrogation or a kindly kidnap with continental breakfast and a massage. The 48-

hour event will be shown live on a web site —

www.newmediacentre.com/kidnap — that has been sponsored by Digital Summer '98.

The site can be accessed by visitors to The Green Room on Whitworth Street, Manchester.

Tamsin Drury, arts events co-ordinator for Digital Summer '98, said: "It's certainly one of the most unusual and thought-provoking events."

17th July 1998

Close call for kidnap hopeful

I SUPPOSE you could say hard luck to one unfortunate Mancunian who failed by a whisker to get kidnapped the other day. The person, who remains anonymous, paid £10 for the once in a lifetime chance to emulate Patty Hearst and be held hostage by hooded men, all the time being broadcast live worldwide on the Net.

Out of around 100 people who also put their names forward he or she made the shortlist of 10 but unfortunately after a week of being under surveillance missed out on the final abduction. That dubious pleasure went to a bloke and a girl from the south.

It was all part of an arts scam by performance group Blast Theory who, in conjunction with Digital Summer at the Green Room in Manchester, the ICA in London and Firetrap clothes, cooked up the idea. And they weren't short of potential kidnapes.

"People have a desire to step into the unknown," says Blast Theory's agent provocateur Matt Adams. Kidnapes could choose a variety of specials, ranging from a hot bath and massage, to being kept naked.

The pair will be released tonight after two days before the world's media at the ICA, leaving one Mancunian rueing what might have been. What can you say - better luck next time?