



Photo by Alex Kershaw

RIDER SPOKE

Rider Spoke invites you on a ride in search of the perfect place to hide a secret. Think about the people in your life while you explore. Record messages and share them with strangers you will never meet. Ride on and the voices of strangers will draw you to new and unknown places.

To cycle alone, in the evening, with no particular destination offers a rare freedom. Guided by a narrator and a delicate score by Blanket, you're invited to explore the city and lose yourself for a while.

About the work

To take part, you are provided with a headset and a smartphone that mounts on your handlebars. The smartphone uses imagery drawn from Mexican votive painting, sailor tattoos and heraldry: swallows flutter across the screen to show available hiding places, prefab houses indicate places where others have hidden. Votive paintings express gratitude (or sometimes a request) to a saint. Tattoos and heraldry are both badges of identity; early tattoos were hard won symbols of belonging, often indicating an achievement for a sailor. Sometimes they showed how far you had sailed. Sometimes they were expressions of hope for a safe return from a voyage. This combination of styles reflects *Rider Spoke's* themes of travel, reflection, personal expression and hidden messages.

As you head out on your ride, a narrator guides you to answer questions. Choose to answer a question, and the smartphone alerts you to hiding places to make your recording. Alone, in an out of the way spot you reflect on your life. Then your recording is saved in that spot for other riders to find later.

Credits

Rider Spoke was developed in collaboration with the Mixed Reality Lab at University of Nottingham, Sony Net Services and the Fraunhofer Institute as part of the European research project IPerG (Integrated Project on Pervasive Gaming). Blast Theory is supported by Arts Council England.

Having made a recording you can choose to look for the hiding places of others. When you search, the smartphone shows you the nearest recordings and you can choose which ones to listen to. The recordings are only available in this context: played to you, alone, in the place where they were recorded.

As you roll through the streets your focus is outward, looking for good places to hide, speculating about the hiding places of others, becoming completely immersed into this overlaid world as the voices of strangers draw you into a new and unknown place.

The streets may be familiar but you've given yourself up to the pleasure of being lost.

Rider Spoke premiered with a sold-out season at the Barbican in London and has since been shown in 22 cities worldwide.

Selected Press

"As soon as it was over, I wanted more. Rider Spoke was magical..." (Icon magazine, UK)

"A gloriously enlivening piece of theatre... it manages to embrace the remorseless rush of the city while insisting on the individual's ability to pierce it with quiet reflection." (Metro newspaper, UK)

"A highly original and exciting form of augmented travel... a delicate, almost intangible work [which] combines elements of trust and risk, irony and politics, confession and exposure, orientation and disorientation, everyday life and digital worlds." (Realtime magazine, Australia)

"An extreme confessional which turns London's spectacular and squalid alleys into a theatrical backdrop for your own memories" (Time Out magazine, UK)

Tour Requirements

Size of company

2 - 3 members of Blast Theory for an agreed performance period including get-in and get-out. The number of Blast Theory team travelling will depend on the agreed audience capacity and local team.

Scale of venue

As an outdoor site specific work, *Rider Spoke* requires a weather protected front of house and bike staging area for the public. A small back of house production workspace and secure overnight storage are also needed.

Session times

Rider Spoke is designed to take place in the evening. It's recommended that the first performance is generally no earlier than about 3 hours prior to sunset. During winter the work may take place in the afternoon.

The standard performance set-up allows up to 5 participants to start every 15 minutes. Box-office should sell tickets with a specific start time to regulate audience flow through the show. Three hours of start times allows 65 participants per day. Additional capacity can be quoted on request.

In our experience the most popular performance start times are between 5pm – 8pm.

The duration of the show for an individual participant is around 75 minutes, including front of house briefing.

Equipment and bikes

Blast Theory provide costume and all core equipment for front of house and running of the show including mobile phones, headsets, handlebar mounts for phones and equipment for offering accessible options.. We can also additionally provide front of house set and equipment subject to agreement on shipping, including front of house counters, illuminated signage, and bike helmets to loan to participants.

Hosts will need to provide suitable equipment for the venue setup including power and electrics, site security, weatherproofing and flooring where needed. We can provide a production guide with more detail on request.

In addition, we suggest that the host supplies a limited number of bicycles for audiences who do not have their own bike. *Rider Spoke* is designed primarily for audiences to take part on bikes. Hosts have previously run successful partnerships with local bike share schemes to encourage those without their own bike to participate. From our experience, between 10 - 30% of audiences have used a hire bike where these have been available. In these cases, proximity to a bike share hub or establishing a temporary hub at front of house should be considered.

Freight

As standard: 2 large equipment boxes. These can travel with the Blast Theory team.

Where agreed: illuminated signage, counters and additional set and equipment for front of house.

Working with local teams

With a Blast Theory team of two on site, a local team of up to four people is needed to assist in setting up and running the show. The size of the local team provided by the host can vary with the specific venue set-up, the number of performance days and hours agreed with the host, and on the language requirements. We will discuss options with you in detail to make sure the presentation works well for your local circumstances and audiences.

Language

The work was originally written in English, but can be performed in alternate languages. The smartphone app includes support for multiple languages if required Please discuss further bilingual and translation options with the company.

Taking part

Rider Spoke is suitable for people age 16 years and over – audience members should bring their own bikes to take part.

Artists' presentations and workshops

The artists are available to provide talks, presentations and workshops. Please discuss options with the company.

Production

A detailed production guide with further information on schedule, host responsibilities, local team, space requirements, equipment, signage and accessibility is available on request.

Accessibility and Inclusion

We have tested *Rider Spoke* for use by audiences with diverse access needs. With support from the host we invite the audience to take part on a bicycle, wheelchair, mobility scooter, alternative cycle or on foot. We can also offer some assistive technologies, accessible routes and provide personal assistance during the show.

Previewing the work

A full project description can be found here:
<https://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/rider-spoke/>

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