

In the shoes of a terrorist for play at Release the Hounds fest



Release the Hounds Festival director Steph Jones. (Picture by Tracey Kilner)

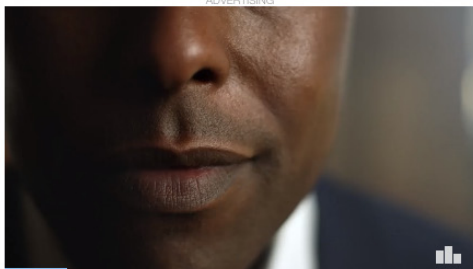


published

08:00 Sunday 16 August 2015

When life and art intersect, something interesting always happens, writes *Graham Chalmers*.

Knaresborough-based Release the Hounds festival director Steph Jones has finally secured her dream team – and it's partly because of that infamous bomb hoax in the town a couple of years back.



Never quite a traditional literary festival from the start, the ground-breaking Release the Hounds has always been billed as a weekend of “performance-based” spoken word events.

With the booking of internationally-acclaimed interactive arts group Blast Theory, it finally looks set to live up to that billing completely.

A play which puts one member of the audience at a time in the shoes of a terrorist with a script which gives control of what happens next to that audience member, Steph said it had taken more than a year to finally secure the involvement of, Brighton-based Blast Theory.

The final thing which clinched this mighty coup for this pocket festival was that notorious incident on the High Street.

“I was a fan of their’s and my original mentor Kevin Jamieson at Harrogate Theatre has been talking to them about the possibility of coming to Knaresborough.

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"They'd already heard from someone else who's performed at Release the Hounds that it had a good vibe but when they heard about the bomb hoax, they thought it was perfect for them.

"I remember the day itself. It wasn't funny. It closed down the whole town."

Organised mainly by Steph herself with a tiny budget in a variety of very small locations and venues around Knaresborough, who would have thought when she first launched it in 2013 it would bring big names and cutting edge events of national reputation to such a small town successfully?

The former King James's High School and Harrogate Ladies College student said: "I envisaged the first year of the festival being like this but it had to be simple enough to do. The main aim was to make something happen, to do something that was possible to do.

"But this year's is more what my original aim was meant to be with more pieces devised in the spot without a pre-existing script.

"It's what excited to me when I was at drama school in London."

As well as innovative ideas, next month's third annual Release the Hounds also features some big names.

Steph's excitement is palpable.

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I've always thought the arts thrives most when the people organising the events are knowledgeable and passionate about the arts but running a festival also requires a feeling for the practical.

Under Steph's direction, Release the Hounds seems to be evolving and improving each year.

If you happen to buy a modestly-priced three-day pass and wander round Knaresborough town centre taking in the whole thing from September 11-13, Rth 3 certainly promises an entertaining and provocative time.

For more information visit the [Release theHounds](#)

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