



## My One Demand: The Movie You Can See Before They've Finished Making It

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Most movies are shot and canned long before they ever make it to theatres. *My One Demand*, a 90-minute film debuting during the [Luminato Festival](#), is an exception. The film is streamed to the theatre in real-time every night from the streets of Toronto, where a camera crew follows seven actors as they weave a tale of unrequited love.

The film is the latest endeavor from [Blast Theory](#), a British arts group that constantly seeks to push the boundaries of interactive media. On that front *My One Demand* is an unmitigated success, as I learned while shadowing one of the final rehearsals. In contrast to the recent *Suicide Squad*, Blast Theory is not shutting down any streets and does not in any way alter the flow of traffic in Toronto. There's nothing to stop pedestrians from entering the frame, and that's only one of the problems that makes the film such an ambitious logistical challenge.

"We're working on an arts budget, so it's not like we can throw money at it, either," said Matt Adams, one of the co-founders of Blast Theory. "But that's exciting. That's the thrill of it, the level of audacity."



Blast Theory Leaders Nick Tandavanitj, Ju Row Farr, and Matt Adams

The biggest obstacles were the live stream and transportation for all of the equipment. The beleaguered cameraman carries what looks like an entire studio on his back for the duration of the film, while carts and cars are waiting for the crew at several points throughout the journey.

"The first time we ever did this project end to end was last Friday, so we're on a very, very steep learning curve, and there's lots of research to be done into how you can stream from the streets over mobile networks, in real time, in high definition to the cinema," said Adams. "Saturday was the first time we ever streamed the picture for the entire duration of the film, and that's the first time that we had solid proof that yeah, this thing is actually going to work."

Fortunately, Blast Theory has been working on the film for roughly year and a half, giving the team plenty of time to iron out the kinks. Adams and his co-producers started planning the route when they visited Toronto in January, and were pleasantly surprised to learn that it looked even better in the summer.

"We spent a couple of weeks in the teeth of that winter walking the streets over and over again looking for places that are meaningful in some way, both in relation to Toronto and in relation to the story," said Adams. "We tried to show people from Toronto a side of the city they might not have noticed before. When you come from outside the city, you see it with different eyes and in different ways."

It's difficult to argue with the results. I walk almost everywhere, but the scenic route for *My One Demand* still took me to parts of the city that I had never been to, and the same is likely to be true for many Toronto viewers. The production has found other ways to tap into the day-to-day life of the city. The film makes no effort to avoid photo bombers and pedestrians, so audiences will see whatever happens in front of the camera.

"We decided early on that we wanted that chaotic quality of the city," said Adams. "You try and use the fact that the city is quite unpredictable. The cinematography has a documentary quality and I think that becomes a strength."

That's not to say that the process has been easy. There was a real moment of panic when Adams first looked at the list of things that have to go right in order for the film to work, largely because the entire production falls apart with even one broken link.

"I have to admit I had a real white-knuckle fear moment, where you just think this is ridiculous," said Adams. "The chances of those hoops all staying in place and working for the whole duration seems incredibly unlikely."

So far everything has come together despite the seemingly impossible odds. As for the film itself, *My One Demand* stars seven actors, each older than the one before. Elements of the story are pulled from the actor's own lives, and while the stories intersect at several points throughout the film, dialogue is minimal, partly because it would be difficult to hear over the sounds of the city.

Maggie Huculack instead serves as the film's narrator and as the primary contact for the audience. That's the other cool thing about *My One Demand*. Every Blast Theory project has an interactive element. In the case of *My One Demand*, audiences are able to text suggestions to the actors. Those suggestions are then sent to a control room before getting relayed to talent wranglers waiting with the cast. The influence is minor – too much change would only add to the logistical nightmare – but Huculack is able to acknowledge the recommendations and adjust the script accordingly.

"It's quite subtle," said Adams. "It's about giving you a space, as an audience, for your voice to seep into the story. The interaction is very gentle."



However minor, that willingness to embrace interactive media is one of the hallmarks that sets Blast Theory apart. According to Adams, the group is "very much inspired" by gaming, and while other projects have embraced that medium more explicitly, gaming tropes have been crucial as the group searches for new ways to communicate directly with its audience.

"We've had real crossover with the games industry and indie games in particular," he said, describing his interest in online games and location-based games. "We've been inspired by how much is going on in that space and we definitely overlap with people who are trying to think about the furthest potentials of games. We come from more the arts side and it's a really interesting intersection."

Adams hopes that the back and forth will prove to be equally compelling for viewers of *My One Demand*.

"I hope that it's honest and true to the seven people performing out on the street," said Adams of *My One Demand*. "And I hope we'll give people an experience that is completely unique. I would like for people to feel that, whether they like it or hate it, that they've had something that is entirely distinctive."

*My One Demand* plays Friday and Saturday at 8pm at the TIFF Lightbox theatre in Toronto, and is also streamed globally at [myonedemand.co.uk](http://myonedemand.co.uk). The Toronto cast includes Faisal Butt, Sascha Cole, Clare Coulter, Gia Nahmens, Julian Richings, Brielle Robillard, Max Sebastián, Craig Thomas, and Jeremiah Sparks.