

BY WILLIAM BROWNRIDGE / JUNE 25, 2015

TFS QUICKIE: INTERVIEW WITH BLAST THEORY CO-FOUNDER JU ROW FARR



Blast Theory is an artist group that creates interactive art that allows individuals to take part in their performances. Through interactive media, the group is bringing the audience into the art, and their latest piece, **My One Demand**, will be having its world premiere at the Luminato Festival on Thursday, June 25, 2015. **My One Demand** is a live shot film (that is, filmed in a single, continuous shot and live streamed to the audience) that blends a narrated story of unrequited love with one continuous 90 minute take of various people walking through the city of Toronto.

The film follows seven different people on a journey through Toronto. Familiar face Julian Richings is just one of the actors in the film, which also includes Faisal Butt, Sascha Cole, Clare Coulter, Gia Nahmens, Brielle Robillard, Max Sebastián, Jeremiah Sparks, and Maggie Huculack as the narrator. The film will be streamed online, as well as being shown onscreen at TIFF Bell Lightbox, and audiences will be able to interact through their phones or computers to alter the story while Blast Theory works behind the scenes to incorporate the interactive aspects with the live performance.

It's an incredibly unique experience, and one that seemed like it needed a bit more information, so we reached out to Blast Theory co-founder Ju Row Farr to ask a few questions about **My One Demand**. For more information about the screening, please check the Luminato Festival [website](#).

What inspired the idea of an interactive live film?

We have been making live streaming projects amongst other works for a few years now (**I'd Hide You** and **My Neck Of The Woods**) and **My One Demand** seems like a natural extension in some ways to these works. Matt [Adams], Nick [Tandavaniti] and I are all fans of film, of documentary, of interaction and of cities – through a series of circumstances these things have all come together in **My One Demand**. It is inspired in part by the Occupy Movement, with the slogan “What is your one demand?” being central to it. We lifted this question and asked ourselves the question politically and personally – what steers you, what do you

move towards and act on and what do you not. For us it led to unrequited love, whether you are the unrequited or the unrequitee, and how the two link. We have had a belief for a long time that this is possible and that we are the right people to do it.

The film features a narrator telling a story of unrequited love, how does that fit with the images you have planned?

If I could explain that to you in words then we wouldn't be doing it in pictures – what you hear and what you see hopefully work in tandem together to do this.

What kind of interactivity can the audience expect? How much can they actually influence the final film they'll be watching?

There will be a series of interactive moments throughout the work. Each screening will be interactive and the contributions people make will have subtle influences on the film. The audience's responses seep into the story, is the best way I can describe it and because audience responses will vary this seepage will vary slightly how the work is read.

What's the biggest fear with a project like this?

There are always many fears with our projects but we are not afraid of them, if that makes sense; we have to break them down. One of the things we deal with as artists is risk and we carefully consider from start to finish, from top to bottom what can go wrong, what will be different to our expectations, that there are things we cannot plan for. This excites us, partly the "live-ness" of this, the unpredictability of the crew, the cast and the audience, challenges our abilities to be able to control things and exploit things. I sometimes feel like we are employed in the art of life's emergency planning, if that could be a job. For a moment in time we want to make this shape, this fictional world, which is new and has never been done before. And some problems the audience will understand, some challenges will not seem like problems, some things we work hard to extinguish and some disguise. In a perfect scenario things maybe wouldn't worry us, but this fear is a part of the currency. Our biggest fear for this project is whether we can create a meaningful conversation with our audience.

How much planning went into the creation of this event, and how much of that is trying to plan for circumstances that are unpredictable?

The idea for this project in part comes from a few other projects, so in some ways it's been a few years in the making. But specifically on this project we have been planning it for about 18 months. Over that time, the work has been slowly building up and we have been intensively planning the specifics of **My One Demand** here in Toronto since the fall last year. Always, the plan Bs, the risk assessments, the trouble shooting, the pre-mortem, take up a lot of time – but we see it as caring for the work and caring for the people involved in the work and caring for the audiences experience of the work. It all takes a long time and the unpredictability is a constant feature when we are making work and not an after thought.