Blast Theory: Rider Spoke

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Blast Theory: Rider Spoke, Cambridge Junction, Wednesday, July 2

I never just cycle. I'm always speeding to work, racing home or trying to make it to the bus stop. There's never time to just amble about, leisurely peddling away.

So interactive theatre troupe Blast Theory's latest project, Rider Spoke, was a bit of a departure from my standard cycling fare.

The concept? You get linked up to a touchpad (rigged to your handlebars), with headphones and mic, then you go out cycling, alone, recording answers to questions in places that are special to you, and listening to the answers of others.

If it sounds random, it is, but it's also surprisingly moving, heartfelt and funny.

My first concern was cycling wearing headphones (oh yes, safety conscious over here), my second was where to cycle, and the third was feeling strange recording my thoughts out loud, on the street. I'm more of a 'write things down' kinda girl.

Luckily, you only wear one headphone (my road safety skills did drop slightly but only because I was too focussed on trying to find good places to "hide"), and aimlessly cycling is far more relaxing than biking to work. The third issue was the trickiest.

After setting off from the Junction I realised it's quite hard to find a secluded spot to answer the questions without being overheard. You also look a little mad; tapping away on the touchpad I had a several people ask me if I was lost... basically, you
have to get brave, particularly as some of the questions are quite deep. They start you off slow: “Find a quiet place, give yourself a name and describe yourself” and gradually get more searching: “Find somewhere with a clear view of the sky and tell me what keeps you awake at night”, until you find yourself borderline in tears on Mill Road thanks to someone’s answer about their dad.

Some of what’s shared is troubling, thoughtful, painful stuff, and the idea is that as more and more people take part, there will be more and more stories to listen to, chattering away across the city for you to tap into. By Saturday there will be so many secrets to hear, you may not even get time to share your own.

But I’d recommend that you do. There’s something oddly empowering about sharing what’s in your head with people you will never see or meet. You have no idea what impact your thoughts will have on them, or on the project as a whole, and that is quite incredible.

After an hours cycling and thinking and talking and listening, I was hot, exhausted, a little emotional, but with a lot more headspace.

Blast Theory: Rider Spoke opens to the general public today and runs until Saturday July 5 at 7pm. Tickets £13 from (01223) 511511 / junction.co.uk