insight
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Riders on a storm

BAFTA-nominated media-theatre group **Blast Theory** are tearing down the fourth wall with an audience-generated work that critically relocates our place in this sea side city. But why do we have to get on our bikes?

So there's a festival on. A feast of potential, a treasure trove of possibilities. One of these shows might, just might, be exactly what you have always wanted; a work of art that is entirely unique, that moves and transports you, that gives you a new perspective on the world.

My money, this year, is on *Rider Spoke* by BAFTA nominated Brighton-based company Blast Theory.

Firstly, you'll need a bike.

Company member Matt Adams explains: "You come along either on your own bike or you borrow one of ours, and you cycle off into the city on your own. You have a small computer mounted on your handlebars and an earphone in your ear through which you hear a woman's voice. She asks you a question and invites you to find somewhere to answer it. Your answer is stored at that location and isn't accessible to anyone else unless they come and find where you've hidden it. And part of the experience is that you have a chance to listen to other people's recordings and to do that you have to find where they hid theirs."

Blast Theory have been working for years exploring the boundaries between gaming, performance, art and digital media. They are probably best known for Kidnap, in which two members of the public were kidnapped as part of a lottery and the resulting event streamed online. They are especially fascinated by how audience members can influence the work they create: "One thing we've been particularly interested in recently is how might the audience be the authors of a work, and what would that mean. Most people assume that that would mean it would be quite bland and a lot of it would be rubbish. We wanted to challenge some of those clichés and say well actually if you make a really rich context you might find that there's a tremendously rich amount of contributions made by members of the public. And that is what we've found, we've done it twice so far in London and in Athens, but we've really found there's been some very funny, very moving, very engaging recordings."

So you're sent out into the city on your own, on bikes, at night. How did the company deal with the challenge of creating something so open? "We've been making location-based work and work that takes place on the streets of the city since 2001, and one of the keys is how do you deal with the inherent chaos of the city and the fact that you can't control what's going on there. It's a huge sprawling thing that means so many things to so many people. There are tens of thousands of people at any one moment going through these very precious, personal and intimate moments and Rider Spoke is really trying to create a stage that will in some way capture that."

A piece that is entirely unstructured, that you can shape and form; you will get out of it as much as you put in. "When it works people have said something out loud that they have never said out loud before. It might be a major revelation or it might not. But that sense in which art might provide you with a space to think about something or look at something or talk about something in a new way is central to our hope for Rider Spoke."

You think you know the city you live in? Maybe it's time to explore.

Rider Spoke, 8-11 May, various times, Jubilee Square (starting point)