

Communications Overview

2097: We Made Ourselves Over

The success of the *2097: We Made Ourselves Over* project has been evident from the wealth of audience participation both online through social media, interactive platforms and app downloads – to physically in the cities of Hull where thousands of people turned out to take part in 2097, and in Aarhus where the 741 live experience tickets sold out in days. In the first month of being online, the five 2097 films were watched ten thousand times on YouTube alone.

Combining film, live performance and interactive experiences to create a breathtaking science fiction world set 80 years into the future, the 2097 project took place over a year and a half and was centred on two cities, Hull in the UK and Aarhus Denmark. The breadth and ambition of the project meant communicating the work's different elements in different countries, to differing audiences and with widely different objectives – from community engagement to ticket sales. Our communications, press and marketing strategy focused on a number of key areas including **social media, press coverage, digital platforms, live public events and targeted print advertising.**

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1. Communications objectives overview

i. Community engagement – “Participation and inclusion are at the heart of the audience development plan for *We Made Ourselves Over*”

The Relationships will be nurtured throughout the life of the project; contributing to the voice of the final work and creating advocates for the public programme of the event.

ii. Audience engagement with key themes – “Conversations are part of the work itself”

We want audiences to be excited by the project; to engage with the artwork, to reflect on it and be changed by it. We want them to talk about it with others and with us. We want to provoke rich dialogues around the work that extend the reach and deepen the impact of the work.

iii. Conversations on social media – “People showing a deep engagement with the project through the quality of comments and feedback.”

Implementation of the project’s social media strategy to reach audiences nationally and internationally: The social media strategy will address an international audience, framing the ideas raised by the project within a context of global concerns, creating stories that reflect on our common fate and enabling conversations through the project blog and social media. “

2. KPI Overview

	KPI	Total
Website		
i. 2097 website views	120,000	16,662
ii. 2097 website unique views	80,000	11,496
Social media reach		
i. Twitter reach	200,000	487,354
ii. Facebook reach	50,000	287,000
2097 Films		
i. Online	125,000	29,279
ii. Screenings	3,000	8,380
Ticket sales	366	741

Key insights

The 2097 project was able to fulfil the majority of its KPIs set out at the beginning of the work over a year and half ago. The reach of the work on social media in particular has been particularly strong, with our Twitter, Facebook and Instagram posts (see below) relating to the project in the final six months of the project reaching an audience of just under 800k.

Elsewhere in the project, our digital engagement did not meet the initial KPI set, with website views reaching just under 17k for the entirety of the project and unique views 11,496. Similarly, views of the five films on YouTube had a total of 29k views, well under the KPI initially set of 25k per film and 125k views overall.

Physically engagement with the work however, far outreached the initial KPI set, with audience figures at the Hull screenings reaching a total of 8k, nearly three times that of the target figure set of 3k. Similarly, tickets for 2097: Live in Aarhus, sold out within days of being on sale, and many more were released in order to meet demand.

3. Methods of engagement

Our communications, press and marketing strategy focused on a number of phases and methods in order to tackle the scale and scope of the 2097 project:

- Phase 1: Sep 2016 – Jun 2017
 - Workshops Hull and Aarhus
 - Proactive local press coverage on workshops with young people reimagining Hull in the future as well as trips to Aarhus to work with Danish counterparts, coverage included print and broadcast.
 - Proactive social media callouts and copy provided to Hull 2017 outreach team to help recruit young and older workshop participants via their networks.
- Phase 2: Jul 1 – Aug 30: Build up to Hull 2017 Season Brochure launch
 - Social media
 - Screening location call outs
 - Blog posts
- Phase 3: Aug 31 – Sep 30: Launch of trailer and social media phone box teasers / Launch of ticket sales Live in Aarhus
 - Hull trailer release
 - Phone box social media teasers
 - Email campaign (various)
- Phase 4: Oct 1 – Oct 31: Launch of Live in Hull
 - Hull press call
 - App launch
 - Hull Letter drops
 - Social media campaign

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- Phase 5: Nov 1 – Nov 30: Launch of Live in Aarhus
 - Aarhus press call
 - Aarhus trailer release
 - Aarhus live event social media teaser
 - Print advertising (flyers and posters)
 - Social media campaign
 - Targeting of local organisations
 - Email campaigns

Within these 4 phases we used **organic and paid social media advertising** which initially pushed the 2097 website and went on to feature Hull and Aarhus specific trailers, alongside phone box and event teasers. This was in conjunction with **local, national and international press coverage, specific email campaigns, print advertising, and targeted local advertising.**

i. Organic and paid social media advertising

Social media has been a key focus of our communications and marketing activity and has increased the reach and engagement with the work considerably over a year and a half. Our own Twitter and Facebook channels have had a combined reach to an audience of 11,000 with specific 2097 Facebook posts in the final six months of the work reaching an overall audience of 287,000, and on Twitter over 487,000.

Post Reach (Jun-Nov 2017)	Target	Total
Facebook	50,000	287,000
Twitter	200,000	487,354
Instagram	-	20,299

Facebook

The most successful 2097 posts on Facebook featured the 2097 films, trailer or teaser videos. The release of the trailer on 31 August had total reach of 41.5k people and was viewed over ten thousand times. On the launch on 1 October, the follow up post after the phone boxes had rung, had a very high engagement rate with over 6k people expanding or clicking the post to 'find out more'. In total the post had a reach of over 47k.

During the run-up to the launch of 2097: Live in Aarhus, Facebook was also used very effectively to market the show. Our partners Aarhus 2017 were able to allocate a budget of 25,000 DKK (£3k) to implement the campaign, which was used across Facebook and Instagram. It used a live event teaser, which we created specifically to be pushed on social media, as well as specially made teasers, which featured clips of the films shot on location in Aarhus, such as at the Moesgaard Museum and the housing estate at night.



Blast Theory: 2097: We Made Ourselves Over

Planning on answering a call from the future this Sunday? Go to wemadeourselvesover.com/#live-in-hull to see full details of how to take part! #Hull2017 KCOM Hull UK City of Culture 2017

0:32 · Uploaded on 29/09/2017 · View permalink

**BOOK YOUR TICKET NOW
FOR A 90-MINUTE JOURNEY INTO 2097**

Blast Theory
TICKETS NOW ON SALE: Take a chauffeur driven journey to a secret #Aarhus location.... and step into the future. Find out more <http://www.bit.ly/2097aarhus>
Aarhus 2017 - Europæisk Kulturhovedstad Aarhus 2017 - European Capital of Cultur...

0:27 · Uploaded on 23/10/2017 · View permalink

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Twitter

Our Twitter reach remained steady throughout the project and gained a substantial number of impressions, particularly during Phase 2 of the communications strategy.

The most impactful tweet, with impressions of just under 30k, featured a phone box ringing and the 2097 project website as a CTA. This teaser was one of four videos created as part of a specific social media strategy featuring Hull phone boxes ringing shot by photographer Jason Fanthorpe. We released the series of short videos following on from the Hull trailer release to maintain interest after the initial launch and generate excitement around the project, and specifically in the city of Hull. The post also featured as a pinned tweet.

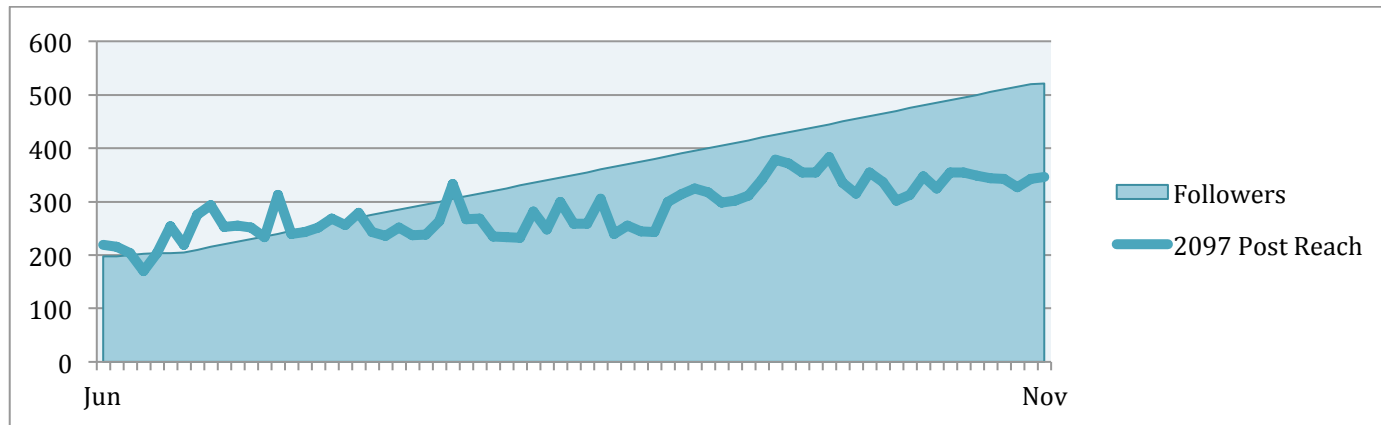
The tweet with the highest engagement – that with the most retweets, replies, follows, likes, links or tweet expansion – was posted on the morning of October 1st and received a high engagement rate (10.4). As the post did not receive a substantial amount of likes or retweets, it is likely that people engaged with the post by expanding and clicking through to the 2097 website link.



Instagram

By dramatically increasing our Instagram output, through activity such as Instagram Takeovers featuring photographers to cover the Hull film shoots, and by working with other organisations such as the British Council on their accounts, we have increased our overall Instagram following over six months by a percentage increase of 163%.

The reach of 2097 posts grew steadily throughout the lifetime of the project in line with the increasing Blast Theory following.



Content

An important part of the success of our social media channels over the course of the project has been via monitoring the success of our output throughout. By measuring the reach and engagement rate of posts, we have been able to adapt our content as needed. This was particular evident in the creation of specific social media content in the form of impactful images and videos such as using Hull phone box teasers and an Aarhus social media live event teaser.

Working with Aarhus 2017, we were able to create a specific event trailer for social media after recognising the success of video on Facebook and Instagram. As a result Aarhus European Capital of Culture 2017 were able to run a paid ad campaign of 25,000 DKK (£3k) across their social media accounts featuring this trailer and other clips. This significantly boosted ticket sales and created substantial interest in the event.

Aarhus 2017 social media campaign:

	Total reach
Instagram Stories	66,376
Facebook videos	109,187
YouTube Bumper Ads	218,872

Partners

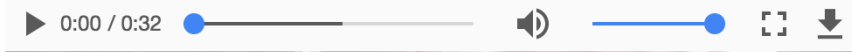
Working closely with our partners Hull City of Culture 2017, KCOM and Aarhus European Capital of Culture 2017 has been crucial and this collaboration and sharing of content across their channels has dramatically increased our post reach. Hull 2017 alone has a combined Twitter and Facebook following of over 140,000.

Our work with partners on email campaigns also gave us a very wide reaching campaign, giving us access to new audiences which would not necessarily be accessible through social media channels. The reach of emails promoting the project, and specifically the 2097 films, was run in collaboration with KCOM and had a reach of 26,000. Our collaboration with Hull 2017 had a campaign reach of over 46,000.

Email campaigns	Number of Subscribers (as of November 2017)	Number of emails sent relating to 2097 project
We Made Ourselves Over	785	20
We Made Ourselves Over SMS alerts	missing	missing
Blast Theory Our Friends Electric	5,582	3
Hull 2017 mailing list	46,000	3

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Throwback to that time @sophieclay911 & I copped a @Tesla and took off Bonnie and Clyde style round Hull. #its2097 @blasttheory pic.twitter.com/qP4sje6XoO

THE SMILE MAKER @KOFI_SMILES · FRI, OCT 27 2017 18:06:53

KCOM

Snap

a selfie of yourself at this weekend's We Made Ourselves Over screening

Post

your selfie to Instagram or Twitter using the hashtag #its2097, making sure to tag @KCOMhome

You'll be entered into our draw to win 1 of 2 Samsung VR headsets



KCOMhome



KCOMhome



Conversations and engagement

A key factor in the success of the 2097 work was the ability for our communications strategy to foster a deep engagement with the project's central themes on social media. In this respect, our strategy around social media was successful, as we were able to generate significant interest and engagement in the work's central theme of life in the future. This led to thousands of people calling in to take part in the work and attending the live film screenings in person over five weekends. As well as this the project hashtag #its2097 was picked up and used frequently by the public during the live events in October, as well as by our partner organisations.

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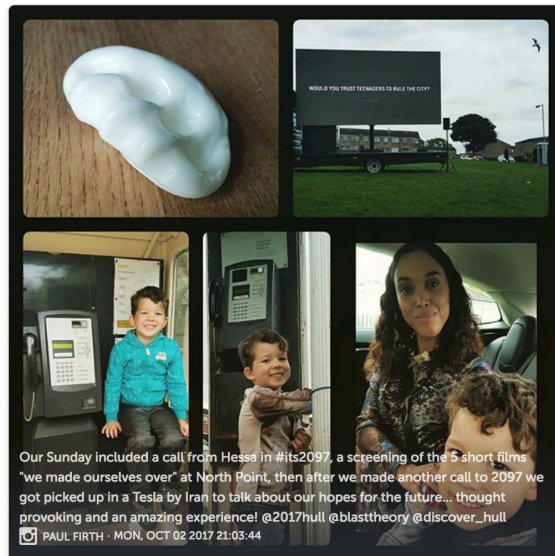
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However, conversations, comments and engagement with key themes such as climate change, artificial intelligence and green economies, did not take place in any great number on our social channels. This element of the communications strategy was not achieved, though it may have been better realised by creating content designed specifically to harness engagement on social media. To reach new audiences in particular, this would have meant the use of short video content with subtitles and sound bites to maximise interest and engagement with the post.

It may also have been useful to release the videos on the existing Blast Theory YouTube channel, rather than on a new 2097 account. This would have allowed us to initially harness the Blast Theory follower base, in terms of comments and interaction, and help us go on to attract new subscribers over the course of the project.

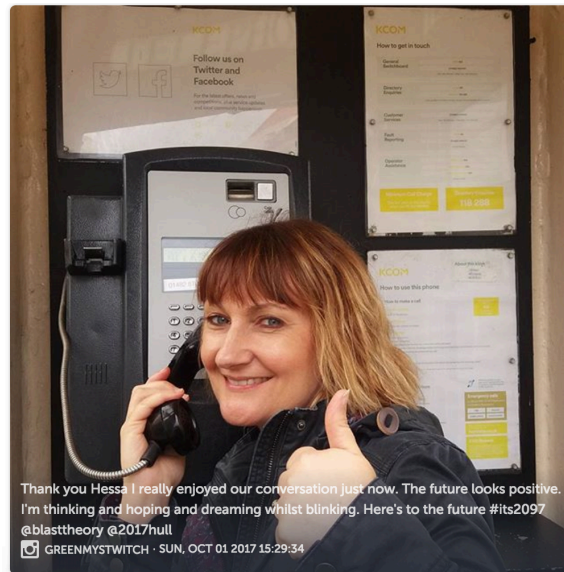
The expert interviews did not gain traction with partner organisations such as The University of Hull and other community-led groups, possibly because they were released too early in the project timeline of the work. By releasing expert interviews later in the project, we would have been able to pitch the videos as part of the work as a whole rather than as stand alone films which made their concept and purpose harder to understand.

Overall, the key social media objective of engagement with the project was largely met, with people posting their own images and responses to the work in high numbers throughout October.



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Social media conclusions

- It is important to set aside time and budget for the creation of videos and content which specifically harnesses engagement on social media
- Generating conversations on social media is difficult and to be successful needs to feature high engaging, 'clickable' content, video content particularly.
- A phased comms strategy is very successful in a project of this size and scale
- Develop strong relationships with one or two key influencers or accounts in advance of implementing comms strategy
- Consider possibility of using the Blast Theory YouTube channel for all video content in the future rather than creating separate channels for projects. Posting new and frequent content relating to specific projects would mean we are able to capture new subscribers with each work, and consolidate the channel by creating a strong body of video work with a consistently high following.

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ii. Press coverage

We focused on local press in both cities to gather audiences as well as larger international press outlets such as the Guardian and Huffington Post. We were able to secure 46 separate press pieces in total with an estimated online readership of 1.17 billion. The estimated views for coverage was 627,000, and overall total social shares were 433,000. Of the 46 pieces of coverage, 97% was favourable. Hull was the most prominent press region, accounting for a third of all 2017 coverage. Similarly, Aarhus press was also prominent, accounting for one third of the project's coverage.

Press clippings

kunsten ^{nu} .

“The future is where you and those you care about will spend the rest of your life. And what the future looks like depends on the choices you make.”

“Since 1998, the group has been working closely with the University of Nottingham in one of the longest and most productive partnerships between a university and a group of artists in the world.”

Jyllands-Posten

“The best of theatre, installation art and computer games is combined in the performance.”



“I've never been on the ground before staring at a November night. It is beautiful. Magical.”



“Floods, locust farms and teens in charge: Blast Theory's vision of Hull in 2097...”

“A story emerged about a community called Aarhull which, following a series of floods, is under the control of three teenage girls. They alone can decide how it will be rebuilt.”

	Total	Target
Press Coverage total	46	-
Press launch Aarhus	7	50 press and VIPs (Aarhus and Hull combined)
Press launch Hull	3	
National Press coverage (UK and Denmark)	1	3
International Press coverage	2	1

iii. Aarhus marketing/press

Digital platforms

The 2097 website has received over 16.5k unique visits since it was launched over a year ago. We were able to alter and adapt this site over the course of the live events in both Hull and Aarhus to reflect the changing communications phases and CTAs of the project.

Project website	Target	Total
Visits	120,000	16,662
Unique visits	80,000	11,496

The 2097 app was launched in October and has been downloaded 1,684 times to date over this two-month period.

	iOS	Android	Total	Target
App beta testers	41	17	58	100
Downloads	1110	57	1681	3000

iv. Public and online screening events

Audiences for the 2097 films were captured both online and at screenings in the UK and Denmark. The bulk of our social media marketing pushed all five of the 2097 films consistently over a two month period and has resulted in excellent viewing figures. The total online views to date for all five films is 29,379, with the total views across the entire project to date so far reaching 84,260.

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The films were also shown through a multitude of channels in the UK and Aarhus. This included local film festivals in Hull; screenings at the KCOM Stadium in Hull to an audience of 31,051; screenings in Hull across five weekends to a total audience of 7,810; and screenings in Aarhus to a total audience of 570.

Films and Trailer Views*										
Video Name	Online				Physical					
	YouTube Views	Facebook Views	Audio Described	In app	Online Total	KCOM Stadium	Hull Screenings	Hull Cinema	O Space Aarhus	Physical Total
2097: We Made Ourselves Over Trailer	4,261	10,000	-	-	14,261	31,051	-	-	-	31,051
2097: Live in Aarhus	133	907	-	-	1,040	-	-	-	-	0
										0
Film 1	5,527	293	48	1,111	6,979	-	-	59	-	59
Film 2	1,854	2,300	3	1,589	5,746	-	-	23	-	23
Film 3	1,636	3,500	11	1,286	6,433	-	-	46	-	46
Film 4	1,391	2,700	-	1,516	5,607	-	-	21	-	21
Film 5	569	2,100	4	1,653	4,326	-	-	-	-	0
Credits	288	-	-	-	288	-	-	-	-	0
All Five Films					29,379	-	7810	149	570	8,529
									TOTAL	84,260

A
*As of December 2017

v. Targeted print advertising

2097: Live in Hull

Over a period of six weeks we ran a local letter drop campaign in Hull which targeted 14,000 Hull residents in eight different locations in the city. In addition to this a total of 10,000 flyers were printed for local distribution in the city.

2097: Live in Aarhus

In the month preceding 2097: Live in Aarhus, we employed a marketing specialist and Danish speaker who worked to share and engage local organisations with the upcoming work. To underpin this activity, we also ran a print advertising campaign to distribute 200 posters and 4,000 flyers in the city. Together with our social presence, this activity increased people's awareness of the project and we saw a marked increase in ticket sales as a result.

The live experience in Aarhus sold out within days to a total number of 741 people. Alongside the impact of print advertising and our social media campaign, we were also aware of the significance of word of mouth in accounting for ticket sales. As people attended the experience, and reviews were published, word spread about the show and tickets sold out rapidly as a result.

4. Project overview and feedback

Live event Hull

Audiences at Hull screenings reached a total of 7,810 with 4,364 people being directly engaged by a member of our own team or by a Hull 2017 volunteer. Additionally, 262 people experienced a car journey and a 'face to face encounter'. Over the course of the month a total of 4,702 people called the 50 2097 number and 185 recordings were made about the future.

Audiences

	Total	Target
Casual audience (Hull)	7810	3000
Engaged by Hull2017 or team	4364	-
Car Passengers	262	262*
Audience with specific access requirements logged	13	-

*Creative decision to change from initial target of 1,000

Calls

Source	Total	Target
Local Phone box testers	262	100
Total calls to 50 2097 from any phone	4702	3000
Total individual callers from non-kiosk phone	2065	-
Recordings made about the future	185	-

Overview of audience feedback

The survey size for 2097 was smaller than we would have liked, with only 24 responses in total. However, looking at the survey comments we are able to gain valuable insight into engagement with the work:

Hull

“I wanted to say thank you for the ride in the future which you gave me on Saturday. It was an amazing once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and it was such a privilege and I'm not going to forget it [...] I've been thinking about the things we were talking about and that I'm going to do my best to try and be a positive change on the city [...] the thing about life is about looking for love and giving love [...] I feel a bit self-conscious saying all this but I think it's really important to say it. And to feel like I'm doing my bit and I'll keep that promise when I put down this phone.”

“Very thought provoking, I won't be around in 80 years but my future family will. It is quite scary were the world is going and how it's developing and changing. My parents are dead but I'm sure things that are happening today were never thought of, or where they? Technology is fabulous but also advancements sometimes happen so quick.”

Aarhus

“Thank you so much for a fantastic and absolutely amazing journey. This will stay with me for long. Amazing images created as we walked! And a strong emotional experience. Cannot recommend this enough.”

“Made me think we are small but can create changes in everything”

5. Conclusions – what has been learnt?

The success of our communications strategy meant that we received excellent physical audience figures with thousands of people participating in 2097 across Hull and Aarhus throughout October and November 2017. This was achieved through a combination of collaboration with key partners on social media; content creation specific to social media; community-led workshops; print marketing, such as leaflet, poster and letter drops; as well as coverage of the project on a local and national level.

In terms of digital engagement however, our communications strategy did not fulfil the KPIs initially set out. This is very likely to be due to the lack of long-lead press pick-up on a national level. Had this been secured, it is likely to have generated interest in the project on a far greater scale, potentially boosting the film and website views substantially.

Feedback from the project's PR and Communications consultant, would suggest that the multi-faceted nature of the project coupled with the lack of visual assets at an early stage, made pitching the work more difficult than normal. The extremely high workload of artists and team as a whole, meant that asset creation, though scheduled into the production schedule, was on occasion overlooked and assets were released to press later than planned.

Key points:

- It would be very useful to create content in advance in order to secure preview coverage: Images and trailers need to be ready at least a couple of months in advance of an event/launch in order to build a buzz and secure long-lead and preview press coverage.
- Content should spell out exactly what the end product is. Concept-driven images and films work less well. For example: For Karen, there was a fantastic trailer that exactly mimicked the end user experience.
- Consider how easy it is to 'consume' a project's key concept and output. More and more the media want a one-line concept that's easy to explain in a sentence. If our visual assets communicate that too it makes pitching easier.
- Social media content should be set out and budgeted for from the outset.