

Subway murder mystery game a thrill for riders

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NEW YORK (Reuters Life!) - It's the ultimate murder mystery.

A killer is on the loose in the dripping, dank maze of pathways in New York City's Canal Street subway station. It's your job, as a subway rider, to find her.

That is the premise of the 31 Down Radio Theater group's murder mystery game called "Canal Street Station." It was designed as an interactive public art installation but has quickly spread by word-of-mouth to become a popular game for anyone who wants to play a private investigator.

"The station is full of atmosphere and mystery," said its creator Ryan Holsopple.

"Canal Street station is great for that, and they (the players) definitely get put into an old private eye world with dripping and the tiled walls and everything," he added.

For the \$2 price of a subway token, players can take part in the murder mystery by calling a toll-free number from any pay phone in the area. An automated server answers the call and plays a recorded message with the player's assignment.

The would-be sleuth must find out where the killer has gone. Clues include anything from determining which train goes to a particular station to finding a character in one of the station's murals.

The player calls back and is given another mission and the game continues. The game could take about an hour if done properly. It is not affiliated with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), which runs the city's subway system.

Holsopple said his goal was to create an interactive game that used both a form of media, a telephone server, and traditional scavenger-hunt clues to move the story forward.

"You can't use cell phones down there," he said, referring to the subway station.

"I wanted to somehow use the media to see the space around us a little differently," Holsopple added in an interview.

He said that finding the clues and returning to the pay phone to key in the answers makes the players true participants in the game.

"You're really solving things, you're really moving the character forward instead of just being told the story."

Actress Tajna Tanovic, who plays the voice of the killer, played the game for the first time.

"I like mystery and I like drama, too," she said, adding it was interesting, challenging and fun.

Holsopple said the response has been particularly good.

"It has definitely generated some buzz," he said.

The theater group co-produced the game with the non-profit arts organization free103point9 (free103point9.org).

The theater company's Web site (<http://31down.org/performances/CanalStreet.html>), provides starting instructions for the game which runs through October.