

“ poetic and playful
and tough and
unsentimental

-Total Theatre



SLAP TALK

A PERFORMANCE BY ACTION HERO

ABOUT THE PIECE

Slap Talk is a 6 hour-long performance to camera. Two performers read from autocues whilst the audience watch both the live performance and a feed from the camera to a monitor. The performers' argue and threaten each other, their words are violent and confrontational but playful; they speak as if they're boxers at a pre fight weigh-in. Slowly, the language evolves into other kinds of linguistic violence and verbal conflict; the subtle oneupmanship of middle class parenting, the fire and brimstone preacher, the relentlessness of a shopping channel. Slap Talk is an epic *tour de force*, both funny and entertaining but also dark, complex and deeply unsettling.

BACKGROUND

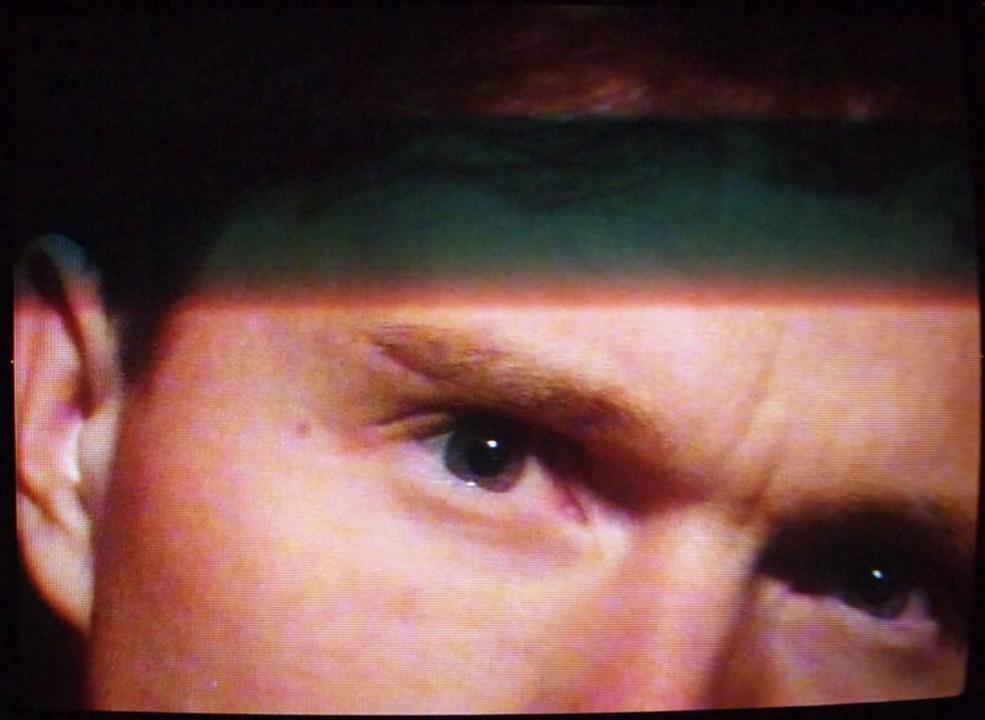
Slap Talk is the company's first durational work, and cleverly uses the performers' mediatised images to reflect upon how violence in language and language-as-violence is all-permeating in an age of 24 hr news cycles and unfiltered internet comment. Developed via residencies at BIOS in Athens and China Plate's Dark Room writers residency, Slap Talk began as a series of writing experiments around sport and its mythologies, and ideas around the performance space as a site of competition and/or adversarial combat. It quickly expanded into a text that clashed together a series of binaries, placing world views, personal politics and identities in conflict with each other; scientific vs spiritual, male vs female, capitalism vs communism. In Slap Talk, Action Hero demonstrate their formidable skill as writers, having authored a 45,000 word performance text whose scope ranges from boxing to free market economics to the Iraq war, but also as performers and orators engaged in an exhausting, long-form artwork that pushes at the boundaries of what they are physically capable of.

CONTEXT

Slap Talk is a dialogic, discursive arena in which the gestures, codes, images and rhetoric of popular culture (and by extension everyday life itself) are playfully re-rendered, re-enacted, radically reversed and relentlessly repeated until the foundations of violence inherent in the languages and texts of contemporary culture are thoroughly exhausted. Within this staged, authored conflict, in the spaces between the “linguistic seduction” and “discursive subterfuge” (Carl Lavery in *Action Plans: Selected Performance Pieces by Action Hero*) ruptures emerge.

Slap Talk adopts no moral position, it only borrows the *shapes* of ideologies. It is a machine for manufacturing conflict and so it challenges our disposition towards singular authoritative narratives and defined moral outcomes. Its ceaseless doubling of language and form reflects the simultaneity of lived experience and the simulations, fabrications and performances that make up the world we live in. Slap Talk is a serious game and an unserious argument, a playful conflict and a grim amusement. Like the interstitial space between the two artists that form Action Hero, Slap Talk creates a space where multiple ideas and sensations can exist at once. It is both confrontational and equitable, entertaining and horrifying, intimate and distant, totally earnest and wholly unreal.

For 6 continuous hours, Action Hero put their money where their mouths are and their bodies on the line. Like boxers in a pre-fight weigh in they verbally spar, engage in one-upmanship and attempt to de-legitimise their opponent/collaborator but they refuse to give up and the incessant text (which they have authored) refuses to let up. The autocue unremittingly insists that they perform. For six hours there are no breaks, no time-outs, no punches pulled.



“ the ultimate discursive arena, interrogating the construction and application of dialogue and performance”

-This Is Tomorrow

DOCUMENTATION

Video: <https://vimeo.com/actionhero/slaptalk> (nb: the password is promoter)

Photographs: <https://500px.com/actionherolive/galleries/slap-talk>

The video is the full length, 6 hour-long piece. It was live streamed from Culturgest, Portugal in December '15.

TECHNICAL

<i>Duration</i>	6 hours. The audience are encouraged to stay for the duration, but may come and go as they please
<i>Get in</i>	1 day (nb: get in must be the day before the performance)
<i>Get out</i>	2 hrs
<i>On the road</i>	2 performers
<i>Space</i>	Black box or gallery space with black out, or appropriate found space. Min 8m x 4m
<i>Venue crew</i>	2 crew for get in
<i>Equipment</i>	2 x large CRT gallery monitors (Hantarex or Trinitron) to be supplied by venue. Action Hero will provide all other necessary equipment. For international touring, venue must also supply appropriate stools.
<i>Surtitling</i>	Slap Talk is performed in English, but has been successfully performed with surtitles for non-english speakers. Contact the company for more information about surtitling possibilities.

ABOUT ACTION HERO

Gemma Paintin and James Stenhouse live in Bristol, UK, and create interdisciplinary performance together under the name Action Hero. For the past decade, they have worked almost exclusively with each other and have toured together to more than twenty countries across 5 continents to critical and popular acclaim.

Action Hero have performed in theatres, museums, galleries, bars and public spaces everywhere, from an old cinema in Bangkok to Shanghai Grand Theatre, from a blues bar in Texas to a Satan's Riders Motorcycle club house in Tasmania. Their work has been presented at some of the world's most prestigious festivals and institutions, including PS122 in New York, Theatre de le Ville in Paris, Brut in Vienna, Fusebox Festival in Austin, Culturgest in Lisbon, PuSh in Vancouver, CCCB in Barcelona and 21st Century Museum in Kanazawa.

Their ongoing interests lie in the iconography of popular culture and its use; both as a weapon and as a shared cultural memory, and although their work manifests in many different forms, the live experience is at the heart of everything they do.

Gemma & James have been shortlisted for several awards and won an Austin (Texas) Critic's Table Award in 2013. In 2015, a book of six of their works was published by Oberon.

CONTACT

Gemma Paintin
Gemma@actionhero.org.uk
+44 (0) 7717 096 813

James Stenhouse
James@actionhero.org.uk
+44 (0) 7515 378 689

actionhero.org.uk @ActionHeroLive