

TREASURE HUNT

Tales of the City

An interactive tour guide leads you through the secret history of New York.

TIMOTHY "SPEED" LEVITCH is best known as the subject of *The Cruise*, a 1998 documentary that followed the erudite and eccentric tour guide as he unearthed the untold history of New York City. Now, Levitch has a new project, an interactive NYC guide called *The Pegleg*, geared to visitors looking for something more engaging than

the Empire State Building/Circle Line tour. The game is designed by Italian company LOG607. Readers send a text message to a number printed in the book and receive location-based clues that they use to solve a mystery. WIRED caught up with Levitch to discuss New York's forgotten past and the art of turning a guidebook into a game.

Touch the cab to read an Interview with Levitch.



TEXT Alice Gregory

ILLUSTRATION Miles Donovan



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HOW DOES THE GAME WORK?

The initial text sends you to one of the locations for your first clue. (The game even knows how long it should take you to walk from one point to another.) The text will also include a code that corresponds to one of the 40 stories in the book. As you go through the game, the narratives sort themselves chronologically.

SO, IS IT A GAME OR A GUIDEBOOK?

It's a guidebook—you are learning about the city and its history—but it's fun. You're trying to solve the mystery posed in the book's introduction. And it has a surprise ending. That was really important to me. It had to be fun but not condescending. It had to be emotionally satisfying.

SOUNDS LIKE A COUNTER-INTUITIVE WAY TO IMMERSE PEOPLE IN THE CITY.

Yeah, when we're on our phones, we're usually doing everything but appreciating the city. This is a cool way to learn about it, especially for people who hate history or who think they do. They want to have fun on vacation. This is like Dungeons & Dragons, but real life.

WHAT'S ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE LOCATIONS?

The Luckiest Subway Grate in the Whole City. It's the one that Marilyn Monroe stood on when she wore the billowy dress in *The Seven Year Itch*. When you stand on it, you can feel the jealous rage of the neighboring subway grates on your right and left, because they were so close yet so far away.

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