

SUPER NIGHT SHOT

I want to feel important.

I don't want to blend into the crowd.

I want to stand out, to shine amongst the dirt and concrete.

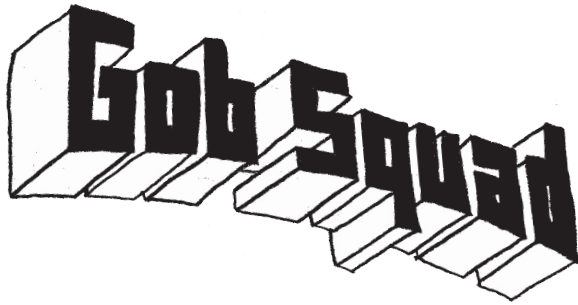
I want onlookers to think I'm a hard man, someone to be reckoned with, a rebel, a loner, a misguided youth, a jealous lover about to commit a crime of passion... a rich jealous lover, out of control and unable to hide emotions I've suppressed for years.

Hold me back as I struggle from the police in slow mo.

For freedom's sake give me sirens, blue flashing lights and chaos, with me, in the middle, at the centre of everything...



GOB SQUAD. SUPER NIGHT SHOT. PRESS PACK.



About the group

"This feels like one of the most impossible, beautiful, courageous and epic theatrical experiences you can imagine" The Guardian

Gob Squad is a seven headed monster, an **arts collective** with seven bosses. Gob Squad has a schizophrenic identity and a multiple split personality: hermaphrodite, binational and bilingual, both a patchwork family and a social utopia. Gob Squad have been devising, directing and performing together **since 1994**, working where **theatre meets art, media and real life**.

For over 20 years, Gob Squad have been searching for **new ways to combine media and performance**, producing stage shows, video installations, radio plays, interactive live films and urban interventions. The use of audio and video technology plays a prominent role in their work, with the result that **alienated forms of intimacy** have become a central theme. They try to scratch beneath the shiny, pixelated surface of the 21st century, seeking out the dark corners and hidden desires of contemporary culture.

Always on the hunt for beauty amidst the mundane, they place their work at the heart of **urban life**: in houses, shops, underground stations, car parks, hotels or directly on the street, as well as in theatres and galleries. **Everyday life and magic, banality and idealism, reality and entertainment** are all set on a collision course and the unpredictable results are captured on video.

Motivated by a desire to elevate the everyday and empower audience members to step beyond their traditional role as passive spectators, Gob Squad set up often absurdly **utopian scenarios** where meaningful collective experience and genuine **encounters involving passers-by and audience members** are suddenly possible. Audiences seem to like the feeling that anything might happen during an evening with Gob Squad. They might be asked to dance, sing or even kiss one of the performers. They might play guitar in a band, play the part of a lover or liberator in a semi-improvised film, or be asked to explain the complexities of the world to an unknown future. Or they might just simply be asked to sit and bear witness to the organised chaos unfolding on stage before them.

Gob Squad was founded in **1994**, whilst its members were still at Nottingham Trent and Giessen universities. **Berlin** has been the group's creative home since 1999. **Core members** are Johanna Freiburg, Sean Patten, Sharon Smith, Berit Stumpf, Sarah Thom, Bastian Trost and Simon Will. Other artists are invited to collaborate on particular projects. The group is managed by Eva Hartmann.

Gob Squad's international reputation has grown steadily since coming to prominence at documenta X in 1997. Their productions have been shown on all the continents apart from Antarctica where projects such as SUPER NIGHT SHOT (2003), GOB SQUAD'S KITCHEN (2007, winner of New York's Drama Desk Award), SAVING THE WORLD (2008, winner of the Goethe Preis at the Impulse Festival), BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES (2011, selected for Germany's Theatertreffen) and WESTERN SOCIETY (2013) have received wide acclaim.



DOWNLOAD THIS DOCUMENT AND HIGH-RES PHOTOS AT gobsquad.com/press-packs

PHOTO: GARRETT DAVIS/CAPTURE IMAGING

SUPER NIGHT SHOT

About Super Night Shot

Super Night Shot is a magical journey through the night time streets of a not too distant city. Full of unexpected surprises, the public become co-stars in a movie that celebrates unplanned meetings with strangers and delights in the randomness of urban existence. Both comical and moving, **Super Night Shot** attempts to elevate the banality of everyday life into the glamour and glitz of a big screen blockbuster. It's a completely unpredictable show that elevates the everyday into the epic and plays with your perceptions of the familiar. Anything can happen, and usually does...

The film begins exactly one hour before you come to watch it when the four performer/activists meet, arm themselves with their video cameras and start them simultaneously. With their watches synchronised, they state their manifesto with military precision:

"Each of us is just one in a million, easy to replace and easy to forget in a city that doesn't really need us. But don't worry. We're going to change all that. We've got a plan. This city will need us and this film will be our witness."

Embarking on a *War On Anonymity*, they set off into the night on an adventure where only one thing is certain: 60 minutes later they will meet again and present what they have filmed to the waiting audience. The city becomes a film set, a place where cigarette butts, graffiti, cars and buildings become props and facades and every passer-by is a potential extra, friend, lover or liberator. Working under the constraints of the time limit (the length of the DV tapes) the group set out to capture a great moment of emotion, passion and liberation on camera and bring it back to the waiting audience who themselves take part in the final scene, a heroes welcome. Once the tapes have rewound, performers and audience watch the results together. The sound is mixed live and scored with elements from film soundtracks.

The result is an experience halfway between theatre and film that comments on our relationship to the urban environment. A movie that is both fantastical and documentary, that is at the same time a product and a process, both a "making of" and the thing itself.

Super Night Shot is Gob Squad's most widely toured production, with nearly 200 unique presentations since the project's inception in 2003, each one shot and screened only once in the host city. The piece has been performed in 4 languages on 6 continents and is still as fresh, dangerous and exciting as the day the 4 performer/activists first stepped onto the icy streets of Berlin in order wage their "War on Anonymity".

Over the years, the film's hero (a role rotated amongst Gob Squad's performers) has done his/her best to solve all the problems thrown at them. In Siberia, the hero was asked to bring warmth to the city and melt the snow, in Brazil, the hero bridged the gap between rich and poor and helped raise money for a homeless woman to buy milk for her baby. In London, the hero gave some instant marriage guidance to quarrelling pensioners. In Bangalore, the hero provided security for a market trader and during a recent mission in the company's home town of Berlin the hero helped some confused shoppers assemble their new Ikea shelves. Which challenges will your town throw at Gob Squad?

CREDITS

Concept
Gob Squad

Devised and performed by
Johanna Freiburg
Sean Patten
Elyce Semenec
Berit Stumpf
Sarah Thom
Bastian Trost
Simon Will

with
Mat Hand
Erik Pold
Ilia Papatheodorou
Laura Tonke

Sound design
Sebastian Bark, Jeff McGrory

Production Management/Dramaturgy
Eva Hartmann (Nina Thielicke)

Production Assistant
Nina Tecklenburg

Commissioned by
Volksbühne am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz Berlin.

Research and Development funding from
Arts Council of England East Midlands

Premiere
Volksbühne Berlin, Dec 13th 2003

Gob Squad is regularly funded within the Konzeptförderung programme
2015 - 2019 by the Senatsverwaltung für Kultur und Europa Berlin.



ON SUPER NIGHT SHOT:

"Super Night Shot is steeped in a companionable cuddliness... executed with bravura seat-of-the-pants verve and ingenuity."

New York Times

"Dazzling... transforms the familiar into something mythic, estranged and uncannily monumental"

LA Weekly

"Fragile and Beautiful."

Le Temps

"A spectacle of breathtaking tension."

Libération

"One of the top ten shows of the year."

Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung

"In their war on anonymity, Gob Squad have won the battle."

Berliner Zeitung

"Surprisingly beautiful...one of the most inclusive and interesting works of the festival."

Sydney Morning Herald

"A funny and poignant revelation of the host city... full of fun, laughter and spontaneity. An unusual concept, a hilarious outcome."

Daily News, Sri Lanka

ON GOB SQUAD:

Gob Squad has always felt similar to a gang – and watching it, you want to sign up and join in.

THE STAGE

This feels like one of the most impossible, beautiful, courageous and epic theatrical experiences you can imagine.

THE GUARDIAN

Gob Squad virgins, please stop reading now, and go get your tickets!

TIME OUT NEW YORK (on WESTERN SOCIETY)



SUPER NIGHT SHOT

Gob Squad: The unruly Anglo-German theatre collective still evolving after 25 years

THE STAGE

Jul 3, 2018

The Anglo-German theatre collective considers itself 'a bit like a blob' – 'morphing' to meet its members' needs. Founder member Sarah Thom tells Matt True-man how the company has grown together over 25 years

The Japanese art of flower arranging, ikebana, features heavily in Gob Squad's latest show. Throughout *Creation* (*Pictures for Dorian*), flowers are serenely slotted into place under a heat lamp. As an art form, ikebana elevates the act of arranging over the final arrangement, and it celebrates the plant's life cycle – growth and decay – over the pristine beauty of blooms at their peak. As the performance plays out, petals wrinkle and wilt.

Gob Squad's seven members have grown up together, over 25 years, but age has hardly withered them. The iconoclastic Anglo-German collective has built up a body of rambunctious performances unlike anyone else's – and is still going strong.

Creation, a careful meditation on ageing, art and visibility, which premiered at Brighton Festival, felt like Gob Squad's most mature work to date, but it still showed the silly side that has set the collective apart. En route, it has sent signals into outer space with *Calling Laika*, incited insurrection from the Institute of Contemporary Arts in *Revolution Now* and taken to the streets with camcorders and superhero capes to capture every single thing in existence for *Saving the World*.

Gob Squad has always felt similar to a gang – and watching it, you want to sign up and join in. But behind the buccaneering playfulness, there's always insight and

purpose. From its early site-specific shows to its own brand of real-time films, splicing the best bits of theatre and live TV, Gob Squad's work has consistently pushed performance. Its shows stretch their limits and expand horizons, whether riffing off classics, such as *War and Peace* or *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, or teaching robots to talk, such as in *My Square Lady*. But, for founder member Sarah Thom, it all adds up to something bigger: **"Just being Gob Squad, that's our greatest work. Some have come, some have gone, but we've managed 25 years. It's a piece in itself."**

Like ikebana, Gob Squad is an ongoing act: unfolding, evolving, undergoing growth and decay. It's more than its shows – more, even, than its members. Gob Squad is a process – perhaps a way of life. **It functions as a collective, completely and utterly. It doesn't just create work collaboratively, the team members run their lives and their company in the same way.** Touring dates, pay packets, funding applications – all of it comes from communal decisions.

"There really is no boss," Thom stresses. "It's a struggle, but we believe in the politics of that. You're constantly in process, negotiating things, working everything out so it's completely fair and egalitarian. We're all one – a bit like a blob. We can't exist without each other, but each of us is absolutely replaceable. Gob Squad would go on without any one of us."

It's not easy being Gob Squad. In fact, Thom reckons theirs is "the most inefficient way of working ever", but the benefits outweigh the hassle. "Everything takes longer, but it does mean that, at the end, everybody owns it." And nobody gets left behind, either – the company "morphs" to meet its members' needs and fit their lives. It has shifted to accommodate relationships, babies and illnesses – people

always come first. "There's no institution to defer or submit to. Everything's open to debate, everything's up for grabs. It's what has held us together all this time," she says.

Gob Squad grew out of Nottingham Trent University. Its founder members – four of which remain – met on its Creative Arts course, an inter-disciplinary programme rooted in collaborative practice that criss-crossed from video to visual arts. An exchange scheme with Giessen University gave the company its Anglo-German core: Berit Stumpf and Johanna Freiburg clicked with Thom and Sean Patten. They still do: "There was a kindred spirit. We just got on – that's the most important thing."

For the last 20 years, Gob Squad has been based in Berlin – the funding's much better, commissions matched by the state – but it has retained relationships with theatres in the UK. "The UK is so important to us, way more than people realise," says Thom. They still "feel very at home here", but homecomings are getting harder. "Funding's less available given the size we are now. Our shows practically have to fit into suitcases to tour."

Having begun making site-specific work, taking over houses, offices and a furniture shop floor to subvert everyday spaces, Gob Squad began taking "baby steps" towards theatres at the end of the 1990s. For its first foray on to the stage, *Close Enough to Kiss*, it built a mirrored box to block the audience out. "Theatre's about the act of looking," Thom explains, "not just telling stories. We wanted to ask questions about the stage as a space."

SUPER NIGHT SHOT

Effectively, it treated theatres the same as any other site, toying with their configurations and conventions. The show *Safe* likened theatregoing to travel: ticket checks, stewardess ushers, a pilot MC. *Creation (Pictures for Dorian)* is all about “frames within frames”. Similar to Wilde’s novel, it examines the triangular relationship of art, artists and audience.

On stage, however, Gob Squad found itself constrained by the need to stick to the script. Since *Safe*, it has created structures, then improvised as it goes. “**Rules, risk, reality, rhythm**” – **that’s the Gob Squad playbook**. “Without them, something’s missing: the element of not quite knowing where you are. **We create a space where we’re able to be alive and to be ourselves** – and that is fun. It’s always at risk of being dropped and that makes it so much more exciting.”

If Gob Squad shows are alive, they’re also electric – literally as well as figuratively. Video is often at the heart of its work, the camera adding to and emphasising the quality of being live. *Room Service* plonks four lonely souls in separate hotel rooms for a night with only a camera for company. *Super Night Shot*, which it is doing for the National Theatre of Scotland this summer, sends four performers on to the streets to shoot a blockbuster film. One’s the hero, another the villain; one casts extras, another scouts locations. Their four feeds are mixed live.

This, perhaps, has been Gob Squad’s most pioneering front – not just in terms of performance, but in relation to society. Since the members of Gob Squad first picked up their VHS camcorders, cameras have become ubiquitous. Anyone can be a social media star. “When we first started using it, lots of people had home video cameras, so it felt quite universal, quite a DIY aesthetic,” Thom says. It

proved liberating, freeing Gob Squad from ‘stageyness’ and participants from inhibition. “As soon as you’ve got a camera, you’re not crazy. You can ask people quite full-on questions in the street and they’ll answer.” In today’s camera-centric world, it can go one of two ways: either people are cautious, wary of protecting their image online, or they’re comfortable – too comfortable.

That might explain Gob Squad’s retreat to the stage of late, and to those classic texts. Practically, it’s useful. Thom says: “Source material brings us all back to one point, as we go off on our seven different tangents.” But there’s politics too: about looking back, about remaking, engaging with the past. “You’re always standing on the shoulders of giants,” adds Thom. History, like Gob Squad, art and ikebana, is a process.

Matt Trueman

Five Facts about Gob Squad

1. *Gob Squad started in 1994. Its members wanted a way to get into Glastonbury for free.*
2. *Gob Squad has toured every continent but Antarctica.*
3. *Among the unusual spaces Gob Squad has performed in are the Steffi Graf tennis stadium in Berlin and a bingo hall in West Bromwich, UK.*
4. *Gob Squad’s smallest production was To@ster, which involved two performers, 10 toasters and 1,000 slices of bread. The biggest, My Square Lady, involved a 40-piece orchestra, a choir of 35 children, 30 technicians, seven opera singers, seven scientists and a robot called Myon.*
5. *Performing Super Night Shot in Rio, Gob Squad faced arrest. The show ends with performers running through the streets in pants – illegal in Brazil. They bought bikinis and swimsuits, which are fine.*



PHOTO: GARRETT DAVIS/CAPTURE IMAGING

SUPER NIGHT SHOT

THE IRISH TIMES
January 20, 2006

Super Night Shot Project, Dublin

PETER CRAWLEY

Even in a city of more than a million people, everyone is the hero of their own movie. The Berlin-based Gob Squad, who occupy the wittier spectrum of live art, have declared a war against anonymity. Their weapons are their video cameras. *Super Night Shot* begins with an ending: four guerrilla film-makers hurtling past the audience as they return to the theatre. Over the next hour, we discover where they've been.

Across four screens, the performers synchronise their watches, their cameras running while they outline their objectives with as much whimsy as zeal. The hero (Simon Will) will kiss a stranger, the casting director (Sarah Thom) will procure that stranger, the PR officer (Laura Tonke) will publicise the hero, and the location scout (Johanna Freiburg) will find a perfect setting.

It sounds like a recipe for

disaster – a race against the clock which could either fail to involve strangers when filmed, or fail to involve a theatre audience when screened. In fact, the live challenge makes for riveting viewing, each journey unfurling in real time, side by side – like a no-budget mesh of *24* and the title sequence of *Dallas*.

Nor is it as chaotic as you might imagine. Partly because there are enchanting and unexpected set-pieces (at any given point, all four will begin a rap, a dance sequence, or a twirling panorama) and partly because random strangers do come up with great dialogue.

When the hero persuades a woman into his arms, she lets him down easy: "You're handsome, you're gorgeous but . . . you're not the only one."

Gob Squad don't battle anonymity so much as the guarded seclusion of the passer-by. They attempt to contort the anomie of city life into a storyline. The city may not exactly play to the camera, but it does yield something to this quixotic charm. And Gob Squad know that a million more stories are possible. This has been just one take.



PHOTO: DAVID BALTZER

SUPER NIGHT SHOT

NYTHEATRE.COM

January 5, 2012

On arriving at The Public, the audience is asked to line the hallway outside the Newman Theater, leading up to a banner proclaiming "The End." After a few minutes of waiting, the intrepid members of British/German performance collective Gob Squad make their triumphant return, cameras in hand. The audience gives them a hero's welcome with cheering and streamers, unwittingly acting out the final scene of the film they are about to watch. Super Night Shot actually begins one hour (the length of a single DV tape) before the audience arrives, as four members of the Squad synchronize their watches and prepare to take to the streets with cameras to wage a "war on anonymity." New York can be a notoriously impersonal place, where "each of us is just one in a million, easy to replace and easy to forget in a town that doesn't really need us." Gob Squad sets out to change that by rallying the collective potential human energy of the blocks surrounding The Public Theater and Astor Place to create a moment of transcendence and transformation, to take one of their members and make him, for just one night, into a hero for the city of New York.

Each of the four members of the squad, rotated each performance from the company roster, has a particular role to play in constructing the climactic moment, such as public relations or location scouting, and the length of one tape to record their attempt to do so. The show itself is the four feeds of their respective cameras, played simultaneously across the stage with no cuts. A sound editor mixes the audio live, directing attention between the feeds and occasionally overlaying music. This leads to surprising and delightful moments of synchronicity, where through mysterious coordination the four scenes will all gel into a rap video or a dramatic, slow-motion spin. They achieve a perfect balance of structure and spontaneity to make it feel deliberate, but still vital. What really grounds it is the wry charm of its performers. Earnestly committed to their mission, but joyously tongue-in-cheek in their execution, the Squad members are endlessly likable in their quirkiness, which is essential to their success in striking up friendly conversation with the random pedestrians they happen to encounter on any given night.

This element of chaos is what makes the show so exciting. It has the spark of an improv show, but replaces the dynamic component of audience suggestion with the stochastic engine of New York City itself. The limitation of a particular radius around the theater and the specificity of the mission provides just enough rigidity to let the city do the rest of the work. New York lives up to its reputation for being full of delightful weirdos. During the rap video moment a passerby decided to jump in with a pretty great freestyle. Since premiering in Berlin, the readily transportable form of Super Night Shot has been dropped into cities around the world. I am led to wonder how the distinct character of each city comes through and colors the piece. If New York is at all typical, I have no doubt that the oddball wit of Gob Squad can bring out the best of any city, transforming their prosaica into magic and heroes, proving their claim that, "without the banal there wouldn't be anything remarkable."

Will Fulton

SUPER NIGHT SHOT

SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

January 27, 2011

This appealing guerilla film project has been performed more than 140 times since it premiered in Berlin in 2003. As well as making a rigorously planned exercise seem largely off the cuff, its creators, the Anglo-German collective Gob Squad, have maintained an infectious enthusiasm for making it.

Their stated aim? To wage a war on anonymity. Their weapons of choice? Video cameras and a smile. Their mission? To conjure a moment of visual poetry and emotion from the everyday streets.

Super Night Shot begins with a crowd-wrangled celebration of its own ending. That's right. The event the audience has paid to see has in a sense already happened. All that remains is for Gob Squad's performer/filmmakers (Sean Patten, Berit Stumpf, Bastian Trost and Simon Will) to plug in their cameras and screen their just-made movies simultaneously on a wide screen split into four adjacent frames. The audience then watches a replay of the previous hour.

What emerges is a parodic hero's journey, with some of the content left to chance, governed by interactions with strangers. It feels random though the group works to a precise schedule that allows for time-synchronised sequences of surprising beauty. At one point, the performers don animal masks and dance, and what starts like a satire on Amazing Race-style reality TV morphs into something beautiful and strange.

Sound engineer Sebastian Bark's work is critical to the process, heightening emotion with music and by manipulating sound levels, guiding the audience from one frame to another.

Running around an art-friendly precinct with a video camera isn't a particularly risky endeavour, but Gob Squad's openness and candour seemed to win everyone over on this night. Most (with the exception of one reticent Kiwi) seemed willing to join in the fun and there was no sense that the people they pressed into service were being critiqued or made fools of.

At the end of the screening, the audience rose to applaud everyone who contributed to making Super Night Shot one of the most inclusive and interesting works presented at the festival thus far.

Jason Blake

SUPER NIGHT SHOT

BC BUZZ, VANCOUVER
January 14, 2014

First let me say to you, dear readers, that before I attend this gala evening I promise to everyone I see that day, "I will be kind." I am, as it happens, a tough audience. Amongst a certain set I am famous, if not infamous, for walking out of shows. I put on lipstick and do my nails, pick up my mum and hope for the best. You know what? That's exactly what I get, what we all get; the best. Gob Squad's Super Night Shot delivers and then some. It goes like this:

We arrive at the theatre and are informed we can not yet be let into the auditorium, we will be let in as soon as the show begins. We mingle, we have a sip, we spy old friends and the place begins to fill. The anticipation gets buzzing and everyone wonders why we are being wrangled onto the sidewalk with sparklers, or the staircase with streamers. Why we are forming two lines, like we are waiting to wave at the queen's motorcade. We are informed by bullhorn that Gob Squad are on their way, any moment, and we should be ready to roar. And they appear, four Brits in underwear carrying video cameras, and we do roar. They run the gauntlet of us, filming our orchestrated excitement, spurring us to nearly true happy feelings. We are seated.

Four square movie screens are side by side, each showing the footage of a separate video camera, and on each a digital watch is set and synchronized, signalling the beginning of the one hour movie shot in real time in the exact hour before we are seeing it. The watches belong to Simon, Mat, Sean and Sarah, who tell us the plan, the manifesto.

"Each of us is just one in a million, easy to replace and easy to forget in a city that doesn't really need us. But don't worry. We're going to change all that. We've got a plan. This city will need us and this film will be our witness."

It is a War On Anonymity. Simon will seek to find out what it takes to be a hero and hopes to end the night as romantic heroes do, with a kiss from a stranger. Mat is marketing, Sean will audition the strangers and Sarah will search for the perfect location for the kiss. Cameras rolling they split up and run into the streets of Vancouver. They talk to strangers, buy a hobo a six pack of cider, practice gentle public nuisances and perform perfectly timed simultaneous dances with umbrellas. Sean suffers much rejection, Simon struggles with the meaning of heroism, Mat gets kicked out of a bar and Sarah dons a wild boar mask and executes a surreal, writhing, seductive dance in a hall of native art. They lose clothing as the one hour deadline looms, shedding bulky olive drabs to reveal glamorous attire in efforts to be more noticeable, to convince our reluctant Vancouverity brethren to heed the call to adventure. We recognize our city, our shyness, our hobos, our car shares, but also our senses of humour, and our desire for presence and connection.

Things unravel beautifully as the pressure of time mounts, until a young man, Rodrigo, is convinced by his friends and Sean to "kiss a stranger in a rabbit mask", and he is whisked away to Sarah's chosen location. If David Lynch and Monty Python had a love child in the form of a kiss, this would be it. Simon makes it, but Rodrigo is really our hero, and we hope with all our hearts that he is somewhere in the theatre with us, witnessing in the dark what he is really a part of. The performer/activists then jump in a waiting car, strip off their clothes, drink champagne, make it to the Playhouse and we are back where we started, a lovely pay off seeing ourselves cheering them on, welcoming the heroes home. The screens go dark and every one of the six hundred people in the theatre leaps to their feet, genuinely cheering, with honestly true elation. And then Gob Squad come up and bow, and they bring Rodrigo, and the place goes wild. He is beaming and I get the feeling his whole idea of life has been altered. We love him, we love them, and, and odd feeling for Vancouverites, we love ourselves. Maybe they haven't won the war on anonymity yet, but Gob Squad wins this battle.

Riel Hahn