

FEBRUARY 2014: THE CASE STUDY ISSUE

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**Selling
Youth**

**Educating
Yorkshire**

**A Field in
England**

**GOOGLE
GLASS**

**Elysium and the
decline of a genre**

**GTAV &
Mario Kart Wii**

MM

English & Media Centre

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Spring half-term already, and time to think ahead to what you'll be facing exams-wise in a few months time. So to give you a steer on ways this issue of *MediaMag* could help you out (as well as entertaining and inspiring you, of course!) we've provided you with case

studies galore. There should be something for everyone and food for thought whichever course you're following.

David Buckingham leads with a masterly overview of the ways young people are wooed by, competed for, represented in, and sold to by advertisers and marketers – a must-read case study no matter which exam you're studying for. The same for Steph Hendry's 'how to' piece on what makes a successful case study, full of tips and guidance on honing your focus, how to evaluate sources of information, and research processes.

If you're preparing for AS – for example WJEC's MS1 (Media Representations and Responses), you really need to read Steve Connolly's thought-provoking article on *Educating Yorkshire*, and Emily Stuart's close study of representations of war in TV News. If you're studying OCR's AS, you will find really useful studies from inside the videogame industries (*GTAV* or *Mario Kart Wii* anyone?) and the UK film industry, with articles on the marketing and distribution of *Attack The Block* and *A Field in England* – which will of course double up for the Film Studies AS FM2 module.

A2 film students should brush up with Nick Lacey's introduction to 'other' New Wave cinemas, arguments around the Hollywoodisation of science fiction, and spectatorship in *The Reader*. And A2 Media students of all three Awarding Bodies should find fuel for the debates and critical perspectives around new digital media, globalisation and regulation with our well-researched case studies of the forthcoming Google Glass, and the ethics and issues around Primewire.ag.

Our final issue of the year is on Producers and Production – watch out for it in May. Meanwhile, If you're putting the finishing touch to your production coursework right now, remember you still have a few weeks to get your submission ready for the 2014 *MediaMag* Production Competition. The deadline is Friday 28th March (see back page), entry is simple, open to all, and a great first step for you if you love film-making, either in school/college, or in your own time. Check out last year's shortlist on our home page and aim high – inspire us!

Jenny Grahame

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The Front Page

Top Five TV drama treats to look forward to in 2014

As you head towards the summer, lots of AS OCR students will be speculating about representations in TV Drama. Our advice for exam practice is: watch lots and lots of it! We've picked out five of the most interesting newcomers which may be heading our way over the next few months.

Babylon: Heavily trailed new Channel 4 comedy drama, directed throughout by the great Danny Boyle, turning to the small screen for the first time. An American PR expert is hired to help improve the image of the London police force ... a dark and satirical look at the Metropolitan Police written by *Peep Show* and *Fresh Meat* writers Sam Armstrong and Jesse Bain. Brit Marling plays the American PR executive, while the cast includes brilliant UK TV regulars like James Nesbitt, Paterson Joseph, Jill Halfpenny, Adam Deacon, Jonny Sweet and Daniel Kaluuya.

The Red Road: An original crime drama from the Sundance Channel – low-key but with a great cast from *Game of Thrones*, *Masters of Sex*, and *Boardwalk Empire*. After a sudden tragedy involving his wife, a sheriff makes a pact with a member of an unrecognised Native American tribe that has the potential to only make things worse. Coming to Sky Atlantic very soon.



roles each season, starting with Matthew McConaughey and Woody Harrelson in lead roles. Two cops try to track down a serial killer in Louisiana, a case that spans

True Detective: From HBO, directed by Cary Fukunaga (*Sin Nombre* and *Jane Eyre*), an 8-episoded 'anthology' series which will feature new characters and

decades and multiple time-lines, leading them to dark places. To see the trailer go to <http://blogs.indiewire.com/theplaylist> and search 'True Detective trailer'.

The Knick: produced and written by Steven Soderbergh (*Sex Lies and Videotape*, *Oceans 11-13*), 'final' film *Behind the Candelabra*. Historical medical drama in ten episodes, about the lives of doctors and nurses at New York's Knickerbocker Hospital in the early 20th century. Starring Clive Owen.

Broadchurch: Not strictly new, but David Tennant has crossed the Atlantic for a US remake of ITV's brilliant drama (to be titled *Gracepoint*). Meanwhile Olivia Colman will be returning alone as Sgt Ellie Miller in Series 2 later this year. Rumour has it this one may be a prequel to the events of Series 1...

Could I do it? Yes, icould

In a week in which the government has announced that student achievement in vocational qualifications must be now included in school League Tables, it looks as if employers are increasingly valuing a range of skills-based courses beyond A Levels. Figures published this week by ONS suggest now that more than 25% graduates are actually earning less than school leavers who followed vocational courses or apprenticeships.

Are you one of the many young people who is (tick whichever is applicable):

- Considering a career in some form of media, but is bewildered by the massive range of opportunities to chose from?
- Thinking ahead to UCAS and unsure which Media degree is right for you?
- Unsure whether you want to follow a media degree course, apprenticeship, or internship?
- Desperately wishing for a personalised careers advisor who could help you decide what film, media or creative option would be best for you personally?
- Just curious to know exactly what a social media editor, lighting cameraperson or content manager does?

If you've answered yes to any of these questions, help is at hand with ... icould.com – a careers website with a difference. icould has the largest selection of real-life career videos in the UK, reaching over 500,000 people a month, and featuring over 1200 powerful personal stories from individuals of all ages, backgrounds and employment sectors. It reaches across the UK and beyond, including schools, colleges and training providers, careers advisors, teachers and parents. And it's a great first stop for media guidance.



You can discover icould through its own YouTube channel, icould.com, and via other careers sites including TES, Skills Development Scotland, Careers Wales and so on. It works with print, film and online media production companies and organisations to generate new video stories of employees, leading figures or celebrities, highlighting key messages with articles and links to corporate websites: <http://icould.com/stories/subject/media-curriculum/>

For example, you can read and watch mini case-study interviews with successful professionals in

particular media industries or skills sets, supported by useful infographics showing the range of skills required, the geographical distribution of jobs, gender balance, predicted employment figures, tag-maps, and where to go next in terms of further training or employment. The following are just a small selection:

<http://icould.com/stories/job-types/film-television-and-radio/>

Assistant Editor, Primeval: <http://icould.com/videos/ian-m-2/>

Radio Producer, BBC 1Xtra: <http://icould.com/videos/julie-s-3/>

Production Buyer, Primeval: <http://icould.com/videos/bronwyn-f/>

Cameraman, Director and Writer: <http://icould.com/videos/dishad-h/>

The site also offers hundreds of media-related articles and its easy-to-use interface and bright graphics should prove very useful.

And speaking of careers, where would the media industries be without these well-known career changers: Madonna, formerly a Burger King employee; Rod Stewart, once a grave digger, and George Clooney, previously an insurance salesman.



The quarterly magazine for students of advanced level courses in English.

See www.emagazine.org.uk for full details of the magazine and website and to download a sample copy.

Join the *emagazine* community at www.facebook.com/emc.emagazine



More useful resources:

In November the BBFC launched CBBFC, its new website for children, which has a dedicated area for parents and teachers. In addition to its monthly email newsletters and regular podcast, the BBFC also now holds regular Twitter Q&A sessions. Using the #askBBFC hashtag, the BBFC answers short questions from the public about age ratings for film, DVD/Blu-ray and video-on-demand services. Recently themed #askBBFC Q&A sessions included a focus on age ratings for children's films and questions from parents. It also publishes a transcript of each twitter Q&A on its website (<http://www.bbfc.co.uk/education-resources/education-news>) – should be quite useful to anyone revising for Media Regulation.

Farewell to the Gothic ... hello to Science Fiction!

As the fabulously dark BFI Gothic cinema season draws to a close, another door opens, this time into the future, with the next season: a huge celebration of Science Fiction, from October 2014 to January 2015, with three distinct themes: Tomorrow's World and visions of the future; Contact! and the existence of other beings on other planets; and Altered States – neuroscience, monsters, and the futuristic fantasies of the mind. There will be amazing one-off events, special guests and a unique BFI perspective on the genre with screenings of classic sci-fi films including *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), *Alien* (1979), *Planet of the Apes* (1968), *Village of the Damned* (1960), and the prophetic British classic *The Day the Earth Caught Fire* (1961).

And to tie in with the season, this year our **MediaMag Production Competition** (see inside back cover) includes a brand new category for your submissions: Science Fiction! We hope to see some inventive and inspiring approaches to some of the logistical problems of representing deep space, futuristic landscapes or Uranians reflected in your entries!



The Front Page was compiled by Jenny Grahame.

Selling Youth

David Buckingham looks at the changing ways in which marketers are targeting young consumers.

Who creates youth culture? Is it a spontaneous expression of young people themselves, or is it mainly an aspect of media and marketing? Does the market simply exploit and manipulate young people, or does it offer them opportunities to fulfil their needs, to express themselves, and to create their own identities?

We often talk about music artists selling out to commercial interests. But this seems to assume that youth culture comes from some kind of non-commercial space – that it arises ‘from the streets’. It is assumed to be authentic, challenging and subversive until it is commercialised and made safe by the operations of the market.

However, research on youth culture suggests that it is inevitably commercial, and has always been so. This is very clear if we look at the origins of contemporary youth culture

in the mid-20th century. The term ‘teenager’, for example, was invented by market researchers in the 1940s to describe a new age group of consumers they were interested in targeting. Young people in their teens had always been there but they were not identified as a distinctive group until they came to be seen as a potential market.

Teen spending power

It’s possible to trace the emergence of the teenage consumer in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s, from the rise of fan groups like the ‘bobbysoxers’, who followed the popular singers of the day (like Frank Sinatra) through to the beginnings of rock and roll. We also see the first teenage magazines, offering girls in particular a whole range of consumer options in clothing, make-up, music and home decoration.

This phenomenon emerged a little later

in the UK. A report called ‘The Teenage Consumer’ published in 1959 by the market researcher Mark Abrams was the first to identify this new market. Abrams focused particularly on the spending patterns of newly-affluent working-class consumers, which he described as

“distinctive teenage spending for distinctive teenage ends in a distinctive teenage world.”

Teenagers, Abrams argued, were a new and separate market, which adults (including companies and marketers) had to work hard to understand. Yet there were many commentators – including leading academics like Richard Hoggart – who looked on this commercial youth culture with despair. They saw youth culture as tasteless, superficial and consumerist, and just a slavish copy of American styles.



Niches and 'generation gaps'

Since the 1950s, the youth market has grown significantly: it is now worth approximately \$200 billion a year in the US alone. Youth has become a very important 'niche market', who also set trends for both younger and older age groups. Over time, marketers have developed a range of new strategies to target them, but at the present time, there are significant changes under way.



Books on youth marketing tend to present today's young people as dramatically different from earlier generations; and they suggest that there are significant new generation gaps emerging. Young people – so-called 'Generation X' and 'Generation Y' – are seen as much more individualistic and independent than they used to be. As a result, they are perceived as an elusive market – as constantly changing, and difficult to

reach. It is argued they are also much more knowledgeable and sceptical about marketing and advertising.

The power of technology: the 3 Ps

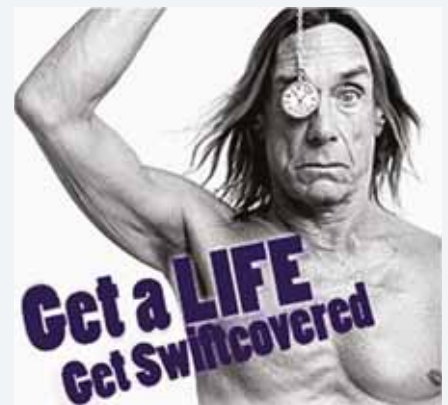
Technology is also seen as a significant factor here. Young people are described as 'digital natives', by comparison with their parents, who are 'digital immigrants'. This new 'digital generation' is somehow defined by its relationship with technology; and it is only through using this technology that marketers believe they will be able to reach them.

As a result of these changes, marketers have adopted a whole range of new strategies in order to target and engage young consumers. Especially for this age group, it seems that old-style advertising is dead. 'Mass marketing' – sending the same messages to millions of passive consumers – is no longer seen as appropriate for the more individualistic approach of today's teenagers.

These new marketing tactics are more **pervasive**: they are less visible and overt, and therefore much harder for consumers to identify, to 'filter out' and hence to resist. They are **personalised**, in that they seem to speak to your needs and desires as an individual rather than a member of a mass. And they are **participatory**: they aim to get us involved in a dialogue, to enable us to create and distribute our own messages, to feel as though we are the ones in charge.



The use of online media is the most obvious aspect of this. The phenomenal financial success of companies like Google and Facebook clearly depends on their value as means for marketing. Spending on online marketing overtook that for TV marketing in the UK back in 2009. The recent flotation of Twitter generated billions, despite the fact that the company has yet to make a profit: yet you can be sure it won't be long before it (along with other apparently 'free' services like Instagram and Snapchat) is being used to generate marketing revenue.



From marketing to mining

In some cases, the presence of marketing messages is fairly obvious – as in the case of Google ads and sponsored links. Companies also spend large amounts on search engine optimisation (SEO), a technique which helps to ensure that your website will come out high on the list of search results. Even less visible is the process of datamining, whereby companies can gather information about what you are doing online: this information



is often aggregated and sold, in order that consumers can be targeted with individualised advertising that seems to reflect their personal interests.

Marketers are also very active on Facebook and other social networking sites, not just with their own branded profiles, but also in circulating applications, competitions and other messages about what's currently 'cool'. Marketers have known for a long time that the most effective way of selling is through word of mouth: when a friend recommends something, you are much more likely to buy it than if you just see an ad. For marketers, social networking is the modern version of word of mouth: it's a very effective way to embed marketing messages into the dynamics of young people's friendship groups.

Youth marketing strategies are participatory: they aim to get us involved in a dialogue, to enable us to create and distribute our own messages, to feel as though we are the ones in charge.

The key thing here is that these messages appear to come, not from large and impersonal companies,



but from peers whom you trust. This is also the case with viral marketing, where messages are distributed from person to person, often using mobile technology. Cadbury's 'gorilla' campaign from 2007 was a very successful example of viral marketing: while the ads were occasionally on TV, they were mainly viewed on YouTube and similar platforms, on the basis of personal recommendation. And of course for companies, getting consumers to distribute their messages for them is significantly cheaper than paying to buy lots of airtime or advertising space.

Create your own advertising

The next step on from this is user-generated marketing, where consumers actually create the advertising messages. Doritos' 'Crash the Superbowl' competition in the US is a good example: consumers are invited

to make their own Doritos' ads, and \$1 million (plus a Superbowl screening) is offered for the winner. According to Doritos, this is all about 'sharing talent and creativity'; but of course it ensures that consumers (both the ad-makers and those who vote for them, in an *X-Factor*-style competition) will 'buy in' to their product. Similar techniques are being used by a growing number of brands, from Ford cars to Vans shoes.

These new marketing tactics are more pervasive: they are less visible and overt, and therefore much harder for consumers to identify, to 'filter out' and hence to resist.

Another increasingly important technique is experiential marketing. In relation to the youth market, this is probably most obvious in the commercial sponsorship and branding of music festivals. However, marketers are now creating their own branded experiences – events that are put on specifically to promote the brand, rather than the event coming first and the sponsorship following.

One example of this is T-Mobile's 'dance' campaign. TV ads showed groups of people apparently spontaneously



breaking out into displays of co-ordinated public dancing in venues like Liverpool Street station in London and Heathrow Airport. Alongside this, other 'flashmob' public dances were put on across the country, all strongly branded.

Meanwhile, market research has become increasingly important in companies' efforts to target these elusive young consumers. Much more is being spent in this area, and market researchers are increasingly using new techniques to get up close and personal. They are visiting young people in their homes, observing them in their bedrooms, checking out the contents of their wardrobes; they are going shopping with them, and hanging out in the mall; and they are asking them to create video diaries about their intimate everyday lives.



Ambassadors of cool

Cool hunting is a technique that involves employing young people as informants to provide 'on the ground' information about trends within their friendship groups. This sometimes blurs with the use of brand ambassadors,

where young people are paid to promote brands among their peers, ideally in subtle and unobtrusive ways. You might want to think about this the next time someone casually mentions to you about a new drink or a new clothing brand that's come on the market.



Tactics are personalised – they seem to speak to your needs and desires as an individual rather than a member of a mass.

Finally, co-creation is a fairly new approach, in which consumers are invited (and paid) to work with market researchers to develop new product ideas. They attend focus group workshops in which new ideas are brainstormed and developed – ideas which the researchers then take back (and sell) to the companies.

In different ways, these techniques all display aspects of my three 'Ps': they are **pervasive**, **personalised** and **participatory**. According to marketers, they are all about empowering young consumers. Marketing, they say, is no longer about faceless companies dictating to us – telling us what to buy, and what kind of person we should become. On the contrary, the consumer is now in charge.

On the other hand, we could argue that these kinds of techniques are much

more subtle and manipulative – and much less visible and obvious – than traditional advertising. They are harder to identify, and perhaps harder to resist. They illustrate how commercial marketing has become much more deeply embedded in our private lives and our personal relationships.

So are young consumers just being duped and exploited – or are they being empowered and liberated? Personally, I do not regard young people as passive victims; but on the other hand, I don't think any of us is really in control, or completely savvy, about this. And that, of course, is one reason why we need more media education...

David Buckingham is Professor of Media and Communications at Loughborough University.

Follow it up

Information about youth marketing can be found on websites of agencies that specialise in this area, like Premise, Face Group, Mobile Youth and Campus Group.

Ypulse is a US-based portal with links to a whole range of agencies and other market research information. You can also easily look behind the scenes at Facebook and Google marketing.

For an example of current thinking among youth marketers, see *The Youth Marketing Handbook* by Freddie Benjamin and others, published by the UK company Mobile Youth in 2011.

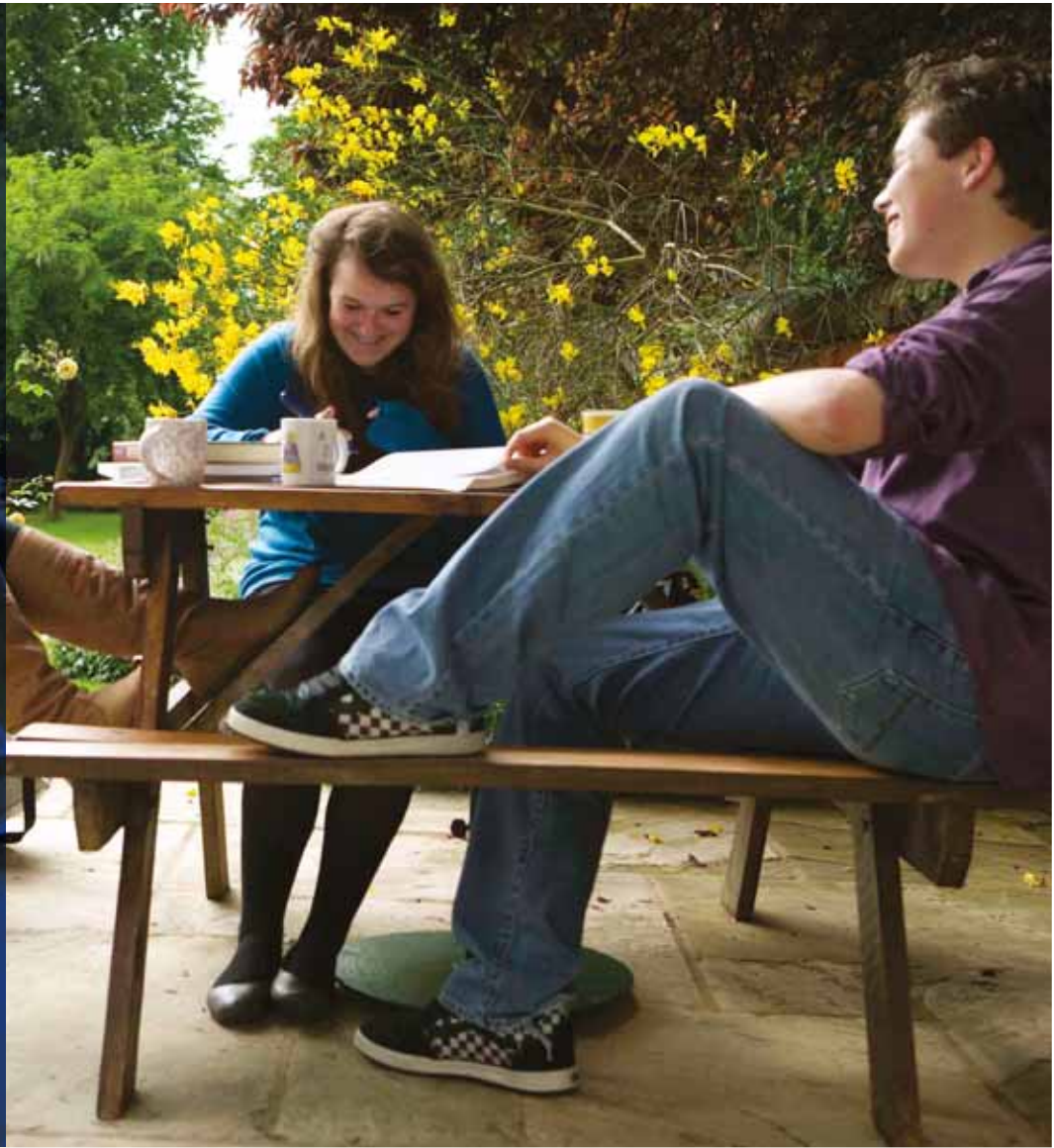
Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter's book *The Rebel Sell: How the Counter-Culture Became Consumer Culture* (Capstone, 2005) is a very provocative look at some of the broader issues, while the following academic texts are also recommended:

Buckingham, D. 2011. *The Material Child*. Polity.

Montgomery, K. 2009. *Generation Digital*. MIT Press.

<http://www.teenagefilm.com/>

SO, ER, WHAT EXACTLY MAKES A GOOD CASE STUDY?



Lecturer and examiner Steph Hendry takes you through the processes, skills and questions you need for a good case study – with plenty of tips and examples along the way. Her approach fits particularly well with the AQA A2, but the principles apply whatever your spec.

One of your central skills as A Level students is your ability to undertake a case study. Case studies can be based on a specific genre, representational group, media form/platform or institution. Different exam boards may ask for case study work in preparation for an exam question, or as part of your coursework submission – or both; so ensuring a case study is structured appropriately and thoroughly is very important. You must check the assessment criteria to see exactly how your case study work will be assessed.

Students often find the idea of a case study difficult because there is no one single approach to a case study that can be applied to all topic areas. There are some activities that all case studies share; but a case study on the horror genre, for example, will inevitably develop very differently to one on the music industry. However there are some central ideas that can be useful for all case studies at all levels.

Choose your topic & focus

All case studies need a clear focus from the start. Be clear on what you want to investigate. Are you studying:

- a specific genre (e.g. hip-hop)?
- a media institution (e.g. The British Film industry)?
- a specific topic area (e.g. the idea of 'home improvements' in the media)?
- a representational/ideological topic (e.g. class and politics in the media)?

- a representational group (e.g. teenagers)?

Good case studies use examples from media products to exemplify or challenge ideas.

Select and analyse media products

Once you have defined your topic area, you will need to select one or two media products as a focus for your initial research. Most A Level case studies will need to have a contemporary focus – older products might be used as a comparison or contrast, but these should be secondary to the newer products. So, *The Walking Dead* (AMC) and *In the Flesh* (BBC3) could be used to look at contemporary horror/zombie products, while *Night of the Living Dead* (Romero 1968) could perhaps be drawn in later to help consider how and why the genre has changed over time.

Stage one – analysing examples

	Horror	Music Ind (R&B)
Media Language	How does horror use media language to create atmosphere?	What are the visual codes of R&B? Is the genre defined by musical sound, visual iconography or both?
Institution	How might institutional factors impact on the presentation of taboo material/gore?	Other than music sales, how does the genre reach its audience and generate an income?
Genre	How does the genre comment on contemporary fears and concerns?	Has R&B changed over time? How and, most importantly, why?
Representation	How are heroes and monsters represented? What about the representation of young people? gender? race?	Representations of gender? class? race? urban culture? consumerism?
Audience	Why do people like horror? How does the genre maintain audience interest?	How does the genre maintain mainstream appeal?
Ideology	What values are present in mainstream horror products? Are there similarities and/or differences across forms and platforms? Who or what is punished? What is the threat?	How (and where) does R&B reflect or challenge consumerist values/gender stereotypes/the context of individualism?
Narrative	What observations can be made about horror monsters? What techniques are used to maintain tension?	What roles do R&B artists portray in their public personae/video characters?

Whatever the subject/topic of your case study, you will need to have an in-depth and detailed knowledge of a range of media products. Most case studies would benefit from considering products from different platforms, so you should perhaps look at examples of print, broadcast and online/e-media where possible. With a horror case study, an obvious place to start would be by looking at films and/or television programmes; but a broader, more in-depth knowledge of the genre would come from considering the way the genre is dealt with in comic books, radio drama and/or computer games too.

Stage One: The first stage of the case study should be close textual analysis of the products you have selected – and using media concepts would give you a structure to do this.

Use media concepts

Before you can expand the depth and breadth of your case study you will need to identify some ideas to help you with your initial analysis and investigations. You should spend some time considering what conceptual issues are important for your topic area. Let's take two contrasting examples – Horror and the Music Industry – to see how these might differ.

Once you've started your close analysis of an area, you will probably find that different topics raise different issues. These should provide you with an indication of where your research needs to take you. Starting with Media Concept analysis will help you focus your research. The questions in the table above are, of course, only examples. The

types of questions will also depend on the media products you are studying too; a horror case study that begins with *The Walking Dead* will inevitably go in a different direction to one that begins with *The Cabin in the Woods* (Goddard 2012). These products raise different issues. To help you focus your case study you should identify a few questions that you would like to answer.

Stage Two: You will then need to extend your knowledge to enable the development of a case study. Once the topic, texts and general focus have been identified, the extended development will depend on your willingness to undertake research, and do some reading.





Research

Libraries and learning centres should be your first port of call. Despite the resources easily available on the internet, much of the most useful development of your case study will come from the wider reading you undertake in textbooks and journals. However, there are ways you can research for your case studies at home; there is a world of information available to anyone with an internet connection. There may well be websites that contain information specifically relevant to your case study area; but here are some suggestions for ways to begin your research – while some may be familiar to you, others may be new.

First of all make a list of key words and terms that relate to your topic area then use these terms to search online.

- **A simple Google search** using these terms may well throw up some interesting and useful information immediately. Chances are, Wikipedia will be near the top of a Google search and using this online encyclopaedia can be a good way to get started with research. As well as the information on the encyclopaedia entry, each page lists sources of information and, whilst Wikipedia itself has to be treated with great caution and is not seen as a particularly valuable bibliography entry, its collection of sources are well worth looking through.
- **Try expanding your search** by looking in the Google Books, Google Video and/or Google Scholar tabs. The results in these tabs will be more specialised, and potentially more



useful. You may be surprised to find videos online where academics (and sometimes students) offer explanation, analysis and examples of key Media Studies-type ideas. Google Books has a wide collection of scanned books that can be read or searched. You could find some unexpected gems but will definitely find some well-respected textbooks covering a range of Media Studies topics.

- **Broadsheet newspapers** can be an excellent source of information, particularly for industry or institutional case studies. Much broadsheet reporting has moved into opinion-based articles that can offer different perspectives and original takes on contemporary media issues and current debates. Some columnists write humorously, some are deliberately provocative and others use factual research to support their arguments. Whatever approach is taken by the writer, their articles can be a useful source of information and can give an indication of what the important cultural and political issues of the day are.
- **Channel 4 and the BBC** offer free on-demand television services.

Current C4 programmes are available as are a wide range of older entertainment programmes and documentaries. C4 documentaries can sometimes be a little simplistic, but they cover a whole range of topics from social and political issues to specific media related topics.

- **BBC iPlayer** tends to show recently broadcast programmes and they are available online for a limited amount of time. It is worth keeping an eye on BBC broadcast schedules. BBC4 broadcasts lots of documentaries on media-related issues. BBC3 has a younger target audience in mind but often broadcasts shows that have a connection to areas that could be part of a media case study.
- There are many sites online that offer **archives of historical information and films**. A wonderful archive of newsreel and other filmed material is available at both <http://www.britishpathe.com> and the BBC Archive (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/>).
- Many online sites host **documentaries that can be streamed and watched online**. Try <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/category/media/>. You may also be surprised what a YouTube search can provide: theorists, commentators and academics are all accessible through video interviews and filmed discussions. YouTube also hosts a lot of full documentaries and filmed summaries of media related topics, ideas and theories. Be selective though: not all user-generated material online is accurate!
- **MediaMagazine makes its back issues available online**. Just reading through the contents pages is a good way to start a research project (see www.mediamagazine.org.uk for a downloadable PDF of the contents pages for all issues). Web subscribers can access nearly a 1000 articles from, and you may well find lots of articles related to your products/topics. Have you seen the videos on the *MediaMagazine* website? They also cover lots of very useful topics. Check with your teacher to get the login details (username and password) – your passport to loads of extra stuff, tailor made for you.



The internet offers a massive range of information sources but it can sometimes be difficult to sort out the valid material from the subjective, biased, or sometimes, plain wrong. Where possible begin researching your case study on sites that you know have some editorial control.

Stage Three: With your new-found depth of knowledge you should now be able to start to raise further questions and expand your case study by making connections across platforms, genres and/or forms. For higher-level studies, it is important to link your topic to broader media issues and debates, and to the wider social and cultural context.

As your research develops, you may want to prioritise specific types of research:

Textual research	Close analysis of the media texts central to your investigation based on media concepts plus wider context issues as relevant to your topic. Some factual research may be required: dates, directors, writers, sales/viewing figures etc. etc.
Key Concept Research	Detailed knowledge of a number of theories and ideas related to media concepts. This will be identified in your written work by your use of appropriate terminology.
Issue Based Research	Detailed knowledge of the chosen issue based on reading related theories and debates in the press.
Contextual Research	Facts and ideas related to the context(s) relevant to your study.

Context: making connections/asking questions

Case studies could be linked to issues around:

- **Audience** – connecting the construction of products to the creation of audience appeal and meeting audience expectations.
- **Institution** – connecting the way products are marketed and aim to generate an audience; considering how products generate income for media producers.
- **Context** – connecting the representations within products to contemporary values and ideologies; connecting products to one another



Good case studies will use these examples to show how *In the Flesh* does these things. Excellent case studies will discuss why.

- Why does the BBC need to ensure it appeals to a youth audience? What role does *In the Flesh* play in this?
- Why are the Zombies in *In the Flesh* represented as sympathetic?
- *In the Flesh* can be interpreted as being reflective of issues such as cultural integration, homophobia, religious and racial intolerance, social and cultural alienation? Why might this be?

Case studies begin as a gathering of information – information about media products, information about media concepts, media theories and media issues. Once the information has been gathered, good case studies do something with that knowledge – the knowledge is used to analyse the topic area and to link to the knowledge gained in research.

Different Awarding Bodies may ask you to use your case studies in slightly different ways and with specific types of focus. You should check your exam board's requirements; but all assessments based on case study work will want to reward students with in-depth knowledge of media texts and those who show evidence of research and conceptual thinking. A well-chosen case study topic that taps into your own interests should mean that time spent gaining this knowledge and understanding should be rewarding – and you may even find it enjoyable!

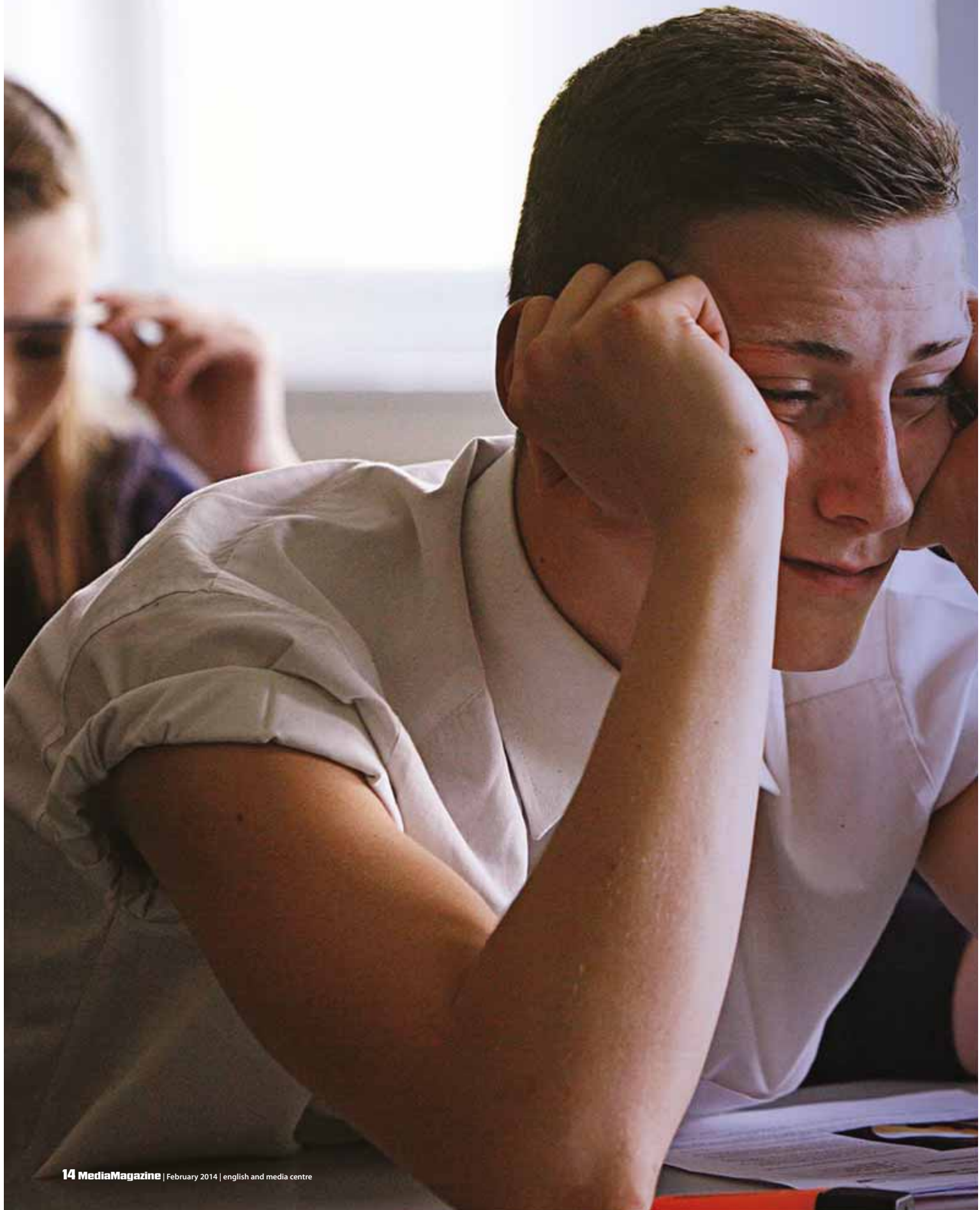
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to identify trends; connecting media products to current discussions and debates.

Good case studies use examples from media products to exemplify or challenge ideas from media theories and debates. For instance, you could use examples from *In the Flesh* to show:

- How BBC 3 targets youth audiences
- How the idea of Zombies as monsters has changed over time
- How horror products are often metaphors for current issues/concerns

Good case studies will use these examples to show how *In the Flesh* does these things. **Excellent case studies** will discuss why.



Educating Yorkshire: The Reality and Representation of the Modern Documentary Format

In 2012, Steve Connolly wrote a thought-provoking article for *MediaMag* on what was then a highly controversial new documentary series with an even more contentious title: *Educating Essex*. Who better than Steve to follow up the next stage in Channel 4's exploration of education, this time in the rather more diverse and snowy area of Dewsbury, Yorkshire?

Two years ago, I was lucky enough to find myself in the office of an Essex secondary school interviewing my former colleague Vic Goddard who had unexpectedly found himself catapulted to stardom as the Headteacher of Passmore Academy in Harlow. His school featured in Channel 4's fly-on-the-wall offering, *Educating Essex*. At the time, both Vic and his colleague Stephen Drew were fairly sure that there wouldn't be a second series of the surprise hit of 2011. In one way they were right; the cameras did not revisit Passmore. Instead they relocated to Thornhill Academy in Dewsbury near Leeds, and produced *Educating Yorkshire*, another slice of secondary school life which got people talking about the nature of schooling in the UK.

On the face of it, *Educating Yorkshire* looked little different from *Educating Essex*; the same kind of charismatic teachers and leaders, the same kind of Year 11 cliques, the same fights and the same snappy classroom banter – albeit with a distinctly Yorkshire accent. Digging a little deeper, however, I want to suggest that *Educating Yorkshire* explores some quite different themes to its southern cousin, and from a Media Studies point of view, offers us a rich variety of material, particularly relating to the concept of representation, that *Educating Essex* did not.

When I wrote about *Educating Essex* two years ago, I suggested that the programme was doing some new

things with an old documentary format – often termed 'fly-on-the-wall' – through its exploitation of new media, scheduling and its cultural connections with the 'constructed reality' stylings of *The Only Way is Essex*. *Educating Yorkshire* maintains that drive to re-imagine the fly-on-the-wall documentary for the 21st century; but, perhaps more significantly, it goes down some entirely different representational avenues. So how should we read these differences in this text, and as ever, what do they tell us about the institutional actions of Channel 4 and TwoFour, the production company who made the programme?



The people's republic of Yorkshire

The first difference between *Educating Yorkshire* and its predecessor surrounds the choice of location for the documentary. Just as Essex is a county in the south of England with a very distinct identity and set of representations and associations with it, Yorkshire has an entirely different but equally distinctive set of representations that people associate with that county. These associations are largely stereotypical; and interestingly the programme does not really explore them at all. We might argue that *Educating Essex* did no such thing either, though, as I argued two years ago, there was a distinct attempt to exploit the 'Essex girl' stereotype in the promotion of the programme.

So, no lazy flat cap and whippet stereotyping in *Educating Yorkshire*, but rather the modern reality of a school that is 50% white working-class and 50% Asian students occupying an area that is largely segregated along ethnic lines. The exploration of this reality is problematic for both the makers of the programme, the school, and indeed us as an audience, and is explored further below. But in terms of the representation of regional identity, the programme should remind us that regionality in Britain is often present in British television texts. In *Educating Yorkshire*, the identity of the children and staff in the school as distinctly from and of Yorkshire is focused on from day one. Assistant Headteacher Mr Burton's



comment that

“As we know, we Northerners, we're proper reet clever.”

features in the opening titles every week.

This emphasis on the North and being from Yorkshire is an important aspect of the programme's appeal; quite frequently, a good deal of the media seeks to suggest that we are part of a monoculture, where everyone is using the same media technology, consuming the same brands and having the same experiences. It is quite easy for audiences to get sucked into the idea that as a consequence of this we are all the same. What programmes like *Educating Yorkshire* do is to remind us that, in fact, there are many

differences between us and the people who live a few hundred miles up (or indeed down) the road. While the experiences of the students and staff at Thornhill are clearly not that different to those of the staff and students at Passmores in Harlow, the programme sets out a markedly different cultural identity. Some of the promotional posters designed by students at Thornhill for the series, highlighting the differences between *Educating Yorkshire* and its Essex based predecessor, demonstrate this. (You can still see a selection at <http://educating-yorkshire.channel4.com/>)

Dewsbury: a town divided

We should also be interested in the way that the geographic location of



Thornhill, and the wider representation of Dewsbury in the media, allows the programme to explore some social issues that were not touched upon by *Educating Essex* at all. In *Educating Essex*, teen pregnancy, cyberbullying and the ever-present tensions around the Year 11 prom were all to the fore, as one might expect in a documentary about a 21st-century school in Britain. The choice of a school in Dewsbury, however, allowed the programme makers to take on some rather more challenging issues. In interview, Thornhill Headteacher Johnny Mitchell has made much of the pre-existing media representations of the town as being something that he wanted *Educating Yorkshire* to challenge. In the last few years Dewsbury has been the centre of unwanted attention owing to three fairly unpleasant news stories. Firstly, the fact that the leader of the 7/7 bombers, Mohammed Siddique Khan lived and worked in Dewsbury in the run up to his suicide attack on London in 2005; secondly, the faked 'abduction' of Shannon Matthews by members of her own family in 2008; and finally an ongoing issue with racial segregation that has led to a history of race riots stretching back to the late 1980s. As Mitchell himself said in an interview with the *Guardian* in October 2013:

I'm from Dewsbury, and I'm sick to the teeth of some of the unfair things that have been said about it [...] There's been so much ad publicity around Dewsbury. Terrorism stuff, Shannon Matthews [...] I thought it was time to put Dewsbury back on the map in a positive way.

For interested Media students, this should raise questions about the extent to which 'reality TV' or documentary



can *really* represent reality. We might want to consider the extent to which those representations of the town put forward in news programmes can be challenged by *Educating Yorkshire*. I would want to suggest that they can, in that the popularity of the format that *Educating Yorkshire* uses is, in many ways, more valuable to audiences as a measure of reality than the news is. This is because of the way that much modern documentary and reality TV use narrative. The representation of people – for example, Mr Mitchell himself, or Ryan Ward, the 13-year old sage who became the student star of the show – as characters in an unfolding story makes people much more inclined to engage with an issue, event or place.

The students, for example, talk openly about the racial tension present in the town, but at the same time, we see these students going about the daily business of being educated side by side. The support shown to Musharaf (the Asian Year 11 with a terrible stammer) by all his peers, both white and Asian, is unconditional when he stands up in front of assembly.

While we might argue that this story – of student courage that appeals to everybody regardless of race – is heavily constructed, right down to the cutaway shots of his classmates crying, we must also concede that this representation of ethnic coexistence is a powerful antidote to some of the more negative portrayals of both the town and its young people.

Are we teachers? ... Or are we human?

In terms of representation, perhaps one of the most radical departures from the content of *Educating Essex*, was the decision to delve a little deeper into the private lives of the staff at Thornhill. Episode 5, which focuses on Mr Moses, the Head of Year 9, spends quite a significant time having him talk to camera about his background and the fact that he is single. This is quite a deliberate move away from *Educating Essex* on the part of the programme's producers, where the focus on lives outside school was firmly with the students (Vinny's relationship with his Mum, for example, and the support Sky received from her family when



pregnant). This is quite interesting, in that in film and television texts generally, the life of teachers outside of school tends to be treated in a somewhat comic way, most notably recently in both *Bad Education* and *Big School*. I see *Educating Yorkshire's* treatment of Mr Moses (or indeed, Mr Steer, the Deputy Head who, despite being quite seriously ill, refuses to go home) as being an attempt to address this, by presenting school staff – Mr Moses is actually a non-teaching Head of Year – in a more realistic light; and in itself, this suggests that the *Educating Yorkshire* format is much more closely related to older forms of documentary than its brash and terrible offspring, 'Reality TV'. In exploring the wider lives of staff, *Educating Yorkshire* is reminiscent of a run of documentaries from the early 80s (such as Glyn Worsnip's *Paras*) that seem to be able to flesh out the characters of the people who feature in them without turning into something like the docusoap format so prevalent in the late 90s.

Representation – beyond the stereotypes

Finally, it is worth saying that *Educating Yorkshire* has a strong pull for audiences, in the same way *Educating Essex* did, because while it is aware of the stereotypes that exist in media representations of schools (cliques, bullies etc.) it seeks to go beyond them and explore the reality a little more. While this is heavily constructed – in that the audience only sees the edited highlights of hours and hours of footage – it allows for some valuable insights into the cultures – both ethnic and indigenous – that make Britain such a diverse place to live in the 21st century. Like *Educating Essex*, *Educating Yorkshire* has attempted to exploit social media and other technologies in order to engage with its audience, but, rather than simply go for a simple 'North vs South: here's-the-difference-comparison', the more recent series has sought to be rather more thoughtful and reflective. This is not to be critical of *Educating Essex* but rather to suggest that each series is seeking to do something quite different with a common format.

Steve Connolly has taught Media Studies for many years and is currently teaching at Bishop Thomas Grant, Lambeth.



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The *MediaMag* Student Conference conversation between Pete Fraser and David Brindley, *Educating Yorkshire* Series Director and Producer, will be available in *MediaMag* clips from May 2014.



DISTRIBUTING A FIELD IN ENGLAND

On Friday July 5th 2013, a low-budget, black and white, art-house film by emerging auteur, Ben Wheatley, *A Field in England*, tried to break the Hollywood model of distribution by becoming the first film in the UK to launch simultaneously across all platforms – VOD (4OD and iTunes), free broadcast TV (Film4), DVD, BluRay and cinema (17 Picturehouse venues). You may have heard about it – and then again you may not. Because, as Mark Ramey will explore in this article, film distribution is a high-risk battle for revenue, with the major Hollywood studios packing the biggest punches.

The reason you last saw a film at the cinema or watched a DVD or legally streamed film content was almost certainly due to a film distributor's marketing campaign – for without effective distribution, film product rarely finds an audience. That's why according to the UK's Film Distributor's Association or FDA (<http://www.launchingfilms.com>), UK distributors spent £330 million in 2012 of which,

£184 million of this was allocated to media advertising, the rest on film prints, advertising production, publicity, premieres and related costs.

Bums on seats and eyeballs glued to screens means money, as David Puttnam, the President of the FDA notes:

It is the task of distributors to identify and deliver the largest possible audience for every film.

The FDA further defines distribution as:

the highly competitive business of launching and sustaining films in the market place. Films don't become talking points, or find their place in the world, by accident.

The distributor's challenge for a film launch can thus be crudely summarised as:

1. identifying the film's audience
2. estimating revenue potential across all platforms



Images throughout the article are from *A Field in England*.

3. building awareness and maintaining interest
4. persuading exhibitors to present the film
5. persuading the audience to watch it.

A distributor's campaign strategy is therefore complex and costly work, involving thorough research and creativity. It is a campaign that will not stop once the film has launched, because early box office figures (the all important opening weekend) will further determine the strategic direction of a film's release.

The industry's costly model for distribution is, therefore, unsurprisingly dominated by Hollywood. According to the *BFI Statistical Handbook* of 2013

“The top 10 distributors had a 95% share of the market in 2012.”

The top 6 distributors are also the major studios (Sony Pictures, 20th Century Fox, Warner Bros, Universal, Disney and Paramount) and they represent 65% of market share, generated from only 173 out of the 755 films released in the UK in 2012.

The *BFI Statistical Handbook* goes on to note that:

“In 2012, the top 10 distributors generated £1.15 billion in theatrical revenues”

while the remaining 119 distributors handled a total of 505 titles, 67% of all releases, but gaining only a 5% share of the box office – less than £60 million.

It is against this Hollywood-dominated background of aggressively marketed, 'tent-pole' franchises and star-driven genre movies with saturation multiplex releases that *A Field in England* has to be placed.

For example, the average Hollywood movie costs approximately \$100 million to make, and a further \$50 million to distribute. Such resources are beyond the scope of any UK producer. The BFI's lottery-financed Film Fund, the scope of which encompasses development, production, and distribution on some 20 film projects a year is worth approximately £23 million annually – or the equivalent of Johnny Depp on a one-picture deal! *A Field in England* was made for £300K, and is a typical UK co-production, finding partners from UK TV in Film4 and 4DVD, an independent cinema chain, Picturehouse Entertainment, and the BFI Distribution Fund, which supports experimental release models.

A Field in England's audacious approach to distribution certainly generated media interest and debate about the future of the current Hollywood model, with its staggered release windows across various platforms, often taking months.

However, *A Field in England's* simultaneous release is not simply a gimmick. Although the model of mainstream releases described above is clearly working for the Big Event

movies, times are possibly changing. As one of the film's producers, Andy Starke notes:

“In four or five year's time your movie is going to be on a server somewhere in the world being beamed directly to the cinema or to your telly or your phone or whatever...”

The official film website
(<http://afieldinengland.com>)

How Hollywood will manage to make money from this new approach to digital distribution is open to question; but clearly *A Field in England* is offering a first glimpse into the future for certain kinds of film. As Starke says:

“This type of release makes sense for these kinds of movies. I think that time and time again, interesting movies come out and don't find their audience because they are not around in cinemas for long enough. I'm hoping that this approach, with all the weight of the publicity geared towards one month, might help it be around longer in cinemas, and let people come to it without having that panic of it being around for one week before it's gone because there's another Marvel movie on which just fills up cinema screens.”

<http://afieldinengland.com>

In *Moviewatch* magazine (issue 35, July/August 2013) another of the film's producers, Claire Jones, states that *A Field in England*:

“was conceived as more of an art-house, experimental film, and for that to go anywhere you can't look at traditional distribution models

any more. You're never going to put it on 200 screens across the country. [...] It doesn't have the audience market for that. [...] So how can we get the widest audience to our art-house film? A television slot, DVDs and a really high-spec streaming service, we thought, might provide some answers to that. 55

Moviescope Magazine: Issue 35, July/August 2013

Anna Higgs, an executive producer at Film4.0 (Film4's digital initiatives division and the main funding agency behind the film), states in the same interview that:

55 We're looking at a landscape of 12 to 14 films being released every week in cinemas, and we never have the press and advertising budgets to match the big studios. In a conventional model, it's very hard for an indie film to break through and create enough buzz to hold its screens. 55

Moviescope Magazine: Issue 35, July/August 2013



Each platform release of *A Field in England* had a special identity to add value to its purchase. For example, a live Q&A event followed the Ritzy Picturehouse screening in Brixton, London and was beamed live to the other Picturehouse venues – adding value to the cinematic experience; the Blu-ray carried even more extras than the DVD (and sold more as a result); and the advert-free TV screening on Film4 was curated – programmed alongside an established cult classic, *El Topo* (Jodorowsky 1970 Mexico).

It's perhaps still too early to talk about the eventual success of this radical release strategy. However, in her interview with Mark Kermode on his film blog, posted 12 July 2013, Anna Higgs of Film4.0 was confident the strategy had been a success and that the cinematic release of the film had not been hurt by a multi-platform release.



As reported by Michael Rosser in *ScreenDaily* on July 8th 2013, *A Field in England* made a comfortable £21,399 over its opening weekend and played to sold-out crowds at some key inner-city venues. On TV it drew a combined audience of 288,000 viewers (including the time-shifted channel Film4+1) and when those who recorded the film on Saturday and Sunday were also added to the total, it was at 357,000 – up on the Film4's slot average of 346,000. *A Field in England* was also the number one trending topic on Twitter in the UK on Friday evening, and sales of DVDs from Amazon and HMV across Friday and Saturday amounted to 1,462. On the Film4OD and iTunes platforms there were a total of more than 1,000 purchases.

According to *ScreenDaily*, Higgs said:

55 We are ecstatic with the results. I was nervous going into the hottest weekend of the past two years, which also featured Wimbledon, but we had the best possible results. By having all platforms working together, we generated a real buzz and put the film on the map... [She later admitted that this model of film distribution will not work for every release:] We built this campaign in a bespoke way so there is no one-size-fits-all approach. But we have taken a film that might have gone out on five screens and debuted it on 17 sites, generating mainstream coverage. It has shown that taking critical and multiplatform buzz can create a perfect storm. 55

ScreenDaily (<http://www.screendaily.com/>)

That 'perfect storm' has probably not changed the basic model of film distribution; but it has shown that certain films can now benefit from

a more diverse release strategy – something the 'digital democratisation' of film is making increasingly possible. This film, then, is a pebble, causing only minor ripples in the Hollywood lake, but at least the pebble's origins are close to home – from a field in England in fact.

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Follow it up

'Digital democratisation': the idea that digital technologies will disrupt the hegemony of the media industries, enabling the public to produce and distribute their own content and have a greater freedom of access to content.)

Film Distributors' Association: <http://www.launchingfilms.com>

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The Spirit of 13

In early 2013, director Ken Loach released a film named *The Spirit Of '45* (Sixteen Films/ Dogwoof) about the spirit of unity and community that carried people through the Second World War and, afterwards, helped create a better, more equal society. Student Lydia Kendall describes her response to the film, and involvement in a production project which encouraged young filmmakers to reflect on the aspirations and values of their own generation.

THE SPIRIT OF '45

A NEW FILM FROM KEN LOACH
IN CINEMAS FROM 15 MARCH



NATIONWIDE ONE-OFF SCREENINGS PLUS LIVE Q&A
WITH KEN LOACH AND SPECIAL GUESTS VIA SATELLITE
3PM SUNDAY 17 MARCH

SEE www.TheSpiritof45.com FOR PARTICIPATING CINEMAS

A Film Education study guide on the film *The Spirit of '45* explains:

1945 was a pivotal year in British history. The unity that carried Britain through the war allied to the bitter memories of the inter-war years led to a vision of a better society. The spirit of the age was to be our brother's and our sister's keeper. Director Ken Loach has used film from Britain's regional and national archives, alongside sound recordings and contemporary interviews, to create a rich political and social narrative. *The Spirit of '45* hopes to illuminate and celebrate a period of unprecedented community spirit in the UK, the impact of which endured for many years and which may yet be rediscovered today.

I saw the film at the Warwick Arts Centre on the day when it was followed by a live question and answer session through a satellite link. This discussion

included Ken Loach and Dot Gibson from the film, and Owen Jones, left-wing commentator and author of *Chavs: The Demonisation of the Working Classes*.

The Spirit of '45 taught me a lot about the post-war period, and life before the welfare state. In the mid 1930s, almost a third of the population's diets did not match the minimum requirements of the British Medical Association, and in 1938, girls under the age of 10 who worked for 44 hours or more every week made up one-tenth of the female workforce. However, in 1942, Liberal politician William Beveridge proposed setting up a 'welfare state', providing social security, a free National Health Service, free education, council housing and full employment. In 1944, an Education Act made education,



including secondary level education, free for all, and raised the leaving age to 15; in the same year, full employment was expected to be achieved. In 1945, Labour won the general election, and the 'Family Allowances Act' was formed, providing child benefit for the very first time in Britain. In 1948, the NHS was fully formed, bringing free healthcare for everyone – a drastic change from the 1930s, when the National Insurance Scheme had aid for only 43% of the population.

Celebrating the Welfare State

The film highlights how people came together to fight fascism and then, after the war, would not accept a return to unemployment and poverty. The film reminds us of the difference the welfare state has made to this country. What made this film so special was the fact that it opened our eyes to the importance of the welfare state, the troubles we faced to get where we are today, and the need for us to 'look to the past for a better future.'

The elders featured in the film gave witness to the post-war events of 1945, and stressed that their responsibility was to now pass on their experiences to the younger generation, in hope for a better future. Dot Gibson ends the film by confirming this, suggesting that pensioners need to talk to teenagers about the social right to welfare and support 'from the cradle to the grave' and the importance of looking out for other people in the community. She raised this again in the live discussion after the film.



Looking to the past for a better future

So what exactly did Ken mean by the 'Spirit of '45'? Arguably, the spirit was one of community, and working together to defeat from the depression the war had left them in. The message taken from the film, which somewhat inspired *The Spirit of '13*, was that we should 'look to the past for a better future', and that it was the responsibility of the older generation to pass on the ideas and the spirit of 1945, in attempt to build a fairer world for today.

The Spirit of 13 project that I took part in was a response to Loach's film, fuelling a discussion between the younger and older generations about the welfare state and an equal society and to try to find, as in Ken's film, the 'Spirit Of 13'.

Bournemouth University ran the project and sent out an invitation through social media and emails to Media teachers, who passed on the message to students. The invitation was to produce a short film, between 3 to 5 minutes, which had to be inter-generational and relate to themes explored in Ken Loach's film, but applying them to today. The films were uploaded to a Vimeo channel.

The spirit of our age is 'greed is good', and that's the challenge you've got ... the spirit of this age is unacceptable, and the only way you change it is to work together.



The project's website gave guidance on how to prepare and plan for making the film. This included a link to *The Spirit of '45* website which contains lots of information, timelines and interactive activities to help with historical knowledge of the period, a study pack on the film designed by Film Education, and some guidance for inter-generational research from the English and Media Centre. As well as seeing Ken Loach's film, it was suggested that these resources be used beforehand.

On 6th December, the makers of five selected films came together at the British Film Institute in London, with Ken Loach, The Bournemouth University team, and some of the older people who had appeared in *The Spirit of '45* to show and discuss the films that

were made. There were a range of films submitted discussing different topics, including education, community, trades unions and corporations. The under-25 age range included secondary school, college and university students.

One of the films suggested that the 'younger generation is lost', and others shared the opinion that the past seemed to be a lot brighter than the future. One film was produced in the form of a poem, raising many issues about the problems with today's society; my own film raised the question of whether trades unions are still as big a part of society nowadays as they were in the past. An interesting film about the topic of community suggested that concepts of the community had 'changed beyond recognition', and an older man featured



in the film also said:

“I’m glad I’m the age I am, I wouldn’t want to have to go through what these young people will go through when they get older, when I’m no longer here.”

After the showing of the films at the BFI, there was a discussion between the young filmmakers, people who featured in their films, and a panel consisting of Ken Loach himself, Dot Gibson and Jonathon Tomlinson from *The Spirit of ‘45* and Dorothy Allen-Pickard, representing *The Spirit of ‘13*. Julian McDougall, who ran the project, started by saying this intergenerational discussion was, he hoped, what Dot Gibson has said was needed.

We were strong as a community, we could solve problems together, the dominant idea [was] of the public good.

The role of education

There were many issues raised from the films, including the suggestion that we should beware of looking back on 1945 with nostalgia, and talking about how much better life was than it is nowadays, and instead use the ideas from this era and start making our future better.

Another issue raised was the idea that movements that were so important and had so much impact in 1945, such as the collective power of trades unions, were being forgotten by the younger

generation, who had effectively grown up without them. It was argued that the majority of young people do not actually know what a trades union really is, and why it is so important. Following on from this, a point was put forward that there was no sort of teaching about trades unions in the curriculum, and therefore the younger generation had little knowledge of them. Dot Gibson said that when the unions were first being formed, there were 14.5 million people in trades unions in the country; now only 6.5 million people in Britain are a member of a union.

When asked about the state of education nowadays, one filmmaker (whose film was called ‘*Spirit of Education*’) said that education today is being taken for granted, especially with secondary school students whose education is completely free; when free education was first introduced, people were ‘so happy to have it’.

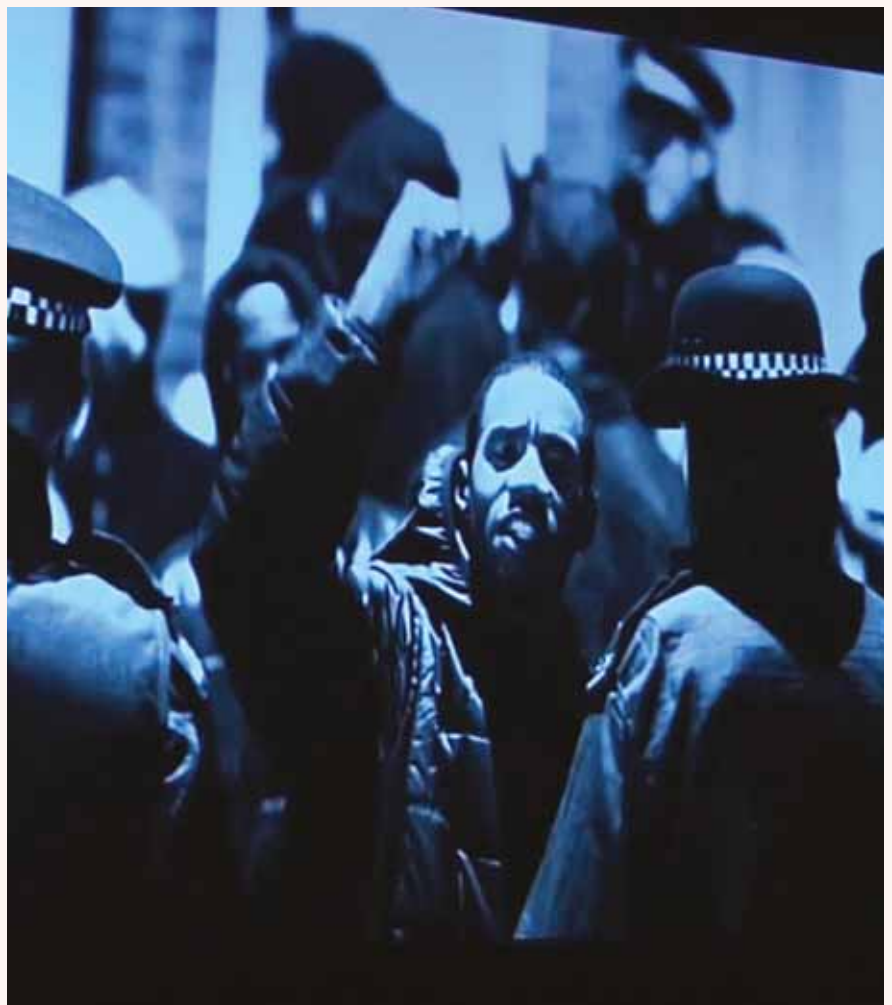
Again, the shared view that the younger generation is ‘lost’ came into play when another ‘*Spirit of*

Education’ filmmaker said that he felt he should educate people on how things have changed, because a lot of his generation doesn’t know, and education nowadays has changed so much that many people ‘don’t know where places in the world are.’

Regaining trust, working together – the true spirit of 13?

One interesting question raised during the discussion was ‘What is the spirit of 13?’. One filmmaker stated that we were in fact lacking spirit; in terms of community, where once people let their children play on the streets, now we are afraid to let them outside alone because our sense of trust and civic responsibility has been lost, and many people they interviewed said that they did not talk to the people who lived next door or anyone on their street.

Ken Loach talked about the dominant ideas of an age, and the fact that he wanted to make *Spirit of ‘45* ‘precisely because those ideas have slipped away.’ The ideas he said had been





Images from *The Spirit of '45*, *The Spirit of '13* and the Q&A at the screening



forgotten were that we were strong as a community, we could solve problems together, the dominant idea of the public good, and the belief that

“we contributed together to make the world a better place, to make the country a better place, to make your town or workplace a better place.”

No such thing as society?

He went on to talk about the spirit of our age now. He said:

“the spirit changed in 1979, when Margaret Thatcher said there was no such thing as society, and what was dominant then, and has become unthinkingly accepted now for most people, is that individual pursuit of individual interest, will lead to a greater good for everybody.”

We contributed together to make the world a better place, to make the country a better place, to make your town or workplace a better place.

He mentioned the Mayor of London,

Boris Johnson's comment that 'greed is good', and said that:

“the spirit of our age is 'greed is good', and that's the challenge you've got.”

He concluded this analysis by saying that if you were to make a film about this age, 'the only way you could find the optimism, is by finding the mechanism for change.' He suggested that the mechanism for change, just as happened back in 1945, is people working together, and that

“the spirit of this age is unacceptable, and the only way you change it is to work together.”

Members of the audience and panel responded to Ken's powerful points. Dr Jonathon Tomlinson, a GP who appeared in *The Spirit of '45* and was on the panel, said that a survey done a couple of years ago showed that people working in the NHS value it as being fair, that everyone who needs care gets it. He also pointed out that everyone in work should be satisfied that every eleventh hour, some of the money that they earn will be going to someone with an illness, and therefore there is a sense that we are all still looking after each other:

“Within the NHS, the idea that we are all looking after each other is still very strong.”

Organise – and make films!

A member of the audience followed on from Ken's point, saying that we should not only organise, but 'organise and make films.' He said that we should take advantage of the power of the media, to communicate our ideas to others and make a change on a larger scale. Ken pointed out that we need to understand *why* the spirit of the age is as it is, and that it is about the dominance of the big corporations, it is not an accident, it is not that the people who run the big corporations are just bad people – 'although they probably are!' – but it is about the system they operate.

“If you want to change the spirit of this age, which is destroying the planet and destroying your futures, you have to organise politically and you have to understand the nature of the beast you're against. You have to understand the enemy, and organise to defeat it.”

Lydia Kendall is a student at Kings Norton Girls' School, Birmingham.

The film of the screening and discussion reviewed in this article, including the five selected films, can be viewed at www.cemp.ac.uk/spiritof13

A Case Study in controversy: TV Politics



Student Harry Cunningham is interested in the representation of political issues on TV. But what happens when a supposedly impartial presenter comes up against extremist views – and indeed, should they be allowed on air at all? Read on – and then decide for yourself.

There are few things I find more amusing when I'm scouting through YouTube than watching some of the country's slimiest and most unsavoury characters defend the indefensible on serious political programmes, usually with disastrous but equally hilarious consequences. Whether it's BNP leader Nick Griffin trying to explain why he once believed the holocaust never happened during his infamous appearance on *Question Time*, or Islamic cleric Anjem Choudary desperately trying to worm his way out of condemning the views of Osama Bin Laden to Jeremy Paxman, it is often reaffirming to see such delusional 'hate figures' held up in the bright light of day and ridiculed for their sheer absurdity. But are television networks guilty of giving too much airtime to extremists? And should these people really be treated with such contempt? The BBC's *Daily* and *Sunday Politics* programme, fronted by former Fleet Street editor and News Corp mogul Andrew Neil, certainly has a penchant for these types of guests. Yet whilst

cabinet ministers, trade unionists and even the leader of the opposition have all felt the heat of Neil's intensive interviewing style, those with more extreme views tend to get slightly different treatment...

Conspiracy theorist & 'Shock Jock' Alex Jones

Conspiracy theorist Alex Jones, known for his series of highly controversial films including *The Obama Deception*, *America Destroyed by Design*, *Police State 2000* and *Martial Law 9-11: Rise of the Police State*, was invited onto *The Sunday Politics* to discuss the annual meeting of the secretive Bilderberg group: an informal and strictly private gathering of politicians, economists, business men and royalty from around the world.

Many conspiracy theorists, including Jones, have speculated that the Bilderberg group colludes with each other to write the world's tax laws with loopholes which specifically favour their own vested interests, and plots

together to legitimise and extend their control over the world. But what was clearly supposed to be a light-hearted counterpoint to a heavy interview with Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls about Labour's plans for the economy, and an attempt to give coverage to the meeting which is otherwise ignored by the media, soon turned into one of the most watched videos on YouTube, described on Twitter as 'TV Gold' and later picked up by most of the broadsheets. You can watch the clip at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YB7ZaK7Oa88>.

But what went wrong? Did Neil provoke Jones by ridiculing him? Was his treatment of him fair or should he have approached him in the same way he approached Ed Balls?

Considered an expert on the group given his own extensive coverage of the Bilderberg meeting and his presence with protestors outside the conference in London, Jones was invited onto the show alongside *The Times* columnist, David Aaronovitch.



Neil began the discussion by introducing Jones and referring to his expertise:

“You’ve been covering the Bilderberg piece for a very long time, what have you ever found out about it?”

This is a valid question, as Neil’s interviews are usually heavily based on evidence, with Neil producing a fact or figure in the hope the guest will defend it with their own research. But immediately Jones launched into a tirade of un-related assertions and shocking revelations.

In just a few short minutes Jones told Neil that he believes the Bilderberg group and its architect Prince Bernard (the husband of former Dutch Queen Juliana and grandfather of the current King Willem-Alexander) is responsible for the presence of hydrofluoric acid in tap water (Jones briefly referenced

an unnamed Harvard study which apparently shows this caused a 7% rise in bone cancer); the Euro, which he says was originally a Nazi German plan to take over countries economically; and the Lockheed bribery scandal of 1971. Perhaps it could be argued here that Neil should have probed some of these assertions, and asked for specific evidence that he could challenge. But with such a barrage of accusations, it is hard to see how this would have been possible. Instead Neil made a sarcastic remark and turned to David Aaronovitch:

“So now we know Bilderberg has given us the Euro.”

As the interview continued and Jones became more irate, claiming that the FBI had been tapping his phone lines and had implicitly threatened to kill him, Neil struggled to keep control of the show, and had to ask him to let



David Aaronovitch speak several times before saying forcefully:

“No, shut up for the moment.”

Some viewers had complained about Neil’s use of ‘Shut up’ – but it’s hard to see what else he could have said.

The impartiality must be adequate and appropriate to the output, taking account of the subject and nature of the content, the likely audience expectation...

The final straw came as Aaronovitch went to make what sounded like a very interesting point about how the internet had changed people’s perceptions about conspiracy theories; but he was cut off by a visibly distressed, almost unhinged Jones, who now completely lost control and started shouting, leading Neil to proclaim:

“You are the worst person I’ve ever interviewed.”

He then attempted to end the interview; but Jones continued to shout over him and Neil’s reaction was to admit to his viewers that ‘we have an idiot on the show today’, before using hand gestures to suggest Jones was mentally unstable.

Professional or partial?

It was this in particular that is questionable. It’s useful here to refer to the BBC’s Editorial Guidelines to see whether Neil did break due impartiality or behave less than professionally (key aspects of what the BBC stands for). As the BBC is a public service provider, funded by the taxpayer, it is regulated by its own guidelines set out by the BBC Trust rather than by Ofcom which regulates independent broadcasters. Regulation 4.4.13 stipulates:

“Our audiences should not be able to tell from BBC output the personal prejudices of our journalists or news and current affairs presenters on matters of public policy, political or industrial controversy, or on ‘controversial subjects’ in any other area.”

While it is clear that Neil’s remarks made plain his views on Jones as a person – that he thinks he is an ‘idiot’ and that he had found him incredibly difficult to interview – viewers could not tell whether he supported or

disagreed with Jones’ views. The hand gestures, however, blur this line slightly. In suggesting that Jones was mad, it could be argued that Neil was implicitly telling his viewers that Jones was mad because of his views. But this is a matter of opinion, since it could just as easily be argued that Neil was implying Jones was mad not because of his views but because of his outlandish behaviour on the show.

We have an idiot on the show today.

But given Jones’ reaction to the interview, we have to ask why the BBC or Neil decided Jones would be an appropriate guest on the show to begin with. His previous interviews had been well publicised, in particular his heated showdown with Piers Morgan on American network CNN. In fact, so enraged was Jones by Morgan’s suggestion that the American gun laws should be amended that he launched into a rant of epic proportion that saw Morgan, like Neil, almost completely shouted down. It wasn’t so much a debate as an unstoppable tirade, in which Jones once again recounted many of the vast and seemingly unrelated conspiracies he believes in.

The answer came when Neil defended his interview with Jones on the BBC’s *Newsnight* programme. He argues:

“[Jones] is regarded by a lot of people who believe Bilderberg to be a conspiracy to be their spokesperson. Programmes have to take risks



and I think it was interesting [...] this shows you what can happen in a culture where people just shout at each other, and so much of American media now is people shouting at each other [...] if you want a lesson on the road Britain probably shouldn’t be going that’s a good six minutes to watch.”

Although the programme did indeed raise some interesting points about the differences between American and British television, it was hardly a risk. In fact the outcome was almost inevitable.

Muslim Cleric and former leader of Islam 4UK Anjem Choudary

In 2010 Neil interviewed radical Muslim Cleric Anjem Choudary. At the time his organisation Islam 4UK had just been banned under the Terrorism Act of 2000. Choudary had also come to prominence that year for a planned march through Royal Wootton Bassett during the funeral parade of British soldiers killed in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. Choudary wrote letters to the parents of all the dead soldiers claiming that the war was unjust





and said his march was supposed to highlight what he saw as the unjust killing of innocent civilians and Muslims in illegally occupied territory.

What is different from the way in which Neil handled Alex Jones is that in this interview he does not give Choudary a chance to engage in a reasonable line of questioning. Neil clearly articulates his utter contempt for Choudary right from the start, jibing at him:

“So you got banned and now you’re never off the TV screens, you must be laughing all the way to your social security?”

This is interesting because it seems to suggest Neil feels that Choudary has been offered too much airtime; yet if he believes this is the case, why has he allowed him on the show? Although Neil does make some valid points about the hypocrisy of Choudary claiming benefits whilst attacking the values of a Western democracy, and of Choudary trying to insinuate that the banning of his group meant Britain doesn’t really allow freedom of speech when, as Neil points out, he is ‘living it out now’.

Throughout the interview Neil continues to show his utter contempt for Choudary and his organisation in an unprofessional manner, saying of Islam 4UK ‘Did it exist anyway or was it just a figment of your imagination and a few mates?’ Having cynically suggested Choudary will just re-group, Neil then jokingly asking viewers to think of a new name for his organisation. At one point Choudary complains about Neil’s



line of questioning arguing that:

“I think many people watching this interview will say ‘why can’t we get to the real issues here?’”

Impartial or incendiary?

Indeed this inability to take Choudary seriously raises interesting questions once again about the nature of impartiality. The BBC has a duty to due impartiality but not impartiality itself. Due impartiality, as defined in the BBC’s editorial guidelines (section 4), means

“the impartiality must be adequate and appropriate to the output, taking account of the subject and nature of the content, the likely audience expectation...”

In this sense perhaps it could be argued it would be wrong of Neil to maintain his impartiality here, when it’s clearly not appropriate; most, if not all, reasonable viewers of a programme dedicated to politics would disagree with Choudary’s abhorrent views, and it would be wrong of the BBC to allow them to go unchecked.

But if Choudary’s views are so abhorrent and so self-evidently ludicrous that they are not worthy of proper scrutiny, why bother giving him airtime in the first place? This is a question that has been asked in parliament by Lady Warsi and by Ofcom more recently following Choudary’s connection with the death of Drummer Lee Rigby in May 2013. For Choudary is seen by many as responsible for

radicalising Michael Adebolajo, convicted of the murder of Rigby. When he was interviewed on Channel 4, BBC and ITV he refused to condemn what had happened.

In conclusion, I think that while the likes of Anjem Choudary and Alex Jones always make for good telly, sometimes it can feel as if they are on the air more than politicians with seats in parliament. While it’s an important part of a modern and progressive society that we accept that television, and the BBC in particular, must reflect everyone’s views even if we find them repulsive, I think inviting these sorts of people on so much is not particularly useful and can at times give voice to concerns from people like Alex Jones who believe the media is just a propaganda arm of the government. Many channels seem to feel the need to justify the regular appearances of extremists by visibly laying into them on air. So it will certainly be interesting to see the outcome of Ofcom’s report into whether Anjem Choudary has been given too much airtime.

Harry Cunningham has freelanced for The Leicester Mercury and Writers’ Forum Magazine. He currently studies English at Loughborough University.

Follow him on Twitter: @harrycunningham

Glass Explorer Edition

Developer pre-order for US-based IO attendees



GOOGLE GLASS: A CASE STUDY IN GLOBALISATION

The launch of Google Glass offers the opportunity to explore many of the themes and debates around the impact of digital technologies in an online age. Matthew Kaufman explores the hopes and techno-panics generated by this literally mind-boggling new development.

If you haven't already heard about the forthcoming release of Google's latest product, then let me be the first to inform you about Glass. Glass is the highly-anticipated hardware that's a pair of glasses, which, in effect, acts as your mobile phone and provides you with all the functions that you'd expect, but also allows you to utilise a range of new features which are accessed

through voice interaction and a display screen located on one of the lenses.

Google, part of Google Inc, is an American based multinational company specialising in internet-related services with headquarters located in California and over 70 offices around the world.

Google is, of course, now a household name, and – as with other generic terms such as 'Coke' meaning all types of cola, and 'Hoover' used to refer to all types vacuum cleaner – it can be argued that the expression 'I'll Google it' is now an umbrella term to mean 'I'll go and look it up online'.



Amongst some of its already popular services, such as the blog-sharing site Blogger and the telecommunications corporation Motorola, Google also provides three services which regularly attract over one billion users: its search engine, the file sharing site YouTube, and the location service Google Maps.

If any further evidence of Google's dominance was required, then it should be noted that in August 2013 all Google online services were unavailable for approximately five minutes (the reason for this is still unknown). Soon after, analytics figures were published: due to this small crash, all web-traffic around the world dropped by a staggering 40% – which highlights the massive global market that Google tailors to.

At present it's reported that approximately 2.2 billion people around the world are connected to the internet. This means, however, that there's an approximate 4.8 billion people who remain offline. In June 2013 this was something that Google attempted to rectify by launching Project Loon – large balloons fitted with radio antenna devices which were released into the air to float above



rural areas of New Zealand without access to the internet, thus offering the people living there the ability to do this for the first time. If these trials prove successful, the intention is to launch thousands more balloons over other areas of the world that don't have internet access, such as parts of Africa and East Asia.

This mention of the spread of services across the world moves us towards a look at globalisation and the lines of debate that then emerge.

With any discussion of globalisation, we find at the very least there are two viewpoints that can usually be heard. The first comes from those who view globalisation as a positive event, and highlight some of the benefits it can bring. The second comes from those who look at any of the possible negative outcomes that might result.

Opportunities...

So what positive outcomes can be identified from people across the globe



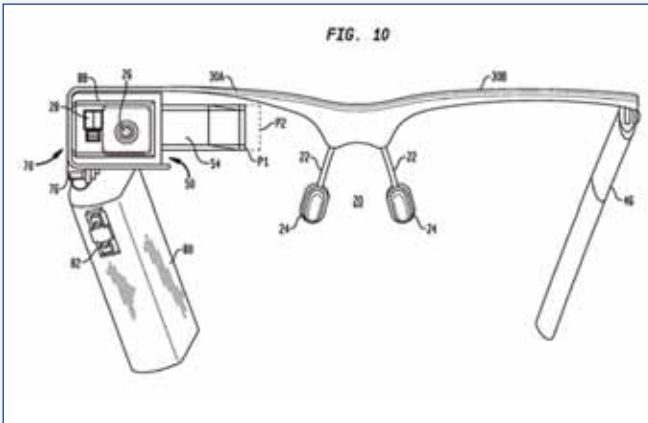
suddenly being able to go online for the first time, thanks to Google? In a sense the world becomes more accessible, and people are enriched by getting to know and understand it better. Increased choice and opportunities empower people, while access to information can enhance not only the ability to make informed decisions but even the democratic process.

...or limitations?

However, if we consider that all of these benefits are provided by one of just a small number of corporations, this leads to a discussion about the concentration of ownership, and the possibility that smaller companies have little or no hope of staking a claim on the global market as they won't be able to compete. This means that the previously mentioned 'choice' we talked about so positively is in effect provided by a limited number of companies who

dominate the global market, and, in the main, only distribute the majority of the world's wealth amongst themselves. A quick look at the FT500 for 2013 confirms this: it shows Google placed in at number 15 on the list. Incidentally it's also worth noting that of the top 10 companies featured on the list, eight of these are American owned.

So Glass will be with consumers soon, and as we look at the buzz it's already generating, we can continue to assess the potential positives and



negatives that its arrival will bring. Demonstrations of Glass have shown wearers following directions for their journey on a Sat Nav style display seen on the lens, as well as capturing footage of what it is they're looking at whilst sharing it live with friends and family through the fitted camera on the side of the headset.

So what's the cost?

This example of technological convergence comes in five colours, and boasts of a durable and flexible frame. Although it's hard to see how Glass won't be a huge hit once it becomes available on general release, the currently estimated price tag of a thousand pounds may put some people off. But with competition from other companies such as Microsoft and Apple already being rumoured, and the Japanese wireless phone network giant NTT DoCoMo having already released their own version named 'Intelligent Glass', this price may come down significantly.

Dystopian fantasy – or imminent reality?

Initially, having heard of the proposed release of Glass, I began to think

along the lines of a dystopian future reminiscent of scenes from the *Matrix* trilogy or other similar films that depict the general populace alienated from each other and hooked up to a host of machines controlled by a large and powerful unseen source. While this viewpoint may seem farfetched, I discovered that some of what I had imagined was in fact being echoed in some of the commentary surrounding the impending arrival of Glass.

A **moral panic** is a term coined by the sociologist Stanley Cohen as a way of highlighting concerns stirred up by the media in regards to an event within society. This concern is often related to a change that some have viewed as a threat to the rest of us as a whole. Often the threat is exaggerated, and done with the intent of selling newspapers or other similar media texts.

By extension, a **techno-panic** is therefore a moral panic that centres on fears regarding specific contemporary technology or technological activity. Some of the dialogue regarding Glass and its release could be viewed as both moral and techno-panics. Questions are already being asked as to whether people wearing Glass may start to

become less engaged in conversations with each other, because of the uncertainty that the person you're talking to is actually paying attention to you and isn't preoccupied with surfing the net – thus creating the sense of alienation that I spoke of above.

The birth of a techno-panic: privacy issues

The main concerns with the advent of Glass however relate to issues of **privacy**. If people using Glass are effectively able to walk around and film everything that they're looking at, how are the public to know if they're being filmed without having given their permission? This isn't helped by reports that Glass can record all the sound that it picks up, and will also come with facial recognition software – meaning that individuals could be picked out from a crowd of faces with ease. Dialogue around these concerns has led to the coining of the term 'Google agent' to embody the panic that all we say and do may soon be being recorded by anyone nearby wearing a headset.

With regard to moral panics, it's documented that, once the initial panic has been spread, there then follows

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Google Glass: release date, news and features

UPDATED Are Google's glasses more than just a gimmick?

By Stuart Houghton November 7th

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Does Project Glass represent the next big step in mobile communications?

With so much new information surrounding Google Glass, we have completely updated this 'what you need to know' feature. Enjoy!

Many of us spend a significant portion of our day glued to our smartphones, or to other connected devices. Reading social media or checking out the weather or otherwise dipping into the wealth of data at our disposal will typically

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a move to calm the audience and restore some sort of order. This can be referred to as the **resolution** stage, and we are already seeing evidence of this happening with regards to Glass. Google has stated that a red light will show whenever any type of recording is taking place. Also, some establishments such as bars and restaurants in America have already announced that they intend to prohibit anyone wearing Glass headsets within their premises.

Glass datamining?

However, further concerns have emerged which claim that, through the headset, Google will be able to see what the wearer sees, and commentary around this highlights some of the negative consequences this may bring. For example, if we were to walk into a supermarket and begin looking through the choices available for a certain product, what products did we look at first? What products didn't we look at? This kind of information is very valuable to certain marketers, companies and organisations; and it's common knowledge that Google have a history of selling their customer data and statistics to other interested parties. Whether some related commentary from Google will emerge and therefore resolve this panic, we will just have to wait and see.

Liberation or determinism?

Whenever a new form of technology is released, and especially one as



potentially popular as Glass, there are inevitably going to be those who are split on the pros and cons of such a device. Along with the techno-panics that we're seeing, there are also those that point to the benefits. With Glass, we are not simply expecting to experience new ways of using features such as surfing the internet, making calls and videoing; Sergey Brin the co-owner/founder of Google, hastens to point out that the very nature of using a mobile phone is changing. He suggests that using a handset to do all these things should now seem outdated, and argues that having to pull out your phone to send a text, answer a call, record footage or surf the internet is in itself restrictive and binds the user to the physical requirements needed to carry out all of these tasks.

Glass will change all this and allow the user to do all these things and more without the need physically to interact with any hardware. Your hands will be free, and you won't need to be looking at your phone as you perform each of these activities. So in this sense Glass can be seen to be part of **technological determinism**, because it will liberate the user to such an extent that it will change the very way that we interact with each other and the environment around us.

Potentially then there are a number of things to be both worried and excited about in regards to Google Glass and its approaching release. As time goes on, we'll see which of these become the more relevant. But as students of

the media we are undoubtedly able to agree that Glass will cause large changes, and attract a lot of attention from consumers around the world.

Matthew Kaufman teaches A Level Media at Worcester College of Technology.



Glossary:

Alienated: a feeling of isolation or estrangement.

Ownership concentration: is a process whereby progressively fewer individuals or organisations control increasing shares of the mass media.

Democracy: means that all the people should be able to have their say in one way another in everything that affects their lives.

Dystopian: where everything is as bad as it possibly can be.

FT 500: provides an annual snapshot of the world's largest companies.

Globalisation: the process by which businesses or other organisations develop international influence, or start operating on an international scale.

Moral panic (Stanley Cohen): media-generated public outcry against a group, community or practice considered threatening and/or dangerous.

Multinational: a large based organisation with branches in different countries.

Resolution: the stage during a moral panic where an attempt to regain social control is attempted.

Techno-panic (Marwick 2008): a moral panic that centres around fears regarding a specific contemporary technology.

Technological convergence: the trend of technologies to merge into new technologies that bring together a range of media.

Technological determinism: argues that technology dictates or determines the nature of society.



Follow it up

<http://www.policymic.com/articles/26992/google-glass-release-date-and-price-google-glass-is-coming-in-2014>

http://www.ted.com/talks/sergey_brin_why_google_glass.html

<http://www.techdirt.com/blog/innovation/articles/20130503/12261122940/moral-panic-over-google-glass-white-house-petition-asks-to-ban-them-to-prevent-indecent-public-surveillance.shtml>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2295004/Google-Glass-Goggles-sinister-glasses-turn-world-search-giants-spies.html>

<http://www.baekdal.com/opinion/google-glasses-and-the-technopanic>

<http://news.softpedia.com/news/Google-Has-Three-1-Billion-User-Sites-with-Two-More-on-the-Way-361075.shtml>

<http://www.theinquirer.net/inquirer/news/2289637/google-goes-down-for-five-minutes-web-traffic-plunges-40-percent>

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<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/articles/479117/20130615/google-project-loon-new-zealand-internet-balloons.htm>

<http://www.ft.com/indepth/ft500>



A Digital Technologies Case Study: **Primewire.ag**

Primewire.ag makes an excellent case study for both the Audience and Institution section of OCR's AS G324 exam, the A2 topics in the G325 Critical Perspectives exam, and AQA's MEST3 topic 'The Impact of New/Digital Media'. Matt Johns explains how this media-streaming site works, and the legal and ethical issues it raises.

We all know about BitTorrent and peer-to-peer file sharing. It remains the internet's most prolific form of media piracy, but in the last two or three years there have been free-to-watch, unauthorised media streaming websites.

Access to an unauthorised stream of a film or TV show is most often gained via a website known as an 'aggregator', or linking site, which allows users to search for content – the latest episode of *Game of Thrones*, for example – then choose from a list of links to file-hosting sites where that media is stored and made available to anyone who clicks the link.

One of the UK's most popular linking sites for streaming films and TV shows is Primewire.ag. This website makes an excellent case study for both the Audience and Institution section of OCR's G324 exam and the topics of Media in the Online Age and Media Regulation in the G325 Critical

Perspectives exam. It is equally relevant to AQA's MEST3 topic 'The Impact of New/Digital Media'.

This case study will concentrate on four questions:

- What is Primewire.ag and how does it operate?
- What are the legal and regulatory implications of its existence?
- What impact is it having on the film and TV industries?
- What impact is it having on audience behaviours and expectations?

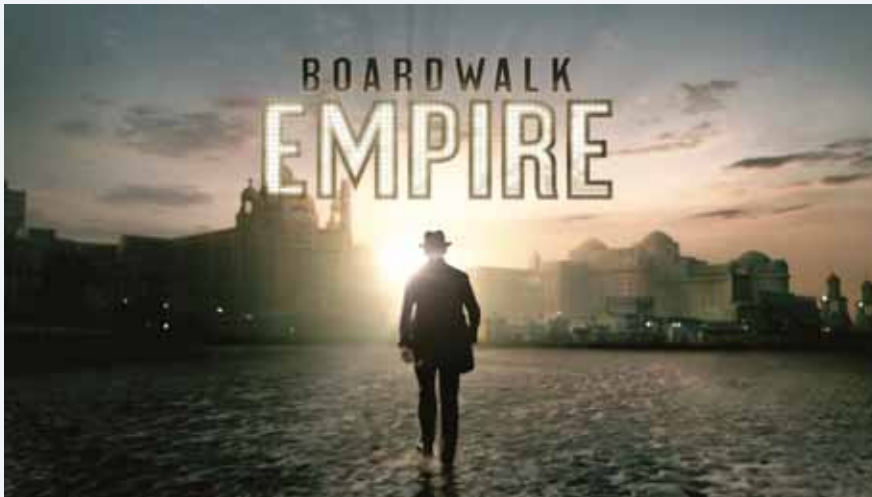
What is Primewire.ag?

Primewire.ag, reportedly hosted in Estonia, is an aggregator of video streaming websites. In other words it offers users the ability to search for films and TV shows, then provides them with a list of links that forwards them to another website, streaming the content to their browser without the need to download it to the hard

drive. Primewire.ag does not host any copyrighted content themselves, but makes it easy for audiences to find it.

Primewire.ag (as it is called at the time of writing) has gone through a number of identity changes in its short history. It started out in 2009 as LetMeWatchThis.ch and later changed to 1Channel.ch. In May 2013 the website announced its 1Channel domain had been 'hijacked', and directed users to Primewire.ag. The reasons for all these domain name changes remains unclear, but is most likely due to a combination of hackers and competitors trying to steal a slice of their advertising revenue, and the lack of official protection for organisations such as themselves, who are basically operating outside of the law.

Primewire.ag is funded by advertising. Little in the way of officially published information exists on advertising revenues for Primewire.ag; but one



unsubstantiated source published on speedydeletion.wikia.com suggested it may be as much as \$21,130 per day – which is easy to imagine given that the site receives around 4 million hits per day and is ranked in the UK as the 216th most popular website (some seven places above LoveFilm.com).

The links appearing on the website are provided by other users. You may wonder what motivates some users to spend time providing links to films and TV shows, and the answer is very

simple: money. A user can either simply find an existing stream of a film or TV show on one of the 'cloud storage' streaming sites such as PutLocker or Sharesix, or they can upload it there themselves, then place a link to it on Primewire.ag. At that point, the user 'owns' the link, and they can collect a small share of the advertising revenue generated from that page.

Generally that income isn't much. According to Torrentfreak.com, payment works out to about \$1 or \$2

per 1000 views of a film or TV show. Whilst this sounds barely worth it, these \$1s or \$2s can add up for a dedicated link-sharer. Torrentfreak.com interviewed one such user who allegedly owns links to 30,000 films and TV shows spread across 12 different file-hosting sites, and claimed to be making a good living from it.

What are the legal and regulatory implications of Primewire.ag?

From an industry perspective, the owners and administrators of the file-hosting sites to which Primewire.ag links are quite clearly engaging in film and TV piracy, and operating illegally. This stands up in court, and the case of Megaupload.com is a perfect example.

Megaupload.com was a huge file-hosting site which was ostensibly a means for internet users to store and share files, much like YouTube or Dropbox. In reality it was a notorious host of copyrighted media, which appeared in almost any search on video stream aggregators such as Primewire.ag. In January 2012 the US Justice Department shut down Megaupload.com, arrested its operators, charged them with violating piracy laws, and seized around £32 million in assets.

The law regarding websites such as Primewire.ag, which do not actually host any content themselves but 'merely' link to it, is equally well-precedented. In December 2012 Richard O'Dwyer a 24-year-old student from Sheffield, and founder of video stream aggregator TVShack.net, was successfully extradited to the US, convicted of breaking US copyright laws, and ordered to pay £20,000 in compensation to the victims of his copyright theft. Under US law he might have faced five years in prison. This action was brought by the MPAA (Motion Picture Association of America); and if they seem single-minded in their 'take no prisoners' approach to copyright infringement, then the UK organisation FACT (Federation Against Copyright Theft) are just as determined.

In May 2012 Anton Vickerman, founder of video stream linking site SurfTheChannel.com, was taken to court by FACT and was also successfully

Images throughout the article are from: Game of Thrones, Broadwalk Empire House of Cards, Orange is the New Black and Ghost Protocol



prosecuted. What was interesting about his case, however, was that the Crown Prosecution Service had earlier refused to prosecute him under copyright laws. It seems the case against him was too weak. Instead FACT took Vickerman to court for 'conspiracy to commit fraud', essentially claiming that he had defrauded copyright owners out of their rightful share of the website's profits (estimated at £300,000 per year). He was convicted on two counts of fraud and sentenced to four years in prison.

What Vickerman's case suggests is that copyright law in the UK is relatively powerless to act on video-linking sites, even if hosted in this country. But this is not stopping anti-piracy groups from successfully targeting these sites for closure or some other form of censorship. Until recently another linking website, Movie4k.to, was the UK's most popular aggregator of unauthorised streaming films and TV shows. However, in May 2013, under pressure from both the MPAA and FACT, all the major ISPs in the UK were compelled, by court order, under the Digital Economy Act 2010, to block Movie4k.to. Rather than being shut down at source, it was simply



blocked to the end-user, which some would argue is a form of internet censorship, or at least a 'creeping' form of regulation. If you can't legally shut it down, you can at least legally block it from view.

The anti-piracy groups are coming for the other sharing sites as well. In October 2013 the MPAA officially furnished the US Government with a list of 27 'rogue' websites engaged in piracy, including Primewire.ag, in the hope that they will appeal to the countries hosting them to take action to close them down. This highlights the greatest barrier to internet regulation. Whilst countries such as the UK and

the US may be tough on copyright infringement, other countries may not be, or just don't have the resources to invest in tackling someone else's problem.

Are you a criminal?

From an audience perspective it is difficult to say if streaming films and TV shows on your home computer is strictly an act of copyright theft. On the 'Types of Copyright Theft' page of the FACT website, unauthorised streaming is mentioned, but only to say that the websites offering the copyrighted content are illegal. Last year a spokesperson for Rights Alliance, Sweden's top anti-piracy organisation, admitted that, as the law stands, the act of streaming cannot be construed as a criminal offence. In this respect there is a real legal incentive for prolific downloaders of content to switch to streaming via sites such as Primewire.ag. A moral question does remain: just because streaming can't be traced as easily as downloading, and there are currently no sanctions for it, does that mean it's OK to do it? Judging by the view counts on Primewire.ag, hundreds of thousands seem to think so.

WATCH FREE MOVIES ONLINE

What impact is Primewire.ag having on the film and TV Industries?

The obvious answer, and one repeatedly cited by the anti-piracy groups, is the loss of revenue. From their perspective every view of a stream equals a lost cinema ticket, Blu-ray sale or subscription to a legitimate source such as Netflix or Amazon. We can see how this might pan out with a specific example.

If we take one of 2012's most illegally downloaded films, *Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol* (reportedly 8.5 million torrent file downloads) and search for it on Primewire.ag, it produces a list of 26 file hosting sites and presents a total view count of about 305,000. Small potatoes compared with the downloads. But if we assume that each of those 305,000 views is a lost cinema ticket or Blu-ray sale, we can estimate the loss of revenue to the industry to be somewhere between £2 million and £4.5 million, which is somewhat less insignificant.

The problem with this calculation is the assumption that everyone who streamed the film via Primewire.ag would have gone to the cinema or bought the Blu-ray or otherwise paid to watch it, and that is difficult to prove. Indeed, it seems fairer to assume that not every download or viewing of a stream means lost revenue to the industry. With UK cinema admissions steadily rising, it seems difficult to argue that the UK film exhibition industry is suffering from the impact of piracy.

Regarding the television industry, the impact is even harder to determine. The rise in popularity of legitimate sources

of on-demand content such as Netflix has certainly captured some of those who would otherwise have turned to illegal downloading or streaming. It seems demand for the legitimate sources of TV content is high enough for the producers of popular shows such as *The Walking Dead* or *Boardwalk Empire* not to notice the impact of piracy. In fact it has been argued that TV piracy actually raises the profile of certain shows.

The third season finale of *Game of Thrones*, for example, made history as the most illegally-downloaded TV show of all time, with a record-breaking 'swarm' of 170,000 users sharing it simultaneously, a million downloads in just one day, and total downloads topping 5 million. A quick look on Primewire.ag shows that particular episode to be live on 32 file hosting sites with a total of around 235,000 views at the time of writing. Far from complaining about this level of piracy, however, the show's director David Petrarca publicly observed that the record-breaking level of piracy for *Game of Thrones* contributed to the 'cultural buzz' surrounding it, and would ultimately lead to more paying subscriptions to its parent channel HBO.

You might have thought that HBO's business executives would take a different view; but programming president Michael Lombardo told *Entertainment Weekly* that the piracy of *Game of Thrones* was a compliment and did not negatively impact on DVD sales.

Looking at it objectively, perhaps the greatest impact of free-to-stream unauthorised content is a certain levelling of the playing field. The business of high-profile television drama is these days one driven by

exclusivity. It is best exemplified by Netflix's decision to go from simply exhibiting the work of others, to financing and producing their own hit TV series such as *House of Cards* and *Orange is the New Black*. The idea is that audiences, whether in the UK or anywhere else, cannot legitimately access these programmes without a Netflix subscription because they are not on Sky or HBO or any other premium service. For just a few pounds per month, the quality of these shows alone can easily justify the cost. Many will do exactly that: pay the Netflix subscription for, say, *House of Cards*, and then keep paying once they get used to having access to their other content. What Primewire.ag does is erode that exclusivity by allowing anyone anywhere in the world the ability to watch without paying, or keep paying Sky, and just use Primewire.ag to watch *House of Cards*.



What impact is Primewire.ag having on audience behaviours and expectations?

The prime motivator for audiences to access unauthorised streams of content is immediacy. For example, in the UK the only way to watch *The Walking Dead* is on Fox HD, which requires a subscription to Sky. The problem for UK audiences is that this runs about one whole season behind the US schedule. In this way the programme is a victim of its own success; audiences just can't get it fast enough.

In the case of *Game of Thrones* and its international audience, the problem is more to do with getting any legitimate access whatsoever. In the UK, HBO has partnered with Sky to bring it to British audiences; but in many other parts of the world the only legitimate option is the DVD box set, which is costly and available quite significantly behind the TV schedule.

With the film industry, the time-lag between theatrical release and home exhibition release, whether it's Blu-ray, digital rental or download, is the space into which piracy steps. Whilst the shoddy quality of a camcorder recording is something only a few die-hard fans will endure for the sake of seeing the film before anyone else, there are other time-delays which will be exploited. The Blu-ray release schedule of *Man of Steel* provides a good example. In the US it was released on 12 November 2013; in the UK Blu-rays of the film were only available on 2 December, almost three weeks after the US. Studios might do well to consider every illegal download and stream of *Man of Steel* in that time as revenue lost not to piracy, but to a poor release strategy.

In the online age audiences expect media to be available on all platforms the moment it is released on one; and largely this expectation is met, if not through legitimate means then through piracy. It's not about getting a product free, it's about getting a product *now*. The overwhelming attitude of audiences seems to be that they recognise the illegality of websites such as Primewire.ag; they may even consider the downloading



or unauthorised streaming of films and TV shows as a type of theft; but they do not believe they are doing anything wrong.

In 2009 *The Guardian* reported a study which found that people who illegally downloaded music were also ten times more likely than those who didn't to buy music. The same could be the case for those who stream and download TV and films. The smaller numbers of those who stream via Primewire.ag compared to those who download the torrent files suggest that unauthorised streaming is more of a casual or occasional form engagement. The audience who is watching an unauthorised stream of a film on their tablet on the train home from work could well end up watching it again at home via their Netflix account, or at least promoting it to their friends, who then pay for it.

In conclusion, Primewire.ag, and other sites like it, exist due to audience demand. They are operating in a media landscape which finds the big media companies clinging to an old business model based on controlling the way in which audiences consume their products – first the theatrical release, then the DVD release, then digital rental, then broadcast television. Each stage is designed to squeeze as much profit from a product as possible. The trouble is that technology has left this model behind. The internet allows any media product to be available on all platforms the moment it is available on one. Audiences have embraced the technology, and if the producers and distributors of the media products they consume have not, then, as far as the audience is concerned, that's their loss.

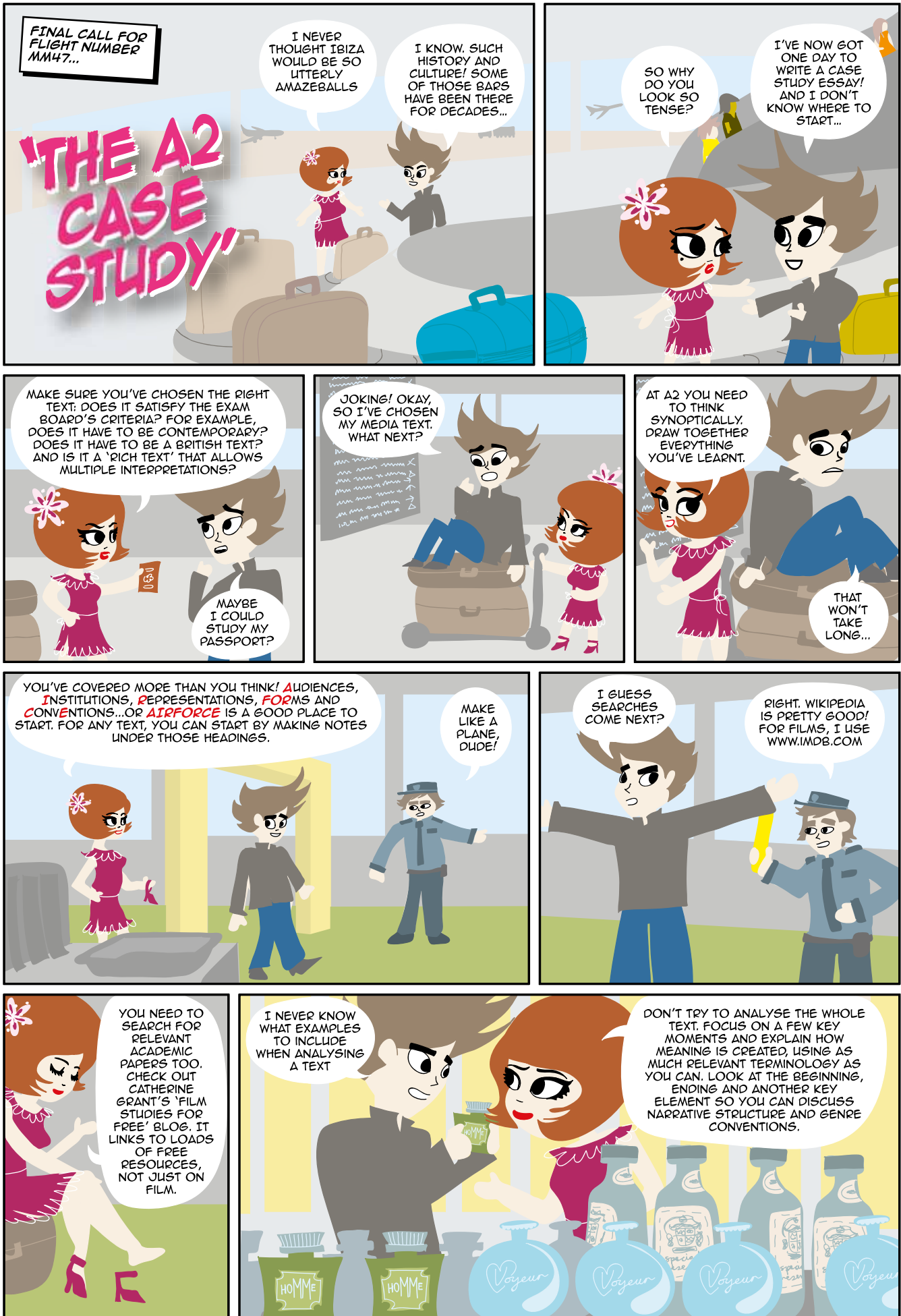
It has been argued that it is not piracy that is killing the movie industry – it is studio greed.

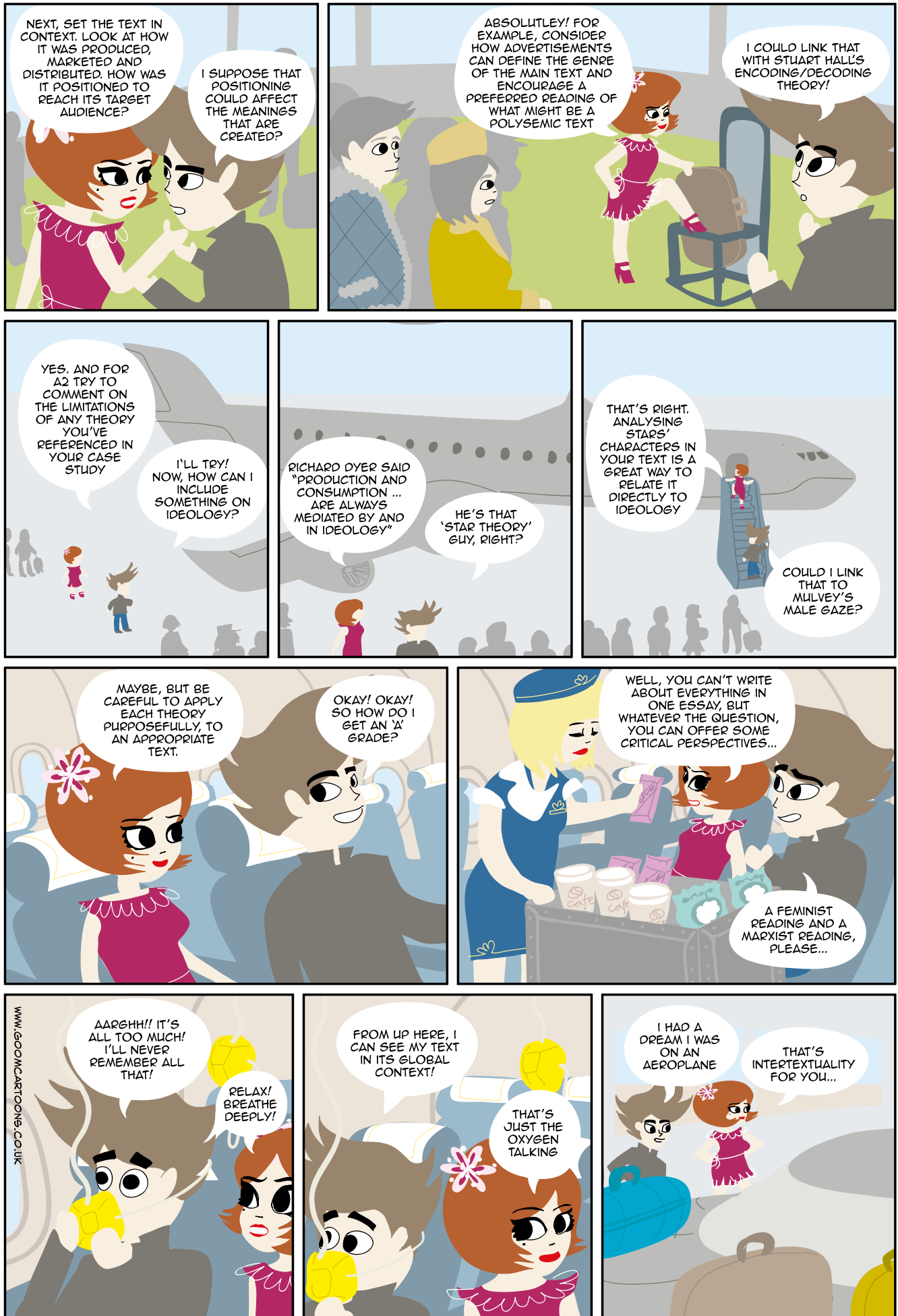
Kevin Spacey best sums up the idea in a speech reported by the *Guardian* last year:

“I believe [...] we can open a movie online, in the movie theatres, on DVD on the same day, that is probably where it is leading. That would be a huge bite out of piracy; if it is all available, no one is stealing it before someone else gets it.”

In the meanwhile it is safe to assume the anti-piracy groups will continue their offensive on the peer-to-peer networks and unauthorised streaming sites. But the pirates outnumber the authorities. When a website is shut down, a proxy or mirror site usually springs up the same day. What Primewire.ag and other unauthorised streaming websites represent is perhaps more powerful than the function they perform. They represent an audience-driven shift in how media are consumed. The audience are not thieves, the audience are not pirates; they are merely consumers, most of whom would be willing to pay for the service they are already using, if only it was offered at a reasonable price by legitimate providers.

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BEYOND THE FRENCH NEW WAVE: BRAZIL, CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND HUNGARY

They're New Wave – but are they Old Hat? Nick Lacey takes another look at some of the less well-known 'new wave' movements of the 50s and 60s which have influenced the work of directors such as Tarantino and Scorsese.



Images are from Black God, White Devil, Deus e o Diabo, A Blonde in Love, The Red and the White

For most young people, history is something that happened a long time ago. For old folks, history becomes, increasingly, something you remember. Thus, when you're young, some recently released films can seem incredibly original. However, for us old folk these 'incredibly original' films can often feel like movies that we first saw years ago. For example, Quentin Tarantino's movies can seem unlike anything else that's ever been made before – until, that is, you realise that he's heavily influenced by the French nouvelle vague (New Wave) of 50 years ago.

To be fair to Tarantino, he clearly acknowledged his debt to the French by naming his production company, A Band Apart, after a 1963 Jean-Luc Godard film. It is a tribute to the many extraordinary films made in France at the time, such as Truffaut's *Shoot the Pianist* (1960) and Agnes Varda's *Cleo Five to Seven* (1962), that they can still appear to be thoroughly modern. That's because, in part, many of the techniques pioneered and refined at the time, like jump cuts, are now very much part of mainstream film language.

Another French innovation that remains highly influential is the idea that the director is the author (auteur) of the film, despite the fact that filmmaking is a totally collaborative process. It has become commonplace that virtually every film now states that it's 'by' the director, seemingly forgetting the mass of other creative talents involved.

Spirit of the 60s

The 1960s (and 1968 in particular) was a time of revolution and social change. The febrile atmosphere of the decade was conducive to new ways of making films; and the New Wave, which originated in France, swept not just through Europe, but also around the world. Of course the French innovations didn't spring out of nowhere, and were themselves influenced by earlier filmmaking practices, in particular the neo-realism of Italy just after World War II which, amongst other things, emphasised location shooting rather than studio shoots. With the invention

of lightweight handheld cameras in the late 1950s, the French could suddenly very easily shoot on location without elaborate set-ups. These diverse influences converged in the groundbreaking innovations of French New Wave Cinema.

We shall consider films from Brazil, Czechoslovakia and Hungary as examples of how different cultures utilised the freedom, which the New Wave French rule-breaking had started, to produce startlingly different films.

Brazil's Cinema Novo

Glauber Rocha was the key director of the Brazilian New Wave (Cinema Novo) and *Black God, White Devil* (*Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* Brazil 1964) is his most celebrated film. It's about the desperation of the extremely poor who live in the impoverished back lands, the sertão, of north-eastern Brazil. An exploited cow herder, Manuel, kills his boss in rage and, with his wife, goes 'on the run'. First, they join a preacher, Saint Sebastian, who claims he'll lead them to a 'promised land'; then a bandit, a sort of low-rent Robin Hood (though there's not much evidence of giving to the poor), Corisco. They are pursued by Antonia das Mortes, employed by the Church to kill anyone who threatens the status quo.



Glauber Rocha's influences are many, but the French New Wave idea of 'director as author' is probably the most important. Rocha created his own Manifesto for making films: *The Aesthetics of Hunger* (you can read it here http://www.tempoglauber.com.br/english/t_estetica.html). The key element of his Manifesto was to dramatise misery and so lead the audience, who were being exploited, to fight against their oppression. Rocha, in common with filmmakers from the Third World (now called the 'developing world'), had no love for America,

since most Latin American countries suffered under US-supported military dictatorships. This was a significant break with the French 'New Wave' which, at least until Jean-Luc Godard became politicised, expressed affection for Hollywood cinema and American popular culture.



Black God, White Devil ends, like Francois Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* (*Les quatre cents coups* 1959), the seminal film of the start of the French new wave, with the protagonist reaching the sea and finding he has nowhere to go. Peter Hames (2005) points out that the Czech film *Black Peter* (*Cerný Petr* 1964) also references the end of Truffaut's film.

Czech new wave

At the same time that America was oppressing Brazil, Europe east of the 'Iron Curtain' was under Soviet control, and there were severe limits on freedom of expression. During the 1960s Czechoslovakia (which is now two distinct nations, the Czech Republic and Slovakia) sought to loosen that Soviet control by electing a more liberal and humanitarian Socialist leader, Alexander Dubček. But Dubček's 'socialism with a human face' was destroyed when the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968. Before the invasion there had been a distinct thaw in censorship; and this was evident in the Czech 'New Wave' of cinema with such films as *A Blonde in Love*, also known as *Loves of a Blonde* (*Lásky jedné plavovlásky*, 1966), director Milos Forman's follow-up to *Black Peter*.



This is a fascinating 'teen pic' that both 'universalises' the teenage (or early-20s) experience and sets it squarely in its time. The fact that government censorship was already loosening is particularly evident in the scenes where a youth union meeting is satirised, and in some scenes with relatively graphic nudity that, as one commentator at the time joked:

☞ revealed the well-kept state secret that people take off their clothes in order to go to bed with each other. ☞ (Ibid.: 115)



Being a teenager and yearning for a (sexual) relationship is the predominant narrative of most teen movies; and Czechoslovakia in the 60s was no different. In fact, the narrative drive was accentuated by the 16:1 ratio of women to men in Zruc, the home town of Andula (the 'blonde' of the title). To counteract this gender imbalance the local factory's 'social director' persuades the army to move a garrison of men to the vicinity. However, they turn out to be middle-aged reservists of little interest to Andula and her friends.

The troops' arrival is one of many comic set pieces in the film. The girls are full of hope until the balding men arrive and march to their barracks singing a ridiculous song about blood and glory. In a dance hall, three of the men bicker amongst themselves on how to pick up the girls. They try sending a waiter with a bottle of wine for them, but it's delivered to the wrong table. Writer-director Milos Forman's observes all this affectionately; he is not mocking the small town troubles of his characters.

Long conversations between characters suggest a French influence that reminded me of early Godard. However, the film is also distinctly Czech, for example a surreal necktie hanging on a tree when Andula walks through the wood for an assignation that never happens. The

dance hall scene reminded me of the one in *Billy Liar* (UK), shot three years earlier, emphasising how, in the Sixties, youth culture was becoming internationalised.

Forman cast locals, mostly non-actors, who, along with the location shooting, give the film a realist flavour, and it's not surprising that Ken Loach (see page 22) often cites it as a favourite film. Its political edge is seen when a youth union meeting of women is asked to vote for being chaste. Only Andula, hiding at the back, doesn't put up her hand, emphasising the conformism expected by the Establishment at the time. However, while she is something of a rebel, Andula is also a victim; a smooth-talking pianist betrays her. Their 'love' scene, with the recalcitrant blind, is very funny. Overall the film is suffused with a melancholy tone; it entertains but doesn't forget the pathos of young lust.

Hungarian new wave

Like Czechoslovakia, Hungary in the 50s and 60s was part of the 'eastern bloc' dominated by the Soviet Union. Like the Czechs:

☞ Hungarian film-makers [...] were eager to see the latest releases from Paris and elsewhere, and with the more relaxed and open policy at the Film Academy it was now possible for students to see most of the important new foreign films. ☞

Cunningham 2004: 102

As Cunningham points out, there were many other cultural influences on Hungarian cinema than merely the French. Indeed the Czech New Wave, set going by the French, in turn affected the Hungarians. Although Miklós Jancsó had directed films in the 1950s, it wasn't until the 'arrival' of the wave that he really hit his stride.

The Red and the White (*Csillagosok katonák* Hungary-Soviet Union 1967) was meant to be a 50th anniversary celebration of the Russian ('Red') Revolution. However, Jancsó had other ideas. What is most striking about the film is its extraordinary mise-en-scène and long tracking shots. The 'reds' are the communists whilst the 'whites' are the bourgeois (middle class) forces opposing the revolution. In a film

made from within the Soviet bloc, you'd expect that the reds would be celebrated over the whites; however Jancsó shows there are only losers in war. His steady tracking shots often appear to be more interested in the landscape than the action which seems to be happening almost accidentally in front of the camera. Characters and conflict appear and reappear, whilst the camera tracking flows on its stately way. This estranges us from the action, giving the film a distancing, Brechtian dimension that encourages us to think about what we're seeing.

Similarly, we are often unsure who is on which side, and our Hollywood-conditioned search for the 'good guys' is undercut by the cruelty, and occasionally humane actions, of both sides of the conflict.



Jancsó, who died on 31st January 2014, had a style so distinctive that he is unquestionably an auteur and, as such, was influenced by European art cinema, the films of Antonioni, Bergman and Wadja for example, as well as the French 'New Wave'.

Conclusion

Although the French New Wave remains massively influential in cinema, and on television, unsurprisingly the way it impacted on other nations was heavily influenced by the culture, political context and history of those particular nations. In order to fully appreciate these films we need to understand the conditions in which they were made. But then again, that's true of all cinema – including our own.

Nick Lacey teaches Film Studies at Benton Park School, Leeds and is the author of several Film and Media textbooks.

Follow it up

Cunningham, J. 2004. *Hungarian Cinema: from coffee house to multiplex* (Wallflower Press)

Hames, P. 2005. *The Czechoslovak New Wave* (Wallflower Press)



INNER CITY VS OUTER SPACE

ATTACK THE BLOCK B-MOVIE OR BLOCKBUSTER?

The British film industry may not be well known for its blockbusters but with a long tradition of science fiction on film and television, *Attack the Block* brought big thrills to a very British setting. Pete Turner gets tooled up.

Attack the Block is a low-budget British film that takes the science fiction genre and slaps it right back down to earth in a South London council estate. With mugging youths as its anti-heroes, Joe Cornish's film makes for a fascinating case study of how British films can emulate Hollywood blockbusters and B-movies, while still remaining distinctly British. Cornish has said he was inspired by directors like Steven Spielberg, John Carpenter and Ridley Scott when writing and directing his first feature, and his film sits between British film, Hollywood blockbuster and B-movie.

Attack the Block had a low budget compared to Hollywood blockbusters like *Prometheus*, but a much bigger budget than the smallest independent films such as *The Blair Witch Project*. \$13 million (around £8 million) was invested in the production of *Attack the Block*; but it only made nearly \$6 million at the worldwide box office, meaning the film made a significant loss. It had only Nick Frost as a star, and he is very little known compared to the biggest A-list stars in Hollywood, despite the success of *Shaun of the Dead* in Britain and America. As a result, the filmmakers would have struggled to raise the budget – there is far less chance of big international box office without internationally recognised stars.

Director Joe Cornish had never made a feature film before, and the subject is very distinctly British in terms of characters and locations. Investors would normally be reluctant to give first-time filmmakers \$13 million to make a British film with a cast of mostly unknowns, set in a tower block and featuring characters that open the movie mugging an innocent nurse.

However, Joe Cornish has had a great deal of experience in television and has developed a strong following with his radio and television shows. He is also co-writing Spielberg's latest film with Edgar Wright, who recently had a huge international hit with *Shaun of the Dead*. Like that film, *Attack the Block* takes very English characters, cast and settings, and mixes them with a popular genre. So the science fiction element could help to draw in bigger



Images are from *Attack the Block*

crowds and therefore make investors feel more comfortable putting in \$13 million. In addition, it was thought that casting Nick Frost might draw in international fans of *Shaun of the Dead*, helping *Attack the Block* to sell worldwide.

The film was funded by Studio Canal, Film4, Big Talk Productions and the UK Film Council, a (now defunct) funding body set up to help produce films that promote British culture and tell British stories. There was no funding from the Hollywood studios. Interestingly two of these companies are very involved in television, which suggests Joe Cornish is likely to have had a working relationship with them before shooting his first feature film.

Attack the Block combines practical and computer-generated effects for its alien creatures. The relatively low budget meant director Joe Cornish had to limit the CGI and work more with traditional techniques. He said:

“they designed this terrific costume-suit, and then we shot that, and then there’s a little bit of enhancement by a company called Digital Negative, and a very brilliant European company called Fido. So the end result is a combination of practical, with a little bit of digital.”

Den of Geek

Attack the Block was shot on locations in and around London to add to the



credibility and realism of its far-out story of an alien invasion. This also makes it stand out from much of Hollywood’s science fiction output (including *Prometheus*) which is often shot on giant expensive sets at places like Pinewood studios. It also would save the producers of *Attack the Block* money as fewer sets had to be built.

Distribution techniques for Hollywood and British films differ in many ways, mostly due to the marketing budgets of the films. *Attack the Block* uses its only star (Nick Frost), the science fiction genre elements and ‘from the producers of *Shaun of the Dead*’ as selling points to be highlighted in much of its marketing. Nick Frost has some international recognition from *Shaun of the Dead* but also helped promote the film a great deal in

Britain. The distinctive British location, language and characters are also emphasised and while this could be a draw for some audiences, it also could put off a wider audience, unfamiliar with the language of Britain’s youth. There was even talk of subtitled the film for US audiences. Film festivals are often essential for spreading word of mouth about smaller films because they can win competitions, awards and gain valuable attention from film fans and the press. A screening at SXSW film festival helped *Attack the Block* to secure distribution in North America.

The marketing strategy included posters, trailers, t-shirts and TV spots but was nowhere near as massive as the promotion of a Hollywood blockbuster.



Hollywood movies spend huge amounts on marketing a film in the lead up to the opening weekend in an attempt to make their money back as quickly as possible. This 'saturation release' strategy works well for blockbusters with mainstream appeal. The stars of the film attend premieres in order to get more written about the film in the media. *Attack the Block*, on the other hand, had very low opening weekend figures in terms of box office and number of screens. It was released on far fewer screens than a Hollywood blockbuster would have been, with around 350 screens in the UK, and only eight in America. The distributors, who did not spend as much on marketing as the biggest blockbusters do, clearly hoped for word of mouth to help publicise the film (and ensure its wider release). It premiered at a film festival in America as well as in Leicester Square in London with stars in attendance. The premiere of *Attack the Block* failed to attract the same amount of media attention as a blockbuster premiere because the stars are not as internationally recognised.

Hollywood often follows trends to ensure they make the most out of what is currently popular. Even



though *Attack the Block* displays many generic trappings, it is also clearly very different from many blockbusters. It was considerably riskier than yet another superhero film as it had no built-in audience, except perhaps fans of Nick Frost and people interested in variations on the science fiction genre. Generally British films are less likely to follow trends as they are more likely to deal with real situations and characters in the social realist tradition. *Attack the Block* incorporated elements of this with its working-class characters, but also incorporated genre conventions to make it a more appealing bit of escapist cinema.



Hollywood studios often work with the MPAA and BBFC to ensure that their film will be passed by these regulatory bodies with an appropriate rating. As Hollywood films need to make huge amounts of money at the box office to turn over a profit, the producers are often willing to trim violent or adult scenes to ensure their film gets a sufficiently low classification for family audiences, where the big money is. *Attack the Block* had less potential money to make or lose; consequently, the producers accepted the decision for



it to be classified as a 15. The language and drug use are particularly strong on occasions; and while a Hollywood blockbuster may have had to tone this down to attract a wider audience, *Attack the Block* exploits these features as its unique selling proposition. Its characters are unknown actors who talk and act as if they are really from the streets of South London, and the film proudly represents them in all their glory, both perpetuating and challenging stereotypes of British youth.

Hollywood and British films are very different in many ways. Although British films are attempting to become more commercial, and Hollywood studios do distribute some independent and British films they hope will make a profit, there are still many films getting made for niche audiences on very low budgets. With the UK Film Council now a thing of the past, British films will perhaps have to become more commercial in order for the industry to survive. This may mean more British films that attempt to follow trends and fit within clearly-defined genres – and in turn lose some of their distinctive Britishness. Though *Attack the Block* failed to attract a huge audience and make a profit, it was a clear attempt to make a B-movie in which B stood for British. Film is increasingly about business; and with the Prime Minister urging the British film industry to make films with more mainstream appeal, we can expect to see more films with the ambition of *Attack the Block* – but with less of the believable British youth, and more of the science fiction escapism.

Pete Turner is undertaking a PhD at Oxford Brookes University, writes a film blog at <http://ilovethatfilm.blogspot.com/> and is writing a book on *The Blair Witch Project*.

POETRY NO MORE WHAT'S GONE WITH SCIENCE FICTION ELYSIUM AND THE DECLINE OF A GENRE

I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched C-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhauser gate. All those moments will be lost in time... like tears in rain... Time to die.

With this line, Ridley Scott's classic *Blade Runner* (Scott USA 1982), sums up much of what has been wonderful about science fiction. A popular genre which has used futuristic and fantastical worlds to mirror and comment upon issues relevant to us all in the here and now. Scott's film was a reflection on racism, slavery and humanity. In the end, the quote celebrates the importance of all human life and the need to regard our time and lifespan as precious and fleeting gifts.

Such poetic sentiment has not been limited to Scott's cerebral and celebrated film. Similar ideas have characterised the genre from its early beginnings. In an interrogation scene between a suspect and the detective protagonist, Scott uses an optical effect to represent a futuristic shutter closing and darkening the room. The effect was

in homage to the origin of the genre on film. *Metropolis* (Lang Germany 1927) has the same shot and that film (as Scott respectfully noted) created a template that effectively stayed with the genre ever since. Not only did *Metropolis* create a vision of the future mega-city that would be referenced everywhere from *Blade Runner* to *Judge Dredd* (Travis USA 2012) and obviously *Superman* (Donner USA 1978); it also raised the sort of concerns about science, progress, humanity and fairness that would become the hallmark of the genre to the present day.

With later examples like *The Forbidden Planet* (Wilcox USA 1952), *2001 A Space Odyssey* (Kubrick USA 1968) and *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind* (Spielberg USA 1978), each decade's great filmmakers used the genre to explore the relationship between humankind

and outer space, whilst at the same time scrutinising our relationship with ourselves as a species. Leaving aside the famous *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* franchises, each era has had its key films, including the dystopian fantasy of *The Matrix* (Wachowski and Wachowski USA 1999) and the highest-grossing film of all time, James Cameron's *Avatar* (Cameron USA 2009). In each instance, the future has been used to explore the pressing issues of the present.

So what of Sci Fi now? Whilst Germany's *Metropolis* was the start, it has been American films that have dominated the genre in every subsequent decade. Not surprisingly, since the visual tapestry of Sci Fi requires the deepest pockets and biggest budgets. No surprise also that other nations have shied away. Rare non-Hollywood examples like *Children Of Men* (Cuaron



FROM DYSTOPIAN TO FUTURE WRE

UK 2006), have employed near-future dystopian mise-en-scène, allowing the use (with a little future-fitting) of much cheaper present day locations.

However, the most recent examples from Hollywood have met with a mixed critical response at best. Initially, the slate for 2013 looked very promising, with several large projects lined up, featuring major talents. The Tom Cruise vehicle *Oblivion* (Kosinski USA 2013) appeared early in the year but was dismissed as forgettable and derivative. It was closely followed by JJ Abrams' hotly anticipated sequel to his 2009 reboot of the *Star Trek* franchise. But *Star Trek: Into Darkness* (Abrams USA 2013) opened to some caustic reviews and widespread disappointment. So it continued with *Pacific Rim* (Del Toro USA 2013). Any new film from the lauded director of *Pan's Labyrinth* (Del

Toro Spain 2008) was an event; but when released, the film was attacked as the dumbest yet, with its scenes of massive mega-robots (how original!) battering alien dinosaurs. *Robocop* (Verhoeven USA 1988) and the *Transformers* (Bay USA 2007) would be turning in their toolboxes!

Late summer produced a more enticing prospect. Neil Blomkamp, the thoughtful and auteurist director of *District 9* (Blomkamp 2009 South Africa) was releasing a follow-up to his much-liked 2009 debut (see *MediaMagazine* 37, September 2011). That film had been a thinly veiled commentary on apartheid in his home country. Its aliens, mistreated and abused by humans, were an obvious parallel to the abuses inflicted on black South Africans during white minority rule. The film's aesthetic stretched its low

budget to the limit, merging South African shanty towns with space ships and high tech weaponry. The moral, as Sharlto Copley's racist functionary morphs gradually into an alien, only to be hunted himself, was clear.

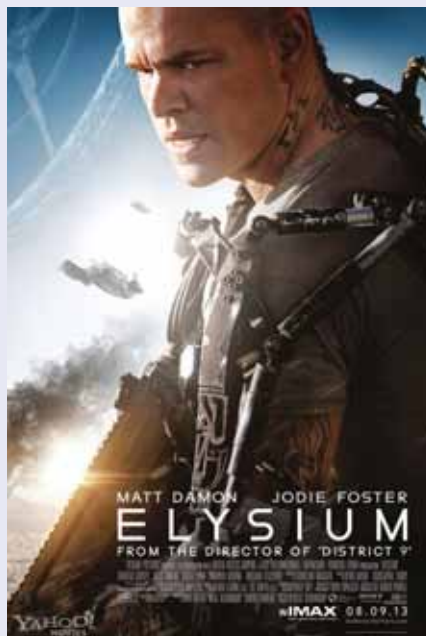
The new film *Elysium* (Blomkamp USA 2013) had a much larger budget and major stars in Matt Damon and Jodie Foster, with Copley returning, but this time as an antagonist. A good writer/director, with more money and an A-list cast suggested an engaging movie. Yet the reviews were as poor as for the season's earlier releases. This was a visually arresting and at times dazzling film that failed to deliver a positive critical response.

So what went wrong with *Elysium*? The opening scenes were stunning. Partially filmed on a massive landfill site, the



future Los Angeles is a huge shanty town, its impoverished inhabitants abused and herded by robotic police. Without healthcare or hope, the inhabitants look forever upwards to the glowing Torus (ring-shaped) space station that hangs like a moon in their sky. Here the super rich have escaped the deprivations of earth to live in a utopian idyll where any sickness can be cured at the flick of a switch.

The narrative set up for the film plays on science fiction conceits as well as current references. The film commented on a lack of affordable health care when (at the time of writing) the US government had shut itself down in a factional battle over universal healthcare for U.S. citizens. Known as 'Obamacare' this pet presidential project was the most aggressively debated issue of the year. Other key references were equally clear. The space station was a form of gated community, the ultimate version of the well-guarded estates where capitalism's super rich keep themselves isolated from the ordinary public. The attempts by the earthbound poor to attain a bearable life by breaking into Elysium (the name of the space station means 'place of perfect happiness') are savagely repulsed, and are a clear comment on our own reaction to attempts by the desperate and poor to migrate illegally to wealthier western nations. The most recent parallel is



the tragic and continuing death toll of migrants, who in their desperation to escape poverty and war, attempt lethal crossings from Africa in leaking overcrowded boats, to reach their own version of 'Elysium' in Italy and the rest of Europe.

The Sci Fi notion of the rich escaping to an ultramodern paradise whilst leaving the massed poor behind can be found way back in *Metropolis* itself. The futuristic Torus design for the space station is in homage to that in *2001 A Space Odyssey* and for those that know *Blade Runner*, *Elysium* finally provides an opportunity to get a look at what 'the off world colonies' might actually look like. The fact that the antagonists

in the film were rapaciously greedy capitalists is another Sci Fi staple, seen most recently in *Avatar*, but also in films like *Alien* (Scott USA 1979) and, of course, *Metropolis*.

Based on the points made so far, the film should be excellent. A brilliant and inventive visual aesthetic (partially created by Syd Mead, the legendary production designer for *Blade Runner* and *Alien*), with a whole range of themes and issues drawn from Sci Fi itself and from the immediate concerns of the world around us. All this was woven together by a proven auteur, with a quality cast and a bigger budget. And yet, whilst the film is no disaster, it fails to deliver on its original promise.

The issue appears to be a 'Hollywood-ising' of Blomkamp's work. Whether or not this was with Blomkamp's agreement is unclear. The film's promising early scenes lead to a brief establishment of Damon's character, Max, an apparently ordinary working-class man, who yearns for Elysium and freedom from his stricken existence. The script conveniently provides him with a fatal illness and a lost love, whose daughter also has a terminal illness, giving them a compelling, if clumsily devised, motive for crossing the metaphorical border to Elysium (a metaphor for the USA if ever there was one) to get themselves some 'Obamacare'. However, at that early point, character development



virtually stops. Stricken with radiation poisoning, Damon is bolted into an exoskeleton and embarks on a sequence of increasingly frenetic battles with the bad guys. His character, his lost love Freya and her daughter are given little further development, and the villains even less. The battles are spectacular though, and revisit Blomkamp's *District 9* signature of using high-tech weapons to bloodily splat and detonate any character unlucky enough to get hit. However, the thinness of the characterisation, and the assumption that the audience needs to be hit with visual effects every few minutes, means that the narrative tends to emotionally distance rather than engage the viewer.

The film's core ideas, which had been so interestingly laid out, are not meaningfully developed. Damon's



reluctant revolutionary becomes an off-the-peg action hero, wasting a good actor on a role so thinly written the character could have been played by anyone with beef and brawn. The Afrikaans antagonist Kruger, is a cartoon monster, without any of the depth Copley brought to his *District 9* protagonist. Even Jodie Foster, an Oscar winning performer, is here no more than a stereotypically cold corporate suit as lead villain Delacourt.

So what insight does *Elysium* offer into the weaknesses of these films,

with their big stars, high budgets and auteur directors? The issue seems to lie mostly with Hollywood itself. Science fiction can be a uniquely poetic and thoughtful genre. Yet with the modern blockbuster, the underlying assumption seems to be that audiences cannot handle – and do not want – depth. Eye-catching spectacle, always a part of the genre, becomes everything, with splashy visual set pieces needing to be laid on every few minutes.

Hollywood has often been accused of infantilising its content to appeal to young audiences. If so, it does those audiences few favours.

Plot spoiler alert!

Elysium ends with Damon making an ultimate Christ-like sacrifice to save Freya and her child and to allow the poor into the life-saving utopia of the space station.

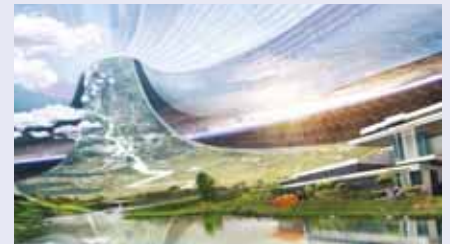
The problem is that his character has had no developmental journey or story arc, and is essentially the same man as he was when we first met him, so his sacrifice feels empty and fails to ring true. His death has little impact and pathos, since we had only a superficial sense of him in the first place.

Perhaps the clearest example of Hollywood's flawed approach to the genre came earlier. After all the interesting and insightful thematic set up, the titular space station, the apparent centre of the story, is little seen, let alone explored, except for one key scene. Damon was given a cyborg-like exoskeleton to help him achieve his mission of getting to the space station. Copley's crazed antagonist is then even more fearsomely outfitted in order to take him on (as his previous character had been in *District 9*). The

two mechanised characters finally go spectacularly mano-et-mano – just like *Transformers* and, it seems, every second science fiction film released in recent years. As Producer Lynda Obst comments:

“We've got this formula: set-piece, set-piece, blow up a city.”

For auteur directors, it seems access to Hollywood budgets can lead to a critical loss of creative control – a high price indeed.



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Follow it up

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TRAILS and teasers: marketing grand theft auto FIVE





Grand Theft Auto, the bestselling video game series, has become what Harry Potter is to the publishing world. Hugely detailed with hundreds of missions and scripts which often run to thousands of pages, the open world adventure games are an international phenomenon with an unprecedented fan-base. And the fifth instalment is bigger and more ambitious than ever before. With three main characters, each interchangeable, a landscape three and a half times as big as the previous instalment, and a gritty crime narrative which focuses on risqué bank heists, it is not surprising that its launch on the 17th September 2013 made newspaper headlines across the globe. The slow drip-feed of trailers, plots and adverts have become events in themselves, and a strict embargo on the game's release meant excitement reached extraordinary levels as release day loomed. Fans queued for over two hours ahead of the midnight launch to get their hands on the game and it is thought that the game's developers Rockstar will make over £1 billion from its sale. But what is behind all the hype? And why is the game so popular? Is it all down to the savvy and perfectly calculated marketing campaign, or is

it the fans' love of a well-crafted and expertly thought-out game?

2011: the early marketing campaign

It is usually anything between a couple of months and a year at most between a game being announced and its release. The trailer for an average game will be paraded in front of hard-core fans and industry experts at the annual E3 conference in June, and released anytime from September to the February of the following year. With *Grand Theft Auto V*, however, it was a staggering two years between the announcement and the launch. On 25th October 2011, using the hashtag #GTAV, Rockstar started posting links to their website where they revealed the logo for the game, styled like a banknote, so as to give fans the first clues to the bank heist theme. The following day they posted a countdown to the trailer that was to be launched on 2nd November 2011.



But what is interesting about Rockstar's early marketing strategy is that it appeared to focus primarily on the hard core fans. Without searching for the information, the average video game consumer would not be aware that a new game had been announced. Yet the fact that Rockstar not only felt it was worthwhile releasing information about the game early, but also went as far as drumming up hype about the release of the trailer, shows they obviously realised that fans would actively hunt out the information about the game and the news would spread rapidly by word of mouth.

The trailers

In November 2011 after a countdown on their website, Rockstar released the first trailer for *Grand Theft Auto V*. At barely 1 minute and 15 seconds long, this gave very little away about the actual plot of the gameplay, but emphasised the vastness of the landscape – the mountains, desert, the beaches, the city itself – and the sorts of vehicles you can unlock – fighter planes, mountain bikes, quad bikes and, of course, a huge array of cars. It is narrated by just one of the main characters: Michael. We hear him talking about why he moved to Los Santos where the game is set and how he wanted to settle down; but we hear little about his life or his motivations for turning to crime as a means of making money. Indeed it is only in the final couple of seconds of the trailer that we catch brief glimpses of some action sequences which, when taken together,



Images show GTA V, queues for the new game and excitement on its release.

make no narrative sense. There is a man dressed in a red uniform and wearing a gas mask kicking open the doors to some sort of shop, a car being chased through the streets by the police and a helicopter chasing three men round the city. All viewers can infer from this is that this is a game about career criminals, not a particularly surprising revelation to anyone who knows anything about *Grand Theft Auto*.

The trailer was also reported as a news item in itself in much of the world's press including *The Guardian* and *The Metro*.

After this trailer, which acted as a tease, it was a further year before fans got to see any more footage from the game. And in contrast to the first trailer the second was heavily plot-driven. After a few establishing shots of the city – a beautiful vista looking over the city observatory and a wide shot of a tennis court – the viewer is dumped straight into the action. We are in the middle of a kitchen with a daughter arguing with her mother about having a boy round to sleep before we cut to a swimming pool where Michael, whose voice avid viewers would recognise as the voiceover for the first trailer, is telling us once again about his life. As we can still hear the arguing in the background, viewers will naturally assume that Michael is probably the father of the girl arguing with her mother. We hear



him say 'If you want my advice, give this s*** up' implying heavily that he is involved with some of the criminal activity we saw in the first trailer.

After another establishing shot, this time of trains, we cut to a different unkempt character. In a few short seconds we seem him growling, banging someone's head onto a bar and setting fire to a house before making humorous remarks about people he has apparently killed: 'I'll swing by and sign the contract, just ignore the bodies...' Then we switch to yet another character who is driving around in a fast car being chased by the police, intercut with him being told by a girlfriend that it doesn't matter how many fast cars he has, he isn't going to change as a person. We then cut back

to Michael talking to a counsellor about his life.

From these three separate scenes, the viewer now knows the basic plot: three characters each turning to a life of crime because they are disillusioned with their lives in some way. One is having a mid-life crisis and feels bored, one is young and feels trapped and unfulfilled by his economic circumstances, and the third is psychotic and bored, turning to murder and arson for the sheer hell of it. By why is this important? Surely most gamers are only interested in the gameplay and the excitement of the missions? This trailer is subtle. Rockstar must know that dedicated fans would re-watch and analyse these trailers in a bid to find out information from the game. The obvious conclusions they would draw is that since there are three storylines, there will be three playable characters who will probably join forces to rob banks, steal planes, set fire to houses and generally descend into violence, and that these activities will all form missions within the game.

But generalising about gamers not being interested in the story also completely misses the point of the *Grand Theft Auto* series. One of the reasons it is so popular and so marketable is the narrative. Indeed, interviewed in the *Guardian* GTA's Dan Houser explained he felt video



games are a better medium for telling a story than movies themselves. This is becoming an increasingly noticeable pattern in the video games market. By the time you read this Microsoft and Sony will have launched the next generation games consoles: the Xbox One and the PlayStation 4, both of which feature impressive graphics specifications and support for Ultra High definition which has a pixel quality four times that of current Full High definition (1080p). Such improvements in technology and picture quality allow for more complex story-telling, something Rockstar have capitalised on in all their recent games, but even more so in *Grand Theft Auto V*.

The next trailers

After another significant gap of five months, April 2013 saw a new set of trailers which featured each main character, now named as Michael, Franklin and Trevor. On YouTube the viewer could select which character they wanted to view first, adding yet more interactivity to the marketing campaign. Not as much is revealed about each character, but we learn a few more nuggets of knowledge: that Michael's wife has been having an affair, that he sees a counsellor, and that he is involved in bank robbing, shooting people and stealing cars; and that Franklin is a low-level gangster, led astray by his friends who frequents strip-clubs. We also learn from just a couple of shots of a dog that there are animals in the game. But it is Trevor that we learn the most about and, seeing as he is the most psychotic and the most violent of all the characters, it is easy to see why Rockstar wanted to hold back on information about him

in previous trailers. We learn about his relationship with Michael and, therefore, learn for the first time how the three stories might be intertwined: that they are old friends and that Michael's wife disapproves of him, presumably because of the sleazy comment he makes: 'Nice new t**s'. We see his violence reach new levels: in the trailer, which lasts just over a minute, we see him beat up or kill no less than 12 people. There is also a heavily implied torture scene with Michael holding a pair of electric tongs above someone's mouth, presumably about to remove their teeth. The fact that we see more of the landscapes that each character occupies is also important as once again it gives a sense of the scale of the game.



Midnight launch

The final part of the marketing strategy behind *Grand Theft Auto V* was the midnight launch on 17th September. Stores across the world opened their doors so that fans could get their hands on the game as soon as it was released, promising additional content, a prize raffle and merchandise for those that pre-ordered their game. Being the dedicated *MediaMag* contributor I am, I went to the launch in Leicester (purely for research purposes of course!) where

both GAME stores in the Highcross shopping centre and on Gallowtree Gate were open. Fans had queued since half past nine and by the time midnight approached, the queue to the store inside the Highcross stretched right outside into the street while the queue for the store on Gallowtree Gate stretched right around the block. There was a sense of excitement, jubilation, and comradeship as fans, who had never met before, spoke for hours about their love of the game and the features they were most looking forward to seeing as they waited for the shutters to open.

There had also been stories that day about the embargo being broken, with Amazon having delivered the game a day early to a small number of fans. This might not seem like a big deal but an embargo breach removes some of the mystique surrounding the game; fans can now confirm or deny on the internet what vehicles features are available – but it also means that the plot is spoiled. Though producers often worry that this can have a negative effect on the midnight launch, such is the loyalty of the fan-base that the fans I spoke to said they deliberately avoided the internet because they didn't want to see screenshots of early games and were content to wait until midnight.

As fans left the queues to shut themselves away and start playing the game, the verdict from critics and fans was unanimous: *The Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *Digital Spy*, *IGN*, *Official Xbox Magazine*, all were in agreement that *Grand Theft Auto V* deserved five stars. A combination of a two-year long media campaign with a slow drip-feed of information and a clear understanding of their fan-base has meant Rockstar have achieved unprecedented sales which, many would argue, they clearly deserve.

Harry Cunningham has freelanced for The Leicester Mercury and Writers' Forum Magazine. He currently studies English at Loughborough University.

Follow it up

There's an excellent article in the *Guardian's* online technology section (7.9 2013). Search 'meet Dan Hauser'.



MARIO KART WII – A CASE STUDY

It's often lazily assumed that gaming is for 16-year-old boys, and that any videogame industry case study will automatically exclude anyone who is not a devotee of *GTAV* or *LA Noire*. Liz Sim's research into the global phenomenon that is Mario Kart Wii suggests quite the reverse – that as the technology evolves, games are becoming increasingly inclusive and appealing to audiences of all ages and interests.

In my experience, whenever it is announced at the start of term that part of the OCR AS Media exam will involve a study of the Computer Gaming industry, boys' faces immediately light up whilst girls' faces fall. This cliché is soon quashed when the topic begins, and the boys realise it is not a term of investigation into *Call of Duty* or *Halo*. Instead, I encourage them to focus on *Mario Kart Wii* – a game which is enjoyed by mass audiences and which provides a good base for a detailed study into the gaming industry for all students.

The OCR specification requires that:

☞ candidates should be prepared to demonstrate understanding of contemporary institutional processes of production, distribution, marketing and exchange/exhibition at a local, national or international level as well as British audiences' reception and consumption. ☞



The main areas, students should therefore be prepared for include knowledge and understanding on:

- Ownership
- Production
- Distribution and marketing
- Introduction and development of technology and impact
- Audiences – specifically British audiences
- Cross-media convergence
- Synergy
- Issues
- The future



The game

Mario Kart is a racing game released in April 2008 on the Nintendo platform. It is the sixth version of the game within the *Mario Kart* series, which is part of the *Super Mario* franchise. *Mario*, which dates back to 1985) is arguably the most successful and popular franchise in video game history, and the character himself the best-known character ever created; the *Mario* games as a whole have sold over 210 million units. *Mario Kart* is the most commercially successful racing game of all time. As of March 2013 it had sold over 34 million copies. Key features of this game include the bright visuals, instantly recognisable characters from other *Mario*-related games and easy, but exciting playability.

The original *Mario Kart* game was released in 1992 on the SNES console, with eight more versions released since. The 8th game, *Mario Kart 8*, is in development for release on the newest console, the WiiU.

Ownership

The game is produced solely for the Nintendo platform, with various versions of the game developed for different consoles.

The exclusivity of the gaming platform allows Nintendo to reach out to a wider target market, using their main hook of the Wii as a family product, to entice users looking for something more than the straightforward racing games with



super-cars that can be found on other platforms.

By keeping the development, publication and production in-house, Nintendo can also maintain brand continuity, keep careful control of content, and maximise their topline profits.

Production

The *Mario Kart* series, from the Wii versions onwards, are particularly commended for their production values. Although not as sleek as other racing games, such as *Gran Turismo*, the bright, fun, accessible and recognisable graphic make the game a visually interesting production. The target audience and focus of the game also relates to the vivid but childlike production values too. With a product aimed predominantly at younger children and families, there is little need for detail and realistic settings. These games are not aiming to provide escapism into another world, but a less intense journey into a happy, fun land for a few hours.

However trying to research production costs proves difficult for Nintendo-based games. The budget has not been revealed for *Mario Kart Wii*, but it is estimated among fans and industry publications to have been around \$10-20 million. These estimates further demonstrate the difference in production methods between *Mario Kart Wii* and other top-selling games of the same year, such as *GTAIV*, which is believed to have cost \$100million in production costs. Games of this kind often then spend a similar amount on marketing.

Distribution and marketing

Distribution methods of the game continue in the same 'basic' form. Whereas many more serious games are available on a range of platforms, via download, online streaming on sites such as 'Steam' or disc, *Mario Kart Wii* is only available in disc form from major retailers, such as Tesco, GAME and Amazon.



The game itself had a strong marketing campaign. Whilst not as intense and cinematic as games such as *Halo*, *Call of Duty* or *Gran Turismo*, due to the family and child-based target audience, it did make use of high profile celebrities in its promotion. Keeping true to the aims and values of the game, the advertising campaign in November 2010 featured then high-profile boy-band JLS having wholesome, group fun. The use of pale, neutral colours in the background (in fact the Australian ad uses a white backdrop) further emphasises the 'pure/clean' fun to be had from the game as well as extending the brand identity. The adverts clearly promote the game as something for the whole family, and people of all ages, to enjoy. Similarly, the billboard adverts and magazine features for the game also utilise the pale colour scheme and wholesome fun. Again this is in contrast



to the promotion for more adult games, such as *Call of Duty*, which place more focus on the elements of war and violence – their main selling points. Nintendo stated, when first launched, that their main aim with the console – and many of the games they offered – was not to rival Sony and others, but to bring new gamers to gaming. This intention is clearly reflected in their products and promotional methods, focussing on families, young children and the older generation – all previously underexploited markets for gaming.



Technological innovation

Along with the Wii being the smallest and most powerful console created by Nintendo at the time of release, it was also their most innovative, changing gaming practices across platforms. The release of the 'Wiimote', a wireless remote control with a motion sensor that could be used as a number of things depending on the game, was one of their major changes. Moving away from the traditional wired, controllers requiring both hands to play, the Wiimote revolutionised game play, as can be seen by the development of the X-Box K'nect and

Sony's wireless PS4 control pads. The design, intended to be more intuitive to the new gamers, provided a more interactive experience in the game and created a more 'realistic' involved experience, allowing people to feel that they are participating within the game, rather than being outside the game.

This interactive nature of the Wii also allows players to create their own characters (a 'Mii') to develop a more immersive experience. The use of the avatars let players actually be in the games (after completing a certain number of races) – something again very different from other games. This added an extra element of fun to the game, further distancing itself from the more serious and grown up racing games available on the market.

Mario Kart Wii continued in this interactive, inclusive theme. The inclusion of the steering wheel when the game is bought was one way that audiences could interact



more realistically. The use of the steering wheel also made game play simpler and more intuitive, allowing participation from younger players, those who are less tech-savvy and older

people who may have health issues which make a traditional controller hard to manoeuvre.

The future

Gaming is evolving all the time, with technological developments transforming the consoles we buy. Nintendo's savvy marketing strategy, targeting those who had previously not been interested in gaming, opened up the potential for gaming and audiences to the world. Use of consoles and tablets have grown exponentially, with the games available growing massively too. Apps for babies and toddlers mean that gaming audiences are getting even younger, and sales of tablets among the elderly, with apps and games specially developed for them, mean that the potential prime audience for gaming is no longer the traditional 16-year-old boy locked in his room. It has become a group event. Parties are held centred around games such as *Mario Kart*, *Just Dance* and *Singstar*. Gaming is not a solitary pastime now, but a sociable form of entertainment. Consoles have moved into living rooms.

Moving on into the next decade, we are likely to see gaming becoming more intuitive, more interactive and more global. Gaming now brings people together from across the world, transcending racial and ethnical divides. More games, on more devices in more themes will only further forge these international links and enable players to develop online friendships – something that, ten years ago, would have sounded like madness.

So, despite the groans when the topic of gaming is announced, it doesn't take long to see that it is a topic that is relevant to everyone. No matter what gender, age, race, religious beliefs, personality type or class, there is something for everyone.

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Images are from *The Reader*

Popular Film and Emotional Response: Reading *The Reader*

The A2 Film Studies unit FM4: Section B addresses issues around the relationship between particular types of film and their impacts on audiences; this sub-topic asks you to consider the ways films create the emotional responses they do. Lecturer Morag Davis unpicks the ways Stephen Daldry's disturbing film *The Reader* constructs challenging and uncomfortable feelings for the spectator.



The Reader (Daldry 2008) is a film that takes us on an emotional journey into uncomfortable territory as we are forced to confront and question our own moral and ideological beliefs about human relationships, gender, power and exploitation, guilt, accountability and forgiveness.

The narrative, concerning a romantic relationship between Michael, a 15-year-old schoolboy and Hannah, a woman in her thirties, is set in post-War Germany and reveals, in a series of extended flashbacks, how a single relationship has cast a shadow over the life of one man.

At first, we may be shocked by the age gap between Hannah and Michael, and perhaps even outraged by the seeming exploitation of this young boy by an older woman; however, as the



narrative unfolds and we are drawn into the relationship, we are positioned to accept and even support the romance. When Hannah's history in the concentration camps is revealed, we pity rather than hate her and feel angry with Michael for what could be seen as a betrayal of his lover, even though he is also her victim.

So, how does the film manipulate us, as spectators, into supporting something that we may disagree with so strongly? Are we aware that we are being manipulated? What techniques does the film use to position us in relation to the characters and the story? These are some of the questions that you will need to explore in your study of Spectatorship: Popular Film and Emotional Response in FM4, Section B.

So what is a spectator?

Firstly, let's define what a spectator is, and how the notion of spectatorship differs from that of audience. The easiest way to distinguish between the audience and the spectator is to think of **audience** as relating to groups of people and dealing with everything that happens outside the film-viewing experience – fan behaviour; social, cultural, geographical and age-related groupings; and responses to film marketing, amongst other factors. **Spectatorship**, on the other hand, describes the study of the individual on a psychological level, sitting in a darkened cinema, without the influence of any outside forces such as background and ideological beliefs. By examining what happens in the

mind of an individual spectator, film theorists hope to be able to make generalisations about all spectators.

Of course, we all bring our own values and life experiences with us to the viewing of a film, and, as film students, you need to acknowledge these factors, whilst focusing on the relationship between the film and the individual.

Formal techniques

Examining *The Reader*, one of the first scenes in the film that elicits a strong emotional response is when Michael returns to Hannah's apartment to see her, and catches her dressing. Point of view camera angles are used to position us in the subjective consciousness of Michael as he spies on Hannah. The framing of the shot incorporates the door, emphasising the covert nature of his gaze, and the lighting is soft and slightly back-lit, creating a romantic atmosphere.

The cumulative effect of these formal techniques is to create a sense of both pleasure and guilt in the spectator – we too want to gaze on the beautiful Hannah, but know that what we are doing is wrong. This process illustrates two ideas coined by Murray Smith: **alignment** and **allegiance**.

We are **aligned** with Michael because we see the world through his eyes (through techniques such as POV shots,



music and lighting) and so we feel what Michael feels. We also know, because of our moral beliefs, that what he is doing is morally wrong, a fact emphasised when Hannah looks directly at Michael/the camera/the spectator and Michael then runs away. Although we feel Michael's emotions, we do not have **allegiance** with him – we are not 'on his side'.

Later on in the film, the same formal techniques are used in the courtroom scenes, where we are shown the scene from Michael's point of view, but are compelled to feel pity for the betrayed Hannah; our **allegiance** is with her. It can make for an uncomfortable experience when our emotions and our intellect come into conflict, as when Daldry uses tight close-ups of Hannah's face, depicting her evident distress, which elicit similar emotions in us, even though we know that she is guilty of terrible war crimes. Our allegiance is with Michael but we are **aligned** with Hannah.

Mirroring through close-ups

The use of close-ups in the courtroom scenes also functions on another level: to encourage the spectator to mirror, or 'catch', the emotions of the characters. Kate Winslet's expressive face communicates her anguish and fear, so we also experience these emotions indirectly. Critic Amy Coplan claims that the use of formal techniques such as the extended close-up of a face can force the spectator to 'catch' the emotions of the character. This emotional mimicry bypasses our



conscious thoughts, and works on a subconscious level, explaining why we can have a number of conflicting emotions during the scene when she is asked to provide a sample of handwriting – disgust at Hannah's actions; pain and confusion at her betrayal by the other camp guards. On a conscious level, we can identify with her feelings of abandonment, because this is one of the earliest emotions that we experience as children; the situation may be different, but the emotions on display are very familiar.



Withheld narrative

Another way of exploring the way a film positions us emotionally is by examining the narrative and the way it withholds and reveals information in order to create a dynamic range of emotional responses. *The Reader* begins with what appears to be a controversial but fairly uncomplicated romance. It is not until fifty-two minutes into the film that Hannah's SS past is revealed – by which time we have been positioned to quite like her

and her playful but flinty personality. Daldry is, metaphorically, pulling the rug from under our feet, revealing information about the character that elicits conflicting emotions. Again, when the reason for Hannah's taking responsibility for the crimes becomes clear, we are overwhelmed by pity for her, and anger at Michael for not revealing her illiteracy; but at the same time we understand his reasons for not doing so. He is, after all, just another of Hannah's 'victims'.

So, are we helplessly manipulated by film texts or can we form our own emotional responses to a film? A bit of both, really – we are positioned by the formal, narrative, graphic and ideological devices in the text, but, at the same time, we are shaped by our own ideological and moral convictions and life experiences, and even our knowledge of the actors and the context of viewing. As spectators, we submit to the film experience in the knowledge that we will be manipulated and made to feel a range of emotions. Indeed, isn't that the reason we go to the cinema?

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Follow it up

Smith, Murray. 1995. *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion and the Cinema*. Clarendon.

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REPRESENTATIONS OF WAR IN TV NEWS: A REPRESENTATIONAL CASE STUDY

The French philosopher Baudrillard said that 'The Gulf War did not happen'. He was referring to the First Gulf war, which the history books state clearly *did* happen. So what was his point? And does it still apply to contemporary news coverage in our digital age? Emily Hughes investigates.

Since the dawn of the moving image, the battle on the front line has been accompanied by another battle; one that deals with how to represent conflict. Baudrillard made the point that the First Gulf War (1990-91) was so heavily mediated by the news media that it had become a 'media event' – in effect, a 'virtual war'. Why did he say this? Can his statement still apply to contemporary news coverage? How much of our understanding of current conflicts is real and how much is it mediated by the news media, or by cinematic representations of war? This article looks at how conflict has been represented in television news across different battlezones. It will make the

case that news reporting has never been accurate, and has always been subject to heavy mediation by the military, by news gatekeepers, and by the technical elements of camera, editing and sound.

News coverage before TV

During the First and Second World Wars before the advent of television, our perception of war came from three main sources: the traditional print media (newspapers), the wireless (radio) and the cinema. The first widely exhibited moving images of war were in the form of newsreels such as *The Pathe Animated Gazette*; these were short pieces of news footage with

real – and sometimes staged – footage from home and abroad, including from the front line. The newsreels would be screened before the main feature film, the only way in which people during the First and Second World Wars could access footage from war zones in the era before television.

Cameras, particularly during the First World War, were large and bulky, so journalists at the time were restricted to what and where they could film. Much of the footage was also heavily controlled by the military; and thus the depiction of war could be heavily edited so as to highlight victories and downplay defeats. *Willing Captives*



(1916), silent piece of footage from the Pathe archives, is a good example of such a newsreel. It features a long shot of German troops appearing, as the title suggests, to be willingly accepting their capture. The Germans can be seen smiling at the camera and then obediently tending to crops overlooked by their British captors. In this case, the camera itself can be seen as a mediating factor. The prisoners are 'performing' to the camera, rather than the lens being a passive observer; the fact that they are being filmed has changed their behaviour, and thus positions the German prisoners differently in the minds of the audience. You can see second-by-second images from this film at: <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/stills/willing-captives>



During the Second World War, war footage was accompanied by both diegetic and non-diegetic sound in the form of voiceovers and music. Pathe's *The Great Air Assault on Europe* 1943 demonstrates a much more cinematic style of war reportage that cuts between in-plane low-angle shots of the pilots to bird's-eye views and low-angle shots from the ground, all accompanied by a stirring trumpet soundtrack. The editing of the newsreel also uses cross-cutting between the command centre and the planes to

suggest that this is a highly organised and successful operation. The newsreel features real bombing of a target in a French forest. Although the bird's-eye view shot could arguably give a sense of verisimilitude, the stirring music makes this real event seem like a work of fiction. Baudrillard used the term 'hyperreality' when describing the media depictions of the Gulf War; by this he meant an over-exaggerated, heightened version of reality. The term could easily be applied to this newsreel, and indeed to many of the newsreels from the Second World War which, through cinematic editing and stirring soundtrack, worked as much as entertainment as they did as information. This framing of war as 'entertainment' also works as propaganda, the aim of which was to raise spirits and support at home for the conflict abroad. Again, you can see second-by-second images from this film at <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/the-great-air-assault-on-europe/query/assault>

Tipping point: the Vietnam War

During the Vietnam War (1956-1975) the portability of cameras had improved vastly, as had the news industry itself. This was the first widely broadcast war footage that Americans had seen in colour. Gone is the triumphant battle music, replaced by solemn, impassive voiceovers. The style of the news footage is much more observational, with the camera favouring a long shot, a passive observer on the scene, thus creating a greater sense of verisimilitude. Other common shots include tracking shots from behind the troops, as if taken from

the point of view of a soldier on the ground, where much of the fighting actually took place.

During the First and Second World Wars the enemy was very clear, and was represented as a binary opposite to the allied troops. In Vietnam it was less easy to paint a clear binary opposite in what was a heavily criticised and far less popular conflict. The conflict also saw journalists from channels such as CBS and NBC reporting stories about the large number of civilian casualties, fuelling massive anti-war protests in the US.



Another big difference in news reporting during the Vietnam war is that there was a much greater emphasis on the troops and, as such, much of the footage is in a mid-shot or over-the-shoulder mid-shot as uniformed journalists interview troops. Much of this footage was intended to counteract some of the negative coverage coming from Vietnam, and to bolster support for troops from the US public. Watch it on YouTube at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XisBhLzqoM4>

The First Gulf War

Like many modern conflicts, The First Gulf War (1990-91) was fought mainly through air assault with comparatively little ground combat. Coinciding with this was the rise of 24-hour news channels in America such as CNN. For the first time footage of war could be relayed by satellites and was transmitted live. Arguably the fact that footage was live means that the representation of war was less mediated by the selection that occurs during editing; however, as in all wars, the military were keen to highlight successes to the news media, such as the accuracy of their missiles. The satellite footage, combined with increased use of graphics and key terms used by the military such as 'collateral damage' and 'surgical strike' contributed, as Baudrillard argued, to making the Gulf War seem like a computer game.



CBS went further, presenting war as a form of entertainment by titling its coverage 'Showdown in the Gulf', likening it to a Western film. Furthermore, many news channels such as Sky created a film-like antagonist



in Saddam Hussain, referring to him as 'The Dictator Saddam Hussain' or 'Iraq's Dictator'. Due to the demand for 24-hour news, and the lack of on-the-ground action, the 24 hour news channels were filled with footage of press releases, analysis and interviews with the troops, as if the conflict was a public relations exercise.

Baudrillard did not mean to imply that there was no conflict in Kuwait in the 1990s. What he meant when he said 'the Gulf War did not happen' was that the war was presented as a form of entertainment by the news media, and as such, the realities and horrors of war could not be understood by audiences at home.



Contemporary coverage

So what of contemporary news coverage? Arguably, during the initial outbreak of conflict in Iraq in 2003, the US government played upon the idea of war as a 'media event' with phrases like 'shock and awe' that could easily have been applied in critique of a movie.

Whereas Baudrillard described 9/11 as being the 'ultimate event', and compares it to a disaster movie, the representation of Bin Laden's assassination could be compared to a computer game. The real footage of the event was not broadcast in the news media, but instead what was broadcast in news around the globe was the image: on the right.

This long shot, released by the White House, denotes Obama and his advisors watching live footage of the mission to kill Osama Bin Laden. This image captures the tone of modern warfare, that technology has allowed for live footage of things happening many miles away to be controlled and observed from America just as cinemagoers can watch a film or computer gamers can play characters in faraway lands.

The increasing use of drones (unmanned aerial vehicles) by America on Al Qaida targets in Pakistan means that real people are further distanced from war zones; and as such there has been comparatively little footage of such attacks on the mainstream news channels. Perhaps in reaction

to warfare that is detached from on-the-ground troop involvement, America and Britain have returned to celebrating soldiers. Indeed, in the US, Fox News has a section on their website entitled 'Honour the Troops' in which people can send in images and footage celebrating American troops.

The invisible civilians

Of course what's missing in all these reports of war is the impact upon the victims, the civilian populations. Rarely in the mainstream TV news are we given accounts of what it's like for civilians to live in war zones. Why? Just like a computer game or film, binary opposites are used to help frame and construct representations of wars so that they become, as Baudrillard suggested, 'media events': the primary binary being Good (US and UK Forces) vs. Bad (foreign enemies). The truth of the matter is of course that conflict is much more complicated than this. If you want to find out what war is really like you need to search outside of the mainstream news channels and find accounts that break down the framing and offer more personal, less mediated accounts.

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Follow it up

<http://www.britishpathe.com/video/the-great-air-assault-on-europe/query/assault>

<http://www.britishpathe.com/video/stills/willing-captives>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XisBhLzqoM4>

http://i.dailymail.co.uk/i/pix/2011/05/03/article-1382859-0BE03DE700000578-150_964x642.jpg

MediaMag Production Competition 2014

The categories

Work can be submitted in any of the following categories:

- Short film
- Film or TV opening
- Film, TV or event trailer
- Music video
- TV or cinema advertising campaign
- Documentary
- Animation in any genre.
And...
- This year's special BFI Education award: Science Fiction!

The formats

**Minimum length: 30 seconds;
Maximum length: 4 minutes.**

Productions should be saved as a Quicktime or .wmv movie, and submitted on disk, clearly named and well packaged.

The dates

Deadline for entries:

Friday 28th March

Shortlisted producers notified by email on Tuesday 6th May, and shortlist online on Friday 9th May

Awards ceremony at NFT1 at BFI Southbank on [Wednesday 2nd July](#)

Email jenny@englishandmedia.co.uk for further info.

The rules

Where possible use your own or royalty-free material.

Each entry must be accompanied by the official entry form, downloadable from the MediaMag website from Friday 10th January, including:

- a description of context of production, and your role in the production
- a 25-word pitch for the production
- a signed authentication that it is your own work

Entries can be submitted by both individuals and groups. If a group production, please include all names, but chose one person to be the group email contact – and make sure names and addresses are legible!

