



# **Independence Day**

## **Study Guide**

## INDEPENDENCE DAY

*Please note: This study guide was produced for the run up to the release of 'Independence Day'. It is therefore written within the context of being able to monitor the preceding advertising and marketing campaign as it happened.*

### TEACHERS' NOTES

This guide looks at the marketing campaign for 'Independence Day' and incorporates both analytical and creative activities. It is intended for use with students of GCSE and A Level Media Studies and GNVQ Media: Communication and Production. It may also be of use to students of Business Studies.

### SYNOPSIS

Strange phenomena surface around the globe. The skies ignite. Terror races through the world's major cities. As these extraordinary events unfold, it becomes increasingly clear that a force of incredible magnitude has arrived; its mission, total annihilation over the Fourth of July weekend. The last hope to stop the destruction is an unlikely group of people united by fate and unimaginable circumstances to save the planet.

'Independence Day'  
Director: Roland Emmerich  
UK Release Date: 9 August 1996

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### INTRODUCTION

Marketing a forthcoming film is vitally important to success. With so many films and other leisure time activities competing for the public's attention, the success or failure of a film at box office can depend heavily upon the strength of its campaign. Therefore, the marketing plans for each film have to be as effective as possible to reach the correct target audience.

A marketing campaign consists of important elements including:

- Posters
- Trailers
- Articles and reviews in newspapers and magazines
- Star interviews, topical programmes and reviews on TV and radio
- Promotions in the cinema
- Promotions linked to other businesses
- Items of film merchandising
- Film premieres: Possibly Royal or charity events

We are now going to look in some detail at how the marketing campaign for one particular film 'Independence Day', which was released August 1996 was constructed.

## THE FIRST TEASER CAMPAIGN

### POSTER TASK

Study the first teaser poster (EARTH. Take a good look...) and answer the following questions:

- What information are you given about the film?
- What type of film do you think it may be?
- How does the poster try to make you curious about the film?

Did you find any difficulty answering any of these questions? Did this surprise you? What other information might you expect to be given on the poster?

The reason why this poster offers a limited amount of information is because it is the start of a teaser campaign, set in motion some months before the main campaign for the film begins. As the name suggests, it is designed to tease the audience, to whet their appetite and encourage them to look forward to receiving more details about the film.

### TRAILER TASK

Now look at the trailer . This is also part of the teaser campaign.

- What questions are asked in the dialogue? By whom?
- Are we given the answers to these questions?
- What is the effect of having only a small amount of dialogue?
- What happens on Day One and Day Two?
- Say how the following have helped to build up the suspense:

The images we see  
The sounds we hear  
The ways in which these are lit  
The graphics used

- What information have we been given that adds to the information in the teaser poster?
- Can you now say why the film is also to be known as 'ID4'? How might this be useful in terms of the publicity campaign that surrounds it?

### POSITIONING THE FILM

Earlier in this section you were asked to say what type, or genre, of film you thought 'Independence Day' might be. Think about the information you now have from both the poster and trailer and write down all the clues you have been given about the nature of the film. These may include images, words and sound. What indications do you have so far about the uniqueness of 'Independence Day', i.e. a film where you can expect to experience something out of the ordinary?

You may have noticed that the teaser poster and trailer build up your expectations, without giving away too much of the plot, hinting that it will be a big event film, a 'must-see' film. What other films can you think of that have had a similar build up?

## THE SECOND TEASER CAMPAIGN

### POSTER TWO TASK

As the release date for 'Independence Day' draws nearer, a second teaser campaign is put into effect, giving further details about the film and encouraging everyone to look forward eagerly to the opening. This is in advance of the final campaign, which will be released just before the opening of the film.

Look at the second teaser poster (We've always believed...) and compare it to the first teaser poster you saw earlier.

- What is the main image on the poster?  
How does it relate to the earlier image?  
How do we know that the attack is closer?
- What is the catch line (written in white) of this poster?  
How has the sense of danger to Earth been emphasised, especially by the second section?
- How has colour been used to enhance danger?
- What do you see at the bottom of the first teaser poster? What has taken its place on the second poster? How does this add to our understanding of the film?
- Where can you find more information about 'Independence Day' if you want to? Why do you think the publicists chose this particular media to link with their film?

### TRAILER TWO TASK (OPTIONAL)

Now view the second teaser trailer for 'Independence Day'. You may find it helpful to re-run the first teaser trailer as you are going to compare the two. As you probably expected, the second teaser trailer expands on the 'bare bones' of the story we were given in the first teaser. It also has to thrill is further.

- What images do you recognise from the first teaser?
- How do the opening shots of a trailer make us feel that we are actually there in the monitoring station?
- What is amusing about the music being played on the radio?
- How are we made to feel that danger is closer?
- In the second trailer we see more images of ordinary people responding to the attack. What effect does this have on us?
- What Day do we hear nothing about? Why is this and what effect does it have?
- How is humour used to attract our attention?

- Which stars are going to play an important part in the film? How do you know?
- When will the film be released in this country? When do you think it will be released in the United States? What might be the thinking behind this?

## PREDICTING THE MAIN CAMPAIGN

The main campaign was used across the UK. Having seen the two teaser poster and trailers, you are now in a position to predict what would have been the main poster and trailer advertising 'Independence Day'.

### TASK

Design a main poster for 'Independence Day'. If you think back to your work on the two teasers, you will remember that the attack appears to be coming closer to Earth, and you may wish to continue this idea.

### TASK

Storyboard your ideas for the main trailer. Include both what you will see and what you will hear (including dialogue, sound effects and music). Aim to storyboard between 15 and 20 shots.

## ADVERTISING AND PUBLICITY

Marketing for a film falls into two basic categories:

- Advertising, which must be paid for and consists of press, TV and radio advertising as well as posters and trailers.
- Publicity, which is not paid for directly but is generated by the publicity department, includes reviews, articles and interviews in any media.

Any marketing campaign has to be aimed at a target audience. This will be the group of people who will be most interested in the film. Looking at the stars who appear in the film, the type of film that you think 'Independence Day' will be and the information you have been given on the posters and in the trailers; who do you think will be the target audiences?

### NEWSPAPERS

Newspapers will often carry articles, which are related to the subject matter of a new film release and/or interviews with the stars who appear in it. These will have been generated by the film publicists. The newspapers will also run reviews of all new films, which act as free publicity for the film company.

### TASK

Imagine that you are a film critic. Once you have seen 'Independence Day', write a film review. You will obviously need to read some reviews of other films in order to get an idea of the format that a review takes.

## TV & RADIO

When a new film is due for release, the publicists will arrange TV and Radio interviews with the stars on news programmes and chat shows, together with clips from the film. In addition to this, there will be reviews of the film on media programmes and in some cases, a programme about the making of the film may be broadcast.

TV and radio advertisements for the film will also be broadcast at times when the target audience will be tuned in.

### TV TASK

People such as Barry Norman have an important effect on the way that people choose the films they want to go and see. If you have access to a video camera, you could make your own piece on 'Independence Day'. You could use excerpts from the trailers to illustrate what you are saying about the film.

- If you were advertising 'Independence Day' on TV, when would you want your advert to be broadcast? Why?

### RADIO TASK

- The teaser posters and trailers you have seen rely heavily upon visual images to create an idea about the film, whereas radio obviously relies on sound to attract and sustain attention. Using a tape recorder, create a radio advertisement for 'Independence Day'. What information would you give? How would you interest an audience in going to see the film? What you must come up with is a 30-second radio spot which will really excite a potential audience for the film.

## PROMOTIONS AND MERCHANDISING

Promotions and merchandising for a film are very important because they take the marketing of a film out onto the high street, thereby spreading news of the film into a much wider area of people's lives. Promotions may take the form of linking with other businesses to offer focused displays in shops, special deals, competitions and so forth. Within the cinema itself there may be enlarged photos of the stars, cardboard standees (large figures), offers at the concession (food and drink) stands, an opening night party. Merchandising can be anything from badges and T-shirts to lunch boxes, toys and luggage.

### MERCHANDISING TASK

- What kind of items would you have suggested be produced to promote 'Independence Day'?

Draw or describe two of these. How useful did you find the alternative title – 'ID4' – in your work in this section?

- Sega Pinball created an arcade pinball machine based on the film 'Independence Day'. Either:

Explain how you think this might work, including a diagram of the pinball table.  
Create a computer game or a board game based on the film, with diagrams and explanations.

## PROMOTIONS TASK

As a cinema manager you have been asked to make suggestions for promoting 'Independence Day' in the weeks running up to the release of the film. You will be looking to create a atmosphere of suspense, of waiting for something to happen, so that people will be eager to see the film when it eventually opens.

When you have decided what you think would be the most effective form for your promotion to take, write letters to shops suggesting your ideas, draw up plans for events to be organised and design whatever leaflets, invitations, etc. are necessary. Make a folder cover sheet for your promotional package.

TRACKING THE FILM
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## TASK

Do some research on the film 'Independence Day'. Collect together any reviews and articles about the film. How do the articles and the reviews describe the film? Do they try to place it in a particular genre? How do they describe the stars of the film?

- What was said about the making of the film in the articles? What extra information was given about the film that is not in the film reviews?
- How was the film advertised in your area?
- Were radio and television been used?
- What advertisements appeared in the newspapers?
- What merchandise was in the shops connected with 'Independence Day'?
- What promotions were other businesses in your local area running?
- You could also do some research on how 'Independence Day' did in the charts. Did it get to number one? If so, how long did it stay there?