

Film & Audience

Teachers' Notes

Understanding the film industry and understanding audience activity is vital for studies in Film and Media units about producers and audiences. The film industry has power yet it needs to listen and to respond to audiences; as in other economic fields supply and demand is an interactive, interdependent process. This study guide aims to present this relationship as a dynamic one.

The study guide examines the relationship between the film industry and audiences as an interaction between two producers of meaning, institutions who create meaning, and audiences who not only interpret the film but process the film experience in a variety of ways, for example at the cinema, at home, through the internet, on DVU or through computer games.

The film industry faces a continuous task of bringing a product to life through exhibition to an audience. A film achieves maximum success when the audience for that film delights in what the film offers and shows that pleasure in a variety of ways. The primary objective of the film industry is to ensure a film achieves sufficient exposure to return profits not only at the box office but also in its diverse existences.

This study guide gives information and suggests activities for students and draws on a wide range of stimuli. Students are asked to respond to arguments made by theorists, interpret data produced by the industry and analyse responses film audiences have made to films.

The study guide outlines activities intended to allow examination of the role of the film industry past and present. There will be a specific focus on the dominance of Hollywood. The activities which will need further extension in the classroom raise important issues about the relationship between:

- Film production, distribution and exhibition
- Hollywood now
- Hollywood past
- Hollywood as a global producer
- Hollywood and other national cinema [British]
- Finance and the audience

This study guide also aims to encourage students to reflect upon their own experiences as cinema-goers, and to explore the various ways in which the film industry attempts to capture their imagination and interest. It also encourages them to examine the ways in which fan behaviour is developing beyond the control of the film industry.

PART ONE THE FILM INDUSTRY TODAY

In this section you can expect to investigate the institutional context of film production and to consider the ways in which the film industry DEVELOPED over the course of the TWENTIETH CENTURY. Undoubtedly the dominance of American films throughout the world is a matter of considerable significance. The term 'HOLLYWOOD' has become almost synonymous with the word 'film'. This section will help you to think about the issues of national and global cinema and what these phenomena show us about the importance of cultural identity and cultural worth.

Read the following passage:

movie production [can] be seen as the creation of entertainment software that can be viewed through several different windows and transported to several different platforms maintained by other divisions of tightly diversified media corporations. Less than 20 per cent of total film revenues come from the domestic box office.

Richard Maltby's 'Nobody Knows Everything' which is included in 'Contemporary Hollywood' [Chapter 2, page 24], edited by Murray Smith and Steve Neale [London Routledge, 1998]

This description appears to suggest that the film industry is not so much an industry that produces films out one that is concerned to ensure that films are shown and seen. New analyses of Hollywood suggest that its real dominance lies in the fact that it owns a number of important ways of distributing and exhibiting films. Film companies own video companies and distributors, own shares in music companies and merchandise tie-ins. Making money in Hollywood depends upon these many different ways of conveying a film to an audience.

The way in which Hollywood is organised in current times tells us quite a lot about the ways in which the film audience has been differently conceived.

When films were made in Hollywood in the 'Golden Age [see page 7 for more on this] there was a belief that there was a single, mass audience out there who would all arrive at the cinema and 'read' a film text in the same way. Studios did have to compete for audiences and use the star system and genre to differentiate audience taste in an attempt to maximise attendance. Of course, stars and genre are still important as you will examine in Part TI but there are new issues about how films are received that have brought about changes in the industry.

Consider these changes and debate what they might mean to the filmmaking industry.

1 Video was first introduced in the 1980s and is now a technology in 92% of homes in the UK

2 Cable, satellite and digital technologies were first available in the late 1980s and 1990s and is now accessed in 43% of UK homes

3 Merchandise: argued by Disney as '...extending the entertainment experience for the child - a way of letting the fun of the movie continue.'

Video, cable, satellite and digital technologies and [yet to show its true potential] the internet are all termed 'New Delivery Systems'.

These New Delivery Systems have opened up the possibility of a much wider distribution for a film than its simply being shown in a movie theatre. Audiences from all around the world have the potential to access a Hollywood made film. It may be that it did not reach their local cinema, but that they see it later through one of the New Delivery Systems.

THE GLOBAL AUDIENCE

For the film industry the global audience obviously means a wider source of revenue for a single film. However, whilst technology enables the film and publicity to move around the world more freely and quickly there are certain problems that have to be considered.

Can you think of any other problems with trying to make a single film appeal to a global Audience? East is East, a British film, has been received very well in both America and France, two territories which have had a completely different 'take' on it. Does it matter that the film is received by different audiences in ways not necessarily intended by the filmmaker?

- 1 Global audiences do not all speak the same language.
- 2 Global audiences have their own cultures, film preferences and interest in stars and genres from films made in their own countries.
- 3 Global audiences may see a film in very different circumstances to the ones originally intended by the producers. Seeing a blockbuster on a small screen or on a large screen may elicit different responses.

The French Campaign for *East is East* – retitled *Fish And Chips* – played up the comedy card and saw the word of mouth build rapidly. Patrick Frater reports...

FRANCE DEVELOPS A TASTE FOR FISH AND CHIPS

Ocean Film's Thierry Decourcelle saw Damien O'Donnell's *East is East* at Cannes last year and was so impressed that he did not even wait until the film finished before making his way to the FilmFour International sale's office to put an offer on the table. It was while he was still in the darkened screening room that he came up with a draft outline of the marketing strategy that would be necessary to lift the British-Asian film above the crowd. 'We immediately saw that this was an art film that would need a commercial release. I know other [French] distributors were nervous about that, but we felt we could rise to the challenge.' He says.

Ocean decided to play down the elements of race drama and play up the film's humour. 'Other than *The Full Monty*, which was on a different scale, there has been no British social comedy for years that is purely comedy,' says Decourcelle. 'As we were playing the comedy card, we felt it appropriate to release the film in the [winter] holiday period, even though we were going up against *American Beauty*.'

'We did lots of preparatory work before the release, including lots of previews, especially in the provinces. To get the word of mouth really flowing, we took it to several festivals. These included the Angers Festival of first films and the Alpe d'Huez comedy festival. We supported it with a good poster and a smart silhouette standee, which I understand [FilmFour chief] Paul Webster has in his office in London.'

Ocean released the film on Wednesday 9 Feb on 60 prints, of which 12 were in Paris. The first day was good and by the weekend it was gathering momentum. 'We had excellent support from exhibitors, who put it in medium-sized screens and were turning away just the right number of people,' says Decourcelle. 'For a comedy it is important to have busy theatres. Later, we took the total to 70 prints but did not want to overstretch it. We knew we were taking a risk choosing to release it uniquely with subtitles and no dubbed prints, but we also saw that this helped position the film.'

Crucial to the release was getting the right title. 'The title *East is East* would simply be impossible in France both in terms of phonetics and meaning. We looked at all sorts of possibilities with the word *Pakistani* or similar, but decided they were all too ethnic. Eventually we hit on *Fish and Chips*. For the French population that phrase is absolutely evocative of Britain in the 1970s before hamburgers took over. It is easy to say and it is a central motif of the film.'

Ocean was also a touch lucky: in the week of release, Le Film Français decided to write a special issue on the whole culture of Indian filmmaking, a subject virtually unheard of in France, but which was picked up by national radio and TV stations. This spiced up the word of mouth and may have kept the arthouse crowd interested.

The film has had 163,000 admissions. 'It has now fulfilled its promise with its natural audience and is crossing over beyond it. We are certain to hit 300,000 admissions and will probably get 350,000 or 400,000,' says Decourcelle.

The 'high concept' film

The 'high concept' film is a response to some of these difficulties in 'knowing the audience' in ways that used to seem more predictable. Study the features of a 'high concept' film:

- a straightforward, easily pitched and easily comprehended story
- character and narrative are reduced and simplified
- there is a very strong match between image and music
- parts of the film can be easily transferred into other 'windows' of exhibition e.g. montage of shots from a film may be released with a soundtrack to become a pop video
- film is sold on 'look' - spectacular special effects, high production values
- the audience is to be caught up in the 'surface' of the film

TITANIC

Titanic is a good example of a 'high concept' film.

1 The story is a very well known one. The director, James Cameron, dressed up the tale of the largest ocean-liner sinking on the maiden voyage with a love story, starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet.

2 A high society girl falls in love with a decent, honest man. The narrative is driven by our knowledge that she has survived the sinking, but does he?

3 Celine Dion sang the title track that was an important organising device in the film for moments of tenderness and tension.

- Shots of the film were cut into a video for the single's release.
- The film was sold on the 'look'. It had fantastic special effects; costumes, lighting, exciting and features of style were all highly produced.
- the audience was very caught up in the 'surface' features of the film. The 'effect' of a massive ocean-liner sinking was magnificent, whether the audience liked the rest of the film or not.

Titanic was a massive international success. Reports during its making suggested it was way over budget with technical and other problems. Go the film's release it had a massive following augmented by the musical release and rewarded in the Oscar ceremonies of 1999. In an interview with Michael Parkinson on BBC1, Kate Winslet reported how incredible the international success had been. When walking in the Himalayas she passed a local man, who turned to her and in broken English said 'You. Titanic.' much to her amazement. The film had travelled well and she was an internationally recognised figure.

The box-office success was staggering [in the UK alone, nearly £G9 million was taken at the box office. Further revenue was received from the music soundtrack release, from video sales and from tie-in deals with television companies gearing up to screen it the following year. The video promotion was to sell the video with accompanying 'stills' from the film. The tie-in deals are an essential aspect of a film's success.

In pairs, research a 'high concept' film on current release. You will need to look for the range of ways in which the film is constructed to appeal to international audiences. Use the following points to help organise your thoughts:

- In what ways is the film being marketed as an event not to be missed?
- What use of special effects are made?
- Who are the stars?
- What is the importance of the soundtrack?
- What potential is there for profit in other texts, for example games or merchandise?
- How successful might it be overseas?
- How easy is it going to be to distribute?

Pokemon

Pokemon [The First Movie], released in April 2000 is a 'nigh concept' film built on the back of previous success in other 'windows'. It was first a game, then a cartoon, a set of cards and merchandise, and then a film. How does it appeal to an international audience?

New Hollywood practices aim to bring together production and distribution strategies, as it has always done. However, changes in the ways in which texts are consumed have meant that the industry has to be aware of how a film might succeed in different markets.

Consider the following:

- If a film is not successful in the cinema, how can it be made successful in other ways?
- Just owning cinema screens is not good enough business for the film industry. It is also important to own video, some shares in television companies, some shares in the music industry and in retail outlets for merchandise. If the film does not make money in one place, it might be able to make it in another. Owning studios and television companies is important. Owning the rights to produce, to distribute and to exhibit is vital. This is called **vertical integration**, meaning that, all the processes of making a film and selling to an audience are kept in one place. You can read more about vertical integration in the next section on Hollywood 'past'. It means something more in 'new' Hollywood practices than it did in old.
- If audiences do not watch the film in one place, how might a film maker reach these different audiences to invite them to engage with the film, or aspects of the film, that will entice them to watch the next production?

The Hollywood studio system 1930-1948

This period in Hollywood has often been referred to as the 'Golden Age' when production of films was recognised as efficient and profit-making by the rest of the world. The general points made here are to help you think through the differences between the Hollywood of the past and the Hollywood of the present. You will need to find out much more than the information given here.

ESSENTIAL POINTS

- The Hollywood studio system that operated successfully from 1930-1948 worked on a 'production-line model', much like other industries.
- Studios were organisations that combined the three essential interests of the filmmaking business.
- Studios were run by moguls who oversaw the work of all concerned.
- All the interests necessary to create profit from the film-making industry were situated under one roof.

PRODUCTION Raising the money for a film, bringing together actors, directors, and technicians to create the film.

DISTRIBUTION Personnel who could see the marketing potential of a film and create the right publicity and conditions for circulating the text

EXHIBITION Studios owned chains of cinemas into which they could block-book their films.

The success of Hollywood in this period can be attributed to a number of factors:

ADVANTAGES

- ❶ The consolidation of the three processes ensured that films were seen by audiences, profit was made and returned.
- ❷ The construction of a tightly-reigned industry was a real attempt to minimise risk and maximise profits. If one film failed, another could do very well and future production not put at risk
- ❸ As studios did not have to worry about the problems of getting their films seen, they could turn their attention to filmmaking as an art. Hollywood developed a narrative system, a system of stars and a process of marketing and reviewing that has stood it in good stead.

KEY CHANGES

In 1948 the Paramount Decree broke the power of the studios and forced them to sell off their cinema chains. This effectively meant the end of vertical integration whereby major studios owned and controlled the means of film production, distribution and exhibition. The closed practices of the studio system were ended and stars found a new freedom to choose a greater range of film roles.

DISADVANTAGES

- ❶ Film stars complained that they were compromised by the system, that the studios controlled them and had to work in genres and roles that 'typecast' them. They wanted some artistic liberty.
- ❷ **Filmmaking was accused of being** too formulaic, that it did not take risks and became too concerned with the certainty of success rather than experimenting with other forms.
- ❸ Independent film makers and films from other countries found it very hard to compete with the strength of the Hollywood studio system.

What Happened in Britain?

Study the columns below about the differences in practices between Hollywood and Britain in the reign of the Hollywood studio system.

THE HOLLYWOOD STUDIO SYSTEM

Hollywood was highly efficient at producing, distributing and exhibiting films.

The Hollywood studio system produced a wide range of films and Developed cinema as an 'art form'. [They generate their own money - they can do what they like!

The Hollywood studio system always put distribution and marketing at the fore, Stars, in the 1920s, as today, would follow a big film release around the world to promote it, participating in Premieres and press junkets.

Cinema-going in America has always been an exciting experience. Multiplexes are big, airy and comfortable with high quality sound and good refreshments, turning watching a movie into an event

THE BRITISH FILM INDUSTRY

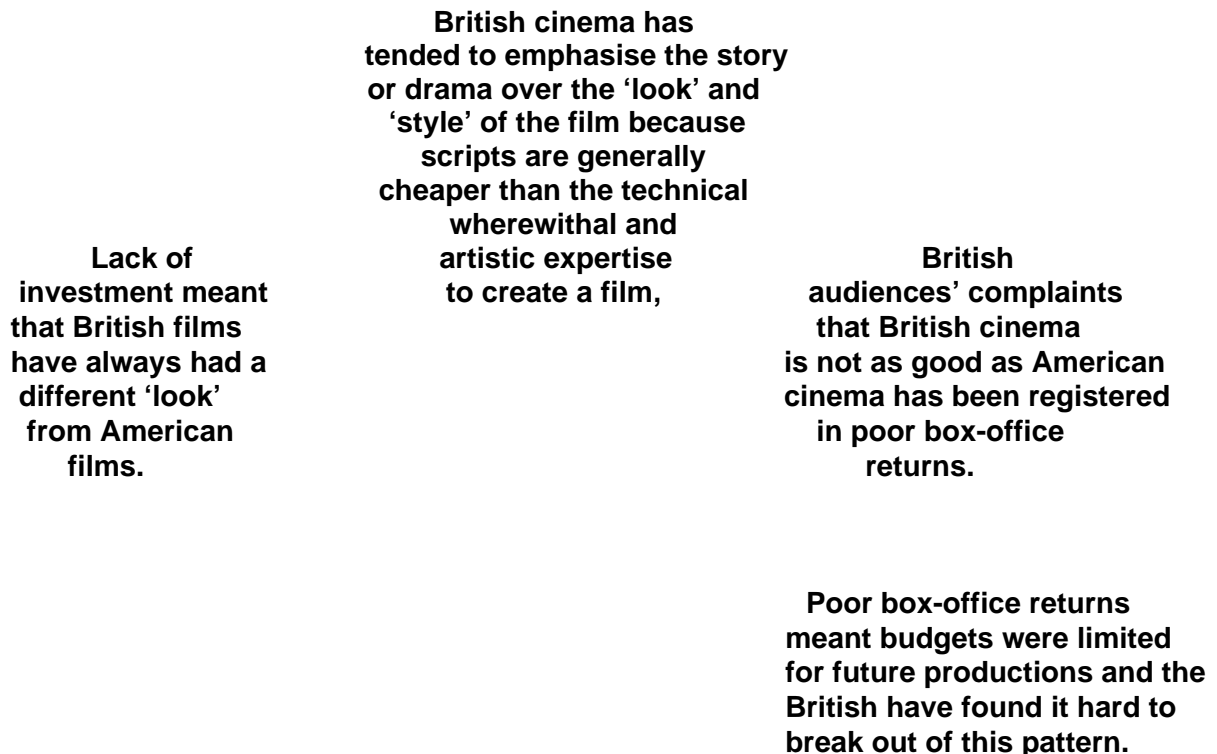
The British did produce films. However, they were generally poor at distribution, and until recently, exhibition.

There have been incidences in the British 'mini-studio system' of producing a range of films, for instance the Ealing comedies. However, one non-profit making film could cause a studio collapse and bring new productions to a grinding halt!

Poor marketing budgets meant that 'unknown' stars in the UK did not get to promote their films abroad. British stars are better known for their work in Hollywood than they are in the UK.

Until recently cinemas in Britain were small, cramped and often admissions were expensive. Multiplexes have reintroduced some 'glamour' to the cinema-going experience as well as more choice. Audience attendance has improved.

The financial problems Britain had in competing with the Hollywood studio system had a significant effect on the kinds of films that were made. Look at the effect of the industrial flow on profit and future investment.



The Film Council has been set up by the government to counteract this negativity around the British film industry. Its plans and strategies, revealed on 2nd May 2000, are to encourage cultural and commercial film activity. One of the Film Council's long term objectives is to develop the film industry and encourage investment

Is it important to have a 'national' film industry?

There are clear financial benefits for defining a film as originating from a particular place, for example *The Full Monty* [1997] was:

- created from an idea by an Italian producer, Uberto Pasolini , based in Britain
- directed by Peter Cattaneo, a British director, with an all -British cast
- originated from a screenplay by a British screenwriter, Simon Beaufoy. FilmFour paid for the script to be developed.
- marketed by Fox Searchlight, an American distributor, who put all the money for the film's production.
- very successful in Britain
- very successful abroad

**Is the Full Monty a British or an American film?
Discuss your definition and justify it.**

Creatively *The Full Monty* is an entirely British product but in terms of its impact worldwide, and the success it enjoyed as a result of the marketing, the American input and influence was important.

Co-production, that is, help from the American distributor in putting on the money, was clearly important. It meant that the film was made. However, co-production has downsides too. The profits from the film were returned to Fox Searchlight, the American distributor, and not to the British film industry. There were benefits in giving the film, its stars and director a high profile and put them in demand for future projects but they did not gain from the film financially and other films were not made in Britain on the back of *The Full Monty's* profits.

One of the challenges for people working in the British film industry has been to arrive at a clear definition of a film and where it comes from. This is not an easy task. Look at the following example:

What do you think determines the nationality of *The Beach*?

The Beach [2000] was a film made from a book written by a British author, Alex Garland [screenplay by John Hodge].

- it had a British director, Danny Boyle
- the majority of the cast were American, led by Leonardo Di Caprio
- it had a soundtrack by British band, All Saints
- it was filmed in Thailand
- it had an American distributor
- it was exhibited worldwide

Write down what you think makes a film 'British'. would you define the film's nationality according to the following points?

- the kind of story
- the script (language]
- the setting/landscape
- the iconography
- the stars/characters
- the style (lighting, editing, direction)
- any other features?

Discuss what you think the distinctive aspects of the following British films were and what led to their success.

- Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels (Guy Ritchie, 1998)
- Trainspotting (Danny Boyle, 1995)
- Notting Hill (Roger Michell, 1999]
- Four Weddings and a Funeral (Mike Newell, 1994)

Using a listings magazine, identify films which are on current release that you believe to be British. Prepare to discuss the why you think these films are British. Use the list of pointers above to help analyse the films.

Where is the British film industry today?

There have been various new initiatives to encourage the profitability of British film making to produce, what is called, a 'British' film. In 1998, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport [A Bigger Picture - The Report of the Film Policy Review Group, published by DCMS and NOT Making Movies Matter] initiated a Film Review Group whereby various professionals working in the film industry devised a series of proposals to make the British film industry function better in today's marketplace. The first stage was to identify problems. A spokesperson from PolyGram [a major distributor] said:

'The British film industry is renowned for its creativity but we need to improve distribution and training, get closer to our audiences and take a more global perspective. Only then will British film have a brighter future in the worldwide movie business.'

The success of Hollywood's film industry throughout the twentieth century [training, distribution, getting close to audiences, having a global perspective] meant that British filmmaking has always been in a 'catch-up' situation. Many people would argue that having a healthy film industry is a vital means of representing ourselves, as we see ourselves, part of preserving national identity. However, in a multi-cultural Britain with moves towards devolution in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, what does this concept of identity mean and is it worth representing?

In groups, debate what you think the issues are of having a film industry that can represent the diversity of British cultural life. What do you think the British film industry does well? What do you think it does badly? What would you like to see the British film industry dealing with? [Some of the more successful films, for example *Trainspotting* [1995] and *Human Traffic* [1999] have been concerned with issues affecting the young.]

This whole concept of national identity is a difficult one. Films produced in America are intended to appeal to a global audience, rather than just a national one. Films that seek to represent particular American stories that specifically question aspects of American cultural identity are often made in the independent, rather than in the mainstream sector, with a view to having a specific audience appeal as opposed to a mass audience appeal. Is there soon a thing as a British film which is produced for a global audience? What are the differences in American and British film production?

In Britain there have been moves in the 1980s and 1990s amongst filmmakers to embrace the whole idea of international audiences. Capturing a global audience's imagination would have clear benefits for the British film industry by bringing money into Britain and enabling other films to be made. Appreciating American audiences, or using an American star, means that American distributors would be more interested in part-financing a British venture. There are very few investors in business that do not want to see their money returned.

The potential disadvantage with co-production, or creating to 'formula', is that actors and directors may have to compromise on the kinds of film they wish to make. Part-financing a film project sometimes comes with conditions attached. These conditions might be creative or artistic ones, decisions that are ordinarily in the control of the filmmaker might well be being made by those who raise the money.

Previews, before a film is released, is one way of ensuring audiences' response. Distributors have been known to insist on changing the ending of a film to ensure that the film will have a better chance of being successful. There can be a conflict between the economic and creative sides of film making in these circumstances, that is why it is important to consider film making as both an economic and creative process.

Outlined below are two films which are currently in pre-production. Examine the synopses and production details, bearing in mind the following points:

- What makes each of the films distinctively British?
- What factors would contribute to their saleability worldwide?
- What advice might you have for the producer of each to ensure they get maximum publicity for the film?
- What do you think the best distribution strategies would be?

[CREATE A TITLE FOR THIS FILM]

American actor [played by an American actor] survives a plane crash off the shores of the Pembrokeshire coast in Wales. The local community seem friendly enough but do not seem to share his concerns about being cut off from the rest of the world. He has lost his mobile phone, has only got the clothes he stands up in and doesn't know how to get home. Before long, he has completely fallen in love with the Welsh landscape and quirky way of life of the locals. The hotel proprietor turns out to be more of a woman than the Hollywood versions he is used to, and he faces a life-changing decision of abandoning his past and opting for the romantic British way of life.

Cast: *American male star; British female star with high profile in US [Catherine Zeta Jones]*

Director: *Roger Michell [directed Notting Hill] Budget: [£20m] - part American finance; part FilmFour. US distribution deal guaranteed.*

Soundtrack: *Catatonia and Tom Jones*

CAR WASHING [Comedy caper with 'feel good' factor]

The car industry in Birmingham is closing down as American investors pull out and the men of the town find themselves having to reconsider their future. The unemployed men are eager to retain their pride in the car industry. To show their commitment to hare graft they establish a car wash and valeting service right outside the closed factory. Amongst their customers are the American investors who have decided their fate in the boardroom, a group of Japanese investors looking for a new site for their own car plant and a work force that can make it competitive. The lead character discovers documents in the American Managing Director's BMW that show that the car plant could have been profitable but has been mismanaged. The heat is on for the men to let the new investors know the plant is a going concern and show that they are the workforce to take the investment forward.

Cast: *Strong British television drama cast [not known in US] Estimated budget: £3.9M [FilmFour/European co-funding - no US deal yet]*

Soundtrack: *Rose Royce [1970s, Car Wash soundtrack]*

British film and television

The British film industry revived itself somewhat in the 1980s and 1990s, not because it established a studio system to compare with Hollywood, but through the ways in which television has become an important backer of filmmaking. The most familiar entrant into this field was FilmFour who developed a scheme to finance films for release in the cinema as well as on the television. As, in most financial enterprises, it involved a high-risk strategy - which films will make it and recover costs and which ones will fail?

Being able to exhibit a film in more than one place [cinema, television and on video] increases the opportunities for recovering money from the filmmaking use process. FilmFour has had an important role in helping to develop new talent and provide a space for innovation. It is not hugely profitable, nor has FilmFour resolved the industry's problems, but **it** has become an **important** player.

Research the role of FilmFour. What does this digital channel provide? [You may want to use a listings magazine or newspaper television listings to see how they organise the exhibition of films.] How, and why, has it been important in reviving British filmmaking?

British film needs to be distinctive and profitable. Why do we need to define a film by its nationality? As mentioned before, there are both economic and creative reasons for being precise about a film's nationality. Films are currently defined by national origin - the percentage of technical and creative input. A definition can achieve the following gains:

- A successful British film ensures profits are returned to Britain and these profits can be used to make other films.
- having the money to make films ensures a greater diversity of films [look at all the different kinds of films coming from America].
- The American film industry is so successful that it is able to support a buoyant independent industry, for example the Coen brothers, Spike Lee etc. Having a vibrant independent sector feeds ideas to the mainstream, enhancing creativity.
- Hollywood has had the advantage of feeding audience expectations because of its successful industry. American films are good but there are many ways to tell a story. Britain, like other cultures, needs to compete. It is creative to have many stories, styles, genres, stars and special effects. Blockbusters and smaller films all have a place in our culture and all have audiences' appeal.

In this section of the study guide, you have had opportunities to explore the role of the film industry, to think about the ways in which film production, distribution and exhibition has changed and what the significance of those changes are for audiences. You may want to revise this whole section through answers to questions such as those below:

- In what ways is the Hollywood of today different- to the Hollywood at the studio age?
- How, and why, is Hollywood dominant in the global marketplace?
- What chance has British film got in this marketplace?

- Giving examples from recent releases, what appears to make a British film popular?
- Is there a difference in a 'British' film being popular with a British audience than with an international audience?

- What should British filmmakers do to make their films distinctive from Hollywood?
- If Hollywood cannot be beaten, should Britain join them?
- Is it possible for the British film industry to become as successful as Hollywood?

One of the central objectives of the film industry is to encourage the public to part with money and buy a ticket to see the films in the cinema. Indeed continuing to make films depends upon them being able to get you, the AUDIENCE, to do this. The film industry works in three distinct stages. These stages - production, distribution and exhibition - have to work together to encourage audience attendance and ensure box-office return.

- PRODUCTION** Money needs to be raised to support scriptwriting and development, to negotiate fees for actors and directors, to pay film makers and editors, to pay for lighting, costumes and location costs etc. This money comes from an initial risk-taking enterprise that is recouped at a later stage when audiences go to the box office and see a film; it is the box office estimate that is the basis for budgetary decisions.
- DISTRIBUTION** It is through distribution strategies that we, as an audience, first get to know about a film. In most big budget films the distribution deal is secured **before filming** takes place. This aspect of the industry deals with the marketing and promotion of the film through the production of trailers, posters, film reviews, film festivals, previews and merchandise. The distributors are also interested in how many sites a film will be seen in, in video and television deals, plus cable and satellite distribution. Increasingly, the internet has become an important vehicle for distributing information about a film.
- EXHIBITION** This is the stage of the industry where you experience the film itself and the area you are likely to be most familiar with. It refers to the place where the film is seen and since the 1980s, most films that go on general release are seen in multiplex cinemas. These are cinemas with many screens and have facilities designed to make the experience comfortable and enjoyable. Exhibitors pay attention to local marketing, food and drink inside the auditorium, issues about air-conditioning, sound and vision maximisation etc.

Whilst Hollywood is rightly described as the centre of the world film industry [it does indeed produce the majority of all films seen worldwide] it is not in a position to feel secure that the strategies it uses to attract audience attention always work. There is no magic formula as to why films work at some times and not at others. A new film sometimes excites audiences and sometimes they do not want to know! Read what one American fan wrote about *Godzilla* on the internet:

FRAUDZILLA

From the beginning I was all for an American version of my favourite international movie star, but things started to worry me within the past year. And by the way, I know I take Godzilla WAY too seriously. The ol' Hollywood rumour mill was churning out whispers of insight into the film being produced by Tri-Star. C-FAN had been publishing these rumours as nothing more [because Centropolis would not give any confirmation]. That I can understand. I was kind of open to the appearance of Godzilla being 'altered.' In fact my old artistic hero, Art Adams, published a very small piece entitled Trampling Tokyo in the last few pages of his Creature Feature graphic novel. Unfortunately some images were leaked out from the Centropolis. These images were seen in magazines, over the Internet and even printed on some T-shirts. When Centropolis found this out, they issued a statement that these were fakes. And as the months continued I discovered that there were several changes to be made about Godzilla's origin. Not only his origin was to be changed, not only his appearance, but also his famous attributes. He was reported to be very fast and agile. His ability to ignore conventional weaponry was to be ignored itself. And the worst two: [1] Godzilla would not carry his patented atomic ray and [2] he was going to lay a whole mess of eggs in Madison Square Gardens. Upon this discovery I composed a lengthy letter to Dean Devlin & Ronland Emmerich at Centropolis and wrote to many people with Godzilla websites, imploring them to vocalise any opinions they might have about these changes directly to the company in charge. Centropolis wrote back saying this, 'Thanks for your interest in the film. I do not think you'll be disappointed on Memorial Bay. Unfortunately, we cannot divulge information about the movie but the movie is going to be amazing.'

Well I was more than disappointed. I was angry. I felt like I had been deceived about him. For some reason I had a false hope before the film opened. I just thought it was lame. Godzilla didn't look threatening. And, except for his size, he wasn't!

OK I've been rambling on about this for too long now. You're probably saying, 'Jeez. . It's only a movie'. But it's more than that. it's Godzilla.

Comment on this American fan's response to the film. [This review is part of a fan-based counter-culture where fans can engage in their own particular discourse.]

Now read what a film academic has to say:

'Targeted with almost fascistic precision, the three trailers were released at key points in the American film-going year [Independence Day, Thanksgiving and New Year Holidays], accompanied such suitably blockbuster titles as Men in Black and Starship Troopers and received standing ovations from audiences... The masterstroke of these trailers is the decision to show only a part of the monster [an eye, a foot], thus delivering a double dividend - audiences are set drooling at the thought of the scale and destructiveness of the complete beast and persuaded to forget the palpably man-in-a-rubber-suit Godzilla of the kitschy Japanese originals.

Can you think of a film which has been badly received by the critics - and yet - which audiences like precisely for the reason they have been so badly reviewed? Video viewing plays an important part in creating cult- status for films. Who chooses the films you watch with your contemporaries on video? Where do you watch them? what is the event?

Who are the audiences for these two reviews?

Godzilla did achieve a reasonable box-office return but it was not critically well received. It did appear to have many of the features that usually contribute to a film's success with incredible special effects, as Andy Medhurst commented above.

Whilst the cinema industry has budgets to create publicity and does its best to distribute information through a range of print and visual media, it cannot control the ways in which audiences may respond to a film. One of the most significant tools for distributors in creating interest for a film is **word of mouth** that effectively creates a 'buzz' about a film.

The problem with word of mouth is, like the example from the website on the previous page, it can backfire. It may be that, from the industry's point of view, audiences respond negatively to a film. There is always a dynamic, arc therefore unpredictable, element in the way audiences respond.

Film audiences past and present

In Film and Media Studies the view of the audience has undergone a great

deal of change. In the heyday of Hollywood, from the 1930s to the 1960s, the main task of promoting a film was a little easier as there was not so much competition for audiences from other media - television, video, cable and satellite did not exist. Nevertheless, there was competition amongst film studios, for audiences and there were various attempts to package films according to particular selling points, for example stars, genres, directors and special effects. These same selling devices are evident in trailers and posters for films today.

Media production has increased throughout the twentieth century to give audiences the opportunity to experience stories told in a range of media: cinema, television, magazines and on the internet and the task of attracting audiences to see films at the cinema has not become easier, but arguably, more difficult with so much competition.

With these media developments the cinema-going audience has a more challenging point of view. The audience is no longer viewed by producers or theorists as easily influenced into 'buying' their product. Instead, knowing the audience and how to appeal to them has become a source of considerable research and debate.

Looking at yourselves as an audience

Within your class there are certain features that bind you together as an audience. You are part of the ever-coveted 15-24 age group - the audience that goes to the cinema the most. Generally, the leisure industry is made up of more than just the cinema. There is huge competition to get the audience to spend their 'leisure pound' [a term used by the industry for the money people spend on leisure pursuits] in the cinema, rather than somewhere else. It is almost certain that whilst there are certain films you are all likely to see, there will also be variations in your tastes.

In pairs, discuss the last two films you have seen at the cinema and the last two you watched on video. Try to identify the main reason for your choices. What made you choose those films in particular?

Compare your choices to another pair, how similar or different are they? What factors accounted for your different choices? Where did you see them and with whom? What form did they take - were they cinema screenings, were they on video, DVD, on the internet, on satellite or terrestrial television? As a class, feed back the most cited films. Debate the reasons why most of you have seen those films.

In this section you have thought about the role of the film industry and how it considers attracting the audiences' attention. Do film fans influence decisions about the movies? Now read this excerpt from a report in the Evening Standard:

10,000 Empire magazine readers... were asked to respond to a variety of questions about the film industry, from who has Hollywood's best body to who is the most overpaid star. Asked who should be the new James Bond, most readers plumped for the rising star Jude Law...The couple we most want to see united on the big screen are real-life husband and wife Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston, said to be looking for a film project together at the moment. Brad Pitt won the coveted title of Best Body in the movies...in the female category, Denise Richards came out on top with Heather Graham, Salma Hayek, Jennifer Lopez and Buffy the Vampire Slayer's Sarah Michelle Gellar runners-up... Sam Mendes was named the most promising director of the new century...Arnold Schwarzenegger's acting 'talents' saw him chosen as the most overpaid star and as the one who should take early retirement. Terrible movie clichés were picked up on by readers. The worst was Robin Williams in yet another sensitive film role. Almost as bad is any plot about characters who start off hating each other but end up as friends.'

Sarah Shannon, Evening Standard, 5th May 2000

- 1. What is the point of conducting such a huge survey?**
- 2. Do you think there are any lessons the film industry might learn from discovering what fans really think?**

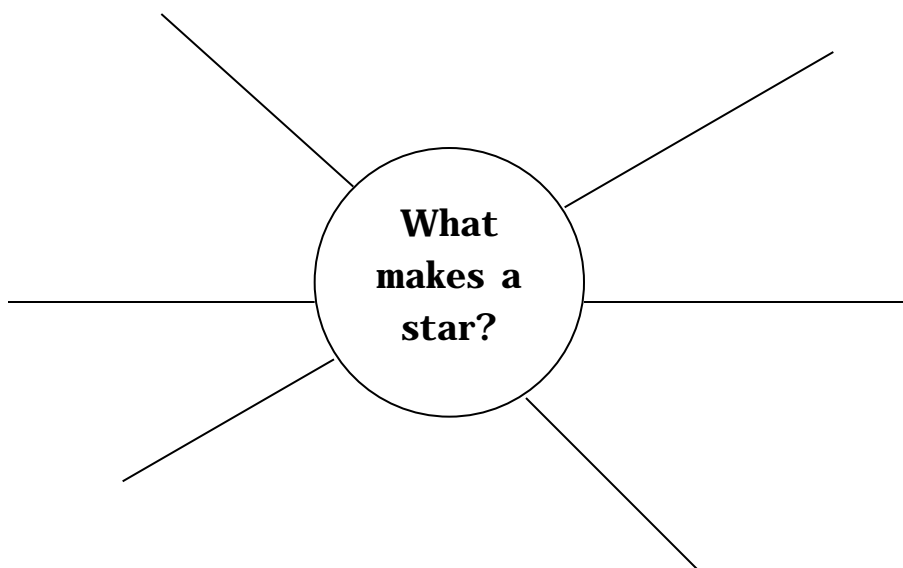
Film industry distribution strategies and fan responses

One of the biggest tasks facing the film industry is how to sell their product to an audience. Audiences watch films for a number of reasons. These may be to do with the following:

- narrative - a great storyline
- genre - a particular type of story e.g. horror or science fiction
- production values - e.g. special effects
- stars - and what those stars mean to people
- other connected merchandise and media products that extend interest in the original text e.g. video or computer games

In this section you are invited to consider the role of the 'star' in the process of 'selling a film' and to reflect upon the ways in which audiences have been invited to identify with stars for films. What makes a film actor a 'star'?

In groups, discuss your favourite film star [if you do not have a current favourite, think about one that you used to like!] Using the spidergram [below] try to uncover the reasons why this person has moved from being merely an actor to what might be termed as a 'star'. What are their special qualities?



Contemporary Stars

The construction of 'stars' is essentially an industry-led phenomenon. The qualities of the actor become joined with the qualities of the characters that they play. Look at how this works with the following actors:

ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER

an ex-Mr Universe, a muscle-bound actor who became a star by playing 'muscle-bound' parts. The potential for humour in this huge man playing a more sensitive figure was attempted in films such as *Junior* [1994] & and *Twins* [1998].

The audience expects a display of physical prowess from Schwarzenegger. Try and think about whether it would work for him to play a serious role where his strength and physicality were not important.

TOM HANKS

has been playing the role of the sensitive American man in many different genres of films from *Sleepless in Seattle* [1993] to *Forrest Gump* [1994] to *Saving Private Ryan* [1997] to *The Green Mile* [2000].

In each of these films he plays an essentially good character struggling with questions of morality and the greater good. Do you think it would be possible for an audience to read him as a conventional villain?

LEONARDO DiCAPRIO

made his film debut playing a retarded boy in *What's Eating Gilbert Grape* [1993], a low-budget film about family and community and went on to play Romeo in William Shakespeare's *Romeo Juliet* [1991] and Jack Dawson in *Titanic*. DiCaprio is essentially an object of romantic interest for young women. How does this fit with your view of him as a star?

According to the film critic Richard Dyer, a 'star' can be defined from the following elements:

- 1 PROMOTION** What the producers of a film let be known about the star. This might be details of where they have come from. Especially exciting is when a star has apparently been plucked from obscurity.
- 2 PUBLICITY** What is known about the star from newspaper clippings, magazine articles or interviews in a range of media. A key aspect of Tom Cruise's star status, often referred to in publicity, is his marriage to the Australian actress Nicole Kidman. What does this additional information contribute to your understanding of him as a star?
- 3 FILMS** The kinds of roles made to draw out the 'star' qualities, such as in the example given earlier about Arnold Schwarzenegger. His film roles have used his special qualities as a body builder.
- 4 CRITICISM AND COMMENTARY** Essentially this is the 'currency' or 'value' of the star. To what extent is their work critically acclaimed? How are they debated as a star? As a fantastic actor? As a brilliant screen presence? As a professional stunt person?

Other critics have argued that a star is best defined as someone who is positioned between the ordinary and the extraordinary, that means that they may represent at one and the same time, someone that we might actually know and someone who we aspire to know. Most of the audience will never see a famous film star outside of the two main ways in which the star is known:

- the star is made available to the audience via the films that they star in
- the star is made available to the audience via the various publicity that they appear in

Channels of communication film publicity

The daily newspapers are an important source of information about new films and film stars. The tabloid press can be generally relied upon to reveal any particularly interesting gossip about stars or directors. The audience can be persuaded against a film by reviews or criticism/gossip about stars in exactly the same way that they can be swayed to go and see it. Nevertheless, magazines that make the reviewing of films and their stars a central focus are a vital source of distribution for film stars.

Film magazines have a number of different functions. Some magazines are owned by the film industry and are a way of organising reviews [however, the film industry does not control the review process, indeed, bad reviews are something it dreads] and getting information about a film across to distributors, exhibitors and reviewers rather than to audiences. Variety magazine does this. Most film magazines, however, are about giving the audience information about films. Here are a few examples:

Empire magazine is a review vehicle. It gives up-to-date information about films on release or due for release, as well as information about stars and award ceremonies. It is targeted at film fans and is available in newsagents.

Sight and Sound magazine is funded by the British Film Institute and organises reviews and information about films for a more scholarly audience interested in the study of film. It is sold in large newsagents and is also available by subscription.

Time Out magazine is the main listings magazine for 'What's On' in London and provides extensive reviews about films, stars, and where to see the films. It also deals with other listings, such as theatre, music and nightclubs. It is available weekly, through newsagents.

Flicks magazine, like **Empire**, is a review magazine and organises information about new releases on film and video. It provides gossip on the stars and directors and records interviews. It is aimed at film fans. It is a monthly publication and is available in newsagents. The language of **Flicks** is much more down-to-earth than **Sight and Sound** and expects to meet with a younger target audience.

In the April 2000 issue of **Flicks** Kate Winslet appeared on the front cover with the caption 'Why We Love Kate. A Proper Woman? In Hollywood? What Is Ms Winslet Thinking Of?' Inside the magazine there was an interview with Kate Winslet. Below are some excerpts from the interview. What impression of Kate Winslet do these excerpts give? How do these comments contribute to your expectation of Kate Winslet as a star?

'I was never fond of being girly. I was always much happier climbing trees.'

'I suppose I am really famous now, but I feel embarrassed to say that because it's just a bit daft for me', she admits. 'When I thought of becoming an actress, I never had fantasies about being a movie star'.

'I'm not a model and I'm not a stick.'

Now read Flicks' review of the film:

Holy Smoke: Indian cults, brainwashing, Kate weeing down her leg and Harvey in the buff. If proof were still needed as to the blessed talent of Kate Winslet, then doubting Thomases need only watch Holy Smoke. Unfortunately there is little else in Jane 'The Piano' Campion's movie that inspires similar devotion.

Winslet is Ruth, a headstrong young Australian woman who travels to India, becomes fascinated-or is it brainwashed? - by a guru and decides to remain there as his disciple. Naturally her suburban mum is horrified at the thought, and fashions a family plot to lure her back home, where slick-haired, cocksure American cult-buster PJ [Keitel] is waiting to bring her back to her senses. Or at least try.

When it's concentrating on the shifting power games between Ruth and PJ, Holy Smoke is absorbing stuff, with Campion and her sister Anna's screenplay playing around with interesting ideas about sexual identity and May-December relationships amid a luminous desert landscape. And Winslet is mesmerising, delivering a raw naked [literally] performance that sometimes leaves the well-travelled Keitel struggling to keep up.

But *Campion* doesn't have the courage of her convictions, explicitly breaking up the intense two-handers with some would-be light-hearted nonsense involving Ruth's tiresomely dysfunctional family, thereby destroying the impetus of the drama. And poor Pam Grier, in the briefest of cameos as PJ's long-suffering girlfriend, is completely wasted. The emotionally charged Winslet, and to a lesser extent Keitel, deserve better.

Simon Wardell

The attention paid to Kate Winslet in this issue of *Flicks* supports what Richard Dyer has said about what being a star means for the industry:

- stars help to promote films, here *Holy Smoke*
- stars and their lives give publicity to a film
- the star exists not just in their new role but in relation to previous film roles
- her value as a star is debated in the criticism or review of the film

ESSAY

In what ways might it be argued that Kate Winslet's star status in *Flicks* has been constructed from positioning her between the ordinary and the extraordinary?

FURTHER RESEARCH

Using magazines and other sources such as, television film review programmes, newspaper reviews etc. trace how a contemporary film star is represented to the audience. You should collect a dossier of clippings and, as in your analysis of Kate Winslet, create a presentation showing how the star has been constructed.

Channels of communication - the internet

The internet has become a powerful , new marketing tool for film distributors as it is in the film industry's interests to use new technology to generate interest in stars and films.

Examine the ways in which the internet is being used by film distributors to encourage the audiences' interaction with stars.

www.seeing-stars.com

- Spend some time examining now this website works.
- Select one star each and prepare a presentation to deliver to the rest of the class on what you have learned about the star.
- In searching for information about a star, what other information did you find?
- What is the purpose of this information?

FANS USE THE INTERNET TOO!

The internet is a technology that provides the potential for ordinary fans, audiences and web-surfers to create their own kinds of interest. The film industry attempts to control the image of a star we, the audience, are given. In all publicity there is careful attention paid to how the star is to be represented to audiences. It does **not** have control, however, on how fans/audiences re-interpret and re-represent that information themselves.

Look at the information on below: In April 2000 these were just some of the many websites found on the internet about Leonardo DiCaprio.

- **what are these websites attempting to do**
- **What are these websites attempting to do?**
- **How does a fan activity correspond with, or differ from, industry representations of Leonardo DiCaprio?**
- **What expectations do these sites seem to have of Leonardo DiCaprio?**
- **What issues do you think might be involved in any attempts the film industry may make to reconstruct Leonardo DiCaprio as the 'hard man' of Hollywood?**

ESSAY

From the evidence on above and from your own studies should the film industry take fan behaviour seriously? What should the film industry do to learn about, and respond to, the behaviour of fans?

OR...

In what ways do you think fan behaviour might be powerful enough to influence the activities of the movie industry?

Mia's Cool Leonardo DiCaprio Page

<http://members.tripod.com/~miadavis>

Have pretty pictures of Leonardo DiCaprio in the movie Romeo and Juliet. have a lot of cool pictures of Leonardo! Have lots of pictures and interesting facts about the movie.

Leonardo DiCaprio

www.geocities.com/Hollywood/

You are visitor number... Hi! I'm Karinz and welcome to my Leo's Page. I built this page last December 1996 with the inspiration of Leo of course! Leo is one of the most gorgeous men alive.

My Lil Piece of Leo

www.geocities.com/Hollywood/

Click me to vote. I would love for you to link my site! You can use this banner. Or, choose from a variety of banners I have made, by clicking here! Learn more about me.

Leonardo DiCaprio: The Romeo of Hollywood 'My career should adapt to me. Fame is like a VIP pass takes you wherever you want to go. ' -

www.geocities.com/Hollywood/

Leonardo DiCaprio Photo Gallery, Filmography, Quotes, Biography, Multimedia Links, Sign My Guesthook, View My Guestbook.

Welcome to the DiCaprio den

www.angelfire.com/tx/r12/leo

Hello and welcome to the DiCaprio den. The DiCaprio den is a compilation of all things Leo. Previously, a site called simply, 'Leonardo DiCaprio' presided here. It has morphed into a much bigger and better site; one you can now enjoy here.

Tribeca - Leonardo DiCaprio

www.tribecca.com/celeb/l/leo

My Romeo, The Hottest Guy on Earth, Leonardo DiCaprio. This page is dedicated to my Romeo, Leonardo DiCaprio.

The Completely Unofficial Leonardo
dicaprio.com/

Definitive source of information on actor Leonardo DiCaprio on the net. Includes biographical information, photos, filmography, quicktime movies, and links to other DiCaprio sites.

My Official Leonardo DiCaprio Page!

<http://members.tripod.com/~Leonardo>

My Leonardo DiCaprio Page Has Been Enjoyed Many Times! My Official Leonardo DiCaprio Page!! Leonardo DiCaprio has to be the world's hottest, most talented actor of all time.

GENRE

If stars might be seen as one important device for focusing audience response, so too is the kind or type of film being sold. Genre is a French word and it essentially means 'type'. When applied in Film Studies, it means what type of film it is, for example comedy, western etc. Most films are made according to certain generic conventions. The importance of this is that audiences have clear expectations of what they are to see, and will make decisions on that basis.

Though there have been times in Hollywood's history when films were made to quite strict generic conventions it is unlikely the industry would have continued to be so successful if all it did was to produce the same kinds of films all the time. Most horror films are recognisable for sharing certain conventions, yet variations in plot, setting, use of stars ensures films can provide something new for the audience.

Examine the publicity [below] for the film *Scream*. You will find 'stars' are not mentioned in this publicity. How is the film sold on genre?

The sleepy little town of Woodsboro just woke up screaming. There's a killer in their midst who's seen a few too many scary movies. Suddenly, nobody is safe, as the psychopath stalks victims, taunts them with trivia questions, then rips them ~ bloody shreds. It could be anybody Sidney, the quiet high school beauty with an ugly past... Billy, her faithful boyfriend with a frustrated sex life.. Tatum, her cute best friend with an answer for everything... Casey, the lovely blonde who knows thrillers... Geeky Randy, the scary movie fanatic... Stuart, the wild partier... Gale, the overeager television reporter... even Dewey, the syrupy-sweet police officer. The only hope is to stay one step ahead of this crazed slasher - know your trivia. The clues are there; are you good enough to see them?

The same kinds of issues about internet access pertain to the ways in which film fans interact with certain genres of films as it does with the ways in which fans have created their own sites about stars. The official websites are eager to present the information for the film in conventional ways drawing attention to stars, to the plot or to the director. The clear advantage of the internet is that these traditional distribution strategies can be brought together. If the internet offers flexibility and new ways of marketing to audiences, it can also be argued that the internet offers new ways for audiences to interact with film. The 'official' *Scream* site had links to other horror sites and attempted to guide the audience into seeing *Scream* within that context. Fan sites of '*Scream*' attempt to do this rather more individually.

Examine the sites and links from the fan site www.geocities.com

When examining websites you need to consider the following:

- What kind of information does the site bring together?
- Assess the quality and range of reviews of the film, official and unofficial.
- What images does the site make use of to gain your attention, for example posters, trailers, actors' profiles etc?
- Is there any sound?
- Is there any merchandise?
- What links are recommended?

Measuring audiences .reading and interpreting information

So far you have undertaken a fair degree of reflective work on yourself as an audience and the ways in which fans use the internet to express their interest in stars and in films generally. Now you need to look at the ways in which the industry attempts to record audience behaviour.

Study the following three tables. For each of the tables prepare a brief presentation in groups on what the information tells you. How important might this information be in guiding what the film industry does, i.e. what films seem popular, why and in what ways might this shape future production?

1

TOP 10 FILMS AT THE UK BOX OFFICE 1998

Film	Country of Origin	Box Office Gross [EM]
<i>Titanic</i> [12]	US	66,971,532
<i>Doctor Doolittle</i> [HG]	US	19,854,598
<i>Saving Private Ryan</i> [15]	US	17,875,260
<i>Armageddon</i> [12]	US	16,506,605
<i>Godzilla</i> [PD]	US	15,974,736
<i>There's Something About Mary</i> [15]	US	15,665,386
<i>Sliding Doors</i> [15]	US/UK	12,434,715
<i>Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels</i> [18]UK		11,520,069
<i>Flubber</i> EL]	US	10,891,774
<i>Lost In Space</i> [PGI]	US/JK	10,664,453

2

- 1980 2% of Americans owned a video
- 1990 66% of Americans owned a video
- 1989 \$5 billion box-office return on US film releases
- 1989 \$10 billion video sales/rental income
- 1998 One-third of the total revenue of a major studio comes from home video

3

- In 1976 *Alien* cost \$10.8 million to produce and \$15.7m to advertise
- In 19B9 video sales were the largest source of Hollywood's overseas revenue
- In the 19BDs and 199Ds global market opened up mostly due to the expansion of New Delivery Systems [video, cable, satellite]
- Upto 9D% of income earned on a movie can come from overseas sales
[Source BFI Handbook 2000]

Acknowledgments

Patrick Phillips, Chief Examiner AS and A Level Film Studies [WJEC] and author of the new national specification.

The following resources can be obtained from Film Education. Visit www.filmeducation.org for details:

- BRIT PIX £9.99
- FILM LANGUAGE £19.99
- STORYBOARD, THE *Free
- FILM INDUSTRY PACK, THE £5.00
- SCREENPLAY *free