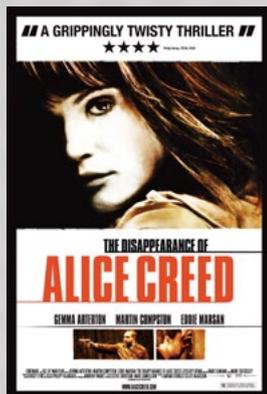
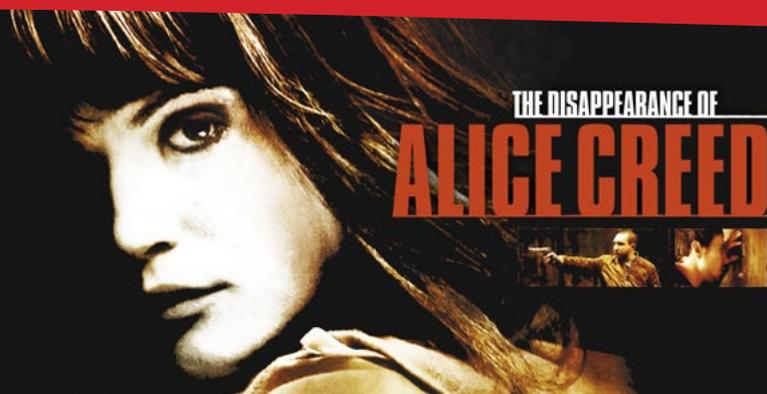


DIGITAL INNOVATION IN DISTRIBUTION

Case study

The Disappearance of Alice CreedDistributor: **CinemaNX** Release Date: **30th April 2010**

Praised at both the Toronto and London film festivals as a gripping and intelligent movie that "shanghaied the tropes of genre", *The Disappearance of Alice Creed* is not your average modern kidnap thriller.

Closer in style to *Shallow Grave* than to *Saw* or *Hostel*, distributor CinemaNX wanted to create a marketing campaign that reflected this to their audience.

CinemaNX knew that with *Alice Creed* they had the opportunity to exploit digital media by maximising the online part of their campaign.

They wanted an interactive marketing campaign that spoke to, and involved their audience and, crucially, made the user feel as if they owned the film.

So CinemaNX would hand the audience the decision of where to hold the premiere of *Alice Creed*...

Partners

For this project, CinemaNX partnered with the digital agency Brandmovers, the social media agency Punktilio, Vue Cinemas, and Facebook, and used Twitter and other social networking sites extensively.

Making the user a marketer

Working with digital agency Brandmovers, CinemaNX developed an application to be housed in Facebook, with communication tools that would allow it to be shared on Twitter and other social networking sites.

Users signed up at <http://apps.facebook.com/alicecreedmovie/> (although the activity is over, it is still currently available to interact with) and were presented with a choice to select their region, and then the cinema they would like to see host the premiere of *Alice Creed*.

As well as collating user data from sign up, CinemaNX were able to generate locality trends for the map view on the application home page. Users were invited to share their choice with their friends to earn activity points.

Each week the group with the highest number of activity points collected that week was able to access exclusive content, and the cinema with the most activity points accrued would gain access to this content before anyone else for a period of 24 hours.

Exclusive content for users included a live 30-minute web chat with

We wanted to make the audience a part of the digital marketing campaign, and a marketer in their own right.

CinemaNX

the film's director, J Blakeson (recorded and edited for other users to view after the winning cinema's exclusive period had elapsed), along with original storyboards and exclusive stills. CinemaNX also created two unique pieces of film content featuring the film's star, Gemma Arterton, which were only available for viewing by application users.

All marketing activity by the user increased the activity points for the cinema group, encouraging users to remain engaged with the digital marketing campaign.

Planning the campaign

The ultimate aim of involvement with the application was to win their chosen cinema the right to host the premiere of the film, and all users in the cinema's group would be offered cinema tickets to allow them the kind of red carpet access usually restricted to the film industry and guests of West End premieres.

CinemaNX created a dynamic incentive for user activity through a suite of tools, which participants could use to generate support for their cinema, and earn themselves activity points. These tools, intended to facilitate a viral effect, were a combination of Facebook standard communicators, and on-brand messages relating to movie items or activities.

The toolkit included:

Invite

Users selected Facebook friends and sent invitations to install the application.

These were represented as calls to action to support the user's selected local cinema, but also allowed an option for recipients to select or nominate their own cinema.

Each invited friend that installed the application and supported the original user's cinema earned the user 100 activity points. Each referred installation which supported another cinema earned 20 activity points, and each invitation sent but not completed earned 2 activity points.

Publish to newsfeed

Individual components or activities were automatically published to a user's newsfeed and were visible to all of their friends.

These included their cinema's current position in the rankings, their own position within the local activity chart or certain milestones being reached (cinema has 100, 1000, 10000 supporters etc).

One successful model, inspired by both Facebook phenomenon Farmville and the social media tool Foursquare, was to provide badges to users on once they hit pre-defined numbers of activity points.

The user was made aware of these from the outset with a grid, which highlighted what still needed to be achieved, thus providing a direct incentive to complete the tasks.

Map view

An interactive map was displayed on the application home page, showing the whole of the UK and overlaid with colour tones to show hotspots of activity.

Users could then click to zoom into areas and eventually to a level where individual cinemas were shown. This could be used to find local cinemas and then vote, and utilised Google Maps via an API.

DIGITAL PROPOSAL BREAKDOWN

Cost

Front-end template creation	£1600
Facebook application build and integration	£6000
Map module & integration	£2700
Unveil functionality	£2000
Discount codes integration	£800
Vote feature	£1600
Survey feature	£800
Design and Asset build	£3500
Content Production	£100
Seeding costs	£5885
Facebook ad drivers	£2000
Premiere Costs	£3015
TOTAL	£30000

Share

Users used the Facebook 'share' function to publish a call to action to their newsfeed, which would proclaim their support and encourage their friends to join the campaign.

Each time this was performed, up to a maximum of three per day per person, users earned 10 activity points. Each time their share was clicked upon by another Facebook user, 2 points were earned.

Find Item

The system randomly generated instances where items or non-exclusive content were made available to a user within the application, which could then be accessed at any time or shared using the tools described above.

These were brand items from the film such as Alice's mobile telephone. Clicking to store the item earned activity points, as did sharing and friend's viewing.

Leaderboard

A leaderboard ran along the right hand side of the application home-page detailing the top ten cinemas in competition for the premiere and a percentage of the votes earned.

Ultimately, all of the above were vehicles for spreading awareness of the application via social networking tools, providing a personal incentive to ensure repeat activity and so that the primary message would be regularly transmitted.

Preparing the campaign

CinemaNX chose to work with social networking agency Punktilio after being very satisfied after working with them on the first CinemaNX distribution title, Richard Linklater's *Me and Orson Welles*.

Punktilio created early pre-awareness buzz, using overt and guerrilla promotional tactics to promote the application including searching for and messaging any groups and pages connected to all UK cinemas, and discreetly promoting the feature in comments left on online coverage, promoting the feature in forums and posting messages on any cinema-centric pages or groups throughout Facebook.

Punktilio started "Let's Win The Premiere In [an area]" groups on Facebook, and promoted these on relevant pages, gathering support on local forums and websites as well as posting in over twenty regional forums on online classified and communities website Gumtree.

CinemaNX also bought 3 million targeted ASUs (an ASU is Facebook's proprietary advertising unit), inviting users to 'Win the Premiere' of Alice Creed. These adverts ran two weeks prior to release.

Timings

The initial plan had allowed for the campaign to run for three months but due to contractual issues, the launch was delayed and subsequently all timings were pushed back.

The closing date of the application was also extended and the date for the premiere was set as 20th April 2010. The campaign would end up running for six weeks.

Running the campaign

The application was soft-launched to allow any issues to be ironed out. During this period, CinemaNX discovered that some of the mechanics involved were overly complicated or insufficiently explained to users. Reacting to this, they reduced the amount of detail for the user on how activity points were accumulated.

Also during this period CinemaNX amended the leaderboard, from displaying the number of votes each cinema had received to each cinema's percentage of the votes. This was due to the distribution of votes being such that early in the campaign, for example, a cinema in tenth position had only a handful of votes whereas the cinema in second place had several hundred. They also changed the colour scheme of the map to make it easier to read.

CinemaNX had hoped, in association with their partner cinema chain, to offer unique codes for all users of the application which could then be used to buy discounted tickets via the chain website. By ensuring these codes were unique and generated using a random string, they had hoped to reduce the risk of fraud and ensure that each code could be used only once to purchase.

The idea was to drive sales and also provide a key identifier of campaign success which could have then been compiled with collated data to create a true breakdown of performance, follow-through and revenue generated.

Ultimately there were too many technical issues involved in co-ordinating this plan with the box office system in place at the chain to allow this to happen. This unfortunately means that the ability to track the success of the campaign reliably was affected.

If CinemaNX were to run the application again, they would begin everything earlier to allow for the three months as originally planned:



the advertising campaign, the social networking work by Punktilio and the application itself, allowing for eWOM (electronic word-of-mouth) to spread, and the number of installs to increase.

In terms of the advertising campaign itself, they would use interactive ads such as poll adverts rather than straightforward ASU, which have limited interactivity. CinemaNX feels the advertising campaign behind a highly interactive app should be reflective of the app itself. However, the allocation in the budget for these ads did not allow them to do this.

CinemaNX would also seek to work with other brand partners to widen their communications on the application.

How the campaign played out

After initial competition between several cinema groups, a university film society in Southampton – Union Films – fully embraced the prospect of hosting the premiere, advertising to all their members, asking them to vote for their cinema on their university campus via posters, home page exposure on their website and through a newsletter.

It was this interest in the increasing regional presence for the film that gained the film further coverage in regional and Scottish/Irish publications such as Venue, Leeds Guide, The List, Irish Times, Evening Herald – many of which detailed the underground approach of taking the premiere out of London.

CinemaNX worked with Findanyfilm.com to create an MPU (a standard form of mid-page advertising unit measuring 300 x 250 pixels), shown on the right, to feature next to every cinema listing on their site (regardless of the film selected) encouraging users to click through and vote for their local cinema.

Vue Cinemas were highly supportive of the 'Win The Premiere' competition and partnered with CinemaNX to target their extensive user database to vote for their local Vue cinema, by email newsletters with hyperlinks to the application.

As momentum behind the application grew, a fierce but good-natured fight broke out between Vue Bury and the University of Southampton's Union Films. Both of them harnessed word-of-mouth, Facebook, email and posters to encourage more users to vote for their cinema. At the end of a hard-fought battles, there could only be one eventual winner, which was Union Films.

CinemaNX had built press coverage from a press release detailing the application. This included good coverage in The Observer and several trade publications. As the campaign drew to a close, the on- and off-line teams managed to secure further exposure through great coverage of the event itself; with the paparazzi travelling from London to photograph Gemma Arterton's appearance on the red carpet.

Local and national coverage included ITN, The Observer, The Sun, Daily Mail, Metro, Life, Cineuropa, Female First, This Is Hampshire, Daily Echo. The application itself had extensive trade and consumer press in regional areas where cinemas were competing (e.g. Islington Gazette, Gravesend Reporter).

Alice Creed was one of the most covered premieres that week due to the uniqueness of the location and the approach.

Union Films fully embraced the prospect of hosting the event: organising all ticket redemption and, with CinemaNX, coordinating all marketing materials including the creation of banners, hiring of a red carpet and associated security staff, laying on a champagne reception and hiring a photographer.

The members of the University's film society dressed up for the occasion and the result was a massive success.



FINAL RESULTS

- | | |
|-----|------------------------------|
| 1st | Union Films (Southampton) |
| 2nd | Vue (Bury) |
| 3rd | Vue (Bolton) |
| 4th | Screen On The Green (London) |
| 5th | Vue Atrium (Camberley) |

We were all blown away by how incredible the premiere was. Particularly in comparison to the usual type hosted in the West End.

CinemaNX



The aim of the campaign had been fully achieved: allowing the cinemagoer to assist in moulding the shape of the campaign, allowing them to engage and be creative with the marketing assets whilst spreading traditional awareness (via PR and advertising) of the film into the regions.

The film's performance

The Disappearance of Alice Creed was the key indie contender against blockbuster Iron Man 2 and Miley Cyrus vehicle The Last Song, beating The Last Song on their opening weekend by £64 a screen. CinemaNX view this as quite an achievement considering the huge spend afforded to a studio film compared to a small British indie.

The film also beat other titles Revanche, Milk of Sorrow and Sura, and gained a higher screen average than similar-sized releases around the same time, such as Greenberg and The Killer Inside Me.

With a current total gross of over £400,000 following its initial 67 print release, and with a 4 day weekend screen average of nearly £3000, the film punched well above its weight.

Owing to the film's opening weekend success, CinemaNX were able to add Vue Eastleigh (five miles outside Southampton) to their bookings - due to the regional popularity of the film after the premiere.

Proof of the film's success is that, close to three months after its April 30 release, the film was still playing off-dates across the country, including Stamford Arts Centre, Odeon Southend, Riverside Hammer-smith, Eden Court Theatre and Odeon Belfast.

The campaign has also had industry acclaim with its nomination for Premiere of the Year in Screen International's Screen Awards 2010, up against Avatar and Twilight: suggesting an innovative marketing campaign for a lower budget indie film could succeed in a competitive marketplace.

Conclusion

Working closely with Brandmovers and Punktilio, CinemaNX expanded the regional awareness of the film and were able to profile the audience and interact directly with fans of the film. It is CinemaNX's belief that the film's box office performance owed much to their targeting their key audience.

But it was perhaps the spill-over effects of the campaign – the PR gained and eWOM – which really assisted in a successful opening weekend.

This campaign combined viral tools within social media, and an of-line hook that the mainstream media could pick up. This meant that awareness grew from a small group of app users into a wider network online, and ultimately to a far larger audience, many of whom may never have been exposed to the online activity.



CinemaNX now has a database of Facebook users along with each user's email address, their region and favourite cinema, all of which can be used for future marketing, future theatricals and of course, DVD sales. This, together with the profile achieved in the theatrical release, mean they can expect good awareness of the DVD release, and they look forward to strong sales on October 4.

Learning from this experience, future applications would employ a very simple interface with one simple hook – CinemaNX felt, in conclusion, that simply competing to win the premiere may have proved sufficient without the object collection element.

They would also begin everything earlier, to allow for the three months as originally planned: the advertising campaign, the social networking work and the application itself, allowing for eWOM to spread, and the number of installs to increase. They would also seek to work with other brand partners to widen their communications on the application.

Budgetary constraints aside, in terms of the advertising campaign, in future CinemaNX would use interactive ads such as poll adverts rather than straightforward ASU, which have limited interactivity. They feel a campaign behind a highly interactive app should be reflective of the app itself. They also feel that having an iPhone and iPad application might have increased participation and awareness of the application.

CinemaNX believe the knowledge and methodology gained with regards harnessing social media has thoroughly prepared them for future digital campaigns.

VITAL STATISTICS

Application installs	2088
Total invites sent	6693
Total share actions	991
Application views (canvas views)	19400
Active users at time of poll closing	6557
Facebook 'fans'	6000