

GCSE LEVEL
FACT FILE

Moving Image Arts

Subject content link:

**Industry Practices and Contexts:
Production, Distribution, Exhibition and
the Audience**



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Industry Practices and Contexts: Production, Distribution, Exhibition and the Audience



Learning Outcomes

Students should be able to:

- demonstrate knowledge of how the mainstream Hollywood film industry currently produces, distributes and exhibits films;
- understand the difference between studio and independent film production; and
- explain and discuss the different ways that audiences view films:
 - cinema;
 - television (scheduled and on demand);
 - DVD;
 - Blu-ray; and
 - online streaming.



Course Content

Hollywood Studio Production

When we use the term Hollywood Studio Production or talk about the Hollywood Studio System, what we are referring to is the long-standing dominance of a number of film studios and distributors based in Hollywood, California.

Under the Hollywood Studio System a small cluster of powerful studios fund and produce films themselves and distribute them to cinemas through their own distribution wings. Studio films are also sometimes shot on the soundstages or studio backlots owned by the studio.

So, for example, *Jurassic World* (2015) was produced by Universal Studios and distributed by their distribution wing.

Independent Film Production

Films made outside of the Hollywood Studio system are referred to as Independent films. The term “Indie Cinema” is often used to describe these non-studio films.

Usually filmed on lower budgets than studio movies,

independent films may be independently funded by private investors or by smaller production companies. Independent films may deal with subject matter or themes not normally dealt with by studio films.

Independent films may enter production without a distributor in place and with no guarantee of wide distribution. Some extremely low budget indie films do, however, manage to find wider distribution.

The Irish film *Once* (2007), for example, despite having a production budget of approximately £100,000 and no well-known stars, was picked up for distribution in the US by 20th Century Fox and eventually made over \$20 million at the American Box Office.

Hollywood Distribution, Exhibition and Audience

Prior to the advent of home video in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s film distribution was confined to a film’s original theatrical release and TV screenings, which would follow years after films had finished their runs in cinemas. For example, *Star Wars* was released in cinemas in 1977 and wasn’t premiered on television until 1982.

These days the cinema distribution model has changed very little. Major motion pictures are still released to cinemas first with releases on other formats and venues following sometime later. Prior to the current decade, films were distributed to cinemas on 35mm film reels. These bulky film reels were expensive to transport and could only be played on expensive and cumbersome projectors. Nowadays almost all film distribution is digital with films being delivered to cinemas on especially formatted hard drives known as Digital Cinema Packages or DCPs.

The time delay between theatrical release and release on other formats has now also become shorter. For example, *Marvel’s Avengers* was released in cinemas in the summer of 2012 and was broadcast on terrestrial television in December 2014.

There is now also a much greater variety of ways in which audiences can watch films. This increase in consumer

choice began with the rise of home video technology which enabled studios to release their product on videotape, allowing consumers to watch films in their own homes at the time of their own choosing. Video Rental Stores sprang up to facilitate this new business. Even then, however, VHS tapes of films remained expensive and were only sold to these rental outlets. By the end of the 1980's, however, distributors were also selling videotapes directly to home-viewers.

The arrival of DVD in the late-1990's saw a massive growth in home video sales with the newer, more accessible and higher quality format winning over consumers. This market has shrunk but still endures with customers still willing to buy films on DVD or the newer high definition format, Blu-Ray.

Streaming video services are currently the newest and fastest growing means of distribution. Companies such as Amazon Prime, Netflix and Mubi charge customers a subscription fee. In return customers can watch dozens of films via their computers or via home viewing devices such as Smart TVs or tablets.

Films are now also available on television before their first terrestrial broadcast through subscription or on demand television services, such as Sky Movies.

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