



AQA The Film Industry – *Blinded by the Light* (Dir: Gurinder Chadha, 2019)

The aims of this **Media Studies Factsheet** are:

- To give an overview of the industrial process of film production.
- To explore how *Blinded by the Light* exemplifies these processes.
- To demonstrate how some media theory can be applied to the film industry.

1) Production of film

Production of film refers to everything that is needed to get a film made. This includes:

- Financing and budgets.
- Pre-production activities such as script writing, location scouting, sourcing of talent.
- Filming.
- Post-production activities (editing, special effects, etc.).

Synopsis

Blinded by the Light (2019) Dir: Gurinder Chadha is set in 1987, during the austere days of Thatcher's Britain. It is a coming-of-age story, with a touch of Bollywood, about a young man called Javed who feels that he is growing up in a town where no-one really understands him. Amidst the racial and economic turmoil of the times, he finds solace in writing poetry about his family steeped in Pakistani tradition and the intolerance of his hometown. When his classmate Roops introduces him to the music of Springsteen who ends up being the unlikely rescuer of the hero.



Activity 1

Watch the 4 trailers and see if you can work out which budget range they fall into.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALSwtWTb88ZU>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1YFA_J5JBU

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1gPGeAYo3yU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXs2-TY9qok>

Budget	Price	Trailer and what elements made you choose that budget?
Micro-budget.	Less than 150k.	
Low budget.	Less than 1.5 million.	
Mid-budget.	5-30 million.	
Studio budget.	50+ million.	

Blinded by the Light is specific to AQA syllabus, but some of the information in this Factsheet could be useful for thinking about film as an industry in general.

Blinded by the Light may appear on Paper 1 section B and has an industry only focus. It is not necessary to watch the film, but it is a very good idea to do in order to get a better understanding of the production of the film, plus it's very enjoyable! You can watch it on Amazon Prime and Netflix.

The questions about film could be varied and there is a possibility that you may get a 20 mark question which means you will need extensive knowledge and understanding the **INDUSTRIAL PROCESS** of film production. These are:

- Production** – How a film gets made.
- Distribution** – How a film gets seen – cinema, digital products, streaming, on-demand etc.
- Circulation** – How a film aims to build its audience via marketing and promotion.

Financing film projects often requires an elaborate patchwork of investors, banks, soft money tax credits and in-kind services, and some companies specialize in financing specific stages of production. One of the overall themes of the industry that can at times make obtaining financing hard, are the financial risks involved. Many films fail to make a profit.

Blinded by the Light – Funding and Production



Gurinder Chadha.



Safraz Manoor and lead Viveik Kalra.

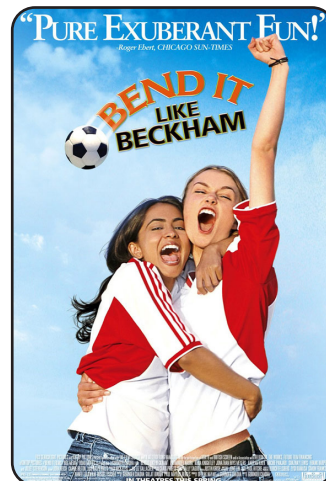


Springsteen, his wife Patti Scialfa, cast, Manzoor and Chadha at the premier of Blinded by the Light.

Blinded by the Light is a mid-budget film. As with any film it was conceived in the creative mind of the director, Gurinder Chadha, who is a director and producer of international renown. Her films include: *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993), *Bend it Like Beckham* (2002), *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), *Angus, Thongs and Perfect Snogging*, (2008), *It's a Wonderful Afterlife* (2017) and *Viceroy House*. (2017) Her production company, **Bend it Networks**, produces films and television shows that are usually about British culture, past and present. The company also often produces films that are adaptations of books. *Blinded by the Light* is an adaptation of the autobiographical book by Safraz Manoor, *Greetings from Bury Park*, (2007) which recounts his experiences as a young British Pakistani growing up in the United Kingdom, his conflicted relationship with his Muslim father and his obsession with Bruce Springsteen, a white, American rock star. Chadha is a long-time friend of Manzoor and is also a massive music lover and Springsteen fan. Chadha's films also tend to combine the comic and light-hearted with serious subject matter. In *Blinded by the Light*, racism and the culture clash of Pakistani and British identity provide the drama and reflect the context of the 1980s, and to some extent it echoes ongoing debates and issues around multiculturalism today. Chadha acknowledges that she makes films that reflect these things. In an interview she stated, 'My buzzphrase is "effortlessly diverse- That's what I do. My teams, both in front of and behind the camera, are a complete mixture. Diversity, for me, is a state of mind; it's about how I see the world.'

As such, Chadha's films have a particular auteur style and content with a focus on the conflicts that mixed identities and heritages bring.

The production of the film was a joint funded venture by Levantine Films, Ingenius Group, Bend it Films and Cornerstone films. Levantine Films. The latter had already had a box office success with *Hidden Figures* (dir: Theodore Melfi, 2006.) Ingenius Group is an investment group is an investment company that invests money in projects that have the potential to deliver future profits.

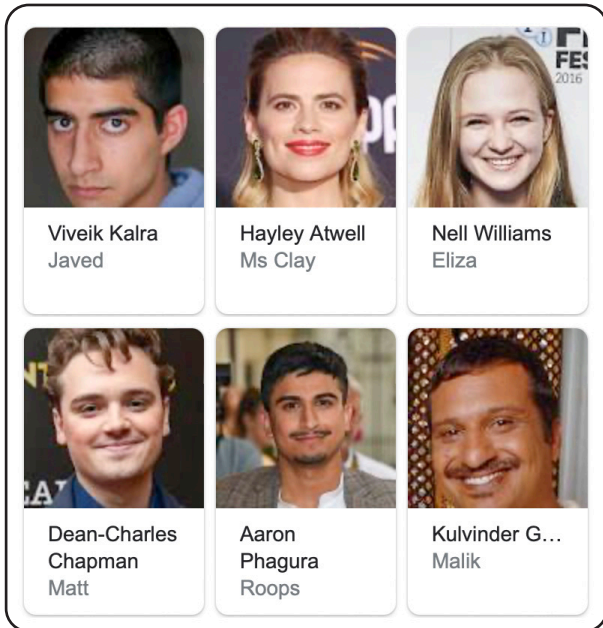


Theatrical release poster

Directed by	Gurinder Chadha
Written by	Paul Mayeda Berges Gurinder Chadha Safraz Manzoor
Based on	<i>Greetings from Bury Park: Race, Religion and Rock N' Roll</i> by Safraz Manzoor
Produced by	Jane Barclay Gurinder Chadha Jamal Daniel
Starring	Viveik Kalra Kulvinder Ghir Meera Ganatra Neil Williams Aaron Phagura Dean-Charles Chapman
Cinematography	Ben Smithard
Edited by	Justin Krish
Music by	A. R. Rahman
Production companies	Levantine Films Ingenius Bend It Films Cornerstone Films
Distributed by	Entertainment One Films
Release date	27 January 2019 (Sundance) 9 August 2019 (United Kingdom)
Running time	117 minutes ^[1]
Country	United Kingdom
Language	English
Budget	\$15 million ^[2]
Box office	\$18.1 million ^{[3][4]}

"I don't know Bruce personally; I've never met the man. But there is no way in hell that Bruce would have sat down and thought, you know, there's probably a young Pakistani boy living in Luton who's had this epiphany moment around the '80s and he loves my music, and my music has inspired him in his life." Safraz Manoor

Wanting to make a film and getting it made are very different things, even if you are an established director and especially if the film you want to make involves **creative** and or **intellectual property** such as the rights to a book or the use of an artist's music. Filmmakers cannot just use the songs in their films they have to get a **synchronization license**: This is the right to synchronize a song or a piece of music with visual imagery. It must be obtained from **the copyright owner of the music**, which is usually the publisher. Luckily for Chadha, Bruce Springsteen's wife was a fan of her films, and they 'worked something out with Springsteen's lawyers.' Sometimes creative people involved in different **cultural industries** see the value of working in **synergy** for financial and for personal reasons. For example, it is entirely possible that people who watch the film but who have no former interest in the music of Bruce Springsteen may be persuaded to buy his album. Equally fans of Springsteen might watch Chadha's film and then be drawn to watch others she has made. These types of business factors help distributors make decision about whether or not they will pick up the film for **distribution**.



Chadha also prides herself on finding new talent, the actress Keira Knightly was discovered by Chadha and cast as a lead in *Bend it Like Beckham* (2002). Viveik Kalra, who plays Javed, was relatively unknown before he was given the role.

- 1) <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2020/may/15/gurinder-chadha-ive-written-a-whole-new-movie-in-lockdown>
- 2) <https://deadline.com/2019/08/blinded-by-the-light-viveik-kalra-sarfraz-manzoor-gurinder-chada-bruce-springsteen-musical-diversity-representation-inclusion-1202668269/>
- 3) <https://www.asianimage.co.uk/leisure/17825443.bruce-springsteen-us-premiere-blinded-light/>
- 4) <http://foreveryoungadult.com/2016/04/07/a-highly-scientific-analysis-of-bend-it-like-beckham/>
- 5) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blinded_by_the_Light_\(2019_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blinded_by_the_Light_(2019_film))
- 6) Cast <https://www.google.com/search?sa=X&biw=1920&bih=1001&q=Dean-Charles+Chapman&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAAONgFuLVt9c3NEzLypKtjM-VeLSz9U3yEsxzi0w1RLKTrbST8vMyQUTVsmJxSWLW-EVcUhPzdJ0zEotyUosVgHRBbmLeDlbGCWyMANV7M-3pOAAAA&lei=E7UFYZSxKfGLhbIP27Cg6A>

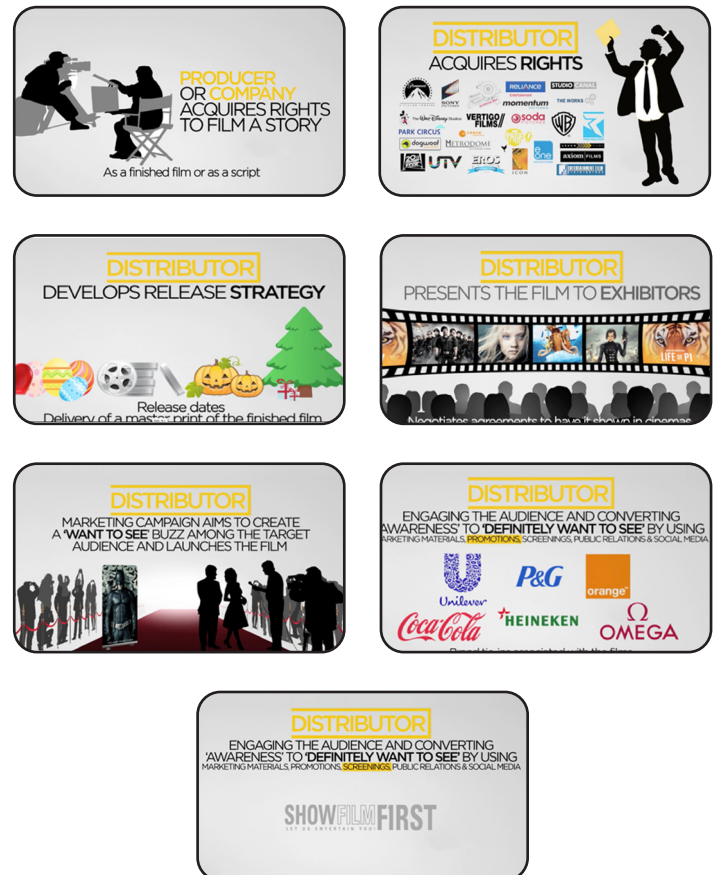


Activity 2

- Using the Wikipedia information about the film create a mini biography for the production companies involved in the production of *Blinded by the Light*. You could cut and paste this from their websites.
- Chadha owns the company Bend it Networks. Using the <https://www.benditnetworks.com/news/> page. Identify a story that exemplifies how they are not completely independent from big conglomerates.
- Why would they choose to ‘sell’ part of their company and how might this effect their content in the future?
- Research Warner Bros. Pictures and New Line Cinema and summarise the history of New Line Cinema in a short paragraph.
- Read <https://www.levantine-films.com/get-to-know-us/>. What films have Levantine been involved in. Why would they choose to work with Bend it Films?

2. Distribution of film

The following images show the process by which a film goes from a film to ‘getting seen’ by audiences.



Distribution executives get films into cinemas and TV dramas onto TV screens and onto other streaming platforms like Amazon or Netflix. In film, distribution executives go to film markets where they look at films and acquire them from production companies or **sales agents**. They negotiate for the rights to release them. These deals cover a set period of time and include agreements about promotion, classification of the film and any edits allowed. Distribution executives then pitch the film to **exhibitors** (usually cinemas). They deliver the film materials to them and they plan the release, including how to market the film, targeting the film's core audience to bring in the most profit. It costs a lot of money to market and promote a film especially if it is a global campaign. *Blinded by the Light* had its first showing at the Sundance Film Festival. It did not win any prizes but was picked up by New Line Cinema, a subsidiary of Warner Brothers that specialises in independent film for \$15 million after it was chosen in all night bidding/auction war. This meant that the film was guaranteed a global cinema release. The film received a 5-minute standing ovation after its showing, so it obviously impressed the critics.

'Blinded by the Light' is one of those incredibly special films, filled with humanity, heart and pure joy, that is simply impossible to resist,' Carolyn Blackwood, president and chief content officer of New Line Cinema.



- 1) Sundance Film Festival, Utah, U.S.A. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Sundance_Film_Festival_award_winners
- 2) <http://commentaramafilms.blogspot.com/2015/02/mini-major-discussion-new-line-cinema.html>

Indie films vs. Big Screen Spectacle

However, *Blinded by the Light* failed to be the box-office smash that New Line had hoped for, grossing 18.5 million at the box office. This means it was sure to have made a loss for New Line - this is the risk that companies take when they take on films. *The Hollywood Reporter* stated that internally at New Line the film is seen as a 'noble failure' - demonstrating that sometimes the risks that a company takes are not simply about commercial gain but also creative endeavour.

Furthermore, the failure of *Blinded by the Light* to excite audiences could be due to trends in audience behaviour which seem to indicate that they are saving cinema-going for the big screen spectacles. For example, *Detective Pikachu* (dir: Rob Letterman, 2019) starring Ryan Reynolds was a box office success for Warner grossing \$455 million on a budget of \$150 million. These big box office hits go some way to offsetting losses from other films, such as *Blinded by the Light*.

Warners distribution chief Jeff Goldstein commented on the change in what people are watching at the cinema: "These kinds of movies are more difficult than ever before. It's alarming what is theater-worthy and what isn't in the eyes of the consumer... The gap between the have and have-nots has never been bigger."



The wider context here could be that indie style films get made less as investors opt for big returns for their money.

The film was then released in cinemas worldwide in August 2019. The DVD release followed in December 2019 distributed by Paramount Home Entertainment - a Viacom company. Deal with Amazon Prime secured in early 2020 for streaming in the UK.

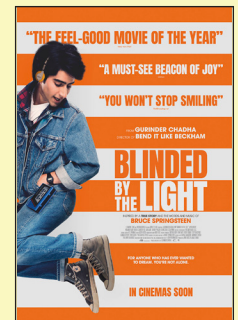
3. Marketing and Promotion of Film

Activity 3

David Hesmondalgh argues to reduce risk media companies use:

- a) Star formatting – using a big-name star to draw in audiences.
- b) Genre formatting – identifying what pleasures audience might get from a film through marketing and promotion before they consume it.

- Who might this poster appeal to?
- What genre of film do you think it is?
- What does it pleasures does it promise its audience?
- Look at the poster. In what way(s) does it use the above?
- Do you think *Blinded by the Light* could have marketed its 'stars a different way? If so, how?



Marketing techniques of a film can include:

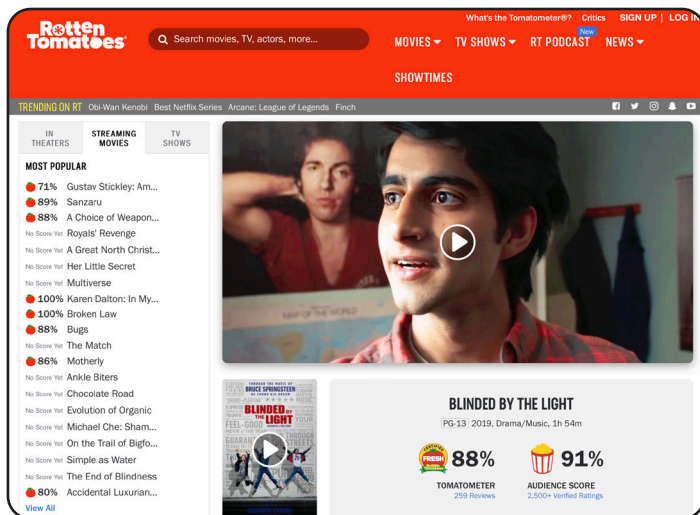


- Press junkets.
- Trailers.
- Viral Videos and campaigns.
- Publicity blitz.
- Promotional tour.
- Film posters.
- Social networking.
- Official website.
- Tie-ins.
- Q and A sessions.

The marketing and promotion of *Blinded by the Light* focused on the positive emotional experience the audience would get. 'Feel-good' film and 'smiling' all evoke the idea that the film will bring pleasure. This is a good marketing strategy for a film that is set in a very specific cultural context because it focuses on universal feelings of joy and happiness.

The poster also denotes a specific time setting through the selection of a Walkman as a prop, this could appeal to both older audiences through nostalgia and to younger audience through the retro appeal of technology. The orange and yellow colour palette was also used throughout the campaign to constructs an image for the film. Other posters were red, white, and blue – perhaps these were chosen to appeal more to an American audience. Viveik Kalra would not be recognisable to global audiences but the appeal of youth and the joyous expressions on his face could be an attractive element for all audiences. What is interesting is that they did not use Bruce Springsteen’s image in the marketing. There could be many reasons for this, but it is likely that the film makers wanted to sell the film on its own merits rather than market it as a Bruce Springsteen film.

Other traditional promotional products such as the trailer https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1YFA_J5JBU combined many multi-cultural elements. The trailer starts with the music of Human League and an aerial shot of Luton and titles referring to ‘From the director of Bend it like Beckham.’ Edited clips of conflicts of cultures are shown through the opposing characters and the direct reference to The Boss – Bruce Springsteen with his major tracks playing over the action could appeal to audiences because the narrative shows that a love music transcends race, class, and place.



Activity 4

Broadcast	
1)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diKeJe19Lk Blinded by The Light reviewed by Robbie Collin.
2)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2DPnGd5IPc Sarfraz Manzoor Discusses How Bruce Springsteen Inspired The Film Blinded by the Light Lorraine.
3)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znO0TSDvHY Gurinder Chadha & Sarfraz Manzoor on “Blinded by the Light” Amanpour and Company.
4)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Djqbo_vDjV4 Sarfraz Manzoor on new Bruce Springsteen film “Blinded by the Light”.
5)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70FVYWif9Wc Blinded By The Light: Gurinder Chadha, Sarfraz Manzoor and Viveik Kalra Interview.

- 1) Access the marketing and promotion materials.
 - a) How are they working in synergy to:
 - b) Target audiences?
 - c) Raise awareness?
 - d) Create a positive image for the film?
 - e) Create a global appeal?

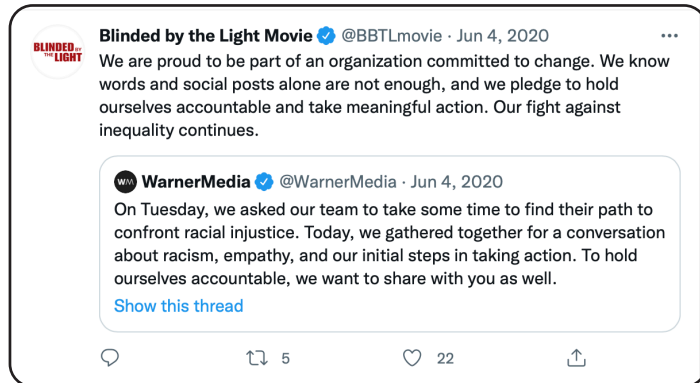
Here’s an example of how to use the promotional materials. This comment is from Adam Chitwood’s review Video 5) “Blinded by the Light is an irresistible movie. You may be initially dubious about its premise—a coming-of-age 80s-set story about a young British Pakistani boy who discovers his identity by listening to Bruce Springsteen—but you will inevitably succumb to its charms.”

This comment from Chitwood acknowledges that the film has a very niche appeal, especially to American audiences who do not share the same cultural history as people in the U.K. But he attempts to persuade the audience by saying ‘you will succumb to its charms’ which suggests the film will be something different than what audiences usually consume and that the pleasures will be very positive and soulful.

Reviews of films by critics and journalists still remain important and audiences can be swayed one way or another based on what an opinion leader says. But online review sites like Rotten Tomatoes also can have influence. *Blinded by the Light* scored 91% approval from audiences.

Other conversations on social media includes celebrities with big followings promoting the film. For example, George R.R Martin – *Game of Thrones* author, tweeted about the film and how much he liked it.

The twitter feed of *Blinded by the Light* promotes interest in the film in different ways. <https://twitter.com/bbtlmovie?lang=en>. Having not posted since the film came out, they posted on June 4th- the day protesters were gathering about the murder of George Floyd an American citizen. These types of social media posts are not uncommon as companies become more aware of how their audiences view such issues.



There were also several live events that Manoor and Chadha attended. These events create positive word-of-mouth and build up a buzz around a film where traditional marketing might not reach. It also can foster an authenticity about the film's meaning and content- all of which differentiates it from the unreal blockbuster spectacle.

Blinded By The Light: author doing live events in London

4th October 2021 | by Simon Brew | 0 Comments

Sarfraz Manzoor is taking to the stage in London to tell the story of *Blinded By The Light*.

It's not had too much love at the box office, nor at the awards ceremonies since. Yet once of the finest mainstream films of 2019 was Gurinder Chadha's film *Blinded By The Light*, that she made alongside co-writer Sarfraz Manzoor. In fact, that sells him very short. Manzoor penned the source book the film is based on, *Greetings From Bury Park*, and the book in turn is his life story.

If you've not seen the film, then I can't recommend it enough. And as an added treat, Manzoor is playing three dates in London where he promises to dig further into the true story behind *Blinded By The Light*, along with his Bruce Springsteen obsession!

He'll be playing at the Leicester Square Theatre on October 27th and 28th, and tickets for the three shows are available now. Hopefully, he'll do a few more dates around the country too.

[Here's the link to order yourself some seats.](#)

Practice Exam Style Questions:

- Using close analysis of the trailer for *Blinded by the Light* how does it attempt to 'sell' the film to the audience?
- Identify three different techniques that can be used to help increase the circulation of a film when using social media? Using examples from the marketing for *Blinded by the Light* how effective are these techniques?
- It is important to create a recognisable brand image to sell a media product.
- How does film marketing create synergy across marketing methods to help promote a film? Use examples from your close study of a film product in your response.
- Hesmondalgh argues that media production is a risky business. How far is this true of *Blinded by the Light*?

Acknowledgements: This *Media Studies Factsheet* was researched and written by **Di Naylor** and published in **January 2022** by **Curriculum Press**. *Media Studies Factsheets* may be copied free of charge by teaching staff or students, provided that their school is a registered subscriber. No part of these *Factsheets* may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any other form or by any other means, without the prior permission of the publisher.