



## NEWS HEADLINES

### G.I. JONNY GOES TO WAR

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**Aimed at raising awareness of the threat of sexually transmitted diseases, The Viral Factory's risqué G.I. Jonny spot for BBC Learning Zone has been garnering continuous column inches for the past two weeks. shots.net caught up with Viral Factory co-founder and owner Matt Smith for a quick chat.**

"It's caused far less than we actually hoped for," says Smith on the controversy surrounding the James Rouse-directed spot. "I'm speaking more on behalf of The Viral Factory than the BBC. For the BBC I think it caused a slightly uncomfortable level of fury. It didn't come at the best of times for the Beeb, but the more fury it caused the more our target audience are hopefully going to hear about it."

The viral in question is an innuendo-packed fake toy advert for G.I. Jonny, an action figure with a mission to 'inform and protect'. Aimed at a target audience of 16-24 year-olds, the viral has enjoyed much, unsurprisingly, negative attention from the tabloids and some Christian groups.

"We thought 'let's do something quite puerile'," Smith explains. "Something that you'd feel quite naughty having on your mobile phone and showing your mates in the pub. It doesn't actually carry the message of the campaign particularly. We thought we could pump the core anti-AIDS message or we could pump the G.I. Jonny action figure and that's what we thought was the better strategy."

While the spot might be a little risqué to some, it seems that the larger part of the furore has centred on the fact that it was commissioned and released by the once great and respected BBC. "It was an overblown reaction," says Smith. "It was great in one way because it got people interested, but when they got there and looked at it they probably thought. 'Right. Okay. Yeah. Fine. I don't quite see what the fuss is about.'"