

= The Life (advertisement) =

The Life , also known as We Are ODST is a television and cinema advertisement launched in 2009 by Microsoft to promote the first person shooter Halo 3 : ODST in the United States . The 150 @-@ second piece follows a young soldier through enlistment , training , and battle as an Orbital Drop Shock Trooper (ODST) , analogous to a paratrooper that drops from space to a battlefield . The Life was created by advertising agency T.A.G. , an offshoot of McCann Erickson . Production of the commercial itself was handled by production company Morton / Jankel / Zander (MJZ) . It was directed by Rupert Sanders , and post @-@ production was conducted by Asylum . It was filmed in Hungary , just outside Budapest in a coal mine and abandoned factories to give the sequence an " Eastern Bloc " aesthetic . The commercial and its associated campaign , proved hugely successful ; on the week of its launch , Halo 3 : ODST became the top @-@ selling game for the Xbox 360 worldwide , and over 2 @.@ 5 million copies were sold within the first few weeks of release . The Life went on to win a number of honours from the advertising and entertainment industries , including two Clio Awards , a London International Advertising Award and several honours from the Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival , the most prestigious awards ceremony in the advertising industry .

= = Sequence = =

The Life opens to a military funeral of an ODST . Rows of candles arranged along the floor burn as a bagpiper plays a dirge . The assembled mourners , a mix of military personnel and civilians , attend as the casket 's red ODST flag is removed , revealing the name of the deceased . A young man looks on as the cloth is ceremonially folded and passed to a woman among the mourners . A song in Welsh begins to play as the attending officer orders a gun salute in Hungarian . The camera cuts to another scene ; the young man , Tarkov , is having his head shaved in the first of a montage of scenes depicting Tarkov undergoing recruit training . Again , the camera cuts ahead . Tarkov is in a one @-@ man " drop pod " , entering the atmosphere of an alien planet , onto a battlefield . He emerges under fire alongside several other soldiers , moving over corpses and through plasma fire until a Covenant Brute knocks him aside , sending his helmet flying and scarring Tarkov 's face . Tarkov fires his pistol at the Brute to no avail . However , he is saved when a falling Banshee crashes into the Brute , killing it . The film jumps ahead again ; Tarkov is now a veteran soldier , and oversees a memorial service for one of his fallen comrades amidst burning ruins with a recruit that bears a resemblance to a younger Tarkov . Soon , sounds of gunfire draws him and his team back to the fight , closing with the lines " We are ODST " which transitions again into " Halo 3 : ODST " .

= = Production = =

= = = Background = = =

In 1999 , Microsoft made the decision to consolidate its marketing efforts with a single advertising agency , after several years of partnership with different agencies for each of its product line . They entertained pitches from each of the agencies on their roster , and ultimately assigned the global account to McCann Erickson . McCann was assigned the task of promoting what would become the killer app of the Xbox , the video game Halo : Combat Evolved . The launch campaign was hugely successful , selling over five million copies of the game worldwide . The success of Halo : Combat Evolved led to a series of sequels and tie @-@ in merchandise including books and action figures .

In 2007 , McCann launched a multi @-@ platform global advertising campaign titled Believe , that included six minutes of live @-@ action sequences called Landfall , to promote the latest game in the Halo series , Halo 3 . Landfall was directed by Neill Blomkamp who also agreed to direct a full length Halo film , but it was cancelled due to funding disagreements . Believe proved a critical and financial hit . Over £ 84 million of sales were made on the first day of release alone , the highest

@-@ grossing opening sale of an entertainment product at the time . Believe received dozens of awards from the advertising community , including eight Clio Awards , Best in Show at the ANDY Awards , and two Grand Prix (for Film and Integrated campaigns) at the Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival , the most prestigious awards ceremony in the advertising industry . According to the Gunn Report , Believe was the second @-@ most @-@ awarded integrated advertising campaign of 2008 , behind Earth Hour for the World Wide Fund for Nature .

In 2012 , due to the success of Landfall and The Life , Halo 4 : Forward Unto Dawn was created to broaden the audience of Halo 4 . Released initially as five 15 @-@ minute episodes online , it was later released as a ninety @-@ minute extended cut on DVD and Blu @-@ ray . Microsoft considers it the " next step " between advertising material and a full @-@ length film , and Frank O 'Connor , development director for the Halo franchise , has said that a film will be made " when the time is right " . Live action shorts were also used in the advertisement of Halo : Reach focusing on the Spartan supersoldiers of the Halo universe . Two shorts , The Birth of a Spartan and Deliver Hope were made , again to appeal to customers who were unfamiliar with the series .

= = = Filming = = =

In early 2009 , McCann received a brief to create a new campaign for the latest entrant into the Halo series , a first @-@ person shooter called Halo 3 : ODST . It would be the first game in the franchise not to feature the series ' protagonist , the Master Chief . McCann returned with a pitch for a campaign in the same vein as Believe , aiming to humanize the soldiers featured in the Halo universe . The project was greenlit , and McCann brought back several collaborators from Believe to handle this new campaign , now given the working title of The Life .

Director Rupert Sanders , known for his work with production company MJZ on campaigns such as Lava for Guinness and reat Return for Nike , Inc . , was given five weeks to produce the commercial , with three days set aside for filming . Several locations were scouted for shooting , with an eye towards an " Eastern Bloc " aesthetic . These included several areas around Chernobyl , Ukraine . However , the tight schedule precluded using locations too distant from one another for different scenes and , in the end , three spots outside of Budapest , Hungary were settled upon : the cooling tower of an active nuclear power station was dressed to act as the backdrop to the opening funeral scene ; an open @-@ pit coal mine served as the setting for the battle scenes , and an abandoned aluminum factory was used to stage the closing funeral scene .

Sanders drew inspiration for the shooting style and aesthetic of the commercial from a variety of sources , including news footage from journalists embedded with military forces in Afghanistan , and Russian feature films such as Stalker and Come and See . To keep the details within the commercial consistent with established Halo canon , the creators of the Halo series , Bungie Studios , provided Sanders with information on aspects ranging from appropriate fur color and rank insignia for the Brute , to the armor and weaponry of the ODST soldiers .

= = = Post @-@ production = = =

With filming complete , MJZ contacted post @-@ production company Asylum to begin work on the substantial visual effects component of The Life . The team , led by Visual Effects Supervisor Robert Moggach , tripled in size as the scale of the work required became apparent , given the deadline of three weeks . Work on the opening funeral scene was relatively easy , requiring the creation of only minor elements such as additional tombstones in the foreground and color correction on the actors . The same was true for the training sequence , where only minimal tracking work and compositing of matte backgrounds was required . The bulk of the visual effects work was in the battle sequence . This ranged from simple work such as wire removal to the creation of dynamic lighting and reflections from visors and armor , to particle effects for the background smoke and dust , plasma weapon fire and alterations to some of the filmed explosions to lend them the appearance given to plasma explosions within the Halo games . The entire background was a 3D projection of matte paintings and dramatic skies . While the Brute was partially animatronic , substantial adjustments

such as scaling to almost twice the size and the enhancement of fine muscle movements of the creature were made . Other elements , such as the Banshee aircraft and the drop @-@ pods , were created entirely through the use of CGI . Software used by Asylum FX included Flame and Nuke for compositing , Maya for animation , RenderMan and Mantra for rendering , SynthEyes for tracking , Silhouette Pro for rotoscoping work .

= = = Music = = =

The Life was scored by Gareth Williams , a composer for Human Worldwide . The music , an arrangement of Light of Aidan 's " Lament " , was created specifically for the ad , and featured a wide variety of instruments . Percussive elements included military snare drums , a hand drum , Samoan log drums and stones tapped against one another . These were joined by a Great Highland Bagpipe and traditional string orchestration such as a double bass and cello . Vocals were provided by Kathy Fisher who , despite not being a native speaker of the language , sang the Welsh lyrics provided by Williams .

= = Release and reception = =

The Life premiered online as a 90 @-@ second cut on September 4 , 2009 , on both the social networking website MySpace and news and review website IGN . This was followed by its first appearance on U.S. national television as a 150 @-@ second spot three days later , during a commercial break in Spike 's airing of the World War II miniseries Band of Brothers . Additional 90 @-@ second spaces were purchased on a variety of television networks , including Adult Swim , Comedy Central , ESPN , FX , G4 , History , and Spike . The Life was made available for download through Xbox Live on September 8 , and continued to air on television through the release of Halo 3 : ODST on September 22 , 2009 and into the Christmas period . The launch was accompanied by print advertisements and a new interactive website featuring a making @-@ of documentary for The Life , interviews with the director and other crew members , and an unaired scene cut from the ending of the commercial , as well as interactive elements exploring features of the game itself , such as an " evaluation " application offering profiles on several of the game 's characters .

Upon its release on September 22 , Halo 3 : ODST immediately became the best @-@ selling title for the Xbox 360 worldwide . Within two weeks , over 2 @.@ 5 million copies had been sold . The Life went on to win a number of awards from the advertising and television industries , including honors from the Visual Effects Society Awards , the ANDY Awards , the London International Advertising Awards , and the Clio Awards . The Life received several nominations at the 57th Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival , the most prestigious awards ceremony in the advertising community , going on to win Gold for Cinematography , Silver for Direction , and a Bronze in the Film category .