



Conservatives



Darling's eyebrows

Agency: Lowe
A simple, humorous message about Chancellor Alistair Darling's most distinctive feature - his black eyebrows at odds with his white hair - mirroring the "broken" promises not to increase tax. The recession has given Darling a high profile; many would recognise his forehead without the rest of his face.

The politics of advertising

How might a 2009 election campaign shape up? The *IoS* asked six leading ad agencies to give us a sneak preview. **Jane Merrick** and **Paul Bignell** report

Will there be a general election in 2009? Last week, Gordon Brown ruled out a spring election, insisting it was "the last thing" on his mind. But he did not rule out a poll later in the year, meaning one could be planned for June, when voters go to the polls in the European and local elections. The smart money remains on 2010, but if there a campaign were under way now, what would be the three main parties' lines of attack? The *IoS* asked six advertising agencies to produce these exclusive posters to give you a sneak preview of how the campaign might be fought. Most of the

adverts were for Conservative campaigns - showing that many agencies want to pitch their business at the party tipped to win. As the 1992 election showed, an effective advertising campaign such as the Tory attack on "Labour's tax bombshell" can make all the difference. Patrick McClelland, creative director at Lowe Worldwide, said: "It's always easier to attack the incumbent, as the public are more aware of their failings." Mark Braun, creative director of 360 Inspire, said: "It's getting harder and harder to market politicians nowadays, as there doesn't seem to be much differentiation between them. I think

that's why party political adverts now so often attack their opposition rather than sell their own party." James Hilton, executive creative director at AKQA, said: "The message is now from the people, and it's 'engage me or get lost'. It's about surgical strikes with relevant messages to engage voters in a conversation." Jon Brierley, creative director at Alphabet London, said: "A lack of trust in our leaders is the biggest problem we face in political campaigning... Negative characteristics and incidents seem to sit in our minds for longer."

Additional reporting by Oliver Laughland



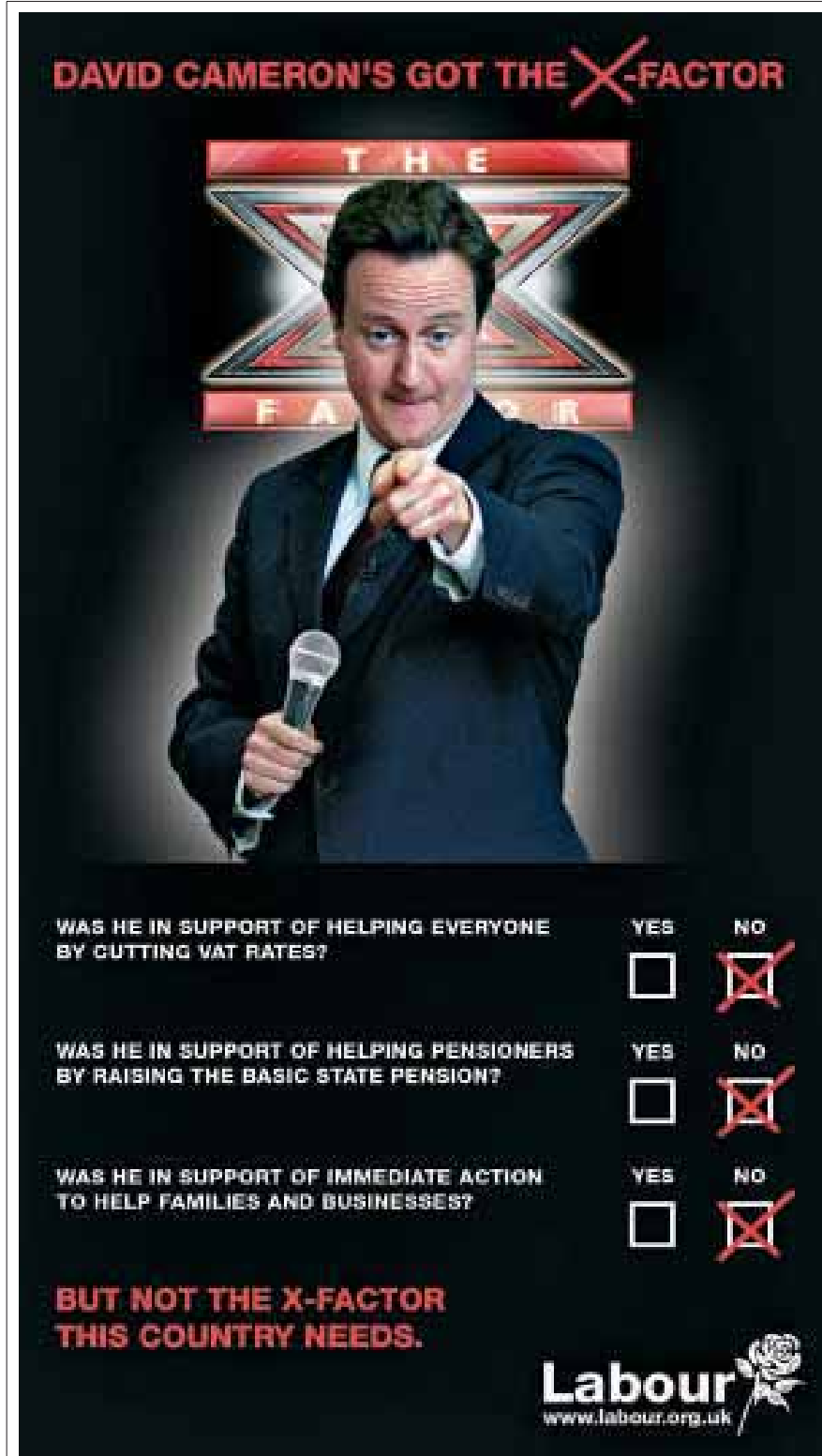
Cameron as Thatcher

Agency: Green-consultancy
David Cameron's face is superimposed on to Margaret Thatcher's hairline and earrings, in an echo of the 2001 election, when a Labour campaign used William Hague morphed into the former PM. The image of Mrs Thatcher remains powerful.



Benefit thieves

Agency: AKQA
A well-known government advert targeting benefit cheats is turned on Gordon Brown, using the same slogan. In this case, the "benefit" refers to what the Liberal Democrats say has been taken from voters by the Government: pensions, income lost from the axing of the 10p tax rate, as well as a get-tough policy on incapacity benefit and single parents.



Cameron: no X-factor

Agency: Add-Juice
David Cameron looks like a game-show host - this ad plays up to his negative image as a former PR man. It uses the Labour attack that the Tories are the "do nothing" party on the economy. Cameron may have "star" appeal, but this is turned on its head.



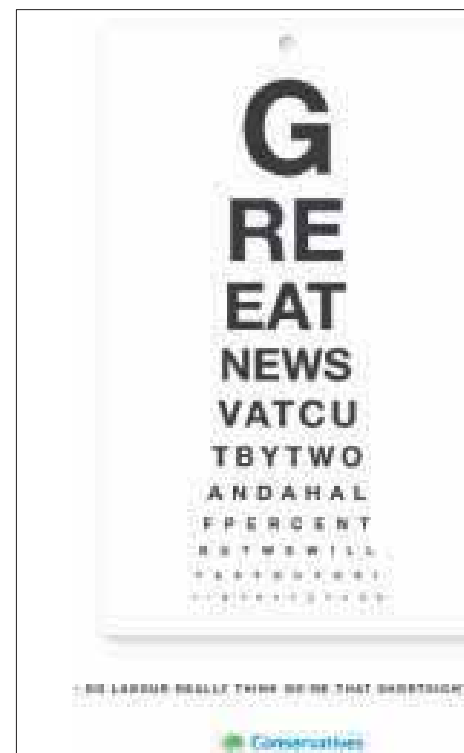
Eye test

Agency: Add Juice
The message is, don't fall for Labour giveaways because the small print means there is pain to come. This would work better in a newspaper than as a poster campaign.



Laurel and Hardy

Agency: AKQA
Alistair Darling and Gordon Brown as Laurel and Hardy. Again, the recession is the dominant theme. The message is that the pair are hapless and accident-prone with the nation's finances.



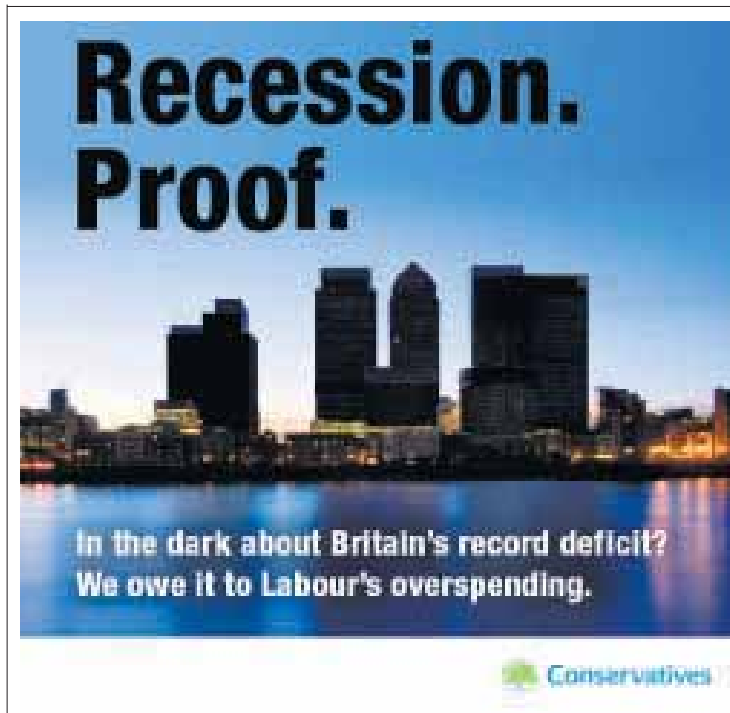
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The Borrowers

Agency: AKQA
Gordon Brown, Alistair Darling and Tessa Jowell appear as characters from "The Borrowers", reminding voters that borrowing will reach record levels - £12.5bn is the cost of the 2.5 per cent VAT cut.



Recession. Proof.

Agency: Alphabet
The striking silhouette of Canary Wharf in darkness is a reminder that thousands of banking jobs have been lost during the recession. The positive phrase "recession proof" is turned into a negative with a simple full stop.



In the red

Agency: 360 Degrees Advertising
Just a simple, memorable slogan with the straightforward message that Labour is responsible for the recession. It uses a key part of Labour's "brand", the colour red, against the party. The phrase "us all" adds a confiding, "we share your pain" message, similar to 2005's "Are you thinking what we're thinking?" slogan.



Taxo stuffing

Agency: 360 Degrees
The familiar image of Paxo stuffing is changed to refer to the tax rises that are planned for 2010, as outlined in the pre-Budget report. The Liberal Democrats want higher taxes for the rich, but they also want 4p off income tax for low and middle earners and warn that a £5bn tax rise is coming under Labour.