

Date viewed: 30/10/92

Film: X First: X English lang: X

Video: 2nd/3rd: Foreign language:

Sub TV: Resub: Sub-titled/Dubbed:

INITIAL	CLASSIFICATION ISSUES	COMIC SPLATTER AT '18'
CATEGORY '18'	Wimp finds courage to escape the clutches of his mother	
SUGGESTION	OUTLINE	when she becomes a zombie.

CATEGORY & CUTS	Uc	U	PG	12	15	18	R18	CUTS/REMARKS
THEME					X			
TREATMENT						X X		
VISUALS: NUDITY								
SEX								
VIOLENCE						X X		
SEXUAL VIOL								
HORROR						X		
LANGUAGE						X		
DRUGS								
IMITABLE TECHNIQUES								
LEGALITY: OBSCENITY								
CHILDREN								
ANIMALS								
BLASPHEMY								
FILM AS A WHOLE						X		

Keywords: COMEDY, HORROR, SPLATTER*

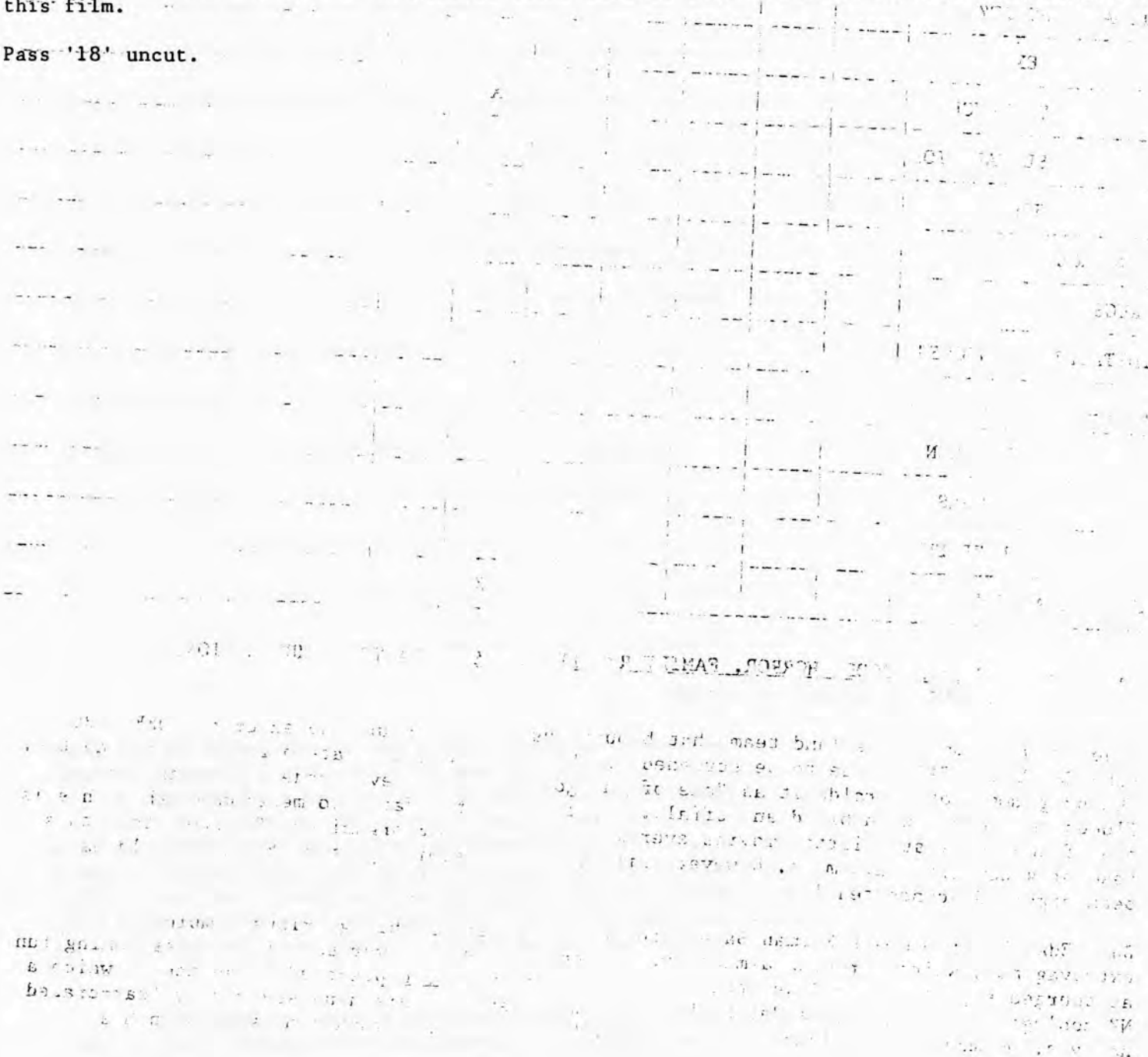
New Zealand 1957 and Paquita sets her heart on wimpy Lionel who is dominated by his ghastly mother. She follows them on a date to the local zoo and is bitten by a strange rat-monkey which turns her into a zombie. Lionel tries to cover up the existence of mum and an increasing number of zombies created by her eating activities. He attempts to drive Paquita away but she perseveres as does his money-grabbing uncle Les, who thinks he is a serial killer. The latter, blackmailing Lionel into giving up his inheritance, throws a party. The zombies turn up and mayhem ensues. Piling gore upon gore Lionel and Paquita finish the lot off with a rotary lawnmower. Finally they confront the now enormous mother on the roof. She engulfs Lionel in her womb but he fights his way out, destroys her, and rescues Paquita.

I don't much care for horror spoofs, but this is wonderfully funny - a genuinely entertaining grand guignol farce in which the comic invention never flags. Unlike 'AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON' there is never a scary moment and in general it owes more to

Brian Rix than John Landis. I was on this basis strongly tempted to go for '15' despite the endless succession of amputated limbs, torn off head-skins, beheadings, buckets of blood, dismemberments, pustules bursting, arms being devoured; on and on the comic gore is piled but not without genuine comic structure so that each sight of entire rib cages being torn out, heads being whipped up in the blender and so on is continuously varied by a truly original comic sense. 's point about not subjecting teenagers, whether they like it or not, to comic gore on the basis of it being inappropriate doesn't really apply in this instance because the gore, despite there being so much of it, is only part of the mechanism of the comedy. The attempt by Paquita to stuff a wonderfully vicious zombie baby into the blender results in a series of sight gags which had us all in hysterics. In fact, I don't think I've laughed so much at a film all year, and I repeat I'm not a fan of the genre.

In the end I went along with '18' simply on the pragmatic grounds that most people would expect the astonishing amount of gore here to be '18'. But I can't imagine even a sensitive teenager being bothered by this. Specific instances of mutilation are not to the point here beyond noting them in general terms because tone and treatment are everything in this film.

Pass '18' uncut.



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INITIAL '18' CLASSIFICATION ISSUES SPLATTER + MUTILATION IN COMIC CONTEXT
 CATEGORY UNCUT
 SUGGESTION OUTLINE OTT horror splatter spoof from New Zealand, by the BAD TASTE team.

CATEGORY & CUTS	Uc	U	PG	12	15	18	R18	CUTS/REMARKS
THEME					X			
TREATMENT						X		
VISUALS: NUDITY								
SEX								
VIOLENCE						X		
SEXUAL VIOL								
HORROR						X		
LANGUAGE					X			
DRUGS								
IMITABLE TECHNIQUES								
LEGALITY: OBSCENITY								
CHILDREN								
ANIMALS								
BLASPHEMY								
FILM AS A WHOLE						X		

Keywords: COMEDY, SPOOF, HORROR, FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS, SPLATTER*, MUTILATION, ZOMBIE

Dame Edna Everage meets Norman Bates and George Romero in this glorious zombie extravaganza, which parodies almost every horror movie you ever saw, as well as poking fun at bourgeois pretensions Down Under. After an Arachnophobic pre-creds sequence in which a NZ zoologist is bitten by a Rat Monkey in Sumatra and has his hand severed by fear-crazed natives, we move to Auckland where shy Lionel, who shares a gothic mansion with his

domineering mum Vera (pillar of the Ladies Welfare League), falls for sweet young Pequita, whose ancient gran has seen his face in the Tarot cards, and foretold romance. The young couple are tailed to the zoo by the jealous Vera, who is promptly bitten by the original Rat Monkey from the pre-creds, and turns into a carnivorous zombie with a serious gunge-problem. She goes beserk, catapulting slime into a Welfare League visitor's custard, chomping on her own ear when it falls off, and eating the neighbour's Alsatian. The filial (or Oedipal) Lionel tries to sedate her with a giant hypo, but the woman just won't lie down, even in the cemetery; soon she has attacked and zombified the local padre and district nurse, who fall into each other's arms and instantly produce a hyperactive zombie baby (one of the best characters in the film). Rather than call the police, Lionel keeps the zombie menagerie in the cellar (where else?): "They're not dead exactly, just rotting!" he explains to Pequita. Mayhem breaks out with the arrival of Vera's dreadful brother Les, a Les Patterson lookalike who wants his share of Vera's lolly. When Les invites a posse of Castlemayne-swilling partygoers to the house, the zombies burst out of the cellar and zombify almost everyone in sight, except for Pequita and Lionel, who's protected by a magic amulet given him by the clairvoyant gran. To quote the LFF handout, "the finale, in which Lionel does battle with a horde of crazed flesh-eaters armed only with a rotary mower, has to be seen to be believed".

I agree: the final reel is a triumph of OTT farce and clever editing, which had our team (including , who didn't find THE EVIL DEAD funny) rolling about in mirth. For as the rather wimpish Lionel lays about him with the rotoscythe, scattering zombie limbs and intestines in a huge fountain of studio blood (red ink rather than ketchup), there's no feeling of real life pain or cruelty, or of real life human victims. The scene has its yucky moments, which non buffs will cavill at, if they accidentally stray into the cinema, but there's none of that undercurrent of cruelty and personalised violence that concerned us in THE EVIL DEAD films or DEMONS 2. BRAINDEAD is played for belly laughs rather than screams or ghoulish chuckles, and it's much less heartless than the recent RABID GRANNIES (passed 18 uncut).

Fans who relished BAD TASTE will relish BRAINDEAD: I certainly did! But what about the non-cognoscenti, who may not pick up the horror parody cues, or those who find splatter stomach churning in any context? Could anybody find the OTT excesses of the last reel "depraving and corrupting", on the same lines as the juries who convicted THE EVIL DEAD on video? My answer would be No: there's nothing genuinely horrific or sadistic here, the monsters are clearly prosthetics, and, unlike Romero's zombies, fantastical and ridiculous, bordering on lovable; and the splatter is constantly undercut, not just by the rotoscythe, but by broad humour and even kindness. The hero and heroine are genuinely appealing, and Vera and Les are straight out of Barry Humphries! The macho padre, who takes on a band of skinheads with the cry "I kick ass for the Lord!" is a glorious ~~celebration~~ ^{celebration}, as is the hyperactive zombie baby whom Lionel tries to control in the park.

At the end of the screening, boldly floated a 15, on the grounds that there's nothing here to harm or disturb a 15-year-old, and that most teenagers would love it. Perhaps; but apart from the political factor, which freely acknowledged, we need to be very careful before pushing back the horror boundaries too quickly. Our school visits seem to show that some teenagers (girls especially) while enjoying "mild" horror, are disturbed and upset by blood and visceral detail, even in a comic context, and go for 15 rather than 18 horror tapes because they are less gory. They would not thank us for lowering the rating (which they use as a guideline); nor would adults for whom the 15 also signals "relatively mild" where horror is concerned. Obviously more research is needed into teenagers' attitudes to splatter; don't let's push the boat out before we've consulted them properly! As things now stand, BRAINDEAD must surely remain 18 uncut, to cover gore and mutilation (including the severing of the man's hand in the pre-creds) and the excesses (comic as they are) of the delirious final reel. So pass 18 uncut, with an urgent request for a staff screening (, this is one for you!)