

BBFC Board of Classification Meeting

Thursday 16 June 2022

Present

Patrick Swaffer	President
Murphy Cobbing	Vice President (remote)
Kamlesh Patel	Vice President
David Austin	Chief Executive
Chris Davies	Compliance Manager
Matt Tindall	Senior Policy Officer (minutes)

Apologies

Dave Barrett	Deputy Chief Executive
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Minutes of the previous meeting

1. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Matters arising

2. There were no matters arising.

Classification of TILL

3. The Board watched and discussed US historical drama TILL, which was submitted for advice with a 12A request from the company. The BBFC's advice service allows companies to submit works ahead of their formal classification in order to receive an indication of the likely rating and what changes, if any, are required to obtain a particular rating.
4. The film concerns the 1955 murder of 14-year-old Emmett Till, which became a significant event in the movement for civil rights in America. The key classification considerations are prolonged and repeated sight of Till's mutilated corpse, and the intensity of the emotionally distressing scenes in which Till's mother Mamie grieves her murdered son. Secondary issues a sequence of threat, racist behaviour and language, and brief references to sexual violence.

5. While the sight of Till's corpse is unarguably disturbing, the Board agreed that it could be defended at the requested category. BBFC Classification Guidelines allow for 'occasional gory moments' at 12A if justified by context, and the disturbing images in TILL are integral to the film's narrative, marking the moment at which Mamie resolves to engage with the wider civil rights movement and to confront the country with the horrific violence that was inflicted upon her child. The Board also noted the film's sensitive and restrained handling of the scenes involving Till's corpse, and the educational value for 12-14 year olds, who may study the US civil rights movement, including the murder of Emmett Till, in school.
6. In terms of the film's emotional impact, the Board carefully considered whether the scenes depicting Mamie's grief may be too intense for 12A. Chris provided examples of similarly distressing films passed at the category, including JUST MERCY and MASS. Ultimately, the Board decided that the upsetting scenes could be accommodated at the company's preferred category.
7. A final decision was deferred until 6 July 2022 to allow Murphy and Sarah Peacock (Compliance & Education Manager), who had been unable to attend the screening, to see the film. On that date, advice was issued to the company that TILL was likely to be classified 12A with the ratings info 'racism, disturbing images, upsetting scenes, moderate threat'.

AOB

8. The Board agreed that the BBFC Youth Panel should attend the next meeting of the Advisory Panel on Children's Viewing (APCV) on 13 July, to view and discuss the horror thriller THE BLACK PHONE.

Date of next meeting: 13 July 2022