

TITLE: TOTAL RECALL

Distributor: GUILD

Examiners:

Country of Origin: USA

Film: X Video: Subtv:

Genre: SCI-FI, ACTION, THRILLER

First: X Resub:

Eng Lang: X Foreign Lang:

Cuts: No Cuts: X

Subtitled: Dubbed:

Category: '18'

	Uc	U	PG	12	15	18	R18	CUTS	REJECT
THEME					X				
TREATMENT						X			
VISUALS: NUDITY						X			
SEX									
VIOLENCE						X			
HORROR						X			
LANGUAGE					X				
DRUGS									
CRIMINAL TECHNIQUES									
LEGALITY: OBSCENITY									
CHILDREN									
ANIMALS									
BLASPHEMY									
FILM AS A WHOLE						X			

Keywords: OUTER SPACE, QUANTITY OF VIOLENCE.

Douglas Quaid's (Arnold Schwarzenegger), manual labourer, subconscious mind is awakened when he embarks on a brain implant promising him travel in Mars. It soon appears that tyrannical ruler of Mars Cohaggen has erased secret agent Hauser's mind turning him into Quaid when he has discovered he has been working with rebel leader Kuato and his men to undermine him on Mars. Secret agent Laurie is set up as Quaid's wife who attempts to kill him when he is about to discover the truth. Pursued by Cohaggen's man, Richter, and his goons from Earth to Mars, Quaid manages to contact Melanie, an old girlfriend who helps him unfold the mystery after a series of adventures and mishaps.

Comments:

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Paul Verhoeven's gripping, action packed film is reminiscent of Ridley's Scott's BLADE RUNNER filled with futuristic technological images that excite the imagination. Whereas in the fifties xenophobia and fear of communism rarely permitted films to present the aliens as friendly, the late eighties and 1990 seems to present more and more the human as evil overcome with greed, on a road to self-destruction environmentally as he explores new planets, Mars in this instant. There is not only an underlying preoccupation with global destruction but with those still relatively unknown chemical materials and the effects shown in those humans malformed and made grotesque from working in the Pyramid mines on Mars. Women, Melanie the undercover agent prostitute and Lawrie, the secret agent "wife" have positive roles, physically strong as shown in dealing with male adversaries using skilful martial arts techniques, thus removing the all-too-familiar representation of the beautiful woman as a mere sex object. In many areas the film is ideal for the '15' audience ('15' was requested by the company) however specified areas of violence continued to nudge it into '18'.

## Reel 2

0444 In a fight where Quaid is caught by three men, there is head banging, knee kick to face, blood splattering on walls as man is shot. Later the same man is attacked in his home, two kicks in crotch included. There are quick sweeps of a knife used to slash chest and a wrist in close-up. The secret agent "wife" fights hard, Quaid punching her on the face eventually to get away.

1200 In a shoot out on the metro escalator, blood splatter is vivid and a wounded man used as a shield in the confusion.

## Reel 3

0337 A sequence that would have delighted fifteen year-olds, a gun instrument which Quaid uses to remove the bug inserted in his brain through his nose, smaller than a table tennis ball. Not category related but worth with a mention as it was quite painful and funny to watch. The whole film was strewn with witty lines that seemed to diffuse the continual aggression against Quaid.

## Reel 4

Quaid is taken to an area where the "freaks" (deformed workers from mines) are in a brothel. There a woman with three breasts draws particular attention.

## Reel 4

0225 Quaid shoots a man in the head, his blood splattering from the wound. More blows to crotch and face. The two women come face to face and fight karate style, one is shot and as she falls (the secret agent wife) another comic remark about marriage is made which again serves to debrief the frenzied fighting that has gone on. The women remain clothed throughout perhaps reducing the titillation intended.

During the storming of the brothel-bar, the three-breasted woman is shot and a man stabbed.



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## Reel 5

- a) One man, Billy a black taxi driver reveals his tucked away deformed hand followed by the similarly deformed figure of the rebel leader Kuato, an old figure of a baby or dwarf emerging from a man's stomach, the baby actually talking. Expertly handled and frightening at the same time.
- b) In an attempt to deprogramme Quaid once more, he escapes from the chair he's fixed to and plunges a nail into the technician's neck.

## Reel 6

- 0230 This followed by a tunnelling machine attacking a couple, its drill-like tentacles moving in close to their bodies. The driver is stabbed with a drill-like rifle muzzle.
- 0706 As Richter and Quaid fight on the moving lift, his hands are seen being cut off. An agonising moment. The transformation of those falling into the red mountain lacking in oxygen, their faces distorted and grotesquely changed regain normality when oxygen is released into the air. Almost a horror image.

As I write the report, going over the various scenes the feeling that this could have been '15' remains. As I watched the action, the violence felt '18' predominately, moments that we usually take at the higher category. However with the view that cuts should not be made to a film expertly and technically executed, I recommend '18' uncut.

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	Uc	U	PG	12	15	18	R18	CUTS	REJECT
THEME				X					
TREATMENT						X			
VISUALS: NUDITY					X	X			
SEX				X					
VIOLENCE						X			
HORROR									
LANGUAGE					X	fuck, bastard, arsehole, shit			
DRUGS									
CRIMINAL TECHNIQUES									
LEGALITY: OBSCENITY									
CHILDREN									
ANIMALS									
BLASPHEMY									
FILM AS A WHOLE						X			

Keywords: SCI-FI, ACTION, THRILLER, OUTER SPACE, RESISTANCE, VIOLENCE - QUANTITY OF.

Cohaagen, the tyrannical governor of the Martian Colony, has, with the agreement of his favourite Secret Service agent, Hauser, had the latter's mind-set doctored to become the good Doug Quaid, complete with pretend 'wife', Laurie, also a Secret Service agent. Coahaagen hopes by this means to penetrate the forces of the Martian Resistance led by Kuato. Nice Doug, however, goes to Total Recall a mind holiday/space travelling agency, to have a trip to Mars experience with the Ego Trip extra, namely, to go as a secret agent. The process causes Hauser to become mind-set into the good Quaid, who goes on, through many adventures, to destroy Coahaagen's tyranny. He is helped in this by Melinda, a resistance lady he'd met earlier as Hauser.



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## Comment

This is a splendid rollercoaster movie - a great film for an evening viewing! - in which Paul Verhoeven proves the equal of James Cameron, Walter Hill and John McTiernan when it comes to action sequences. Rather more importantly, beneath the exciting action's surface, Verhoeven is making a number of interesting points about social oppression, the search for an individual identity, dichotomies within the individual psyche, the reality of dreams and the dreams of reality. Serious themes are gracefully and unemphatically woven into an exciting narrative which never pushes 'significance' at the viewer in the way that Ridley Scott does in BLADE RUNNER - not everyone will agree with the latter. The numerous set pieces are exciting, most of the decor/mise-en-scene is effective - though not as impressive as BLADE RUNNER, the references to the Hollywood Sci-fi genre are subtly contained and, once again, Arnie Baby proves his ability to fit, with chameleon skill, into the needs of the film. And the script's not half bad either. I thoroughly enjoyed the movie which, in its different way, is the equal of ROBOCOP. Indeed, TOTAL RECALL may prove on repeated viewings to be the richer film in the responses it provokes, the ideas it circulates.

All of which is germane to the category question since the Company have requested a '15' and the film's explosive narrative, sci-fi ambience, thrills and spills, and, yes, ideas make it a perfect viewing for '15' plus audiences. Would it were that simple. Verhoeven has always made films for adults - he does us that compliment - which also means he does not play down a violent incident. In which respect, while the quantity of violence is not excessive - the keywords list is urgently in need of rational revision! - the quality of these moments is punchy and upfront. Consider the following:

## Reel 2

- 4.11 Head banging, knee into chin, neck break.
- 7.33 Close-up crotch kick (Laurie to Doug), Laurie thrown across room, Laurie slashes Doug's stomach with a kitchen knife (medium close-shot).
- 12.45 A spectacular gunbattle on and about a subway escalator with heavy duty impact shots and bloodspurts.

## Reel 4

- 8.34 Doug is attacked, hit in the face, hit in the crotch (close shot).
- 9.59 Laurie and Melinda fight: punches (two heavy ones to stomach), kicks. An impactful encounter.
- 15.55 Gunbattle in bar. Impact shots.

## Reel 5

- 14.40 When Doug escapes from a mind-bending machine, he twice thrusts spiked implements into the necks of Coahaagen's minions (14.40 and 14.50).

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Reel 6

6.32 Doug fights one of the arch baddies, Richter, during which there are a couple of kidney punches, a powerful stomach punch, and Richer's arms are chopped off as the lift passes through a built up section. Doug holds them aloft.

There are a couple of gunbattles which are shooting and falling figures, shot in medium to long shot for excitement rather than detail.

I suppose all this adds up to '18', though writing the report in retrospect and considering the details of my log, I begin more and more to see point about the film being more '15' than '18'. The stronger moments lead the viewer to think that less specific action encounters are stronger than they are. Again, much rests on the crucial (I believe) distinction that needs making between action and violence, the latter often implied by the former, the former often compromised by the latter. In TOTAL RECALL, there are sequences both of action and violence, which colour each other. But the sequences are never, to my mind, exploitative.

Finally, there is the question of the triple-breasted lady peddling her favours, with comedy taxi-driver, Benny (also a traitor) fondling them (Reel 3, 17.56; Reel 4, 2.25 and 15.40). seemed to think this an '18' moment, but I'm not sure she isn't just one step (two actually) from the 'PG' mutants of STAR WARS.

|| Since we saw a rough cut, with no title, credits etc, it will presumably re-surface in final form for classification, when it will be seen by another team. It would be well worth considering a possible '15' for the film - is it honestly more 'violent' than, say, THE UNTOUCHABLES or HAMBURGER HILL, two films in different genres both of which were '15'. It's important to register the tone of TOTAL RECALL which is not exploitative but which is about visceral thrills. While I have here gone for '18', I'm very marginal about it and would be delighted if others felt the film was more a '15' - uncut I hasten to add. It would be criminal and irresponsible to go hacking away at this fine film purely on marketing grounds. I'd be absolutely delighted with a '15' verdict, but recognise that there may well be those who feel my distinctions less valid, that impact alone is sufficient warrant for the top category. I'd not be happy with the latter contention, though I can see there are '18' arguments to be made. So, a reluctant '18' on my part for the rough cut: I'd prefer '15'. It's perhaps worth recording that reaction was '18', but would like a '15'.

'18' but would prefer '15'.



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THEME			X						
TREATMENT						X			
VISUALS: NUDITY									
SEX					X				
VIOLENCE						X			
HORROR									
LANGUAGE					X				
DRUGS									
CRIMINAL TECHNIQUES									
LEGALITY: OBSCENITY									
CHILDREN									
ANIMALS									
BLASPHEMY									
FILM AS A WHOLE						X			

Keywords: VIOLENCE (QUANTITY OF), ESPIONAGE.

Synopses on file.

## Comments

This is brilliantly imaginative and witty entertainment playing on multi-levels of reality. Though action-packed, the action hangs on an intelligent and coherent narrative that never lets the audience down. Both and I thoroughly enjoyed the film and we would strongly recommend this for a Tuesday viewing. More to the point, we would not dream of cutting it for '15'. The violence, though strong in places, is not only well-filmed, but fully integrated into the rhythm of the piece. Meddling with accomplished direction and editing as this clearly is would be over-stepping

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our function as classifiers. According to last month's bulletin, shouted commands in one's report is always a good idea, so here is mine "Hands off this movie!"

However many four-year-old fans of ROBOCOP there might be out there who would adore this, in line with Board policy this movie demands an '18' certificate.

Both and had written that it 'felt' '15' and we would agree to a certain extent, but there are many specific and personal moments of violence here. A few examples will suffice.

- 1 In Reel 1, where Doug (Schwarzenegger) is seen to overcome and kill off his first four adversaries, he head butts two of them together, breaks the neck of one with his foot and shoots dead the others and who die with blood spurts against splattered walls. This is horrific, brief but strong.
- 2 Later, when he returns home, he gets shot at by Lori. She further delivers a punch followed by a kick to his crotch, before slashing him across the chest and arm with a kitchen knife.
- 3 Still in Reel 1, a shoot-out scene on an escalator, Doug uses a man as his shield against bullets aimed at him. The poor guy is literally shot to pieces while others around him die with blood spurts. At 13.14 mins, Doug is seen to step on not over, a blood-drenched, not to say perforated body to make his escape. We see this in close-shot. Like many other moments of violence they are brief but punchy.
- 4 In Reel 4, at another encounter with Lori (this time in Mars), she delivers her favourite crotch kick to Doug after whacking him in the face. Again we see this in close-shot. The fight between the two women that ensues is also serious in intent involving heavy kicks and punches until Doug shoots Lori dead through the forehead (11.56 mins).
- 5 The general shoot-out scene at a brothel sees many woman dying with blood spurts, but the moment that stands out is where the female dwarf plunges a knife into one of the baddies' crotch area (thankfully obscured by his own leg). Camera cuts away at once.
- 6 When Kuato is shot in Reel 5, the violence is oddly ambivalent in feel. A wonderful fantasy creation, Kuato looks like a cross between a baby and an old man hanging out of a man's stomach. To see him shot in the head is not unlike witnessing a baby or embryo being killed despite the audience's rational knowledge that this is sci-fi. Very clever, very affecting, very '18'.
- 7 In reel 5, where Doug escapes from the lab, he deals out some spectacular violence to the technicians with the instruments at hand. One is stabbed in the neck, another has something sharp up his nose etc. before the good guys make their escape. In each case we get a brief close-up of the victims dying their bizarre deaths.
- 8 Reel 6 sees Doug and Meline cornered by a tank, they are both seen



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to be hurt as the machine ploughs into them. Doug kills the driver with a drill out of view.

9 Finally, in Reel 6, Victor falls to his death after both his arms are spectacularly severed by an elevator meeting a walk. Doug throws away the bits of arm he's been hanging on to.

Being a classy project, none of the violence is lingering, voyeuristic or sleazy in any way. It is however, strong beyond the shadow of a doubt, and this is what escapist adult entertainment means. No doubt a load of younger teenagers will love it too, but let us at least, by our chosen category indicate what they might be in for.

One question that remains is where do we stand on goldfish? In reel 5, a goldfish tank is shattered and the poor things fall onto the floor gasping for air. We even get a close-up of one at 16.35 mins in a desperate state. There can be little doubt that this is a real goldfish in distress. I seem to remember campaigning for goldfish rights a couple of years ago. Can someone tell me if he has the support of the Board?!

Pass '18' uncut on violence to a variety of life-forms.

