

BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION

**ANNUAL REPORT
AND ACCOUNTS FOR 1986**

BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION

3 Soho Square, London W1V 5DE

President: THE EARL OF HAREWOOD

Director: James Ferman

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26th June 1987

THE SECOND ANNUAL REPORT OF THE BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION

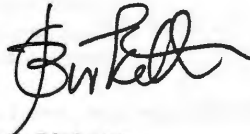
Dear Secretary of State,

In accordance with section 6 of the Video Recordings Act 1984 and our letter of designation dated 26th July 1985, we have pleasure in submitting to you the Annual Report of the British Board of Film Classification together with the statement of accounts for the year ended 31st December 1986.

Yours sincerely,



Lord Harewood
President



Lord Birkett
Vice President



Monica Sims OBE
Vice President

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd CBE MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
Home Office
50 Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9AT

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PRINCIPAL OFFICERS OF THE BBFC

President

THE RT HON THE EARL OF HAREWOOD KBE

Vice Presidents

THE LORD BIRKETT

MONICA SIMS OBE

Director

JAMES FERMAN

Deputy Director

Wing Commander K R PENRY RAF Retd, MBIM

Assistant Directors

MARGARET FORD JP (Examining)

PETER WILSON FIPM MBIM (Administration)

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Hon Treasurer: G W Brooks

D C Calder

R G F Chase

M H Cox

P P Rigby JP

S Sansom OBE

W P Vinten OBE

I D Wratten CBE

BBFC Senior Staff at 31st December 1986

EXAMINERS

Julie Blake, David Blewitt, Michael Bor, Richard Falcon, Behrose Gandhi, Paul Hoffman, Shah Hussain, Dermot Lyons, Maggie Mills, Maria Moustaka, Jeremy O'Grady, Frank Panford, Guy Phelps, Sally Sampson, Rosemary Stark, Kristina Tang, Victoria Tawadros, Carol Topolski, Philomena Wat, Geoffrey Wood, Julian Wood

ADMINISTRATIVE AND TECHNICAL

B A Mayell, Head of Accounts, Jackie Simons, Head of Programming, Claudia Meldon, Senior Secretary, Jean McMeakin, Head of Registration, Dennis Askew, Chief Film Technician, Vincent Hull, Chief Video Technician, Shirley England, Data Systems Officer, Karen Grant, Post-Exam. Co-ordinator

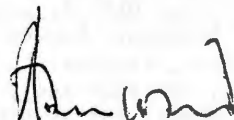
PRESIDENT'S INTRODUCTION

1986 was a year of consolidation for the BBFC, in which its new responsibilities for the classification of video works under the Video Recordings Act 1984 produced the biggest volume of work in the Board's history. It was a year when unaccustomed pressure of work meant that new staff recruited and trained in 1985 had to be absorbed very rapidly into an efficient organisation capable of examining and classifying some twenty feature films or videos each working day.

It would be good not to have to begin each Annual Report with a slightly apologetic "thank you" to the staff of the BBFC, but 1986 was no exception to what is in danger of becoming a rule. Not only were our examiners and administrative staff hard-pressed and often over-worked by the volume, particularly of videos, of what came their way, but they had, because of the virtual re-building of much of 3 Soho Square, often to work in cramped and dusty conditions or outside the building altogether. Since their labour was undoubtedly - and for much of the time particularly - arduous, per ardua ad astra might well be thought of as our motto, and we must only hope that the dust was not so thick as to prevent the star-gazers amongst us - and what organisation loses all its optimists at the same time? - from occasionally seeing appropriate bright spots through the gloom. So, our gratitude goes to members of the Board for their patience in a year which not only introduced several new languages to our viewing rooms - and some new members were brought on to the Board to deal with them - but which was, even at its best, not easy.

Heart-searching over our interpretation of public taste continues, but every now and then we are lambasted - in public and in private - for over-vigorous use of the scissors or for giving the public too wide a choice over what it sees. This is as it should be. The Report which follows goes in some detail into these problems, but our intentions are perfectly clear: to resist an encroachment on standards as far as we can, and to continue to keep in step with what the public perceives those standards to be. We still believe very strongly that there is a world of difference between manners and morals, between a shock to our social conventions and an undermining of our fundamental morality. The latter we shall try to keep off our screens, the former to admit while sending up sufficiently visible warning signals (in terms of the categories we allot to films and videos) for those who want to avoid it.

At the same time, we are highly conscious that the industry itself, film and video, is capable of setting very high standards indeed, and that our work is aimed in the same direction. A warning may be timely that enforcement of our categories is not all it should be, but these are early days. And if we are right in believing that the past year has seen something very close to the disappearance of what came to be known as the 'video nasties', then not only has the industry moved a bit up-market, but the Act has made a useful start. And - dare I say it? - we have been doing the job set us by Parliament.



26th June 1987

Harewood

VIDEO CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL - Membership during 1986

Norman Abbott (British Videogram Association)
Cllr R F Ashmole (London Boroughs Association)
Cllr P N Baggott (Association of Metropolitan Authorities)
The Hon Mrs Susan Baring OBE JP (Central Council of Probation Committees)
Dr Alan Gilmour CBE (Director, NSPCC)
Alderman George Green (Association of Local Authorities of Northern Ireland)
Clive Grenyer (Association of County Councils)
Cllr W Harley (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities)
Cllr Felicity Harvest (Association of Metropolitan Authorities)
Barrie Heads (Independent Television Companies Association)
Sandra Horne (Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians)
Anne Jones (Head, Cranford Community School)
Cllr Ken Little (Greater London Council)
Kenneth L Maidment (The British Film & TV Producers' Association)
Graeme McDonald (British Broadcasting Corporation)
Derek Mann (Video Trade Association)
Rajesh Mehra (India Videogram Association)
Cllr Derek Mitchell (Association of District Councils)
Robert Perkins (Association of Metropolitan Authorities)
Lady Plowden DBE (former Chairman, Independent Television Authority)
Patricia Rawlings (appeals organiser and fundraiser)
Claire Rayner (author, journalist and broadcaster)
Cllr L A Robertson (Association of District Councils)
Richard Warren (Video Retailers Association)
Professor Donald J West (Cambridge Institute of Criminology)
The Rt Reverend W J Westwood, Bishop of Peterborough
Philip White (Association of Video Industry Established Wholesalers)

VIDEO APPEALS COMMITTEE

President:

Peter Barnes CB, former Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions

Members:

Nina Bawden FRSL JP, novelist,
President, Society of Women Writers and Journalists
H J Eysenck, Professor of Psychology,
University of London Institute of Psychiatry
St John D B Harmsworth JP, Senior Stipendiary Magistrate, London (Retired)
Richard Hoggart FRSL, former Professor of English and Warden of
Goldsmiths College, University of London
Dr Neville March Hunnings, lawyer and author, editor Common Market Law Reports
The Hon Mrs Sara Morrison, member of the Annan Committee, and
former director, Channel Four Television Company Ltd
Dr Faith Spicer OBE JP, psychotherapist and
founder Director, London Youth Advisory Centre
Laurie Taylor, Professor of Sociology, York University
Fay Weldon, novelist and playwright
Sir Brian Young, former Director-General, Independent Broadcasting Authority

A YEAR OF CONSOLIDATION

1. 1986 was a year when statistics told the most important part of the story, with 4,464 video features classified under the Video Recordings Act 1984, together with 348 cinema films as part of the Board's continuing responsibilities in connection with the Cinemas Act 1985. The logistical problems encountered in handling this unprecedented workload occupied the greater part of managerial time, but by the end of the year, computerisation of the Board's records had begun to ease the rate of expansion in staff and resources. It is hoped that this major investment will lead to a streamlining of effort during 1987.
2. Although physical plant remained inadequate for most of the year, with video examining decanted for six months to a temporary annexe some ten minutes walk away while builders dustily occupied two floors of the Board's offices at 3 Soho Square, by the end of the year, the Board was beginning to experience adequate accommodation for its much expanded workforce. This programme of repairs and refurbishment will continue throughout 1987/88.
3. Difficulties in acquiring leases for the additional floors in these offices had set back the building works by three months, with disruption to budgetary planning which can be summed up briefly as a temporary surplus at the end of 1986 and a marked deficit three months into 1987 when the first phase of renovation came to an end.
4. One of the biggest problems arose from the relationship between the Board's traditional responsibilities for cinema and its new and urgent role in video classification. In terms of volume, video dominated the Board's thinking, but where standards and working methods were concerned, it was the Board's 74 years of classifying films in accordance with evolutions in public taste and media law which set the pattern. This was the heritage the Home Secretary had called on in designating the President and Vice Presidents of the Board as the authority responsible for implementing the Video Recordings Act 1984.
5. The Board's film operation had always been technically small-scale, with a private cinema seating less than a dozen and no possibility of accommodating the much increased policy team of twenty-one examiners and six principal officers. With its new video role resting largely on the professionalism derived from a continuing expertise with films, it became essential to provide a screening room big enough to seat the entire examining staff of the Board on those occasions when decisions have to be made on difficult films of a kind which constitute precedents for future policy. Also required was a conference room capable of accommodating the crowded staff meetings at which decisions are reviewed and standards discussed.

6. Accommodation problems were a post-war phenomenon for the BBFC, which until the end of World War II had owned the freehold of a Wren building known as Carlisle House which had overlooked one of the entrances to Soho Square within easy walking distance of the film industry. It was a major loss to the Board when this building was demolished by one of the last V2 rockets of the war, and it was only by the greatest good luck that most of the records were saved and could be moved into the new offices at 3 Soho Square. Not owning the freehold, however, made the temporary nature of the lease something of a problem when long-term responsibilities under the Video Recordings Act became a reality.
7. The Board had always considered it essential to retain its close proximity to the film industry, but the vast expansion of video records and the rapidly growing archive of tapes meant that negotiation of a longer lease on several additional floors of office space was urgently required if the Board was to face the future with any degree of security. Once this was accomplished, careful planning, despite much inconvenience to staff, ensured that the refurbishment programme in its first year could be covered out of current income, with future phases to be scheduled as expeditiously as financial constraints permit.
8. Apart from the statistical achievements of 1986, the successful and relatively secure accommodation of the Board's vastly expanded operations was the major achievement of the year.

CLASSIFICATION

Films

9. The classification of films under the various Cinematograph Acts, now consolidated as the Cinemas Act 1985, has been the continuing function of the BBFC since its inception in 1912, and it is film classification which sets the standards and establishes the procedures which the Board has now extended to the field of video under the Video Recordings Act 1984.
10. During 1986, there were 348 feature films submitted for classification as well as 41 short features, 265 trailers, and 93 advertisements. One feature was refused a certificate during 1986, and 44 features (12½% of the total) were cut as a condition of certification. For the second year running, the incidence of brutal or sadistic violence in films was a problem, and the one feature refused a certificate altogether was rejected because of its continuing emphasis on scenes of the most appalling sadistic cruelty.
11. Category trends since 1970 can be assessed from the figures given in Appendix I, in which the total number of films passed and cut each year is broken down into categories and set out in tabular form. At the end of 1982, the age for the 'AA' category was raised to 15 and the age-bar categories were thenceforth referred to simply as '15' and '18'. The old 'A' category, which once required parental accompaniment but had been merely advisory since 1970, had its symbol changed in 1982 from 'A' to 'PG', which is the symbol for 'Parental Guidance' and indicates that some scenes may be unsuitable for young children. At the same time, a new category, the 'R18', was introduced for films restricted to specially licensed cinema clubs.
12. In 1986, the 348 features to which classification certificates were issued can be broken down statistically as follows:

<u>Classification Categories</u>	<u>Total number and percentage of works in each category</u>	<u>Number and percentage of works classified only after cuts</u>
'U'	25 (7.2%)	-
'PG'	78 (22.4%)	14 (17.9%)
'15'	137 (39.4%)	12 (8.8%)
'18'	107 (30.7%)	18 (16.8%)
'R18'	-	-
Rejected	1 (0.3%)	
<u>Total</u>	<u>348 (100%)</u>	<u>44 (12.6%)</u>

Two of the films cut for '18' had been classified 'R18' in previous years and were submitted in 1986 with a request for cuts which would make them suitable for showing to adults in the public cinema.

Video

13. The most notable feature of 1986 was the Board's classification of some 4,464 video features under the Video Recordings Act 1984. Of these, 4 were refused a certificate altogether while another 438 required cuts as a condition of certification. For the second year running, just over half the features classified were considered suitable for general viewing, with 1,042 of these being subject to a 'Parental Guidance' warning on the grounds that some scenes might be unsuitable for young children. The largest category, roughly a quarter, was of features judged suitable for supply only to persons of 15 years and over, while a further 952 features were classified as suitable only for those of 18 and above. Only 76 works, a mere 1.7% of the total, were classified 'R18', which restricts the supply to licensed sex shops. Also classified during 1986 was the first video game to be submitted to the Board under the terms of the Act. Full statistics for the year are summarised in the table opposite, with cumulative totals for 1985/86 on the following page.
14. The focus during 1986 was on works for which the criminal provisions of the Act were most rapidly being brought into force. These were, in order of priority: (a) new releases of works never available in video form before September 1985, (b) works in English available before that date but never registered as cinema films with the DTI, and (c) works in English available before that date and released in the British cinema since 1980. These three categories had been given top priority by the Home Office because most of the notorious video nasties appearing on the list published by the DPP would be covered by one or other of these categories. The overriding priority given to new video releases during this first year of the Act meant that the Board was concerned during this period with a vast amount of material never classified before in any form, some of which was caught by tests of British law which would have been applied at an earlier stage had they been classified for the cinema.
15. The Board's standards were discussed in some detail in the Annual Report for 1985, and they have not altered significantly, but they are tested from time to time by new works since the standards of public taste are constantly evolving. It is worth noting that very few complaints have been received by the Board since the Act came into force, and there is increasing evidence that the public has found the Board's classifications both helpful and reliable in regulating their own and their children's home viewing.

Video Lists

16. A consolidated list of all video works classified by the Board from September 1985 to December 1986 is published under separate cover. This list has been made available to subscribers and is now the authoritative guide for the video trade and industry and for the police in carrying out enforcement under the Act. The Board publishes monthly lists of works newly classified and also 4-monthly cumulative lists as well as annual consolidations.

British Board of Film Classification

Video Recordings Act 1984

VIDEO STATISTICS FOR 1986

<u>Classification Categories</u>	<u>Total Number and percentage of works in each category</u>	<u>Number and percentage of works classified only after cuts</u>
FEATURES		
'U'	1,092 (24.5%)	8 (0.7%)
'U/c'	159 (3.6%)	-
'PG'	1,042 (23.3%)	71 (6.8%)
'15'	1,139 (25.5%)	69 (6.1%)
'18'	952 (21.3%)	273 (28.7%)
'R18'	76 (1.7%)	17 (22.4%)
Rejected	4 (0.1%)	
<u>Total</u>	<u>4,464 (100%)</u>	<u>438 (9.8%)</u>
TRAILERS		
'U'	646 (57.5%)	59 (9.1%)
'U/c'	1	-
'PG'	123 (10.9%)	4 (3.3%)
'15'	213 (19.0%)	7 (3.3%)
'18'	140 (12.5%)	14 (10.0%)
'R18'	1	1 (100.0%)
<u>Total</u>	<u>1,124</u>	<u>85 (7.6%)</u>
ADVERTISEMENTS		
'U'	208 (95.4%)	2 (1%)
'PG'	5 (2.3%)	-
'15'	5 (2.3%)	-
	<u>218</u>	<u>2 (0.9%)</u>
VIDEO GAMES		
'15'	1 (100%)	-

British Board of Film Classification

Video Recordings Act 1984

CUMULATIVE VIDEO STATISTICS
September 1985 to December 1986

<u>Classification Categories</u>	<u>Total Number and percentage of works in each category</u>	<u>Number and percentage of works classified only after cuts</u>
FEATURES		
'U'	1,265 (24.8%)	15 (1.2%)
'U/c'	192 (3.8%)	-
'PG'	1,190 (23.3%)	76 (6.4%)
'15'	1,321 (25.9%)	73 (5.5%)
'18'	1,055 (20.7%)	300 (28.4%)
'R18'	76 (1.5%)	17 (22.4%)
Rejected	4 (0.1%)	
<u>Total</u>	<u>5,103 (100%)</u>	<u>481 (9.4%)</u>
TRAILERS		
'U'	805 (61.0%)	87 (10.8%)
'U/c'	1 (0.1%)	-
'PG'	123 (9.3%)	4 (3.3%)
'15'	217 (16.4%)	8 (3.7%)
'18'	171 (13.0%)	16 (9.4%)
'R18'	3 (0.2%)	1 (33.3%)
<u>Total</u>	<u>1,320</u>	<u>116 (8.8%)</u>
ADVERTISEMENTS		
'U'	213 (95.5%)	2 (0.9%)
'PG'	5 (2.2%)	-
'15'	5 (2.2%)	-
<u>Total</u>	<u>223</u>	<u>2 (0.9%)</u>
VIDEO GAMES		
'15'	1 (100%)	-

17. The lists give not only the authorised running time of the classified work but also the duration of any cuts required by the BBFC as a condition of certification. Occasionally, a work will already have been cut by the submitting company and, if so, the Board always keeps a record of these as well and enters them in the 'Remarks' column of the list. This column also carries additional information on works which are in a foreign language or which have been abridged or released with a change of title.

Trends

18. Comparisons between 1985 and 1986 are limited by the relatively small number of tapes examined in the four months the Act was in force during 1985, when only 652 features were classified, of which 42 were cut. Statistically speaking, a slightly higher proportion of features were cut in 1986 than in the previous year, but this reflects chiefly the submissions received during the summer in time for the statutory deadline of 1st September, when all video works which had never been released in the cinema had to be classified under the Video Recordings Act. Conversely, the cutting of trailers fell markedly from 15.7% in 1985 to 7.6% in 1986, reflecting two different factors: first, that video companies had begun to appreciate BBFC standards for trailers, always a problematic area, and secondly, that the Board had begun to encourage a greater use of the intermediate categories 'PG' and '15' for trailers following assurances from the industry that they understood the labelling requirements and would not include such trailers on recordings with features classified less restrictively than the trailer.

Cuts

19. The most significant trend over the two years was the decline in horror submissions of a kind which would have required cuts, in particular the sort of 'zombie' movies less and less favoured by an industry eager to cast off its 'down-market' image. This also, to some extent, reflects the disappearance of some of the smaller companies specialising in what is known as 'exploitation product'. More and more during 1986, it seemed that the video industry was being given a lead by a relatively small number of companies with a fairly clear professional appreciation of Board policies, companies who saw their future, moreover, as dominated increasingly by material designed for the wider family audience.
20. Even so, the cutting of sexual violence continues at a level very similar to that reached in 1985, with around 10% of all video features in the adult categories requiring cuts in sexual violence. In 1986, there were 143 such cuts in sexual violence in some 76 video features, cuts which totalled 2 hours and 19 minutes of material ruled unacceptable by the Board even for adults. It is perhaps disquieting that such material should continue to account for such a high proportion of screen time in so-called adult entertainment. This is a recent trend, however, and it is likely that as deadlines approach for works released in the cinema in progressively earlier decades, so scenes of this nature will tend to occupy a significantly smaller proportion of screen time and provide a statistically lower percentage of video cuts.

Rejects

21. One of the most important responsibilities of the designated authority under the Act is to determine whether a video work is suitable for a classification certificate to be issued to it, bearing in mind that classified video works may be viewed in the home. In 1986, as in the previous year, the Board has taken a particularly strict line on rape and other forms of violence against women where such scenes are presented as sexually titillating. It has long been the Board's view that such scenes might be sought out by the psychologically disturbed, in particular by men who bear a resentment against women and might find a dangerous kind of pleasure in repeatedly watching a woman maltreated, particularly in a sexual context, in videos which can be viewed in the privacy of the home. Cuts, occasionally quite heavy ones, are usually sufficient to control such material, but occasionally no amount of cutting can make a significant difference and the work must be refused a classification certificate altogether.
22. Four video features were rejected during 1986, all on grounds of sexual violence. One of these was set wholly in a brothel where two customers seek to buy the right to abuse the women both physically and mentally, with or without their consent. Some of the violence here was amongst the worst the Board has seen in a sexual context. Another rejected video featured a very long and elaborate scene of bondage, whipping and sado-masochism, in this case all consenting but nevertheless presenting images of violence against women which were judged to be both excessive and seductive in their potential impact on vulnerable male viewers, who might even seek to emulate such behaviour in non-consenting situations. Of the other two, one was a soft-porn video featuring non-consenting bondage and sexual assault on a bound female victim, whilst the other, a more frankly pornographic work, featured not only sexual assault with a broken bottle but a plot which centred on the consummation of a relationship of father/daughter incest. Since this, after rape, is one of the most serious sex crimes in Britain, the Board has always taken a particularly strict view of any work which seeks to present such scenes for purposes of sexual arousal.
23. Yet another submitted feature had originally been rejected on video before the Act came into force after having already been rejected as a film in 1984 because of a prolonged rape and other scenes of brutal violence. Because of this history of rejection, a new version was submitted on video which had been abridged by about five minutes by the distributors with the loss of most of the rape, but these cuts were considered insufficient to mitigate the atmosphere of anti-social violence which had led to the work's rejection on film. Since every video company has the right to alter a rejected work in the hope of securing a certificate in this revised form, the distributors took steps to cut the work by a further five and a half minutes before resubmitting it at the end of the year. In this form it at last seemed to the Board that a cuts list could be issued with the intention of rendering this much abridged work suitable for a classification certificate to be issued to it, and during 1987 this process of further cutting has continued.

24. Although very few features have so far been refused a certificate altogether, there are many others which have been discouraged from being submitted because of their history of prosecutions for obscenity. Under the terms of the Home Secretary's letter of designation, the Board must continue to seek to avoid classifying works which are obscene in the meaning of the Obscene Publications Acts 1959 and 1964 or which infringe other provisions of the criminal law. The Board has kept a detailed record of the decisions of the courts on all the so-called 'video nasties' since 1984, and where it is clear from the court results that no classification certificate can be issued, it is Board policy to discourage submitting companies from wasting their money on a submission which is unlikely to bear fruit on legal grounds. No video work which has been the subject of successful proceedings for obscenity has been granted a certificate under the Act in the version found obscene by the courts.

Sex videos

25. A slight increase was evident in 1986 in the number of cuts required on grounds of visual explicitness in scenes of consenting sex which public taste has tended to accept as within the range of normal sexual practice. This apparent increase in strictness by the Board reflects to some extent the attempt to achieve a clear line of demarcation between the degree of explicitness permitted in the '18' category and that considered more suitable at 'R18'. Some 203 cuts were required in sex scenes in a total of 52 features classified '18' or 'R18', such cuts amounting to 1 hour and 34 minutes of screen time. The limits set for the 'R18' are those which the Board's records indicate to be the current borderline set by juries and magistrates for scenes of consenting sex brought before the courts in various parts of the country on charges of obscenity. The limits of permissiveness at '18' are subject to constant reassessment in the light of the Board's sense of what public taste will tolerate in video works supplied in ordinary video shops to which families, including children under the age of 18, have access. The Video Appeals Committee considered only one appeal during 1986, and that was against the award of an 'R18' certificate where the submitting company had requested an '18'. In that case, the appeal was upheld by the Committee, and the implications of that decision and of future appellate decisions on standards for sex at '18' and 'R18' are considered in the later chapter on Appeals.

Animals

26. The Board's relatively strict policy where the maltreatment of performing animals is concerned remains evident in both the junior and the adult categories, where the carrying over to video of tests evolved under the Cinematograph Films (Animals) Act 1937 has led to the trimming of horsefalls caused by illegal tripping devices and of scenes in which animals are goaded into mortal combat. Such scenes tend to be present in films made in parts of the world where maltreatment of animals is part of the social scene, but the Board must apply the standards of the United Kingdom to entertainment intended for supply in this country, and the strictness of its policy has met with support from all quarters.

27. During 1986, 65 video features were cut to remove 104 separate scenes of cruelty to animals, such cuts totalling 24 minutes of unacceptable animal action. All were in films made outside the United Kingdom, and nearly two thirds were in films classified for the family audience, which meant they could have had a formative influence on the humane attitudes of young people in Britain, with its world reputation for responsibility in fostering the humane treatment of animals. If we wish to see our children grow up with an appreciation of the need for humane behaviour, then the Board's careful monitoring of such scenes may have a role to play in moral education.

Suitability for viewing in the home

28. The Board's scrupulous attention to the demonstration on video of imitable criminal or harmful techniques is based on a recognition of video's unique capacity as a teaching medium in which the facility for freeze-frame and selective replay may lead too easily to copycat crime. This has always been one of the areas for regulation under the statutory requirement to have special regard to the likelihood of video works being viewed in the home. In the junior categories particularly, the Board is cautious about the techniques of amateur crime, with displays of lock-picking, breaking and entering into houses, or taking and driving away cars monitored closely because of their capacity to teach the young an activity they might find both exciting and tempting.
29. The Board has also found it necessary to take a strict line on dangerous combat techniques, with oriental weaponry and aggressive 'martial arts' blows and holds causing particular concern during 1986. 110 cuts were required in 55 features suitable in other respects for persons under the age of 18, with another 135 cuts required in adult films, usually to remove easily copiable blows or weaponry which carry the risk of serious or fatal injury. The availability of dangerous weapons to young people in Britain has been debated in Parliament recently, and the Board has continued to take a strict line on the display of chainsticks and metal throwing stars, as well as on the more recent fashion for crossbows in films about urban gang violence in America. Indeed, the Board would welcome measures in the new Parliament to control the sale of many of the dangerous weapons displayed in violent screen entertainment. In all, 1 hour and 13 minutes of imitable anti-social behaviour was excised from the four and a half thousand features classified during 1986.
30. Amongst the kinds of imitable behaviour the Board has taken seriously in recent years is the abuse of controlled drugs, traditionally an area which the BBFC has dealt with most severely in works classified for children and young persons. There were 9 cuts in 8 different features during 1986 to remove details of drug abuse where the display of such practices was considered too instructive, seductive or detailed for viewers watching the tapes in their own home. The psychology of drug abusers makes them particularly vulnerable to the hypnotic fascination of repeated viewings of an illicit ritual of self-medication, all the more so when removed from the social constraints which govern the viewing of similar scenes in a public cinema.

31. As mentioned earlier, the Board has continued to take a particularly strict line on rape and other forms of violence against women where such scenes are presented as sexually titillating. And it is BBFC policy to assume that the danger of such works is compounded by their availability for repeated viewing in the privacy of the home.
32. Under the home-viewing criterion, the Board is consistently more cautious with video versions of films than it might judge necessary in the cinema where control of audience age is more rigorous. For example, horror imagery has occasionally been cut because it seemed far too disturbing to be included in domestic entertainment which very young children might find themselves viewing without parental permission or supervision. In particular, images of mutilation have been cut because of the possibility of chance viewing by the young and impressionable who might fail to recognise such fantasy horror as mere make-believe.

Manners

33. Bad language was trimmed in 4 videos during 1986, minimally in terms of screen time, with less than 20 seconds in all being removed, but significantly in terms of the Board's role in reinforcing the language taboos and codes of public behaviour which British society considers important. In each of the above cases, the cutting of language was a voluntary act by a distributor in order to obtain a category which would make the work available to a wider or younger public. If we are being too strict in this, we hope the public will find ways to let us know, but so far, our postbag suggests that people do care about this sort of line being drawn. For most British parents, what is felt to be 'suitable' for their own children has as much to do with manners as with morals, and suitability is the test the Act lays down as governing standards in the various categories. There is clearly an evolution in social conventions from generation to generation, but the increasing permissiveness of previous decades may well have slowed down recently, and the Board can never relax its efforts to assess the levels of public toleration in terms of language, nudity and public behaviour where these may be considered unsuitable by many parents in the presence of their own children. If manners have a continuing value, it is in reflecting the extent to which social codes provide one means for ensuring a prevailing level of consideration for others, a value which is never out of date and without which society is in trouble.

Violence

34. Roughly 10% of cuts in the '18' category were to reduce scenes of realistic violence, often in contemporary settings where the imitability of the violence was felt to constitute an anti-social influence for the generation most commonly involved in crimes of violence, those between 17 and 25. Videos in this adult category cut for reasons of imitable violence represent less than 4% of all works classified '18' during the year, but we can never forget that it was public disquiet about the possible anti-social influences of video which gave rise to the Video Recordings Act. One of the essential tasks of the designated authority, therefore, must be a monitoring of the extent to which it is possible to bring such material under regulatory control.

Labelling

35. Protection of the young depends on the fullest information to parents about unsuitable material. Thus, the advisory categories, 'U', 'U/c' and 'PG', are used only when videos are considered appropriate for general viewing, with the 'PG' as a cautionary warning for parents that, on balance, they might consider some scenes to be unsuitable for their own young or impressionable children. In this case, the unsuitability is chiefly related to manners, since where the question is one of harm to the young, the Board will always choose one of the age-bar categories restricting supply to those of 15 and over or 18 and over.
36. Clear and instantly recognisable labelling for cases and cassettes is essential if parents are to be aware of the kind of entertainment which is brought into the home. The Video Recording (Labelling) Regulations were based on symbols designed by the Board and illustrated at the back of this Report, and these designs are now almost universally adopted by the video industry. We hope that as these symbols become familiar to the population at large, so parents will be able to exercise more effective control of their children's viewing.

Foreign language video

37. Video works in the untranslated languages of the ethnic minorities became a major strand of the Board's work during 1986. New staff were taken on to handle this, and indeed the Board still needs to recruit examiners fluent in some of these languages if it is to handle the increasing throughput of works from Hong Kong, the Indian sub-continent, Egypt, Greece and Turkey. Statistics speak for themselves and refer to total numbers of works classified from September 1985 to December 1986.

Language	Total	'U'	'PG'	'15'	'18'	Cuts
Arabic	117	27	51	34	5	1
Cantonese	8	-	6	2	-	1
Egyptian	1	-	1	-	-	-
Greek	2	1	1	-	-	-
Gujarati	12	5	6	1	-	-
Hindi	226	45	89	70	22	26
Hindi/Sanskrit	2	1	1	-	-	-
Punjabi	119	5	40	59	15	9
Turkish	4	-	4	-	-	-
Urdu	95	14	43	32	6	8
Urdu/Hindi	2	-	1	1	-	1
Urdu/Punjabi	4	1	-	3	-	-
	<hr/> 592	<hr/> 99	<hr/> 243	<hr/> 202	<hr/> 48	<hr/> 46

Enforcement

38. During 1986, the Board issued its first Certificates of Evidence under section 19 of the Video Recordings Act. In all, ten Certificates were issued, all of them in connection with proceedings brought in Scotland against the supply of some 33 video works which had been released before a classification certificate had been issued. In some cases, the version supplied was not that subsequently classified, while in others, the category label failed to display the category eventually awarded.
39. Interestingly, all these cases were brought in connection with copyright offences, since the enforcement provisions of the Video Recordings Act have been found useful as a means of dealing through summary proceedings with video pirates, who usually seek to release their own version of a title before the legitimate version has been put on the market. Since it is an offence under the Act to supply a work for which a certificate has not been issued, the Act provides a useful means of dealing with this kind of piracy through the courts.
40. The lack of proceedings during 1986 for the kind of offences the Act was specifically intended to control is disquieting to say the least, and the Board has been convinced by increasing evidence that there are many unclassified works or versions of works still being offered for supply in Britain, despite the classification deadline having passed. There are also shopkeepers who apparently see little need to observe the age-bars. The Board recognises that the police face many demands on their resources. It accepts, too, that at a time when the Video Recordings Act is only partly in force, it is less easy for the police to recognise when an offence is being committed. Nevertheless, it is clear that forces have given little priority to enforcing the Act, taking action only when a complaint is received. If the system of regulation which Parliament considered necessary is to be fully effective, it is essential that the Act makes its mark at this early stage, since otherwise the illegitimate side of the video trade, which has been successfully curtailed since 1985, will once more expand, to the detriment of society and of the reputation of the industry. The Board hopes that the police will give greater priority to enforcement so as to ensure by a regular flow of prosecutions that those who are willing and increasingly ready to flout the Act are firmly discouraged.

THE VIDEO APPEALS COMMITTEE

41. Under section 4(3) of the Video Recordings Act, the Video Appeals Committee was constituted in 1985 for the hearing of appeals against decisions which were stricter than the submitting company considered appropriate. Although the full Committee, under its President, Mr Peter Barnes CB, was convened for two briefing sessions during 1985, no company lodged an appeal until April 1986, when Strand Films gave notice of an intention to appeal against the Board's decision to classify the video work known as "Peter Kay's STAG SHOW GIRLS" in the 'R18' category, thereby limiting supply to licensed sex shops.
42. The hearing took place on Wednesday 25th June 1986 before a panel of five members of the Committee, with the President, Mr Barnes, in the Chair. The decision of the panel was delivered on 16th July 1986, when by a narrow majority it concluded that the appeal should be allowed and the work receive an '18' classification.
43. The video in question was a recording of an entertainment described in the decision as being shot entirely in an Exeter public house in the presence of an audience consisting of ordinary members of the public seated casually around tables, most of them young men, but with several women also present. The main attraction was a number of mud-wrestling bouts between women, with the bouts separated by a comedian and, on one occasion, by a strip-tease act. Classification had raised a number of issues, each of which was analysed by the Committee.
44. The appellant had pleaded the difficulty encountered by any person wishing to acquire a video work in the 'R18' category. He argued that this difficulty was even greater in 1986 than Parliament had envisaged when the Video Recordings Bill was being debated, since in those days, according to the appellant, "there were in the region of 1,000 sex shops in the United Kingdom, whereas there were at the time of the appeal none at all in Scotland and only about 100 in the rest of the country." The Committee conceded that they had no information as to the geographical distribution of licensed sex shops, but it seemed reasonable to suppose that in Scotland and in parts of England "only an exceptionally determined person would travel the considerable distance required to visit the nearest sex shop." This was not to suggest, the Committee said, that, however difficult it might be for some adults to obtain 'R18' videos, there should nevertheless not be "certain types of hardcore material placed firmly in the 'R18' category." What then should be the dividing line between 'R18' and '18', bearing in mind that each work must be considered on its merits.
45. The Board had said that it poses to itself two questions, both of which must be answered in the affirmative before an 'R18' classification is considered appropriate. These were formulated as follows:-
- 1) Is the video work designed to appeal exclusively or primarily to the prurient interest by virtue of the manner in which it portrays the sexual characteristics of the naked human body or deals with or relates to the sexual functions or genital organs of humans or animals?

2) Would it be offensive to reasonable people if the video work were to be supplied throughout the nation in ordinary video shops to which persons under the age of 18 have access?

46. The Committee agreed that both these tests were "useful and valid" but concluded with respect to the first that the Board should also have regard to the degree or extent of the prurient appeal and with respect to the second that the likely reaction of reasonable people should apply only to those who "had had the opportunity of seeing the video work in its entirety."

47. Turning to a consideration of the three ingredients of the work in question, the mud-wrestling, the comedian, and the strip-tease, the Committee looked first at the main attraction, the mud-wrestling which took up a major part of the 55 minutes duration of the video. In its decision, the Committee described these bouts as follows:-

"The women, after being introduced by the compere, step bare-footed into this area and start to grapple with each other. Soon, they are wholly covered with mud, and each spends most of the first few minutes pulling or tearing from the other the scanty clothing she is wearing. Once both are naked they continue to grapple for several more minutes, but there is a complete absence of any violent throw or the use of any painful lock.... If these bouts had included the portrayal of force or pain, whether real or simulated, we should have considered that an '18' certificate was inappropriate...."

While accepting the appellant's contention that "none of the women taking part appears to feel degraded," the Committee accepted the relevance of the Board's reference to the degrading nature of the bouts by conceding that

"although participants in some activity may not themselves feel degraded, it may nevertheless be that spectators may reasonably look upon it as a degrading spectacle. However, ... a majority of us felt that the public-house audience accepted the light-hearted nature of the bouts and see no reason for believing that reasonable adults viewing a recording of them in their own homes would look upon them in any other light.

"In these circumstances we have, by a majority, come to the conclusion that these bouts are not quite as appealing to the prurient interest nor quite as offensive to reasonable people as to warrant an 'R18' classification."

48. Turning to the other elements of the video, the Committee made similar distinctions, concluding that members of the public who can encounter such things

"quite easily at live performances should not, by virtue of an 'R18' classification be severely restricted from being able to see a recording in their own homes We all had reservations about some of the comedian's jokes and about one brief episode (lasting some ten seconds) in the strip-tease act. These matters, however, occupy a very small proportion of the total viewing time and in our view are not so prurient or offensive as to outweigh the far less prurient or offensive nature of the rest of the work."

49. This view being a majority decision, the Committee then gave the view of the minority of the panel, who considered:
- "that the film's appeal is solely to a salacious interest in women being treated as objects of sexual desire and assault - mock-assault, it may be, and non-injurious assault, but nevertheless assault and degradation. The stripping of the women during the pretended bouts and the lubricious washing of them afterwards are also factors (together with elements of the strip-tease and the jokes) in persuading the minority that this is the kind of video which should be available only in sex-shops. They therefore dissent from the majority verdict and believe that there is a prima facie case for labelling videos of this kind as 'R18', however much it be claimed that participants and audience are enjoying themselves and that the spectacle is good, non-clean, fun."
50. The majority having decided to allow the appeal, the BBFC then granted the video work in question an '18' classification.
51. This being the only appeal heard by the Committee during 1986, the decision must stand on its own insofar as the development of case law is concerned in assessing the validity or otherwise of the Board's judgments on the borderline between the '18' and 'R18' categories. Nevertheless the Board did find the judgment useful. Clearly, the narrowness of the panel's verdict had echoed the narrowness of the Board's own judgment, with weight being given to all of the arguments the Board had put during the course of the hearing. And one of the principal factors weighing on the panel in reaching their decision had been the appellant's argument about the dearth of outlets for 'R18' material.
52. This point was subsequently raised in the Video Consultative Council and a letter was sent to the Minister on the Council's behalf. The Minister's reply is quoted in the following section on the work of the Council, but the question of the number of retail outlets for 'R18' material which would be necessary to produce a viable category in market terms is one which will arise repeatedly over the next few years, since the Board's attempts to relegate sex entertainment of this kind to a restricted and fairly specialised market must be seriously undermined if that market is one which the trade regards as unduly punitive in commercial terms.

THE VIDEO CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL

53. The Video Consultative Council was set up with the encouragement of the Home Secretary to provide a forum in which the progress of the BBFC in implementing the provisions of the Act could be reviewed and debated. The Council includes representatives from the local authorities and the video trade and industry as well as individuals of personal distinction with relevant experience and expertise.
54. The Council agreed to meet quarterly, and its four meetings during the year covered a great deal of ground, initiating a number of actions which have proved fruitful. In monitoring the Board's progress during 1986, the Council decided to organise a regular series of formal screenings of problematic video material so that members could develop sufficient expertise to advise the Board on questions of standards. Decisions of the Video Appeals Committee were also to be reviewed, with an opportunity to view the video work which had been the subject of the appeal in order to assess the implications of the decision for the Board's standards. Other issues discussed during the year were:
- a) British obscenity law as applied to video, with particular reference to two Private Member's Bills, the Churchill Bill and the Howarth Bill;
 - b) gaps in the application of the Video Recordings Act, in particular its failure to cover video screenings to captive audiences in unlicensed premises such as video shops, hotels and long-distance coaches;
 - c) the dearth of licensed sex shops and the consequent danger that the 'R18' category could become economically unviable; and
 - d) the showing of classified video works in schools to viewers appreciably younger than the age specified in the certificate.

Significant initiatives were taken on all these matters, including letters to Ministers, to Members of Parliament, and to local authorities and associations of head-teachers. Many of these issues are worthy of summary in this Report.

Appeals

55. The decision on STAG SHOW GIRLS was reported to Council at its meeting in October, when the viewing of scenes of nude mud-wrestling from the video gave rise to lengthy discussion on the borderline between '18' and 'R18' for material of this kind. Much sympathy was expressed for the Board's original decision, several members finding the work offensive and many agreeing with the Board's examiners in finding it particularly offensive to women. Nevertheless, there was agreement that such work should be available, although preferably in sex shops, which led to a discussion of the apparent scarcity of such outlets and of the fact that the Video Appeals Committee had regarded the 'R18' category as particularly punitive for that reason.

56. The Council agreed that reasonable people might differ in their judgment as to what was salacious, but it was felt that the lack of suitable outlets for such material might remove what was necessary to prevent its being forced underground where the kind of emblematic violence to women present in this video might reach unacceptable lengths. Minority sexual interests should be catered for, it was felt, but preferably in a controlled environment like sex shops rather than in ordinary shops to which persons under 18 have access. Concern was expressed at the Video Appeals Committee's finding that because the 'R18' market was such a small one, the Board must begin to make such material '18' instead of 'R18'. The illegality of mail-order for 'R18' videos was also considered, and it was decided to write to the Minister about the apparent inaccessibility of 'R18' material to those who wanted or needed it. Nevertheless, it was felt that the scarcity of licensed sex shops should not have been taken by the Video Appeals Committee as grounds for the desirability or acceptability of this sort of video on the open market.

The Sex Shop Category

57. The Chairman's letter to the Minister prompted a reply which was reported to the Council at its next meeting. On the question of mail-order and the dearth of licensed sex shops, the Minister said that the 'R18' category had been "the subject of extensive consideration at Committee stage of the Video Recordings Bill," with the decision being reached that "it should be unlawful to supply such videos other than in a licensed sex shop." He himself had made it clear in Committee that the number of sex shops was relatively small and that, while the Home Office did not have precise figures, "to the very best of our knowledge the number has remained fairly constant at around 100." The figure claimed by the appellant of 1,000 licensed sex shops at the time of the Parliamentary debates was, in the view of the Minister, "grossly exaggerated." On the question of mail-order, he had two reservations:
- 1) the difficulty of preventing children from obtaining such material through the post, and
 - 2) the fact that the Post Office Act made it an offence to send obscene or indecent matter through the post; in this connection, he accepted that the Board would not classify anything which it considered obscene, but felt that material deemed worthy of an 'R18' might well be considered indecent.
58. In the light of the Minister's reply, the Council gave further consideration to the problem of whether the 'R18' category was a valid one when there were so few outlets. It was suggested that local authorities might ease the large sums charged for sex-shop licences and that it might also be possible for respectable video shops to maintain a segregated section with a separate entrance where 'R18' videos could be supplied to adult customers seeking them out. The Board's view as put to the Council was that the courts would be most unlikely to find the material classified 'R18' illegal on grounds of obscenity and that there would be pressure on BBFC staff to allow increasingly marginal material into the '18' category for fear of restraint of trade. The BBFC's position was that there was a place for such material, but not in ordinary shops to which persons under 18 had access.

Violence to Women

59. In the discussion of standards arising from the nude mud-wrestling video, the Director of the BBFC had expressed the view that, while such entertainments might be thought to be relatively tame, they were nevertheless part of a continuum leading from the mildly suggestive to the truly depraving and corrupting. In illustration of this, the Board had prepared a two-hour screening of video material for presentation to the Council, and this was viewed at one of the morning sessions which had been arranged to precede the more formal agenda in the afternoon. The programme was designed to demonstrate this continuum of violence against women which was usually offered in a sexual context or atmosphere and as entertainment for a largely male audience. The examples shown ranged from widely acceptable '18' material to scenes cut from '18' and even 'R18' videos, where censorable elements like bondage, flagellation and rape are always excised, and concluded with scenes from the range of videos where sexualised violence to women was so extreme as to justify rejection.
60. Some members of Council expressed shock and revulsion at the depravity of some of the material and felt that the viewing had been a bonding exercise for the Council: now they knew why they were here. All expressed gratitude to the Board for its vigilance and concern at the existence of such video films, none of which, they were relieved to learn, had been produced in Britain. Some members feared that it might not be possible to continue exercising a constraint on such material unless society became aware of its unacceptable nature, while others expressed concern at the difficulty the Board and the Council might have in holding this line since new technology might soon overwhelm it. There was a dual responsibility for those present, it was said, both as members of the Council and individually, to try and influence wider society in all their separate spheres, and it was also judged important to explore the experience of other European countries in establishing appropriate media controls, particularly in relation to the incidence of sexual and violent crime.
61. When the question of prosecuting such material was raised, the Home Office responded that there was an absolute ban on its import but that it was extremely difficult to detect. If the Board were to decide to refer such material to the police, this might have a deterrent effect on the submission of other similar material, with the result that it would not become subject to regulation under the Act. The Home Office was also asked if it might contribute to the funding of market research into public attitudes on such material, with the Board making a case for in-depth attitudinal surveys into the viewing habits of children and adults, but it was felt that public funding for such a project would prove difficult. Attention was also drawn to the awkwardness of bringing the sort of material shown to the Council before members of the public without a fairly elaborate framework, there being a subtlety of argument and discussion in the Board's approach which might not be susceptible to normal research methods.

Obscenity Law

62. Proposals to amend British obscenity law were considered, with particular attention directed in 1986 to the Private Member's Bill tabled by Mr Winston Churchill MP, which would have introduced a new test of obscenity based on whether or not the work in question depicted a specific list of contents, any one of which would have meant that the work as a whole was deemed to be obscene irrespective of context. Many members of the Council took exception to this so-called 'laundry list' on the grounds that it would catch a number of '18' videos which could otherwise be legally supplied in a shop to which persons under the age of 18 had access. The lack of any reference to context was a particular worry, given that the Board's approach as set out in its Guide to the Act had been that it was not the what but the how and the why which would normally determine whether a video work was suitable for certification.
63. It was noted that, whatever its faults, the Bill was responding to a feeling in the nation that somehow or other things had gone "too far," but there was general acceptance that without justification by context, the new approach would fail. After considerable discussion, the Chairman was asked to write to Mr Churchill and to Ministers expressing the very strong misgivings of the Council on two aspects of the Bill: the laundry-list principle as opposed to the context principle, and the unfortunate influence the Bill would have on video classification through its application to any work supplied in premises to which children under the age of 18 were admitted.
64. The Chairman's letter to Mr Churchill is included as Appendix II and brought the reply that he would be abandoning the 'laundry-list' approach, having recognised the list's inherent defect of taking no account of context. The Minister also responded with concern at the probable effects of the Bill on the Video Recordings Act, which he believed had not been the proposer's intention. In the event the Bill was defeated at Report Stage, but later in the year, when the Howarth Bill was tabled, it was agreed that Council should consider the issues closely once again and make its views known to Ministers and to Members of Parliament, a course of action which was carried out in 1987.

Video Screenings in Unlicensed Premises

65. A recurrent problem considered at meetings of the Council was that of unsuitable videos being shown in captive situations with children present, such venues including long-distance coaches, hotels and restaurants, and video shops where it was currently legal to hold such exhibitions in order to advertise or demonstrate a product. It was generally agreed that some controls should be introduced in order that the screening of videos in non-domestic situations could be constrained by audience age, particularly where the screenings fell in that grey area between the Cinemas Act, which regulated exhibition in licensed premises, and the Video Recordings Act, which regulated supply but failed to catch any form of exhibition. Again, the Chairman was asked to write to the Minister about the need to tighten up the rules, preferably by requiring the age-qualifications in the video certificate to be observed where such screenings were accessible to the public.

66. The Minister replied that the matter was already being considered as part of a wider review of the Cinemas Act and suggested that Home Office officials and those of the Board should remain closely in touch on these matters as the review progressed. The Association of Metropolitan Authorities took the view that licensing might be introduced on an annual basis for all premises falling between the two pieces of legislation, so that if they were found to be showing uncensored, unclassified or rejected material, the abuse could be brought to a halt by the local authority simply determining the licence. The Home Office suggested it might be worth exploring the possibility of voluntary guidelines since there was always an advantage in doing these things without legislation if possible, although some members doubted the efficacy of voluntary guidelines where profit was at stake. Nevertheless, the Board's officials and those of the Home Office began to consider the matter jointly in 1986, and it is hoped that progress will be reported in 1987.

Video in Schools

67. It was reported to a meeting of the Council that a complaint had been received by the Board about an '18' video being shown to a fifth-year class in a secondary school in outer London. Expert members of the Council were able to recommend that the Board should write to all education authorities as well as to the Head Teachers Association, the Secondary Heads Association and the Society of Education Officers stressing the importance of the BBFC categories awarded to videos and the need for schools to observe these categories before showing material to their students. This was agreed, subject to the suggestion from the video industry that attention should also be drawn to copyright provisions regarding the exhibition of videos in schools. One of these letters is attached as Appendix III, together with a copy of the sheet of symbols which was included to illustrate the category labels required under the Act.

Other Matters

68. Amongst other matters discussed by the Video Consultative Council during 1986 was the availability to young people in Britain of many of the 'martial arts' weapons displayed in recent years in films and video entertainment. These included such oriental weaponry as the Chinese rice-flail or 'nun-chaku', known more familiarly in Britain as 'chainsticks' and banned for many years by the BBFC. Also widely available are metal throwing stars, sharpened projectiles which were banned by the Board only after similar projectiles were employed on football terraces. A more recent problem, addressed by a Private Member's Bill in the last Parliament, was the unrestricted availability of crossbows, which had been strictly controlled by the BBFC in videos featuring contemporary urban violence, but which were increasingly available in shops to children and adolescents. The Council conveyed to the Home Office its support for any measures Parliament could devise to restrict the availability of such weaponry, which the Board had striven to suppress since the Act was brought into force.

69. As well as policy matters, the BBFC reported regularly to the Council on the practical problems involved in implementing the Video Recordings Act, particularly for an organisation with no access to public funds. Members were given copies of the BBFC Accounts for 1985 showing that a financial loss had been sustained which made it necessary to plan for a budgeted surplus in 1986 in order to service the capital the Board must raise for the expansion and refurbishment of its very cramped premises. Also reported was the continuing shortfall in revenue despite the increase in submissions resulting from its letter to the industry about the deadline for backlog works never registered as films with the DTI, which had resulted in an accelerating workload and a need for further investment in the cause of efficiency.
70. In its Annual Report for 1985, the Board included amongst the appendices a copy of the Minutes of one of the meetings of the Video Consultative Council in order to demonstrate the thoroughness with which issues had been debated. This year, the discussions have been summarised more fully in the body of the Report. The BBFC has found the Council to be a most valuable forum for reviewing progress under the Act. Contacts with members have been maintained between meetings in order to further the progress on issues on which action has been agreed. Several members have visited the Board to keep abreast of its activities, and the views of Council members on material screened at meetings have been conveyed to BBFC examiners so as to make them aware of the way that classification decisions have been received. Minutes of Council meetings are also available to members of the Board so that they can inform the thinking of examiners and influence future decision-making.
71. In 1986, members of the Video Consultative Council expressed the hope that the Board's Annual Report to the Secretary of State would be seen by persons of influence and that the views of the Council would carry some weight. They were gratified to learn that a substantial number of copies would be laid before Parliament. We hope that the progress of the Council has confirmed the faith of Ministers in setting up such a consultative mechanism at the time of designation.

FINANCE AND FORWARD PLANNING

72. In order to classify up to a hundred films and video features per week, the Board has had to expand not only staff but physical plant and resources. Six new screening rooms and an enlarged film theatre were provided during 1986, but there is still a need to use screening facilities elsewhere in the building in order to handle an increasing if sometimes erratic throughput. 1986 produced a greater volume of work than anticipated in the Board's forecast to the Home Office, and 1987/88 should do the same, although the unpredictability of video submissions gives little firm ground for future planning.
73. May to September 1986 were the busiest months the BBFC has known, due primarily to the statutory deadline in September 1986, by which time all video versions of works never released in the British cinema had to be classified. Since all these were charged at the full rate, they produced sufficient income to cover most of the investment that year in physical plant and equipment. The next two deadlines, on 1st March and 1st September 1987, were likely to produce a similar volume of work but at a concessionary fee, so that income will be lower in 1987 unless the volume of new releases continues to grow. In 1988, on the other hand, it is confidently expected that the workload will swell in the months leading up to the final September deadline, by which time all foreign language works, whenever released, will require certification.
74. An interesting if unforeseen consequence of the phased deadlines for the pre-designation backlog has been the extent to which sex-film distributors have used the period of grace for foreign-language videos to their advantage by removing the English soundtrack from their tapes, thus securing an extra two years of shelf-life before classification restricts supply to licensed sex shops or reveals the need for cuts to conform with the law. 1988 should therefore see a much increased volume of sex films, perhaps of a difficult nature, at the very moment when the Board will be classifying the great reserve of backlog videos in Hindi, Punjabi, Cantonese, Greek, Turkish, Arabic and other languages of the ethnic minorities. In order to prepare for this pressure on staff and resources, a very high pitch of efficiency must be achieved by the end of 1987.
75. Administrative and technical staff were stabilised during 1986, and only natural wastage is likely now to produce significant vacancies. On the other hand, examiners fluent in the above languages must be recruited and trained in 1987 to meet the increased turnover in 1988.
76. The storage of written records accelerated to such an extent during 1986 that a decision was taken to introduce a new, modern filing system which will require capital investment not only in equipment but in structural repairs to the building to provide a secure floor for the new video records section. Archive space for video works has also had to be provided under the Act, and this, too, will expand from year to year, together with its own computerised catalogue. Eventually, some rationalisation of tapes retained in the archive must be undertaken on a regular basis, but this will require an allotment of manpower which the pressing needs of the moment make impossible to allocate.

77. Computerisation of the Board's records has facilitated the rapid handling and accessing of data but is no substitute for the detail of written records, however bulky. Nevertheless, for all the advantages of the computer, that, too, has limitations of capacity and will need to expand as records expand, with further investment at regular intervals.

Finance

78. The BBFC accounts for the year ended 31st December 1986 together with the Auditor's Report are set out on the pages which follow. These show that the Board made a profit after tax of £41,330 as against a loss of £13,567 in 1985. Taking the two years together, therefore, the surplus of £27,763 since designation is a modest one in view of the Board's increased commitments. Indeed, the 1986 surplus arose only because the first major phase of building works was delayed for three months, with some of the costs falling due not in 1986 but in 1987.
79. With so little room for manoeuvre, the Board's ability to plan for the future is severely limited. Indeed, despite an increased volume of work since budgets were submitted to the Home Office, the first two years under the Act have produced a smaller surplus for contingencies than originally forecast. It follows that further capital costs will mean the raising of finance during 1987, to be borrowed largely against projected revenue and repaid out of taxed income.
80. The Balance Sheet for 1986 shows increased reserves amounting to £98,582, but these will be seen to have been rapidly depleted in the early months of 1987. What remains was accumulated over some 75 years and constitutes the only funds available to finance activities when current revenue becomes unreliable. It is important to repeat that the BBFC has no access whatever to public funds, despite providing funding to government in the form of taxation. Thus 1987 will require careful reassessment of fees if the Board is to remain solvent.
81. Although video dominated the Board's activities during 1986, taking up more than 89% of the workload in both submissions and screen time, it nevertheless produced only 85% of the income. Film classification could thus be said to have been subsidising the Video Recordings Act, a position which is clearly inequitable. This is because video fees have not quite kept pace with film fees, and natural justice suggests that this imbalance should be put right as soon as possible.
82. The prosperity of the video industry during 1986 has confirmed the faith of those who forecast that classification and a respectable image would win back customers deterred by the aura of the 'video nasties' before the Act was brought into force. The costs of regulating the industry would once have been assumed voluntarily if the 1983 Code of Practice had been put into effect by the BVA. The costs of a statutory authority are very similar, and it is hoped that the industry will be prepared to shoulder a greater financial responsibility for regulating what is now a very profitable and vital segment of the British media.
83. While revenue in the accounts which follow has been apportioned between film and video, operating costs cannot easily be apportioned in the same manner, since the functions are shared by the same staff in the same premises. The accounts thus reflect the unified structure of the BBFC and have been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Companies Act 1985.

**REPORT OF THE AUDITORS TO THE MEMBERS OF
THE BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION**

We have audited the financial statements of the Board, which are reproduced on pages 28 to 35, in accordance with approved Auditing Standards.

In our opinion the financial statements, which have been prepared under the historical cost convention, give a true and fair view of the state of the company's affairs at 31st December 1986 and of its profit and source and application of funds for the year then ended and comply with the Companies Act 1985.

W H Payne & Co
Chartered Accountants
Sandringham House
199 Southwark Bridge Road
London SE1 OHA

15th April 1987

The annual accounts which follow were approved by the Council of Management on 15th April 1987 and were signed on its behalf by the Chairman and Hon Treasurer.

They comprise:

- Profit and Loss Account
- Balance Sheet as at 31st December 1986
- Statement of source and application of funds
- Notes to the Accounts

COUNCIL OF MANAGEMENT

Chairman: D W Samuelson
Hon Treasurer: G W Brooks

D C Calder
P P Rigby JP

R G F Chase
J S Sansom OBE
I D Wratten CBE

M H Cox
W P Vinten OBE

Secretary: James Ferman

THE BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION

PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1986

	<u>Note</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1985</u>
Fees receivable	(2)	1,195,768	669,263
Operating costs	(3)	<u>(1,086,613)</u>	<u>(681,993)</u>
Operating profit/(loss)		109,155	(12,730)
Interest and investment income	(4)	5,606	2,255
Interest payable		<u>(2,946)</u>	<u>(5,411)</u>
Profit/(loss) on ordinary activities before taxation	(5)	111,815	(15,886)
Tax on profit/(loss) on ordinary activities	(6)	<u>70,485</u>	<u>(2,319)</u>
Profit/(loss) on ordinary activities after taxation for the year	(13)	<u><u>£41,330</u></u>	<u><u>£(13,567)</u></u>

The accompanying notes are a part of these profit and loss accounts

THE BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION

BALANCE SHEET

31ST DECEMBER 1986

	<u>Note</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1985</u>
<u>Fixed assets</u>			
Tangible assets	(7)	271,506	113,475
Listed investments	(8)	25,000	25,000
		<u>296,506</u>	<u>138,475</u>
<u>Current assets</u>			
Debtors	(9)	147,760	88,637
Cash at bank and in hand		1,205	2,429
		<u>148,965</u>	<u>91,066</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(10)	(325,950)	(136,498)
Net current liabilities		<u>(176,985)</u>	<u>(45,432)</u>
Total assets less current liabilities		119,521	93,043
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	(10)	(2,439)	(13,991)
Provision for liabilities and charges	(11)	(18,500)	(21,800)
		<u>£98,582</u>	<u>£57,252</u>
<u>Reserves</u>			
Capital reserve	(12)	23,251	23,251
Profit and loss account	(13)	75,331	34,001
Total reserves		<u>£98,582</u>	<u>£57,252</u>

Approved by Council of Management

..... D.W. Samuelson - Chairman

..... G.W. Brooks - Hon. Treasurer

15th April 1987

The accompanying notes are a part of these balance sheets

THE BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION

STATEMENT OF SOURCE AND APPLICATION OF FUNDS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1986

	<u>1986</u>	<u>1985</u>
<u>Funds generated from operations</u>		
Profit/(loss) from ordinary activities before taxation	111,815	(15,886)
Adjustments for items not involving the movement of funds:-		
Depreciation	115,902	37,188
Profit on disposal of motor car	(269)	-
	<u>227,448</u>	<u>21,302</u>
Proceeds from disposal of motor car	269	-
Increase in creditors falling due after more than one year	-	13,991
	<u>227,717</u>	<u>35,293</u>
<u>Application of funds</u>		
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	273,933	88,559
Taxation paid	1,171	1,347
Decrease in creditors falling due after more than one year	11,552	-
	<u>286,656</u>	<u>89,906</u>
(Decrease) in working capital	<u>£ (58,939)</u>	<u>£ (54,613)</u>
<u>Comprising:</u>		
Increase/(decrease) in debtors	59,123	(44,728)
Increase/(decrease) in cash and bank balances	(45,406)	21,468
(Increase) in creditors due within one year (excluding bank overdraft)	(72,656)	(31,353)
	<u>£ (58,939)</u>	<u>£ (54,613)</u>

The accompanying notes are a part of these statements.

THE BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1986

1. Accounting policies

a) Convention

The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the historical cost convention. The principal accounting policies which the Council of Management adopted within that convention are set out below.

b) Depreciation

Furniture and equipment and motor car are depreciated over their estimated useful lives at the rate of 25% on a straight line basis.

Leasehold premises expenditure unamortised at 1st January 1986, has been written off in these accounts. Subsequent costs in connection with the refurbishment of the leasehold premises are being written off as incurred. This treatment does not comply with the Statement of Standard Accounting Practice number 12 but is considered by the Council to be appropriate in view of the uncertain position regarding the value of the expenditure to any incoming tenant.

c) Taxation

The charge for taxation is based on the profit for the year and takes into account taxation deferred because of timing differences between the treatment of certain items for accounting and taxation purposes.

d) Pensions

The company operates a contributory pension scheme to provide retirement benefits for its staff. Contributions are charged to the profit and loss account as they are made. Any deficits arising on periodic re-appraisal by the actuaries are charged to the profit and loss account when they arise.

2. Fees receivable and miscellaneous income

	<u>1986</u>	<u>1985</u>
Fees prior to designation (1985 7 months)	-	354,696
Fees after designation (1985 5 months)		
Video works	989,423	249,720
Cinema films	168,422	64,847
	<u>1,157,845</u>	<u>314,567</u>
Video labels and lists	34,724	-
Rent receivable	3,199	-
	<u>£1,195,768</u>	<u>£669,263</u>

3. Operating costs

	<u>1986</u>	<u>1985</u>
Staff costs	626,889	448,683
Accommodation	206,571	76,068
Depreciation	115,633	37,188
Auditors remuneration	9,000	5,000
Other operating expenses	128,520	115,054
	<u>£1,086,613</u>	<u>£681,993</u>

1986 accommodation costs include an exceptional item (see note 5).

THE BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS - continued

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1986

<u>4. Interest and investment income</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1985</u>
Bank and other interest received	3,608	257
Income from listed investments	<u>1,998</u>	<u>1,998</u>
	<u>£5,606</u>	<u>£2,255</u>

<u>5. Profit on ordinary activities before taxation</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1985</u>
Profit on ordinary activities before taxation (1985 loss) is after charging:		
Exceptional item - leasehold premises refurbishment costs	85,001	-
Depreciation and amounts written off	115,902	37,188
Staff costs (see below)	626,889	448,683
Auditors remuneration (including £1,000 under- provision of 1985)	9,000	5,000
Rental of equipment	9,130	5,865
Bank overdraft interest	1,148	3,613
Hire purchase interest	<u>1,798</u>	<u>1,798</u>

Staff costs

Average number of people employed by the company during the year:	<u>No. of employees</u>	
	<u>1986</u>	<u>1985</u>
Examining	22	20
Administrative and technical	<u>31</u>	<u>22</u>
	<u>53</u>	<u>42</u>
Costs in respect of these employees:	<u>1986</u>	<u>1985</u>
Wages and salaries	548,525	387,204
Social Security costs	55,025	34,675
Pension costs	<u>23,339</u>	<u>26,804</u>
	<u>£626,889</u>	<u>£448,683</u>

In 1986 there was one employee whose remuneration was in the band £45,001 - £50,000(1985 - £40,001 to £45,000).

<u>6. Tax on profit/(loss) on ordinary activities</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1985</u>
a) The charge/(credit) for the year is made up as follows:-		
Provision for corporation tax (see below)	74,500	-
Taxation recoverable	-	(1,319)
Overprovision in respect of previous years	(715)	-
Transfer from deferred taxation (note 11)	(3,300)	(1,000)
	<u>£70,485</u>	<u>£(2,319)</u>

The taxable profit for the year has been subject to corporation tax at rates of 40% and 35%.

b) Deferred taxation arises by reason of the company claiming taxation allowances in advance of book depreciation on its fixed assets (note 11).

<u>7. Tangible fixed assets</u>	<u>Leasehold premises</u>	<u>Furniture & equipment</u>	<u>Motor car</u>	<u>Total</u>
a) <u>Movements</u>				
Cost at 1st January 1986	45,744	211,919	3,149	260,812
Disposal	-	-	(3,149)	(3,149)
Additions	-	263,590	10,343	273,933
Cost at 31st December 1986	<u>45,744</u>	<u>475,509</u>	<u>10,343</u>	<u>531,596</u>
Accumulated depreciation at 1st January 1986	41,000	103,188	3,149	147,337
Depreciation on disposal	-	-	(3,149)	(3,149)
Charge for the year	4,744	108,573	2,585	115,902
Accumulated depreciation at 31st December 1986	<u>£45,744</u>	<u>£211,761</u>	<u>£2,585</u>	<u>£260,090</u>
Net book value at 31st December 1986	<u>£-</u>	<u>£263,748</u>	<u>£7,758</u>	<u>£271,506</u>

<u>8. Listed investments</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1985</u>
Cost (market value £29,606 - 1985 £28,410)	<u>£25,000</u>	<u>£25,000</u>

THE BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1986

<u>9. Debtors</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1985</u>
Trade debtors	125,172	81,184
Other debtors	8,313	6,234
Prepayments and accrued income	14,275	1,219
	<u>£147,760</u>	<u>£88,637</u>

<u>10. Creditors</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1985</u>
<u>Amounts falling due within one year:-</u>		
Amount due on hire purchase	9,754	9,754
Bank overdraft	44,182	-
Trade creditors	20,760	-
Current corporation tax	73,936	1,322
Other taxation and Social Security costs	26,852	24,415
Other creditors	133,284	79,806
Accruals and deferred income	17,182	21,201
	<u>325,950</u>	<u>136,498</u>

Amounts falling due after one year:-

Amounts due on hire purchase	<u>2,439</u>	<u>13,991</u>
	<u>£328,389</u>	<u>£150,489</u>

<u>11. Provision for liabilities and charges</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1985</u>
Deferred taxation (note 6(b))	<u>£18,500</u>	<u>£21,800</u>

<u>12. Capital reserve</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1985</u>
As at 1st January 1986 and 31st December 1986	<u>£23,251</u>	<u>£23,251</u>

The capital reserve represents surpluses realised on sales of fixed assets prior to 1984.

<u>13. Profit and loss account</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1985</u>
Retained profits as at 1st January 1986	34,001	47,568
Profit/(loss) for the year	<u>41,330</u>	<u>(13,567)</u>
Retained profits as at 31st December 1986	<u>£75,331</u>	<u>£34,001</u>

14. Guarantees and other financial commitments

a) Capital commitments

Capital commitments contracted for but not provided for at 31st December 1986 amounted to £90,000 (1985 - nil). In addition, there were commitments contracted for but not provided for in respect of property refurbishment expenditure amounting to £82,000 (1985 - nil).

b) Lease commitments

Since the balance sheet date, the company has entered into a new 25 year lease of its offices at 3 Soho Square with effect from 24th June 1986. The company bears all insurance, maintenance and repairs of the premises and in addition is committed by the terms of the lease to carry out certain specified refurbishment work before 24th June 1991. The estimated cost of these specified refurbishments is £344,000. The commencing rent payable under the lease is £70,000 rising to £91,000 from 24th June 1987, and is subject thereafter to re-negotiation at intervals specified in the lease. A reduction of £50,000 in the annual rental is to be made from the date by which the refurbishment works mentioned above are due for completion.

APPENDICES

FILM CLASSIFICATIONSTATISTICS

Trends may be deduced from these annual figures, starting with 1970 when separate age-bars were introduced at 14 ('AA') and 18 ('X'). In 1982, the age for the 'AA' was raised from 14 to 15 and the age-bar categories were referred to simply as '15' and '18'. At the same time, a new category was introduced, the 'R18', for films restricted to licensed clubs. Figures in brackets indicate films cut, or in the final column, those passed with cuts in later years.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>'U'</u>	<u>'PG'</u> ('A')	<u>'15'</u> ('AA')	<u>'18'</u> ('X')	<u>'R18'</u>	<u>Refused</u>
1970	502 (166)	104 (9)	84 (31)	77 (29)	212 (97)		25 (11)
1971	502 (165)	98 (7)	77 (22)	77 (25)	228 (111)		22 (8)
1972	488 (179)	78 (5)	81 (25)	77 (23)	222 (126)		30 (8)
1973	504 (201)	62 (4)	78 (24)	85 (25)	249 (148)		30 (10)
1974	540 (218)	72 (5)	80 (23)	93 (21)	268 (169)		27 (6)
1975	424 (147)	74 (5)	96 (32)	73 (12)	164 (98)		17 (6)
1976	402 (135)	53 (3)	73 (17)	74 (10)	187 (105)		15 (1)
1977	375 (105)	39 (1)	86 (18)	78 (8)	164 (78)		8 (1)
1978	324 (74)	35 (2)	81 (16)	66 (8)	138 (48)		4
1979	331 (81)	33 (2)	88 (19)	87 (14)	120 (46)		3 (1)
1980	319 (67)	25 (-)	82 (9)	84 (4)	124 (54)		4
1981	278 (59)	15 (-)	57 (7)	87 (4)	115 (48)		4
1982	326 (79)	17 (-)	54 (4)	115 (11)	139 (64)		1
1983	390 (100)	23 (1)	95 (14)	100 (8)	137 (52)	33 (25)	2
1984	376 (73)	12 (-)	92 (15)	126 (7)	130 (46)	13 (9)	3
1985	351 (70)	16 (1)	85 (12)	146 (11)	103 (46)	-	1
1986	348 (44)	25 (-)	78 (14)	137 (12)	107 (18)	-	1

BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION

APPENDIX II

3 Soho Square, London W1V 5DE

President: THE EARL OF HAREWOOD

Director: James Ferman

MB/CRM

Telephone: 01-439 7961

21st February 1986

Winston Churchill Esq MP
House of Commons
Westminster
London SW1A 0AA

Dear Mr Churchill,

Obscene Publications (Protection of Children, Etc) (Amendment) Bill

On 28th January, I chaired a meeting of the Video Consultative Council, which is the advisory body set up at the request of the Home Secretary to monitor the implementation of the Video Recordings Act. For convenience, I enclose a list of the members of this Council, which includes local government representatives, professionals from the video trade and industry, and distinguished individuals with relevant experience and expertise. The Council discussed at some length your Private Member's Bill, and I can assure you first of all that we share your concern about violence in entertainment which may be seen by children and about the the very offensive sex magazines which are displayed by some newsagents. Nevertheless, your Bill goes much beyond this, and I was asked to express to both the Minister and yourself the very real anxiety felt by members of the Council about two elements of the Bill as drafted.

- (1) Clause 2(a) includes a catalogue of activities the depiction of which would outlaw certain material from television or from any place of publication to which persons under 18 had access. Not only are some of the categories broad enough to catch material that it would surely be foolish to ban, including several classic texts and much historic documentary material, but more importantly, the list approach quite overturns the principle of judging material in context, which is implicit in the "deprave and corrupt" test of obscenity which looks at the effect of a work when "taken as a whole". That scenes and actions should be "deemed to be obscene" irrespective of context sets at nought the efforts of countless people, including the BBFC and the Video Consultative Council itself, to determine and counter any harmful influence of screened material. It may be that tests of context and effect are difficult to define, and also difficult to apply, but they do embody a real effort to marry natural justice and social awareness. The "laundry list" approach effectively negates that responsibility.
- (2) Clause 2(b) as it stands will catch video shops because children under 18 do have access to them. This will automatically make a nonsense of the Video Recordings Act, because the whole process of classification (which the President and Vice Presidents of the BBFC administer as the designated authority) will be pre-empted by the "deeming" provisions of clause 2(a), which override any others.

Continued

Winston Churchill Esq MP

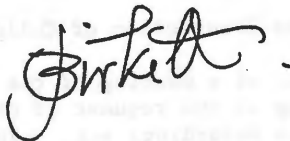
21st February 1986

-2-

I am aware that you have already had some meetings with the Director of the BBFC, James Ferman, and also that you are considering amendments in the light of discussions which are continuing in other quarters. Nevertheless, I hope you will accept this letter as an expression of the very grave reservations of the Council about certain aspects of the bill as it now stands.

The above points have also been made to David Mellor, and I am copying this letter to other Members of the Standing Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Birkett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lord Birkett,
Vice President

BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION

APPENDIX III

3 Soho Square, London W1V 5DE

President: THE EARL OF HAREWOOD

Director: James Ferman

Telephone: 01-439 7961

JF/CRM

28th November 1986

TO ALL EDUCATION AUTHORITIES

At a recent meeting of the Video Consultative Council, the Board reported a telephone call from a mother whose 15-year-old son had stayed away from school rather than see a rape-and-revenge video which a classmate had brought in and which his teacher had agreed to show. We understand that at least the first half of the film was indeed shown to the class, although the video had been classified '18' by the BBFC in accordance with the Video Recordings Act 1984. Since the early sections of this film contain two very brutal rapes, both heavily cut at the Board's insistence but still unquestionably '18' in content and treatment, the Board and the Council were very concerned indeed.

The Video Consultative Council was set up under the auspices of the Home Secretary to bring together representatives of the local authorities, the video trade and industry, and individuals of personal distinction and expertise to discuss the formulation of policy by the British Board of Film Classification in implementing the Video Recordings Act. The Council includes the Head of Cranford Community School, Anne Jones; the former Chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority, Lady Plowden; the Director of the NSPCC, Dr Alan Gilmour; the Bishop of Peterborough, the Rt Rev Bill Westwood; and the Medical Director of the Cambridge Institute of Criminology, Professor Donald West.

It was the unanimous view of the Council that the above incident gave cause for concern and that the Board should write to the Associations of Head Teachers and Education Officers, and also to the Education Authorities, urging that the classifications awarded to videos under the new Act should be taken seriously in schools. The Board does not award a '15' or '18' category lightly, since it implies that grounds exist for barring the work to all those under a certain age, either because of dialogue, subject matter, or levels of violence or sexual activity requiring a maturity unlikely in viewers much below the specified age. Particularly in the case of videos classified '18', it is important to stress that this category is never awarded unless it is the considered opinion of the Board that the contents or treatment of the work are suitable only for an adult audience.

We realise that there may be times when a teacher feels a particular film is so relevant to the syllabus that it should be shown to a class a year or so younger than the category age. In an educational setting, such a decision need not be incorrect, but I am sure you will agree that it is essential that teachers not embark on such a course unless they have taken the trouble to view the work themselves in order to assess whether some scenes would be inappropriate or potentially disturbing for the youngsters in the class.

Continued

It may be of some help to set out the video categories which are currently in force. These are as follows:

- U - UNIVERSAL. Suitable for all.
- U/c - UNIVERSAL. Particularly suitable for young children
- PG - PARENTAL GUIDANCE. General viewing, but some scenes may be unsuitable for young children.
- 15 - Suitable only for persons of 15 years and over.
(Not to be supplied to any person below that age)
- 18 - Suitable only for persons of 18 years and over.
(Not to be supplied to any person below that age)

The first three categories are chiefly relevant to primary schools, where the 'PG' should be particularly noted as indicating a work which may be frightening or disturbing to young or impressionable pupils, or which may contain language or subject matter which parents or teachers might find unsuitable for them. 'PG' films should be found suitable for children of 10 or 11, but caution and some advance knowledge of the contents are recommended before 'PG' videos are shown to classes much younger than that.

For secondary schools, 'PG' films should present no problems, but we strongly suggest that '15' films should be reserved for the 5th Form and above, and that '18' films should not be shown at all unless previously vetted by a teacher who considers them particularly suitable or relevant for students in the second-year Sixth.

Finally, the Video Consultative Council felt that teachers should be reminded of the existence of copyright restrictions governing the showing of videos in non-domestic circumstances, a matter about which the education authorities have already been informed by the video industry.

If any further information is required, or if schools would like any advice on the reasons for a particular category decision, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us. The constraints of time are very pressing during these early years of the Act, but we will do whatever we can to see that the category system is widely observed and understood. To this end, I enclose a sheet of category labels as they are now required to appear on video packaging and the cassettes themselves. Copies of this colour sheet can be supplied in packs of 100 for display in schools, and education authorities wishing to order these should get in touch with this office.

Yours faithfully,

James Ferman
Director

Enclosure:

BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL FOR VIDEO PACKAGING AND QUALITY

Examination date: 1984/04/10

Examination date: 1984/04/10

1) Material: front and back of case
has been checked and found good.

2) Condition: front and back of case

2) Material: front and back of case
has been checked and found good.

3) Condition: front and back of case



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BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CLASSIFICATION

CERTIFICATION SYMBOLS FOR VIDEO PACKAGING AND PUBLICITY

Symbols only, for use on:

- 1) Cassettes: front and spine of case
and top and spine of spool
- 2) Discs: front of disc sleeve
and centre of disc itself



Symbol plus explanatory statement for use on:

- 1) Cassettes: reverse side of case
- 2) Discs: reverse side of sleeve

