

17th October, 1955.

Warner Bros. Pictures,

Dear _____,

I am writing to confirm our telephone conversation on Friday evening, 14th October.

The film entitled REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE was seen by us on that day. I do not have to tell you the serious view which this Board takes about any film dealing with juvenile delinquency, especially in these times when there is such widespread public anxiety about the problem. Before the Board can certificate any film dealing with this subject, it has to be satisfied that the moral values are sufficiently firmly presented to outweigh any harmful influence which the film might otherwise have on young and impressionable members of a cinema audience.

REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE contains, in our view, much that would have a harmful influence on young people and until it is clear whether or not the sequences in question can be dealt with to our satisfaction, we cannot give you any assurance of our being able to certificate the picture.

As a first step the film should be resubmitted when the following primary and essential cuts have been made:-

Reel 1. Delete all shots of Jim punching and kicking the desk.

Reel 3. Drastic cuts must be made in the sequences covering the baiting of Jim outside the planetarium, and the ensuing fight. The incident of slashing the car tyres should be deleted, and only the barest amount of footage necessary to maintain the continuity of the story should be left of the invitation to the fight and the fight itself. If a way can be found - and it might be the simplest from the technical point of view - of removing the knife fight altogether,

so/

(2)

so that the preliminary baiting leads direct to a challenge to the cliff-top contest, it would suit us much better and there would be a much better prospect of our eventually being able to pass the film.

Reel 4. The extent of the cuts which would be required in the cliff-top sequence would depend on the extent to which the cuts in Reel 3 had been satisfactorily made. The less we have of this whole unpleasant idea of young people met together to witness a contest which could end in the death of one of the participants, the better. In any event, the part played in the proceedings by Judy should be shortened as much as possible, in particular her unrestrained excitement over starting the race. The dialogue between Jim and Buzz "Why do we do this?" and "You gotta do something" should be deleted. The shot of the car actually crashing on the rocks below should come out and the close-up of Buzz, and his scream, before his death, should be reduced.

Reel 5. Remove shots of Jim trying to throttle his father.

When the above cuts have been made, the film should be resubmitted and we will decide whether or not an 'X' certificate can be granted to the film and, if so, whether or not further cuts are necessary.

The trailer of the film was also submitted to us on 14th October, but in view of the position with regard to the film we did not, of course, consider it and I am returning the script herewith.

Believe me,
With kind regards,
Yours sincerely,

AS

24th November, 1955.

Warner House,

ENCL. Dialogue Transcript.

Dear

We have given the most careful consideration to the request made in your letter of the 8th November about re-grading REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE in the 'A' category.

The main obstacle is the behaviour of the parents in the film. Children, even accompanied, should not be allowed to witness the spectacle of ridiculous and ineffectual parents which this film presents. Similarly, the irresponsible behaviour of the teenagers themselves, as exemplified particularly in the cliff-top sequence, could not have a desirable influence on young people.

We have studied the dialogue carefully to try and find a means of modifying the elements mentioned above and it is quite clear that a number of cuts would be required if the film is to stand any chance of an 'A' certificate.

If you are interested in proceeding with the object of getting an 'A' certificate, the following cuts should be made in the first instance:-

Reel 1-A. There should be some reduction of Jim's drunkenness in the opening scenes, including deletion of the policeman's reference on p.1 to "plain drunkenness" and Jim's drunken mimicking of the sound of a police car (p.2). Delete Judy's line "He called me a dirty tramp, my own father".

Reel 1-B. Delete from dialogue "Can you tell me why you killed those puppies, Plato?"
p.1

Reel 1-B. Delete the father's line "He's just loaded, honey".
p.2.

Reel 1-B. Delete dialogue from "You know what kind of drunken brawls those kinda parties turn into" down to "Well, you know who he takes after".
p.3.

Over...

- Reel 2-A. Delete Jim's speech beginning "That's a zoo".
p.1.
- Reel 3-B. Delete shot of Judy's face being slapped by her father.
p.3.
- Reel 4-B. The incidents of Judy going excitedly to each car in turn and wishing good luck to the drivers should be cut.
p.1.
- Reel 4-B. Delete shot of the mass of cars driving away from the cliff top.
p.2.
- Reel 5-A. There should be some reduction in the brawl between Jim and his mother and father. We would suggest the following cuts:-
- p.1. Delete dialogue from "All right, I'll let him tell it" down to "Please relax, relax!"
- p.2. Delete Jim's speech beginning "You're not listening to me"
- " Delete dialogue from "Well, far be it from me..." as far as "Except to yourself!"
- p.3. Delete the lines "Just tell a little white lie" and "You'll learn. When you're older, Jim".
- " Delete from dialogue "You use every other phony excuse..." as far as "...you better give me something fast".
- Reel 6-A. Delete the lines "I'm not going back in that zoo" and "I'm never going back".
p.1.
- Reel 6-A. Delete shot of chicken hanging outside the door.
p.2.
- Reel 6-B. Delete Plato's line, referring to his father, "He might as well be dead anyway".
p.3.
- Reel 7. The kiss between Jim and Judy should be reduced.
- " We would like to get out the incident of Plato shooting one of the gang, even though this would involve minor consequential cuts later.

Perhaps you will consider the above list and let us know whether you think it worth your while to proceed in the direction of an 'A' certificate. If so, the film should be resubmitted when the cuts listed above have been made and we will then decide whether or not an 'A' certificate is possible.

Kind regards,
Yours sincerely,

AW

TITLE: REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE

DATE 6 6 85

FILM

VIDEO

DISTRIBUTOR: Warner Home Video

EXAMINERS:

FIRST

RESUB

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: USA

CATEGORY: 'PG'

CUTS

NO CUTS

GENRE: The Original Youth Pic

REPORT BY:

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

SUB-TITLED

DUBBED

FOR BOARD DISCUSSION

APPROPRIATE CATEGORY:	Uc	U	PG	15	18	R18	CUTS	REJECT
THEME			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
TREATMENT			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
VISUALS: NUDITY			None					
SEX			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hardly	any by	current	standards!	
VIOLENCE			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Flick-knives	fight at	32 mins and	chicken	
HORROR				rtm	sequence	from 43	mins.	
LANGUAGE			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No swearing	but refs	to "dirty	tramp" and	
DRUGS				father	not wanting	to kiss	daughter	now she's 16
CRIMINAL TECHNIQUES			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Tyre-slashing	at 31.05	- nothing	new	
LEGALITY: OBSCENITY								
CHILDREN								
ANIMALS				Chicken	hung over	door at 1.12.	OK.	
BLASPHEMY								
FILM AS A WHOLE			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					

SYNOPSIS AND COMMENTS:

Rebel Without a Cause, the original youth-pic which first launched James Dean to fame, was made back in 1955, and spawned thousands of bad movies about misunderstood teenagers (most of which seem to pass through our hands on video!). Though it seems a bit slow and dated in style, it still grips the viewer, largely thanks to James Dean's charisma- though he looks terribly old for the part of a 16-year old, as does Natalie Wood! (the only really believable teenager in the film is Sal Mineo, who conveys the scary instability of the disturbed delinquent in a very convincing way: we see many like him in the juvenile courts, but not many James Deans!).

The movie was given an 'X' (ie 16+) back in '55, with many cuts (the list shows how concerned the censors of that period were not just with teenage violence but

with parental authority! Times have changed, thank goodness, and when the film was re-submitted in the original version in 1976, it was given a 'AA' (14+) without cuts. As the examiner's report says (it may have been) "re-viewing it all these years later, we felt that the film tells a moral tale".

We would agree with that - to the extent of bringing the film down to 'PG'. It seems both old-fashioned and harmless now, compared with what one can see after 7pm on TV, any night of the week (not to mention Grange Hill on children's hour). If it still rings bells with 12 and 13-year olds (as I think it does, to judge from the children I know), this seems to me to be no bad thing: the message of the film - that parents and children must try to get along together, and that parents are partly to blame if their kids go wrong - may be corny, but it's true (though reality is usually a bit less glamorous than as portrayed by Nicholas Ray!).

Of course, the film has its exploitative side, which is part of its appeal: but the hero is rather less of a rebel than the title would suggest! Once he has seen the consequences of teenage sensation-seeking in Buzz's death on the chicken-run scene, Jim acts in a responsible way which would do credit to most 17-year olds: he is restrained from going to the police by his parents, who are less mature than he is; he tries, but fails, to get guidance from his father; and, when Plato finally goes berserk with the gun, it is Jim who tries to reason with him, and who gently talks him into handing over the gun, before he walks out to reason again (not effectively enough, as it turns out, with the police). Nobody could argue that, in these scenes, the James Dean figure glamorises violence or even anti-social behaviour.

The two 'problem' scenes that most people remember are the flick-knife fight between Jim and Buzz (at about 32 mins on video) and the famous 'chicken run' scene (at 43 mins). Both now look tamer and less controversial than as remembered: the knife-game, though possibly imitable in the playground, isn't visually as strong as the knife fight in The Outsiders; and its dangers are spelt out. James Dean is not a willing participant, and (as pointed out) the boys stop the game the minute an adult appears on the scene!

The 'chicken run' caused a rumpus in the '50's, which now seems more like a storm in a teacup. The consequences (Buzz's death) are spelt out: and one can't somehow see modern youngsters being tempted to try a chicken run on their BMX's! And Judy's excitement seems plausible enough in context, particularly as she is so appalled at Buzz's death.

To sum up: this is a 30-year-old film with adult status, which has lost its power to shock, but not to entertain. It would be unreasonable to make it '15', thus in theory barring it to 12, 13 and 14-year olds, who would not only enjoy it but might (possibly) benefit from its lessons! One can envisage it being shown uncut on TV at 7.30pm, and perhaps it already has been (in which case this report is far too long!!!).