

BBFC Board of Classification Meeting

Wednesday 26 January 2022

(Meeting held remotely)

Present

Patrick Swaffer	President
Murphy Cobbing	Vice President
David Austin	Chief Executive
Matt Tindall	Senior Policy Officer (minutes)
Ben Howarth	Compliance Officer (for item 4)
Verity Pickles	Compliance Officer (for item 4)
Wallis Seaton	Compliance Officer (for item 4)

Apologies

Dave Barrett	Deputy Chief Executive
Kamlesh Patel	Vice President

Minutes of the previous meeting

1. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Matters arising

2. Patrick apologised for having to postpone the meeting from its originally scheduled date.

VAC update

3. Matt confirmed that as of 1 January 2022 the new Video Appeals Committee (VAC) is in place. In order to improve its effectiveness, the BBFC has, with the support of DCMS, made changes to how the VAC works. We have streamlined the process by removing the requirement that VAC hearings be held in-person and by drawing the membership of the VAC from the child-welfare experts who sit on the BBFC's independent Advisory Panel on Children Viewing, with recruitment managed by an independent third party. The changes we have made have allowed us to reduce the VAC appeal fee by 50%, and this has been communicated to the home entertainment industry.

Recent classification decisions

4. Verity, Ben and Wallis presented four clips from recently classified works.

5. Verity invited the Board to consider a scene of sexual violence and humiliation from #LIKE, a US horror thriller in which a woman seeks revenge on the man who cyberbullied her sister, leading to the girl's suicide. The BBFC classified the film 18 for 'sexual assault, abusive behaviour'. In the clip the protagonist has a suspect shackled in a cellar: she taunts him, drugs him, and, it is implied, eventually rapes him with a dildo. The Board considered the arguments for 15 - and there was sympathy for the lower rating - but given the prolonged nature of the sexual threat, supported the more cautious 18.
6. Verity also shared a scene from KING OF CALIFORNIA, a comedy drama starring Michael Douglas as a bipolar man who tries to convince his daughter that there is a buried treasure in their town. The BBFC classified the film 15 in 2008 for the category-defining scene under consideration, in which the daughter cuts her father down after finding him fighting for life after having attempted to hang himself from a chandelier. In 2021, after referral to Compliance Managers, the BBFC reclassified the film to 12 for 'suicide references, moderate sex references, drug misuse, strong language'. The Board agreed with the 12 given the brevity of the scene, the clearly aversive portrayal of suicide, and the lack of meaningful instruction.
7. Wallis presented a clip from PARIS POLICE 1900, a French period crime drama series. In the scene, an unconscious woman is positioned by a man for the purpose of pornographic images to be taken against her will, via rape by a second man. Given the prolonged nature of the sexual threat and the aggravating factor of the second man's masturbation (implied by a cast shadow) the episode was classified 18 for 'sexual threat'. The Board agreed with the rating.
8. Ben introduced two clips from the Netflix series TRUE STORY, examined as part of the monthly audit. In the first clip, a black comedian's white fan delivers back to him a monologue laden with the word 'n***a'. In the second, the comedian publicly berates the fan for his earlier behaviour. The frequency of racist language resulted in a 15 classification with which the Board concurred.

AOB

9. David provided a brief update covering the BBFC's latest work with video-on-demand providers, development of the Horizon compliance platform, renovations at 3 Soho Square, and the upcoming recruitment of two new Compliance Officers.

Date of next meeting: 22 February 2022